



# COVID-19 Guidance for Migrant Farm Workers and their Employers



## Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Migrant Farm Workers and Their Employers

Effective April 2, 2020 until removed from the Arkansas Department of Health Website

COVID-19 can spread easily in settings with many people living in close proximity, including residential facilities for migrant farm workers. Farm owners and managers who provide housing for migrant workers should implement plans to prevent exposure to COVID-19, care for individuals with COVID-19, and prevent the spread of the disease.

Individuals over age 65 and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung disease and chronic heart disease, or a compromised immune system (e.g., cancer, cancer treatment, or other immunosuppressant treatments) have a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This could include agricultural workers with lung problems. The following recommendations from the Arkansas Department of Health are intended to help prevent exposure to COVID-19, if possible, and protect the public health of the state.

The key components of a prevention plan for migrant farm workers include: 1) minimizing the risk for exposure to the virus; 2) early detection of people with symptoms of COVID-19; and 3) caring for individuals with COVID-19 while ensuring that they do not give the virus to anyone else.

### Be Prepared

#### Determine where you will house workers with symptoms of COVID-19.

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) should be housed in a separate room with a separate bathroom from people who are not sick.
- Provide surgical facemasks and store them near the room for people with COVID-19. Facemasks should be worn by sick people when they are outside of their room or when other people are in their room, and by people who are taking care of sick people.
- Ventilate the room where persons with COVID-19 are housed on regular intervals, if possible.
- Identify the nearest healthcare facility that provides free or low-cost care to uninsured people.

## **Promote Healthy Habits**

### **Educate workers about hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.**

- Provide signs in English and Spanish with information about washing hands and protecting yourself and others from germs. Educational materials available in both English and Spanish can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>; <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-social-media-shareables-and-print-resources>; [www.uaex.edu/covid19](http://www.uaex.edu/covid19)

### **Provide supplies to fight COVID-19 like alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, and lined trash cans.**

- Make sure that workers have access to these supplies at the worksite, in common areas, where they sleep, and where they eat.
- Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide a disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses to sanitize counters, bathrooms, and other areas.

## **Prevent the Spread of COVID-19**

### **Ask incoming workers if they have symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.**

- If they have these symptoms, house them in the area designated for sick people and arrange for them to see a medical provider. Call the medical provider in advance so healthcare workers can take appropriate precautionary measures.
- Workers with symptoms of respiratory illness should take a private vehicle to get to the medical provider. If they do not have their own vehicle, please assist with transportation. Circulate air by partially lowering window panes (weather permitting) and have the patient wear a mask.

### **If a worker starts having symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath:**

- Have the worker stop working immediately and isolate the person from other workers, including others who may have COVID-19 symptoms or have received a positive diagnosis for COVID-19. People with these symptoms should not be working.
- Follow the instructions above to arrange for them to see a medical provider.

### **Let workers who have symptoms of respiratory illness rest until they feel better.**

- Make sure they have enough food and water as they will not be able to go to the store and may not have any funds to buy their own.
- Monitor for worsening symptoms.

- Public health officials (e.g., local health department staff) will provide further instructions about isolation and release from isolation.
- Create a plan for what to do if many workers are sick at the same time.

**If a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19:**

- Instruct workers who had close contact with the COVID-19 patient to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (fever and onset of respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath) for 14 days. These exposed workers should be separated from non-exposed workers for 14 days (e.g., sleep in a separate room, work in a separate area). If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, contact a local health care provider.
- About 20% of infected people will need hospitalization.
- No infected or exposed farmworker should be allowed or forced to return home prior to being cleared by the health department for travel.

*Adapted from similar guidance from North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services:*

[http://www.ncfh.org/uploads/3/8/6/8/38685499/interim\\_guidance\\_for\\_migrant\\_farm\\_workers\\_031320.pdf](http://www.ncfh.org/uploads/3/8/6/8/38685499/interim_guidance_for_migrant_farm_workers_031320.pdf)