



# GUIDANCE

## ALERT

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## Farmworkers and the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

### Temporary Worker Housing COVID-19 Guidance

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### PREPARE. EDUCATE. PREVENT. ISOLATE. COMMUNICATE.

NCDOL urges employers and employees to be aware of their role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Employers have asked for guidance on what to do to respond to the spread of COVID-19 disease. Employers should already be taking preventative actions now and should be using all resources available to prepare for and respond to the outbreak.

#### *PREPARE—Develop a plan and be prepared*

- Develop a plan for how you will care for and isolate sick farmworkers and how you will quarantine (separate) exposed farmworkers from nonexposed farmworkers.
  - Your plan should include how you will communicate with and provide food, water, transportation, and other supplies to isolated and quarantined farmworkers.
  - If you do not have adequate space on the farm to isolate sick workers or quarantine exposed workers, contact the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) at 1-888-892-1162 or text questions to 898211 for their assistance in determining alternate housing arrangements. These agencies or staff at the 211 information and referral service should also be able to answer any other questions or concerns you have about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
  - If you have separate housing available that has not been certified, contact NCDOL at 919-707-7820.
- Develop a regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule for farmworker housing (including kitchen, dining, and bathroom facilities), transportation vehicles, and other commonly used areas. Determine who will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting and follow-up to confirm it is completed.
- Provide cleaning/disinfectant supplies, running water, soap, paper towels, tissues, gloves and masks in all housing and work sites. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the use of non-medical, cloth-based face coverings. Surgical masks should be reserved for healthcare workers.
- Create a list of important phone numbers such as the local health department, the closest migrant health clinic, NCDHHS and NCDOL.

#### *EDUCATE—Educate yourself, family members and farmworkers about COVID-19*

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within six feet).
  - When an infected person coughs or sneezes.
  - When touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.
- The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 may include:
  - Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, fatigue, congestion, runny nose, loss of sense of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Visit the **CDC's web page** for updates.
  - Symptoms may not occur for two to 14 days after initial exposure.

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- Isolation time frames per the CDC:
  - Persons with COVID-like symptoms who have not been tested or have received a positive test may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:
    - At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
    - At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication and
    - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving \*\* Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation
    - If you had severe illness from COVID-19 (you were admitted to a hospital and needed oxygen), your healthcare provider may recommend that you stay in isolation for longer than 10 days after your symptoms first appeared (possibly up to 20 days) and you may need to finish your period of isolation at home.
  - Persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms may discontinue home isolation when at least ten days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and have had no subsequent illness.

## **PREVENT**—*The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed*

- Arrange beds in all farmworker housing at least six feet apart, if possible.
- Encourage workers to practice social distancing (stay at least six feet away from other people); avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth; and to stay home when sick.
- Encourage workers to wash their hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Confirm that farmworker housing (including kitchen, dining, and bathroom facilities), transportation vehicles, and other commonly used areas and surfaces are cleaned and disinfected daily.
- Group workers into groups of fewer than 10 people that will share the same bathroom, kitchen, transportation and worksites. Workers should maintain a distance of six feet from other workers. Prevent contact between these groups as much as possible.
- Encourage the use of cloth face coverings when around those who don't live in your household.
- Limit close congregation for social or dining activities.
- Post handouts about coronavirus prevention and symptoms in English and Spanish in multiple locations around the farm (e.g., housing, kitchen facilities, bathrooms, shop, break areas, porta johns, field sanitation units, etc.).

## **ISOLATE**—*Separate sick and exposed farmworkers from others*

- If an individual is COVID-positive or is exhibiting symptoms, they should be separated from the rest of the farmworkers and put in an isolated area away from others. Separate sleeping, bathroom, and kitchen facilities for symptomatic or COVID-positive farmworkers are recommended per NCDHHS.
- If you are unable to completely isolate a COVID-positive individual, then separate the individual from the rest of the workers to the best of your ability and enforce safety protocols (wearing a mask, six feet of separation, frequent disinfecting shared spaces, etc) when others are near the individual. Also, contact your local health department, emergency management or NCDHHS to determine if any community resources are available.
- Farmworkers who are sick or showing respiratory symptoms should NOT return to work until they meet the CDC guidelines listed above.

## **COMMUNICATE**—*Communication is the key to success*

- Seek medical advice if you or your farmworkers develop symptoms.
- Talk to your workers daily to determine if anyone is not feeling well, if additional supplies are needed, and to provide updates about COVID-19.
- Contact your local health department, as required, to report any suspected or known cases of communicable disease, such as COVID-19. The health department will guide you on your specific situation, including if, when, and how to test farmworkers.
- Contact NCDOL to report any changes related to migrant farmworker housing.

*This document was revised on December 15, 2020 and may be subject to change.*

