

Need an Ear? Let's Talk about Farmer Mental Health

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**North Central
Farm and Ranch
Stress Assistance Center**



**GREAT LAKES CENTER FOR
FARMWORKER
HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

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Agricultural Safety & Health



What We Will Cover Today

- The State of Mental Health and Substance Use in Ag
- Unique Stressors and Barriers to Care for Farmers
- How First Responders Handle Mental Health Emergencies on the Farm
- Free and Confidential Helplines and Resources
 - The Illinois Ag Mental Health Voucher Program

Agricultural Stress

- High rates of work-related injuries and fatalities
 - Stress and injury relationship
- Common stressors:
 - Unpredictable weather events
 - Volatile market prices, financial concerns
 - Poor work-life balance, time pressures
 - Social and geographical isolation
- Chronic stress --> poor mental and physical health

Mental Health in Agriculture – *by the numbers*

	Anxiety	Depression
General population	18.2% <i>of adults</i> <i>have experienced symptoms in the past 2 weeks</i>	21.4%
Agriculture	27% to 71% <i>Estimated ranges</i>	26.3% to 53%

Farmers are **2x more likely**
to die by suicide

(Bjornestad et al., 2021; Miller & Rudolphi, 2022;
Rudolphi et al., 2020, 2024; Terlizzi & Zablotsky, 2024)

Substance Use in Agriculture by the numbers



16.8% farmers at risk for alcohol use disorder.



More than one-quarter (27.6%) of farmers reported tobacco use in the past three months.



The opioid crisis has directly impacted nearly **three-fourths (74%)** of farmers and farmworkers.

American Farm Bureau, 2017; Cuthbertson et al., 2024; Dierickx et al., 2026

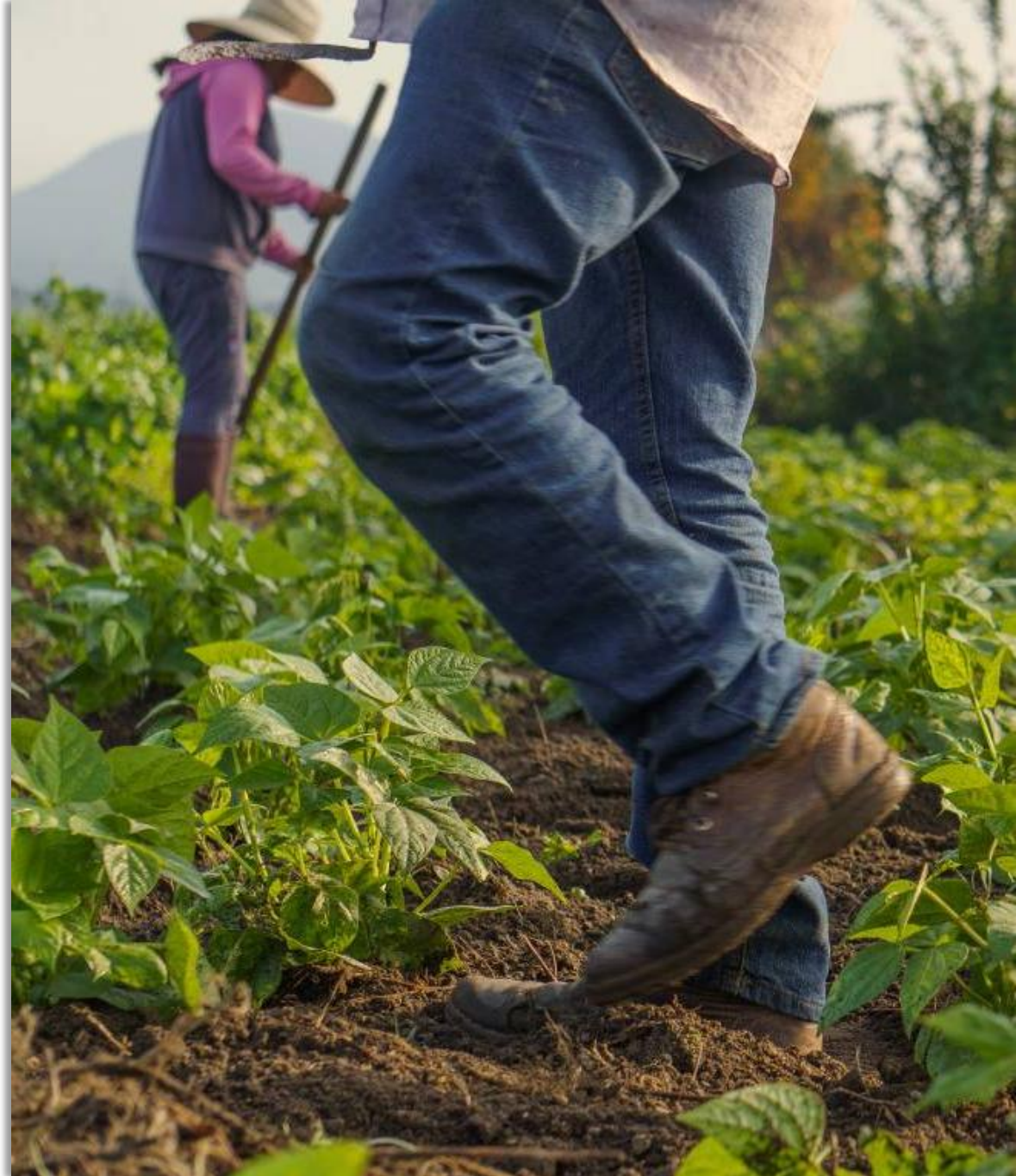
Barriers to Care

The 4 A's

- **Accessibility**
- **Availability**
- **Affordability**
- **Acceptability**

Special Populations

- Youth
- Aging populations
- Women
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers



Gender Differences

Women

- “Triple-duty lifestyle” of farm women, aka responsibilities of family, farm, and off-farm careers
- Higher prevalence of **anxiety, depression**, and overall psychological distress among women in agriculture

Men

- Traditional gender roles --> stressors such as, being the sole financial provider, being tough and not showing emotion
- Farm men are at higher risk for **substance use** and **suicide** than women

Need an Ear?



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Consider reaching out to these **free, confidential** resources:

Concern Hotline: Call 1-800-447-1985 (Legal, financial, and stress support available to farmers and agricultural workers nationwide 24/7)

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 (Available 24/7)

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 (Available 24/7)

Farm Aid Hotline: Call 1-800-327-6243 (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm CST)



Funded by: USDA-NIFA 2020-70028-32728, 2023-70028-41284, 2024-70028-43552



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What it is like to call the hotline

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AgriStress Helpline: Call or text 833-897-2474 (Available 24/7)

Paramedic responding to mental health emergency

- Usually not first on the scene
- Ensure Safety of paramedics and patient



North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center (NCFRSAC)

*Funded in part by USDA
NIFA award numbers
2023-70028-41284,
2024-70028-43552*



**North Central
Farm and Ranch
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Voucher Programs

- Free or low-cost behavioral health services
- Illinois, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Michigan have programs funded through the NCFRSAC grant.
- Other states in the region may also have similar programs for free to low-cost care for farmers and family members

Illinois Ag Mental Health Voucher Program

Goal: Improve the mental health of agricultural producers and their families by reducing barriers to professional mental health care.

**Mental Health Voucher
Program Coordinator:**
Kacie Hulshof,
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extension.illinois.edu/health/vouchers-ag-producers

Illinois Ag Mental Health Voucher Program

- Licensed mental health providers from across the state
- Agricultural Literacy Training offered to providers for free
- 80+ providers (most offer tele-services)
- 39 counties
- Recruiting bilingual providers

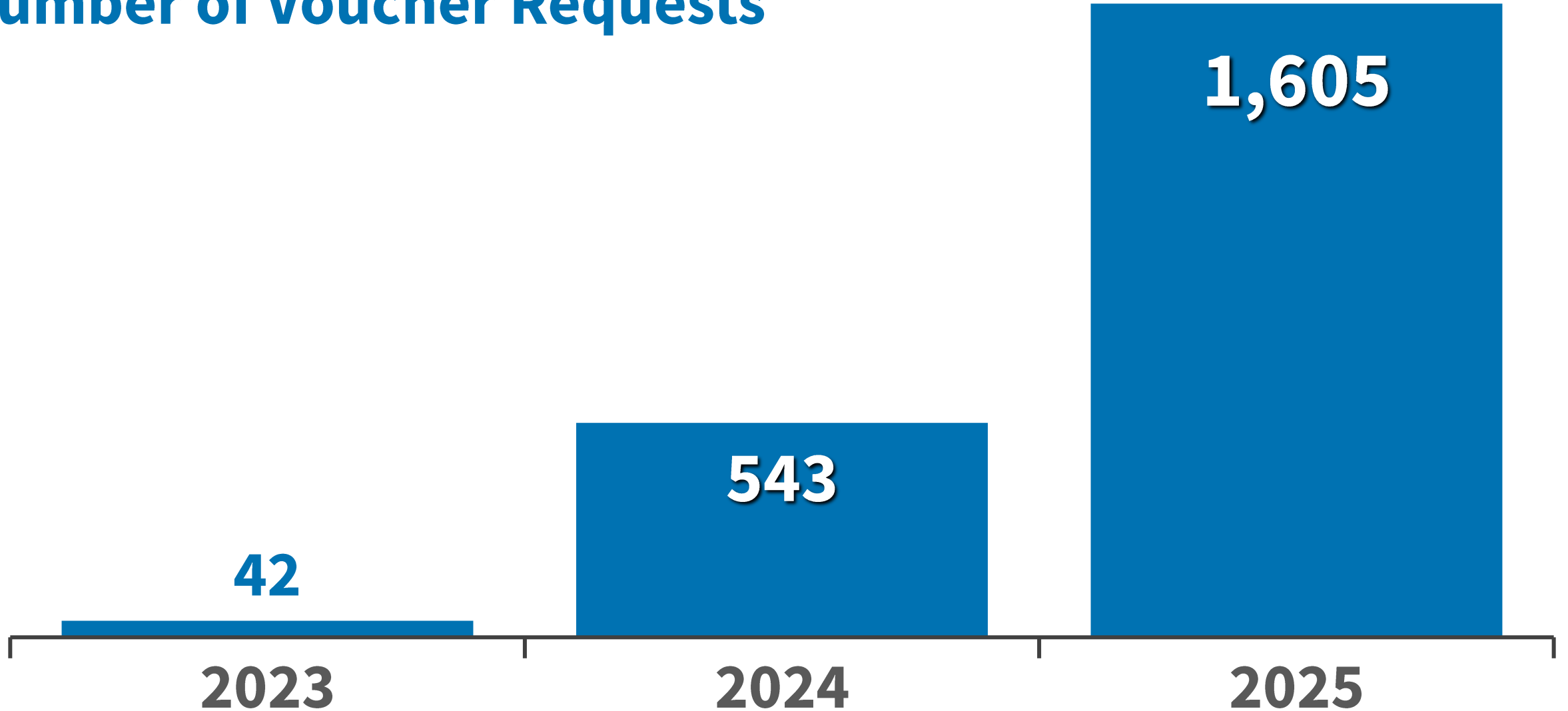


Illinois Ag Mental Health Voucher Program



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Number of Voucher Requests



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→ Programs → Resiliency

Resiliency

Program Description

First Responders experience unavoidable stress and traumatic events in the course of their vocation. If these challenges are not dealt with in a productive manner they can lead to emotional and behavioral health problems. Since many of the current ways to deal with these challenges revolve around assistance and treatment after the event, the Illinois Fire Service Institute has sought to change the fire service culture relative to mental health and resiliency by adding training to many of its courses. This culture change will occur by helping First

Courses

Resiliency Awareness Online
Resiliency Development for First
Responders
Resiliency Development for
Leadership Support

Resources

First Responder Resiliency LibGuide
Resiliency Resource Guide



<https://farmstress.org/>

Helping Midwestern Farmers
and Ranchers Find the
Resources and Support to
Thrive

READ MORE

Key Takeaways for Today's Session

- ✓ Identify unique stressors and mental health care barriers in agricultural communities.
- ✓ Compare farmer anxiety, depression, and substance use rates to the general population.
- ✓ Understand how agricultural stress uniquely impacts women, men, and migrant workers.
- ✓ Recall key crisis helplines and resources available to farmers.
- ✓ Explain how to access the Illinois Ag Mental Health Voucher Program.

Thank you!

Any questions?

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Upcoming 2026 Webinars

Manure Pit Gases

on 11 November 2026

Each fall, manure pit agitation and pump-outs create one of the deadliest hazards on any livestock operation. This session covers the specific gases — including hydrogen sulfide, methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide — produced during agitation and why they are so dangerous even in brief exposures, why strict perimeter security and the removal of all people and animals from the area is non-negotiable during pump-outs, and why fire and rescue departments cannot safely enter a pit environment without Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) gear — and what that means for response capabilities and timelines if something goes wrong.

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UIUC Agricultural Safety & Health Program

Search

Agricultural Safety & Health Research Lab

We are dedicated to reducing risks and improving safety in farming through research, innovation, and education.



<https://go.illinois.edu/ISSA-lab>



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