

Ag Youth Work Guidelines Overview

The overall goal of this initiative is to help young people work safely in agriculture. Safe and appropriate work is good for children, and agriculture offers many opportunities to develop work skills while gaining an appreciation for farming and related industries.

This project focuses on the development and launching of an updated version of 50 work guidelines. These guidelines are based upon the “North American Guidelines for Children’s Agricultural Tasks” (originally released in 1999), which help parents and supervisors assign age appropriate work. Youth doing work that does not match their developmental level is associated with increased risk of injury. Youth working in agriculture experience more fatalities than all other industries combined.

Methods

Three teams were established: 1) a National Steering Committee to guide the project and assist with dissemination; 2) an Internal Team to provide information on content, provide feedback and assist with the work process; and 3) a Technology Team to explore technology options, assist with website design and programming, and carry out pilot testing. Content consultants, including a child development specialist, were also utilized.

Phase I

A mobile-friendly website was developed to house the new guidelines in an interactive format to facilitate access and increase use of the guidelines. An initial assessment was conducted to determine which guidelines should be completed first, based on the frequency of youth performing farm jobs and data on frequency of youth-work injuries. Additional content on child development, supervision and communication was also created and/or updated. Phase I, creation of the website and the first 20 guidelines, is nearing completion and will debut in June 2017.

Phase II

Beginning in July 2017, the guideline content for another 30 agricultural work tasks commonly performed by youth will be updated or developed. In addition, website analytics and user feedback will be used to guide improvements for improved usability with mobile devices. Once these tasks are completed a national media campaign will be launched. In addition to traditional promotional efforts such as press releases and social media posts, the Childhood Agricultural Safety Network (CASN) and the National Steering Committee member organizations (National FFA, 4-H, American Farm Bureau Federation, USDA, etc.), will assist with promotion and dissemination. Follow-up and tracking of the use of these mobile-friendly agricultural youth work guidelines will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this strategy for reaching farm parents and employers with guidance on assigning work tasks to youth.