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A partnership to promote the health of indigenous farmworkers in Oregon

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An increasing number of farmworkers in Oregon come from indigenous communities in Mexico and Guatemala. In addition to speaking different languages, indigenous workers have distinct cultural traditions and few agencies have acquired the language skills or cultural competence necessary to assist these workers. The community-driven project, Promoting the Occupational Health of Indigenous Farmworkers, is funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and addresses the health needs of indigenous farmworkers. The project partners include the Oregon Law Center, labor union advocacy organization Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, Salud Medical Center, Portland State University, the Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc., and indigenous farmworkers.

In an effort to identify priorities for workplace education and policy change, and to develop local leadership among indigenous farmworkers, the Partnership worked collaboratively during the first months of the project to train farmworkers and other advocates to conduct focus groups. This presentation will describe the focus group training, and the eight focus group meetings conducted with leaders from the farmworker communities, and representatives of health care, labor, and social service organizations. The presenters will discuss the results of the focus group data, and describe how the results were used to inform the education, intervention, and policy change efforts identified as priorities. We will discuss the challenges of working on sensitive issues, such as health, discrimination, and legal status, and describe methods used to address these potential barriers to collaboration and project implementation.

Learning Objectives:

- 1. Articulate the potentially unique contribution of using qualitative data methods in multi-lingual communities.
- 2. Describe the methods used to apply focus group data to inform and strengthen community-based interventions.
- 3. Identify challenges encountered in the data collection process, and list ways of overcoming such challenges in a collaborative setting.

Keywords: Community Collaboration, Indigenous Populations

Presenting author's disclosure statement:

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