About Us
The National Children’s Center is one of 10 centers funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the only center with a national focus. The mission of the center is to “enhance the health and safety of all children exposed to hazards associated with agricultural work and rural environments.” It is located in the National Farm Medicine Center, Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield WI.

The National Children’s Center traces its roots to the 1992 Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention Symposium, from which formed the National Committee for Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention. Committee members finalized a National Action Plan for addressing the childhood agricultural injury problem. The plan was endorsed by the U.S. Congress in October 1996. In late 1996, NIOSH rolled out its National Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention Initiative, which included funding of a national center to bridge private and public sector efforts. That center became the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NCCRAHS), formally established in 1997.

Blueprint for Protecting Children in Agriculture
It has been a decade since the last National Action Plan was critically reviewed and updated. After reviewing evidence of progress to date, NCCRAHS led development of the Blueprint for Protecting Children in Agriculture: The 2012 National Action Plan” (www.marshfieldclinic.org/blueprint).

The process for developing the 2012 National Action Plan took advantage of lessons learned from previous efforts and relied heavily on a core group of six individuals. Over an 18-month period, an assessment of published research was conducted, childhood agricultural injury data were analyzed, and changing patterns of agricultural production and demographics of workers were reviewed. Scholars in various disciplines authored papers on related topics and generated recommendations for research, programs, policy and dissemination. Advisors guided the process and reviewed preliminary drafts of the proposed Goals and Strategies. The draft plan was posted on the Internet for public feedback. Journal articles and the core document were finalized in early 2012.

The Blueprint project has resulted in a dedicated issue of Journal of Agromedicine: Practice, Policy & Research. Vol. 17(2) was released in April 2012 with 15 peer-reviewed manuscripts on topics related to children, agriculture, safety, policy and interventions. A 36-page, fully illustrated 2012 National Action Plan was also published in May 2012.

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Safe Play Areas for Children on Farms

More than half the children injured or killed on farms are not working at the time of the incident. Ideally, non-working children should be physically separated from the hazards associated with agricultural worksites. Safe play areas are an alternative to bringing children into the worksite, especially when off-farm childcare is not available. Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms provides the first comprehensive guide for building an outdoor safe play area on a farm.

Guidelines for Children’s Work in Agriculture

Many agriculture work-related injuries and deaths are associated with children conducting work that does not match their developmental level. The North American Guidelines for Children’s Agricultural Tasks is a collection of guidelines designed to assist parents and others in assigning age-appropriate tasks for children 7-16, who live or work on farms and ranches.

Based upon requests from agricultural employers, NAGCAT resources were adapted in 2009 to include federal child labor regulations in agriculture to create Safety Guidelines for Hired Adolescent Farm Workers. Seven guidelines have been developed in English and Spanish.

Minimizing Children’s Exposure to Pesticides

With support from the National Children’s Center, Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) and Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK) partnered to design a culturally and linguistically appropriate educational comic book, Aunque Cerca...Sano, aimed at minimizing pesticide exposure to migrant children. There have been over 180,000 copies distributed.

Youth and Tractors: Guiding Public Policy

Farm tractors are the leading source of fatal injury for youth working in agriculture and also a major source of disabling non-fatal trauma. The National Children’s Center has been involved in research and scholarly activities aimed at reducing tractor injuries and fatalities that could inform organizational policy, as well as state and federal policies.

Networking Among Child Safety Advocates

Different organizations have developed programs to enhance child agricultural safety and health over the years. Unfortunately, these efforts have sometimes resulted in duplication of effort, conflicting messages, and competition rather than cooperation. The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network works to speak with one voice, advocating farm safety for children.

Integrating Safety into Agritourism Operations

An estimated 29.3 million children visit farms each year, many of whom are unfamiliar with the farm environment and its hazards. Agritourism Health and Safety Guidelines for Children were developed to give farm owners the information necessary to reduce the risk of illness and injury to children visiting farms.

Media Relations for Child Ag Safety

Minimal media attention is generally afforded childhood agricultural safety. The goal of this initiative is to build a cadre of journalists who understand the broad scope and preventability of childhood agricultural injuries. The National Children’s Center proactively engages and educates media professionals on Center activities with the goal of shaping public policy discussion and reducing the burden of injury and illness in agricultural populations.

Journal of Agromedicine

Agriculture safety and health needs a venue to reach a broader audience with research findings, practice recommendations and policy relevant issues. The National Farm Medicine Center and National Children’s Center has been the editorial home of the peer-reviewed Journal of Agromedicine since 2004.

Hearing Conservation for Farm Youth

Agriculture is one of the industries identified as having the highest exposure to dangerous levels of noise. The long-term effectiveness of a well-designed hearing conservation intervention for high school youth working in agriculture was evaluated, providing valuable information to inform future hearing loss prevention efforts.

For more information on childhood agricultural injuries and fatalities, see the Childhood Agricultural Injury Fact Sheet at www.marshfieldclinic.org/NCCRAHS

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