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Caring for Children While Working in Agriculture—The Perspective of Farmworker Parents

Amy K. Liebman^a, Juliana Simmons^a, Marsha Salzwedel^b, Antonio Tovar-Aguilar^c, and Barbara C. Lee^b

^aMigrant Clinicians Network, Salisbury, Maryland, USA; ^bNational Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, Marshfield, Wisconsin, USA; ^cFarmworker Association of Florida, Apopka, Florida, USA

ABSTRACT

Access to safe, off-farm childcare is often a challenge for farmworkers with young children and is likely to become an increasingly salient barrier as more agricultural workers migrate together with families and as the number of women entering the agricultural workforce increases. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries, and the presence of young children in the workplace puts them at risk. To better understand the current nature of childcare for farmworker families and the challenges to accessing services, this project facilitated in-person surveys with 132 parents in three communities in Florida. A convenience sample that intentionally targeted parents living and working in areas with limited access to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start facilities was used to recruit participants. Most participants reported childcare access as a challenge. They expressed a desire to work in an area based on childcare availability. These findings offer agribusiness leaders important data to consider. They also suggest that industry support of childcare may be an important workforce investment. Findings indicate that high quality, affordable off-farm childcare services could serve as a means for attracting farmworkers to regions currently experiencing labor shortages. Additional research is warranted to explore this subject in diverse geographic areas.

KEYWORDS

Agriculture; child care; farm workers; parents; socio-ecological model



Introduction and background

There are an estimated 1.8–2.5 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States,^{1,2} and more than half of these workers have minor children.³ Agriculture poses numerous risks to workers, where hazards include machinery, livestock, and exposure to pesticides and other chemicals.⁴ Access to off-farm childcare is a vital component of safeguarding children while parents work in agriculture. An estimated 60% of injuries to children on farms are among nonworking children who face many of the same risks as adult workers.⁵ Yet, for many reasons, children are often brought into the agricultural work site by farm operators and employees.

According to the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS), an employment-based, random-sample survey of US crop workers that collects demographic-, employment-, and health-related data in face-to-face interviews, the number of farmworkers traveling with their families in the United

States is increasing, and more women are entering the agricultural workforce.³ Recent NAWS data indicates that 28% of farmworkers are female,³ compared to only 21% in 2001–2002.⁶ Findings indicate that more women would be interested in agricultural employment if childcare options were accessible⁷; therefore, childcare is likely to become an increasingly salient issue among women seeking employment in agriculture. Florida-specific farmworker data is not readily available, but the team feels that the NAWS findings are generalizable to the target population for this in-person survey.

This paper considers the uniquely vulnerable position of farmworker children and their parents within the context of the socio-ecological model (SEM). The SEM recognizes multiple dimensions and how agents at various levels affect the individual in different ways.⁸ This project works to impact the safety of children by targeting agents at various levels of the model. Agents will refer to adult (parents, individual growers), community

CONTACT Juliana Simmons  jsimmons@migrantclinician.org  Environmental & Occupational Health Program Manager, Migrant Clinicians Network, 225 N Division St, Ste 302/303, Salisbury, MD 21801, USA.

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(childcare providers), and institution/organization (national organizations of migrant childcare providers and agribusiness leaders).

Protecting Children While Parents Work is a joint collaboration of the Migrant Clinicians Network and the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The overall goal of this project is to improve access to childcare services for children of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers. A five member expert advisory committee guides the project and includes leaders from agribusiness, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) and the childcare community, as well as migrant health and child safety health experts in academia.

The overall goal of the project is to identify common ground among three key stakeholders: parents, childcare providers, and agricultural employers to address the safety needs of children. Ultimately, the team hopes to foster an increase in the availability of and access to off-farm childcare services for migrant and immigrant agricultural workers by bringing together these three stakeholder groups and establishing improved communication strategies (see Figure 1).

Preliminary data

As part of an extensive and multilevel assessment, the project team gathered data and obtained input from all the three stakeholder groups. Agribusiness employers have expressed an interest in how

childcare availability affects employee retention and productivity. Attracting new employees and retaining current employees has become an increasingly critical issue as the national agricultural labor shortage continues across the United States.⁹ The executive director of the National MSHS Association serves on the advisory committee for this project and facilitated access to MSHS parents to help form a base of knowledge regarding childcare for farmworker parents. The team felt that MSHS was an ideal partner for this project because of their broad reach among migrant families. The project team visited MSHS locations in various regions of the country and interviewed childcare provider staff at these locations. These site visits and semi-structured interviews offered insight into the services available to farmworker parents and the perspectives of and challenges facing childcare providers.

One of the biggest challenges discovered during the preliminary childcare center site visits was limited funding including obtaining supplemental funds and restrictions on their use. For example, MSHS centers are required to enroll children according to strict eligibility criteria, and only a limited number of spaces for migrant children and seasonal children are available; the childcare centers do not have the autonomy to accept children based on need alone. Centers often receive funding from various sources (e.g., MSHS, private donations, and state-funded), and in some cases funds have preconditions and families may not meet the criteria. For example, there is eligibility criteria based on the type of agriculture in which the parents are employed; in some cases dairy and poultry workers are not included under the umbrella of migrant or seasonal workers because they remain in the same location year round and are excluded from childcare services. Additionally, a specified percentage of a family's income must come from agriculture to qualify for childcare services. Childcare offerings for agricultural workers vary state by state. For example, year-round dairy and poultry workers in New York are able to receive subsidized childcare because in addition to the funds from MSHS, the state supplements the cost of childcare.

During the preliminary site visits, childcare providers also reported a number of barriers to care including child provider ratios, child age, and immigration status. Childcare providers must

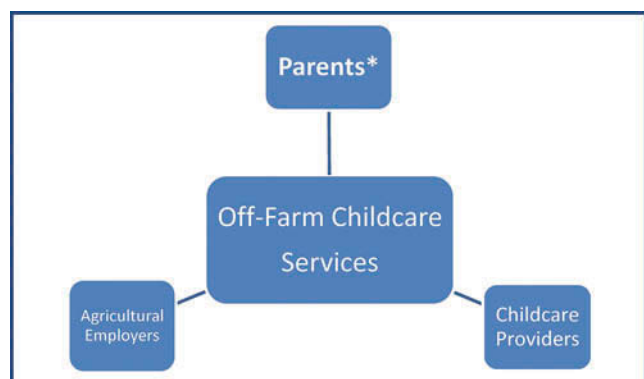


Figure 1. Protecting children while parents work project: Stakeholders. (*While this project involves all stakeholder groups, this manuscript focuses on the parent perspective gathered via in-person interviews).

meet ratios that limit the number of children that can be in the care of one adult. Child age can be a limiting factor for both parents and providers because if a care provider accepts newborns, they are restricted to care for fewer children overall because newborns require a lower child-to-provider ratio. It is important to note that meeting child-to-provider ratios is commonplace in most childcare settings and is not unique to MSHS. Childcare providers also reported undocumented parents being wary of providing personal information which can make enrollment challenging.

The project team conducted an initial focus group among 15 farmworker parents in attendance at the National MSHS Association meeting in Washington, DC to begin learning more about the parent perspective. The purpose of this focus group was to gain a basic understanding of the challenges facing farmworker parents and help frame the content of a more targeted in-person survey. This first focus group was coordinated with MSHS parents because the project team wanted to connect with parents who understood the landscape of migrant childcare in various regions. This focus group was facilitated among parents who were already well-connected with MSHS and used its childcare services in different locations where they worked. The focus group identified the foremost challenges to obtaining childcare, including transportation, limited spaces at childcare centers, and lack of services in rural areas. Participants also shared observations and anecdotes that children were sometimes brought to the worksite when childcare was unavailable, and they expressed concern about hazards such as heat and pesticides.

The focus group, site visits, and informational interviews were pivotal in identifying some of the main barriers to accessing childcare and forming a better understanding of the current landscape of migrant childcare in the United States, allowing the team to develop a targeted in-person survey. The team partnered with Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF) to administer the survey, which facilitated access to areas not saturated with formal childcare options.

Methods

The project team gathered farmworker parent perspectives using qualitative methods for the initial

focus group and quantitative methods for the in-person surveys administered among farmworker parents. Interview tools were developed with the expertise of the project's advisory team. All research activities were approved by the Marshfield Clinic Institutional Review Board.

The aim of the in-person surveys was to better understand farmworkers' access to childcare. It was implemented in partnership with the FWAF in Apopka, Immokalee, and Quincy, Florida. These communities were identified by the FWAF as areas that are not saturated with formal childcare options for farmworker families.

Instrument

The 23-item in-person survey tool was initially translated from English to Spanish by a Spanish-speaking researcher and then reviewed by a team of three community health workers (CHWs) based in locations where data collection was to occur. The instrument collected the following data: demographics, including gender, age, and number of children (3 items); occupational history, including type of agriculture, years working in agriculture, and years with current employer (3 items); current practices surrounding and attitudes towards childcare (12 items); challenges and strategies to accessing childcare (3 items); communication preferences (2 items); and one open-ended question dedicated to participant comments. Upon consensus of the translation, the interview tool was back-translated into English by a native English-speaker for validation. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and used a verbal informed consent process. A signature waiver was granted due to the vulnerabilities of the target population.

Data collection

Data were collected by three CHWs trained by the FWAF on Community-based Participatory Research and certified on the protection of human subjects by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). They contacted, recruited, consented, and interviewed workers in public places (laundromats, churches, day cares, and parks), the FWAF offices, and workers' homes and workplaces.

CHWs used a convenience sample and administered the in-person survey to 132 parents. The sample design linked CHWs to outreach opportunities, therefore, there was a great discrepancy in the number of completed surveys per location (Quincy $n = 52$, Apopka $n = 43$, Immokalee $n = 27$). For instance, the CHW in Quincy had worked for many years in a laundromat. Through this job she had regular access to potential participants and time to complete the greatest number of interviews. In other locations, CHWs had to rely more heavily on reaching parents who were present in the FWAF offices for other reasons. Although there was an effort to recruit male parents, nearly all participants were women. Farmworkers who were not parents or whose children did not live with them were excluded from interviews.

Data entry and analysis

The project team utilized REDCap software to compile and analyze the data. The survey instrument was recreated in REDCap, and data were entered manually from the hard copies of the surveys. All team members performing data entry and analysis were CITI trained. REDCap allowed the team to compile data. For categorical variables, Fisher's Exact or Chi-square test was used to test for the association between each of the categorical survey questions and gender (male vs. female), formal childcare service (no vs. yes), location (Florida South, Central, and North), years worked (<10 vs. 10+ years), and specific occupations (nursery, vegetables, and mushrooms). For continuous variables (e.g., number of children), Wilcoxon or Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to comparing the difference in medians of each of the continuous variables according to gender, formal childcare service, location, years worked, and specific occupations. P -values were derived from the above-mentioned statistical tests and a P -value of < 0.05 was used to claim that there exists a statistically significant association or difference in median values. All data analyses were carried out using a commercially available statistical software package, SAS, version 9.4, English.

Results

Among the 132 farmworker parents who participated in the survey, 76% were female, 10% were male, and 12% were interviewed as a couple with

shared children. Participants had worked in agriculture in the United States from 6 months to 20 years, with an average of 8 years. Farmworker parents had been working for the same employer for an average of 3 years. Participants had between one and eight children, and the average number of children for each participant was three. The majority of survey participants worked in nurseries, greenhouses, or vegetable-growing operations due to the locations where the in-person survey was administered (Table 1).

The overwhelming majority of participants (97.5%) reported someone else caring for their children while they were at work, and 97% of participants reported paying for this service. The majority of participants reported using informal and unlicensed childcare providers including babysitters (52.5%), family members (31.1%), neighbors (32%), and other (3.3%). Other responses included using established childcare services such as MSHS (6.6%). No parents reported using employer-provided childcare. Ninety-three percent of participants reported childcare as difficult or very difficult to obtain. Additionally, parents reported numerous barriers to enrolling their children in childcare (see Figure 2). Some of the most commonly cited challenges in obtaining childcare included eligibility criteria such as migration status and income requirements (54.9%); lack of available slots at the childcare center (20.5%); inability to complete the application for services due to language barriers (40.2%); inability to complete the application due to lack of Internet access (4.9%); and the child being ineligible for care due to age (22.1%). Some less commonly cited barriers included: being unable to use childcare services because the agency required parents to provide pay stubs, and some parents are paid only in cash (3.3%); the childcare agency required the child's social security number (0.8%); not being able to reach the childcare agency because of transportation barriers (3.3%);

Table 1. Participant occupation.

Occupation	Total participants	Percentage
Nursery or greenhouse	80	65.6
Vegetables	39	32.0
Mushrooms	12	9.8
Citrus or other tree fruits	1	0.8

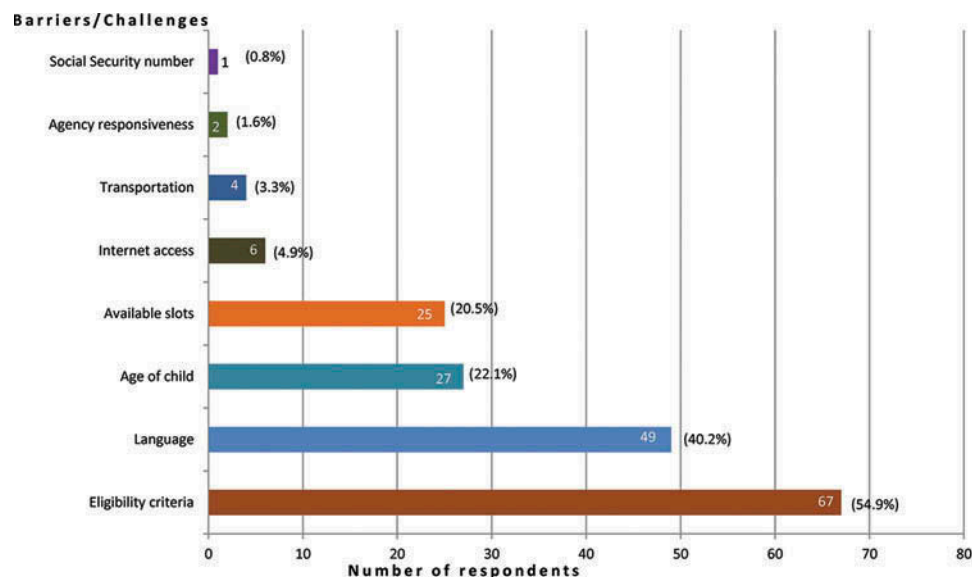


Figure 2. Barriers and challenges to accessing childcare.

and the childcare agency being unresponsive and not returning parents' calls regarding enrolling their child in care (1.6%).

In addition to challenges related to enrollment, the majority of parents (96.7%) noted challenges once their child was registered for and receiving care. Scheduling challenges were reported as a barrier for 84.4% of parents. This included the childcare agency closing before the work day was over or not opening early enough to accommodate the parents' work schedules. Holding mandatory parent meetings during work hours was also noted as a challenge. MSHS is required to hold periodic parent meetings, but the childcare centers are not required to hold meetings outside of regular work hours for farmworker parents. The survey did not inquire about how often participants were asked to attend parent meetings, but informal interviews with childcare providers indicated that parent meetings are typically held on a monthly basis. Transportation was reported as a barrier to accessing care by 38.5% of parents. Parents specified both not having means to transport their child to/from childcare services, as well as not being able to afford to pay for transportation.

Parents identified several ways in which childcare affects their workplace behavior; 63% reported having missed work or left work early due to childcare challenges in the past 2 months, and 97.5% reported having missed work for an

entire day due to childcare issues in the past 6 months. On average, participants reported having missed an average of 4.7 days of work over the past 6 months. Two parents specified that they would only leave work early due to a childcare-related emergency.

Survey data indicate that most (97.5%) parents choose to miss work when childcare is unavailable, as opposed to bringing the children to work with them. No parents reported bringing their children to work with them if childcare was unavailable; 95% reported they felt bringing children to work would be dangerous. Additionally, parents identified various hazards that children could face in the workplace including exposure to machinery (67.2%); pesticides and chemicals (81.5%); slips, trips, and falls (66.4%); and sun and heat exposure (87.4%). Only 1.6% of participants felt that bringing children to the farm was not dangerous at all, and 1.6% felt that bringing children to the farm was only a little dangerous.

Parents were also surveyed on their perception of how concerned farm owners are about the safety of their employees' children. Results found 35.2% of parents believe that farm owners are very concerned about the safety of workers' children on farms, while 12.3% believe they are not at all concerned. Half of all parents surveyed reported that farm owners do not allow children to be present on farms while parents are working.

In the light of the agricultural labor shortage, the team was interested in better understanding what motivates farmworker parents to work in one area over another. Eighty-nine percent of parents reported that they are more likely to choose to work in an area with accessible childcare services (see Figure 3). Participants were presented with three scenarios and asked which they would choose: hourly pay of \$10 and childcare is free (82%); hourly pay of \$12 and you have to pay for childcare (13.1%); hourly pay of \$15 and there is no childcare available (1.6%). Parents reported willingness to choose a job that offers less pay in exchange for free childcare services.

The project team compared responses among female and male participants. Significant findings are presented in Table 2. These groups reported different challenges in terms of accessing childcare. Among females, 78.5% of participants reported limited hours of operation among childcare providers to be a challenge, compared to 41.7% of men. Men also reported missing work due to childcare more frequently than females. Among male participants, 66.7% reported missing between one and three days of work each week, compared to 23% of females. More than half of all female participants (66.7%) reported never missing work because childcare was unavailable, compared to only 33.3% of men who reported never missing work due to childcare.

The project team also explored the most effective strategies for communicating with farmworker

Table 2. Comparisons by gender.

	Male No. (%)	Female No. (%)	P-value
Informal childcare service			
No	9 (75)	92 (98.9)	.0044
Yes	3 (25)	1 (11.1)	
Years worked in agriculture in the United States			
N	12	90	
Mean	5.25	7.76	
Standard deviation	5.53	4.80	
Median	3.5	8	0.0554
Range	1–18	0.5–19	
What challenges related to childcare have you faced in the last two months?			
Hours of operation			0.0114
No	7 (58.3)	20 (21.5)	
Yes	5 (41.7)	73 (78.5)	
No transportation			0.0260
No	3 (25.0)	58 (62.4)	
Yes	9 (75.0)	35 (37.6)	
How often do you leave work early because you do not have childcare for your children?			
2–3 days a week	3 (25.0)	7 (8.1)	0.0148
1 day a week	5 (41.7)	13 (14.9)	
Never	4 (33.3)	58 (66.7)	
Other	0 (0)	9 (10.3)	
How many days of work have you missed in the last six months because of childcare?			
N	10	76	
Mean	8.2	4.33	
Standard deviation	5.41	4.49	
Median	8	3	0.0103
Range	0–18	0–30	

Note: P-value was derived from Fisher's Exact test.

parents due to a request for this information from employer stakeholders. Table 3 compares data from individuals who have worked in agriculture for fewer than 10 years vs. 10 or more years. Among those who have worked in agriculture for

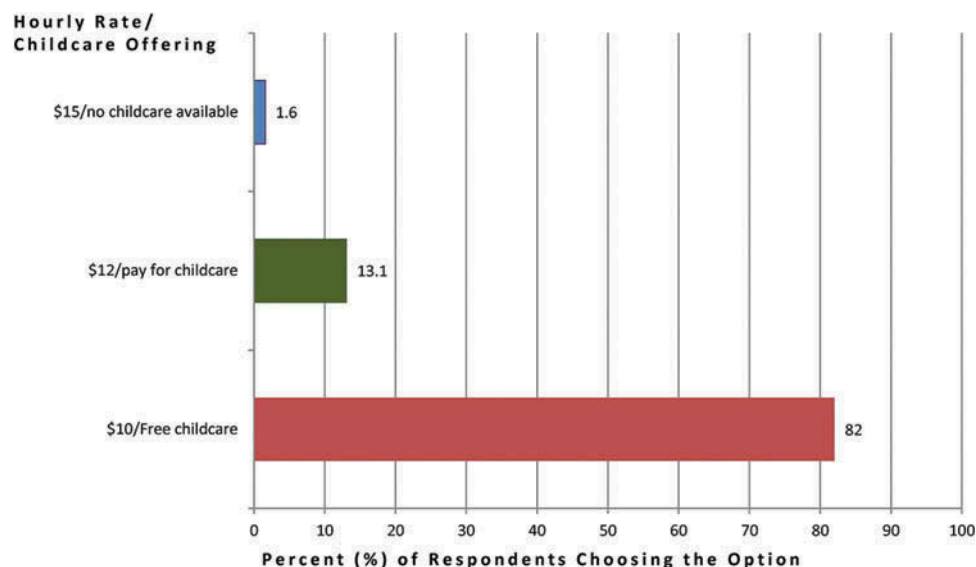


Figure 3. Employment preference based on childcare offerings and hourly rate.

Table 3. Comparisons by years worked in agriculture (<10 vs. ≥10).

	< 10 No. (%)	≥ 10 No. (%)	P-value
Do you have access to ... ?			<0.0001 ^a
Cell phone			
No	7 (10.6)	27 (52.9)	
Yes	59 (89.4)	24 (47.1)	
Text messaging			<0.0001 ^a
No	25 (37.9)	46 (90.2)	
Yes	41 (62.1)	5 (9.8)	
Email			0.0032 ^a
No	53 (80.3)	50 (98.0)	
Yes	13 (19.7)	1 (2.0)	
Bulletin			<0.0001 ^a
No	50 (75.8)	18 (35.3)	
Yes	16 (19.7)	33 (64.7)	
Best way to be reached regarding childcare			
Phone			<0.0001 ^a
No	12 (18.2)	33 (64.7)	
Yes	54 (81.8)	18 (35.3)	
Text messaging			0.0674 ^a
No	61 (92.4)	51 (100)	
Yes	5 (7.6)	0 (0)	
Email			0.1354 ^a
No	60 (92.4)	50 (98.0)	
Yes	6 (9.1)	1 (2.1)	
Bulletin			<0.0001 ^a
No	62 (93.9)	32 (62.8)	
Yes	4 (6.1)	19 (37.2)	
Other			1.0000 ^a
No	62 (93.9)	48 (94.1)	
Yes	4 (6.1)	19 (37.2)	
Years working with current company			
N	63	47	
Mean	1.93	5.01	
Standard deviation	1.63	2.40	
Median	1	5	<0.0001 ^b
Range	0.3–7	1–10	

^aP-value was derived from Fisher's Exact test.^bP-value was derived from Wilcoxon Rank Sum test.

10 or more years, 47.1% have access to a cell phone, 9.8% can receive text messages, and 2% can receive emails. In comparison, 89.4% of participants who have worked less than 10 years have cell phones, 62.1% can receive text messages, and 19.7% can receive emails. Those who have worked in agriculture for 10 or more years were more likely to report having access to a work bulletin and were also more likely to choose the work bulletin as their preferred method of communication. Participants who have worked in agriculture for 10 or more years reported an average of 5.01 years working for the same grower, whereas participants working in agriculture for less than 10 years reported working with the same employer for an average of 1.93 years.

Discussion

Keeping children away from the agricultural worksite is an important safety practice. Farmworker parents in our study overwhelmingly reported that they do not bring their children to work. When childcare is unavailable, nearly all reported missing work as opposed to bringing children to work with them. This is an interesting finding that contradicts anecdotal information gleaned from our focus group, site visits, advisors, and stakeholders. This practice may vary regionally and by employer and warrants further investigation. Given the conflicting information received from interviews versus focus group and site visit data, we believe the survey data may have been affected by social acceptability bias; CHWs administering the survey are known as health educators who promote safe and healthy practices among the farmworker community. Parents may have anticipated that the CHWs would not approve of bringing children to the worksite, and therefore, they reported not doing so.

Lack of childcare universally can impact an employee's ability to work, rates of absenteeism and tardiness, and concentration at work.¹⁰ The implications for agriculture are potentially even more impactful given the time sensitive nature of this industry due to growing seasons. Participants overwhelmingly reported they choose work locations based on the availability of childcare services, and that they would be willing to accept lower wages if childcare was provided as part of the employee benefits package. This issue becomes increasingly important as more women participate in the agricultural workforce. Providing formal childcare improves female market participation and can even facilitate the social inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially migrants.^{11–14}

These findings offer agribusiness leaders important data to consider and suggest industry support of childcare as an important workforce investment. According to agribusiness leaders and the project's expert advisors, a national labor shortage is a major concern among growers in the United States. In fact, current reports indicate that growers have begun to offer increased wages and augmented benefits packages to attract labor to their farms.¹⁰ Findings from this study indicate that high quality and affordable off-farm childcare

services could serve as a means to attract farmworkers to regions currently experiencing a labor shortage; earlier, it was noted that 82% of participants indicated that they would choose to earn a \$10 hourly wage and receive free childcare as opposed to 13.1% who would prefer to receive a \$12 hourly wage and pay for childcare. Only 1.6% would choose an hourly wage of \$15 if no childcare were available. To put this data in context, hourly workers earn an average hourly wage of \$9.71 and those receiving piece-rate wages earn \$11.57 per hour.³

Additionally, agribusiness leaders have indicated a desire to increase employee retention and productivity with particular interest in growing the number of women in the agricultural workforce.^{15,16} Findings show that among farmworker parents who have worked in agriculture for greater than 10 years, the mean length of time under one employer is 5.01 years, compared to only 1.93 years among employees with less than 10 years of experience in agriculture. This indicates that farmworkers can and do choose to return to the same farms each year. Data also indicate that farmworker parents would miss less work if childcare services were readily and consistently available. Findings also suggest that childcare providers could better serve agricultural worker parents by addressing challenges such as transportation, hours of operation, and language barriers, among others.

Data show that there are differences in communication preference among farmworkers with ≥ 10 years of experience in agriculture compared to those with < 10 years of experience. The project team suspects these differences are related to age. Farmworker parents with less work experience were more likely to utilize text messaging and email communication in comparison with the more experienced group. This is an important finding for agricultural employers and childcare providers who are interested in reaching a broad range of farmworker parents.

Study findings suggest key areas of focus in the context of a socio-ecological approach to impacting child safety. (1) Parents have the ability to make decisions about childcare and the safe practices they encourage and promote within the family unit. Parents also can choose employment in areas where off-farm childcare is available. (2) Childcare

providers are able to adapt their services to maximize convenience and be culturally appropriate for farmworker parents. These accommodations may include offering hours that accommodate farm work or hosting mandatory parent meetings at times that are convenient for parents working in agriculture, such as on weekends or rainy days. Additionally, childcare providers can make a concerted effort to recruit and provide outreach on farms. Providing additional support to help parents navigate eligibility criteria and the application process is another way that childcare providers can foster the utilization of their services by farmworker parents. (3) The role of individual growers in the SEM is to create a culture of safety on the farm. This culture of safety can include a commitment to supporting off-farm childcare services that ensure children are engaged in safe, developmentally appropriate care, which in turn prevents parents from being distracted by the needs of their child while at work. A culture of safety includes encouraging parents to seek off-farm childcare options and facilitating this process as much as possible. For instance, employers could allow local childcare providers to host recruitment events on farm property or support childcare providers in other ways such as providing transportation services or financial support. (4) Agribusiness leaders can play an important role in advocating for the safety of employees' children on farms and generate efforts to make safety a priority for the national coalitions of growers. Voicing support at the national level can bolster support among growers. Agribusiness leaders also have the opportunity to provide training and technical assistance to growers related to providing and supporting childcare options for employees. (5) National childcare organizations can provide support to their local offices and model best practices for serving the children of farmworker parents. These leaders can encourage childcare providers to adopt practices that are convenient for both parents and growers, as well as practices that foster a positive and communicative relationship among the local childcare providers and growers.

Limitations

Collecting data from a random sample of migrating farmworker populations for any type of research is a challenge. The shifting

demographics of the target audience present numerous challenges when it comes to understanding the diverse population of farmworkers in the United States. These challenges include increased women in the workforce, more families settling in areas, and changing trends in immigration. Participants for this study comprised a convenience sample. Farmworker parents, many of whom have undocumented immigration status, are often wary to discuss personal issues with researchers; therefore, having CHWs administer the survey allowed the survey team better access among parents. While CHWs' trusted place in the community overcame some barriers to reaching the migrant population, their knowledge of and connection to individuals in the research population made random selection highly unlikely. As a result, the project team assumes some selection bias in the survey results.

Another limitation of this in-person survey is that the majority of participants were female or answering as part of a couple. Only 9.8% of participants were male and this may not accurately represent migrant parents in the United States. Survey administrators reported that males were less willing to participate, which may be due to heightened fear related to immigration status or because of males' perceived roles in the family. Findings in Table 2 may not represent male farmworkers well due to the small sample size.

The project team was not able to administer the in-person survey nationally, which may impact the findings' generalizability. While the project team made efforts to administer the survey in three distinct regions of Florida with diverse types of agriculture and varying levels of access to childcare services, we recognize that these data are limited to farmworker parents in Florida and may not represent trends nationwide. Findings from the three locations were compared and some significant differences were found; however, these findings were not relevant to the purposes of this paper and were omitted. This information may be useful for Florida agricultural employers and the team plans to make this information available to relevant stakeholders.

The project team also recognizes that the farmworker parents who participated in the initial focus group that led to the development of the in-person survey are associated with MSHS and are not from the same

population of farmworker parents among whom the survey was administered, who are more likely to utilize informal childcare services. The project team did compare findings from these two groups and found some differences, but did not feel these findings were relevant to this paper, in part due to the small sample size of participants utilizing formal childcare services. The team recommends further investigation among a true random sample to explore this issue.

Conclusion

Protecting children of migrant farmworkers from the hazards on the farm worksite is extremely important. Despite the availability of family and childcare services, challenges persist for these families in terms of accessing and using childcare services. In addition to programmatic approaches to mitigate some of these barriers to childcares, additional research is needed. The authors recommend further investigation to explore the expanding role of women in agriculture and how this impacts the need for childcare, the regionally specific challenges related to childcare for migrant families, and the role growers and other agribusiness leaders can play in childcare. We recommend this type of research be replicated in other areas of the country among farmworker parents working in a variety of types of agriculture. We also recommend fostering broader partnerships among parents, childcare providers, and growers in order to address the needs identified in this study and develop a plan for communication to better address future challenges in a proactive and timely manner.

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