

## Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan Program Year 2014

### *A. Assessment of need*

Ohio continues to depend upon migrant and seasonal workers to support its agricultural industry, which is the largest industry in Ohio. The state's migrant and seasonal farm worker (MSFW) registrations in the labor exchange system increased in program year (PY) 2012 to 1,035, compared to 856 for PY 2011. Based on data from PY 2012, Ohio received 160 agricultural job orders consisting of 2,112 job openings, compared to 137 orders and 1,731 openings in PY 2011. The state has a goal of increasing all activities by 10 percent from PY 2012 to PY 2014.

From May through October, MSFWs helped harvest several crops in northwestern Ohio. The table below shows the largest crops harvested, based on acreage:

<b>Number of MSFWs</b>	<b>Acres Harvested</b>	<b>Crop Harvested</b>
3,000	7,000	Cucumbers
2,000	4,100	Fresh market tomatoes
500	3,100	Peppers

Nursery activities occur from February through December and are concentrated mostly in the north central and northeastern parts of the state, employing approximately 3,500 MSFWs and supporting nearly 800 operators.

The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), the vehicle for processing interstate and intrastate clearance order activity, was used very little during PY 2013. The OhioMeansJobs Centers plan to increase awareness of ARS through employer orientation during the off-season and continued employer outreach. The main worker benefit of the ARS is that it allows them to access information about work opportunities in Spanish instead of relying on interpretation from others. ARS will continue to be a service priority for OhioMeansJobs Centers when connecting MSFWs to employment opportunities and meeting the labor demands of employers. Ohio's job matching system, OhioMeansJobs.com, also will help serve both the MSFW employer and worker.

For PY 2014, approximately 9,500 MSFWs (including the families that travel with the workers) will be available to meet the labor demands of agricultural employers. Eighty-five percent of MSFWs travel to Ohio from Florida; about 15 percent travel from Texas. Ohio expects crops produced to remain at or above current levels in the upcoming year, as land used as fresh market acreage is increasing due to growing demand for fresh produce.

## *B. Outreach activities*

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Office of Workforce Development (OWD) manages the MSFW program and partners with the ODJFS Office of Local Operations (OLO) to offer services as needed throughout the state. The monitor advocate for the MSFW program works in OWD. Four full-time migrant outreach specialists and four bilingual seasonal intermittent staff, reporting to OLO, are based at OhioMeansJobs Centers. They offer customers the full array of core, intensive and training services. Outreach staff also provide information about OhioMeansJobs Center services to agricultural and food processing employers via employer-coordinated visits to the fields to meet with MSFWs. Explanations of the following are included during these visits:

- OhioMeansJobs Center services, including job information available via OhioMeansJobs.com;
- Referrals to agricultural/non-agricultural employment, training, supportive services, assessments and other job development services;
- Farm worker rights, including federal and state law and employment-related protections;
- The OhioMeansJobs Center complaint system;
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) information and potential eligibility;
- Referral information to contact other agencies serving MSFWs, including the WIA Section 167 grantee, the Ohio Department of Health, Legal Services, migrant clinics, food assistance, medical assistance and others.

Other tools used in conducting visits include the following:

- Joint outreach visits with other migrant services partner staff;
- Informational materials, (in English and Spanish, for MSFW households and individuals) that explain available support services, community-based organizations that offer assistance, use of the complaint system, the Ohio laws pertaining to them, unemployment compensation, farm worker rights, and federal wage/hour laws.

The migrant outreach specialists and the monitor advocate will also work with other partner service provider agencies to ensure full access to such services as Head Start, health care and emergency assistance. In addition, staff will work to enhance and strengthen the partnership with PathStone, Inc., the WIA Section 167 grantee for Ohio, to track the placement and registration activities of workers who need additional assistance.

Migrant outreach specialists are assigned to the OhioMeansJobs Centers in counties with the highest MSFW populations. These Centers are located in Clark, Lorain, Lake, Henry, Ottawa, and Sandusky Counties.

Migrant outreach specialists receive marketing and job development training, as well as MSFW service training made available by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The DOL training explains federal mandates governing the provision of MSFW services.

OhioMeansJobs Centers in counties with migrant labor camps operate outreach programs. Staff approach agricultural and food processing employers to offer labor recruitment assistance via the OhioMeansJobs Center's local job order process and the ARS. These OhioMeansJobs Centers also obtain or update each employer's MSFW labor needs.

Additionally, the Ohio Farm Worker Program web page has sections for farm workers and employers, with information about services available to both groups from a variety of sources. The page was recently updated and includes the following information:

- Current job openings, including openings for temporary agricultural works with H-2A visas;
- Seasonal crop information;
- A migrant outreach specialist directory;
- A MSFW health services directory;
- MSFW Head Start and education resources;
- Ohio agricultural data;
- Instructions about how to file a complaint.

As awareness of the problem of human trafficking has increased, the MSFW population has been identified as particularly vulnerable. To help prevent MSFWs from becoming victims of human trafficking, the migrant outreach specialists, monitor advocate and other partners will continue to conduct orientations, provide educational materials and offer contact information to both employers and workers.

### *C and D. Services provided to agricultural employers and MSFWs*

Migrant outreach specialists will continue to develop and maintain productive relationships with agricultural employers. A series of employer orientations will provide the most current information available from various state and federal agencies. The sessions may include representatives from the U.S. and Ohio departments of agriculture, the Ohio Department of Health, other available health service providers, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, local law enforcement, the Ohio Development Services Agency, ODJFS, and local OhioMeansJobs Centers.

OhioMeansJobs Centers' migrant outreach specialists will continue to actively promote all aspects of labor exchange services available to agricultural employers. This promotional effort may include attending and participating in conferences and meetings related to agricultural employers, agricultural employer associations and other MSFW partner agencies, as appropriate and as funding allows. To increase the effectiveness of outreach to both MSFWs and employers, migrant outreach specialists will be active members of the three statewide MSFW interagency groups.

Staff also will begin recruitment efforts for eligible individuals interested in agricultural work for the upcoming season. Once MSFWs begin to arrive, the migrant outreach specialists will help them access the following services:

- a. *Registration in OhioMeansJobs.com, Ohio's labor exchange system* - Individuals may access the system online through OhioMeansJobs.com or receive staff-assisted registration, which provides additional information to help track services throughout the growing season. MSFWs who visit an OhioMeansJobs Center also can use the resource room facilities to self-register or search for employment opportunities. While at the OhioMeansJobs Centers, eligible customers also may access other core, intensive, training or supportive services as appropriate. Registration forms are available in Spanish, and bilingual assistance is available.
- b. *Assessment of individual MSFW needs* - After individuals register in OhioMeansJobs.com, migrant outreach specialists interview them to assess their needs. The specialists also record their work history, ask whether they are interested in permanent employment or job training, and offer career guidance. The specialists then provide referrals to any requested services. As needed, they refer MSFW customers to the WIA Section 167 grantee, as well as to other partners, community-based organizations or supportive services agencies.

### *E. Data analysis*

The migrant outreach specialists record all outreach and service delivery activities in the migrant outreach log. This allows regional supervisory staff and the monitor advocate to ensure that the specialists are spending at least 50 percent of their time conducting outreach to MSFWs and agricultural employers.

OWD will continue to work with the OhioMeansJobs Centers to improve performance in the federal equity indicators and minimum service level indicators. The monitor advocate will continue to conduct monitoring visits in PY 2014. This activity is designed to help OhioMeansJobs Centers develop performance measures and better understand federally mandated MSFW services. Monitoring visits also allow the monitor advocate to review productivity and recommend ways to improve performance.

Throughout the program year, the monitor advocate reviews the quarterly data available from the Migrant Indicators of Compliance report. During the growing season, this report is expanded as data from the migrant outreach specialists' weekly outreach logs become available. In each case, a review determines compliance with performance goals and identifies areas where additional technical assistance or training may be needed. This information is shared with OLO leadership to make them aware of their regional compliance status on a monthly basis.

The monitor advocate also looks at data compiled for the annual Ohio Migrant Census. This data comes from various sources, including the Ohio Department of Health, migrant and Head Start programs such as Teaching Mentoring Communities, and field visits by migrant outreach specialists. The data are useful for identifying employers' current and projected labor needs and for ensuring that migrant outreach specialists are positioned in the areas of greatest need.

In PY 2012, OhioMeansJobs Centers received 160 job orders for 2,112 openings, 1,035 MSFW registrations in the labor exchange system, and 1,611 job placement transactions. Ohio filled 71 percent of its openings, exceeding its performance indicator of 42.5 percent. Although the job orders showed 2,112 openings, employers post more positions than they actually need in order to interview more workers and find the best qualified applicants. Employers did not report problems with a lack of workers in PY 2012.

No MSFW-related interstate clearance orders were filed in PY 2012; however, 43 H-2A-related interstate clearance orders were filed for 767 openings. Ohio expects to continue increasing placement of domestic workers for H-2A orders and continues to market these orders through the OhioMeansJobs Centers.

Ohio projects similar numbers for PY 2014, with an expected 10 percent increase in job orders and openings compared to PY 2013. The same is expected for interstate clearance orders. Once again, the majority of these orders are expected to be H-2A-related.

Because a direct correlation exists between outreach activities and placements, migrant outreach specialists will increase outreach activities in PY 2014 to meet Ohio's goals. Ohio plans to contact 2,500 MSFWs and meet equity indicators related to placements and referrals for PY 2014.

#### *F. Other requirements*

The state monitor advocate was given the opportunity to approve and comment on the 2014 Agricultural Outreach Plan. The draft plan also was posted on the Ohio Farm Worker Program web page for 30 days to solicit comments from interagency migrant services partners and other interested parties statewide. Input was sought from the following organizations and used to develop the plan:

- Farm Worker Agencies Liaison and Communication Outreach Network (FALCON) Interagency membership;
- Springfield Latino/Migrant Interagency membership;
- Columbus Hispanic/Migrant Interagency membership;
- PathStone, Inc;
- Teaching and Mentoring Communities, Inc;
- Advocates for Basic Legal Equality;
- En Camino;
- Ohio Migrant Education;
- Ohio Farm Bureau;
- Community Health Services;
- Ohio Department of Agriculture;

- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development;
- U.S. Department of Labor – Wage and Hour Division;
- Ohio Department of Commerce – Wage and Hour Division.