

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: POINTS TO REMEMBER

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When planning a community needs assessment for the farmworker population, please consider the following points:

- **Farmworker Population.** Within the farmworker population, there are migratory, seasonal, aged, and/or disabled agricultural farmworkers; each of these groups may have different health care needs and experiences with health services. Including group-specific questions in your needs assessment will enable MHCs to understand the needs of the all the migratory and seasonal farmworker population in their community.

- **Timing.** When conducting a needs assessment of the farmworker population, timing is very important for two main reasons:
 1. Seasonal, aged, and/or disabled agricultural farmworkers may be available all year. In contrast, migratory workers could be in the area only for a few weeks or months, giving the health center a short window to conduct the assessment
 2. The local agricultural activity will determine the optimal time of the year to conduct the needs assessment.

- **Data Collection Tool.** When planning the data collection tool, remember to take into account the language limitation and literacy level of your target population. According to available data:
 1. More than three-fourths of all farmworkers have either limited English proficiency or are monolingual in Spanish.
 2. A small number speak Indigenous languages.
 3. The average literacy level among the farmworker population is the 6th grade.

- **Data gathering.** When conducting a farmworker needs assessment, it is necessary to study and select the data gathering method that will encourage farmworkers to participate. Here are some considerations:
 1. Mail surveys may not yield the best results due to population transiency and literacy issues.

2. Phone surveys may yield poor results due to cost, population transiency, working schedule, time investment, and caller anonymity.
3. An individual or family interview using lay health workers is a culturally accepted approach for data gathering.
4. Focus groups are also a successful approach to gather information about people's experiences with health services; they also solicit suggestions.

Length of the survey tool. Although it can be very tempting to include many questions that will collect all types of information about the population, be mindful of the farmworkers long working hours and the cost of conducting the survey.

The longer the survey is, the less participation you may have, and the more expensive it becomes to administer, analyze and interpret the results. To minimize unnecessary questions, you may want to study the chart provided with some samples of how to determine what information should be included.