

Taylor's Story

Young people eagerly anticipate the end of each school year, and Taylor VanderWeele, 14, was no different. He had recently passed a tractor safety course and began working for two neighboring farmers. Just weeks after his 8th grade graduation, VanderWeele died in a tractor rollover. A recent article published by [Telling the Story Project](#) recounts the VanderWeele family's experience following the incident. Cindy and Jay VanderWeele are sharing their son's story to advocate for renewed and expanded investment in agricultural injury prevention.



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."

National Action Plan publishes Spanish version

The National Children's Center has published a Spanish-language version of "Safeguarding Children in Agriculture: A National Action Plan," an updated framework for safeguarding youth in agricultural and rural environments. The current plan reflects changes in agriculture while building on previous plans published in 1996, 2001 and 2012.

National Children's Center partner Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) is leading Spanish-language dissemination efforts. MCN exhibited at the Agricultural Worker Health Spring Symposium in New Orleans, where MCN staff explained the National Action Plan to attendees and how it can be used in their respective work places. MCN has also been promoting the document to community-based organizations and health clinics, including community health workers, outreach workers and health promoters.

In June, MCN presented the plan in Spanish for the first time to GOTA (Grupo de Organizaciones de Trabajadores Agrícolas, or the Group of Agricultural Worker Organizations). GOTA is a national coalition of organizations serving farmworker communities, convened by MCN. Organizations within GOTA are part of a network of trusted messengers committed to the safety of children and youth in agricultural settings. This presentation served as a springboard for a broader social media campaign and a feature article on MCN's Substack platforms in English and Spanish.

MCN also shared this information at the National Center for Farmworker Health Spring Symposium, the 2nd Annual Virginia Farmworker Advocacy Network Conference and MCN's webinar, "From the Field to the Clinic: Recognizing Pesticide-Related Illness in Children."

To view both the English and Spanish versions online, and to access bilingual social media kits, go to marshfieldresearch.org/nccrahs/nap/2025. To request a hard copy, contact Cassey Peltier, cassandra.peltier@sanfordhealth.org.



Stakeholder Advisory Board meets with scientists, staff

The National Children's Center welcomed its Stakeholder Advisory Board and principal investigators from around the country to an in-person meeting, June 8-9, at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee. Investigators and staff gave progress reports and gathered recommendations on key Center priorities for the coming year, including dissemination and implementation of *Safeguarding Children in Agriculture: A National Action Plan*. "We are grateful for the opportunity to connect and hear from our Stakeholder Advisory Board," said Andrea Swenson, PhD, director of the National Children's Center. "Their feedback strengthens our Center and the impact we have safeguarding youth living and working in agricultural settings across the U.S."



Childhood Agricultural Safety Network

The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network (CASN) kicked off summer 2026 with a sun protection webinar June 5 as part of its virtual series of quarterly meetings. CASN met in-person June 16 during the Safety & Health in Agricultural & Rural Populations (SHARP) Symposium in Saskatoon, SK.



Childhood Agricultural Safety Network

Year of the woman farmer

The United Nations has declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer. A guest-editor team led by Florence Becot, PhD, Penn State University, is compiling a special issue of the Journal of Agromedicine dedicated to the safety, health and well-being of women in agriculture. As a woman recently rhetorically asked in one of Dr. Becot's research studies: "Women are expected to take care of everyone in the family and on the farm, but who is taking care of them?"

Children's Center at world conference

Ten scientists and staff from the National Children's Center joined nearly 400 attendees at the "Safety & Health in Agricultural & Rural Populations (SHARP)" conference in Saskatoon, SK, in June. The team, all members of the International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health (ISASH), presented on multiple projects and played active roles on numerous ISASH committees. Casper Bendixsen, PhD, participated as an invited member of the opening keynote panel, "Farm safety is good for business." ISASH board member Melissa Ploeckelman Brown was announced as ISASH president-elect, while Josie Rudolphi, PhD, took office as president for the coming year. Another National Children's Center project leader, Farzaneh Khorsandi, PhD, was honored with the ISASH Research Achievement Award.



What to know before you mow

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.

"Before teens tackle lawn care and maintenance, it's important for parents and guardians to make sure teens know how to properly and safely do it," said Andrea Swenson, PhD, director of the National Children's Center, which facilitates the network. "Supporting teens includes adults modeling safe behaviors and providing appropriate supervision."

The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network's [mower campaign website](#) contains fact sheets and posters for both youth and adults. Both sets of materials include illustrations of key safety topics covering supervision, personal protective equipment, appropriate shoes, child bystanders and debris in the grass. Resources are also available in Spanish.



Strengthening farm evaluations

Throughout the past year, the National Children's Center translated decades of research into practical action by supporting Farm Workforce Development training across the country. Andrea Swenson, PhD, director of the National Children's Center, was joined by Melissa Ploeckelman Brown, outreach specialist, and Cassandra Peltier, health educator, to deliver multiple trainings focused on childhood agricultural safety and health. In total, these virtual sessions reached approximately 150 individuals who will be working with dairy farmers in the United States and Canada. The training equipped farm workforce evaluators with practical tools and resources for discussing child safety with farm owners, parents and employers who hire youth. The sessions concluded with group discussion and hands-on practice using realistic scenarios that trainees might encounter during on-farm evaluations. One of the most meaningful takeaways voiced by participants was a shift in the perspective that age alone should not determine whether a child or youth is assigned a task. Instead, indicators of physical, cognitive, social and emotional capabilities are more important indicators of readiness.