

# COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NORTH CAROLINA

*“The greatest success happens when opportunity drives collaboration.”*  
- Anonymous

In July 2020, Governor Roy Cooper in the State of North Carolina (NC) announced a State Partnership Delivering 900,000 Masks and Infection Control Supplies to Protect Health and Safety of Farmers and Agriculture Workers.



## OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION

The NC Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions' Agricultural Services Unit identified an opportunity to collaborate with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and reached out to them to offer their assistance, “We work closely with farmers, farm labor contractors, and farmworkers. I felt we could be valuable in ensuring these masks get to the hands of farmworkers” said Luis Cruz, Director of Agricultural Services & Foreign Labor.

NCDHHS agreed to partner with the NC Department of Commerce Agricultural Services Unit and sent face masks and other supplies to distribute to the farm community. Immediately the NC Ag. Services Team and State Monitor Advocate, Victor Garcia, started coordinating the distribution of masks and supplies to agricultural employers and farmworkers. As a team effort, state office personnel and field staff Rubi Moreno, Daniel Phelps, Jose Chicas and the rest of the outreach team across the state came up with a plan on how to deliver the supplies.

## MASK DISTRIBUTION



The distribution began by meeting employers and farmworkers at NC Works Career Centers parking lots. However as more supplies came in and the needs were increasing, the team had to work around challenges and come up with different ways to distribute to meet those needs. They began to ship supplies to employers and farmworker addresses. Rubi Moreno and Daniel Phelps worked endlessly to sort, pack and mail the supplies. In their packages they included inserts with information on the importance of wearing the masks and CDC guidelines both in English and Spanish. They also include a State Resource Guide. The outreach field staff supported the effort as well by reaching out to other local partners who could help distribute the supplies because they were limited to do outreach visits. The team conducts follow up calls, texts, and emails to ensure the farmworkers are receiving their supplies.

## FURTHER COLLABORATION

In addition to collaborating with NCDHHS, the NC Ag. Services team has an ongoing collaboration with other partners who actively work together to serve the needs of NC farmworkers. The NC Department of Commerce Social Committee along with the Ag. Services Team had initiated a long sleeve/hat drive, however as the pandemic started, they decided to also collect face masks within the agency, they also reached out to other community citizens for additional donations.

Altogether, they have received roughly 120,000 facemasks to give out to farmworkers. This will be an ongoing campaign, NCDHHS will continue to donate masks and the Ag. Services Team and the Monitor Advocate will continue to distribute and track the number of workers provided with masks and follow up with farmworkers to ensure they are receiving the masks and identify other needs and services they can provide.

## SUCCESS

The success of the Ag. Services Team and Monitor Advocate show the great effort and collaboration of motivated and committed staff who worked together to make a difference in the lives of farmworkers. "A farmworker expressed his appreciation and stated he really liked the masks and feels grateful and valued" said Victor Garcia, NC State Monitor Advocate.

