

Lesson 2: Migrant Health 101- An Overview of the Farmworker Population

LESSON OVERVIEW

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the lay health worker will be able to:

1. List some key characteristics related to the farmworker population.
2. Explain some key issues related to a mobile population.
3. Explain some key issues related to farmworker housing.
4. List at least three risk factors related to the solo male farmworker population.

Estimated time:

1 1/2 hours

Materials:

- ❑ Overhead or LCD Projector
- ❑ Overhead transparencies or CD-ROM (Referred to in text as OHT)
- ❑ Easel
- ❑ Easel paper/newsprint paper
- ❑ Markers
- ❑ Tape

Lesson Outline:

Topic 1: Who are America's Farmworkers?

Topic 2: Travel and Farmworker Housing

Topic 3: HIV/AIDS Risk Factors for Solo Male FW men

LESSON 2

Lesson Objectives



DISPLAY

Display and Review OHT 1: Lesson 2 Objectives

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DISPLAY

Topic 1: Who are America's Farmworkers?

Display and Review OHT 2: FW History Timeline

Read the following:

Migrant farmworkers are not new to the United States. They started coming here in the 1850's, when there was a high demand for farming but there were not enough men to fill the jobs, so men were brought in from other countries to take on these jobs. This continued through both World War I and World War II and well into today through the H2A program, which was once known as the Bracero program.



READ

Ask the following question:

- ❖ Have any of you heard of the Bracero program?

The Bracero program was an agreement signed by the U.S. and Mexican Presidents in 1942 to bring Mexican men into the United States to work in agriculture. This agreement helped change the faces of farmworkers into what we know them today, as mostly Mexican men; the agreement was ended in 1964. Today farmworkers continue to come to the United States to work the fields under a similar agreement called the H2A program.



DISPLAY

Display and Review OHT 3: Farmworker Statistics

Read the following:

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are considered to be the backbone of the farming industry. There are about 3.5 to 5 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States. Farmworkers are often ignored, but they continue to make many contributions to our country's economy. Did you know that over 85% of the fruits and vegetables produced in this country are harvested or cultivated by farmworkers? Without them, we may not be able to get fruits and vegetables to our tables.



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Who are America's farmworkers?

- 77% of Farmworkers were born in Mexico
- 7 out of 10 farmworkers are age 35 and under
- 80% of farmworkers are men
- Half of adult farmworkers are married
- 27% of farmworker men do not live with their families

(National Agricultural Workers Survey, [NAWS], 2000).

As you can see from the information we just heard, the farmworker population is a very young male population, and a large group of them are single or travel alone without their families.

But did you also know that?

- Eight out of ten farmworkers speak Spanish
- Only 5% or less of Mexican born farmworkers said they could speak or read English well
- Most farmworkers have less than a 6th grade education
- Most farmworkers earn less than \$10,000 a year.
- Only 5% of them reported having health insurance

So who are America's farmworkers? We have learned that the majority of farmworkers are young Spanish speaking males from Mexico between the ages of 17-34, who travel and work alone leaving their families behind. Many of them live in farmworker housing or with other farmworker men earning less than \$10,000 a year and have less than a 6th grade education level. It is also important to note that in addition to the Mexican males that come to the US there are also small groups of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and workers from Central and South America, Black/African Americans, Jamaicans, Haitians, Laotians, Thais, and other racial and ethnic minorities.

This is good information for us to have so that we can better understand the community we will be reaching with this program.



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Topic 2: Travel and Housing

Read the following:

Travel

Even though you may think that farmworkers are like everyone else, what sets them apart is the fact that they move a lot and their housing situation is very different. Approximately half of farmworkers have to travel and leave their homes in order to get work (Dever, 1991). This affects every part of their lives including how they live. This is important for us to know because their travel and eventually living arrangements can put them at a higher risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS. This situation may cause feelings of loneliness and depression and may push them to participate in risky behaviors.

Housing

Because farmworkers have to move to follow the crops, finding decent, affordable housing as they move from one place to another, can be a big challenge. Today, there are many more farmworkers who need a place to live than there are places for farmworkers to live. For this reason, nearly half of them live with people who are not related to them, this is the most common living arrangement among this population. Most of the farmworkers who live with people who were not related to them live in labor camps or rent small houses or apartments. Reports show that only 20% of farmworkers live in housing provided by farmers. This lack of housing and unusual living situations also encourages them to engage in risky behavior which we are going to talk about next.

Topic 3: HIV/AIDS Risk Factors for Solo Male Farmworker Men

Display and Review OHT 4: HIV/AIDS Risk Factors for Solo Male Farmworker Men

Studies have shown that farmworkers are infected with HIV in four main ways:

- Sharing needles
- Not using a condom
 - Unprotected sex with prostitutes
 - Unprotected sex with men

Ask the following question:

- ❖ Why do you think male farmworkers take part in these kinds of activities?

Read the following:

READ



Sharing Needles & Alcohol and Drug Use

Many farmworkers inject themselves with vitamins and antibiotics. In Mexico many medicines are easy to buy without a prescription. Injections of vitamins and antibiotics are popular because people think that they work faster and are more effective. In the United States, it is harder for farmworkers to get disposable syringes and needles, so it is common for them to share the needles with their family members and friends which put them at risk for getting infected with HIV/AIDS.

Drinking alcohol and using drugs are also a problem among farmworkers. Many times they drink alcohol and use drugs as a way to deal with their loneliness or stress. This can cause some farmworkers to participate in sexual activities that they normally wouldn't do such as having sex with prostitutes or with other men.

Not using a condom

Even though not using condoms is common amongst many people and cultures, it is especially a problem in the Latino culture.

Ask the following question:

- ❖ What may be some cultural reasons that keep farmworkers from using condoms? (*Possible answers may be: may be accused of infidelity, belief that using condoms means you are promiscuous, etc.*)

Since many farmworkers are from Mexico, using condoms is not as common in that country because of the religious beliefs that have to do with the Catholic Church. Other reasons for not using condoms may have to do with mistrust between partners, or they might have “machismo” beliefs that make them feel like nothing could ever happen to them.

Not using condoms also affects the wives and partners of these farmworker men. Many studies have shown that the wives of farmworker men that travel alone are at more risk for HIV infection. This is because the husbands may have been infected with HIV through unprotected sex with sex workers (prostitutes) and/or through sex with other men while they were away. So it is especially important to encourage men to use condoms since it not only affects them but also their wives, partners, and family.

Unprotected Sex with Prostitutes

Reports of sex with prostitutes are common among farmworkers. Most farmworkers say that prostitutes hang around labor camps on pay days, other men say that they look for prostitutes in local bars, and hang outs. Many farmworkers use prostitutes since many of the men away from their spouses and family. The use of prostitutes is very dangerous because of the number of sexual partners they have, and because many of them do not use condoms.

Unprotected Sex with Men

Sex between migrant farmworker men may be common because of the isolation and loneliness that farmworkers feel. Although we may consider sex between men homosexuality, male farmworkers do not

Latino farmworkers define homosexuality by the role each person plays in the sexual act. The man who accepts the passive or feminine role and is the receiver during sex is thought of as the homosexual. Meanwhile, the man who takes on the active role is not thought of as homosexual and is actually thought of as more “manly”. This may be why many Latino men who have sex with other men do not think of themselves as “homosexuals”.

No matter how the person defines their role in the sexual act or when they choose to participate in homosexual relations, they need to know that their behavior can put themselves and others at risk for HIV infection.

ACTIVITY 1

Small Group Discussion

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for the participants to talk about how they can help male farmworkers change their behavior when they travel for work so that they do not put themselves or others at risk for HIV.

Materials: flip chart and markers

Time Limit: 15 to 20 minutes

Preparation: Write down one of the following on three separate pieces of flip chart paper: Use of prostitutes, Men who have sex with men, Sharing needles.

1. Divide the participants into three groups and assign them one of the following behaviors: use of prostitutes, men who have sex with men, and sharing needles.
2. Have them write down things they can tell the men to discourage them from participating in the assigned behavior.
3. Let the groups know that a member of each group will be asked to report back to the whole group on what they talked about.
4. Give each group 5 to 10 minutes to talk amongst themselves.
5. Have someone from each group report back to the whole group.
6. Write down their ideas on the flip chart under the activity that they relate to.

Ask the following question:

What are some other risks that are specific to farmworkers?

As we have seen from the risk factors above, farmworkers face many risks when it comes to HIV/AIDS because of their mobility and isolation. In the next lesson we will learn how the Latino culture affects farmworkers attitudes and beliefs towards HIV/AIDS.