

Access to Medical Insurance Among Migrating and Non-Migrating Farmworkers: A Case Study from Rural California

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ABSTRACT

Globally, agricultural laborers struggle to meet their families' basic needs, while performing work that remains arduous and low paying, and entails substantial occupational health risks. In the United States, research studies continue to document the exploitation experienced by this hard working but socially invisible occupational group. The low-income California residents who are the focus of this research are California's working poor—farmworker families. This occupational group is unique because many safety regulations governing other occupational groups are not applied to agricultural labor. In the midst of California's agricultural prosperity, this group of workers remains largely hidden in our society. From the perspective of a political economy of health, this research examines healthcare access, specifically defined, under two labor patterns: 1) when farmworkers migrate, and 2) when they are working in homebased areas. More specifically, this research inquiry aims to understand what processes most substantially affect both potential access and realized access to primary healthcare services. Potential access refers to the availability of medical services relative to the need. Realized access refers to the use of medical services to satisfy those needs.