Continuing to maintain a safe and healthy work environment for our Agricultural workers and their family members, as well as the community in general, remains a priority in the Agricultural community. While we all wait for broader distribution of vaccines, Agricultural employers strive to prevent, decrease and lower the impact of COVID-19 in our fields, workplaces, homes, and community. Food production and maintaining our national food supply chain are essential while protecting the health of our workers and the broader community.

These practices are based on reviews of our existing, stringent practices this group put in place early in the pandemic, aligned with the best practices offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), CA Department of Public Health (CDPH), World Health Organization, and public health departments.

Through this Advisory, all listed organizations support and encourage the Agricultural community to expeditiously implement these protective measures at their worksites. The objectives communicated here are: preventing and reducing transmission among Agricultural workers and their families; protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications; maintaining business operations; and, minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains, and community.

**TESTING**

- Although most cases of COVID-19 are spread in residential and social situations in Monterey County, businesses and employers play a crucial role in preventing and slowing the spread both in the workplace and community. Until there is enough natural and vaccine-induced immunity in the country, testing remains essential to combat the virus.
- Per CDC recommendations, implement testing of employees for COVID-19 into workplace preparedness, response, and control plans.
- Approaches may include:
  - Initial testing of all workers before entering a workplace.
  - Periodic testing of workers at regular intervals.
  - Targeted testing of new workers or those returning from a prolonged absence such as medical leave, furlough, or working in another location.
  - Some combination of approaches.
- Several factors may help determine the intervals for periodic testing, including the availability of testing supplies, results of the previous testing, and community transmission levels.
- The County and State offer free testing at sites throughout the community available to all; check on-line at [https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-administrative-office/office-of-emergency-services/response/covid-19](https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-administrative-office/office-of-emergency-services/response/covid-19)
- Other testing models: as an employer, you can arrange for private testing for your staff. Below are businesses that local Agricultural employers have partnered with to provide testing for their workers:
  - On-Site Testing (locally available; there may be others):
    - Virus Geeks: [https://virusgeeks.com/about](https://virusgeeks.com/about)
    - Lifeline Health: [https://wearelifelinehealth.com/](https://wearelifelinehealth.com/)
WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

- Follow the directions in the Monterey County Health Dept. COVID-19 Workplace Exposure Guidance at: https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=90872
- Require workers not to come to work if they are ill.
- Inform and encourage employees to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 if they suspect possible exposure.
- Employees at work who develop mild symptoms of being ill should be sent home immediately with information on available resources including hotline numbers for medical advice and social services; if symptoms are severe, employees should immediately call 911 and then proceed to an emergency room for treatment. The employer should provide information about self-isolation requirements and immediately conduct worksite contact tracing. Clean and disinfect all areas and surfaces that ill employees contacted.
- Educate foreman to screen and recognize COVID-19 symptoms; provide ill farm employees with information about income replacement programs (sick leave), isolation facilities, and access to health care services (either insured or uninsured).
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, the employer will be contacted by the health department. Immediate actions should be taken to protect other employees and customers and ensure transparent communication both internally and externally. Individual employee health information is protected under law.
  - These actions include identifying the employee’s work location (including multiple worksites, if applicable), work dates and hours, general and specific work duties, and the last day the employee was at work. Identify who has had contact with the employee at the worksite and during transport.
  - If unable to verify that the ill employee’s attending physician has contacted the public health department, and health authorities have not made direct contact with the employer, call the health department immediately.
    - Do not disclose the employee name unless asked to by the County Health Dept.
  - Health authorities will provide recommendations regarding the next steps in terms of identifying employees and further protective measures.
  - This employee should follow the direction and guidance of the health department or health professional, or state and federal guidelines regarding specific isolation and quarantine requirements.

HOUSING SERVICES

- Project Room Key: contact: https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/housing-programs/project-roomkey
- Housing for Harvest: Food and agriculture workers who have COVID-19 or have been exposed may be able to receive isolation support and stay in a free hotel room; contact: https://covid19.ca.gov/housing-for-agricultural-workers or call 831-769-8700.
• Wrap Around Services: Monterey County Office of Emergency Services will arrange for necessary services for isolated individuals; call 831-769-8700.
• For employer provided housing, conduct training detailing site-specific and personal protective measures to safeguard against contraction and transmission of COVID-19.
  o This includes training upon arrival for all employees (and guest workers).
  o Training should be based on public health guidance from the CDC, OSHA, state, and local public health authorities, specific to COVID-19.
  o Train employees to respect social distancing practices (6 feet), as is feasible for the site-specific area, including but not limited to living quarters. Housing arrangements should be managed to maintain employee cohort integrity.
  o Follow CDC, DOL, and state guidelines for H-2A housing; consult with health department for isolation and housing options, if needed.

SUPPLEMENTAL WAGE REPLACEMENT
• Funding is available for wage replacement for individuals unable to work due to COVID-19 exposure or diagnosis; community health workers are available to make connections to: Building Healthy Communities and United Way. Funds are supplied after individual completes the isolation process (2 weeks).

EMPLOYEE TRANSPORTATION
• Bus and vanpool transportation provided by farming and harvesting operations are encouraged to maintain safe distancing in seating configurations, as much as possible, that matches the social distancing guidance, making multiple trips as necessary; ensure facial coverings are utilized during transportation.
• Assigned seating will help to determine exposure circles should an employee become ill.
• Follow federal and state guidelines when transporting H-2A employees.
• Encourage worker-directed car-pooling efforts to incorporate protective health guidance, when appropriate; encourage carpools to include only individuals who reside together; ensure facial coverings are utilized during carpools that do not include family or living partners.

COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES
• The Agriculture trade associations and partners have established a website with information and resources to help Ag and other frontline employers more easily navigate employee COVID education, and vaccination: MontereyFrontlineCovidVaccine.com
• Info for employers is also available from the Community Foundation for Monterey County at https://www.cfmco.org/impact/covid-19-collaborative/