



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

Margaret L. Sauer, MS, MHA • Director, Office of Rural Health

December 15, 2021

Dear Employer of Migrant Farmworkers,

Thank you for all you have done to protect your workers from COVID during this pandemic. We would like to extend our support to you in maintaining a healthy workforce for this upcoming agricultural season. We are again sending you flyers and posters you can post in your migrant housing. Some of these are the same as last year, and some are new. We would very much appreciate it if you could write the name and phone number of the farmworker outreach worker at the migrant clinic nearest to you on the poster entitled **COVID 19: Síntomas, precauciones de seguridad, y recursos para los campesinos** (In English, COVID-19: Symptoms, safety precautions, and farmworker resources). Please encourage your workers to contact this person if they feel they need medical attention for COVID or any other health concerns.

Vaccines remain the most important tool to prevent serious illness and death due to COVID. Many farmworkers last year were given the one-dose Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine. Unfortunately, this one dose has not proven durable, and all recipients of J&J are now advised to get a booster vaccine at least 2 months following their initial J&J vaccine. Choosing Moderna or Pfizer as a booster shows improved protection compared to a second J&J dose. Recipients of all other vaccines are now advised to get a booster vaccine 6 months from their second vaccine. Please reach out to your agricultural extension agent, local health department or closest migrant health center for vaccines or boosters for your workers, yourself and your loved ones. Protecting each other has been a mainstay during this pandemic.

For your workers here on the H-2A visa, we hope you encourage them to call their farmworker outreach worker or migrant clinic for help enrolling in health insurance. They have only 60 days from their border crossing into the US to apply. All H-2A workers are eligible for substantial subsidies for health insurance—some plans cost only \$10 per month. Given the high cost of hospitalization, the ongoing pandemic, and the fact that UNC Hospitals withholds their charity care discount from all patients present in the US on a visa, enrolling in an affordable health insurance plan has never been more important.

We anticipate that a new oral medication for the treatment of COVID will be available for use in the US very soon. If taken in the first 3–5 days of symptoms, it can decrease the risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID by 90%. Since this medication must be started quickly, rapid diagnosis of COVID infection leads to a potentially life-saving step. We encourage you, your family and all your workers to be vigilant for any symptoms of COVID and to be tested quickly. Without a test, it is not possible to distinguish between COVID, a common cold or allergies. Just as a reminder, recent vaccination will not cause a positive test.

Thank you again for your hard work in keeping North Carolina's agricultural community safe during the pandemic. We look forward to working together to keep everyone safe and healthy. If there is anything we can do to assist you, your family or your workers, please do not hesitate to contact the NC Farmworker Health Program.

Sincerely,

Modjolie Moore, MD

Medical Director, NC Farmworker Health Program

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

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