



Health and Safety Concerns of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Across Illinois

The Great Lakes Center for Farmworker Health and Well-being

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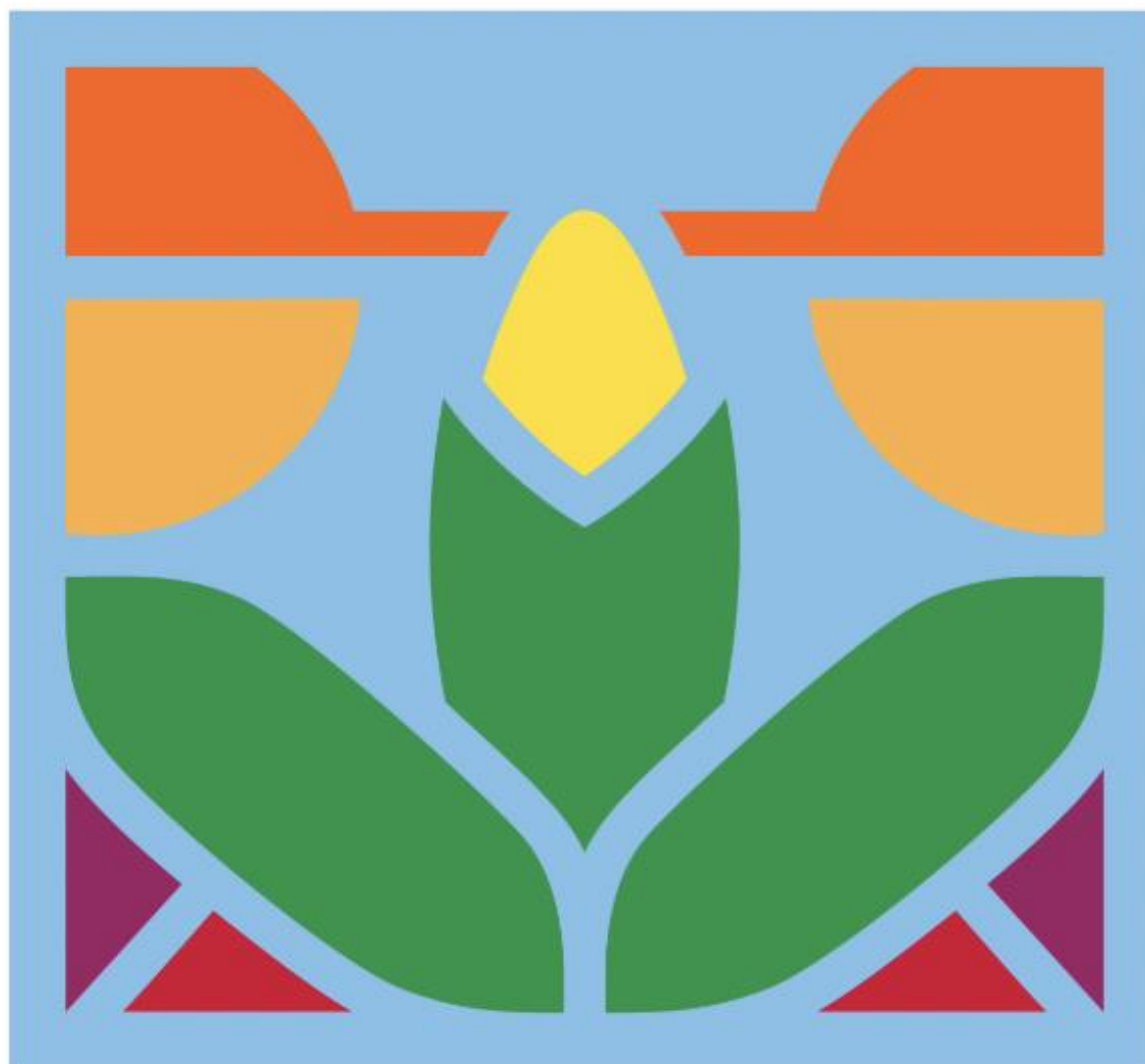
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Introduction



GREAT LAKES CENTER FOR
FARMWORKER
HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Background on Population Served

Seasonal, Migrant Farmworkers: H2A

Workers

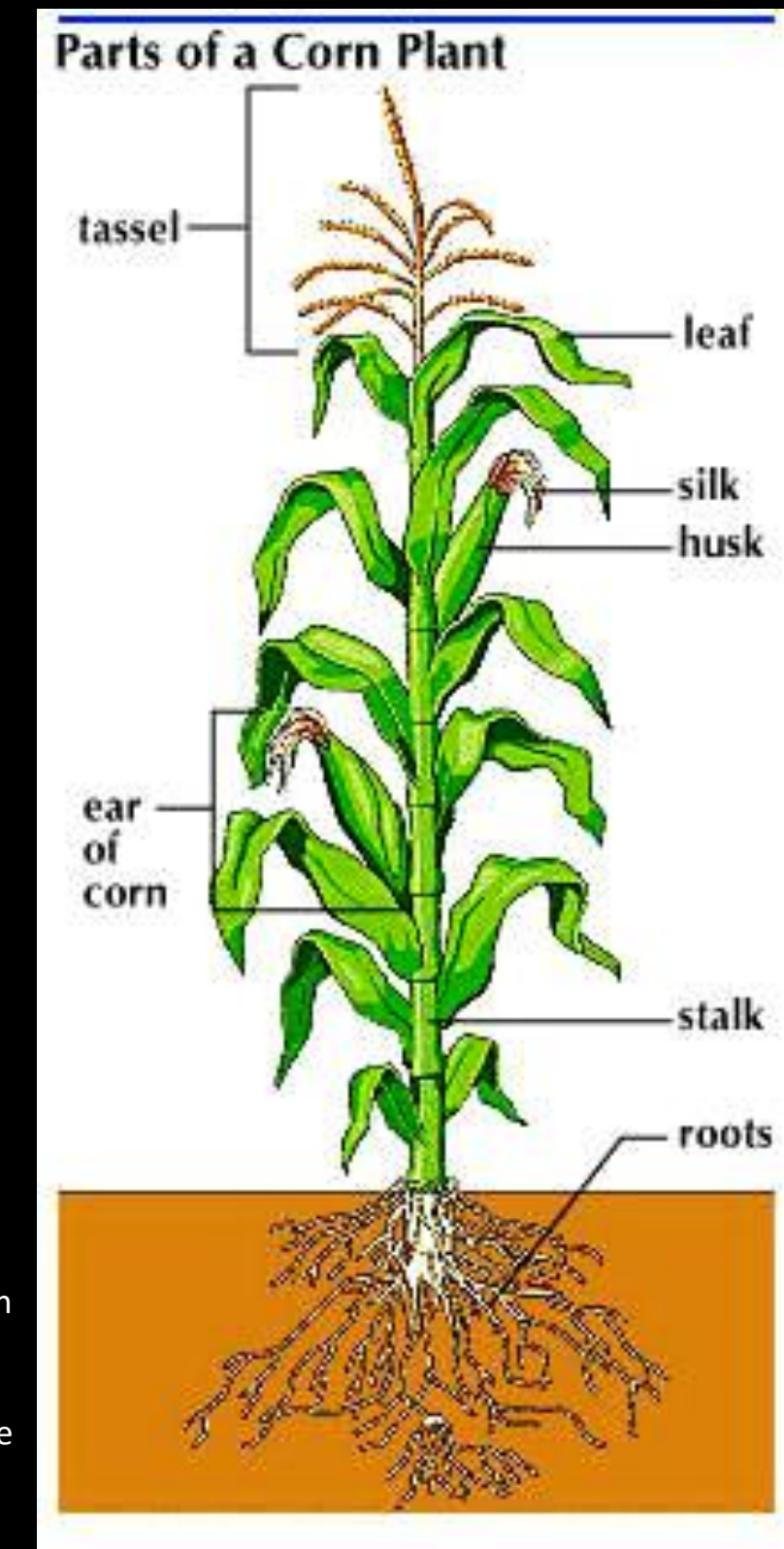
- Intended to help employers who anticipate a lack of available domestic workers
- Employer must cover housing, transportation, and meals

Worked with Corn

- Specifically pollination control
 - Detasseling or pollinating

Hazards

- Chemical: pesticides
- Biological: pests, infectious agents
- Physical: UV, heat, cold, extreme weather
- Biomechanical: repetitive strain, awkward positioning, trauma
- Psychosocial: fast paced work, piece rate payment, long hours, harassment, wage theft, risk of trafficking, remote environment



Left Image from:
<https://www.hollowaysdetasseling.com/how.htm>
Right image from:
<https://kids.britannica.com/students/assembly/view/53137>

Project Goals

1. Strengthen community partnerships by participating in outreach events that reach farmworkers wherever they are
2. Document outreach visits to capture work and demographic information on farm workers including crop specialty, work status and health hazards.
3. Develop educational resources on clothing and housing



Methods

Methods



Community Health Events

- 2 types: Community events and Farmworker-specific events
- Community partners present (Illinois Migrant Council, Fifth Street Renaissance, etc.)
- Administered survey and provided gift for their time (toiletries bag or socks)

Clinic Visits at CHP Locations

- Speak with patients as they leave the clinic
- Administer survey and provide gift for their time (toiletries bag)

Outreach at housing sites

- Attended home visits with Pedro Gaytan, LAC Outreach
- Observe and interact
- Provide resources (LAC documents and toiletries bags/socks bag)



Methods

Survey Design

- 8 question survey designed to understand farm worker demographics, housing, use of protective clothing, and assess interest in educational resources.
 - Translated from English to Spanish
- ## Conducting Survey
- Read aloud to each participant
 - Verbal consent process

Housing and Clothing Survey

u3gately@gmail.com [Switch account](#)



Not shared

Are you an H2A worker? (it is a type of visa to work in the US for a short time if you live outside the United States)

Yes

No

What type of crop do you work with?

Your answer

What type of housing do you currently live in? click on an option



Results

Clothing

Survey Results

- 71.6% of workers reported wanting more resources about protective clothing
- Clothing item reported as the most useful for protection at work: Long sleeve shirts

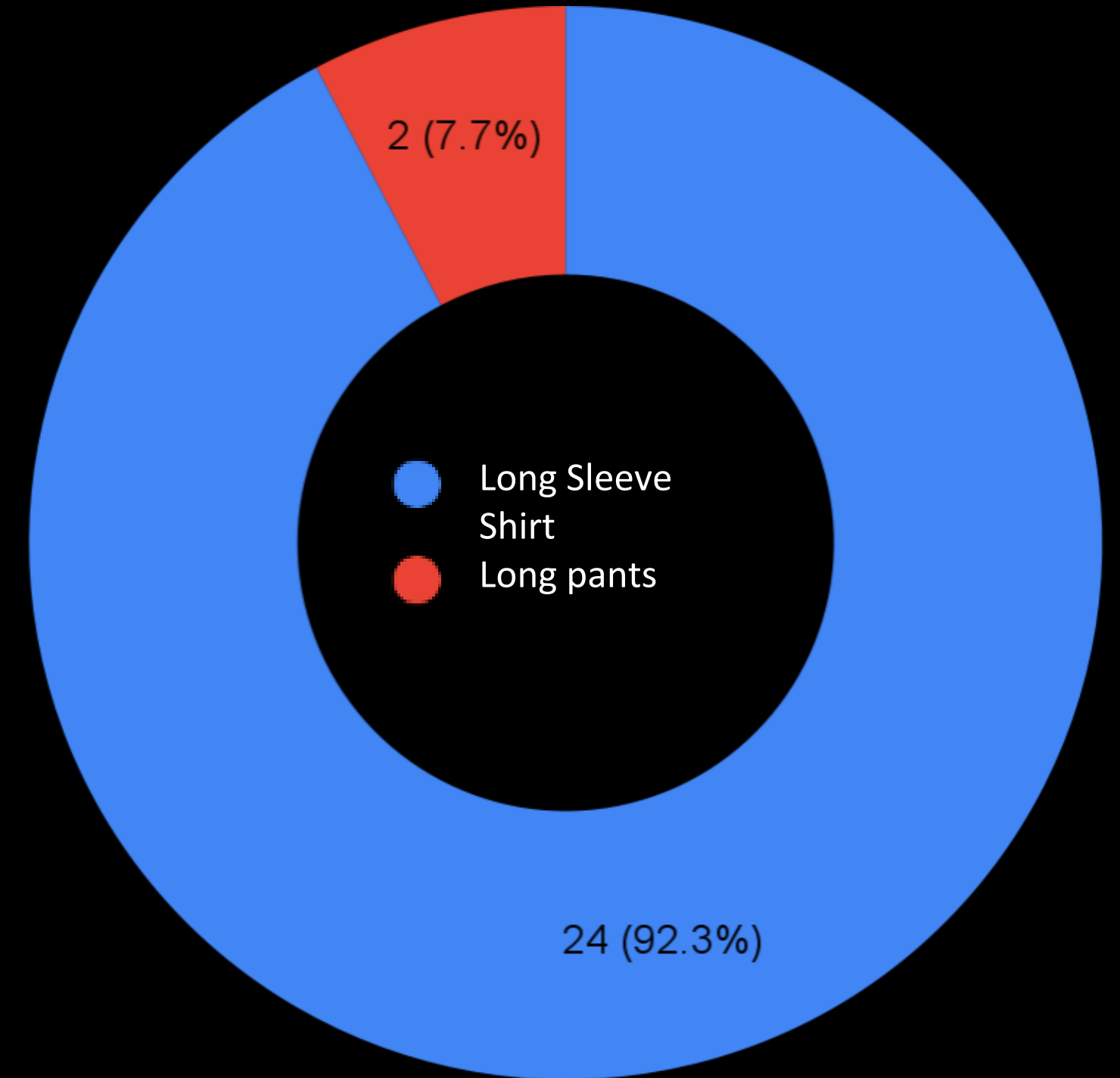


Figure 1. Farmworker responses to the question "What Clothing Do You Think Is The Most Useful for Protection at Work?"



Observations from Outreach Events

- Observed work clothing matched survey results
- Clothing habits
- The most requested/desired resources were physical pieces of clothing
○ Shirts and Socks

Housing

Survey Results:

Highest reported housing concerns

1. There is no working stove
2. There is inadequate air conditioning
3. There are too many people

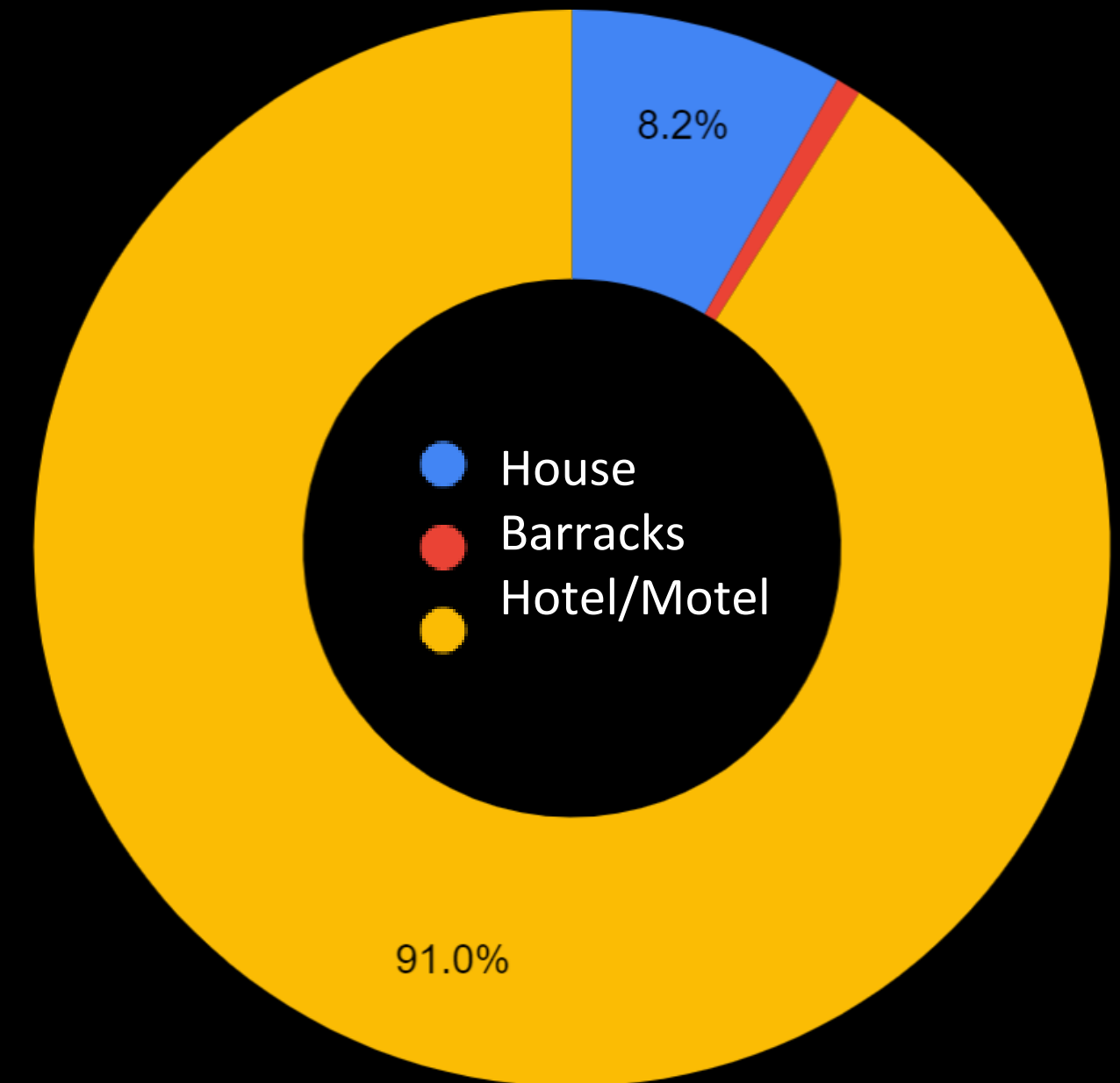


Figure 2. Farmworkers responses to the question "What type of housing do you currently live in?"



Observations from Outreach Events

- Housing type and quality varies largely
- Most workers lacked knowledge of or access to resources available to them

Give-back Products

Informational and Resource Guide

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS PROTECTION

What is Heat Illness?

People suffer heat-related illness when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.

Who is at Greatest Risk?

People who are overweight
People who are ill or on certain medications

What to Look for

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting (passing out)

What to do

- Move to a cool place
- Loosen your clothes
- Put cool, wet clothes on your body or take a cool bath
- Sip water

GET MEDICAL HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- You are throwing up
- Your symptoms get worse
- Your symptoms last longer than 1 hr

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS PROTECTION

Safety Tips

Clothes are your first line of defense

- Lightweight, loose-fitted, and breathable materials
- Light colors (reflects the heat more than it absorbs it)
- Shirts with long sleeves that cover the body
- Brimmed hat or neck gaiter to protect face

Protect Your Home

At home, do the following to keep your space cool

1. Block out sunlight using curtains or shades
2. If you have AC: check that the vents are open, adjust your thermostat so that the fan setting is on constantly, which should circulate the cool air
3. If you do not have AC: when the outside temperature drops below the interior temperature, open all the windows and doors you can. Close them back up in the morning
4. Seek out cooling centers: public places where there is air conditioning, such as shopping malls, public libraries, or public health-sponsored heat relief shelters

WHO TO CONTACT..

Who to call when sick:
Community Health Partnership of Illinois
312-795-0000
Or look online to see which office is closest to you
<https://chpofill.org/locations/>

Who to call when you need legal assistance:
Legal Aid Chicago
Illinois Migrant legal Assistance Project
1-800-445-9025
<https://legalaidchicago.org/get-help/>

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PESTICIDE PROTECTION

Pesticide Residue follows you from work to home, you need to protect yourself, your co-workers, and your family

Residues are the remains of pesticides that are sometimes found on plants or the ground after they have been sprayed.

AT WORK

How are you exposed to pesticide residues?

Skin Absorption

- Skin comes in direct contact with pesticides or residues when working with crops
- Health Effect: Rash, blisters, skin irritation

Mouth Ingestion

- Drink, smoke, eat, or chew gum with unwashed hands
- Drinking irrigation water
- Health Effect: Nausea

Eyes Absorption

- Rubbing eyes with unwashed hands
- Health Effect: eye irritation, blurry vision, watering of eyes

How can you protect yourself?

- Clothes protect your skin from pesticide residue exposure
- Wear clothes that cover your body
- Avoid touching your mouth after you touch the crops
- Wash your hands before eating or drinking or anything
- Avoid touching your eyes after you touch the crops

AT HOME

Work clothes bring pesticides into your home

Pesticide residue sticks to your skin, hair, clothes, and shoes. Entering your home without taking proper action contaminates your home with harmful chemicals

Pesticide contamination in the home can cause long term health effects...

- Skin rashes, headaches, and dizziness
- Chronic diseases – neurodegenerative disorders, cardiovascular disorders, and cancer

You, your family and your co-workers deserve to be safe:

- Meet with your housemates and set up an agreement and plan to keep your home safe
- Hang up the checklist (on the backside) and remind each other to follow it every day

WHO TO CONTACT...

If you are exposed to pesticides:
Illinois Poison Center
1-800-222-1222

If you need follow-up care for pesticide exposure:
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In case of emergency, call 911

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PESTICIDE PROTECTION

Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Co-Workers at Home:

When you get home from work follow each step to protect yourself and your home:

- Remove work shoes and socks before entering your home and leave them outside
- Wash hands with soap and water right when you get inside
- Shower immediately after work, making sure to shampoo your hair and wash your body with soap
 - If more than one person uses the same shower, wait outside your home until it is your turn
- Put work clothes into a bag to prevent others from coming into contact with them
- After showering, change into clean clothes before any physical contact with children, family, friends, or coworkers
- Wash work clothes before wearing them again
 - Wash work clothes separately from household laundry

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Long Sleeve Shirts



Discussion

Successes

15

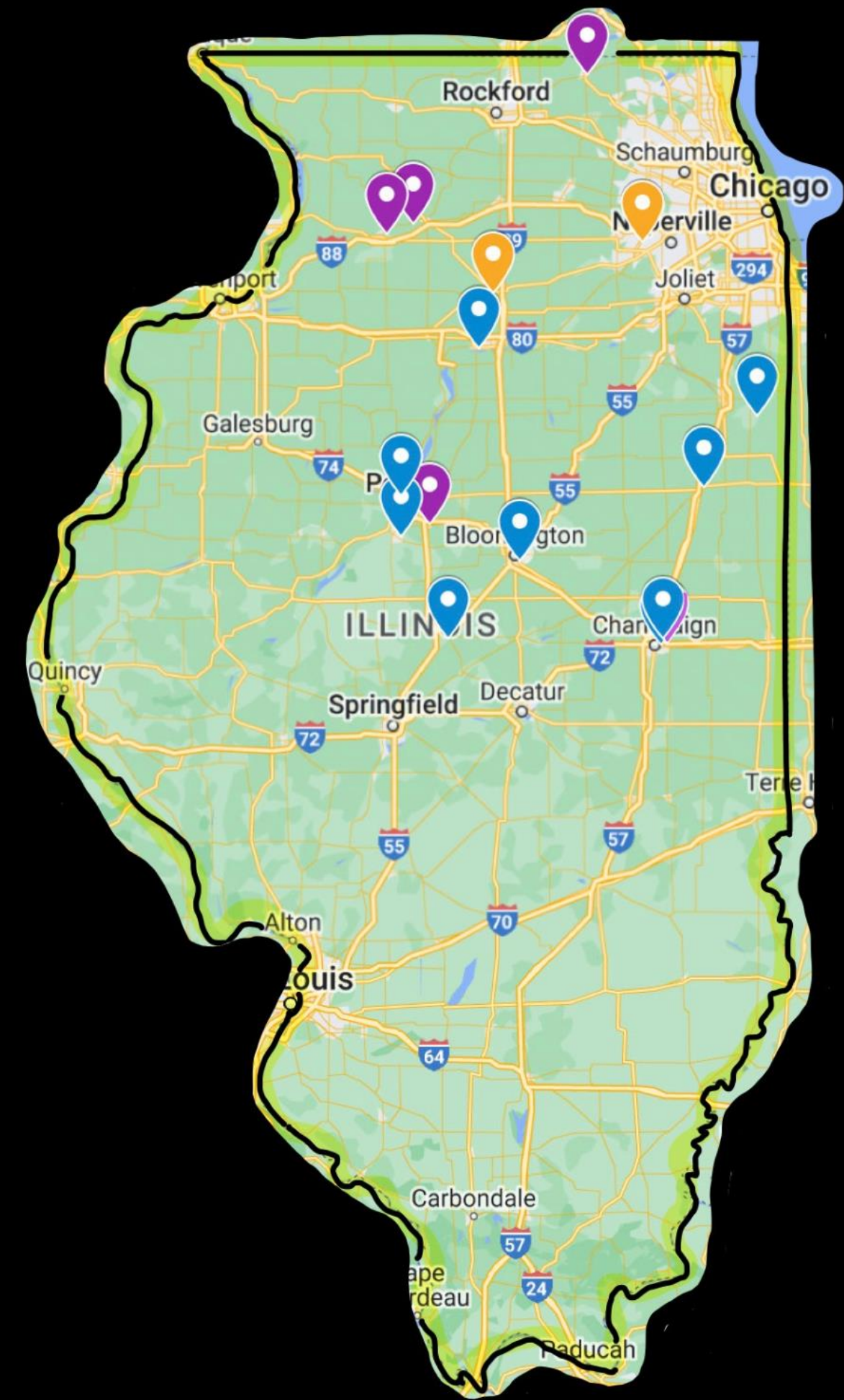
Sites Visited

134

Individuals Surveyed

430+

Farmworkers Engaged





Challenges

Image from
<https://physio.uwc.ac.za/pht402/2019/05/24/language-barriers/>

Recommendations & Next Steps

- **Dissemination of giveback product**
- **Assessing work sites benefits future project depth**
 - **reaching unlisted workers**
- **Continue research in clothing and housing**
- **Potential role of outreach observations in policy change**
 - **Future work with Illinois Department of Public Health**
- **Goal: Continue to process this data and submit summary of field experience for publication in AJPH**

Personal Reflection



Acknowledgements

Thank you so much to

- Gaby Gracia our site supervisor and project mentor
- Linda Forst, Elena Grossman, Maggie Acosta, and the rest of the Great Lakes Center for Farmworker Health and Well-being team
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- AEOC, NIOSH, and other funders



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THANK

YOU



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Background on Population Served

H2A Workers

- Short-term, temporary visas for foreign workers
- Intended to help employers who anticipate a lack of available domestic workers
- Employer must cover housing, transportation, and meals

Non H2A Workers

- Residency or citizenship status vary
- May work one season or follow the crops throughout the year
- Employers are not required to provide housing, transportation, or meals