



Occupational  
Health Clinics  
for Ontario  
Workers Inc.

# Community & Workplace Psychosocial Supports for the Mental Health of International Agricultural Workers in Ontario





# Project Description

- The main goal of the project was to create an **inventory** of mental health and psychosocial wellbeing supports and services available to International Agricultural Workers (IAWs) in Ontario, and to distribute findings to these workers as soon as possible during the 2021 season
- The project also sought to better **understand key issues**, and conducted a scoping review of scientific literature, structured interviews with IAWs and other stakeholders, individual and group consultations, and reviews of secondary sources from all stakeholder groups
- This project identified ***promising practices*** supporting the mental and psychosocial wellbeing of Ontario IAWs, ***important gaps*** requiring attention, and ***recommendations*** for needed intervention

The project was funded by **the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)**, and took place from May 2021 to March 2022. The complete Project Report can be accessed [here](#).





# Theoretical Framing

- This project was developed under two conceptual frameworks: (1) ***Social Determinants of Health*** (SDOH) and (2) ***Occupational Health and Safety*** (OHS)
- The SDOH are the social and economic conditions that shape the health status of people along their lifespan
- The SDOH conceptual framework demonstrates the ways social, economic, and political factors such as income, immigration status, education, work, housing, gender, race, and ethnicity influence individual physical and mental health outcomes
- OHS framework focuses on work environments and human activity within these environments
- Both frameworks emphasise prevention through the design and implementation of policies, strategies, and interventions at the socio-economic and workplace levels





# Project Limitations

- Although part of the initial project proposal, the project was not successful in connecting to Thai IAWs and specific community groups and support services working with them
- Inability to capture experiences of Thai IAWs or of other IAWs from non Latinx and Caribbean countries
- Experience of women IAWs not substantially captured

# Transparency

- Various project team members are involved in initiatives and work reviewed and highlighted in the project report.



# Mental Health and Psychosocial Regional Resource and Service Scans and Project Posters



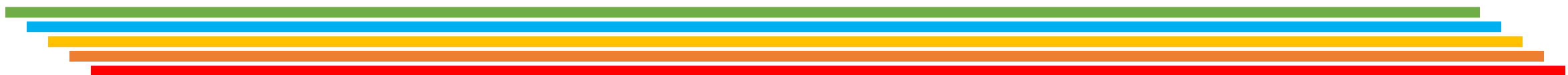
The principal activity of this project was to identify community supports and services available to Latinx and Caribbean IAWs in Ontario that are protective of their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, that may help prevent and address factors that can put their mental health at risk, as well supports and services that can help individual workers facing mental health challenges.

In total, eight (8) Ontario regions were selected for the support and service scans. These included:

1. Bradford, 2. Brantford/ Brant County, 3. Durham Region, 4. Haldimand-Norfolk, 5. Hamilton/ Carlisle/ Lynden, 6. Niagara Region, 7. Sarnia-Lambton, 8. Windsor-Essex

The scan activities consisted of:

- Internet-based research and review of secondary data related to services and supports for IAWs in Ontario
- Extensive engagement with known regional stakeholders and support and service providers to clarify information on known supports and services, and to identify information on and referral to others not previously known (snowball, or chain-referral sampling technique)



# Mental Health and Psychosocial Regional Resource and Service Scans and Project Posters

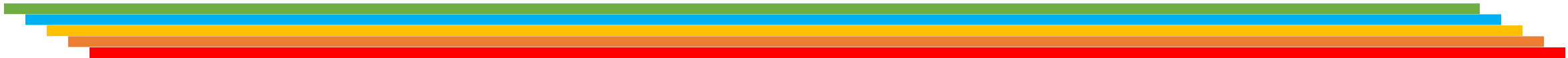


The regional scans and confirmation process culminated in the production of a Preliminary Regional Service and Resource Inventory that contains findings across the 8 Ontario regions of focus. **In total, 89 organizations, services and supports available to Ontario IAWs were identified.** This Inventory was completed on June 18, 2021.

Supports and services across all eight (8) provincial regions were organized into 3 categories:

1. Community Connection and Support
2. Health Care Services
3. Getting Help for Stress and Worry

To share the inventory information with IAWs, a poster format was selected. The regional information was added to the final poster template to create **eight (8) Mental Health and Psychosocial Supports for Ontario International Agricultural Workers Regional Resource Posters (Version 1)**. Both English and Spanish posters were created for each of the eight regions (digital and print copy versions).





**Example:**  
**Niagara Region Poster Version 1**



# NIAGARA REGION

## STRESS RELIEF, HEALTH CARE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

### Community Connection and Support

Socialize, connect to recreational activity and events, get information, and connect to local services

#### Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group (NMIWG)

Health fairs, events, information, service connection

- WhatsApp: +1-289-885-0003
- Email: [nmiwg@ohcwo.on.ca](mailto:nmiwg@ohcwo.on.ca)
- Follow their Facebook page: [Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group](#)

---

#### Southbridge Community Church

Farm visits, social events, personal support, Car/Wheel-drop-in centre

- WhatsApp: +1-905-261-0023
- Email: [info@southbridgechurch.ca](mailto:info@southbridgechurch.ca)

---

#### Niagara Workers Welcome

Newcomer kits, concerts, recreational events  
Contact: Kate Andros

- WhatsApp: +1-289-481-9875
- Email: [nwawelcomeforus@outlookmail.com](mailto:nwawelcomeforus@outlookmail.com)
- Follow their Facebook page: [Niagara Workers Welcome](#)
- [www.niagarabornandwelcome.org](http://www.niagarabornandwelcome.org)

#### Gateway Community Church

Spiritual care and encouragement, resources and information, COVID-19 care kits, transportation, social activities, clothing groceries and hot meals

- Call: 289-783-8844
- Email: [craig.karber@gatewaycc.on.ca](mailto:craig.karber@gatewaycc.on.ca)  
[info.gatewaycc.on.ca](http://info.gatewaycc.on.ca)

---

#### Caribbean Workers Outreach Program (CWOP)

Pastoral care and Social events  
Contact: Donna Brown

- WhatsApp: +1-905-394-0025
- Follow their Facebook page: [Caribbean Workers Outreach Program CWOP](#)

---

#### Niagara Community Legal Clinic

Employment, Human Rights, Immigration, WCB, Pension Benefits, Income Maintenance Issues, Housing Issues, Tax Issues

- Call: 905-933-8802
- WhatsApp: +1-905-933-8802
- Follow their YouTube channel: [Niagara Community Legal Clinic](#)

### Health Care Services

Call to make a health care appointment (private and confidential)

#### Quest Community Health Centre

Primary health care services, health promotion and community capacity building initiatives

- Call: Mon-Fri Niagara: 905-885-2568 Ext. 389
- WhatsApp: Missis/Rexdale: +1-905-325-1546
- Follow their Facebook page: [Quest Community Health Centre](#)

---

#### Cornwall Community Health Centre (with Quest CHC)

2 health primary health clinics per month no DRP required, accessible hours. Interpreters are available during clinic.

- Call: 905-485-7155
- WhatsApp: Missis/Rexdale: +1-905-325-1546

#### Positive Living Niagara

Information, free take care supplies

- Call: Michel Chasseville 289-407-9760
- WhatsApp: Marla Chasseville +1-289-437-9354
- Email: [mchasseville@positivelivingniagara.com](mailto:mchasseville@positivelivingniagara.com)

---

#### Southbridge Community Church

Free and confidential health advice for migrant farm workers

- WhatsApp: +1-905-261-0022
- Email: [info@southbridgechurch.ca](mailto:info@southbridgechurch.ca)

### Getting Help for Stress and Worry

You are not alone. If the stress and worry feel like too much to handle, ask for professional help

#### Western Migrant 2 Migrant Programs

Telephone support & free counselling services

- Call: 236-858-5902 / 804-782-0384
- Follow their Facebook page: [Whatan Counselling and Support Services](#)

---

#### CommaDefensio

FREE service that is available to listen, provide support, and connect you to other services in your region

- Call: +1-905-233-2800
- Available 24/7
- Interpretation support available, ask for your language of preference

#### Canadian Mental Health Association - Niagara

Provide information, presentations, and workshops and can connect you to other local services and supports

- Call: 905-443-5232
- WhatsApp: +1-226-591-7772
- Follow their Facebook page: [Canadian Mental Health Association-Niagara Branch](#)

**Did we miss something? Was this resource helpful?**  
Let us know: text +1 289-684-2821 or email [mfw@ohcwo.on.ca](mailto:mfw@ohcwo.on.ca)

# Mental Health and Psychosocial Resource and Service Scans and Project Posters



## Regional Resource Poster Distribution

June 30, 2021, posters were shared electronically, via email, with the following stakeholders:

- 45 IAW support groups and service agencies across Ontario
- 10 IAW sending country consular and liaison services
- 2 agri-food sector associations

Received feedback on the posters from 18 stakeholders, including requests for edits and additions to service and support information,

A PDF document was created containing links to all eight updated regional resource posters (version 1) in English and Spanish, both print and digital versions. This document was shared with the same distribution list on August 16, 2021.

During this period, stakeholders assisted in the dissemination of the poster links.

As of March 8, 2022, clicks across all Version 1 posters **totaled 528**.

In total, **200 English and 200 Spanish copies of each of the eight (8) regional posters were printed by the project**. Project distributed printed posters directly to IAWs. Printed posters were also distributed by stakeholders. Print poster distribution shortfalls were identified.





# Poster Feedback from Interviews with International Agricultural Workers (IAWs), and additional key Stakeholders

In addition to the early feedback provided by the 18 stakeholders mentioned, questions about these posters were included as part of project interviews conducted with Ontario IAWs, as well as with key stakeholder groups.

## IAW Interviews:

Q 18.1 Useful to you or your co-workers: *Information about Community Support Groups and Services*

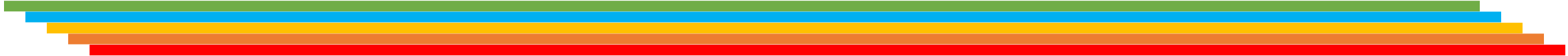
Answer:	Yes	Somewhat	No	Missing	Total
Frequency (n):	24	0	0	2	26

Q 18.2 Useful to you or your co-workers: *Information about Health Care services available*

Answer:	Yes	Somewhat	No	Missing	Total
Frequency (n):	18	5	0	3	26

Q 18.3 Useful to you or your co-workers: *Information about Services and Supports to help with Stress and Worry*

Answer:	Yes	Somewhat	No	Missing	Total
Frequency (n):	23	0	1	2	26



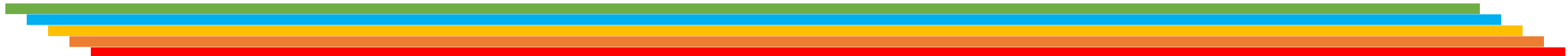
# Poster Feedback from Interviews with International Agricultural Workers (IAWs)



**Complete overview of findings found in final report. Some key IAW Interview responses by theme:**

- **Benefit of being informed about community supports and services in case need arises**
  - Responses specifically mentioned in case of illness or injury
- **Benefit of being informed to increase independence in seeking support and access to services**
  - Responses specifically mentioned benefit of being informed to not depend solely on their employer
- **Need for information due to current lack of knowledge and information not being shared with workers**

**Sample response:** “This information is very helpful, since when we get here, we don’t know anything, and the farm becomes our little world. Knowing about organizations is important to help us know and learn more in general. In reality there is not much dissemination of these services or organizations among the farm workers. I think that you, the organizations that are offering these supports and services, should work more in that area.”





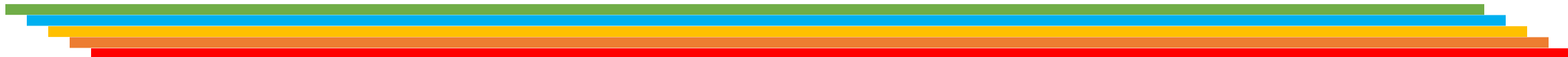
# Poster Feedback from Interviews with International Agricultural Workers (IAWs)

## IAW Feedback on Additional Information Needs and Preferred Resource Formats

Additional Resource Topics (Frequency n)

1.	Information about Rights in Canada (4)	12.	More information about mental health supports (1)
2.	Accessing Permanent Residency (3)	13.	Help to manage stress (1)
3.	Information about Benefits (3)	14.	Healthy coexistence with coworkers (1)
4.	Legal Support (2)	15.	Individual counseling support (1)
5.	Who to talk to when problems arise (2)	16.	Supports for exercising Rights (1)
6.	Family counseling (2)	17.	Information for, and that reflects Black/ Caribbean workers (1)
7.	Support to file taxes (2)	18.	Health and Safety Information (1)
8.	Information about COWAN health insurance coverage (2)	19.	Information about Health Services (1)
9.	English classes (2)	20.	A number to call in worker language to report housing conditions (1)
10.	Numbers and addresses of places that can help in locating poster services (1)	21.	Information about discounts that are made to worker payroll (1)
11.	General number to support identifying what kind of help is needed (1)	22.	Information about minimum wage (1)

Preferred Resource Format	Frequency (n)
1. Video	9
2. Audio messages	7
3. Posters	5
4. Printed Flyers	2
5. On a webpage containing all relevant information	1
6. Something to click on and takes you to information where you can get help	1
7. In a format with the information made more clear	1
8. Presentation	1





# Poster Feedback from Interviews with International Agricultural Workers (IAWs)

## IAW Feedback on Information Distribution Strategies to Reach Them and Coworkers

Distribution Strategy Suggestions	Frequency (n)
1. Send through WhatsApp phone application	12
2. Email	3
3. Put poster up in worker bunkhouses	2
4. Send to cellphones	1
5. Post on social media	1
6. Post on Facebook	1
7. Send through Facebook messenger	1
8. Create Facebook group for workers where information can be shared	1
9. Share on a webpage that all workers would know about	1
10. Distribute printed flyers to each worker	1
11. Deliver newsletter or informational flyer to each worker bunkhouse	1
12. Put poster up in local Mexican stores	1
13. Put posters up in local money sending stores	1
14. Send posters out through the community	1

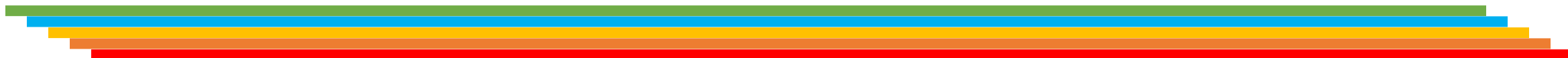
# Poster Feedback from Interviews with Additional Stakeholders



Stakeholders Interviewed	Frequency (n)
Ontario IAW Community Support Groups and Service Organizations	20
Ontario Primary Health Centres seeing IAWs	7
Ontario employers hiring IAWs	7
Ontario Legal Clinic representatives supporting IAWs	4
Mental Health Support Initiatives specializing in work with migrant communities	3
Employer Associations	2
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Branch	1

**Complete overview of findings found in final report. Some key response themes:**

- Posters included information that was 'new' to many of these stakeholders
- Posters were identified as a useful tool for support and service stakeholders to refer workers to other services
- Information identified as correct and thorough





# Updated Regional Posters Version 2

After distributing posters (version 1), soliciting IAW and stakeholder feedback, and completing the additional project activities, the project team decided to update and revise the project posters to distribute to Ontario IAWs during the 2022 agricultural season.

- (8) requests for updates and edits from service and support groups were incorporated into new posters
- (7) new services and supports were included under (2) new categories on all version 2 posters: New Categories: **Workplace Health and Safety Support, and Reporting Situations of Abuse or Emergency**
- The Legal Aid Ontario toll-free number that connects callers to their closest community legal clinic was included in the Community Connection and Support category across all version 2 regional posters.
- Created New Prince Edward County/ Belleville Region Poster

Updated Version 2 Posters can be accessed [here](#)

Poster Guide Videos can be accessed here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

**Mental Health and Psychosocial Supports for Ontario International Agricultural Workers**

**Community Connection and Support**  
Socialize, connect to recreational activities and events, get information, and connect to local services

**Health Care Services**  
Call to make a health care appointment (private and confidential)

**Getting Help for Stress and Worry**  
You are not alone. If the stress and worry feel like too much to handle, ask for professional help

**Regional Resource Posters**  
Learn more about available resources in your area using the following posters:

Bradford, Brantford-Brant County, Durham Region, Halton-Halton Hills, Hamilton-Carlisle-Lincoln, Niagara Region, Windsor-Essex, Simcoe-Lambton

Did we miss something? Was this resource helpful?  
Let us know: text +1 289-684-2821 or email mfw@ohcow.on.ca

OHCA logo and Ontario logo



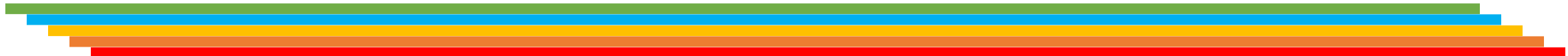


# Poster Limitations and Shortfalls Identified through Stakeholder Interviews

- **Accessibility of Poster Format**
  - **Design and Formatting**
  - **Ensuring Resources Actually Get to Workers**
  - **Ensuring Contact Numbers Lead to Accessible, Knowledgeable, and Effective Support**
  - **Lack of Supports & Services in Some Regions**
  - **Limited Resources Among Some Supports & Services for IAWs**
- 
- **Services & Supports and Structural Change**

Attention placed on the availability of supports and services, although valuable, cannot be divorced from continued recognition, understanding, and work to address the various structural factors that cause harm to individuals and communities.

In the context of IAWs in Ontario, it is essential to understand the ways poverty, immigration status, work and housing conditions, racism and discrimination are all intersecting determinants of ill health and harm affecting these workers. A response to these social determinants needs to be incorporated into policies and practices that seek to improved primary, mental/ psychosocial, public and occupational health outcomes for IAW communities in Ontario.





# **Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs**



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 1. Ontario IAW Community Support Groups & Organizations

- Community groups and organizations in Ontario provide essential services and support to IAWs as well as opportunities to socialize and build community
- During the pandemic, these groups provided workers with essential resources and goods, including: groceries, prepared meals, toiletries, clothing, and COVID-19 safety supplies
- These groups play important role in seeking and reorganizing information on topics of interest to IAWs to ensure this information reaches workers in accessible formats
- They play a key role connecting IAWs to health care and assisting health centres with service provision



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 2. Community Spaces & Support Locations for Ontario IAWs

- We identified a number of community spaces for IAWs in regions across Ontario
- Community spaces offer workers access to ***in-person services and support***, host events and activities, as well as opportunities to ***socialize and connect*** with other workers and additional community members
- Community spaces provide IAWs with a sense of place and community beyond their workplace or shared housing
- **Examples identified include:** *The Farmworker Hub* (Niagara-on-the-Lake), *The Centre for Migrant Worker Solidarity* (Simcoe/ Norfolk County), and *The Bradford Ontario Space for International Agricultural Workers* – hosted by group Unknown Neighbours



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 3. Specialized Support for Black/ Caribbean IAWs

- Black communities in Ontario live a shared present-day experience of [anti-Black racism](#), which impacts Black IAW communities in unique ways
- Some Ontario support groups provide ***specialised services*** and support to Black/ Caribbean workers, but such groups are not found in all regions where these workers are located
- Groups providing services to Black farmworkers offer religious supports, activities for leisure and recreation, and health care services
- **Examples of groups identified include:** The Caribbean Workers Outreach program (CWOP), Niagara Workers Welcome, and Southridge Community Church



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 4. Funding, Provincial Coordination & Network Building (KAIROS)

- In December 2020, the Government of Canada's TFWP awarded KAIROS Canada \$2.18 million to support and assist IAWs arriving to Ontario
- KAIROS created its [Empowering Temporary Foreign Workers Project \(ETFWP\)](#) and distributed funding to six initial partners and community organizations
- Phase 1 activities included outreach activities to provide IAWs with key information and guidance on COVID-19 and related policies
- In May 2021, KAIROS added airport support services for IAWs in Toronto Pearson
- Phase 2 included the funding of additional partner organizations and community groups - for a total of 15
- Through its program, KAIROS has led important provincial coordination efforts around IAW support, and contributed to important network and capacity building.





# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 5. Ontario Legal Clinics

- Most IAWs (1) ***lack access to information*** on their rights (related to employment immigration, income, human rights, etc.), (2) ***lack financial resources***, and (3) are ***structurally disempowered*** to make claims on their rights
- When their rights have been violated, IAWs seeking recourse **require support**
- IAWs report widespread ***stress/anxiety*** around injury or illness - Ontario legal clinics help workers address legal situations that pose a risk to the physical and mental health of this population
- The work of legal clinics (like [IAVGO](#)) play a crucial role in supporting workers in cases of workplace injuries and illness and helping them navigate the workers' compensation system (WSIB)



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 6. Ontario IAW Advocacy Groups

- Important actors in bringing attention to the lived experiences of IAWs, and to the structural power imbalance and vulnerability experienced by those employed under Canada's temporary worker programs.
- Both groups respond to government policies from a ***worker-empowerment lens***, and include temporary foreign worker members, and promote their leadership.
  - [Justicia for Migrant Workers \(J4MW\)](#)
  - [Migrant Workers Alliance for Change \(MWAC\)](#)



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 7. Ontario Community Health Centres

- Leading the provision of accessible health care services for Ontario IAWs
- Respond to the physical concerns of IAWs related to work exposures and chronic issues like musculoskeletal issues, diabetes and hypertension
- Many CHCs also report responding to mental health symptoms and issues among these workers
- Some of these CHCs note that their service reach is limited, identifying concern for gaps in health care access for Ontario IAWs in various regions.



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 8. Existing Mental Health Services (CMHA)

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is the most established and extensive community mental health organization in Canada. At the national level, CMHA identifies, responds, and pushes for pressing mental health priorities and policies. CMHA has contributed resources and services focused on the [mental health of farmers and their communities](#).

CMHA's Windsor-Essex branch has also partnered with the [Migrant Worker Community Program \(MWCP\)](#), an extremely active community support organization working with Latinx IAWs since 2002. Together they have focused on mental health outreach to local IAWs, their connection to local services, presenting mental health information sessions, as well as the development of a series of videos (English/ Spanish) on various relevant mental health topics. These videos can be accessed [here](#).

CMHA's expertise and focus on the agricultural sector, and the experience and collaboration of their Windsor-Essex branch signals an opportunity for CMHA to engage with and support IAW mental health more comprehensively, and across more regions where IAWs live and work.



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 9. Mental Health Services & Initiatives Specializing in Work with Migrant Communities

These initiatives offer culturally informed services in worker languages. Services are flexible to the time availability of workers, and proceed from an understanding of the situations workers face while in Canada and their experience of migration.

1. [Project Te escucho](#)
2. *Ayuda emocional en tiempos de COVID-19* by [Fundación Origen](#)
3. [Watari- Migrant 2 Migrant Program](#)



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 10. Research Teams

These research teams are important to contribute evidence based findings for decision making on IAW related policies, services and supports.

- [Migrant Worker Health Expert Working Group \(MWH-EWG\)](#)
  - Reports recommendations to all levels of government
- The Mental Health of Migrant Agricultural Workers Research Group (Wilfrid Laurier University/ Université Laval)
  - A pan-Canadian research proposal with the goal of expanding to create more opportunities and research collaboration in the area of IAW mental health





# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs

## 10. Communities of Practice

- [University of Guelph/ “In the Know” Team](#)
  - Leading research and resource development around the mental health of Canadian Farmers and Farming Communities.
  - Provides a body of research and resources with relevance to mental health in farming, and IAW mental health support.
- [CAMH Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project \(IRMHP\)](#)
  - A program focused on building capacity among service providers to support the mental health of immigrants and refugees populations.
  - Utilizes evidence-based research findings, strategies and tools to support effective service provision
  - Created a community of practice to share resources and experiences among service providers working with these communities.
  - Program can inform similar capacity building efforts aimed at service providers working with Ontario IAWs



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 11. Ontario Health & Safety Organizations: Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) and Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)

Both Ontario Health and Safety Associations have relevant experience, resources and tools to support OHS in agricultural workplaces, including among IAWs. Both also have experience in the area of workplace mental health and psychosocial factors. [OHCOW's assessment and recommendation tools](#) have supported workers and workplaces to identify psychosocial hazards and consider changes to prevent harm. [WSPS has extensive experience working with farmers and other agricultural industry stakeholders](#) and safety experts, and developing safety resources and programming for the industry.

The work of both OHCOW and WSPS are important contributions and continued work in this area should be supported, and collaboration between these HSA's in this area should be explored



# Promising Practices in Support of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Ontario IAWs



## 12. Promising Practices and Initiatives from the US

Recognizing the long history of Migratory and Seasonal Agricultural Workers (MSAWs) in the United States (US), and of service and support provision to these communities.

- [Migrant Clinicians Network \(MCN\)](#)
- [National Centre for Farm Worker Health \(NCFH\)](#)
  - Mental Health Resource Hub
  - Mental Health Learning Collaborative (MHLC)
  - US Migrant Worker Health Forums
- Pacific University Oregon- Sabiduría Program
- National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)
- US University Extension Programs





# Gaps & Recommendations





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Long-Term Funding for IAW Support Networks

Community groups and support organizations are providing vital services and resources to IAWs in Ontario, however, they note that their support capacity and reach are restricted due to limited or precarious funding.

### Recommendations:

The provincial government should develop a funding partnership with the federal government, to secure permanent (or longterm) funding dedicated to continuing to strengthen support networks who are on the ground and responding to the needs of IAWs. This funding should prioritize programing with a clear focus on empowerment outcomes for IAWs and support their capacity and agency.





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Ontario Legal Clinic Funding for work with IAWs

- Funding should be allocated to strengthening and expanding services provided to IAWs by Ontario legal clinics
- These legal clinics are crucial resources to help IAWs make legal claims and access justice in cases where their rights have been violated.
- A subsection of this funding should be allocated to legal services focusing on WSIB related issues, as well as other employment and workplace health and safety issues







# Gaps & Recommendations

## Ontario Health Centre Funding for work with IAWs

- Funding should be allocated to Ontario Health to strengthen and expand health care services for IAWs and to conduct additional needs assessments regarding access gaps and barriers
- Funding should be allocated to collaboration with OHS system partners, to ensure that work-related health issues identified by primary health care clinics can lead to workplace prevention interventions
- Primary clinic leads on occupational health and safety and WSIB, in partnership with legal clinics, should be developed
- A service strategy assessment and framework should be developed to address practical service delivery challenges, including issues of reaching workers, communication, and follow-up, while promoting IAW independent/confidential access to services (vs. involvement of employers).





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: The WSIB System is Inaccessible & Ineffective for most IAWs

- Injured workers lack an understanding of the WSIB and its processes and need assistance navigating the system
- The current WSIB process for a worker to file a work-related injury or illness, is not accessible to or appropriate for IAWs
- Many IAWs are afraid to file claims for fear of losing future employment
- Addressing the barriers IAWs experience in filing a claim and accessing WSIB is needed to provide them with accessible and effective workplace injury and illness services and supports
- An action plan should be developed and moved forward, led by key stakeholders in this area (legal clinics, primary health care providers).



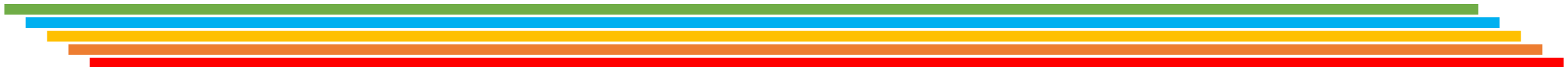


# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Funding for Mental Health Organizations & Initiatives working with IAWs

The Ontario government should support CMHA Ontario in developing a provincial strategy for mental health support and services for IAW communities, working from its position as a key stakeholder in mental health in the agricultural sector. New funding, or funding from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, should be dedicated to this task.

- CMHA should also further develop its psychological health and safety in the workplace training, to contextualize it to agricultural workplaces, including those hiring IAWs. For this, CMHA should connect to provincial health and safety organizations including WSPS and OHCOW, as well as the Ontario Ministry of Labour.
- For the mental health of IAWs related to workplace and housing factors, the sensitization and buy-in of employers is key, as they have control over these environments, and resources and practices therein. However, evidence based occupational health and safety (including mental health supportive) policies, practices and resources should be set as standards, to ensure that needed changes in workplace and housing spaces and practices are enacted as mandatory, regulated and enforced.



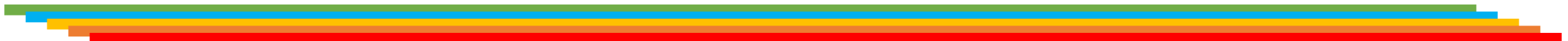


# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Direct Mental Health Support for Ontario IAWs

Although phone-based mental health supports have been identified as useful for IAWs who often face physical isolation and difficulty accessing services at non-flexible hours, these types of services are not widely available to these workers, and existing numbers often do not address language needs or respond to cultural opportunities. The Ontario government, with guidance from CMHA, should:

- Support existing phone-based counselling services for IAWs with experience serving migrant and racialized communities. Support the creation of additional services including those with Afro-Caribbean community representation and service focus.
- These services should not only be marketed for emergency situations, but from a mental health protective, prevention-based perspective
- Central to these services is the provision of support in worker languages, by staff that ideally shares the same or a similar cultural background as workers they will be serving
- Staff working with this population should receive training that acknowledges cultural differences and the situations and risk factors faced by this population.





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Crisis & Urgent Care Services for Ontario IAWs

The accessibility and appropriateness of current crisis and mental health urgent care hotlines for use by IAWs is not clear. With guidance from CMHA, the Ontario government should:

- Evaluate the accessibility and appropriateness of existing urgent care/ mental health crisis hotlines for use by IAW communities, and if deemed not effective, create emergency hotlines of this type to be available to these workers.
- Identify or create accessible and appropriate bereavement support resources and services for IAWs specifically in the context of situations of deaths of family and loved ones in the context of separation related to migration (supported by interview findings across stakeholders).
- Identify or create accessible and appropriate services for IAWs in cases where coworkers die, or experience serious injury or illness, to address the trauma bystander workers may experience.
  - Consider WSIB's role in supporting these services in cases of workplace deaths, or serious injuries or illness.

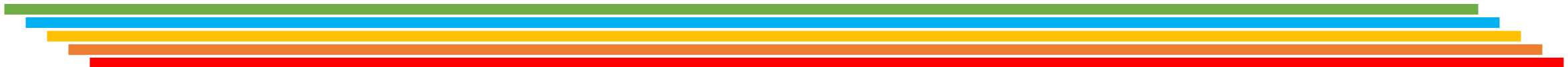




# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Focused Support for Black, Caribbean IAWs

- Programming and staffing considerations present opportunities to improve outcomes for Black IAWs
- Funding should prioritize the expansion and development of support initiatives and organizations focused on work with Black migrant worker populations
- Health services for IAWs can be conceptualized as dedicated services for racialized communities (including Black communities) and therefore should be supported with resources and best practices for working with Black patients
- An assessment of healthcare access and delivery for Black IAWs should be conducted, with focus on identifying opportunities to build on existing services and improve outcomes for this population
- Organizations like TAIBU Community Health Centre, the Black Health Alliance, the Black Physicians Association of Ontario (BPAO), and the Black Scientists' Task Force on Vaccine Equity are ideal partners





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: International Agricultural Worker Housing

Concerns with IAW housing continue to be reported, including unsafe, and undignified conditions that can put workers at risk (including for COVID-19 infection), and are not-conducive to general wellbeing and mental health.

As noted in an [Auditor General of Canada's Report](#), the Federal Government has done little to meet its commitments to improve housing conditions for IAWs.

**Recommendation:** Improve IAW housing standards and conditions, and ensure enforcement is effective. Consider housing standards of other mobile workers in Canada (oil sand worker accommodations in Alberta), and contextualize to working in agriculture and to the experience and needs of IAWs. Review and incorporate housing standard submissions made directly by IAWs who can speak to housing that would support their health and wellbeing. Proper housing is mental health protective, and central for physical and mental rest and recovery.





# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Lack of Accessible Information for IAWS

Government agencies continue to neglect the accessibility needs of IAWs when it comes to key information on policies, practices, rights and responsibilities. Key communication, reporting channels, and policy processes are not accessible to many IAWs. Government continues to be slow or has failed to respond with effective solutions.

**Recommendation:** The provincial government should develop a clear accessibility framework when it comes to policy and practice communication, planning, process, roll out, and consultation related to and with IAWs. This framework should be implemented by all relevant ministries to ensure a commitment to empowering IAWs to be informed and able to respond effectively to government legislation, benefits, protections and requirements. Without this commitment, the government continues to show a disregard for how its policies actually play out for these communities.







# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Available Data on IAWs in Ontario

There is no statistical data available on IAWs nor research including representative samples.

**Recommendation:** Demographic information and other general IAW existing data should be publicly available. Information such as age, sex, country of origin, languages spoken, educational attainment, year/number of employment, and province/ region, would support informed decision making at all levels.

- An IAW national and or provincial survey (work, health & mental health), similar to the US National Farm Worker Survey (NAWS) would be beneficial. Systematic and periodic information collection is needed to support policies at all levels and offer a base for comparison for the various indicators of work and health.
- Data collection initiatives by community support groups would be useful to improve understanding of IAW support. The sharing of this data would be beneficial, as long as it is anonymous, without worker identifying information.



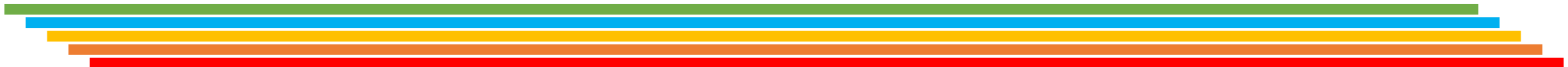


# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Mental Health Protection & Promotion in the Workplace

According to project findings, little information has been produced in Canada about the psychosocial environment and occupational hazards at work influencing the mental health of workers on Ontario farms. Research and practice have focused on farmers' mental health, however many risk factors differ for workers and IAWs. There are many published studies that document various facets of the SDOH among this worker population but only few of them have focused on the injuries and hazards at work (McLaughlin, et al, 2014; Hennebry et al. 2012; Russell 2003), fewer on mental health hazards in the workplace, and none based on hazards assessments in the workplace.

**Recommendations:** Applied research should be promoted and supported to seek to understand and act on the factors affecting the mental health of this population. This includes assessing mental health hazards in workplaces and work towards their management (elimination/control) and evaluating their mental health impact.





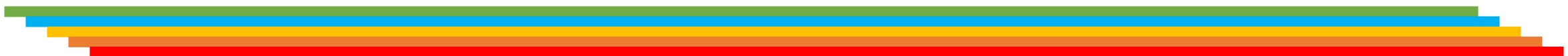
# Gaps & Recommendations

## Eliminate and Control Exposures to Workplace Health and Safety Hazards

Issues related to health and safety were identified as a significant stressor among IAWs, along with the perception of feeling unsafe and the worry of becoming ill or disabled.

More preventive actions need to be conducted at the workplace level, including increased training and active enforcement. OHS regulation must be enforced and expanded to ensure a safe working environment for IAWs. Interventions in agricultural workplaces to reduce risk of physical injuries or mental health disorders have been implemented and evaluated in other countries (US), as evident in the literature review of this project.

- Validated tools should be adapted to identify psychosocial hazards in the workplace affecting the mental health of IAWs so that interventions for eliminating or controlling them can be developed. These tools should consider hazards broadly associated with the agricultural sector, as well as the specific hazards faced by IAWs, and they should be culturally informed and employ accessible language.
- Research that is directly involved with IAWs and leads to concrete actions and changes to work conditions should be prioritized. Participatory research used in agricultural settings could lead to positive changes if the proper conditions and dialogues with stakeholders are in place.



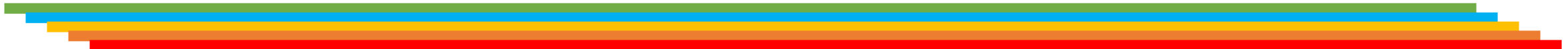


# Gaps & Recommendations

## **Eliminate and Control Exposures to Workplace Health and Safety Hazards**

Needed changes to directly improve or address OHS concerns that lead to chronic stress and mental health issues among IAWs include:

- Open work permits so that IAWs are not tied to a single employer
- Ensure OHS legislation effectively regulates occupational hazards in agriculture, including establishing exposure limits, and that legislation is proactively enforced
- Surveillance programs on the impacts of key hazards should be mandated and implemented
- Ensure OHS policies and procedures function effectively for IAWs (IRS)
- Evaluate and improve the anti-reprisal procedures and protections for IAWs





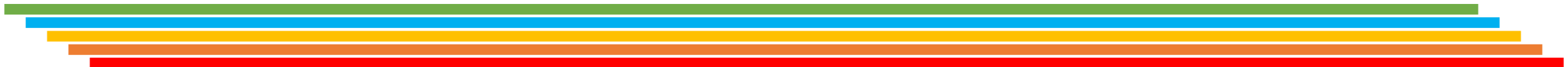
# Gaps & Recommendations

## Gap: Continued Structural Disempowerment of IAWs

Recognizing that IAWs in Ontario continue to face structural disempowerment that negatively impacts their primary, mental, public and occupational health outcomes, the province should develop an empowerment strategy and framework for this workforce that is multi-faceted and identifies clear areas for empowerment outcomes. This strategy should be informed by findings from IAWs, advocacy, support, and service stakeholders and should result in improvement in the following areas:

- Information access
- Ability to access services and supports (including health and social services)
- Ability to identify and report concerns without fear of facing reprisals
- Ability to make legal claims and access justice when rights are violated

As part of this strategy, the province should respond to evidence that the restricted immigration status of IAWs continues to negatively impact their health and wellbeing, including in areas of primary, mental, public, and occupational health and safety, specifically, creating precarity and fear of reprisal or inability to work in Canada if they raise or report issues or access services and support, including WSIB compensation.





# Gaps & Recommendations

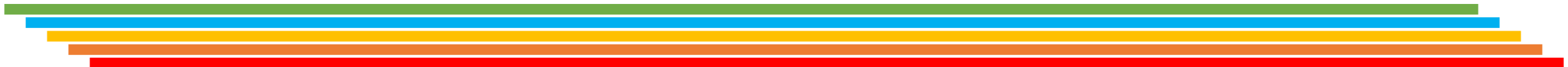
## Gap: Continued Structural Disempowerment of IAWs

### **Develop and Implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Ontario Agricultural Sector Labour Force**

The province should conduct a review of agricultural sector employment in the province, including a specific focus on IAWs, from a poverty reduction framework and develop a poverty reduction strategy for the industry and its labour force. It is crucial to address poverty as a SDOH and key factor related to labour gaps in the industry, and as a risk factor for negative outcomes to primary, mental, public and occupational health among all workers, and particularly IAWs.

### **Develop an Anti-Racism and Anti-Black Racism Framework through which to assess and inform current and future policies, practice and services related to Ontario IAWs**

Connect this to [provincial anti-racism and anti-Black racism commitments](#) to improving outcomes for racialized and Black communities in Ontario. Draw on provincial resource and leaders in this area.





# Questions? Discussion

Follow up: [ehuesca@ohcow.on.ca](mailto:ehuesca@ohcow.on.ca)



## Mental Health and Psychosocial Supports for Ontario International Agricultural Workers



### Community Connection and Support

Socialize, connect to recreational activities and events, get information, and connect to local services



### Health Care Services

Call to make a health care appointment (private and confidential)



### Getting Help for Stress and Worry

You are not alone. If the stress and worry feel like too much to handle, ask for professional help

### Regional Resource Posters

Learn more about available resources in your area using the following posters:

Bradford

Brantford-Brant County

Durham Region

Haldimand-Norfolk

Hamilton-Carlisle-Lynden

Niagara Region

Windsor-Essex

Simcoe-Lambton

Prince Edward County - Belleville Region

Did we miss something? Was this resource helpful?  
Let us know: text +1 289-684-2821 or email [mfw@ohcow.on.ca](mailto:mfw@ohcow.on.ca)



OHCA  
Ontario Health Care  
Association



Ontario





**Eduardo Huesca** is a program coordinator and outreach worker with OHCOW, and has 15 years of experience working with Ontario temporary foreign agricultural workers (TFAWs) and their employers on (OHS) issues. He has presented OHS educational workshops to over 1700 TFAWs across Ontario, in English and Spanish, and has worked to improve the accessibility of OHS information for these workers. Eduardo has focused work on pesticide safety issues among TFAWs, and helped develop the Ontario Pesticide Education Program (OPEP)'s first Spanish speaking pesticide safety instructor team. Since 2017, Eduardo has been a member of the planning committee for the Midwest Stream Forum for Agricultural Worker Health, led by the U.S National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH).



**Cynthia Mora** has an academic background in Psychology and Sociology, and focused her research on topics related to Ontario migrant farm workers and immigrant communities. Cynthia also coordinates the Te Eschucho mental health project that connects Ontario MFWs and other migrant communities to phone-based psychological support based in Mexico.



**Leonor Cedillo** received her Doctorate in Work Environment Policy from the University of Massachusetts. She is researcher and practitioner in occupational health and safety, with specialization in the study of psychosocial factors at work. She collaborates with OHCOW on projects in sectors that include education, urban transport and agriculture.







**Stephanie Mayell, MA** is a PhD Candidate and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellow in the Medical Anthropology Program at the University of Toronto, where her doctoral research investigates the ways race and the histories of slavery influence Jamaican migrant workers' experiences of health and injury in relation to their participation in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). Stephanie is a member of the Migrant Worker Health Expert Working Group (MWH-EWG).



**Mavra Qamar** is an epidemiologist working at the Public Health Agency of Canada. She has a Bachelor in Applied Science from the School of Occupational and Public Health at Ryerson University and a Masters of Public Health in Epidemiology specializing in global health from The Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Mavra has eight years of experience working in public, occupational and global health. Areas of interest include, global health, infectious disease, occupational health, mental health, environmental health and social determinants of health.



**Taina Roberts** is an undergraduate student at Carleton University studying Law and Political Science concentrating in International Relations. Taina is currently employed at OHCOW in the capacity of Student Research Assistant focusing on the Migrant Worker Mental Health Project. Her interest in Migrant Worker projects is inspired by her lived experiences growing up having both parents working as seasonal agricultural workers in a farming community in Jamaica and later in Southwestern Ontario.





**Michelle Tew** is a certified Occupational Health Nurse who has had an interesting and rewarding career covering administration, research, education, consulting and clinical work. She has focussed on the health and working environments of workers for the past 21 years and since 2006, a large amount of her clinical work has been concentrated on Migrant Agricultural Workers in Ontario and Canada.



**Calum Thompson** currently works as an epidemiologist with the Public Health Agency of Canada. He holds a Bachelor of Arts, Honours in Psychology from Queen's University and a Master's in Public Health in Epidemiology with a specialization in Public Health Policy from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, at the University of Toronto.



**Christine Khalil** is an MA Candidate in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, where her Masters thesis explores the impact of various factors as well as the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of migrant agricultural workers in Ontario and Québec. These factors involve community integration, occupational conditions, housing conditions, family and social relationships, immigration status, and financial conditions. The study also investigates access to mental health services for migrant agricultural workers.





**Azuani Cano** works for OHCOW as a Latinx Cultural Outreach Worker in the project Empowering Migrant Farm Workers. She has assisted in the development of resources for MWs, supported the completion of COVID-19 safety posters and videos. She has also participated in projects with other organizations that offer support to MWs and has participated in various vaccination clinics for MFW. Azuani has a BA in Civil Engineering but her passion for helping MFW has taken her into the path of community work. She has 11 years of experience working in this sector. Azuani became a certified Interpreter in 2012 to be able to continue helping and supporting vulnerable Spanish speaking groups.



**Camille Roberts** is a Caribbean community outreach worker with OHCOW, a high school teacher, and an active volunteer in her community. Camille supports seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs) through her position at OHCOW. In her capacity as a Caribbean outreach worker, she connects with workers, community partners, and stakeholders supporting SAWs. This puts her in a position to offer a unique cultural understanding and perspective of the community she serves. Camille has gained valuable insight and understanding of the challenges and obstacles faced by SAWs through her lived experience growing up in Jamaica and later working as an SAW in Canada. Camille is passionate about improving the lives and experiences of the migrant population and newcomers to Canada, through dialogue and representation.



**Natalie Stravens** is a graduate student from the University of Guelph completing a Masters in Public Issues Anthropology with International Development. Natalie's thesis research is focused on Examining Access to Mental Health Care Services among Recent East African Im/migrants in Southern Ontario.

