Lessons in health literacy:

Resources to help Latino/a migrant farm workers navigate the complex U.S. health care system

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It is estimated that there are more than 3000 Latino/a migrant dairy farm workers in Vermont, 90% of whom are undocumented (Wolcott-MacCausland, 2013). Despite their significant contribution to the state’s agricultural sector, these workers face a myriad of barriers to adequate healthcare, including lack of transportation, fear of immigration officials, insufficient language and translation services, and difficulty navigating the complex U.S. healthcare system. Sequestered on rural dairy farms, Latino/a migrant farm workers are invisible to Vermont’s citizens and their circumstances are rarely discussed. This project, in collaboration with UVM AHEC and Puentes a la Salud migrant health outreach, sought to develop culturally and linguistically suitable lesson plans for health care professionals and students to use to introduce important U.S. health care topics to Vermont’s Latino/a migrant dairy farm workers. After interviewing several Latino/a migrant farm workers, three lesson plans were created that addressed important topics, including the form and function of the U.S. health care system, paying bills, and applying for financial assistance. With feedback from farm workers, the lesson plans were adapted to be more culturally and linguistically appropriate. Though there was increased health literacy among several individuals, more work must be done to further empower Vermont’s Latino/a migrant farm workers to make their own healthcare decisions.