

**Connecting the Pieces: A National Effort in Agricultural Safety and Health Educational
Programing for Youth**

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Introduction

Since 1968, the Agricultural Hazardous Occupations Orders AgHOs have been, and are currently regulated by the U.S. DOL to protect youth employed on farms and ranches. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, a federal core agency of the U.S. Cooperative Extension System, dedicated a national program to address trainings and certificate course programs that meet the AgHO requirements. The Youth Farm Safety (YFS) Program supports national efforts to deliver timely, pertinent, and appropriate trainings to youth seeking employment or who are already employed in agriculture. While these training requirements do not apply to youth working on their family farm, the educational resources represent good agricultural work practices. Because of this, many parents and grandparents consider this training for their family-based youth workers. In addition, extension agents and school-based agricultural educators may provide appropriate safety training. However, changes in agricultural production and the types of tasks youth are performing have evolved thereby creating a need to reevaluate safety-training efforts. Additionally, the broad range of interest groups, educational opportunities, and politics, there is an opportunity to address this modern public health and safety problem regarding youth workers. These many stakeholder groups are concerned about ‘how’ to safely involve youth in agriculture. The overall objectives of this project was to develop a national programming effort that would enhance access to and utilization of farm safety materials for youth workers as well as objectively evaluate youth’s agricultural safety competencies.

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases

In 2013, a group of educational specialists from land grant universities received funding for two years from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) to coordinate a national approach for youth safety education. The Safety in Agriculture for Youth (SAY) project was funded as a collaborative effort between Penn State University, Ohio State University, Utah State University, University of Kentucky and CareerSafe L.L.C. The primary mission of the SAY project was to develop a sustainable and accessible national curriculum clearinghouse for agricultural safety and health curriculum for youth in both formal and informal settings. Several secondary objectives were established to improve communication and collective cooperation from multiple stakeholders with similar interests. This national curriculum is an umbrella compilation of materials, which includes many different curricula, programs, projects, and activities that together have a common purpose. Additionally, this comprehensive national curriculum was developed to be sensitive to all types and scales of production agriculture and all ages and experience levels of youth audiences. It includes parents, employers, and other educators. It is usable in both formal and informal educational settings.

The objectives of the SAY project were as follows: (1) Establish a protocol for submission of agricultural safety and health curriculum/resources, (2) create a centralized location (National Clearinghouse) of relevant educational materials that can be used in both formal and non-formal educational settings for youth, and (3) establish a risk assessment protocol for developing supervision strategies and guidelines for formal secondary students’ Supervised Agricultural Experiences.

Results/Implications

The Curriculum Alignment Committee (CAA) functioned as a subcommittee of the SAY and consisted of two agricultural safety and health professionals and four agricultural education professors with back grounds in teaching and learning, faculty/high school teacher development, leadership development, and Ag-STEM education. This team developed a protocol and the framework for submission of educational resources, alignment to the National Council for Agricultural Education's (NCAE) Agricultural, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) career cluster standards, and organization of these resources on the national clearinghouse.

The SAY national clearinghouse for agricultural safety and health curriculum and other supporting resources was developed. A national steering committee and three stakeholder groups assisted in identifying appropriate content to be submitted. Marketing and outreach was utilized to ensure national awareness and easy access/utilization for the materials. An online submission process was developed for easy submission of educational materials. Content is cataloged by curriculum, educational resource, or video link.

A risk assessment protocol for Supervised Agricultural Experiences was developed based on secondary agriculture teacher input. Professional development workshops were delivered at the state, regional and national levels. Materials for the SAE Risk Assessment Protocol are available on the national clearinghouse.

Future Plans

The initial project is a testament of the progress that can be made when stakeholder groups work together for the overall well being of the young workers. A continuation project was funded for 2015-16 with full expectation that additional government dollars will be appropriated towards future projects under this umbrella SAY structure.

With uncertainty in federal funding sources, short-term resources have been granted to the project team for continuity of a national advisory team and basic operation of the clearinghouse. Future directions of the national clearinghouse will be guided by availability of funding and impact of the project as measured by web traffic analytics (site visits).

Costs/Resources Needed

The SAY clearinghouse is available online and may be used freely by parents, teachers, extension agents, and researchers seeking to establish a culture of agricultural safety. The overall USDA-NIFA funding for the project was, \$599,914.

The NCAE AFNR career cluster standards were revised in the spring of 2015, at the close of the SAY project. With the process in place, the educational resources listed on the clearinghouse would need to be re-aligned to the new AFNR standards. Further research is needed to quantify the use of state/national standards and establish the utility (or usefulness) of a national clearinghouse with resources aligned to such educational standards.

References

United States Department of Labor, (2007). Child labor requirements in agricultural occupations under the Fair Labor Standards Act.