



Managing Finances in the United States Facilitation Guide for Employers and Educators Working with Farmworkers



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For the Cultivemos - Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) Farmworker Cohort
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Introduction:

Farmworkers are an important part of the food production in the United States. They have skills and abilities that bring food to the tables of the world. According to national reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor, there are an estimated 2 to 3 million migratory and seasonal agricultural workers in the United States. Some come from different countries and cultures where the financial and health care systems and cultural norms about money, savings, credit, health care and access to financial and health care services is vastly different. Trusted guidance in these topics is important for their physical, mental, and financial well-being, safety, and interest in continuing to support U.S agriculture. The Northeast Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, also known as Cultivemos, recognizes that these stressors are linked to poor physical health, substance abuse, and high injury rates and that resources and information offered to employers and ag service professional will contribute to addressing stress for our farmworkers.

Agricultural workers are vulnerable to very high stress levels, as well as higher than average rates of depression and anxiety. Studies suggest that stressors include communicating in English, accessing medical care, and being taken advantage of (Keeney et. al., 2022), legality and logistics, social isolation, work conditions, family, and substance abuse by others (Hiott, 2008). Finance oriented researchers found that financial stress and anxiety are highly linked to low levels of financial literacy, problematic financial behaviors and decreased financial security (Pierce, 2021).

It may be surprising to know that according to the FDIC, 7.1 million U.S. households, or 5.4% of all households, were unbanked in 2019 and this translates into 13.8 million individuals. The unbanked are adults who do not have their own bank accounts and, therefore, may rely on alternative financial services for their financial needs, where these are available. This FDIC figure includes all individuals – those who speak English and those who don't. A lack of money, trust, and privacy concerns are three main reasons people in the U.S. are unbanked. Unbanked people generally pay for things in cash or else purchase money orders or prepaid debit cards. Unbanked people also typically do not have insurance, pensions, or any other type of professional money-related services. They may take advantage of alternative financial services, such as check-cashing and payday lending, if such services are available to them. For those whose first language is not English, not understanding US financial services can be costly and put them in the position of being taken advantage of. For this population, additional barriers for undocumented farmworkers in setting up bank accounts may include challenges of demonstrating residency through documents that they often do not have such as a driver's license, bill for proof of residence, or a paystub.

As an employer/ag service provider, supporting the financial wellbeing of your employees/clientele will reduce stress and keep them focused on their job. Strategies for access to financial services and sound financial management include:

- Employees understanding how their paychecks are calculated, what their withholdings include and why
- Employees understanding the financial services available in their communities
- Employees determining their financial needs, wants and obligations
- Employees understanding the US health care system and how to access and pay for it
- Employers and employees understanding the role of identification numbers used by national, state, and local authorities (IRS, banking institutions, health care providers) and how they impact access to services as well as employee's financial well-being

According to U.S Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, delaying medical care can negatively impact health and increase the cost of care for individuals. People who can't get the care they need may have more preventable complications, hospitalizations, emotional stress, and higher costs. Additionally, without health insurance, people are less likely to have a regular health care provider and more likely to skip routine health care. This puts them at increased risk for serious health problems.

As an employer or ag service provider we know we need our farmworker s healthy and able to do their work. Strategies for reducing the barriers to health care access for farmworker s include:

- Employees having money set aside for health care costs
- Employees having access to health insurance
- Employers creating health care reimbursement accounts for employees so that there are funds available to employees in case of health care expenses
- Employers identifying local community resources who will assist workers with health care issues when they arise at a reduced rate or payment program

Purpose of this Facilitation Guide:

Agricultural employers and service providers are in a unique position to clarify information about US financial and health care systems and guide learning regarding effective access and use of these systems. Through a literature review and communication with farmworkers, several financial topics were identified. For each topic, a short publication was created that provides background information, a glossary of important words to know, a case study story, and worksheets to assist in application and learning about the topic. These publications were translated into Spanish for your use with employees/clientele. PowerPoint presentations for each of the topics were developed to be used in training settings that support the short publication.

The Managing Finances in the United States series topics include:

- Understanding Your Paycheck and Pay Stub
- Creating a Spending Plan
- Keeping Your Money Safe by Using Financial Services
- Accessing Health Care Services and Health Insurance Basics

The materials were designed as short publications offered in both English and Spanish. The layout of the publications were designed to allow for duplication by section. In this way, employers or service providers using the materials can duplicate the sections that would be distributed; for example, a worksheet. All documents in this Managing Money in the US series in English and Spanish can be found at this website: farmaid.org/cultivemos.

Complementary short PowerPoint presentations were developed for each topic. PowerPoint presentations offer an overview of the material, review of the case story and discussion questions and can be presented in about 30 minutes.

Within the both versions of the documents (English and Spanish) there words that are in bold faced type. These words are included in the "Important Words to Know" section of each document. Within this section of the Spanish versions of the documents the English word is also included to help enhance the connection between the English word and the Spanish word and definition. As an employer/ educator, you can highlight these words to help build financial, health and language literacy.

How Can I Build Farmworker Literacy Knowledge and Skills?

For many consumers financial and health insurance literacy is a challenge. Add to that barriers related to language and difficulties in accessing and effectively utilizing financial and health services in the US can be daunting. Here are some basic definitions for functional, financial and health insurance literacy. The purpose of the materials is to build confidence, knowledge, and skills in your program participants. Programs can also serve to connect participants with local experts or resources.

Functional Literacy refers to the practical skill set needed to read, write, and do math for real-life purposes, so people can function effectively in their community. Functional literacy can include financial, media, religious, civic, computer, legal, scientific, health and health insurance.

<https://www.englishbix.com/functional-literacy-examples/>

Financial Literacy is the ability to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, and investing. Financial literacy is the foundation of your relationship with money, and it is a lifelong journey of learning. The earlier you start, the better off you will be, because education is the key to success when it comes to money. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/financial-literacy.asp>

Health Insurance Literacy measures the degree to which individuals have the knowledge, ability, and confidence to find and evaluate information about health plans, select the best plan for their financial and health circumstances, and use the plan once enrolled.

The materials developed were designed based on literacy research. Simple information, case studies and aligning the Important Words to Know with the content helps to build knowledge and confidence in the material. Using case studies helps participants practice and apply information to their situation.

How Can I Use These Materials with Farmworker s?

Onboarding for New Hires

English only employers can use the English version to understand the material and provide the Spanish versions to their employees as part of onboarding new hires. This could be conducted in a one-on-one setting or as a presentation to a group of employees. An employer/ag service provider might explore the local services – banks, credit unions, urgent care/health care providers – and invite someone from that organization to present or offer additional guidance. In this instance, it would be a good idea to have someone available to translate if the presenter is not able to speak Spanish.

As an employer you may want to assist employees in accessing these community resources. Do some investigating first so you know how to help employees navigate these systems in your community. As examples, what identification numbers will the local financial institution accept to open a savings/checking account? Will they only take a social security number, or will they allow the use of an employee identification number? What information does a local medical facility need to admit patients and will they set up a payment plan for those who don't have health insurance? By investigating these questions prior to your onboarding, you reduce the barriers for your workers and help to build trusted relationships.

Financial and Health Literacy Education

Whether individuals have been in the US for a while or they are new, financial and health care services in the US can be confusing to those who come from countries that don't have the same systems. Even for those who grew up in the US, these systems are confusing. Offering educational programs or discussion groups with employees is a great way to build their capacity to achieve their financial goals, assist them in protecting their hard earned income and provide access to needed health care services when needed. The educational sessions could be offered to farmworker s and their family members as an employee benefit.

Inviting local representative from financial institutions and/ or medical service providers may enhance the workshop and begin to build relationships between them and the farmworker s. Again, having someone who can assist in translation may be important. By being the liaison between the institution and the workers, you will be reducing barriers to access important services.

Conclusion

Providing information and resources to support the financial, physical, and mental wellbeing of farmworker s is imperative to strengthening agricultural systems in the U.S. Offering tools and resources that support employers

and agricultural services providers in supporting and guiding farmworker s no matter what their background, literacy level or first language is a small step in the right direction.

References

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Additional Resources

1. Cultivemos/FRSAN- NE Resources

We hope that these resources are helpful. Additional resources can be found through the Cultivemos Resource listing located at: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/cultivemos-about/>, through Farm Aid Resource Network found here <https://farmerresourcenetwork.force.com/FRN/s/> and through your local Cooperative Extension office <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory>

2. **Farm Aid** – Call 617-354-2922 from 9 am to 5 pm eastern; they have Spanish speaking personnel.

3. **Cooperative Extension** in your county – go to <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/about-extension/united-states-extension-offices.aspx> and type in your state and county

Additional Farmworker Financial and Health Insurance Literacy Resources

1) Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

a) Resources for economically vulnerable consumers:

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/economically-vulnerable/>

Resources for Multilingual Audiences

Multi-Language Resources

Spanish | Espanola [See CFPB in Spanish](#)

Chinese | 中文 [See CFPB in Chinese](#)

Vietnamese | Tiếng Việt [See CFPB in Vietnamese](#)

Korean | 한국어 [See CFPB in Korean](#)

Filipino | Tagalog [See CFPB in Tagalog](#)

Russian | Русский [See CFPB in Russian](#)

Arabic | العربية [See CFPB in Arabic](#)

Haitian Creole | Kreyòl Ayisyen [See CFPB in Haitian Creole](#)

- b) Your Money Your Goals Toolkit – for employers or service providers who are in the helping position. Background information and tools (printable and fillable pdfs). Available in English (Updated June 2020), Spanish (Updated Dec. 2016), Chinese (Updated Dec. 2016)

Topics include:

- Starting the Money Conversation
- Setting Goals
- Saving
- Tracking Income and Benefits
- Paying Bills
- Getting through the Month
- Dealing with Debt
- Understanding Credit Reports and Scores
- Choosing Financial Products and Services
- Protecting your Money

- c) CFPB Money Booklets: These are downloadable or can be requested in hardcopy
- a. Behind on bills? Start with one step. English & Spanish
 - b. Debt getting in your way? Get a handle on it. English
 - c. Want credit to work for you? Start with these steps. English & Spanish
 - d. Building your savings? Start with small goals. English

2) FDIC - Money Smart Curriculum

In English - <https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/index.html>

In Spanish - <https://catalog.fdic.gov/catalog/s/productdetail?selProductId=01tt0000000DCixAAG>

- Module 1 – The values and influence of money
- Module 2 – You can count on that
- Module 3 – Income and expenditure
- Module 4 – Expense and Savings Plan
- Module 5 – Savings
- Module 6 – Credit Reports and Scores
- Module 7 – Principles of lending
- Module 8 – Managing Debts
- Module 9 – Use of credit cards
- Module 10 – Establishing Your Financial Future
- Module 11 – Protecting Identity and Other Assets
- Module 12 – Making Housing Decisions
- Module 13 – Buying a home
- Module 14 – Disasters: Financial Preparedness and Recovery

3. Health Insurance Literacy Initiative (University of Maryland and Delaware Extension)

Educational resources designed to increase confidence and skills in choosing and using health insurance. Users of the materials must be “certified” to conduct the training. Modules include:

- Smart Choice Basics
- Smart Choice – Health Insurance in your Senior Years
- Smart Use – Smart Actions to Using your Health Insurance
- Smart Use – Understanding Health Insurance Benefits
- Smart Use – Understanding and Estimating Health Care Costs
- Smart Use – Managing Health Insurance Conflicts

Consumer Resources include several publications including a My Smart Choice Health Insurance Workbook that can be found: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/family-consumer-sciences/health-insurance-literacy>

4. HealthCare.gov – the federal government website that provides unbiased information about health care coverage and the health insurance marketplace. Beware of imitators who want to sell you insurance!!!
<https://www.healthcare.gov/>

5. Find a Federally Qualified Health Care Center here: <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>

6. Health Insurance 4 U – a free University of Delaware Cooperative Extension self-study on health insurance and the marketplace. It can be found here: <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/nutrition-wellness/health-insurance/health-insurance-4-u/>

7. Michigan State University Extension – [MSU Extension Farm Stress website](#) that includes some financial resources in the Resource Library. A few examples include:

Income Statement Worksheet

- FINPACK Balance Sheet
- Understanding Credit and Debt
- Helping Farmers Understand Net Worth
- Creating a Spending Plan
- Understanding the Farm’s Financial Health

8. Iowa State University Extension has resources for farm/family financial management:
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/farmanalysis/financial.html>

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