

# Effective Communication with Indigenous Agricultural Workers During National Emergencies

Indigenous agricultural workers have recently increased in the US workforce, but still make up a small percentage (6%) of reported crop production workers according to the 2017-2018 National Agricultural Worker Survey.<sup>1</sup> Considering this, limited information is still available about this population despite them having worked in agriculture since the early 1940s. This resource will provide Health Centers information about this population, ways national emergencies impact them, and share tips to improve their emergency response and communication efforts with Indigenous agricultural worker populations.

## About Indigenous Agricultural Workers:

- **Country of Origin:** Research shows that an overwhelming majority of Indigenous Peoples are from Latin American countries including Mexico, South and Central America, and the Caribbean.
- **Language:** Many dialects and language variants exist among Indigenous languages that account for even greater linguistic diversity.<sup>1</sup> In Latin America alone, it is estimated that there are between 550 and 700 different languages spoken and are often tied to the land on which they are spoken.
- **Cultural Considerations:** Indigenous communities are close-knit and very family oriented. They often wear traditional clothing, use food to connect with others, and use traditional homeopathic remedies to treat illness and ailments.<sup>2</sup>

### Indigenous Languages from Mexico and Central/South America:

Mixteco	Zapoteco
Triqui	Purépecha
Mam	Quechua
Nahuatl	Chatino
K'iche'	Q'anjob'al

**Radio Indígena**, based in Oxnard, California, provides programming in various indigenous languages.



## How National Emergencies Affect Indigenous Populations:

Research indicates that Indigenous agricultural workers face challenges such as isolation, discrimination, extreme poverty, and experience greater barriers to workplace safety due to language barriers.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Indigenous populations may be disproportionately impacted by national disasters and have less access to healthcare and community resources.

## Role of Health Centers During National Emergencies:

Health Centers can act as partners, providing continuity of care before, during, and after national emergencies. Communicating with Indigenous populations is key to informing them on preventative measures, prompting life-saving action, and connecting them to essential resources.

<sup>1</sup>Hernandez, T. & Gabbard, S. Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2017–2018: A Demographic and Employment Profile of United States Farmworkers. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Washington, District of Columbia.

<sup>2</sup>Barajas, F. and Loza, M. Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom. California History. 2017;94(4):62-64. Accessed January 26, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26412728>

<sup>3</sup>Indigenous Agricultural Workers. NATIONAL CENTER FOR FARMWORKER HEALTH. Accessed January 10, 2022. <http://www.ncfh.org/indigenous-agricultural-workers.html>

# Effective Communication with Indigenous Agricultural Workers During National Emergencies

Here are some tips to improve your emergency response and communications with Indigenous agricultural workers during national emergencies.

- 1. Connect with a “Hometown Network.”** Hometown Networks are groups of people from the same region in their home country who share the same language, traditions, and other forms of support.<sup>3</sup> They are a great resource for connecting and learning patient-specific information. Contact your [local public health department](#) to locate a Hometown Association in your area.
- 2. Inform and Train Your Staff.** Use your Hometown Network or reach out to groups like [MICOP](#), [CIELO](#), and [The Guatemalan Maya Center](#) who specifically work with Indigenous populations to provide staff training and identify potential translation/ interpretation services. Staff should also be aware of policies and procedures related to emergency preparedness and language access services to maintain service delivery in an emergency. The [Demographic Methods In Emergency Assessment](#) and [CDC’s Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication \(CERC\) Manual](#) can be used as guides to determine what training is needed.
- 3. Identify and Build Community Partnerships.** Identify partners who can offer services and support during a national emergency, and who can play an active role in your emergency response plan. Consider partnering with churches, faith-based organizations, libraries, schools, daycares, and recreation centers. The [Emergency Preparedness Toolkit for Community Organizations](#) and [CDC’s Access and Functional Needs Toolkit](#) can be used to mobilize community organizations in your area.
- 4. Tailor Communication to Your Population.** Media channels play a critical role in the dissemination of health information during national emergencies. Connect with local media outlets, tailor your messaging, and use channels that work for Indigenous communities using [CERC Templates and Tools](#).
  - **Use Radio** - Radio can be a great way to share auditory information given this population works long hours and may experience low literacy.
  - **Conduct Community Workshops** - Community workshops can be done on site in labor housing, camps, farms, etc. to provide in person health information and patient education.
  - **Use Social Media** – Social media platforms and messaging apps can be useful in rural areas. Identify known community leaders to amplify your message and increase trust in the Indigenous community.

Effective messaging with Indigenous Populations has simple language, audio, and images that are visually captivating. They include:

- Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Educational Videos
- Flyers/Handouts
- Culturally relevant songs
- Personal Testimonials

See examples of PSAs and patient resources here: [Emergency Preparedness Videos for the Public and Educational Resources for Agricultural Workers in Indigenous Languages](#).



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