

In the news

Children's Center welcomes rural sociologist



Florence Becot, Ph.D., a rural sociologist with 10 years of agricultural interdisciplinary research experience, has joined the

National Farm Medicine Center and National Children's Center as an associate scientist. Her research program focuses on the health, well-being, safety and economic viability of farm families. Her research first considers the ways in which difficulties meeting social needs such as health care, child care or aging expand beyond the confines of the personal sphere and can have direct implications on the farm including the adoption of farm safety practices and farm business development. Directly tied to farm households' ability to meet their social needs, her work also explores the availability and types of social supports, including crisis support, as well as the role of these support systems in supporting farm households and their farm business. Dr. Becot earned her Ph.D. from Ohio State University and was previously a researcher at the University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies.



National Children's Center
for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

"The National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety strives to enhance the health and safety of all children exposed to hazards associated with agricultural work and rural environments."

Children's Center secures five years' NIOSH funding

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has awarded the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, a five-year competitive grant renewal to continue the center's mission of childhood agricultural injury prevention.



USDA Photo

New studies being

launched address youth operating ATVs for farm work, adolescent mental health, the impact of available child care on safety practices, and other safety issues important to the agriculture community.

"Childhood agricultural safety has never been more important than now during the coronavirus pandemic," said Barbara Lee, Ph.D., National Children's Center director. "Children are spending more time on farms, which can be positive from a family perspective, but it also increases their exposure to agricultural hazards and raises supervision challenges with home-schooling and closure of many child care centers."

The National Children's Center is one of 11 agricultural centers funded by NIOSH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is the only center dedicated to childhood agricultural injury prevention. NIOSH announced the renewal Oct. 1, 2020.

Although the rate of non-fatal injuries to children in agriculture has declined since the National Children's Center was established in 1997, agriculture remains hazardous for children and youth. About every three days, a child dies in an agriculture-related incident, and each day, about 33 children suffer preventable injuries. During the past decade, youth worker fatalities in agriculture have exceeded all other industries combined.

"By working with our partners in agriculture, including farm parents, businesses and organizations, we're helping ensure that safety interventions and guidelines are refined, promoted and adopted based on evidence of effectiveness," Lee said.

The new grant includes six distinct research studies, an outreach program, administrative and core leadership, and a national stakeholder advisory board.

Principal investigators within the Research Institute include Lee; Casper Bendixsen, Ph.D.; Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D.; Marsha Salzwedel, Ed.D.; Florence Becot, Ph.D.; and Jeffrey VanWormer, Ph.D. External principal investigators are Farzaneh Khorsandi, Ph.D., and Fadi Fathallah, Ph.D., University of California-Davis; Shoshannah Inwood, Ph.D., Ohio State University; and Josie Rudolphi, Ph.D., University of Illinois. Andrea Swenson, Ph.D., will oversee evaluation of the center's process, outcomes and impact.

The center will continue to partner with Migrant Clinician's Network, working with Amy K. Liebman, M.P.A., and her team of professionals dedicated to improving the health of migrant farmworkers and other mobile underserved populations.

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The projects:

- “Surveillance of Medically Attended Agricultural Injuries in Farm Children” (VanWormer)
- “Linking Child Care to Farm Children Safety” (Becot)
- “Farm Kid Paradox: Anthropological Inquiry Into The Benefits and Risks of Child-Livestock Interaction” (Bendixsen)
- “Assessing the Impact of Traumatic Injury News Articles on Farm Mothers and Educators” (Weichelt)
- “Farm Adolescent and Mental Health” (Rudolphi)
- “Capabilities and Limitations of Youth Operating Agriculture All-Terrain Vehicles” (Khorsandi and Fathallah)
- “Outreach Core” (Salzwedel)

The National Children’s Center (www.marshfieldresearch.org/nccrahs) is also supported by Marshfield Clinic Health System and through generous donations and other grants.

Children’s Center examines its response to pandemic

Andrea Swenson, Ph.D., is assessing how well the National Children’s Center is positioned to meet the health and safety needs of farm families during a crisis. To achieve this goal, Swenson is interviewing Farm Medicine scientists and staff to understand how the Children’s Center has responded to COVID-19, and is also surveying farm families to identify their needs during emergencies, and increase the Children’s Center’s capacity to anticipate what will be needed in the future for farms experiencing emergencies. Answering these questions will enable the Children’s Center to understand how it contributed to farm family health and safety. The assessment will also increase our understanding about how families experienced change, which could serve as areas for future intervention.

Social media and research

Researchers are looking to social media for new research ideas and participant recruitment, as well as dissemination of research findings and community engagement. For instance, as children have spent more time around home the past nine months, there appears to have been an increase in the posting and sharing of, “proud-parent moments, some of which are unsafe, like youngsters in the worksite,” said Dr. Bryan Weichelt. Social media is ripe for research, with a steady flow of data.

“We expect that our center, as well as many other research institutions, will continue to look to social media for new research ideas, for participant recruitment, dissemination of research findings, and community engagement.”



Keeping children engaged (and safe) on the farm with COVID-19: resources for farm parents

Farming is always challenging, and never more so than now. This is especially true for parents with children living and/or working on the farm.

“We hear from parents who are juggling farm work, off-farm work and home-schooling,” said Dr. Barbara Lee. “And yet, children are still depending on us adults to keep them safe.” No matter how difficult it is to be a farm parent during COVID-19,

think how much harder it would be if a child suffered a serious injury. The National Children’s Center compiled a [list of resources](#) on topics ranging from appropriate farm tasks for children to fun, virtual adventures.



Child care and COVID-19: preliminary data

To understand how farm parents have been juggling child care, homeschooling, off-farm work and farm work during COVID-19, Dr. Florence Becot launched a national survey during summer 2020 and received 134 responses from 38 states. About 50 percent of those with pre-school children and 80 percent of those with school-age children reported that their regular child care options and schools had closed at one point since the start of the pandemic. Some farm parents appreciated having the children on the farm more, but nearly 60 percent said that it became harder to take care of the children. More time with the children meant that they were worried the children would get hurt, that they had to change their farm or off-farm work schedule, or that less work was getting done on the farm. “We have long known about the challenges in finding available and affordable child care in rural areas, but to help them carry through the pandemic, farm parents wished for more resources from the schools such as computers and educational material, better internet connections, programs to connect rural families to create childcare groups, and the reopening of schools and child care,” Becot said.

Journal of Agromedicine COVID-19 issue

The most recent issue of the peer-reviewed [Journal of Agromedicine](#) is dedicated to the impact of COVID-19 on the agricultural community, including



farmers, farm workers, farm families and the farm economy. National Children’s Center Associate Director Casper Bendixsen, Ph.D., served as guest editor. The issue contains 18 commentaries covering topics such as occupational health, training, PPE shortages, mental health, worker housing and child care issues. Authors from North America, Ireland and Australia addressed problems created or exacerbated by COVID-19, and then recommended next steps and strategies.

Children's Center contributes to CDC interim guidance document

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Department of Labor have introduced joint [guidelines](#) and accompanying [checklists](#)



to help agricultural employers keep workers safe and healthy while continuing to work during the COVID-19 outbreak. The diverse nature of agriculture means that older teens and young children can also be found in ag work sites, some of which are family-owned and not subject to labor laws. Outreach Specialist Melissa Ploeckelman represented the National Children's Center and worked with colleagues at CDC/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to ensure that special conditions for children were addressed in the new guidance document.

"Taking children to a work site not only exposes them to the hazards in the environment, but also distracts adults from their tasks, increasing the risk of injury for children and adults," said Barbara Lee, Ph.D., director of the National Children's Center. Child supervision challenges have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many child care centers and schools closed, and activities canceled.

Childhood Agricultural Injuries Fact Sheet



The updated and redesigned [2020 Childhood Agricultural Injuries Fact Sheet](#) is the most popular resource on the National Children's Center website. Leading reported sources of fatalities involved transportation (47%), which includes tractors and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and

contact with machinery (20 percent). Other notable statistics on occupational injuries among youth:

- From 2001 to 2015, 48 percent of all fatal occupational injuries to young workers occurred in agriculture.
- Since 2009, youth worker fatalities in agriculture have exceeded all other industries combined.
- Young workers are nearly 8 times more likely to be fatally injured in agriculture compared to all other industries combined.

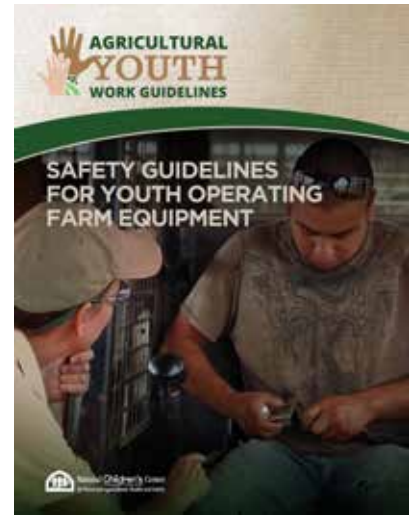
"There is no central database on childhood agricultural injuries," said Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D., who led the fact sheet initiative. "In putting together this fact sheet we drew upon the best available data from a variety of sources." A 2021 fact sheet is currently being worked on. To monitor, explore, or subscribe to the latest injury reports, go to www.aginjurynews.org.



New work guidelines booklets cover farm equipment, gardens, animals

Three new resources built upon the Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines are now available: "Safety Guidelines for Youth Operating Farm Equipment," "Safety Guidelines for Youth Working in Gardens," and "Safety Guidelines for Youth Working with Animals."

"Each of the booklets contain work guidelines that farm parents and supervisors can use to assign age and ability appropriate tasks to youth," said Marsha Salzwedel, Ed.D., who led the team effort to develop the booklets. The Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines are designed to address both the physical risks and behavioral/decisional risks encountered with young workers. The booklets begin by describing the importance of using the guidelines to safeguard working youth. This is followed by sections showing how to use the guidelines to assign appropriate tasks and important supplemental information. The remainder of the booklets contain work guidelines related to operating large equipment, gardening and working with animals, respectively. Currently available in English, all three booklets are also being translated into Spanish and French. To request a print copy of any of the booklets, please email nccrahs@marshfieldresearch.org with your name and shipping information. The complete sets of Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines can be found at www.cultivatesafety.org/work.



New agritourism flyer

As agritourism grows in popularity, implementing safety strategies to help maximize fun and minimize liability is increasingly important. "[Visitors on the Farm](#)" is a new, two-sided flyer from the National Children's Center that provides an overview of the agritourism industry and key resources on the Integrating Safety into Agritourism website (www.safeagritourism.org), including: virtual walkthroughs to educate owners and managers about safety issues; checklists to help identify safety concerns; and resources to help address safety issues.

Survey at National FFA Convention shows lack of safety education

An Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH) survey of nearly 1,000 students at the 2019 National FFA Convention indicated that the majority of respondents (37 percent) learned about agricultural health and safety from their FFA advisors. The most-taught subject was livestock safety, with 22 percent of students reporting they learned about that topic in class. Less than 10% of respondents said they learned about zoonotic diseases, ATV safety, grain bin safety, PTO safety, and manure safety in school. This is especially concerning given that the majority of students live, or have lived, on a farm or ranch. National Children's Center staff administered the survey. The project produced an excellent [infographic](#) summarizing results. For information, contact Megan Schossow, UMASH, schos021@umn.edu.

CS-CASH, Nebraska Extension find safe ways to deliver tractor certification course amidst COVID-19



The pandemic has forced safety training programs across the U.S. to find alternative methods of delivering required safety training to young agricultural workers. The Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH) and

Nebraska Extension worked to formulate and carry out a plan to protect the health of students and trainers while conducting their annual tractor safety certification course. Students were required to complete the first day of the course online through the eXtension Foundation Campus website. After successfully completing the online course, the required driving test was offered to students at one of five sites located strategically across Nebraska. A safety protocol was developed for the driving portion of the course using guidelines from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), University of Nebraska Medical Center, Nebraska Extension as well as input from the instructors. Highlights of the protocol and process included: clear, concise and frequent communication with parents and students regarding strict requirements; establishing cohorts of 3-5 students onsite for a maximum of two hours; requiring students and trainers to wear a mask at all times and maintain a six-foot distance when practical; and disinfecting all equipment before and after contact. Custom ag-themed masks and hand sanitizer were provided to all students and trainers. Students who had a fever or persistent cough within 14 days of testing were required to reschedule their driving test. There was a high rate of compliance and a post-evaluation survey of students and parents indicated satisfaction with the level of safety provided during the training, said Ellen Duysen, community outreach specialist, CS-CASH.

Culturally appropriate COVID-19 educational materials for Anabaptist families

As a volunteer safety educator teaching safety and health in Amish and Mennonite schools, Kay Moyer, Penn State Cooperative Extension, realized it was important to help children learn how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As the cases of COVID-19 rose and the number of deaths increased, a visual handout about prevention was created. Jim Carrabba from the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety contacted Moyer to see if there was a culturally appropriate handout to share with Anabaptist communities. The handout was sent, and Carrabba printed it and distributed it to some Anabaptist groups in New York. More than 400 posters were printed for Anabaptist businesses, in addition to a one-page activity sheet that could be copied and have available for

employees or customers to pick up and take home. More than 300 activity sheets were printed by Lancaster General Hospital to be distributed. The handout was also sent to the Pennsylvania Amish Safety Committee, medical providers caring for the plain community members, home school parents, Anabaptist owned stores and families that sew safety vests for children. To get copies of these materials, contact Moyer at: klm26@psu.edu

Online training protecting young workers in agriculture

A new, [free online training](#) aimed at supervisors of young agricultural workers is available in English and Spanish with a goal to protect younger workers. Co-Principal Investigators Diane Rohlman, Ph.D., and Shelly Campo, Ph.D., both University of Iowa professors, took the Total Worker Health approach while developing the “Protecting Young Workers in Agriculture” training in conjunction with the National Children’s Center. The training can assist supervisors, parents and teachers with topics such as best practices in supervision, training adolescents and young adults more effectively, facilitating difficult conversations, considering updates in workplace policies, and more. The training and supplemental materials can be found at www.healthierworkforcecenter.org.

Here’s what people are saying about the training:

- *“Really good information; things I’ll be able to use when working with youth on our farm. We are very aware of what a dangerous line of work we are in!”* – Iowa Farmer
- *“I have completed the training and thought the training information was presented well and would like my supervisors to also participate. I also like that there is a Certificate of Training Completion available once the training is complete.”* – HR Manager
- *“I am impressed with the high quality of the writing, organizational structure of the material, and the insight of the key messaging.”* – Senior Safety Consultant

Furthermore

Several staff have taken positions representing the National Children’s Center on boards/committees of various child-serving organizations, including **Andrea Swenson, Ph.D.** (Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin); **Melissa Ploeckelman** (Children’s Safety Now Alliance); and **Kyle Koshalek** (Grain Handling Safety Coalition). ... **Marsha Salzwedel, Ed.D.**, National Children’s Center Outreach Core PI, has been promoted to project scientist ... **Kathrine Barnes, M.S., M.P.H.**, has been promoted to project manager within the National Children’s Center. ... Child agricultural injury prevention will be one of the key topics at the online **North American Agricultural Safety Summit**, March 22-24, 2021. For registration and information check www.ashca.com.