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To: Employers of migrant and seasonal workers, health care providers, local and tribal health officers

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Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recommends testing migrant and seasonal workers for COVID-19 prior to departure at the end of the work season

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Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, employers have taken measures to protect migrant and seasonal workers from COVID-19 through symptom screening, workplace safety enhancements, and proactive testing for workers at the start of the season. These measures have been critically important in reducing the risk of disease transmission, particularly among migrant workers living in congregate housing. As migrant and seasonal workers leave Wisconsin to return home or pursue employment in other states, it is important to take steps to protect workers and ensure that they are appropriately screened before traveling.

This memo describes recommended public health measures employers should implement to reduce the risk of COVID-19 among migrant and seasonal workers at the end of a season. Prevention measures are also briefly reviewed below for those who will remain working in Wisconsin.

Recommendations

Worker screening prior to departure from Wisconsin

Daily screening for COVID-19 symptoms should occur throughout the season for all migrant and seasonal workers, and symptom screening should also be performed at the end of the season. Any symptomatic employees should be immediately referred to a healthcare provider for COVID-19 testing. To further reduce risk, **employers should consider offering COVID-19 testing to all migrant and seasonal workers, regardless of symptoms, prior to departure at the end of the season.** Testing is a critical tool that can identify workers who are minimally symptomatic or asymptomatic, and prevent them from transmitting the virus to co-workers, people with whom they are traveling, and other community members.

Pre-travel symptom screening and testing helps reduce the chance of introducing COVID-19 into other workplaces and communities. Employers are encouraged to partner with local healthcare providers for testing or refer workers to a [local community test site](#).

Employers who test all migrant and seasonal workers prior to departure are encouraged to work closely with medical providers who can appropriately interpret test results, as well as their local health department and other organizations to assist in the management of any workers who will need to complete isolation or quarantine before traveling from the work site. Accurate contact information that includes personal phone number and forwarding address for each employee should be collected and is essential for public health follow-up.

Because of the impact that isolation and quarantine may have on workers' livelihoods, employers and healthcare providers should explain the reasons for testing and partner with local health departments or community organizations to support workers during the quarantine or isolation period. Individuals testing positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts are prohibited from taking public transportation such as bus or airplane during their isolation and quarantine periods.

Review of current best practices to prevent COVID-19 among migrant and seasonal workers

All employers should have a plan for preventing COVID-19 transmission and appropriately managing ill workers at their worksite. Employers are encouraged to review Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation/DHS [general re-opening guidelines for businesses](#) that describes sanitation measures, worker symptom screening, protective equipment use, physical distancing recommendations, and other measures that can be used to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace. The Department of Workforce Development has adopted Emergency Rule 2014 ([EmR 2014](#)), which affects Ch. DWD 301, Migrant Labor Law. EmR 2014 imposes additional requirements on migrant housing, field sanitation and worker transportation for prevention of exposure to and spread of COVID-19.

Employers are encouraged to partner with healthcare organizations to provide COVID-19 testing for all migrant and seasonal workers at the start of the season to prevent the introduction of disease into worksites and congregate housing. Migrant and seasonal workers who begin their employment mid-season should also receive COVID-19 testing before joining other workers. Employers should coordinate with their local health department and have a plan for how they report and take appropriate actions if any workers are diagnosed with COVID-19. This includes plans for appropriate isolation and quarantine of workers if a case of COVID-19 is identified.

Employers should be prepared for COVID-19 outbreaks in their workforce. Congregate housing increases the risk for rapid transmission of the disease. A plan to conduct daily symptom screening, prompt referral for COVID-19 testing, and appropriate isolation of cases and quarantine of close contacts should be in place. If a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in a congregate housing facility, it may be necessary to have a hotel or separate housing facility ready to receive workers who need to isolate or quarantine due to having COVID-19 or being exposed to someone with COVID-19. DHS recently issued [guidance for employers](#) for managing COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace.