



Race, rurality, suicide

Racial/ethnic minority youth who lived in rural areas were more likely to experience suicidality as compared to their non-rural counterparts, [according to a study](#) published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine and partially funded by the National Children's Center. Cross-sectional analyses were conducted using data from youth age 5-17 years who had complete capture of their medical care in a Wisconsin healthcare system. The sample included 27,392 rural and 20,370 non-rural youth, with suicidality observed in 2% of participants. There was a significant interaction between rural residence and race/ethnicity ($p=0.015$). Non-White or Hispanic youth in rural areas had the highest risk of suicidality at 75 per 10,000. Non-White or Hispanic youth in non-rural areas had the lowest risk of suicidality at 38 per 10,000. Co-authors included National Children's Center investigators Jeff VanWormer, Ph.D., and Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D.



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."

New director leads National Children's Center



Andrea
Swenson, Ph.D.

The National Children's Center is nearing three decades of preventing injuries associated with the agricultural worksite, one of the nation's most hazardous worksites and the only one where children of any age may be present. Significant changes in agriculture and in rural communities require new approaches to safety, and leading the center into this evolving landscape is a new director, Andrea Swenson, Ph.D., associate research scientist, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute.

Swenson joined the [National Children's Center](#) in 2019 with training in human development and family science. Swenson's research focuses on intersections between family dynamics, individual development and social environments in agricultural and rural communities. She led the evaluation core for the center for the last five years and is currently

principal investigator on a project researching barriers and motivators for use of the [Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines](#), a tool to assist adults in assigning developmentally appropriate tasks for youth agricultural workers. In addition, Swenson leads projects on supporting youth health and safety curriculum for educators and family interactions with medical systems in rural communities.

"Having been raised on a dairy farm and having family members engaged in agriculture, I value the complex labor that farm families and farm workers engage in every day, and strive to improve the quality of programs designed to increase the safety and health of those working in agriculture," Swenson said.

Swenson succeeds Barbara Lee, Ph.D., the only director in the center's 27-year history. Lee now serves as the National Children's Center's associate director, providing administrative guidance as needed. She will focus on several projects, with an emphasis on organizational and public policy. Additionally, Lee is the senior associate editor for the Journal of Agromedicine.

CASN celebrates 25 years

The [Childhood Agricultural Safety Network \(CASN\)](#), founded in 2000 and facilitated by the National Children's Center, is inviting everyone to join its 25th anniversary celebration. CASN is a coalition dedicated to the safety and health of children on farms and ranches, bringing together the agricultural community to share knowledge and collaborate on key issues. Members include agricultural safety and youth-serving organizations, groups representing underserved populations and agribusiness. Membership is free. To request an invitation to the CASN Online Community, go to

<https://www.childsafety.org/> or to learn more about CASN, visit <https://cultivatesafety.org/casn/>. This past June, during the annual CASN in-person meeting held as part of the International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health conference in Portland, Oregon, CASN launched a safety campaign dedicated to [lawnmower safety](#), asking if youth are 'Mow Ready'? Look for a re-launch of the campaign in spring 2025.



Childhood Agricultural
Safety Network

First manuscript from Telling the Story Project

When a farm injury or fatality occurs, sharing stories of those incidents can help others avoid similar hazards. A qualitative analysis of stories told



by injury survivors on the [Telling the Story Project](#) website, published in the peer-reviewed [Journal of Agromedicine](#), identified themes that can be used to shape more effective injury-prevention messages. “We think this paper can be a road map for safety professionals and organizations who want to use the power of storytelling,” said lead author Melissa Ploeckelman, outreach specialist with the National Farm Medicine Center/National Children’s Center.

The project is a collaboration of the National Farm Medicine Center and three agricultural safety and health centers funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): the National Children’s Center, the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH), and the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH).

The Telling the Story Project website includes educational materials and [resources](#), including discussion guides for educators, 4-H and FFA leaders, managers, and others looking for positive ways to start a conversation about safety. “We’re going to continue adding stories to the website, including more stories involving children and safety,” co-author Scott Heiberger said. “We’re also talking with agricultural communications professors at universities who are interested in using Telling the Story Project as part of their writing classes.” The project website registered nearly 1,000 visits in September 2024.

Children’s Center issues first Spanish-language media release

A media release announcing a webinar that took place on National Farmworker Appreciation Day (Aug. 6) was the first release issued in Spanish by the National Children’s Center. The webinar featured Melanie Forti, Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (who translated the release) and Reid Maki, National Consumers League Child Labor Coalition. The webinar addressing the challenges faced by migrant and seasonal farmworker children and the role of child labor legislation.

Autumn injury events put agritourism in spotlight

More than two dozen children and adults were injured, some of them seriously, in a [hay wagon](#) rollover Sept. 18 at an apple orchard in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The orchard is one of more than 86,000 agritourism operations in the United States that give visitors a glimpse of farming



and ranching. Other high-profile, wagon-related incidents took place in [Tennessee](#) and [Minnesota](#). Operators are urged to make their agritourism operation as safe as possible with checklists, virtual walkthroughs and signage from <https://safeagritourism.org>

Book chapter examines rural child environmental health

Congratulations to Barbara Lee, Ph.D., and Matthew Keifer, M.D., M.P.H., for their chapter in the recently published Textbook of Children’s Environmental Health (second edition). Chapter 21, “Rural and Agricultural Environments,” addresses crucial topics such as rural vs. urban environmental facts, fatal and nonfatal injuries, weather hazards, infectious diseases and community-level well-being. This comprehensive 16-page chapter is a must-read for anyone interested in children’s health and environmental safety. [Order online](#) with promotion code AMPROMD9 to save 30 percent. This 900-page textbook with 65 chapters authored by 100 contributors is a key resource for public and environmental health practitioners and is used in many graduate-level courses.



Out and about

The National Children’s Center attended the Farm Progress Show in Boone, Iowa, the nation’s largest outdoor agricultural show, as well as the National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals, Minnesota Farm Fest and the National FFA Convention, engaging hundreds of visitors with resources and a survey involving the Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines. Safety colleagues from NIOSH-funded ag centers, Extension and other youth-serving organizations were also in attendance at these events.



Furthermore

Roger Aby, Ph.D., has joined the National Children’s Center as a research specialist, and will be working primarily with Dr. Bryan Weichelt. Earlier this year, Aby passed his dissertation defense at the University of Illinois. He is well-versed in agricultural safety and health, including research to improve the safety of agricultural autonomous machines. ... Each year during National Farm Safety and Health Week, the third week of September, the [U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers](#) join partners across the nation to raise awareness about the safety and health of people working agriculture. In addition to webinars, media releases and interviews, the National Children’s Center and National Farm Medicine Center posted 24 times on social media. The posts reached 5,326 people while getting 245 reactions and 38 shares by other pages, where additional discussions ensued in comments sections.