

PPDC Farmworker & Clinician Work Group
Meeting Notes
June 11, 2021

Attendance

Name	Organization	Attended
Walter Alarcon	The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (CDC-NIOSH)	
Ruben Arroyo	California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA)	x
Kaci Buhl	Oregon State University, Department of Environmental & Molecular Toxicology	
Allison Crittenden	American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)	x
Ricardo Davalos	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)	x
Africa Dórame-Avalos	Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.	
Jeannie Economos	Farm Workers Association of Florida	x
Iris Figueroa	Farmworker Justice	x
Melanie Forti Rogenhofer	Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)	x
Katie Karberg MD	Bayer Crop Science	x
Patsy Laird	Syngenta/ American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE)	x
Amy Liebman	Migrant Clinicians Network	
Dominica Navarro	Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides	
Mily Treviño-Sauceda (Co-Chair)	Alianza Nacional de Campesinas	x
Emma Torres	Campesinos Sin Fronteras	
Jennifer Weber	Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) Maricopa County Cooperative Extension The University of Arizona	x

EPA Co-Chairs: Steve Schaible and Carolyn Schroeder

Other Attendees:

EPA Office of Pesticide Programs: Aidan Black, Rachel Eberius, Ana Rivera-Lupianez, Stephanie Burkhardt, Jennifer Park, Kelsi Grogan

Agenda

1. Administrative information and previous meeting notes check in – 10 mins
 - a. May meeting notes – review
 - b. Teams channel check in
2. Subgroup on Farmworker Training, report out – 20 mins
 - a. Action item from May meeting for a subgroup to meet to flesh out the problems, causes, and solutions
 - b. Bring solutions for discussion at this meeting
3. Farmworker Training discussion – 60 mins
 - a. What are the problems with Farmworker Training?
 - b. What are potential solutions?
 - c. How can we turn those solutions into recommendations to EPA?
4. Farmworker guest meeting check in – 15 mins
5. Action items /homework – 15 mins
 - a. Next steps for moving towards Farmworker Training recommendations
 - b. Prep for next meeting (July 9) focused on Clinician Training
 - i. Take time between meetings to identify problems, causes and solutions?
 - ii. Subgroup?
 - c. Farmworker guest meeting (subgroup)
 - d. Review May and June meeting notes prior to July meeting, once distributed

Administrative Information and Previous Meeting Notes

- EPA noted that the draft notes from the previous meeting (held on 5/28/2021) have not yet been shared with the work group for review and will be sent to the work group for review with the June meeting notes.
- Discussed technical difficulties with TEAMS and their resolution.
- Discussed potential schedule change for upcoming meetings and the group's availability.
 - Multiple workgroup members have conflicts with Friday meetings
 - The group discussed potential meeting times with better group-wide availability
 - EPA will follow up with a poll to determine the best time to meet

Report Out from the Subgroup on Farmworker Training

- Members of the subgroup who focused farmworker training shared a document that outlined issues on problems, causes, and potential solutions
- The subgroup looked at the overarching charge questions and came up with core problems and proposed solutions
- Work group charge questions:
 - How should EPA evaluate appropriateness & effectiveness of farmworker protection activities?
 - Subgroup members emphasized that focus groups with farmworkers have had significant positive impact.
 - The subgroup suggested that funding grassroots groups and organizations to conduct focus groups in states across the country could help with collecting feedback on the training materials
 - The subgroup emphasized that gaining access to and trust from the farm workers is more effective when it is done by grassroots community groups
 - How should EPA engage stakeholders in decisions to fund such farmworker protection activities?
 - Find ways to bring farmworkers into the conversation; farmworkers should be at the table when discussing training and protection needs
 - Accessing and recruiting farm workers to participate in conversations is difficult because workers need to have established trust with the process.
 - Engaging stakeholders (workers) would be most effective if it is done by smaller grassroots groups who have established relationships and earned the trust of the communities they work with
 - There is potential to involve health care professionals to determine where there are knowledge gaps for training and identifying their role in farm workers protection
 - Farmworker advocates in Florida noted that free covid-19 vaccinations were not accepted by many farmworkers in public clinics but were widely accepted by workers when the vaccinations were provided at the farm worker protection agency's office.

- How and when should EPA reach out to stakeholders, including farmworker community-based organizations, in their development of analyses on appropriateness and effectiveness of such activities?
 - Stakeholders should be engaged at the very beginning; don't wait until materials are created
 - Engage farmworkers at the beginning so farmworkers can help contribute
 - The group emphasized that grassroot groups are who can help EPA gain access to farm worker communities
 - Focus groups and 1-on-1 interviews can help get information and feedback from workers
 - Work group members emphasized that focus groups (rather than 1-on-1 interviews or other means) are the most effective
- Follow-up comments and discussion on the charge questions:
 - Many times clinics want to do their own work and outreach, but the effectiveness depends on how the program is designed/implemented in the clinic; the staff delivering the info need to be trained and willing to do outreach
 - Bringing an academic/researcher to talk to farmworkers is not effective because the farmworkers will not talk to them
 - Their trust is with people within their community
 - You will only get good feedback and analysis from people that the farmworkers trust
 - Focus groups may take one hour or several hours
 - Having a “token farmworker” to represent the opinions and experiences of all farmworkers is not sufficient
 - It is sometimes effective to prepare the workers before conducting interview or sharing their experiences
 - A group member asked to clarify exactly what the group was hoping to address and whether the goal was to update the WPS, assess the current rule, or changing PPE requirements, or something else.
 - One group member said that they were discussing preparing workers to prevent poisonings and that to do so, you must build trust within the community.
 - Training the workers needs to be done in a more holistic way
 - Just because EPA prepared a training with good content doesn't mean that it will be effective with the workers (e.g., more to a training than the 'right' content)
 - Another group member noted that the focus of the group is to think about effective evaluation tools to monitor the training materials available and to compare the knowledge in different areas and the gaps.
 - There are different stages
 - Outreach before the training materials are made
 - Providing/doing the training
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of the training

- Another group member noted that the goal of this group is not to change the WPS and, rather, the goals are to:
 - monitor the effectiveness of trainings and the posting poster
 - evaluate the effectiveness of the protection activities of the WPS
- EPA noted that the requirements are there in the WPS to provide certain info and training, but now we need to think about what it takes to implement those requirements, so they are effective and appropriate.
 - When we are talking about "worker protection activities", the group is focusing on the central posting, training and all the materials provided to farmworkers
 - The group's recommendations should be specific and clear, considering what the funding supports and how the educational materials are developed and who is the audience.
- EPA noted that they agree with what has been shared thus far in the meeting
 - In the end, the discussion and focus of the group should be tied back to the charge questions.
 - Because this is a PRIA reporting requirement, the charge questions go back to how EPA is using its PRIA funds to evaluate the effectiveness of training
 - EPA is looking for guidance for the measurements of effectiveness and trying to figure out to do the deeper dive into these measurements
 - How would EPA better measure the effectiveness of these training materials?
 - Need to get into the 'nitty gritty' of implementation - how to make it really work in 'the field'
 - Consider whether the recommendation is something that groups funded by EPA can do with the PRIA dollars
 - Need to assess whether the recommendations could be something that EPA can build on
- EPA also noted that it is good that PRIA exists as a mechanism to demand funds be put towards these activities
- EPA noted that everything that has been talked about in the broader conversation is absolutely a conversation that should be happening but, in the end, might not be things that the group moves forward in terms of recommendations
- A work group member noted that since the charge questions are on evaluation it may be useful to consider the peer review paper noted by work group members from Florida
 - Maybe that would be something that targets evaluating
 - Show a process of what is available and what could be more effective

Farmworker Training Discussion: Problems, Solutions and Potential Recommendations

- The first overarching problem identified by workgroup members was that trainings are not engaging or interactive

- Often training administrators just play the training video and workers sign that they were trained
 - There is often no one present to answer questions during training
- There is a lack of trust for trainers
 - Even if someone is there to ask questions, workers are afraid to ask
 - Workers are afraid to speak up when exposed to pesticides
 - Workers are afraid to be labeled as a troublemaker
- There is also a lack of trust of enforcers among farm workers
 - It is difficult for individuals working in enforcement to gain trust of the workers
 - If individuals working in enforcement provide training, workers are unlikely to speak up or ask questions
 - The state level needs to communicate with grassroot groups
- There is a culture of dismissal of importance of training by employers
 - Employers often don't convey importance of training and treat it as a box checking exercise
 - Workers fall asleep during the training
 - There should be encouragement to the employers to recognize the upside of the training and not just the burden and the enforcement.
- Trainings might not always be relevant to people taking the training
 - EPA tried to make trainings more crop-specific which is good
- Effectiveness of training is not just giving farmworkers information but also engaging them in dialogue
 - It is more about giving examples and asking what resonated with people
 - The use of skits to show people examples is helpful
 - In what way are we really proving effective training? It might not be about preparing a video but really making sure that information really resonated with the workers.
 - Workers are also from indigenous communities; English and Spanish is not their first language
- Training the trainers is very important; sometimes the growers don't know the importance of the training
 - You can have a good video or training but if you don't have a good trainer, it is not good or effective.
 - Sometimes people who give the training cannot provide any answers to the questions because they have no experience
 - Certification to give the training could be given to an administrative person with no in-field experience
- A workgroup member noted that we need to need to make the current WPS good first before changing it
 - Suggested putting more support into grass root community groups and state agencies if there are not grassroot groups available
 - Require that these groups do a good job with outreach

- Plan where states do a better job reaching all growers including small growers
 - More support to train workers at the state level
 - EPA also noted that there is a whole group we might be missing with regards to adequate training (the growers who are not providing a good training)
 - WPS training requirements include having a trainer present to answer questions, a training free of distractions, and to be provided in a manner the worker can understand.
 - Maybe they are willfully not complying, but it is also possible the employer does not know the training requirements extend beyond the content.
 - EPA-approval of WPS trainings means that the content (only the content) was reviewed and approved to contain the safety messages and information as required by the WPS. The review doesn't consider all the other requirements that are part of a successful (and compliant) training.
 - How to get the information in there to the trainers might be another topic to discuss and think about
 - Grace period elimination leads to "let's just get it done" mindset
 - Some work group members think that bringing the grace period back would be beneficial
 - Other work group members are opposed because farmworkers could get exposed in 5-day grace period
 - A work group member noted that the grace period is a problem on the WPS; the new modification to the previous rule is much better for both enforcement and for the workers. EPA noted that the grace period gave employers flexibility but also was a window when workers were uninformed, and exposures could occur; the 2015 rule revisions got rid of the grace period based on this concern and stakeholder feedback.
 - EPA noted that there are several voices provided in the subgroup's document with differing opinions and perspectives
 - One workgroup member expressed appreciation for the diverse representation on the workgroup.
- A second overarching problem brought up was that farmworker trainings and safety/educational resources are not designed to work within the cultural context of farmworker communities
 - Issues identified
 - Graphics do not resonate with farm workers; do not look like the people who we are talking about. There are many indigenous workers
 - Trainings for indigenous people were more effective when the indigenous people were in pictures provided
 - In general, people understand better when there are images rather than writing

- Engaging grass root organization is important for having people from the community and in the appropriate cultural context and cultural terminology
- A work group member said that it could be useful to review and compare different trainings that are out there and being used and see what works best
- Another work group member supported the idea that using pictures for training
 - Medical device companies for home use are moving towards more universal instructions with pictures
 - Thinks pictures are powerful and that it is the wave of the future
- A work group member noted that a lot of the training information has been translated in California. The issue is finding a method to disseminate information to the workers
 - COVID-19 has shed light on this
 - The key to getting PPE (to protect against COVID) to workers was through community-based organizations
 - The issue was finding the right community-based organizations when trying to reach thousands of people state-wide
 - Suggested that to get information out to people, smaller community-based organizations should be utilized
 - Many workers do not want to talk to regulators because it may label them as ‘troublemakers’
 - There is also mistrust among farm labor contractors
 - This group member agreed that using community-based groups is most effective
- There is a common rhetoric of "Pesticide are medicine for plants" which leads farmworkers to believe pesticides are safe or healthy
 - Farmworkers are told that pesticides are just medicine for the plants (even if it is a strong odor or causing headaches)
 - This is being repeated by crew leaders.
 - This was reported by workers from California, Oregon, Arizona, and Washington state
- A group member provided an example of an issue with the new central posting requirement development in Florida.
 - Farmworker group in Florida offered to do focus groups with farm workers to evaluate the central posting poster
 - The evaluations they developed with these groups were sent into the EPA
 - Many of the workers thought that the pesticide container symbol looked like a fire extinguisher
 - After sending in the evaluations to the EPA they received feedback that it was too late to make changes
 - They did not think the poster was clear or understandable or culturally appropriate
 - They noted that the farm workers should be involved so that the materials are culturally appropriate for them

- EPA said that if there are best practices for training, maybe that could be shared with this group and we could think about how that could be better utilized in the public sphere
- A third problem discussed was that farmworker training comprehension and retention is not effectively measured
 - Measuring the effectiveness of training and it is not easy to do
 - There are ways to do pre- and post-test knowledge
 - Do the post test at least a month after to see the retention of the training
 - If it is not an interactive training it is less effective
 - Suggested solutions
 - Instead of having just a teacher, ask the farmworkers what the experiences that they have had
 - One way to do an evaluation is to have a focus group where workers come together to talk about their personal experience and whether the regulations are being followed and what they learned in the training
 - Training and reality are not the same thing
 - Focus groups are good and can build on worker’s experiences
 - Hearing from workers is most powerful
- A fourth problem discussed was enforcement and compliance with WPS farmworker training requirements
 - There are many issues with enforcement
 - During COVID-19 shutdowns, everyone wanted to take care of themselves and their workers
 - Agriculture workers were essential workers and needed to keep working
 - Issues kept building up for farm workers
 - During the covid-19 shut down there was more relaxation of enforcement
 - Not enough investigators or inspectors in certain states
 - Issues with private properties:
 - by the time the inspector comes in the workers are moved to other areas or the issues are covered up
 - Workers don’t feel safe talking in the workplace and feel that if they speak up they will be black listed
 - Example from California: A worker who used to be involved with United Farm Workers started working for a farm working company that didn’t have union contact; at this company farmworkers were not given protective gloves or allowed space for social distancing during COVID-19. The worker complained and was demoted and not able work where she worked previously. She was also exposed to a pesticide and experienced poisoning. Was injured by a tractor on the job. This is someone who knows her rights; regulations are not followed. This individual cannot get re-hired, because she is considered an issue amongst employers because she points out where they are not compliant with regulations.

- Need to make sure that workers have support so that they are not black-listed
- Crew leaders are the ones more likely to silence the workers
- If an inspector is coming, growers will call all the other growers to let them know that the inspectors are in town
 - Workers are intimidated and tell inspectors that everything is fine and being done by the regulation
- Potential Solutions:
 - There is unequal funding for enforcement among states
 - Need to look at each state and where funding is going
 - Work with grass root groups for how to address enforcement
- A work group member noted that there are also inspectors that need more training. Some inspectors do not know all the aspects of the WPS
 - Noted that even when there are complaints sometimes the workers will lie for the company
 - It is difficult for the inspectors to enforce
 - Training the inspectors needs to be better so that they can really know the regulations
 - Suggested using the inspectors to reach out and provide information on how they can be more effective in the future.

Farmworker guest meeting check in

- Ran out of time to cover in detail; planning to continue 'off-line'. Jumped to the action items

Action Items/homework

- Some work group members needed to leave before follow-up steps could be addressed
- Future Meeting Planning and Next Steps:
 - Discussed the plan for the next meeting
 - Form subgroup on the clinician aspect and identifying problems, causes and solutions to set up the group for discussion
 - EPA will put a call out for volunteers to partake in the subgroup for clinicians
 - EPA to send out a file in shareable format for all workgroup members to contribute to prior to the next meeting.
- The group discussed that it was intentional to have a variety of voices in the work group
- Farmworker guest meeting -Co-Chair, Mily, to follow up with subgroup
- Review May and June meeting notes prior to July meeting, once distributed