


# Innovative CHC Responses for COVID-19 Outbreaks




Preparedness and Response for COVID-19 Outbreaks in Midwest Latinx Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

Claudia Corwin, MD, MPH  
Emily Sinnwell DNP,  
ARNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC

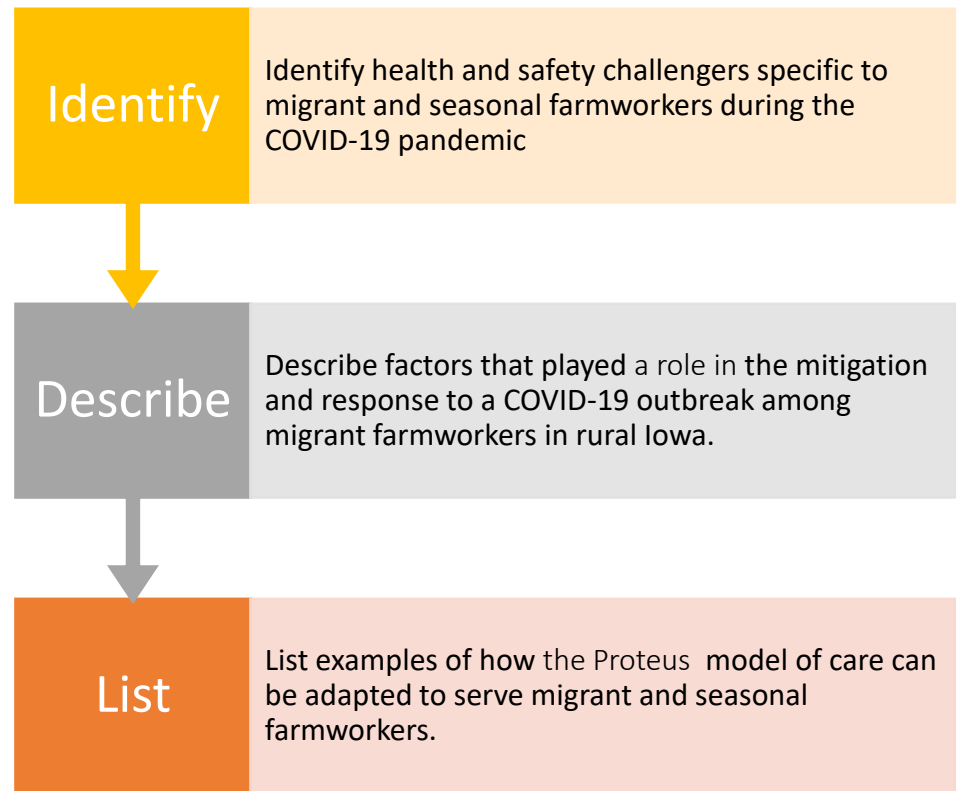
**IOWA** | NURSING



The presenters have no disclosures  
or conflicts of interest to declare



# Objectives





# Iowa Farmworkers

Approximately 7,000  
farmworkers in Iowa every year







**About Proteus, Inc.:** Proteus is a multi-state 501c3 non-profit organization that provides services to farmworkers in Iowa, Nebraska and Indiana. The mission of Proteus is to provide communities health, educational and economic opportunities. To learn more about Proteus, feel free to check out our website: [www.proteusinc.net](http://www.proteusinc.net).

# Background

- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are a **vulnerable population** with unique health and safety challenges related to the entire spectrum of the social determinants of health.
- These challenges place them at a **disproportionate risk** and illness as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Due to the migratory nature of their work, **sheltering at home** or social distancing are not options.
- Workers often live in poorly maintained and crowded **congregate housing** where access to optimal hygiene resources is usually limited.
- Fear of pay cuts, job loss (1) and deportation make migrant workers reluctant to report symptoms, (2) making infection detection through **screening and treatment a unique challenge**.
- **Racist narratives** and stigmatization may further deter these essential workers from reporting symptoms when they feel unwell.
- Pandemic preparedness was limited, necessitating just-in-time response and mitigation.



# Practice Adaptations

---

- Early during the pandemic, providers proactively pivoted their model of care delivery and adopted a telemedicine option.
- To maximize social distancing and protect both farmworkers and healthcare staff, they conducted telephone visits in the evening, followed by in-person follow-up the next day when necessary.
- Bilingual virtual town hall meetings were conducted with workers to provide education around COVID-19 testing, social distancing, and other important prevention measures.
- Proteus staff reached out to farm owners and managers to offer education about protecting the health and safety of workers during the pandemic.
- Emphasis was placed on on-site testing and education regarding social distancing, mask utilization, and hand washing









## Early Outbreak

Health aid performed NP swab  
and worker isolated in hotel

Worker test positive

Remaining 65 workers tested  
including 21 (32%) Latinx

41% Latinx test positive  
0% non Latinx test positive



# Outbreak Mitigation

- Prior to test result availability, all workers were isolated in **single person hotel rooms**.
- Negative workers were released to back **low-density housing** and then released to work.
- **Daily check-in calls** to assess the workers' health status were conducted while they remained in isolation.
- **Proteus provided provisions** such as meals and personal hygiene products while housed in hotels.
- All workers with positive test results **successfully returned to work** after the ten-day isolation period.
- **No other outbreaks** were experienced among migrant or local workers on this farm for the rest of the agricultural growing season.
- During the course of this outbreak, these mitigation activities monopolized the efforts of the small Proteus staff for two weeks, until all workers were successfully released to work with stable health status.

# Testing



2020 COVID Testing by Month – Proteus Only Test

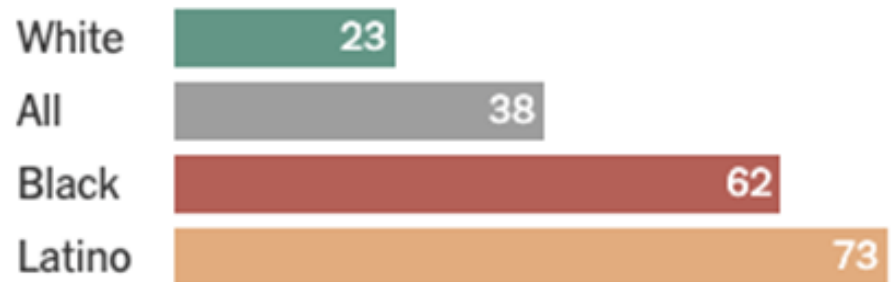
	Tests	Positive	Positive Rate
JANUARY	0	0	0%
FEBRUARY	0	0	0%
MARCH	1	0	0%
APRIL	4	2	50%
MAY	40	20	50%
JUNE	605	19	3.14%
JULY	725	63	8.69%
AUGUST	124	9	7.26%
SEPTEMBER	242	3	1.24%

## Implications for Future Practice and Policy

---

### *The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus*

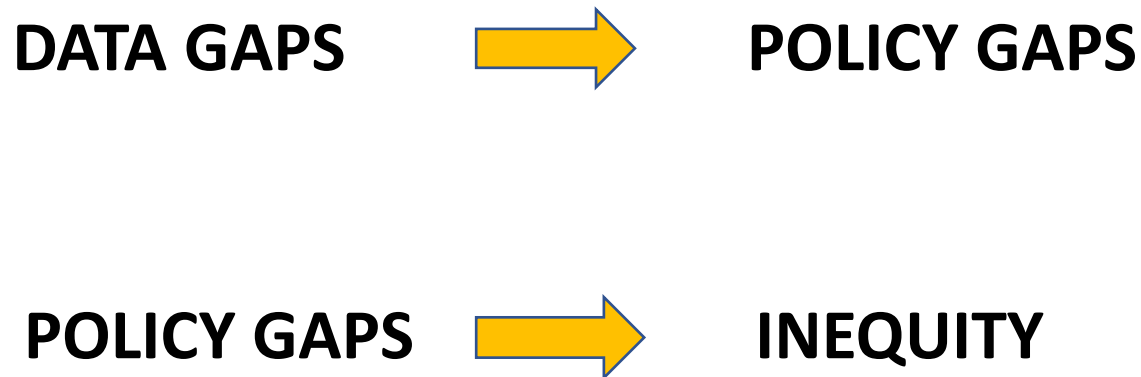
#### Coronavirus cases per 10,000 people





# Implications for Future Practice and Policy

---



## Implications for Future Practice and Policy

---

- High prevalence of chronic conditions – increases risk of poor outcomes
- Diabetes, High Blood Pressure
- Comorbidity does not fully account for the disproportionate burden of disease



Essential workers are taking care of America. Are we taking care of them?

*"We just have to keep working"*

*"One year into pandemic, most states still don't require farmworker protections"*

<https://www.nelp.org/blog/which-states-cities-have-adopted-comprehensive-covid-19-worker-protections/>

# Implications for Future Practice and Policy

---

Executive Order on Protecting Worker Health and Safety

President Biden's CHC Vaccination Program

- Community Health Center Vaccination Program Will Provide Easier Access to Vaccinations for Under-Served Communities



# Vaccines on the Horizon

---

- *"Lots of people say that it's so you can die sooner, and that worries me"*
- *"Need reasons why should still get vaccine after they have had covid"*
- *"Are the rumors true?"*
- *"Is it good? Are you getting it?"*
- *29/56 reply "I will definitely get the vaccine"*



# Summary

- The migrant and seasonal farmworker experience during the COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of the **healthcare disparities** that we know have always existed.
- It is imperative that we as a nation now reflect and **act upon the structural and social forces** that perpetuate these inequalities and place our most vulnerable populations at risk.
- The pandemic has made our national reality undeniably clear. Health **disparities make our entire population vulnerable**, as the health and economic well-being of our essential workers and our nation are forever intertwined.

# Acknowledgments

- We would like to thank Daniel Hoffmann-Zinnel, EdD, Caroline Johnson, ARNP, and all Proteus staff for their tireless support of migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
- A ***special thanks*** to all the migrant and seasonal farmworkers who perform the essential work of feeding our nation.



## References

1. Moyce S, Velazquez M, Claudio D, et al. Exploring a rural Latino community's perception of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Ethnicity & Health*. 2020:1-13.
2. Dudley MJ. Reaching Invisible and Unprotected Workers on Farms during the Coronavirus Pandemic. *J Agromedicine*. 2020 Sep 7:1-3.
3. Harkness A, Gattamorta KA, Estrada Y, et al. Latinx health disparities research during COVID-19: Challenges and innovations. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 2020;54(8):544-547.
4. Webb Hooper M NA, Pérez-Stable EJ. . COVID-19 and Racial/Ethnic Disparities. *JAMA*. 2020;323(24):2466–2467.



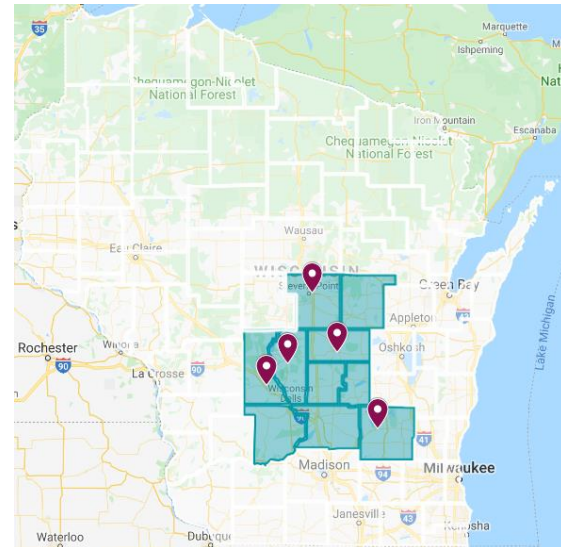
# **Family Health La Clinica COVID-19 Project: Protection for Wisconsin's Agricultural Workers**

Family Health La Clinica (FHLC)

# Family Health La Clinica

*Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of all people in communities we serve.*

- Support of migrant workers dates back to the 1970s
- Community Health Center that serves 10 counties in Central WI
- Only Migrant Health Center in WI
- Mobile Health Center



# COVID-19 Project Overview

- Initiative of the Wisconsin Farmworkers Coalition
  - FHLC, UMOS, and over twenty different non-profit, state, county, and employer organizations
- Collaboration with local county public health departments, the State of WI, WI National Guard (WING) support for large-group testing, etc.
- Utilized FHLC clinical & outreach staff to rapidly deploy project

# Project Services & Outcomes

- Worksite assessments
- COVID-19 education with workers and employers
- Arrival testing:
  - Antigen
  - RT-PCR
- Mid-season re-education
- Outbreak testing and support
- Pre-travel departure testing

Data Current as of December 17th, 2020

Total Missions for COVID Services	302
Worksite Assessment	12
# of Education Sessions	2504
# of Participants in Education	3525
# of Workers Tested	2981
# of Workers Tested (In House)	430
# of Positive	217
# of Negatives	3183

# Project Successes



- Services provided directly at worksites and housing sites, **reaching over 3000 workers**
- Kept up with changing protocols and access to testing for asymptomatic workers
- Culturally-competent care and staff
- Collaboration with partners from across the state

# Personal Staff Story 1

## Anxious Traveler

- 12/7/2020: Our small team was executing a Mobile COVID Testing mission in Dane County to test a group of 5 patients in order to get them a test result (hopefully negative) to board a plane back home to South Africa within the next 72 hours. During this event, I encountered an MSAW/patient who was deeply concerned about the process and the required test result documentation required by the airline for him to actually board the plane to go back home. Their country and the airline required a negative COVID test result 72 hours before air travel and there was a peer of his who ran into issues and delays getting home due to not having this result at the time of boarding a few days prior. After we talked through the situation and explained that we can give him a result prior to his flight brought great relief and happiness to him. His real world worries of not being able to see his family and potentially having to pay a missed flight fee quickly diminished. It felt very rewarding seeing the anxiety and worry on his face lighten up to where he was now excited for his travel due to what our clinic could offer.



# Personal Staff Story 2

## Challenging Diagnosis

- This year we had a patient come in for a general physical who was worried about the pandemic. The visit took a turn when they were diagnosed with HIV. Distraught from learning this, our provider took extra time to talk to them and answer their questions. The patient was then led to the health education station to further discuss what this diagnosis meant and to affirm that we would help them through the transition of care to a treatment facility. We connected the patient with a program that would provide a full scope of treatment. We made sure the transition of care was as smooth as possible. At one point in a phone call, the patient mentioned how grateful they were that we were at the campsite and that without that general physical their disease could have progressed without ever knowing they had it. This story continued to bring enthusiasm and dedication to continue with our services in a season that was rather taxing at times.

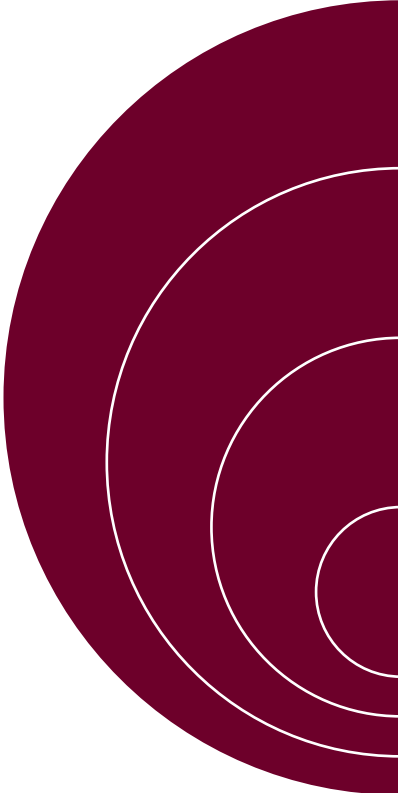
# Project Challenges

- COVID-19 is novel, knowledge is rapidly changing
- Public perception and community spread
- Varying worker group sizes and arrival dates
- Close working and living quarters
- Difficulty quarantining and isolating, especially for smaller workforces

# Project Challenges (continued)

- Funding
- Rapid staffing and deployment
- Contact tracing
- Legitimate privacy and HIPAA concerns
- Occupational safety laws do not necessarily or easily protect workers in a pandemic

# Looking Ahead



Evaluating and revamping processes for 2021 season
Searching to replace MCW and CARES funding
Expanded season
<b>COVID-19 vaccine</b>

# COVID-19 Vaccine

- Many unknowns
  - Availability
  - Efficacy
  - Short- and long-term success
- Three vaccines have been approved for Emergency Use Authorization in the U.S.
- **Timing:** Grace period of 4 days early, never too late, don't have to restart the series regardless of time interval. No other vaccines for 2 weeks before or after.
- **Side effects:** Local redness and pain, fevers and body aches, typically last 24 hours, sometimes up to 72 hours.
- **Contraindications:** Anaphylaxis to any component of this vaccine, acute severe illness.

# Deploying the Vaccine

- Actively preparing for mass clinics
  - Piloted small-scale flu shot clinics for MSAWs this season
- Considerations
  - Education is KEY to emphasize known COVID mitigation strategies
  - **Cannot mandate that employees receive the vaccine**
  - Tracking/reminders could be done through the employer, worker and/or vaccinator; no plans for a national or international registry
  - Strengthening partnerships with county public health departments, partners and local CHCs



# Thank You!

Family Health La Clinica

Cell: 920-765-0639

Email: [William.Kinsey@famhealth.com](mailto:William.Kinsey@famhealth.com)

[Netzali.Pacheco@famhealth.com](mailto:Netzali.Pacheco@famhealth.com)

Web: [www.famhealth.com](http://www.famhealth.com)

Social: @fhlcchc

For more information about the COVID-19 Project:

- The paper can be downloaded from [famhealth.com](http://famhealth.com)
- For information or to support the project contact Lisa Kilawee, FHLC Director of Strategic Community Engagement, at (920) 787-9442
- If you are an agriculture employer or a migrant worker and would like more information regarding these free services, please contact Ashley Bolden, FHLC MSAW COVID-19 Project Assistant, at (920) 787-9450