

Dept. of Workforce Development: Protecting migrant workers from COVID-19 is imperative to Wisconsin economy

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MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is calling for employers of migrant and seasonal workers to adhere to the Department of Health Services' (DHS) Emergency Order #25, which provides directives to ensure the safety of workers and security of the state's food supply chain.

Ensuring the safety and protection of migrant and seasonal farm workers is essential in sustaining Wisconsin's vitally important agricultural and food production and processing industries. COVID-19 can spread easily in settings with many people living in close proximity to each other. As such, farm owners and managers who provide housing and transportation for migrant workers should implement plans to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19, care for individuals with COVID-19, and prevent the spread of the disease.

“Hardworking migrant workers depend on their employers to provide safe housing, transportation, and access to food and supplies,” DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman said. “We must remember that they are critical workers and are invaluable to keep our economy going and our families fed during this difficult time.”

DHS recommends that all Wisconsin employers provide adequate safety equipment and implement six-foot social distancing measures to keep workers safe in both housing and transport.

The Order requires migrant farm employers and camp operators to:

Provide workers who exhibits signs of COVID-19 a separate, isolated living space.

- Disinfect high-touch common areas daily.
- Make reasonable effort to separate beds in dormitory or barracks-style housing by at least 6 feet.
- Make hand-washing stations and hand sanitizer available to workers in cooking and eating facilities, sleeping facilities, and in the field or in other food production or farming operations.
- Ensure workers can engage in social distancing on all transportation between work and their residences and to obtain necessary supplies and services.

It is important that workers are educated about COVID-19 and the safety recommendation provided by the CDC and DHS. Employer should coordinate with local public health to confirm that their social distancing practices conform to CDC recommendations.