



## COVID-19 Farmworker Testing FAQs

*No community is immune to coronavirus, and that includes our farm workforce, and it's important that you take steps to protect your employees. Below, you'll find frequently asked questions, and some resources to support you in this process.*

*The State of Connecticut has launched multiple campaigns to encourage COVID-19 testing among high risk residents including elderly, those living in densely populated urban areas and those, like many farm workers, who live in congregate settings.*

*Our campaign, *Knowing is Better* or *¡Fuera Covid!* includes a toolkit to help you promote testing. The toolkit includes print-ready images, text and social media posts that can be modified with information unique to each organization and community. The tool kit can be downloaded for free in English and Spanish at <https://knowingisbetterct.org/toolkit/>.*

### **What are best practices employers can implement to minimize farm worker exposure to COVID-19?**

**Employer Action Steps:** Your farm workforce is not immune to coronavirus, please begin taking steps to protect yourself and your employees.

1. Talk with your employees about coronavirus, how it spreads, and how to prevent becoming infected.
2. Print the **CDC factsheets and posters**, post in your workplace and employee housing facilities.
3. Provide guidance to help employees clean and disinfect employer-provided housing, and follow up with employees and manage the process to be sure that this happens. Set up a regular weekly and daily schedule for cleaning and view the CDC guidance for cleaning homes: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html>
4. Clean and disinfect your workplace. The employee breakroom and bathroom are places where the virus may be easily transmitted. Clean and disinfect any areas where employees congregate or routinely touch items such as doorknobs, time clocks, tools, and computer keyboards. Set up daily and weekly cleaning schedules.
5. Provide cleaning supplies such as cleaning and sanitizing solutions, buckets, mops, brushes, etc. for cleaning at work and for those living in employer-provided housing. (CDC list of approved antimicrobial cleaning products: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list\\_03-03-2020.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf))
6. Review your sick leave policy. The first advice for people who are sick is to stay home except to get medical care. If you do not provide paid sick leave for your employees, consider that employees may feel financially obligated to come to work even if they are sick.
7. Ensure employees know that they should stay home if they are sick or are showing symptoms of coronavirus. Employees sometimes come to work believing they will face punishment or firing if they miss work. Be sure your employees understand that their health and that of their co-workers' comes first. Communicate and plan to cover for sick employees. The CDC provides posters in **English** and **Spanish** covering symptoms of novel coronavirus.
8. Prepare your disaster contingency plan. What will you do if 50% of your employees become sick and unable to work? Are there neighboring farms who might be able to share resources in an emergency?

Who will manage for a few weeks if you or another key manager are unable to leave your house or are hospitalized?

- Cornell provides the **Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)** to provide community education resources across the entire disaster cycle of preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Penn State also provides farm **disaster preparedness resources**.

Additional resources specific to farming operations are available [here](#).

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Who do I contact that is a part of the state's testing program to test my farm employees at no cost to them?**

Farm operators should contact the following:

- Community Health Center Association of CT: Russell Dexter, [rdexter@chact.org](mailto:rdexter@chact.org), (860) 895-3242 (cell)
- CHC, Inc: Melissa Thibeault, [Thibeam@chc1.com](mailto:Thibeam@chc1.com), (860) 983-2990 (cell)

### **Are all farm employees eligible for testing?**

Yes, all farm employees are eligible, including retail staff and field staff. It is best practice to test all employees at approximately the same time

### **What costs will the farm incur for COVID-19 testing of farm employees?**

There is no cost to the farm operator to conduct COVID-19 testing of employees per the state's high-risk testing program.

### **Do farm employees need insurance or provide documentation?**

There is no insurance or documentation required for individuals being tested. They should provide a phone number and if possible, an address when they are tested. This information will not be used for any purpose other than for sharing results and coordinating medical services/contact tracing if needed.

### **Upon requesting an on-farm site testing, how far out are mobile centers scheduling?**

Farm operators are encouraged to contact a state testing partner to schedule as soon as possible.

### **Is there a minimum number of tests that need to be administered to make it feasible for on-farm testing?**

There is no minimum number of tests in order to conduct on-site testing.

### **How frequently should COVID-19 tests be administered?**

Regularly testing asymptomatic individuals in our most vulnerable communities and settings is critical to protecting the state's most vulnerable populations. Currently, the Department of Public Health (DPH) guidance suggests testing one-time monthly for most populations in this category.

### **How quickly are test results available?**

Under the state high risk program, test results should come back within 24-72 hours.

### **What procedures should be implemented between testing and notification of results?**

While you are waiting for your test results, it is very important to stay at home and isolate yourself to avoid spreading your symptoms to others.

### **If a farm worker tests positive, will the employer be notified? If so, how?**

If a farm worker tests positive, their name and contact information will be shared with staff at the DPH for the contact tracing program. Someone from DPH, or the local health department, will call them to ask for a list of people they have been in close contact with while sick or just before getting sick. A farm worker can provide written consent to share their results with their employer. Contact tracers will not share your personal information.

### **How do I address farm employee concerns about testing?**

Testing for farm workers under this program is fast, free, painless, and available for all workers – symptomatic or asymptomatic. Employees should be assured that information remains private and confidential. Contact tracers will only reach out for health matters related to COVID-19 and not for any other reason. Inform employees that medical and other support will be made available if they test positive. Testing is the best way to protect ourselves and our loved ones as it helps identify an outbreak before it spreads.

### **Are there certain amenities necessary to do on-farm testing?**

It's ideal, but not necessary to have on site:

- Water and power source
- Open space - outside or inside
- Climate controlled environment

### **Who do I contact to discuss farm employee health care concerns outside of COVID-19 testing?**

The CT River Valley Farm Workers Health Program provides additional medical and dental services to farm employees.

### **Contacts**

Community Health Center Association of CT

[www.chcact.org](http://www.chcact.org)

Russell Dexter, [rdexter@chact.org](mailto:rdexter@chact.org), (860) 895-3242 (cell)

Community Health Centers, Inc.

[www.chc1.com](http://www.chc1.com)

Melissa Thibeault, [ThibeaM@chc1.com](mailto:ThibeaM@chc1.com), (860) 983-2990 (cell)

UConn Health Migrant Farm Worker Clinic

Bruce Gould, 860-679-4322, [Gould@uchc.edu](mailto:Gould@uchc.edu)

Connecticut River Valley Farm Workers Health Program

[www.crvfhp.org](http://www.crvfhp.org)

Hartford Health Care

[www.hartfordhealthcare.org](http://www.hartfordhealthcare.org)

**Additional resources:**

Click [here](#) for additional FAQs on testing in Connecticut.

Click [here](#) for COVID-19 Interim Guidance from the CDC & the U.S. Department of Labor for Agricultural Workers and Employers.

Click [here](#) for CRVFHP COVID-19 resources.

Click [here](#) for migratory and seasonal agricultural worker specific resources from National Center for Farmworker Health on COVID-19.