



ASHCA Summit, Oct. 20-22

The Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA) is pleased to announce the 2025 North American Agricultural Safety Summit, Oct. 20-22, at Holiday Inn San Antonio-Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas. ASHCA is a coalition of organizations, businesses, federal agencies, and safety professionals, all seeking to improve the health and safety of farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers. For information on attending or sponsoring, visit www.ashca.org.



(Robin Romano photo)



National Children's Center
for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

"The National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety strives to enhance the health and safety of all children exposed to hazards associated with agricultural work and rural environments."

Safeguarding Children in Agriculture: An Updated National Action Plan

To ensure the next generation of farmers, farm workers and all those whose careers and lives are affiliated with agriculture, the National Children's Center has updated the National Action Plan for Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention. The National Children's Center worked with external advisors and many others to enhance the framework for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of children who live on, work on, or visit our nation's nearly 2 million farms and ranches. The original plan was published in 1996, with updates in 2001 and 2012.

"This update reflects decades of progress while addressing new and emerging issues," said Andrea Swenson, Ph.D., director of the National Children's Center.

The plan addresses leadership, data gathering, policy, research, dissemination and implementation. Additionally, it acknowledges new agricultural production practices, environmental exposures, extreme weather and changing demographics of farm owners and workers. Swenson said the action plan is relevant to a wide range of audiences affiliated with agriculture, youth, safety and health. Examples include child farm safety organizations, agribusinesses, farm organizations, federal, state and local agencies, educators, researchers, communicators, philanthropists and policymakers. While many changes have occurred since the release of the 2012 National Action Plan, problems persist.

"One of the most persistent issues is that tractors remain the most common source of youth deaths on farms," Swenson said. "Adding to the tractor problem is the increasing number of childhood fatalities associated with skid steers."

The plan is scheduled to be published summer 2025.



CASN mower campaign

Warm weather is upon us, and so is grass mowing season. The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network (CASN) urges parents and other supervising adults to ensure that young people are "Mow Ready" before tackling this potentially hazardous job. Nearly 10,000 child/youth lawn mower injuries occur in the United States annually, with approximately 5 percent resulting in amputation. Despite improvements in engineering and safety features, pediatric lawn mower-related injury rates have remained constant over the past 40 years. Injuries include lacerations, burns and eye injuries. On farms, mowing is often the first job involving machinery that is assigned to young people. The CASN mower campaign website, <https://cultivatesafety.org/campaigns/mowing/>, contains fact sheets and posters for both youth and supervising adults, as well as a social media kit. These resources (English and Spanish) address key safety topics such as supervision, personal protective equipment, appropriate shoes, child bystanders and debris in the grass. The campaign kicked off in May with a webinar featuring Diane Rohlman, Ph.D., and Charles Jennissen, M.D., who covered common injuries and proper training, <https://youtu.be/yyGA5E4dJyw>.



Farm moms face 'invisible' stressors

Stressors faced by farm women -- such as working off-farm, raising children around farm hazards and handling details necessary to household and farm operations -- takes a toll on their mental health, according to a study published in the Journal of Agromedicine, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2024.2427800>.

"This study examined the ways in which farm women's personal and professional responsibilities, farm safety and farm women's mental health intersect," said Florence Becot, the Nationwide Insurance Early Career Professor in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, who led the study in collaboration with Shoshanah Inwood and Hannah Budge from the Ohio State University.

Data was collected from 11 focus groups with 68 women raising children under age 18 on farms in Wisconsin, Ohio and Vermont, as well as from two rounds of a photovoice activity. Study findings reinforce the need for agricultural safety and health research, and interventions to expand beyond individual-level safety knowledge and attitudes to more broadly address structural and systems level issues, such as child care options, Becot said. The research was supported by the National Children's Center.

New logo: Farm injuries are not 'accidents'

The campaign to shift terminology away from the word "accident" when describing childhood agricultural injuries continues to build with a new logo and several media and research outputs. Barbara Lee, Ph.D., and Melissa Ploeckelman Brown explained the terminology shift on the FarmSafe podcast hosted by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, and Lee also presented to an AgriSafe webinar audience.



In addition, Lee and her team submitted manuscripts that are undergoing peer review at two separate research journals. The first paper quantifies use of the word "accident" in media articles that describe ag injuries and fatalities involving children, and assesses journalists' reactions to a terminology shift. The second paper features a survey of agricultural media professionals aimed at assessing their reactions to a proposed terminology shift, understanding their attitudes and influences, and gauging their reactions to the rarity of legal action in child injury cases.

Touching base with D.C.

National Children's Center Director Andrea Swenson visited Washington, D.C., in February, where she met with members of Congress and senior staff to highlight the great work the National Children's Center does to keep children safe in agriculture. Swenson is pictured here with Penn State University's Hazel Velasco Palacios



(left) and Florence Becot (right), both of whom have conducted research for the Children's Center.

Advisor Dee Jepsen is 'Leader in the Field'

National Children's Center Stakeholder Advisory Board member Dee Jepsen, Ph.D., Ohio State University, has been named 2025 "Leader in the Field" by the Journal of Agromedicine. The recognition goes annually to an individual who has made significant contributions in agricultural safety and health practice, policy, and research.



Agritourism safety at your fingertips

The website www.safeagritourism.org provides checklists, interactive walkthroughs, signage and other resources farmers need to help keep their visitors safe. Several high-profile, wagon-related injury events occurred across the Midwest last fall, focusing renewed attention on safety training and preparation.



Furthermore ...

Dr. Andrea Swenson and **Heidi Kloster, M.D.**, associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin, have begun work on a research project: "Family Perspectives on How Healthcare Providers May Promote Optimization of Health for Children with Medical Complexity." Their study will collect data from caregivers of children with medical complexity, which the investigators define as children with multiple chronic conditions, several functional limitations, and extensive health care needs. ... **Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D.**, participated in a graduation ceremony in Washington, D.C., completing his year-long National Rural Health Association Fellowship, which included a focus on rural veterans' health issues. ... **Cassey Peltier** joined nearly 5,000 attendees in January at the 106th Annual American Farm Bureau Association Convention in San Antonio, Texas. Peltier surveyed conference attendees who oversee working youth on their perspectives regarding use of the Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines. ... **Bryan Weichelt** and **Matt Pilz** co-authored, "Large Language Models for Agricultural Injury Surveillance," published in the journal Safety. This study investigated the feasibility and implications of filling the role of a human reviewer with an LLM in analyzing information about agricultural injuries from news articles and investigation reports. ... National Children's Center research, interventions and outreach/education are featured in the 2024 National Farm Medicine Center Year in Review. ... **Chris Wanat** and **Melissa Ploeckelman Brown** successfully studied and passed the Certified Playground Safety Inspector exam, providing them additional expertise when working with safe play areas and agritourism. ... **Ploeckelman Brown** has been installed as an ex-officio Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association board member representing the National Farm Medicine Center.