

Interim Guidance for Seasonal Farmworkers and Their Employers in Georgia

May 26, 2020

Farming is an essential business operation and activity, often supported with the use of migrant and seasonal farm workers. COVID-19 can spread rapidly in settings with many people living in close proximity, including living facilities for migrant farm workers. Agriculture employers and farm labor contractors who provide housing for migrant workers should implement plans to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19, care for individuals with COVID-19, and prevent community transmission 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 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

Housing

- Increase the distance between people in sleeping spaces, where feasible.
 - In shared spaces, a “head-to-toe” sleeping arrangement with a minimum of six feet of distance between beds is recommended.
 - If beds cannot be separated by 6 feet, consider creating partitions between beds using curtains or other materials available.
- Create a plan for how you will isolate ill farmworkers from those who are not sick.
 - 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 when possible.
 - Facilities with a single room should assign sick occupants to one side and occupants without symptoms to the opposite side.
 - This may include reserving a housing unit only for ill farmworkers or coordinating with hotels for isolation.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently and at least daily. Frequently disinfect things such as doorknobs, tables, handrails, and shared tools.

Promote Prevention of COVID-19 Spread at Work

General Recommendations

- Make sure that workers have access to hand washing supplies, hand sanitizer, tissues, and trash cans 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.
- Promote social distancing by providing 6 feet between work spaces, where possible.
 - If not possible, consider creating partitions between work spaces.
- Provide masks or cloth face coverings for workers to wear.
- If you have not already, reach out to your local county or district health department to establish communication.

Monitor for Illness

- Ask workers before they start work each day if they have symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Take their temperature, if possible.
- If they have any of these symptoms, do not allow them to work that day.
- House them in the area designated for sick people and arrange for them to see a medical provider, if needed. 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 seeking medical care. If they do not have their own vehicle, please assist with transportation. Circulate air by partially lowering window panes (weather permitting).
- If a worker become sick during the work day, 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.

Promote Prevention Outside of Work

- Eliminate all large group activities. Increase the distance between workers during meals/free time. Plan and encourage activities that do not require close physical contact.
- Discourage visitation. Discourage visitation at your facility and offer alternative methods of visitation (Skype, FaceTime, etc.), if available.
- Anytime shared transportation, such as busses or vans, are used to move employees, attempt to limit to no more than 10 people whenever possible. This includes

transportation to fields/orchards and to town for shopping. When possible, send only 1-2 people to town for shopping with a list for the entire housing unit or take multiple trips with few people in each trip. Shared vehicles should be sanitized between groups and at least daily.

- If using large transportation vehicles, like a school bus, limiting to 10 people may not be possible. In these cases, allow for 6 feet between employees when possible, stagger people in seats, and encourage use of face coverings while on the bus.
- As much as possible, keep work groups together in daily operations and housing assignments.

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.
- Provide 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.
- Workers who are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 should not work until 10 days after their onset of symptoms or 72 hours after fever resolution with other symptoms improving, whichever is longer.
- About 20% of infected people will need hospitalization. Work with your local healthcare providers and have a plan for seeking healthcare for workers who need it.
- No infected or exposed farmworker should be allowed or forced to return home prior to being cleared by the health department for travel.