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## The Effects of an Agricultural Migratory Lifestyle on Children

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The Effects of an Agricultural Migratory Lifestyle on Children

BIS 437

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper to explore medical research journals and interviews with migratory farm workers and their families to explore the effect a migratory lifestyle has on the development of a child as they constantly move from place to place as they, or their parents, seek work following crop timelines in the United States. The articles and interviews used will inform the reader of factors these children face, such as social exclusion, poverty and food insecurities, and how these obstacles affect not only the development of their physical health and growth milestones, but also how they affect the child's cognitive and mental health development. Some of these students have the additional hurdle of overcoming the hurdle of learning English as a second (or third, or fourth...) language. The interviews used in this article are from the Western Kentucky Regional Migrant Education Program (WKRMEP) students and families, with their permission to participate, as well as interviews from staff from the WKRMEP and their insight from working with these students and families as they migrate. Most common migration patterns here are notes as being to other states before coming back to Kentucky, especially during tobacco season, along with strawberry and melon harvest seasons. Medical journals used are from the American Academy of Pediatrics along with studies from the USDA, US Household Food Security Model and The American Journal of Public Health, among others.

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## The Effects of an Agricultural Migratory Lifestyle on Children

### Background of migratory agricultural farm work in the United States

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, agriculture and related farming industries provided 11% of employment in the United States for the year 2017. (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research, 2019) This percentage may seem small, but it represents 21.6 million full-time and part-time jobs around the country. Of 2.6 million of these jobs, 1.3%, were direct on-the-farm jobs. As for factory jobs, agriculture-based employment counts for 14% of all manufacturing jobs, including animal processing plants. Whether the agricultural work is with farm animals going to slaughterhouses and processing plants, or if it is with crops to be harvested, the American economy would face an even greater deficiency without farm workers. Rural economies would be among those hardest hit by such an economic struggle. Many of these farms are locally owned and not corporate facilities, and many farm workers have left rural areas to find better paying jobs in more urban and suburban areas, leaving very few to do the hard work our country relies on. Products typically used to export and trade with other countries for goods not produced here rely on these workers for their products to be available for shipment; without them, what would happen to the United States' agricultural export economy? Who will be there to do the farm work, if there are so few in rural areas who are willing, or able, to stay and do the desperately needed work?

Defining the migrant population

Before we can determine the effects migrancy has on children, we must first identify the group of people and their families we will focus on. Who lives a migratory lifestyle? Before that can be pinpointed with accuracy for the purpose of this paper, we must first determine the definition to be used of the term, “migratory”. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “migratory” as 1: of, relating to, or characterized by migration. 2: wandering, roving. (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.) The focus of this paper will be held on the effects of a migratory lifestyle on children as it pertains to those children whose families live a migratory lifestyle as agricultural farm workers in the United States of America, regardless of national origin.

For the purpose of the Migrant Education Program, a migratory agricultural worker is someone who has lived in their current school district less than three years and has at least one move identified as a qualifying move across local, state or federal school district lines. This move, within the last three years, must be documented as having occurred for economic necessity and that migratory agricultural worker engages in a qualifying temporary (less than twelve months) or seasonal (following the timeline of seasonal planting and harvesting) agricultural or fishing work capacity. Some examples of qualifying agricultural work include, but are not limited to, farm work in terms of crop or animal care, tree harvesting or planting, sawmill work, and commercial fisheries work. A migratory student is a student between the ages of three and twenty-one years who resides with a migratory agricultural worker, or is a migratory agricultural worker themselves, and has not yet completed a high school diploma, nor its equivalent, in the United States of America’s educational system. (Kentucky Department of Education, Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, 2020)

With Americans being less able to perform the duties needed for farm work labor due to moving to more urban or suburban areas in search of higher paying jobs, H2A temporary work contracts have been the go-to for many farmers still requiring workers in these hard labor jobs. Farm jobs many last anywhere from a mere few weeks, to longer term temporary contracts that begin in planting season and last through harvest season, sometimes lasting up to ten or eleven months of a calendar year period. (United States Department of Labor, n.d.) When an American farmer decides to use H2A temporary labor, usually from Mexico, there is a required process to be deemed eligible for the program. One of the first things a farmer must do is provide documentation of a need for workers and there are due to no local area American workers available for the work needing to be completed. This is proven by submitting evidence of advertisements for local area workers for a minimum of three weeks and the farmer is still in need of labor. Documentation of these advertisements can be copies or receipts of local newspaper ads, classifieds in other publications for the area such as buy-and-sell-trade publications, and online job postings. The farmer must also check with former employees to see if they are still available and document these efforts to fill the jobs, as well as those family members of the farmer being unable to help fulfill the need. Once the documentation of insufficient local area labor is complete, the farmer applies to be a Farm Labor Contractor, or FLC, and requests the needed labor from the Foreign Labor Department. (United States Department of Labor, n.d.) Typically, H2A workers do not bring their families as their visas to enter the United States are temporary and non-resident visas. These workers in our area of the United States are usually male and at least 18 years of age, though some workers are also female. Generally, women are prevalent to the shorter-term contracts that are closer to the border of Mexico and the United States, though this is not always the case. There are cases when larger



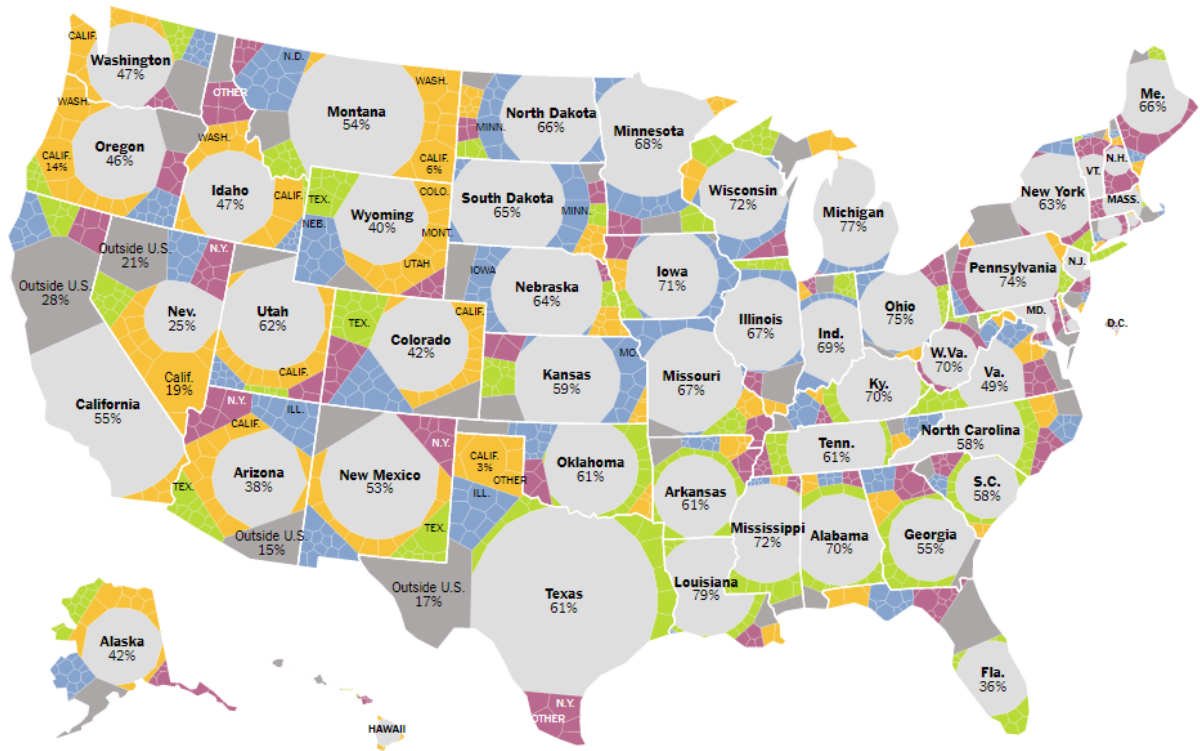
number of workers are needed and will be needed for longer than six months, where the farmer, or FLC, will add additional visas capabilities to allow spouses and children to come with the worker, as long as the other adult works in some capacity, as well, and the children will attend school in whatever district they are living in. This is a clear definition of a migratory child. This child will make the moves with the family during this time period. Sometimes, a child will be enrolled in as many as seven districts in one academic school year. (Levine, 2016)

Before 1993, numbers of agricultural workers looking to come to work temporarily in the United States using H2A visas was quite low. The Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL), the Ministry of Social Development, accomplished the task of greatly increasing the number of these workers through their administration of the Programa Nacional con Jornaleros Agrícolas (PRONJAG), a program created in the Salinas era that was specifically designed to, “buttress the migratory labor market.” (Yaworsky, 2012) PRONJAG seeks to help transient farm workers by coordinating available grants and nutritional supplements as well as coordination between workers and social organizations, the business community, and the governments involved. It should be noted that this program is still in effect today, continuing to help bridge the gap as some workers settle on work visas near the border with the United States, only returning briefly to renew their work contracts in Mexico before returning to their lives in the United States. Many of these workers have transitioned to day labor workers rather than migratory workers in an effort to establish home stability. (Barrón-Pérez, 2019) The map below shows a representation of where people residing in each state of the United States in 2017 were actually born. Notice the gray area is indicative of those born in another country who reside in that state. (Aisch, 2017)

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Each shape represents where the people living in a state were born. Within a state, larger shapes mean a group makes up a larger share of the population.

■ Northeast ■ South ■ Midwest ■ West ■ Outside the U.S.\*



Another contributing factor to the background of agricultural work is that much of it is paid in cash at the time the service is performed. Normally, only larger farms that are more of a legal entity go to the trouble of having an HR department, payroll, tax accountant, etc.; therefore, it is easier to just pay the workers cash as they finish the job. This is another reason to attribute to why the business of agriculture is harder to regulate than other professions. It has been the experience of advocates with the Migrant Education Program that the workers who work for cash are either American citizens who enjoy a nomadic type existence, never staying in one place very long, regardless of race, ethnicity, or language spoken, or those who are in the United States without the proper immigration documentation, or with expired immigration documentation. This is where the family unit is most commonly found when the worker is not an American

citizen, and where the children are most vulnerable to the issues discussed in this paper. When a family, or even one member of a family, does not have proper, up-to-date immigration documentation, it's easier to work in a for a paid-in-cash job and move around constantly than to settle into one place and risk deportation, and thus separation of the family.

Even though it is the year 2020, farm labor is one of the top hazardous occupations, and claims more than 70 percent of the underage child work force. This isn't a claim to fame to be proud of, especially since children working the farms are exposed at an early age to hazardous chemicals, such as pesticides, unsafe drinking water that is potentially contaminated with pesticides and other toxins, and powering and running unfamiliar equipment they have not been properly trained to use. It is much easier for a smaller person, or a child, to get lower to the ground to harvest lettuce and tomatoes than an average size adult. Another issues with child labor is when the farm is family owned; the children of the family are expected to work to understand and maintain their family business. What about the children whose family does not own the farm? What about those whose parents who cannot afford day care or to hire a babysitter during the time their children aren't enrolled in school, *if* they are even old enough to attend? In cases such as these, the children usually go to work alongside their family members in the fields. If they are also doing the farm work, their pay is most of the time, not even given to them directly, but to the adult who brought them to work. While most of the time, that adult is a parent or a family member, it is possible it is someone who happens to live near them and gave them a ride to the fields. That alone is a hazard most of us who do not work in farm labor can fathom our children being allowed to participate in. Then there is the issue of children working in the fields alongside the adults who are not even paid due to the fact they are not on the payroll. The farmer may not even know there are children with the workers in the fields. Working and not

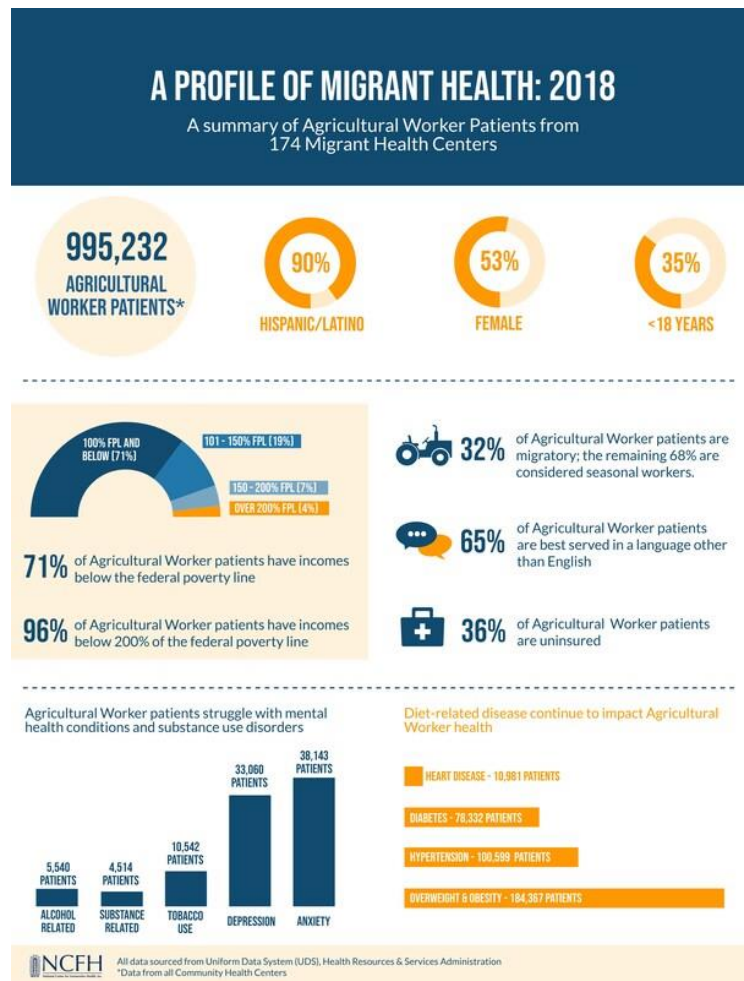
getting paid would not be something an adult would stand for, yet it is something some children do without realizing the wrong being done because for them, it is the norm. It is how they help contribute to their family, and make sure everyone has everything they need. (Wozniacka, 2019)

The United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, has published Fact Sheet #40 to address the federal youth employment jobs in farm work, as it was revised in December 2016. (United States Department of Labor, 2016) Children as young as ten years old are eligible to work in the fields legally, including the children of the farmer/farm owner, although minors under the age of sixteen years of age may not work under hazardous conditions as outlined in the document, including working with pesticides and chemicals, heavy farm equipment, and sharp implement usage. Under this law, children under the age of twelve may only work on farms where none of the employees are subject to the minimum wage requirement of the Fair Labor Standards Act, or FLSA. (United States Department of Labor, Wage & Hour Division, 2016) Due to this, many children are underpaid, if they are paid at all. This law also states that children of such a young age can only work when it is not time for them to be in school, or on days when school is not in session. It is very easily skirted around, however, as more and more kids are being taught via “homeschool” options. Then, their schooling is by their family’s individualized schedules; how is it determined when these children should and shouldn’t be in school when it is on an individual basis? What documentation needs to be presented to establish the child labor laws are not being violated? How is it documented, and should a farmer be required to provide evidence that the child working on his farm is, indeed, enrolled in homeschool and actively does their school work?

Further complications to an already complicated business abound at every turn. It is estimated that more than 500,000 children nationwide, at a minimum, are employed in

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agriculture, with those working in livestock operations having a higher number of accidents compared to those working with crops. (National Center for Farmworker Health, n.d.) The illustration below is taken from the National Center for Farmworker Health website. It shows the number of farmworkers surveyed to obtain the information and the data breakdown for each category. The wording of how 65% of the farm workers are best served in a language other than English when the 90% majority of those polled are Hispanic gives a minute look at the amount of dialects and other regional languages other than Spanish, though they may be a variant of Spanish and Native American/Indigenous Languages that are spoken. Some of these dialects are not written, they are only spoken word between those of certain areas of remote South America. Qanjobal, Kiche, Ma, Akateca, Chuj and Popti are but a few to be considered.



Constant moving to maintain employment in the crops as their harvests rotate brings another obstacle into the development of a child: *toxic stress*. There are many contributing factors for children who move often: settling into a new community, making friends, only name a few obstacles. Becoming adjusted to their latest environment is not something they're allowed to partake in. Many times, as soon as a child feels some type of stability in their home life, it is time to uproot and move again. Some of these children go to sleep in one location and wake up in another, many miles away, across county, state, and even national borders without any prior knowledge. Everyone they know, other than who they are traveling with, is gone from them, and sometimes that even changes. This abrupt change stresses the brain and therefore hinders their emotional development. The chronic condition of this stress lends to the categorization of the term, "toxic stress" as it becomes an obstacle in the growth and development of a child as compared to their non-migratory peers. There are several articles to address this in health literature. For example, adults who are coping with toxic stress experience very adverse reactions in one's health: bad cholesterol numbers will increase while good cholesterol numbers decrease, heart rate increases which signifies a rise in heart rate and/or blood pressure, weight gain and hormonal imbalances also occur. These changes are in fully developed, mature adults; just imagine what those same effects can have on a child who is still developing physically, mentally and socially. This is not something only medical and mental health professionals should be aware of and take into consideration as these children move in and out of areas with the crop seasons. There are several articles written on this topic and how such effects can be noticed and even prevented as children develop. One such article states that toxic stress has lifelong effects on people, most especially children. (Shonokoff, 2012) The article goes on to explain how "early

experiences and environmental influences can leave a lasting signature on the genetic predispositions that affect emerging brain architecture and long-term health.” The early childhood development period of birth through age five, as recognized in Kentucky early childhood education standards, also known as the preschool years, has a profound effect on the life of a child. As the brain develops, science has noted that taking measures to reduce such adversity, or stress, are great strongholds in stabilizing and strengthening the foundation of the physical health and development of children. Science evidence also holds this to be true for the mental health development during the early childhood development stage. Since children of this age range are not legally obligated to be enrolled in school in the United States until they reach six years of age, (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Human Services, 2020) they are among some of not only the most transient and but they also are the easiest to fall through the cracks in the education system as they move around the country before they are even legally obligated to be a part of it.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes that understanding common roots in learned behaviors, the learning process through trial and error, and a child’s physical health during the early childhood development years has the potential to transform not only the future of pediatrics, but of overall health care as the child ages. (Shonokoff, 2012) As a child moves often, it is difficult to ensure that he or she receives timely vaccinations, routine health checks, and nutritional support, especially if that child doesn’t receive health insurance of any type. Many families do not ask for their medical records before they move; for many there is simply a lack of time to do so, for others, it is not their cultural norm to ask for the records. The persistent changes in technology access during toddler years, a rise in childhood obesity, especially in children of the lower socioeconomic class, along with racial and ethnic disparities have led them

to become labeled, “the millennial morbidities.” Learning, behavior, physical health, and mental health are all heavily influenced by these *millennial morbidities* and are worsening as this generation grows. As these children grow, they are continually falling behind their non-migratory peers, they find themselves experiencing health disparities and have unsuitable medical care, which worsens their chances from the start. Unemployment, forced migration, and food insecurity usurp the social networks needed to stabilize communities. School drop-out rates rise, drug use along with other self-medications for conditions that could have been, and should have been, treated many years prior, create habits that lead to law breaking and eventually incarceration. How do we stop that from happening? Understanding that nature does not have to be against nurture, but can rather “dance” in harmony with it may help. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “beginning prenatally, continuing through infancy, and extending into childhood and beyond, development is driven by an ongoing, inextricable interaction between biology (as defined by genetic predispositions) and ecology (as defined by the social and physical environment).” (Shonokoff, 2012)

Some of the factors that come into play where these areas of toxic stress are a key factor are those of cultural origins. Americans who work as migratory agricultural workers are more than likely to have less of an education than that of their peers in other vocations. If they did complete secondary school, otherwise known as high school, many did not have a positive experience with their education. Workers who qualified for special education in school due to learning disabilities, or mild mental delays, can be trained how to do farm work through a repetition of behavior since their reading and writing skills that they may be deficient in are not required to use throughout the process of their workday. These workers, as they become parents of children in school, are not going to have the background and resources to know their parent



rights and what they can do to advocate for the child(ren) at school if/when a situation arises.

When assuming that an American parent who has received an education in the United States will fare better in the educational system, and that did not happen, for whatever reason, it is just as detrimental to the future educational success of their child as if they had attended school in another country and have no concept of the American education system, nor its benefits. Farm workers who grew up in rural areas experience an effect of their educational experience which can have placed them behind the experiences held by their non-farmworking peers in a variety of factors: number of school years completed, literacy rates that are on a functioning level, and ability to enter a labor force status other than farm work. In 2005, only 13% of American farmworkers had completed high school. (Student Action with Farmworkers, 2005)

Parents who are from another country have a different set of issues with the American school system and its differences from the educational system in their own native country, which they may or may not have been a part of. In Guatemala, for example, school is not mandatory for children. (Alvizurez, 2017) Children who are able to attend school are of a socioeconomic status such that their families are able to pay for them to attend school. Those children whose families who cannot afford the rate of pay for the school, join their family members working in the fields as early as age three. American icons, such as Starbucks, who use coffee imported from Guatemala and other South American countries, may be serving you coffee from which the beans were picked by a three year old because it was easier for someone of that size to pick more beans than an adult, or by a ten year old who is illiterate and her family needs the money to merely survive. “This was the most shock to me when I come to the United States.” (Pablo-Nicolas, 2020) The \$5.00 you pay for one cup is the daily wage for coffee bean pickers in Guatemala. Their workday is not a six to eight hour workday, not even a ten hour work day, but

one that lasts from sun-up to sun-down, sometimes as long as fourteen hours. Yet, they receive the equivalent of the cost of one cup of coffee in the United States. (Zamora, 2013) These coffee workers are also present in Hawaii, and the United States Department of Labor has been made aware of several labor violations for the workers there. They are not paid minimum wage, even though Hawaii is a state in the United States. Workers are hired as independent contractors, with some being as young as only *five* years old. This is in the United States of America. These five-year-old children are not attending school, they are not learning how to read and write, how to make friends, and how to play in small and large groups so they will learn how to adapt in social situations as they grow. While these investigations resulted in more than \$63,000.00 in back wages be paid to more than 150 workers, the financial adjustment does not take away the disadvantages these children were used in and how their developmental process was hindered. The children received no financial gain from the decision; it was given to their parents or guardians. (Zamora, 2013)

That further pushes the answer to the question of where does responsibility for the monitoring of the early childhood development of migratory children fall, especially for those not yet of an age where the law of our own country mandates their attendance in school? Is it the responsibility of doctors and healthcare providers across the country as they travel? Some believe so. Others wonder if the responsibility should be shouldered by agribusiness owners, as being held accountable by a corporate social responsibility. 77.4% of people studied believe that a corporate social responsibility (CSR) should be held accountable. Others say the farmer who has the H2A contract should be held responsible for providing health insurance to those workers and extend it to their families, whether they are making the migrations with the worker or waiting their return in their home country. (Agribusiness, Corporate Social Responsibility, and

Health of Agricultural Migrant Workers, 2016) The United States has a Migratory Health Care Act that has been in place since John F. Kennedy was President; such health care programs for the economically disadvantaged were merged into local health clinics, then further merged into what we now recognize in our area as county health departments. (National Center for Farmworker Health, n.d.) According to a 2016 article in *Frontiers in Public Health*, Mexican agricultural workers, “are among the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the country.” (Agribusiness, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Health of Agricultural Migrant Workers, 2016) Although this number is high, especially considering those interviewed were agribusiness owners and managers, it paints an image of contrast between what is believed to be right and just and what actually *is* in place by these very people.

The modern view that is projected in this figure belies the extreme poverty these families experience life in, especially regarding food insecurity. Remote, rural locations enable the workers and their families to have their own chickens to collect eggs from and to use as a meat source, vegetable gardens and other personal sustenance capabilities are also present, though access to grocery stores and community establishments is very limited. As the children grow and their social circles widen, the limited time they have had to develop social skills comes to the surface as they try to get to know the ones they call friends, which in turn leads them to make poorer food choices when out in areas such as shopping malls and accepting restaurant invitations, and more susceptible to peer pressure. Having had limited exposure and access to such foods, these children express definite uncertainty about being able to make healthy choices during those times. Peer pressure has an impact in many aspects of a child’s life, even the foods they choose while in social situations. (Kilanowski, 2016) Think about a child who has never had access to ice cream or soda and they find themselves at a food court in a shopping mall and their

friends order a root beer or cola float. To fit in and get along with the crowd they so desperately want to be a part of because they have never had the chance to be part of a social group outside of their own family, they order one, as well. The sugar, the carbonated beverage, the additives, and preservatives act as a drug to their system, elevating sugar and adrenaline levels, which is proven to be the same effects noted by drug users when they first experience the effects of illegal substances. It is the beginning of a potential chain reaction. (Temple, 2010)

### Family Impact

The contributors of the article by Mr. Kilanowski mentioned above maintained contact with 248 farm families from an area in North Carolina for three years on a quarterly basis. The responses of these families to questions provided from the US Household Food Security Survey Module were recorded and analyzed. The results reported in this article were more positive than expected. The findings of the authors were that 51% of those participating stayed in a food secure state. (Kilanowski, 2016) Working with the Western Kentucky Regional Migrant Education Program as an Advocate/Recruiter, and servicing students within the age range of three to twenty-one years old who are either the children of migratory farm workers or the migratory farm workers themselves, one of my responsibilities is to check in on them on a regular basis and assist with situations such as food insecurity. I was pleased to see that the resources the authors were able to put to use were Migrant Head Start and Migrant Education Programs, among others. Many churches and community organizations have food banks available, and the demographic of the students I serve who are school-age and attending public school use these services regularly, especially one to two weeks following heavy rains or other bad weather when work is unavailable. Students with parents who are in the school district year-

round and who are Hispanic statistically appear to be undocumented, or their parents are of an undocumented status. This renders them ineligible for services to help with food security, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly referred to as food stamps; therefore, they are referred to the local community services for assistance that do not require documentation to participate, such as local food banks and church organizations. With this article discussing 51% of the families having security in their food resources, it was a pleasant surprise. On an average month, I refer approximate 80% of our migrant families with small children to their local food assistance services. During the summer months, a large number participate in the summer feeding programs our local school districts offer, and the backpack program provided by the Family Resource Youth Services Center programs housed in each school district in Kentucky will send food home on weekends to qualified students during the school year, as well.

(FRYSCKy, 2020)

The article goes on to state that some situations in addition to documentation status where food insecurity is prevalent include rural areas exacerbated by restrictions on transportation, limited access to grocery stores within walking distance of residence and low pay for agriculture workers. This is very true. On an average, agricultural workers do receive higher than minimum wage hourly pay, but they are not guaranteed a minimum of a 40-hour work week nor any guaranteed consistent number of weeks in which work will be available to constitute economic stability. Weather conditions and illness untreated due to a lack of health care benefits further hinder their vocation. As the article also states, there are instances where growing their own produce they will be able to use is an option, this helps tremendously with food security. As a family needs to move to retain income through employment in seasonal agriculture and follow the planting and harvest seasons across the United States, it can be difficult to take personal

possessions, even food, whether or not it is food they have grown and preserved themselves. It simply takes too much space and effort to move it as they go, thus leading to a greater food insecurity until they are settled into a new location.

During planting and harvesting seasons, the beginning of spring and the beginning of autumn, job security is stronger. Workers have more consistent work to do during those times. The work is hard and lasts longer than the typical eight-hour workday. Many of these workers do not earn overtime pay, or time-and-a-half, because the additional time is “make up time” from when work was lost due to inclement weather or other factors. At this time, agricultural workers are exempt from the overtime requirements established by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), though they are required by law to be paid at, or above, the federal minimum wage guideline rather than local state minimum wages. (United States Department of Labor, 2016) According to a recent article found on the website Civil Eats, the Supreme Court has heard testimonies regarding the issue, and is set to render an argument as soon as summer of 2020. (Wozniacka, 2019)

American farmers are impacted, as well. United States history tells us about the Dust Bowl, which began in 1930. This was a period of time just after the hit of the Great Depression of 1929 had hit the United States with a drought in the economy. Environmental factors mimicked that drought but in a physicality that would render the American farmer helpless. Not only did crops fail in the dried lands, people and livestock died, as well. This event devastated and financially bankrupted American farmers and farmworkers, especially farmworkers who did not own the land they were working. This prompted them to have to begin the migration process of leaving the farm in search for better economic opportunities to provide for their families by finding income in other vocations and securing better living conditions. (The History Channel,

2009) Many farmers had emigrated to the United States, but now it was time to move on to other employment. Many farms were lost in the decade that was the Dust Bowl, and the agro-economic stability never really fully recovered. Crops that were once grown in the United States now needed to be imported. The states most greatly impacted were Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico and Nebraska. The first migrant farm workers in the United States came from these states when around two and a half million people were forced to leave their homes in these states, becoming refugees in their own country. The nicknames given to these farmworking refugees were “Okies” and these people faced many of the situations immigrant migrant workers face today. Living in below-poverty standards looked different then that it does today; “Okies” homes were either tents along ditch lines or shantytowns rather than farmer provided housing with available transportation that is made available to H2A workers today; however, discrimination along with menial labor and terribly low wages were rampant. The term “Okies” became to be associated with any migrant farm worker from any state and was used with degradation and contempt. (Student Action with Farmworkers, 2005) Today, the term “migrant” is used in that same context, no matter what country the worker may come from originally. Many times, in my job, I have to explain to teachers, school administrators and even school district administrators how the term “migrant” only refers to those who move, and “not all immigrants are migrant and not all migrant workers are immigrants.” The year may change, but the disdain held for farmworkers and their being seen as being of a lower class is still the norm. Today, with the pandemic spread of COVID-19, many people are making social media posts with the hashtag #thankyoufarmworkers and #essentialworkersprovidefood gives a glimmer of hope this will soon change.

With families not originally from the United States, the family impact shows in a different way. Societal norms we recognize as Americans are not those held in ethnically different households. Many times, the men and the older boys are the workers and the women and girls, along with the younger children, stay at home and do the household chores. One family where this is an example is the Caballero family. The father, Victoriano, gets up and goes to work well before the sun is up. While he is getting ready, his wife, Mirna, is also awake and preparing his meals for the day so he does not have to come back to the house to eat. Once he has gone to work, Mirna then begins the tasks of preparing breakfast, getting the children up and ready for school, checking their backpacks to be sure they have everything and sending them out the door to catch the bus. They eat breakfast at home because the free breakfast available at school is not enough to get them through to lunch, and it “doesn’t take like *real* food,” according to their youngest son, Cristian. Once the children are off, Mirna sets to cleaning the house from top to bottom, including laundry, starting with putting away what Victoriano threw into the washing machine at the end of the previous day as soon as he came in the door. While they are all doing what is expected of them for their daily roles, and the day comes to an end, the children arrive home first. The kitchen is clean, so they all sit together to do their homework, then go get showers and cleaned up before dinner, and have some time for television or games. Once Victoriano gets home, he puts his clothes in the washer and starts it, then goes to shower. This is the cue for the rest of the family to get moving. The boys, Bryan and Cristian, clean up the house of their belongings, getting everything out of sight, Mirna prepares the plates for dinner with the help of their daughter, Shelci, and when Victoriano comes out of the shower, they sit and eat together as a family. Then, after helping clean the kitchen, the children disappear into their rooms to play games, chat with friends, or whatever they need to do while Victoriano relaxes



with the television. Mirna prepares the things needed for the next day and then has her shower. That is the cue for everyone to get ready for bed. When Mirna comes out, everyone says their goodnights and they all retire. This is sometimes as early as 7:00pm. (Caballero, 2020) The life of a farmer from Honduras isn't that different from that of a farmer from the United States... in 1985 or earlier. Victoriano does not have much contact with his children, unless there is a disciplinary issue he is needed to address for Mirna. The children know they are expected to do well in school and have absolutely no behavior problems; it is simply not an option. Victoriano and Mirna have very little formal education. Victoriano completed the equivalency of a third-grade education in the United States and Mirna went one year to learn how to read and write her name so she can teach the children she would have in the future. She was ten years old at that time. (Caballero, 2020)

In stark contrast, we have the American farming family of the Cullen family. Steve and Cheryl have raised three children and continue to farm while their youngest child remains living at home. Their regular day looked much like that of the Caballero family in 1985, but by 1994, things had changed drastically. Steve got up early and went to tend the cattle while Cheryl cooked breakfast before getting the kids up and ready for school. Their son, Justin, would grab a few bites and dash out to help his dad get finished faster while their daughter, Rianna, helped Cheryl make sure the youngest child, Ethan, got fed as Cheryl began cleaning up. Steve would come in as breakfast was over and Cheryl was loading the kids into the car to take them to their private school because public school had led to many issues of bullying and teasing about living on a farm for their children. While Cheryl was gone, having driven the 34 miles into town, she would work a part-time job afterward to remain in town and conserve gas driving back and forth. After work and school, she would drive the children back home and begin preparing dinner while

they did their homework. Steve had been out on the farm all day, cutting and baling hay, working with fencing and other matters that came up and came back to the house to make his own lunch and sit on the porch so as not to track up the house. He came in while dinner was still being prepared, exhausted, and leave his clothes on the back porch to be washed while he went straight to the shower. The kids sat with their parents for a little while to eat dinner, then all took off to play outside, meet friends, go to the mall, whatever they had planned and left everything in the house to be cared for by Steve and Cheryl who were exhausted from their work days. Steve ended up hiring someone to help in on the farm and Cheryl hired a teenager to come in after school to help with clean up while the kids were out so she could do laundry and get herself a shower before bed. Their kids would come home near bedtime, maybe shower before bed, and get up the next day and do it all again the next day in much the same manner. (Cullen, 2020)

These farms are five miles apart, yet so different. The expectations and relationships of the Caballero family are more in tune with the Cullen family from the 1985 era, not the 2020 era. Now, Steve and Cheryl are back to almost the same routine Victoriano and Mirna have, with the exception of their youngest son, Ethan, staying on the farm to help Steve so he does not have to pay someone else to help him. When talking with their children, none of the six report having a close relationship with their father until they were older and could work alongside him because they only saw him briefly before bedtime each night, and he was too tired to interact much, or share in their experiences. Now that they are older, and can work with him, they've grown closer and understand why farmers have to work from before sunrise until after sunset with little time to enjoy their family time. (Six children of Beulah, 2020)

The Caballero family has moved 9 times in the last five years to maintain employment in agriculture. The Cullen family is the fifth generation to work their family farm.

Another trend in migration for workers with families is called “circular migration’, This means that sometimes a parent, usually the father, will leave the family to travel to other areas around where the family lives to find temporary work, then return to his family once those jobs have ended. Once he finds another temporary or seasonal job, the process begins again. While this may bring more income and financial stability as well as educational consistency for the children, there are costs that families working in this method of migration endure that go beyond the monetary. Children grow up without their father even being in the household and a consistent figure in their lives, even if only at night, once his workday had ended. The family unit changes drastically, with the mother having to play both roles of mother and father, and that is not something the families of Central American countries are used to. Their own personal family culture has to change and adapt. This can cause an alienation from their extended family members who do not agree with this type of migratory lifestyle, which further diminishes any type of support system. One of the main goals for the parents in this type of migration is for the children to consistently be in one school district and eventually graduate, many times as the first in their family to do so. These children do not leave home as early and get married as young. (VanHook, 2020) This shows how migrant families are noticing the effects constant moving has had on themselves as children, and feel a more stable environment, especially in regard to their education, is important to them. One related area of research in the article, *Spanning Borders, Cultures, and Generations: A Decade of Research on Immigrant Families*, notes that this type of migration has also had an impact on adolescent childbearing in migratory families. (VanHook, 2020) When families are more secure in their environment, even if one parent leaves to go work but comes back, the children recognize the sacrifices the parent is making to give them stability and security, and this creates a better parent-child relationship. The closer relationship within

migrant families choosing circular migration is considered a contributing factor in the delay of children becoming sexually active during adolescence, which results in the lower birth rate among that age group. (VanHook, 2020)

Familial relationships in migratory families are changing yet becoming stronger. As the children of these families grow and realize the sacrifices made to give them a better life when their families emigrate to the United States to find agricultural work, their bonds are stronger. Cultural values, specifically those of Mexican migratory working families, such as honoring familial obligations and support and care of the family as a whole actually reduce the toxic stress that can grow during the constant moving, This reduction in stress has many benefits not just for the children, but for the family unit as a whole. (VanHook, 2020)

### Educational Programs

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services has established a program in Kentucky public schools called the Family Resource and Youth Services Center (FRYSC), This program division was established to “provide support, technical assistance and training to local school-based FRYSC programs. The primary goal of these centers is to remove non-academic barriers to learning as a means to enhance student academic success.” (Kentucky.gov, n.d.) As a public-school program, any child under the age of eighteen or currently enrolled in Kentucky public school has access to these resources. They can include, but are not limited to, free school supplies; free clothing and clothing assistance when needed; holiday support for families in financial need; free food services, similar to that of a food bank; summer school opportunities to continue learning. Graduation from high school is the ultimate goal of this program. It is reached by assisting students with food security, provision of school supplies, and other community

welfare needs. No student is turned away due to race, religion, sex, country of origin, or language spoken.

As noted earlier in this review, two of the resources utilized were Migrant Head Start and Migrant Education Programs. In the conclusion of the journal article, they noted that programs such as these help migratory families achieve a better balance in food security by aligning them with community services that can help alleviate the worries and concerns that come with food insecurity, particularly in families with children. This is good news to me, and lets me know that in North Carolina, at least, my counterparts in the Migrant Education Program are as immersed in helping their families reach out to community partnerships as we are in Western Kentucky. As we continue to recruit and identify these workers and their families, we will strive to raise their finding of 51% of families reporting food security. Unfortunately, I was recently told by an employee losing his job with Migrant Head Start that Audubon Area Community Services, located in Owensboro, KY, will be merging all of their Migrant Head Start classrooms with their Head Start classrooms due to a cut in funding. Purchase Area Head Start for the remainder of the Western Kentucky region did not have separate Migrant Head Start classrooms. Finding these farm families and ensuring they have access to community resources and the children from 6 weeks to kindergarten enrollment have access to meals regularly across more than 30 counties in Western Kentucky alone has just encountered another obstacle.

Programs such as the Migrant Education Program are able to provide supplemental educational services for those children who qualify as either migratory farm workers themselves, or as the child, or dependent, of a migratory agricultural worker. In order to qualify, the student must be between the ages of 3 and 22 years old and have not obtained a high school diploma, or the equivalent of a high school diploma, in the United States of America. This is written as such

Running head: The Effects of an Agricultural Migratory Lifestyle on Children

due to the vast differences in the United States education system and those of other countries from which these students may come from. If a student is an American citizen yet has dropped out of school and is younger than 22 years of age, they will qualify if the farm work is present: in that case, the student is assisted in obtaining either the high school diploma or the equivalent. Earning that certification of completion of public school as deemed as completed by the Kentucky Department of Education is the ultimate goal of the Kentucky Migrant Education Program, as well as each state program. (Kentucky Department of Education, Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, 2020)

**What is the Migrant Education Program?**

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) is an educational program that provides assistance to the children of migratory/migrant **farm workers** and out-of-school youth (OSY) who have **not** completed high school and are **less than 22 years old**.

**Who is a migratory agricultural worker?**

A migratory farmworker is a person who, in the preceding 36 months, has moved from one school district to another, or from another country to the United States, in order to obtain temporary employment or seasonal employment in agricultural (farm) work, including dairy work.

**What services does the program provide?**

Services provided include:

- School readiness preparation for pre-school children of migrant workers;
- Extra assistance to improve reading and math skills of school-age children with an overall goal of high school completion;

- Teaching materials/lessons to learn English, and/or prepare for the GED test;
- Lessons to improve functional living skills while in the United States

**Who is an out-of-school youth (OSY)?**

An out-of-school youth (OSY) is:

- between the ages of 16 and 22;
- has not completed high school;
- is employed as a migratory/migrant farm worker

The Kentucky Migrant Education Program (KYMEP) serves a great deal of OSY who come here from Mexico on H2A visas; therefore, it is a priority of MEP staff to build relationships with farmers which will enable them to identify and serve eligible OSY. MEP staff respect the fact that farmers have invested much in these workers and will only come onto a farm after speaking to the farmer and gaining permission to speak with workers. MEP staff will only approach workers to evaluate their eligibility for the program and/or serve eligible OSY during non-work hours.

Title I, Part C, formulations for funding, consortiums and state guidelines are listed on the United States Department of Education, Title I, Part C, website. Following these formulations, amounts per student enrolled in the MEP are allocated to each state to be distributed to school districts with stand alone or consortium programs, and the regional programs. (United States Department of Education, Title I, Part C, 2020)

Title I, Part C, is just a portion of the federally funding Title I Program across the United States. Title I, Part A, was established to improve the academic achievements of the disadvantaged. Not all schools are eligible for Title I, Part A, funding. To meet the needs of students identified as being at risk of lower academic achievement, schools must report high numbers of students enrolled who are from low income families. These children subsequently will not be able to access such resources as their peers from higher income households.

(Kentucky Department of Education, Title I, Part A, 2020) The United States Department of Education website identifies Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as being a program to provide federal funding to the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with a higher percentage of families deemed eligible by a formula used in correlation with the census poverty estimates and the cost for education in each state. (United States Department of Education, Title I, Part A, 2020) Migrant students qualify for this program in many states, as well, due to the low income their families earn.

Another educational program supported by federal funding under Title I is the Prevention and Intervention for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent or At-Risk, funded as Title I, Part D. The children who qualify for this program sometimes also qualify for migrant education, as well. The objectives of Title I, Part D, include providing opportunities for children to meet everchanging, challenging state required academic standards, assist in providing an environment to transition from institutionalization to continue their education/prepare for employment, and to prevent those students deemed at-risk of dropping out of school with a support system to ensure academic needs are met as well as support for their families and communities. Sometimes these students are being released from juvenile detention facilities,

foster care, or neglect and abandonment problems were discovered and are being addressed.

(Kentucky Department of Education, 2020) Unfortunately, there are migrant education students who fall into this category, as well. Juvenile charges, ignorance of being required to be enrolled in school until age 18, domestic violence and neglect are not new things to many students. It is the goal and objective of advocates with the Migrant Education Program and other programs to research and know the programs available to their students and seek out other programs to help them achieve their educational goals.

### Societal Impact

Earlier, the issue of child labor was raised, with information from the United States Department of Labor, Hour and Wage Division, stating that children as young as ten years old can work on a farm. On average in the United States, the age a young farm worker begins working when the farm is not owned by his or her family is twelve years old. If there are younger siblings and both parents are working, as well as an older sibling, if not more than one, that leaves the next oldest to take care of any younger siblings. In Kentucky, there is not a law stating at what age a child can be left home alone, or left in the care of older siblings, relatives or caregivers. KRS 600.020 merely states, "Abused or neglected child" means a child whose health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by his parent, guardian, or other person exercising custodial control or supervision of the child. (Commonwealth of Kentucky, n.d.) The lack of adult guidance as children raise children while the parents work has a profound impact on their development, thus a greater impact on the younger ones they are caring for. Abuse can be prevalent in this situation as frustration and agitation aren't emotions these adolescents are equipped to deal with in a healthy manner. Based on interviews with several families, the median



age they have left older children home to care for their younger siblings and cousins, sometimes even children of neighbors or community members, is only eleven. One former student of mine who is now studying to be a high school math teacher told me she had watched more than ten children when she was eleven years old, cooking on a stove for their breakfast, lunch and dinner while all their parents were working in the fields. It was summer break and there weren't any summer programs they could get to due to transportation issues and the older children had gone to work with the parents. A total of eight adults had left their children in her care, the youngest being only six months old and the oldest being just one year younger than her at the age of ten. She said without the ten year old, she wouldn't have had any help and wouldn't have been able to keep the babies from crying when she had to get the toddlers out of the crayons to stop them from writing all over the walls. This went on for the entire summer, from the day after school was out until the day before school went back in session. The day she was able to go back to school, she said, she felt like she was getting a huge burden lifted from her shoulders. The mother of the youngest child stopped working in the fields to stay with the children at that time. The former student was not bitter about having been put in an adult situation so soon, it was a normal lifestyle for her as she had been raised by her aunts, cousins, and neighbors wherever they lived for most of her life. It is the culture of migrant farm working families. Coming from a similar socio-economic background in the 1980s, I also grew up in a rural area with family members and neighbors needing childcare in the summers. I began babysitting at age ten, but my parents were also home. At age twelve, I would be dropped off at other people's homes to watch their children while they were out. While my family definitely was able to use the money as my father was disabled, I grew up very quickly and missed out on a lot of things the very children I cared for got to experience. Caregiving at such a young age can have a significant impact on a

young life. In the article, “The Effects of Poverty on Childhood Brain Development”, after noting that experimental studies obviously are not conducted on humans for ethical reasons, it was noted there are noted effects of amygdala and hippocampal development from early caregiving effects. (Luby, 2013) The main outcomes and measures of the study represented by the article did use “brain volumes of children’s white matter and cortical gray matter, as well as hippocampus and amygdala volumes, obtained using magnetic resonance imaging.” The study also resulted in noticing the effects of poverty, as we know most agricultural workers live in, on hippocampal volume were affected by stressful life events on the left. In today’s society in the United States, the care of children provided by children would fall under the stressful life events category and result in toxic stress over a prolonged period of time. Referring back to page five of this paper, toxic stress is noted as yet another obstacle in their growth and brain development of a migratory child. Preparing our nation’s future workforce isn’t the only goal at the end of the day, and it is recognized that the preschool years of development not only promote the foundation of learning that is critical for the future, but also the roots that are set during that time directly influence physical and mental health. If children begin their lives with a strong foothold in brain development and mental as well as physical health, their later years are more likely to follow in an easier pattern throughout their lives.

The impact these deficits the children of farmworkers face greatly impacts society. There are many families served in the Migrant Education Program (MEP) that have no literacy skills at all, no matter the language they speak as their first language, and many have had negative experiences with education. Some have the experiences where they weren’t allowed to attend school due to their socioeconomic status and were sent to work instead (Pablo-Nicolas, 2020); some had negative interactions with the schools being regulated by the government and they

were taken from their families as young as ten years old to serve as soldiers' assistants when civil war broke out (Caballero, 2020); there are even American citizens who fall into the socioeconomic status of the poverty stricken stereotype of the country farm kid who just didn't do well in school and now their children are in school, so no one expects any better of them and the parents, who didn't feel welcomed into the school as a student, definitely don't feel welcome or respected when they enter the school as a parent. (Cullen, 2020)

Social development is also impaired. The temporal lobe, hippocampus and the amygdala are responsible for language development and memory functions. They change significantly between the ages of 4 years and 18 years. (Lenroot, 2006) These areas of the brain increase more rapidly in females with this being attributed to higher numbers of estrogen receptors in the hippocampus. This study focused on children who were not nutritionally deficient, nor migrant. As migrant farm workers and their families move, and food insecurity develops, the nutritional intake for these children can markedly decrease.

Utilizing many of the programs listed under educational programs available to migratory students, it is possible for them to overcome these odds and complete their education. In the United States, more than one million students still drop out of high school every year. (United States Department of Education, 2020) That comes down to nearly seven thousand students every day. These are not just migratory farmworking students, this number represents *all* students across the United States. These students have higher unemployment rates and higher government assistance program participation rates. One statistic that migratory students fit into for not finishing high school is, due to their lifestyle of many movements in their educational career, they simply cannot keep up. These students who drop out and utilize many government assistance services put a strain on their society, their community, that is providing that support

they are unable to attain themselves because they lack the basic education skills required to enter the workforce without that high school diploma. Small changes in these numbers have the potential to greatly impact societies around the country. A small 5% increase in graduation completion has the potential to impact those students' societies in the following ways: \$18.5 billion projected reduction in crime costs, a decrease of at least 60,000 assault charges, and more than 37,000 decreased larceny charges. That is just on a *local* level. On a national level, a 5% increase in high school graduation could save more than \$73 billion in Medicaid spending alone as these graduates would be more able to find employment with benefits and Medicaid would not be needed for those who would qualify. (Barrington, 2019)

The impact on society would be great without immigrant farm labor, documented status or not, as well as American migratory farm workers. People who move to stay in agricultural employment are the backbone behind our American food supply. Without them, our economy would be horrid and our availability to food would be even worse. (University of Pennsylvania, 2016) Food insecurity would go back to being the norm for the “regular” people in the United States, just as it was during the Dust Bowl. (The History Channel, 2009)

Society definitely stands a lot to gain by the support of education for agriculturally migrant students. These students would be able to obtain other jobs in their communities and contribute to society by paying taxes, becoming community leaders, all while continuing to help support their families and the farmers who employ them.

#### Current Migrant Movement Trends:

Prior to the migratory season to begin planting for 2020, our migrant movement trend has drastically changed with the appearance of COVID-19, commonly called the coronavirus. It

received this nickname due to the image it presents when viewed under a microscope. Corona is the Latin word for *crown*. Under a microscope, the virus has the shape and appearance of a crown, hence its name. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020) While human types of the coronavirus were initially identified in the United States in the mid-1960s, the latest strand to create the current pandemic is a new strand, COVID-19. There are seven coronaviruses that can infect people. These include 229E, NL63, OC43, HKU1 as the most common types of human coronavirus, as well as MERS-CoV, the coronavirus that is responsible for Middle Eastern Respiratory System (MERS), SARS-CoV, the strand responsible for the disease Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and SARS-CoV2, which is the current strain, COVID-19, so referred to as its name is coronavirus 19. While this pandemic is active, the United States has followed suit with other countries in closing borders in an effort to limit the spread of this disease. In doing so, H2A contracts are directly affected. This means many workers from Mexico and other countries whose livelihood and the existence of their small communities depend on agriculture jobs in the United States may not be able to come for work, at least not during ground/soil preparation and planting season. According to the United States Department of Labor, Americans displaced by the coronavirus pandemic will be eligible to apply for dislocated worker benefits. (United States Department of Labor, 2020) Where does that leave the farm workers the United States has come to rely on so heavily?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has worked with the United States Department of Labor (DOL) in an effort to assist H-2A employers in the United States. March 19, 2020, an announcement was made to inform employers of this partnership. Details listed include that one goal is for the two entities to work together to “help facilitate the identification of foreign and domestic workers that may be available and eligible to transfer to other U.S.

agricultural sector employers to fulfill critical workforce needs within the U.S. under existing regulatory authority during the COVID-19 pandemic.” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020) What this means is the current number of H-2A workers in the United States at the time of the border closing, nearly 20,000 workers, who have contracts expiring in the upcoming weeks who will be available to fulfill the current contracts left unfulfilled by border closings. Countries with workers being listed as affected on USDA Farmers website include Mexico, Jamaica, South Africa, Peru and Guatemala. These consulates are now closed amid the coronavirus pandemic, and nonimmigrant visa appointments are on hold from March 16, 2020, through May 31, 2020, at the time of the submission of this paper. (USDA Farmers, 2020)

There are also farm workers in the United States without proper documentation from their countries to certify they are here with the permission of their government. Some of these agricultural workers have earned refugee status, and that grants them permission to work in the United States. These workers are more hesitant to apply for more jobs with the current situation because they are aware that the borders are closed, and it may lead to more questions as to why they are here if they claim to have only recently arrived. We have already noticed some children being removed from school to “whereabouts unknown” or “returning to \_\_\_” and naming the country they listed when they enrolled in school. These children are more than likely not returning to their home country if only because borders are closed. They are moving to go into hiding to avoid any legal issues or confrontations that may lead to deportation or separation. The more rural areas are seeing an increase in these moves already as schools are out and it is easier to migrate the children with the family. The underlying concern with this is the social distancing we are practicing; if a family from Texas, where there are many more identified cases of COVID-19, moves to Kentucky, where there is a great difference in the number of reported cases

than that of Texas, they may be infected or unknowingly carry the disease with them. This puts not only the family on the move at risk, but also the community they migrate to. (IRRC, 2020)

While tobacco production may be down across the country, as noted when U.S. Tobacco company recently cut their contracts with farmers by 50%, though R.J. Reynolds Tobacco and Phillip Morris Tobacco sent a 5% increase to their tobacco growers, livestock and row crops such as corn and soybeans are on the rise. According to national agricultural trend data found on the United States Department of Agriculture National Statistics Service, trends in Kentucky are rising with the livestock market in nearby Guthrie, KY, along with Paris, KY, specifically in goat and sheep sales at markets and slaughterhouses. (Agriculture Counts, 2019) While these agricultural jobs can also use migrant farm workers to do the job, most of those are local to the area and move about to keep in work when seasons present change to job availability. For example, a worker can live on a farm and feed goats or cattle during the winter months when grazing is not available, then in the spring, move to another farm to help cultivate and prepare the soil for planting and work there through harvest. Once harvest has completed and that work has ended, many workers are able to return to the farm where they maintained employment through the winter months caring for animals when feeding of hay and specialized feed is required. (Cullen, 2020)

During this uncertain time of pandemic, those working with the Migrant Education Program, whether it be in a standalone or consortium program, or through a regional office, such as ours in Western Kentucky, staff are diligent about keeping up with their current students to make sure they're able to access resources pertaining to their school work, that they understand how to and are able to use the technology needed to do their work or provide instruction on how to use their packets of paperwork that was sent home before dismissal, because once the

communication is lost, that student may also be lost, migrating in a sea of uncertainty and no communication with the lives they have left. Resources for health care needs, mental health access, and food access to combat food insecurity are available from each advocate via text messages, smart phone apps, and social media. We can only hope it's enough to reach them to ensure they know where to get food and help when needed. (Sasser, 2020)

Many states have projected by opinion of family services field experts that the closing of schools could be placing more children in harm's way with an increased risk of abuse and/or neglect. It is also suspected that missing children cases may rise since school attendance is not in place to report those who do not show up for school, thus leading to a possible increase in human trafficking. Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services has information on their website for emergency reports as well as non-emergency reports: (855)-306-8959. (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Human Services, 2020) Amber Alerts are on the rise, but what about those children who are missing aren't, or can't be, reported missing? The runaways, the forgotten foster children who disappeared, the non-documented children whose parents feel they can't speak up, and those who were just travelling with family or friends and a car accident happened, leaving them vulnerable to be picked up are just some of the scenarios that may not go reported. When a child lives a migratory lifestyle, these risk factors are increased. Children who attend more urban school environments don't get to make the relationships with teachers that make them feel included and wanted in society, so when they disappear, who will miss them?

Our office has been contacted by four school districts in one week during this pandemic to ask for assistance to contact five families who were receiving the school district free meals and checking in online to do their schoolwork who suddenly are no longer there. Four of those families responded to inquiries, and they're alright, they've just moved in hopes of finding work



to continue to feed their families. One of the families did not respond. What do you do for that one in five who does not respond? Remain diligent, check their social media profiles, because even when money runs out for minutes, there's free Wi-Fi access that can be used, there's updated numbers to be found for the accounts once they have money for more prepaid minutes, and that's when you reach out and let them know they are missed and ask if they need anything. (Sasser, 2020) The impact this has on society can be overwhelming, and society is used as a term referring to friends, peers, and the family who didn't leave the area in search of work but are trying to wait it out and go back to the lives they had settled into here as well as the community that is suffering the loss of the financial contributions. When school goes back into session, there will be children who are not there, children who have not been heard from since this crisis hit our area, and a great number of them will be the children of migratory farm worker families. Small businesses, such as ethnic food stores, will lose even more business when these families disappear, the mother who sells food out of her kitchen may be gone and there will be families who depended on her help that will no longer have it. The churches and social gatherings that were once filled will take much time to fill back up, but when will those who are no longer present, when they can return, be missed? (IRRC, 2020)

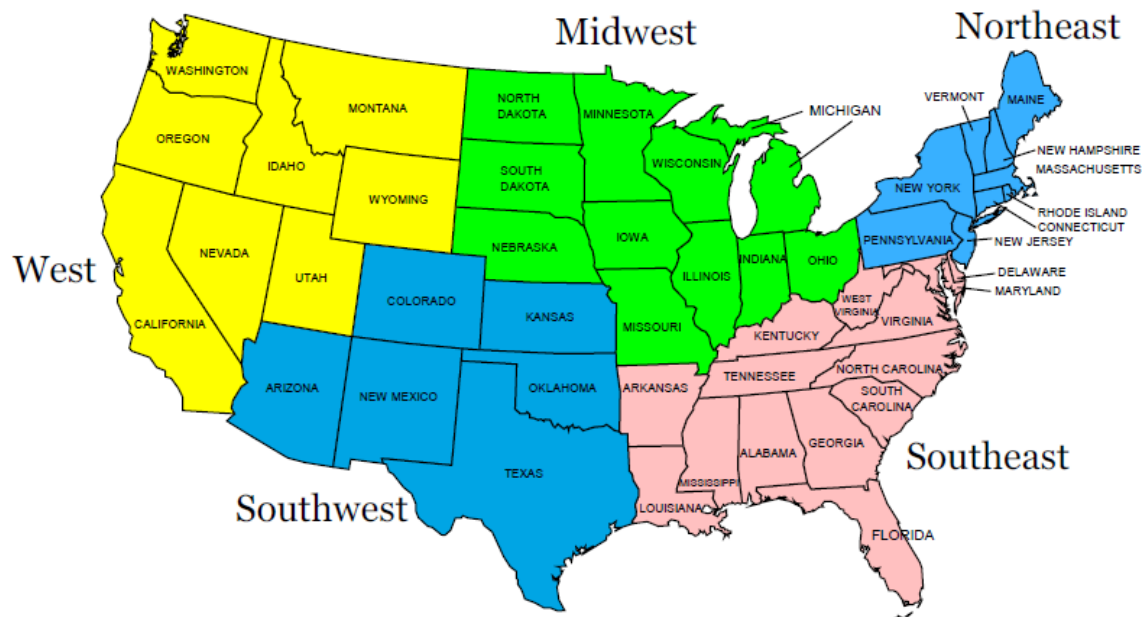
Without farm workers, our nation will not have people to pick the consumable goods we rely on for our own sustenance and for our exports as a nation. Farmers will be unable to get their crops planted on time, thus pushing back the dates of harvest. This will raise the prices of the food that is available due to supply and demand; if the demand is high and the supply is low, prices for produce and meat will skyrocket. (Dudley, 2019) Many workers who are here with their family and children also play other vital roles in society, such as babysitting for other farmworking families as well as families from other vocations and walks of life and paying taxes

here in the United States. Regardless of immigration status, the 2020 census will also affect them as they are counted to determine programs and funding for the areas in which they live.

In 2017, Cornell University's Farmworker Program polled New Yorkers to learn their opinions regarding migrant farm laborers. The results were high in opinion that these farmworkers fill jobs unwanted by American citizens, who don't believe the immigrant workers are here to "take their jobs" as these jobs are well-known to be physically demanding in less than desirable conditions and environments, and it's considered to be denigrated socially in the work force, as well as stated earlier that agricultural is one of the most hazardous occupations still to this day. (Dudley, 2019)

The Center for North American Studies, or CNAS, in 2015 updated a study from 2009 which included the objectives of: assessing the role and importance of the role held by immigrant farm laborers to dairy farms in the United States; estimated the effects of the losses that would be suffered without immigrant farm laborers in U.S. milk production as well as the overall herd size and resulting farm size; estimating economic effects, positive and negative impacts, on economic output and employment in the United States. (Adcock, 2015)

Dairy farms across the United States were polled and subsequently categorized into regions to make the receipt and organization of the incoming data most efficient. The figure below, taken from the CNAS study in 2015, shares the information they gleaned as a result of the surveys that were returned.



The remarkable results from this survey included all but 223 of the 1,223 surveys that were sent out. The reasons these 223 were not completed ranged from farms who no longer were operating dairy farms to no usable milk reporting data. Of the remaining 1,000 usable surveys, some answers were incomplete, but the overall information needed for the data regarding milk production and immigrant labor was able to be used. Farmers reported having 150,418 total number of workers, including full time and part time labor, and of those 150,418 there were 76,968 reported immigrant laborers. Using this data, the percentage of immigrant farm laborers from the 1,000 returned surveys came to 51.2%: more than half of *only* the returned reported data's workforce as being immigrant labor. It is estimated through this study that if only half of the immigrant labor force was reduced, herd size would be reduced by 1.04 million cows. This would lower milk production by 48.4 billion pounds, and 7.011 less farms would exist across the nation. These results would determine the price of milk to increase by a whopping 90%. (Adcock, 2015) If these are the figures from one study of 1,000 surveys of only dairy farms across the United States, imagine the impact on produce sales, vegetable and fruit, as well as the

meat markets, row crop numbers, including tobacco, were the immigrant labor force continue to be restricted after the coronavirus pandemic has been squelched.

As briefly introduced earlier, migratory children are an important source of funding for public schools and programs from our United States Department of Education, as well. Title I, Part C, funding is a national funding source for children who are identified as being eligible for the Migrant Education Programs across the country, regulated by the Office of Migratory Education, OME, in Washington, D. C. Federal funding is passed to the OME, then to each state to delegate to each of its MEP programs, whether that is through the state department of education or a third party grant holder responsible for distributing the funds to school districts in stand-alone or consortium programs and regional programs, determined by each individual state's organizational process. Once these students are identified, an amount of money that fluctuates every year is determined per student to be delegated for services that particular student may need. If a student has moved more than once in a school year, speaks a language other than English as a first and primary language, thus scoring low on the WAPT-WIDA ACCESS testing system, and scores below Proficient or Distinguished in the state's testing arena, these factors contribute to a student being considered Priority For Service (PFS). (Kentucky Department of Education, Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, 2020) Extra funding is available to the states for the PFS students. Public school districts depend on many federal programs to provide quality services, hire quality teaching staff and other essential factors needed to be in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as it pertains to equality in education. (United States Department of Education, 2020) Without this funding, schools would have even less of a budget to work with for those in either a stand-alone or consortium program, and the "cracks" these children can slip through as they move with their families become greater in width, making

it much easier for them to be missed as they travel. The MEP uses a federal database of Migratory Student Information Exchange, MSIX, which MEP staff will use to notify other MEP staff in the student's intended destination so that program is ready for them when they arrive, with grades, credits and other pertinent information already there when the student arrives to fill in those "cracks" and keep the students on track to meet their goal of high school graduation or the equivalent of.

The MEP doesn't end at the graduation from high school, however, only in the terms of funding to public school districts. There is another program called the Collage Assistance Migrant Program, CAMP, which these students can utilize to further their education beyond the secondary level of education in the United States. When these students can continue on to college/university, or a vocational/trade school, they not only earn a better living for themselves and the support of their families, but also provide a stability and stronghold to the economy of the United States with higher paid workers performing higher quality job performances.

### Recommendations:

After reviewing all the sources of information compiled to bring forward this information, it is the recommendation that the following things can occur:

Once we, as Americans, realize that the migratory labor force, immigrant or American employees, are the backbone of the economy this nation has built since the Dust Bowl after the Great Depression, and that their children need to be education just as equally as their peers from much more financially lucrative backgrounds, only then will these children be expected to succeed.

Quality medical care for these children will provide a better quality of life as they grow, making sure that they are mentally healthy as well as physically healthy. Children will be followed up with more efficiently as they migrate with the farming seasons by programs such as the Migrant Education Program through better utilization of federal databases available, such as the Migratory Students Information Exchange (MSIX).

Community resources of medical, dental and vision clinics will continue to be utilized to ensure adequate medical care for migratory children. Mental health services will also be readily available, regardless of income or medical insurance coverage for mental health issues. Other community programs have available funding to assist in payment of these services as they are needed. This will ensure the mental health and stability of the child as they mature as well as the mental health of the entire family, with education on alcoholism, domestic violence and other cultural barriers that may confuse the lines between what is considered mentally healthy and what is considered to be mentally deficient for children as they grow and develop.

Farmers will continue to realize that their farms cannot operate to full potential without migratory workers, American or immigrant, and continue to employ the nomadic people who continue to travel the United States in search of work, and who are willing to work in physically demanding, dangerous jobs.

Public schools will continue to make an effort to identify students for programs such as the Migrant Education Program and other supplemental educational programs to ensure these students are given a level playing field to compete alongside their peers for collegiate and vocational aspirations.

### Lessons Learned

From the time a child is born, they are learning. Each sight, sound, touch, taste and smell create synapses in the brain. These synapses, electric connections which facilitate the growth and development of the brain and the resulting maturation of the central nervous system, continue throughout childhood. (O'Callaghan, 2006) If children are not in an environment where they can learn, and learn in a consistent manner, these synapses don't consistently fire. When they don't consistently fire, the connections are broken, sometimes even lost, and the development is hindered. Once these children with hindered development are ready to be placed in a learning environment, they stand a greater chance of being labeled as needing special education due to developmental delays and suspected of mental retardation by those who know nothing of their time and influences before arriving to be educated. They know things other children do not, but do not know what is considered normal in the educational setting. Are those children any less smart? No. Their intelligence is just different because their environment has been different. (Lenroot, 2006)

Studies have been conducted in American pedagogy research for years regarding the impact of moving from home to home can, and does, have on a child, especially their social-emotional well-being. Each move a child makes contributes to a decline in social skills and sometimes, even behavioral problems. (Levine, 2016) While these effects can advance slowly over time, more immediately recognized effects are in the academic setting. Reading and math tests are the two subjects most commonly affected by childhood moves. (Levine, 2016) One of the best ways to combat these adverse effects is through extra support at home during the move. Sadly, for many migrant agricultural students, this isn't an option. Sharing student information as they move is crucial in closing the gaps they may face as they move frequently. This is why the

Migrant Education Program utilizes a federal database of Migrant Student Information Exchange, or MSIX. (Kentucky Department of Education, Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, 2020)

The first five years of a child's life is crucial to development. The early experiences a child has last throughout their lifetime in one for or another. Food insecurity in early childhood can occur commonly in the migratory agricultural worker community. Financial constraints as well as a lack of access to grocery stores within walking distance for those living in rural areas increases the risk of these households having diets that are poor in quality, lacking nutrients to support cognitive development in very young children as well as deficiencies in nutrients that will inhibit physical growth. Food insecurity also is a cause of toxic stress, which leads to additional health problems that last well into adulthood, including forming and maintaining health relationships. (Aurino E, 2020) Relationships with caregivers, environment and culture in which a child is raised during this time is exceptionally crucial as the person that child will become is sculpted during that time frame. (O'Callaghan, 2006)

The culture in which a child is raised has a profound impact on their life well into adulthood. Cultural differences are not from country to country, ethnicity to ethnicity, nor are they even language to language defined; they are home to home defined. It is not fair to determine every child has a level playing field simply because they attend the same school. Some of these students will attend that school system for more than twelve years. Other students will consider themselves lucky to be able to attend that school system for twelve weeks. As educators, we must be flexible and understanding to where each child comes from and be able to reach them on their own individual level without being bound to do so legally by labeling the child as needing special education with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) because we



determine they are deficient. We are the ones who are deficient in cultural knowledge of the different cultures in our own communities, and we are failing the children who move to follow the agricultural crops timeline that keeps us all fed. (Sasser, 2020)

Migratory children have greater chances of living in poverty. (Disentangling the Role of Income in the Academic Achievement of Migrant Children, 2019) Agriculturally migrant children don't come from one common background that can be studied and scrutinized to determine which is the best course of action to improve their lives. The only commonality each one shares is participation of their families in farm work. This differing background that gives each child a sense of individuality that must be taken into account for each child as they grow and learn makes it unclear to discern whether the outcomes of their childhood and the poverty level of income in which they are raised is consistent enough across sub-groups of migratory farmworkers to determine future level of success in education and into adulthood. (Disentangling the Role of Income in the Academic Achievement of Migrant Children, 2019) As each background is different, each child is equally as diverse. Some may respond positively, due to the positive environment in their home, therefore increasing the mental stability of the child due to the consistency of the primary caregiver while others respond more negatively in direct relation to the emotional stability of their caregiver. The education of the parent is a very influential factor in how the child performs in school for all children, most especially is this evident in the educational careers of migratory farm children. Parents who have a higher education level lean toward placing a higher value on education and the children respond to that. Those parents who have little, or no, formal education do not have any expectations for their children and support and reinforcement for that child's education is not found in the home environment. This is also compounded for those students who also need to acquire English as

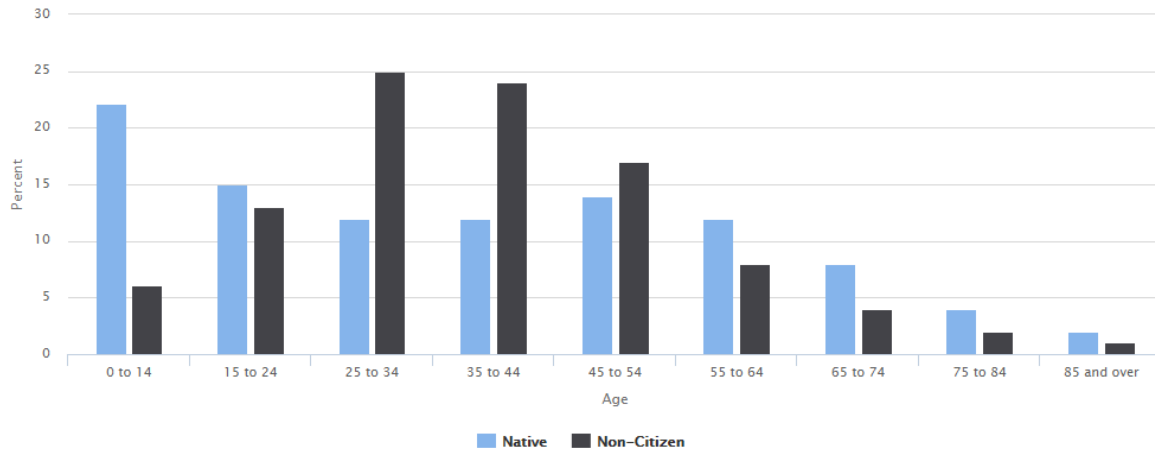
another language. (Disentangling the Role of Income in the Academic Achievement of Migrant Children, 2019) Children who needed to learn English as well as core content class material with a lower literacy rate than their English speaking peers absolutely have a lower literacy level and some schools will try to use the test scores that reflect that as anecdotal evidence the child should be referred for special education services or be placed in a remedial class when they simply lack English proficiency on their current grade level. (Student Action with Farmworkers, 2005) Not only is this unfair, it is illegal in the United States.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as recognized and implemented by the United States Department of Education, states that any discrimination of a child attending school in the United States based on race, color, or national origin (including language(s) spoken) is prohibited in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. (United States Department of Education, 2020) The educational programs described in this report are those programs which are distributed as federal funds from the United States Department of Education and advocates of these programs are to ensure that students receive services from all programs for which they qualify in the standards and eligibility requirements set. If it is found that students are being discriminated against by these advocates and representatives of these programs, there is a protocol in place to report any of those instances through a written complaint through the proper chain of command without fear of retaliation to the employee nor the student within 180 days of the alleged event. (United States Department of Education, 2020)

Children of farmworkers are children of people essential to the welfare of everyone living in the United States. Without farmworkers, there would be no produce sections in grocery stores, no farmers markets, no fresh ingredients to be bought for canning or other preserving. Farmworkers are crucial to life as we know it in the United States. For those states with a higher

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number of farmworkers who were not born in the United States, a faster productivity growth has been experienced. These workers are positive contributors to the federal budget. (University of Pennsylvania, 2016)

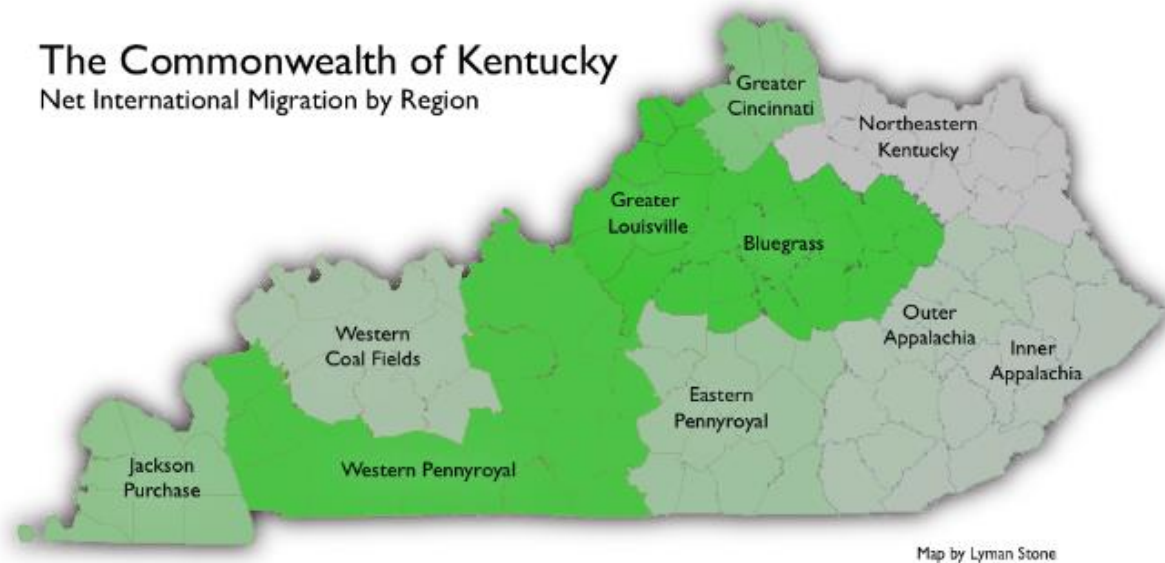


The figure above represents ages of migrant farm workers being in the majority of the age of workers contributing to the federal budget as being an active part of the work force. These workers have a low cost to on programs such as Social Security and Medicare as a result. This includes them with the working class, and this group of people working in the United States is the single largest contributing source of federal non-defense spending. Their taxes help pay for the defense spending in the United States without creating cost for the military. This contributes to the average saving of such expenses to native born citizens. (University of Pennsylvania, 2016)

Many states in the United States have a population that shows migrancy not only from state to state, but from other states into the United States. (Aisch, 2017) In the year 1900, 95% of people residing in North and South Carolina were born there. Now, more than one hundred years later, more than half of the people residing there were born somewhere else and migrated to the Carolinas. (Aisch, 2017) Kentucky has an international migration pattern that shows the density

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of agricultural work. Many of the darker green shaded areas in the map below are where tobacco and other crops which utilize H2A labor contracts. (Stone, 2014)



## Conclusion

Agriculture work is one of the top ranked dangerous jobs in the United States. Workers work with heavy and sharp equipment, harsh chemicals and even more harsh working conditions outside, from spring to fall/winter. Agriculture is the number one job using child labor and isn't held to the same standards for child labor laws that other industries across the United States must conform to. Children as young as ten years old are able to work in the fields legally.

Agriculture is a great commerce in Kentucky. Many farms are family owned, especially in the rural areas, and can date back as far as the American Revolution. Larger, corporate farms are located in Kentucky, as well, nearer to the more urban areas, such as the capitol, Frankfort, and other large cities such as Lexington and Louisville. Farming in Kentucky has changed

greatly over the years, and since 1993, with the creation of the Programa Nacional con Jornaleros Agrícolas (PRONJAG), a program created to support the market for temporary migratory labor. This program changed American agriculture. Some workers started coming to the United States when the inception of the program and are still coming today, to the same farm, for the same farmer, and they are considered a part of that farmer's family. As they age out of being able to do the work, their opinion and recommendation to their farmer is worth its weight in gold due to the trust that relationship has fostered between them over the years. Now, we're seeing a shift as the new generation comes in to take their place in the fields. It's a difficult transition for the farmer and the new worker; the farmer is used to the ways of the predecessor he's known for a lifetime and has shared in the growth of their families and lives together, though separated by a border. That relationship is not present with the new worker, and the farmer has to either adapt and learn about this new addition, or choose to hand the reigns of this group of workers to someone else, a son or other family member, who is younger and the farmer hopes will carry on the business after he is gone. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't, and if it doesn't, the farmer will contact his trusted amigo for another reference and try again, however many times it takes, until he is able to find the right fit for his farm. (Murphy, 2020)

Some farm workers who are here with their families travel a lot, and this can have many adverse effects on their children. Social isolation, language barriers, delay in school records following to the next enrollment and subsequent behavior issues are just a few of the obstacles migratory children face. These factors and others can lead to behavior problems in school as well as at home. There are educational programs in place at the local district, state education departments and the United States Department of Education to provide guidance for those school staff members tasked with caring for migrant children and ensure that the Civil Rights Act of

1964 as it pertains to public education is enforced. These programs are federally funded, and noncompliance with their guidelines can result in districts losing funding.

As children develop, the science of pedagogy teaches us that there are certain things that take place to ensure that a child develops normally, meeting objective milestones, and what to do if those milestones are not being met. The challenge with migratory children is the frequency of their moves. That's where the federally funded educational programs come in, such as the Migrant Education Program. The MEP utilizes a national database of student records that they can send electronically to the newest location for the student who is yet again moving. This student file will get to the school long before the requested records from the previous school attended, ensuring the child will be placed into the correct grade level with the corresponding skill level of classes. The goal in using this system is not only to close the gap that constant moving guarantees the student will face, but to seal it closed to ensure the continued academic success of the student throughout their academic career in the United States.

The impact of migrancy is felt by families, as well. Not only do you have the migrancy that comes to mind for families where the entire family packs up and moves for one to find work to provide life essentials for the family, but there is also a new trend referred to as, "circular migrancy". In this form of migrancy, only one parent goes to find work, leaving the other to stay and care for the children in the current home and school district in an effort to promote stability and security for the child as they grow and learn. This leaves one parent alone to work and send money back, and the other to single-handedly deal with everything going on with the children, possibly while working themselves. Both types of migrancy can lead to toxic stress, which can have a debilitating effect on children that will continue to have adverse effects on their health, mental and physical, on into adulthood.

As advocates for the students and consumers of the agricultural goods these children and their families help to harvest and send out into the markets, we are bound by a moral and ethical duty to see that they are protected as we consume the toil of their labor. Not all of these children are undocumented residents. It is also our responsibility to educate the educators, community members, and others who may not understand this of that fact. They are a mix of all the races, ethnicities and languages that together make up the population of the United States of America. They and their families work to eat and ensure that we are able to in doing so. The children toiling in the fields need to have a voice, someone to be sure they are protected the same way their non-farm-working peers are. Once there is a widely accepted system of accountability for these children as they grow and develop while migrating with their families, an absolute spike in their health, physical and mental development and general well-being is guaranteed to be noted, if and when they seek medical care, now more than ever. The impact of the global pandemic, COVID-19, or coronavirus is no exception. These children need to be able to seek medical care without fear by the children themselves or their families. The National Center for Farmworker Health has many resources in a variety of languages to help those farmworkers who need help in finding resources for healthcare. This includes mental health, as well.

Children are resilient, much more so than adults. The elasticity of the brain is remarkable, again, moreso in children as the brain continues to grow and develop. When a child lives with poverty, food insecurity, and community rejection, this can lead to toxic stress and inhibit the mental and physical growth of these students, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, or language spoken. Recognizing that and representing those children as they enter our communities will allow them access to mental and physical health care to give them the opportunity to grow into

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adulthood as strong, healthy, capable contributing members of society, wherever that society may be.



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