

EL PROYECTO BIENESTAR OR THE WELL-BEING PROJECT

El Proyecto Bienestar (Well-Being Project) is a community-based participatory research project (CBPR) aimed at identifying and addressing occupational and environmental issues of importance to the Hispanic agricultural workers in the Washington Yakima Valley. Four partner institutions (University of Washington, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, Heritage University, Northwest Community Action Center/Radio KDNA) and a community advisory board oversee the project. El Proyecto Bienestar gathered information using three methods: town hall meetings; key informant interviews; and community surveys. Local undergraduate students in the Connecting Students with Health Careers (ConneX) program conducted community surveys annually. This year's survey sought to describe how the community preferred to receive information about workplace health and safety. Participants stated that they received most of their information or news from brochures (30%), information sessions (17%), television (16%), radio (13%), and public meetings (12%). The top three topics requested by participants were: workers rights (22%); pesticides and chemicals (17%); and how to deal with workplace abuse (16.5%). El Proyecto Bienestar can use these results to distribute information according to the Hispanic farm worker community's requests and effort can be made to establish leadership awareness.

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METHODS

Before conducting interviews, we downloaded the survey on a personal data assistant (Palm Tungsten E2). It was field tested on family members and corrections were made based on participant's feedback. A convenience sampling method was used at different locations in the community, including stores, parks, and markets. Locations were chosen based on past successes. The only requirement to participate in the survey was being 18 years of age or older. Prior to conducting the survey, a consent form was read to the participant and upon consent, the interviewer would proceed with the survey. The survey consisted of 39 questions including general questions, methods questions and demographics. All responses were entered into the personal data assistant using the Pendragon program. After completing 221 surveys, all information was uploaded into a computer and was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. An analysis of data was done using comparisons between Hispanics and non-Hispanics, farm workers and non-farm workers, and age and sex.

RESULTS

Data showed that, of the 221 participants, 72% identified themselves as Hispanic and only 28% identified themselves as another ethnicity. Seventy-seven percent of the participants indicated that they had worked in agriculture. Only 23% indicated that they had not worked in agriculture. When asked how participants received most of their information or news, 30% said brochures, 17% said information

sessions, 16% said television, 13% said radio and 12% said public meetings. The responses for the remaining four categories were less than 10%.

Data indicated that the top three types of information requested by participants were workers rights at 22%, pesticides and chemicals at 17% and how to deal with workplace abuse at 16.5%. In response to who participants trusted to give them the most reliable advice on workplace health and safety, 36% identified supervisors, 13% said coworkers, 12% said employers and another 12% said family members. When asked about the most effective way of distributing information to the community, 14% of Hispanic farm workers said written brochures while 9% said the radio. In response to the question about whether the participants felt that they had strong community leaders, 39% indicated that they were not sure, 31% said no and 30% said yes. In addition, participants were asked how they felt they could become stronger leaders, 21% said specific training, another 21% said they did not know, 20% said participation in outreach activities and the remaining 49% had other responses.

CONCLUSIONS

Though it appears El Proyecto Bienestar must use multiple methods to reach out to the Hispanic farm worker community, some methods seem they might have more impact. Having a partnership with a local radio station, El Proyecto Bienestar can better utilize this resource to distribute important information about workplace health and safety. It is also evident that a significant number of participants

were unsure of who the leaders are and how they themselves could become stronger leaders. Knowing this, El Proyecto Bienestar can inform the community by providing information to people workers trust, or rely on, the

most, namely supervisors at work, co-workers and employers.

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