

**Bridges to Health – UVM Extension
Immigrant Farmworker COVID Response
September 2020-December 2020**

Bridges to Health (BTH) is a grant funded health access program that works with immigrant farmworkers across every county in Vermont to create more equal health opportunities. The outreach arm of BTH consists of the Open Door Clinic, a free clinic serving Addison County, and UVM Extension serving the remaining 13 counties. Part time UVM Extension BTH outreach staff fill roles similar to Community Health Workers. Staff are *non-health professionals* who speak English and Spanish and have a unique understanding of and relationship with the BTH primary target population: immigrant farmworkers on Vermont’s dairy farms.

In 2020, COVID Relief funds allowed UVM Extension BTH, for the first time ever, to hire *health professionals* to address health and health education needs unmet by the health care system in Vermont. An Immigrant Farmworker COVID Response Team comprised of two part time bilingual health nurses, a part-time Family Nurse Practitioner, and an H2A outreach staff member was led by UVM Extension’s Migrant Health Coordinator. From September through December, in addition to being a resource for predominately Spanish speaking immigrant workers on 100 dairy farms across 13 counties, BTH was able to reach seasonal immigrant farmworkers on many of the 40+ farms that hire H2A workers. H2A workers in Vermont tend to be from Jamaica and identify English and Patois as their primary languages. With the addition of health professionals, BTH was able to provide a level of COVID education, screening, and coordination of on-farm testing for symptomatic workers as well as on-farm health care services that was previously not available to immigrant workers on Vermont’s farms outside of Addison County.

Quantitative report:

Number of COVID-19 focused meetings with Open Door Clinic: **16**

COVID Kit Distribution (*COVID Supplies & Educational Materials*)

Counties: 14

of Farms: 118

Individuals: **477**

Black: 103

Hispanic/Latinx: 374

Unique individuals reached with COVID-19 related information through indirect services: **800**

Unique immigrant farmworkers who received at least one direct service: **396**

2020 Influenza Vaccine Campaign

Counties Visited: 9

Towns Visited: 38

Farms visited: 62

Influenza Vaccines Given: **296**

Hispanic/Latinx Vaccinees: 226

Black Vaccinees: 13

White Vaccinees: 57 (white farm owners and workers not included in direct service count)

Immigrant farmworker vaccinees reporting they have health insurance: **0**

On-farm COVID tests ordered via EMS: 12

Wellness Screenings and RN Triage of Health Issues

Individuals: **86**

Hispanic/Latinx: 72

Black: 14

Telehealth with COVID Response Team Family Nurse Practitioner

Unique patients: **20**

Hispanic/Latinx: 17

Black: 3

Everyone Eats Meals Distribution

Counties: 6

Towns: 31

Households: 70

Meals: 1077

Recipients: **305**

H2A Needs Assessment

Farms: 30

Counties: 7

Participants: 70

Black: 64

Hispanic/Latinx: 6

Lessons Learned Looking Beyond COVID-19 Response:

- Funding allowed BTH to hire H2A outreach staff to focus on Jamaican H2A workers, allowing BTH to not only address COVID concerns but also to do a health needs assessment with workers from 30 different farms, gaining insight into how to serve these workers in the future – including the fact that, although these workers are eligible for health insurance, only 4% had insurance. Additionally, half of workers did not know where to go for health care in spite of the majority living in Vermont more than 6 months out of the year.
- For the first time BTH had capacity to coordinate on-farm flu clinics, reaching 239 farm workers who otherwise would not have gotten the flu shot and building connections with new partners to shape future immunization campaigns and outreach structure.
- BTH collaborated with Everyone Eats to bring 1,077 meals to farmworkers across six counties, primarily from restaurants that offered familiar cuisine. Farmworkers are at high risk for food insecurity and targeted outreach to this community will be an ongoing need. BTH works to connect individuals who are ineligible for federal programs to food assistance in their communities and support them in establishing greater food security.
- Experimented with broader implementation of telehealth, including for triage calls (eg symptoms checks), appointments, and follow up. Telehealth can help address significant health barriers faced by farmworkers and BTH hopes to integrate more telehealth opportunities into the future.