



Meeting Minutes: Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers

DATE: 8/15/2022

MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ

Attendance

Committee Members

Present

Andrea Vaubel, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Elise Riveness, Project Manager and Outreach Coordinator, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

Erik Zabel, Epidemiologist Principal, Minnesota Department of Health

Rodolfo Gutierrez, Executive Director, HACER

Tamara Nelsen, Executive Director, Minnesota AgriGrowth Council

Absent

Dan Glessing, President, Minnesota Farm Bureau

Emilia Gonzalez Avalos, Executive Director, Unidos MN

Gary Wertish, President, Minnesota Farmers Union

Jim Gleb, President, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1189

Kiza Olson, CHS Administrator, Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services

Lorrie Janatopoulos, CareerForce Director, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Nicole Blissenbach, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

Rena Wong, Director of Organizing, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663

Sarah Berry, Public Health Director, Waseca County | CHS Administrator, Le Sueur – Waseca Community Health Board

Stephanie Low, Interim Executive Director/ Chief Medical Officer, Community Health Service Inc.

Staff Present: Cinthia Martinez, CareerForce Office Coordinator, Minnesota Department of

Employment and Economic Development; Maureen Ramirez, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Valerie Gamble, State Program Admin Principal, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Agenda:

1:30 PM **Welcome**

1:03 PM **Introductions**

1:04 PM **Approve Minutes**

1:05 PM **Migrant Services Consortium**

1:10 PM **Update on Employer Engagement Forum**

1:15 PM **LG Peggy Flanagan visit**

1:25 PM **Root Cause Coalition Presentation**

1:40 PM **SMRLS/HACER presentation & Discussion**

2:15 PM **Public Comments**

2:20 PM **Final Thoughts**

2:30 PM **Adjourn**

Meeting notes

Guest Present /Introductions:

Adriana Campbell, Health Program Representative, Minnesota Department of Health

Griselt Andrade Lead Attorney, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)

Hannah Dereje, Public Engagement Liaison, Governor's office

Janie Sandoval, Migrant Labor Representative, Department of Employment and Economic Development
Stephanie Devitt

Jeanette- Garcia- Planner Senior State, Minnesota Department of Health

Josefina Chavez, Customer Service Representative Senior, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Lidibette Guzman- State Monitor Advocate for Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers Services, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Nico Bauer, Director of Public Engagement, Governor's office

Peggy Flanagan, Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota

Please help us in welcoming our new/confirmed members of this Committee

- Elise Riveness
- Lorrie Janatopoulos
- Erik Zabel

Approve Minutes & Agenda

Approved.

Migrant Services Consortium

The Migrant Services Consortium will meet on August 17, 2022, from 9-10 am. A committee member is requested to attend this meeting to provide an update on the AWWC.

Erik Zabel has agreed to join.

Update on Employer Engagement Forum

Committee member Tamara Nelsen, met with Maureen Ramirez and Valerie Gamble to discuss working together or joining events already scheduled to facilitate outreach and engagement between Committee and agricultural employers. In addition to informing employers of the committee's work, the objective is to seek input from employers on their initiatives to improve worker safety and well-being. The group is working on organizing a virtual event/discussion sometime this fall – MDA and DEED staff to inform Tamara of any dates to avoid. If anyone has suggestions on who to include, please let us know.

LG Peggy Flanagan visit

On behalf of LG Peggy Flanagan and Governor Walz, she expressed her sincere gratitude for the work this committee has done and continues to do. The work of this committee has resulted in many great solutions to many problems. The last legislation was disappointing, and a lot of effort was put into creating the proposals. However, that work still remains incredibly valuable, and we will be sure to

advocate for them. As we move forward into next year, the Governor's office will continue to support your efforts.

Please know that we will keep pushing and fighting to ensure these workers have the support they need.

Root Cause Coalition Presentation

Title: Health Equity in Rural Communities – Lessons of COVID-19's Impact on Food System Workers

Overview: The U.S. food production system is increasingly dependent on immigrant and migrant workers to staff everything from food processing plants to farm fields. Minnesota's meat packing plants were among the first COVID "Hot Spots" early in the pandemic. The movement of COVID through rural migrant and immigrant communities shone a light on how social determinants of health like housing and wages create unique barriers to health equity for those who staff our food system. In 2021, Governor Tim Walz signed an executive order creating the Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health and Wellbeing of Agriculture and Food Processing Workers to both support the unique needs of agriculture and food processing workers during the pandemic, and to recommend legislative changes to support their health and safety into the future.

Panelists:

- Stephanie Devitt, SDK
- Andrea Vaubel, MN Department of Agriculture
- (NAME), DEED
- (NAME), DOL
- Mateo (name), Minnesota Department of Health
- (NAME), Local public health

Proposed Outline

- Set up presentation: COVID in meat packing (SDK - 5 min); COVID in migrant workers (State – 5 min)
- Discussion:
- What can be done at a policy level to protect the health of food system workers?
- What are the unique needs and challenges of food system workers working in fields vs. processing plants?
- What is the potential impact of protecting the health of food system workers on health equity in rural communities?
- How can people in urban areas stay informed?

SMRLS/HACER presentation & Discussion

Presentation in meeting documents

Public comments

None

Final thoughts

Maureen Ramirez will be leaving DEED on August 16, and would like to thank everyone for their hard work, support, and dedication throughout this committee.

Adjourn