

EXCITE Project Fall Update

As we round the corner towards mid-November, it is hard to believe we are already six months into the Extension COVID Immunization Training and Education (EXCITE) project. EXCITE funding to help promote vaccine confidence and uptake among adults dovetailed nicely with ongoing efforts within UVM Extension's farmworker programming to advance health equity. Much work has already been accomplished, and some exciting new possibilities are on the horizon. COVID has been unrelenting, and the needs around immunizations continue to increase as we navigate new guidance for boosters and vaccinating youth while also promoting the importance of flu shots especially during the pandemic. Below are some highlights of the project so far.

- This summer we offered four health screening events in conjunction with vaccination clinics at farms in Chittenden and Franklin counties. These were made possible in partnership with Dr. Ben Clements and Dr. Katie Wells with the Global Health Program at the Larner College of Medicine. These events were attended by many student learners including medical students, residents, and nurses, and were a great opportunity to offer comprehensive "whole person" care for farmworkers that included vaccine education and the opportunity to get vaccinated.
- Offering a combination of Flu, COVID and Tdap vaccines along with acute care triage has been a successful strategy for our on-farm clinics this fall, and we have been very busy during the last month. Many thanks to Dr. Ben Clements and Colchester Family Medicine for facilitating access to vaccines and helping to put on the clinics. The Tdap vaccine has been more popular than we expected, and we are thrilled to be able to offer option this to the communities we work with along with flu and COVID.
- We continue to offer one-on-one care coordination to connect individuals with local vaccine options when a farm visit by us is not feasible. Barriers that exist for workers when seeking to get vaccinated include lack of transportation, language access challenges, demanding and inflexible work schedules, inability to use technology to make appointments, and lack of familiarity with U.S. medical system.
- We are promoting and educating about vaccination in social media, publications and newsletters, including via Front Porch Forum, newsletters of other Extension Programs, the Ag Review and more. We've distributed materials at state and county fairs, in housing on farms, and at local cultural events.
- We are pursuing a social media contract with Hispanic Communication Network (HCN). HCN is a full-service, social change marketing agency delivering culturally driven multimedia strategies with content is produced by Latinos for Latinos. The contract will allow us to build out a social media campaign targeting farmworkers that will include message testing to find out what resonates most with populations we serve, how to be strategic in increasing our social media presence, how to best integrate communications platforms and more.

- We continue to conduct focus groups and surveys to better understand what needs exist related to immunizations, how our target populations gather information and make decisions about vaccination, and how we can best support and assist in this area.
- We will soon have a large-scale mailing going out at agricultural stakeholders around the state with general information and resources and access to a survey to better understand how agricultural stakeholders in the state have been impacted by COVID and how they feel UVM Extension could uniquely assist them with their needs.
- We are considering other ways to push out messaging, including paid advertising in newspapers and on radio stations.

Summary June-October 2021

On-farm COVID vaccines given	198
On-farm flu vaccines given	141
On-farm Tdap vaccines given	40
Care coordination for vaccine appointments	47 individuals
Health Screenings	52 individuals
Reach for vaccine education materials	21,549 individuals

- *Some of the work highlighted above has been made possible by a range of grant funds that cover multiple staff member's time across the state including the VDOH ELC (COVID Response), a HRSA ORHP Outreach Grant and Care Coordination Grant, Nuvance Health/UVMLCOM Global Health Program Funds, Gift funds from the Vermont Community Foundation, and EXCITE (Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement).*

Some key takeaways so far have been the success of offering wrap around supports including health screening, vaccine options, COVID testing and COVID response that ultimately leads to increased vaccination rates. We've also witnessed that changing the thinking of vaccine hesitant folks take a lot of time- building strong relationships, having repeat conversations and interactions, and offering multiple opportunities to get vaccinated. We are also realizing that impactful social media and communications take intentionality and time/capacity that we are still working to build.

We are so grateful to everyone who helped with the proposal drafting for this project and would welcome continued input and participation. Our biggest need right now is identifying an individual to oversee and manage our social media and communications campaign including a market research and evaluation component. Suggestions of potential candidates would be much appreciated. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with thoughts, connections and ideas, or if you would like to hit the field with us and see some immunizations and immunization education in action. On the following page are a few photos of what we have been up to lately.

