Educating to Improve Hispanic Agricultural Worker Safety and Professionalism based on the Interaction of Two Languages Spoken at Work: A Teaching Methodology for Hispanic Agricultural Workers

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Abstract

The United States farm labor is mainly comprised of Hispanic workers, and the majority of workers come from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Currently in the United States, Hispanic workers have the highest rate of fatal accidents in comparison with other ethnic worker populations. The United States agricultural workers are facing many difficulties but the language barrier is one of the most important factors affecting their job safety and limiting their professional development. How to approach this issue poses a challenge to provide educational alternatives based on current agricultural migration facts and job requirements. The purpose of the poster is to explain a methodology used to educate Hispanic agricultural workers to increase their English vocabulary terminology used at work, increase technical knowledge and prepare them for certification programs only offered in English.

The following are the main points presented in the poster: 1) A conceptual framework used to design educational programs for Hispanic agricultural workers; 2) A description of the Hispanic agricultural workforce and their job educational needs; 3) Program design and teaching methodology; 4) Outreach strategies and program development; 5) Collecting data for program evaluation and reporting results.

For Hispanic agricultural workers the language barrier is one of the most critical issues for job development and preventing accidents at work. Regardless of the type of agricultural work Hispanic workers are hired to do; they always would have the need to communicate with non-Spanish speaking supervisors. Failure to understand safety instructions can put Hispanic workers at high risk or death. Farm safety training programs can be very effective but they need to be designed to increase English language terminologies to reduce accidents and improve communication at work. To design effective training programs educators must understand the Hispanic agricultural workers culture and how they interact in their job environment. In addition of helping Hispanic agricultural workers reduce non-fatal and fatal accidents in Florida, this extension program helped 577 Hispanic workers get their pesticide license certification resulting in an economic salary impact of 2.8 million dollars.

Keywords: Agricultural worker safety training; Teaching methodology for Hispanic agricultural workers