



Center for Worker Health

Wake Forest University School of Medicine

POLICY BRIEF

Housing Conditions in Temporary Labor Camps for Migrant Farmworkers in North Carolina

Purpose

This policy brief describes conditions in migrant farmworker housing in North Carolina and presents recommendations to improve housing conditions.¹

Background

Housing conditions in temporary labor camps are regulated in North Carolina by the Migrant Housing Act (MHA). The Migrant Housing Act is enforced by the North Carolina Department of Labor (NCDOL). All temporary labor camps must be registered with the NCDOL, which inspects housing prior to occupancy and issues housing certificates for camps that pass the inspection.

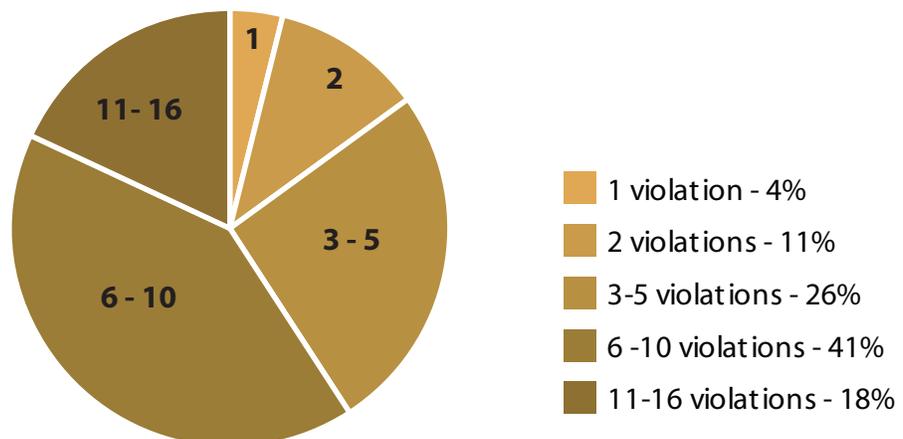
Findings

Most camps had conditions that violated multiple MHA standards

All of the 27 camps inspected in 2008 had at least one violation of housing standards. 18% of camps had 11 to 16 violations, 41% had 6 to 10 violations, and 26% had 3-5 violations.

Camps by number of housing violations documented in inspection

Number of Violations



Violations were more common in camps with no H2A² workers and in large camps

37% of camps had no residents with H2A visas. Three of these camps were not registered with NCDOL.

- Camps **with no H2A residents** had **more than twice the odds** of H2A camps of having an insufficient number of toilets, showerheads, or laundry facilities.

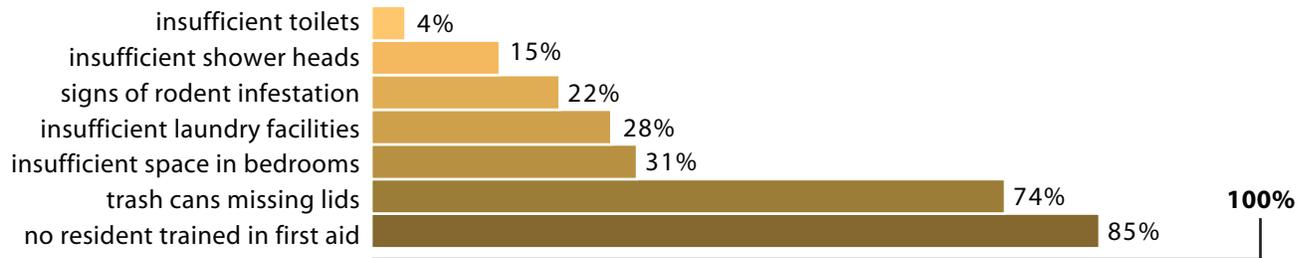
35% of camps had 11 or more residents.

- Camps with **11 or more residents** had **more than 7 times the odds** of smaller camps of having an insufficient number of toilets, showerheads, or laundry facilities.

Common housing violations

Conditions that violate MHA standards³ were common throughout the agricultural season, but were more common in mid to late season. The chart below shows the prevalence of the most common violations.

Percent of camps with violations of housing standards by mid to late season



Policy Implications

Housing standards for temporary labor camps are not being adequately enforced. This brief documents a large number of violations of housing standards. These violations pose hazards to residents' health. Housing violations were more common during the middle and late agricultural season and in non-H2A camps and large camps. Possible explanations include: 1) housing exceeds the capacity for which it is certified, 2) employers fail to properly maintain facilities after inspection, and 3) inspections are prioritized for H2A camps.

Recommendations

Several steps should be taken to enhance enforcement of the North Carolina Migrant Housing Act.

- Increase the number of inspectors.
- Increase the number of post-occupancy inspections conducted.
- Expand efforts to identify and inspect unregistered camps.
- Target a portion of post-occupancy inspections to camps with no H2A workers and camps with more than 10 residents.

¹ Information for this policy brief is based on data collected via interviews with residents in 43 migrant camps in 2007, and via interviews and inspections based on North Carolina Department of Labor's (NCDOL) housing inspection checklist in 27 migrant farmworker camps in 2008. All camps were in eastern NC.

² The H2A Visa Program allows foreign workers to enter into a contract with a specific agricultural employer in the United States to work in farm work. The program requires employers to provide free housing that meets safety and health standards established by law.

³ Migrant Housing Act Standards:

- Minimum 1 toilet for each 15 people [29 CFR 1910.142(d)(1) and (d)(5)]
- Minimum 1 showerhead per 10 persons [29 CFR 1910.142(f)(1)(ii)]
- Effective measures shall be taken to prevent infestation by animal and insect vectors or pests [29 CFR 1910.142(j)]
- Minimum of one laundry tray or tub for every 30 persons [29 CFR 1910.142(f)(1)(iii)]
- Minimum of 50 square feet per person in bedrooms [29 CFR 1910.142(b)(2)]
- Fly-tight, rodent-tight, impervious garbage containers [29 CFR 1910.142(h)(1) and (3)]
- Adequate first aid facilities shall be maintained and available in every labor camp. Such facilities shall be in charge of a person trained to administer first aid. [29 CFR 1910.142(k)(1) and (2)]

Further Information

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