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# COVID-19 Agricultural Employer & Farmworker Advocate Toolkit

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AgHealth  
Central States  
Center for Agricultural  
Safety and Health

# SARS-CoV2 / COVID-19 OVERVIEW

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is a virus that causes COVID-19, which mainly affects the lungs and is spread by respiratory droplets

The virus is mainly spread between people who are in close contact with one another.

- Respiratory droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can remain in the air for minutes or hours.
- Droplets can land on surfaces and contaminate them. An individual who touches their eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface is at risk of becoming infected.
- Some infections can be spread by airborne exposure when small droplets and particles of virus linger in the air. The virus may be able to infect people who are further than 6 feet away from the person who is infected or after that person has left the space.

The virus can be spread by people who have **NO** symptoms.

# SARS-CoV2 / COVID-19 INFECTION

A person infected with the virus may experience symptoms 2-14 days after exposure. Symptoms may range from mild to severe and include fever, chills, shortness of breath, new loss of taste and/or smell, congestion or runny nose, and others.

If a worker experiences any of these symptoms, call **911** immediately or your local emergency facility:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in chest
- Confusion
- Unable to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

# SARS-CoV2 / COVID-19 PREVENTION

COVID-19 can be prevented.

- **Wear a mask** that covers your nose and mouth.
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- **Watch your distance.** Stay 6 feet apart from people that do not live with you.

For more information about proper handwashing:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>



Source: Protus, <http://www.proteusinc.net/2020/04/news-proteus-collecting-face-masks-for-farmworkers/>

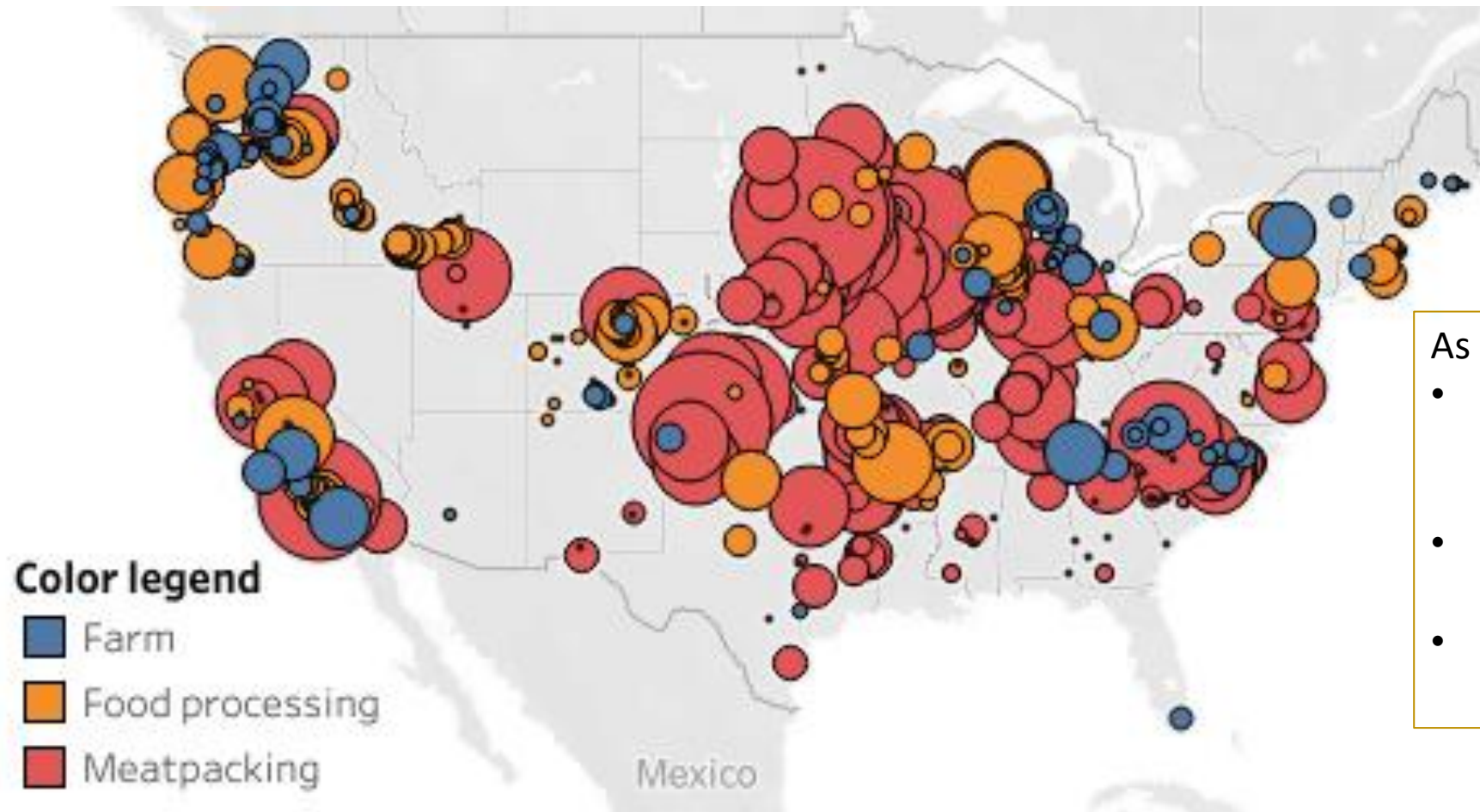
# FARMWORKER RISKS

Farmworkers have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 due to:

- Close contact with other workers (distance)
- Long periods of time in close contact with others (duration of contact)
- Sharing of equipment, tools, and vehicles
- Shared housing and/or transportation

Farmworkers face additional social and job-related conditions that may increase their risk such as limited sanitation facilities, job-related respiratory exposures (i.e., dust, pesticides), mobile lifestyle, low health literacy, limited language appropriate and accurate health information, and limited access to testing and treatment resources.

# COVID-19 OUTBREAKS IN THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM



As of April 19, 2021:

- 407 farms and production facilities have confirmed COVID-19 cases
- 13,604 farmworkers have tested positive for COVID-19
- 43 farmworkers have died from COVID-19

# HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS



The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests implementing a **Hierarchy of Controls** to protect workers from illnesses such as COVID-19.

# HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

## Engineering & Administrative Controls (Isolate people & change the way they work)

- Ensure proper sanitation, cleaning, and disinfection of equipment and other areas within the farm
- Perform screening when workers come in (e.g., temperature and symptom checks)
- Group the same workers in shift throughout the day to limit contact between individuals as well as the potential spread of virus if present
- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between workers (if possible)
- Actively encourage workers to stay home if experiencing symptoms or feeling sick
- Provide paid time off for workers to isolate and/or quarantine
- Require the use of face masks

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Provide workers with appropriate face mask or respirator, face shield, supply of gloves, and other personal protective equipment as necessary
- Train all workers on proper use of PPE
- Provide proper hand sanitation facilities (i.e., soap, water, and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) at convenient locations across the farm premises



# SICK WORKERS

Monitor and manage sick workers accordingly

- Workers who develop a temperature equal to or higher than 100.4 °F or [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) should immediately be separated from others.
- Ensure sick workers avoid contact with animals or other livestock.
- Send home sick workers if possible.
- Provide sick workers with contact information local hospitals, clinics, and testing sites.
- Inform other workers who were in close contact with the infected worker that they have been exposed and next steps to take (e.g., quarantine, testing, symptom monitoring).
- Provide alternative housing accommodations for sick workers who cannot isolate in their home.
  - Congregate housing with a sick worker should restrict number of people in a room, maintain 6-foot distance between individuals, and ensure daily cleaning of each room.
  - For more information on managing COVID-19 in shared housing, visit:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/shared-congregate-house/guidance-shared-congregate-housing.html>

# TESTING

Coordinate any diagnostic testing with a local healthcare provider or state and local public health officials.

- Test Nebraska: <https://www.testnebraska.com>
- Local Public Health Departments may provide COVID-19 testing. To locate a public health department near you, visit:  
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services:  
<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Local-Health-Departments.aspx>

Farmworkers awaiting test results should quarantine.

# RETURN TO WORK AFTER COVID-19

Farmworkers may be permitted to continue to work following COVID-19 exposure if they continue to be asymptomatic and do not test positive.

- Follow CDC's Critical Infrastructure Guidance:

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-infrastructure-sectors.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fcritical-workers%2Fimplementing-safety-practices.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-infrastructure-sectors.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fcritical-workers%2Fimplementing-safety-practices.html)

- COVID-19 positive with SYMPTOMS can discontinue isolation:
  - After at least 10 days have passed since symptoms began AND
  - After at least 24 hours without a fever or use of fever reducing medications AND
  - Other symptoms have improved
- COVID-19 positive with NO SYMPTOMS
  - May discontinue isolation 10 days after the **POSITIVE TEST RESULT**

# VACCINATION TIMELINE

## Phase 1A

- Healthcare workers
- Long-term care residents

## Phase 1B

- Age 65+
- Other essential workers
  - **Food, agriculture, and food processing (Tier 2)**

Phase	Population Group	January	February	March	April	May	June - Dec
1A	Healthcare and long term care facility residents	[Red bar]					
1B	Persons aged 65 and older		[Green bar]				
1B	First responders, utilities, homeless shelter staff, corrections staff, educators		[Green bar]				
1B	Funeral homes, grocery, food processing			[Green bar]			
1B	Transportation, US postal service, public transit			[Green bar]			
1C	Congregate living (residential treatments, corrections, homeless shelters)			[Blue bar]			
2A	Persons aged 50-64				[Dark Blue bar]		
2B	Persons aged 16-49					[Dark Blue bar]	



# VACCINATIONS

**COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. They are approved under an Emergency Use Authorization from the federal government. Receiving the vaccine is important because:**

- 1. It can protect you against getting COVID-19.**
  - 2. Vaccination is an important step in stopping the pandemic.**
- These vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. A person may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal.
  - It typically takes two weeks after a person is fully vaccinated for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19.
  - People who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

For more information on the benefits of getting vaccinated: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>



# VACCINATIONS

Local public health departments are coordinating vaccination in Nebraska. Contact a local health department or community health clinic to learn more.

**Nebraska COVID-19 Vaccine Information Hotline**

**(531) 249-1873 / Toll Free: (833) 998-2275**

- Individuals may register to be notified about eligibility to receive the COVID-19 vaccine either online at <https://vaccinate.ne.gov> or by phone (833) 998-2275.
- Individuals may also search for local pharmacies that may be distributing the vaccine: <https://vaccinefinder.org/search/>

# VACCINATIONS

- Proof of citizenship is NOT be required to receive the vaccine.
- U.S. Surgeon General stated that, "information collected during vaccination process will NOT be used in any way, shape, or form to harm people legally."

For more information or questions regarding immigration legal status, contact the Immigrant Legal Center: (402) 898.1349/  
[info@immigrantlc.org](mailto:info@immigrantlc.org)



# EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR VACCINATION

- Employers can provide farmworkers with COVID-19 information and encourage workers to get vaccinated.
- Depending on the number of workers, agricultural employers may want to explore opportunities to offer free, onsite COVID-19 vaccination in conjunction with the local health department.
- Employers should try to stagger workers' vaccinations so that potential side effects do not disrupt operations. This may be particularly important for the 2nd dose, as there have been more frequent reports of side effects.



## KEY RESOURCES

CDC Interim Guidance for Agriculture Employers and Workers:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-agricultural-workers.html>

CDC Agricultural Employer Checklist:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Agricultural-Employer-checklist.pdf>



# QUESTIONS

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