

# Summer Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Outreach Program: Creating Access to Comprehensive Care and Social Services at Onsite Housing Facilities

## Outreach Promising Practice

Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center (Virginia Garcia) developed a summer migrant & seasonal farmworker outreach program to provide a comprehensive set of services to migrant farmworkers living in migrant housing facilities. During outreach, the team, consisting of medical and outreach workers, utilizes a mobile clinic to provide onsite care, as well as partnering with local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to include a scope of social services. Furthermore, Virginia Garcia regularly evaluates and adapts the program to the needs of the farmworkers served by soliciting input from staff and local partners.

## Organization:

Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center  
Outreach location: Cornelius, Oregon



Virginia Garcia Memorial  
**HEALTH CENTER**

## About:

In 1975, six-year-old Virginia Garcia and her farmworker parents traveled from their home in Mission, Texas, to California and Oregon to work in the fields. Along the way, Virginia cut her foot, and by the time they reached Oregon, it had become infected. Due to economic, language, and cultural barriers to health care, Virginia died from what should have been an easily treatable wound. Moved to action by Virginia's unnecessary death, the community quickly rallied together to open the first Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center in a three-car garage, determined to prevent similar tragedies from occurring.

The mission of Virginia Garcia remains the same today, born from this tragic event they remain dedicated to providing high quality, culturally appropriate health care to those who need it most, with an emphasis on migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

Forty seven years later, they have 18 clinics across two counties and have created a strong relationship with their community, which includes about 900 farmworkers, by emphasizing a patient-centered and equitable approach to health care delivery. Through collaboration with external partners and dedicated outreach staff, Virginia Garcia addresses the unique health needs of their farmworker patient population.

### **47 Years Meeting Needs**

When migrant and seasonal farmworkers arrive in Oregon, they face many barriers to receiving the care they need. In addition to transportation barriers, there are a limited number of medical providers with appropriate language and cultural proficiency available. In response, Virginia Garcia takes comprehensive care to farmworkers and plant nursery workers right where they live and work. The outreach team, consisting of medical and outreach workers, uses a mobile clinic to go directly to farmworkers, overcoming barriers in accessing healthcare as well as building a lasting relationship with the providers at Virginia Garcia.

The farmworker community also has limited access to specialty medical care, health education, and social services. In response, Virginia Garcia partners with local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to expand the scope of services and resources they provide to farmworkers at each camp location. During outreach, the team organizes group and individual health education classes, mental health services, vision screenings, medication prescriptions from pharmacists, transportation, COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and other related education and resources.

## **Description of the Practice:**

Every year from the end of May to August, the outreach team travels to three migrant camps and seven plant nurseries between the two counties to connect migrant workers to the available services offered through the program. Services include primary care physicals, group and individual health education classes, vision screenings, dental hygiene services, medication prescriptions from pharmacists, transportation, COVID-19 screenings, vaccines, and other related education and resources. Depending on the size of the camp, Virginia Garcia will make one or two visits to each site throughout the summer. Virginia Garcia utilizes a mobile clinic to bring the required medical equipment and educational materials to each location. Services are provided in Spanish to strengthen their outreach efforts. Programs are regularly evaluated and adapted to the needs of the farmworkers served by soliciting input from staff and local partners.

## Key Strategies:

### Formalizing Employer Collaboration

A key strategy of the outreach program at migrant camps and plant nurseries is establishing a trusted partnership with employers. To establish these partnerships, Virginia Garcia's outreach coordinator schedules 1:1 meetings with farm and plant nursery owners hosting migrant workers to explain the program and develop a relationship. During these meetings, the outreach coordinator explains the purpose and intention of the summer outreach program, outlines the services they provide, and identifies the organizations that will be involved in the on-site visits.

After meeting with an employer, the outreach coordinator creates a preliminary calendar of planned visits based on the location, needs of migrant workers, and the size of each camp. The calendar is then sent out to migrant camp owners for them to provide any suggested updates to the schedule based on the needs of the migrant farmworkers they host. These close partnerships ensure that onsite visits to farmworkers run smoothly.

Regular communication with employers also encourages transparency and buy-in, which helps to foster stronger relationships and continued support for the outreach program. Typically, these partnerships are not contracted agreements but built from a history of trust and reliability between entities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia Garcia developed a formalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or formal agreement, that outlined action plans between Virginia Garcia and the owners of the farms and plant nurseries to deliver vaccinations to migrant workers.

### Coordinating with a Network of Farmworker-Serving Organizations

Once site visits have been scheduled, the team will share the itinerary of onsite visits with external organizations to explore opportunities to offer additional services to the workers. Services include vision screening, legal aid, food distribution, high school equivalent education programs, and a connection to social services available in the county. Virginia Garcia then creates flyers that are disseminated by the outreach team to alert them of the services offered during the onsite visit. The distribution of flyers also allows the outreach team to have conversations with farmworkers about the services they need. The flyers are also posted on the on-site housing units at the migrant camp and are shared via email to plant nurseries that participate in the program so that employers can spread information to the workers at their location. The outreach team is currently exploring ways of utilizing WhatsApp to send digital flyers to migrant workers as well.



### Conducting a Collaborative Evaluation

Another key strategy to the success of this program is the inclusion of staff in regular program evaluation & quality improvement efforts. Virginia Garcia established a system of consistent communication and feedback between program staff and external partners to improve the operation of the outreach program. After their site visits, Virginia Garcia distributes surveys to their outreach workers and participating external partners to provide feedback. Before the pandemic, paper surveys were distributed to participating staff members and external partners. During the pandemic, Virginia Garcia utilized Google Forms to receive feedback. Staff and partners can voice their ideas and provide input on the quality of the services provided during outreach and any potential changes needed based on their experience onsite. Virginia Garcia created a committee that includes medical staff, camp coordinators, the information technology team, volunteers from the Virginia Garcia Memorial Foundation, pharmacists, and the outreach manager. They met weekly to address any issues while reviewing feedback from surveys.

Ultimately, the regular collection and consideration of feedback has enhanced workflows, helped define roles within the outreach teams, and improved the utilization of resources. Active input from staff and partners has also helped Virginia Garcia establish a stronger workforce and better collaboration between partners.



Virginia Garcia's mobile unit providing on-site care to farmworkers.



## Results:

Over the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022 Virginia Garcia made 59 visits to migrant housing and plant nurseries. During these visits, they contacted 3,655 agricultural workers (or family members) through virtual, telephonic, or in-person visits. During this time, they distributed 2,344 prevention and vaccination flyers at the worksites and vaccinated more than 900 farmworkers against COVID-19.

Moving forward, Virginia Garcia is looking to expand the outreach program to provide more services during the summer camp period and to continue their engagement with the community throughout the year. They will add a new mobile unit in 2023 to deploy during their summer outreach visits. They also plan to use the new unit to provide basic medical care, screening services, and health education at community events throughout the year. This expansion comes from an identified need to bring the comprehensive medical services provided during the summer program to the larger community.

## Key Challenges and How to Address Them:

### Continuity of Care

Before COVID-19, farmworkers who received medical services through the migrant camp outreach program would typically continue their care at one of Virginia Garcia's clinic locations. However, the pandemic caused many to delay care and, most recently, staffing challenges in health care have disrupted the continuity of care for many patients.

To address this, the outreach team is planning to increase the frequency of visits and expand the roles of community health workers to provide follow-up care on site, rather than transporting every patient to the clinic. Migrant farmworker communities often have fewer resources and access to public transportation because they are working and living in rural areas, making it more difficult for them to travel to see providers in the area. More frequent visits address structural barriers, ensuring follow-up care and reducing the strain on resources for Virginia Garcia's clinic sites.



## Resources Needed and Expenses:

Staff time is a critical resource for this outreach program. Costs are largely related to staff time, as the outreach coordinator and others on the outreach team develop the program services, create materials, coordinate resources, and collaborate with employers and partners. Other costs for this program include the mobile clinics and materials to effectively provide medical services on-site, such as tent rentals.

The outreach team spends eight hours per visit to prepare all items (medications, education, supplies, etc.) and to support setting up and taking down the camp. Other support staff, like front-desk staff, providers and volunteers, spend around six hours at the camp per visit, and they also assist in setting up and taking down the camp. The clinic at each migrant camp or plant nursery location generally lasts around four hours per day.

The team that visits the migrant camps is composed of an array of medical staff, community health workers, medical students and volunteers. Staff, students, and volunteers rotate over the camp season.

Virginia Garcia outreach program staff includes the following:

- One full-time outreach coordinator
- Three (3) community health workers
- Part-time Outreach Nurse
- Part-time nurse practitioner
- Part-time physician's assistant
- One full-time medical provider
- Full-time medical assistant
- Fourteen (14) medical students
- Fifteen (15) volunteers



## Partnerships:

Virginia Garcia partners with several external agencies and organizations to provide services outside of the scope of their general practice.

Key partnerships for this outreach program include:

- Pacific University [School of Optometry](#) & [School of Dental Hygiene](#): These departments offer vision and dental services to patients of the mobile clinic.
- [The Mexican Consulate in Portland, OR](#): Supports migrant workers with immigration services and documentation resources.
- [Portland Community College HEP \(High School Equivalent\) Program](#): Provides education for migrant and seasonal farmworkers through recruitment, high school equivalency (HSE) instruction, academic advising, and post-HSE attainment placement services.
- [Oregon Food Bank](#): Provides food assistance to seasonal migrant agricultural workers at the mobile clinic.
- [University of Western State](#): Provides chiropractic services to seasonal migrant agricultural workers at mobile clinics.
- [Oregon Law Center and Legal Aid](#): Provides free legal aid and support regarding workers rights issues for seasonal migrant farmworkers.



## Learn More:

Website: Virginia Garcia [Outreach Programs](#)

**For more information or question, contact:**

Alicia Stoll | Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Outreach Representative

Oregon Employment Department

Office: 971.673.0344

[alicia.stoll@employ.oregon.gov](mailto:alicia.stoll@employ.oregon.gov)

## Tools and Resources:

- **National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH) Pop-Up Vaccine Clinic Checklist:**  
This checklist is designed to provide health centers and other community-based organizations with the information they need to know “Before, During, and After” hosting a vaccination clinic. This tool is also helpful for organizations collaborating with agricultural employers and public health authorities serving farmworkers and their families in various settings.
  - The English copy is [linked here](#)
  - Spanish copy is [linked here](#)
- **Research:** [Delivery of Mobile Clinic Services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers: A Review of Practice Models for Community-Academic Partnerships](#)
- **Article:** [Migrant Clinician - Best Practices in Mobile Team Outreach](#)



***Pro Tip:***

***Consistency can help create a strong connection and presence in a community as well as with partners and employers. Becoming a trusted organization in the community requires showing up consistently and delivering on your stated mission.***

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