

Farmworker Housing: Implications for Health Care Providers

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The Health Effects of Substandard Housing on Farmworker Health



Ann Moss Joyner

Cedar Grove Institute for Sustainable Communities, Inc.

In the News

- Recently, the lead-contaminated water in Flint MI reminds cannot take the safety our water supply, neighbor-
- Water in 34% farmworker camps 2012 study exceeded EPA levels for coliform (associated with diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, UTIs, respiratory illness).
- >40% of wells in farmworker communities in San Joaquin Valley, California exceeded limits for nitrates (SIDS, blue-baby syndrome, heart defects and other risks).



Across the Nation – in Isolated Communities

Nearly half a million Texans live in substandard conditions in 2,300 unincorporated and isolated border towns with limited access to potable water, sewer systems, electricity, sanitary housing or health care.

- Ramshaw, 2011



And in Urban Cities

In Modesto CA, over 20,000 residents

(primarily-Latinos)

live in urban neighborhoods (lots avg. 1/7 ac.)

surrounded by the city yet

without urban rights, infrastructure or services:

- No political representation in the city that surrounds them.
- No sewer;
- No streetlights;
- No stormwater drainage facilities;
- No trash pick up.
- No local police protection.

**Without City Trash Pickup,
neighborhoods become dumping grounds.**



**Without adequate police surveillance,
dumpers know they're not likely to get caught.**

No sidewalks or stormwater management
means arriving at school with soaked shoes, socks and
pantlegs –
or walking in the street



From Washington State...

Where “most farmworkers are dependent on temporary housing, and much of it is dilapidated and unsafe.”



- Familias Unidas por la Justicia

To North Carolina...

Which “relies more heavily on guest workers than other states, and the proportions of farmworkers living in mobile homes or labor camps varies greatly from one community to another.”

- FarmworkerJustice.org 1914



Housing and Health: What do we know?

Limited research literature on Farmworker housing
and health

BUT

- Studies of the general population apply.
- A National Academy of Sciences study (2008) concluded that “a large share” of farmworkers still experience health risks associated with their housing.

Housing problems and health effects include:

- Overpayment = little \$ left for food, health care, etc.
- Overcrowding = difficulty in maintaining hygienic conditions, stress effects (anxiety, depression), lack of privacy, reduced safety and security, and respiratory and infectious diseases.
- Lack of sufficient showers = increased inside pesticide contamination as residents wait to bathe; persistence of antibiotic-resistant staph in nasal passages of hog workers.



-“Harvest of Dignity,” UNC-TV

Housing problems and health effects include:

- Poor construction and disrepair = increased risk of falls, fires, injuries, and insect and rodent problems.
- Leaking roofs, walls, and foundations = respiratory problems from mold, viruses, etc.



Housing problems and health effects include:

- Poor ventilation and faulty heating and a/c = respiratory disease, allergies, asthma, heat stress and hinder physical recovery from field work.
- Older homes = lead-based paint and lead in pipes = neurological damage.
- Lack of clean water = Pathogens, parasites and nitrates (*E. Coli*, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, hepatitis, and *Giardia lamblia*).

Housing problems and health effects include:

- Pesticide contamination from proximity to fields and orchards = headaches, neurological damage, cancer and other health problems.
- Lack of safe facilities for physical activity and play = increased stress, obesity, diabetes and crime..



-“Harvest of Dignity,” UNC-TV



- Lack of safe, private storage facilities = increased stress and vulnerability to crime, reduced safety and hygiene.
- Insufficient lighting to read, write or do homework.
- Unsafe electrical = increased risk of fire.
- Inadequate kitchen facilities = insect and rodent problems.



-“Harvest of Dignity,” UNC-TV

Obtaining first-hand information on your farmworker clients' housing can be difficult, but it has important implications for their health and your ability to deliver meaningful, lasting improvements in health.



- Farmworker Advocacy Network

For specific information on the research literature on farmworker health and housing as detailed in our Nov. 1, 2015 article in ***New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy***, email ann@mcmoss.org.