Using Technology to Improve Farmworker Health

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About the Office of Rural Health (ORH) and Our Mission

• First state office (1973) in the nation created to focus on the needs of rural and underserved communities

• Assists underserved communities by developing and funding innovative strategies for improving:
  • Access to health care
  • Quality of health care
  • Cost-effectiveness of health care

State Fiscal Year 2017 Office Facts:
• Administered over 300 contracts
• Spent $28.8 million from state, federal, and philanthropic sources
• Returns over 86% of its budget directly to NC communities
• Provided 2,000 technical assistance activities

While we do not provide direct care, our programs support numerous health care safety net organizations throughout North Carolina.
Programs at ORH

Placement and HPSA Services
Recruit providers and designates health professional shortage areas

NC Rural Health Centers
Supports state designated rural health centers that serve the entire community

NC Community Health Grants
Supports the primary care safety net system with increasing access to health care for vulnerable populations

NC Farmworker Health Program
Supports medical, dental and educational services for members of the North Carolina agricultural labor force and their families

NC Integrated Health Systems
Supports community health initiatives and demonstration projects that benefit vulnerable populations

NC Rural Hospital Program
Funds operational improvement projects for the benefit of all critical access hospitals and eligible small rural hospitals

NC Medication Assistance Program
Provides free and low-cost medications donated by pharmaceutical manufacturers to patients who cannot afford them

NC Statewide Telepsychiatry Program
Supports psychiatric evaluation of patients through videoconferencing technology in emergency departments

Rural Health Information Technology Program
Provides technical assistance to improve the use of Electronic Health Record (EHR) Systems and the use of health information exchange
SFY 2017 Map of ORH Coverage

Note: Sites may cover multiple counties in addition to its designated county location.
NC Farmworker Health Program

2016-2017 Health Care Contracts

1. Vecinos Inc.
2. Toe River Health District
3. Good Samaritan Clinic
4. Ashe Memorial Hospital
5. Surry County Health & Nutrition
6. Piedmont Health Services
7. Rural Health Group
8. NC Farmworkers Project
9. Pender County Health Department
10. Robeson Health Care Corp.
“The Migrant Farmworker” by Dr. Gayle Thomas, NCFHP Medical Director

“We arrive with the twilight to the camp hidden in the fields...”
Farmworker Health Outreach
Current health assessment

- Demographic information
- Vitals
- General health status and concerns
- Behavioral health and substance abuse screenings
- Occupational exposures
- Preventive health questions
Ready for a change

2017 surveys, interviews, and focus groups with central office staff, outreach workers, and farmworkers

• Data entry burden
• Length for farmworkers and outreach workers
• Close-ended format of questions
• More patient- and site-directed process
• Some questions are very personal
Farmworker voices

- Smartphone usage
- How NC farmworkers use their phones
- What farmworkers want from the health assessment

“How do you feel when outreach workers arrive to your camp/clinic?”

“Verdad bien… porque están chequeándome por mi salud, de azúcar, de presión.”
How can technology help?

- Redesign health assessment with outreach workers
- Automate repetitive processes?
- Mobile app: existing or design
- Chatbots?
- Other ideas? Please share at the end.
More opportunities to engage farmworkers
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https://www.ncfhp.org/

https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/orh