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Methodological Design to Estimate the Target Population for
the Migrant Health Program

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN TO
ESTIMATE THE TARGET POPULATION
FOR THE MIGRANT HEALTH PROGRAM

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FINAL REPORT

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*Walla Walla
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I. CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL REPORT

This Final Report describes the process, progress and conclusions of the development of a "Methodological Design to Estimate the Target Population for the Migrant Health Program, 1983." Work on this methodology and the conclusions reported here were undertaken by Alice C. Larson, Ph.D., who has been providing expert consultation to the Office of Migrant Health (OMH) in an advisory capacity on this subject since September, 1982. The methodology described continues a process undertaken by the OMH to define its target population, as reported in the 1973 and 1978 Migrant Health Program Target Population Estimates studies.

Original plans for this Final Report were to adhere to the four-phased methodological outline proposed by the consultant. However, the meeting of experts held at the Parklawn Building in July, 1983 has suggested a somewhat altered methodology which may not correspond to the established phases. To avoid confusion, this Final Report will continue to address each of the four original steps, discussing plans for the altered methodology under Phase III, as noted below.

- * Phase I: Identify counties which employ seasonal farm labor -- discussion of the report prepared by Whittaker Medicus, Inc., under the guidance of the consultant, which presents data for 12 sample states.
- * Phase II: Divide counties in which seasonal agricultural workers are employed into high impact, low impact or unclassified areas -- discussion of the sources and system used to transform and compare existing information on migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) peak presence in each county, presentation of the resulting data and classification of counties in 12 sample states.
- * Phase III: Categorize each unclassified county as a high or low impact area -- summary of the July, 1983 meeting of data experts which suggested a different approach to county classification and description of how this new approach should be applied.
- * Phase IV: Verify the classification of counties as high or low impact through review by local sources -- detailing of the steps necessary to enact a local review process.

* Phase V: Other considerations in design of this methodology -- discussion of future work needed to adequately describe the Migrant Health Program target population.

II. PHASE I

IDENTIFY COUNTIES WHICH EMPLOY SEASONAL FARM LABOR

The identification of counties which use seasonal agricultural workers was accomplished through a display of data from three existing sources: Employment and Training Administration, Form 223 (ETA 223), Census of Agriculture (COA) and the Migrant Education Program, Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) enrollment figures. (These sources will be described further in the next section of this Final Report.) Information from each source was gathered for every county in the 12 sample states. The data were obtained and arrayed by Whittaker Medicus, Inc., a technical assistance contractor of the OMH. These numbers are presented in Medicus' February, 1983 report, "An Enumeration of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Twelve Selected States." The consultant guided the gathering of this information.

Contact names and information request procedures were provided to the contractor for obtaining data sources. Some of this information was more difficult to secure than originally thought. COA information was readily available in a Bureau of the Census publication, although data pertained to 1978. A more recent COA survey was completed in 1982, but this information has not yet been published and is not available from Census prior to publication.

MSRTS numbers were first sought from the Migrant Education Program in Washington, D.C., but the contractor was referred by this office to the central MSRTS data bank in Little Rock, Arkansas. Numbers were received for every state, but the county information was coded. The Little Rock office did not have code breakdowns to county names making it necessary to contact the Migrant Education Office in each of the 12 states. Securing MSRTS enrollment information was a time-consuming process, but a pattern for obtaining these numbers was set which can be followed if MSRTS numbers are needed for other states. It also seems possible to secure

enrollment figures directly from each state Migrant Education Office. In gathering this information from any source, it is important to be sure the figures are unduplicated enrollment counts not migrant full-time-equivalency numbers.

The most difficult information to secure was ETA 223. The Washington, D.C. office of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has summary information sent by state departments of employment, but these numbers were found to be incomplete and only available by Agriculture Reporting Area, a DOL designation which groups several counties based on employment needs and agriculture activity. It was necessary to contact each state department of employment to obtain the necessary information. No contact names were available in the states, and at first, it was very difficult to find the correct individual and have the party understand what information was needed. Several guidelines developed which seemed to prove successful:

1. Call the department of employment main office in the state capital and start with either a "research and statistics" office or a division concerned with "agricultural labor."
2. Insist on talking to the person who prepares "ETA Form 223 -- In-Season Farm Labor Report." For most states, this will be an individual who coordinates ETA 223 reports from local employment offices. The best rule to follow is the "right person" will know the exact form in question. Often, researchers were referred to the "Monitor Advocate" who also works with MSFWs but who does not complete the ETA 223 form and is not the person needed. In addition, the information desired is not how many MSFWs "registered for work" at each local employment office.
3. When the correct person is found, ask him/her for information on the number of hired seasonal (sometimes called "local") and migrant (usually divided into "interstate" and "intrastate" and/or called "nonlocal") workers reported for every county in the state for each of the last 12 months or for the months of heaviest agricultural activity. Some states may publish this information, but most will have to be asked to assemble the numbers.
4. It is important to stress that information is needed on both migrant workers and seasonal workers. Data should be by county or by local reporting office (a small group of counties), but it needs to be broken down smaller than an ARA. It also seems important to stress that the researcher realizes the MSFW numbers supplied are only an estimate, that they may or may not reflect an accurate picture and that real numbers on MSFWs are very hard to obtain.
5. Document the general process used to collect the number; e.g., local office

personnel make estimates they report to the state, one dominant agricultural industry is asked to report monthly figures, a formal survey of growers is taken during certain months, etc. It is not necessary to have exact details, but it is helpful in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the collected information to know the general system used to gather numbers.

In summary, ETA 223 data take persistence, persuasion and time to collect. The major problem in producing the Phase I report was waiting for states to send ETA 223 information and calling state personnel if the wrong information was received. Now that this pattern to secure ETA 223 data has been established, it should be somewhat easier to gather these numbers, but it will still take time as it involves contacting individual state agents.

Collected information from ETA 223, COA and MSRTS were displayed in a column arrangement by state and county in the Medicus report. This seems to be a satisfactory data array as long as unusual features of any of the pieces are clearly identified through footnotes. As indicated above, weaknesses, strengths and methods used by local sources to collect this information (particularly ETA 223) should be documented.

III. PHASE II

DIVIDE COUNTIES INTO HIGH IMPACT, LOW IMPACT AND UNCLASSIFIED AREAS

DATA RESULTS FOR TWELVE SAMPLE STATES

A. Introduction

This section presents information on "Phase II" of the original four-phased methodology to estimate the target population for the Migrant Health Program, 1983. The purpose of this Phase was to divide counties in which seasonal agricultural workers are employed into one of three categories: high impact, low impact or unclassified. For purposes of Phase II, the definition of each (category) was as follows: high impact -- 5,000 or more MSFWs, including workers and dependents, at peak presence; low impact -- under 3,000 MSFWs present at peak; and unclassified -- between 3,000 and 4,999 MSFWs at peak.

The method used to perform the designated task was to compare numbers of MSFWs from existing data sources to place counties in their appropriate category. Guidelines were also established to cover situations where the sources disagreed on the number of MSFWs. Information was gathered on ten sample states: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Washington. Information was readily available for two additional states, Idaho and Oregon, resulting in their inclusion as well.

The narrative is divided into three parts: (1) Discussion of the Data and Directions for Use, (2) Data Summary, and (3) State Tables: "Discussion of the Data" includes: "Sources for Numbers," "Calculation of Numbers," and "Instructions for Use." "The Data Summary" presents a listing by state of every high impact or unclassified county, and maps for the states and existing Migrant Health Clinic service areas. The State Tables display the actual calculated numbers derived from each data source and the appropriate category for each number.