



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2020

Agricultural Essential Worker Cards Issued to Farmworkers

VENTURA, Calif. – The County of Ventura, in a collaboration with the County Executive Office, the Farmworker Resource Program and the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, has provided Agricultural Essential Worker Cards to be used during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The cards are printed in English and Spanish, allow for employment information to be added, and identify the card holder as an essential worker for critical infrastructure.

“This program is voluntary, free and created after various growers, community organizations and farmworkers shared that employees were afraid to go to work during the Ventura County “Stay Well at Home” Public Health Order,” said Rosa Gonzalez, County Executive Office, Community Liaison. “Agricultural Essential Worker cards are intended to ease employees’ concerns when traveling to and from work. Farmworkers are providing food on our tables and sustaining our nation’s food supply during this pandemic. Their work is critically important during this time and throughout the year. We don’t want them to be afraid. We hope these cards ease their fears,” she added.

“I want to say how grateful I am to all of the hardworking farmers, farmworkers, pest control workers, fresh food packers and all those who bring high quality food from our fields and ranches to our communities near and far. Our food system is critical to our County and Nation’s collective health,” said Ed Williams, County of Ventura Agricultural Commissioner.

“The Essential Agricultural Worker cards issued to farmworkers will provide a level of assurance that those working to keep this part of our critical infrastructure going can continue to provide their invaluable service to the public with the full support of law enforcement and regulators,” he added.

If you are interested in providing these cards to your employees, please contact the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office at (805) 388-4222, or you can email your requests to lena.stehly@ventura.org. Please indicate in your request how many cards you would like to be issued.

“Our farmworkers are essential to providing food. The County of Ventura is distributing these “essential worker identification cards” to local growers, to voluntarily use them and share with farmworkers during this time,” said Talia Barrera, County of Ventura Farmworker Resource Program Manager.

The Farmworker Resource Program, launched in July 2019, was developed by the Board of Supervisors and an eight-member advisory committee at the recommendation of Supervisors Steve Bennett and John Zaragoza. “We are most appreciative of the commitment and engagement of the Farmworker Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives appointed by the Farm Bureau and the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP). The committee engaged the voice of both the farmworker and agricultural community to best inform the design and implementation elements of the program- which has been recognized as a model program,” said Melissa Livingston, Chief Deputy Director of the Human Services Agency.



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The program coordinators assist in facilitating prompt resolutions to workplace concerns such as payroll issues and working conditions, navigating services available from public agencies, and leveraging existing resources. The program is staffed by two trilingual employees who speak Mixteco, Spanish and English, are knowledgeable about the agricultural industry, and serve as outreach resources to farmworkers and their employers.

The partnerships developed through this program have been helpful in the COVID-19 response and outreach. 30,000 educational outreach materials have been provided with Farmworker paychecks, information has been provided through WhatsApp which helps community members who do not read or write, videos have been created in multiple languages and new platforms have been developed on social media to share the message.

Through effective outreach activities, the Farmworker Resource Program has established partnerships between healthcare, education, human services and many other agencies that serve the agricultural community. "This program is an innovative approach to both supporting the County's 43,000 farmworkers and helping growers meet their need for workers," said Supervisor Bennett.

"I am a longtime supporter of farmworkers, farmers and our agricultural industry in Ventura County," said Supervisor Zaragoza. "The program is providing a friendly gateway for farmworkers to seek helpful resources and address their concerns. With the support of the Board of Supervisors we have created an environment where farmworkers and growers can improve working relationships and during a time of emergency this is essential."

For additional program information, call (805) 385-1899, email HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org or visit www.ventura.org/human-services-agency/farmworker-resources/.

"Building trust and relationships with farmworkers, employers, farmers, and advocates has allowed this program to be very successful in assisting with resolutions for workplace issues. These partnerships have been so helpful during this time of emergency. We are working together to help support people when they need it most," said Program Coordinator Israel Vazquez-Nicolas.

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