

Governor Phil Murphy

# Murphy Administration Outlines COVID-19 Guidance for Seasonal Farm Workers and Employers

05/21/2020

## Steps for Working Conditions, Housing and Transportation Published

**TRENTON** – In an effort to help protect the thousands of seasonal farm workers in New Jersey, the state Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Labor and Workforce Development have issued guidance on working conditions as well as testing/treatment procedures to assist agricultural businesses and farm workers in minimizing the risk and potential exposure to COVID-19.

The nature of agricultural work puts thousands of seasonal farm workers (both transient and non-transient) in close proximity with co-workers, and they also rely on employer-provided group transportation and camp-style housing.

“Thousands of seasonal farm workers come to work on New Jersey farms each spring to pick fresh fruits and vegetables. Protecting seasonal workers on these farms is a high priority because they work and live in close proximity to one another,” **said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. “We are working closely with growers, local health departments and our Federally Qualified Health Centers to minimize that risk and to ensure that once they are tested, follow-up, and isolation and quarantine plans are in place for workers.”

“This Guidance is the result of close collaboration between the Departments of Health, Labor, and Agriculture. Our farmers are highly concerned for their workers and families and understand the need to work together to ensure a healthy and safe environment,” **NJDA Secretary Douglas Fisher said**.

“We have a responsibility and an obligation to make sure these workers – and the farmers who hire and house them – maintain safe and healthy workplaces in which to harvest and bring to market the state’s crops,” **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. “We have been engaged with our colleagues since early March to develop a plan that is feasible for farmers and will help protect the health of all. I especially want to thank the farmers for being responsive to the incredible challenges brought by COVID-19.”

The state guidance to employers and owners or operators of seasonal farm labor camps outlines a framework of steps to minimize the spread of COVID-19 for farm workers throughout the agricultural production process, and for their shared housing and group transportation, as well as for screening and caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed virus infections.

## Workplace and housing safety

Workers must wear employer-provided face coverings or masks at all times including while taking transportation, during work hours, and in the presence of others.

Among the other steps outlined in the guidance are:

  
Back  
to top

**Social distancing during work time:** Employers are to promote social distancing by requiring workers to remain at least six feet from one another while working in the fields or any food farming production, processing or cultivation. Staggered shifts are also encouraged to minimize the density of workers in the field and other work locations.

**Housing:** Employers must protect their workers by following CDC recommendations for congregate living if workers are provided housing by the employer. Beds are to be placed at least six feet apart. If six feet of distance is not possible, beds should be positioned at least three feet apart with a partition, such as hanging a sheet or a shower curtain. Mealtimes should be staggered to reduce crowding in shared eating facilities. Adequate ventilation must be provided in sleeping and living quarters with openable windows or door with properly fitted screens or a device supplying ventilation.

**Transportation:** Employers must implement social distancing while transporting workers to and from their residency and work. Vehicles should be limited to 50% capacity, which may require additional trips to and from the worksite.

**Sanitation:** Employers are to ensure disinfection of high-touch areas, such as in communal areas, work and transportation vehicles, in accordance with CDC guidance. Additional guidance is provided on restroom facilities and handwashing.

Employers are to collaborate with their local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or local public health officials to identify culturally, linguistically, and literacy-level appropriate posters and education materials for workers, including those who may be unable to read or write to ensure all workers are aware of this information.

### **Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases**

Employers are to screen workers for symptoms, including through temperature and symptom checks, prior to work shifts. If any symptoms are shown, the worker must immediately be separated from other workers and connected to a physician, who will determine if a test is needed. Pending medical attention and testing, workers with symptoms consistent with a COVID-19 infection are to be confined to individual rooms and avoid common areas.

Once a worker is suspected or diagnosed with COVID-19, employers are to contact the local health department and immediately assign the worker a separate bathroom and provide separate living space, or alternate housing if effective isolation in their current living space is not possible. Workers who were in close contact with the affected workers are to be screened and watched for symptoms.

Costs related to testing and treatment for COVID-19 will not be charged to the employer or worker. Any hospitalization or isolation housing provided by the State of New Jersey will not be charged to employers or workers.

The guidance also sets out conditions for when employees can return to work.

### **Employee protections**

The guidance outlines existing employment-based protections for workers, including the prohibition on employers firing or otherwise punishing an employee who requests or takes time off due to a medical professional's determination that the worker has or is likely to have COVID-19. Most workers will be eligible for paid sick time if they contract COVID-19 and also may be eligible for Workers Compensation if they get COVID-19 while working.

The full guidance can be found at:

[https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID\\_MigrantFarmWorkerGuidance\\_5.20.2020.pdf](https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_MigrantFarmWorkerGuidance_5.20.2020.pdf)  
([https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID\\_MigrantFarmWorkerGuidance\\_5.20.2020.pdf](https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_MigrantFarmWorkerGuidance_5.20.2020.pdf))  
# # #

## **Governor Phil Murphy**

## Home (</governor/>)

### Administration

Governor Phil Murphy (</governor/admin/about/>)

Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver (</governor/admin/lt/>)

First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy (</governor/admin/fl/>)

Cabinet (</governor/admin/cabinet/>)

Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency

(</governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml>)

Boards, Commissions & Authorities (</governor/admin/bca/>)

Internship Opportunities (</governor/admin/internship.shtml>)

Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket (<http://drumthwacket.org/>)

### Key Initiatives

Economy & Jobs (</governor/initiatives/#Economy>)

Education (</governor/initiatives/#Education>)

Environment (</governor/initiatives/#Environment>)

Health (</governor/initiatives/#Health>)

Law & Justice (</governor/initiatives/#Justice>)

Transportation (</governor/initiatives/#Transportation>)

### News & Events

Press Releases ([/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml))

Photos (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy>)

Public Addresses (</governor/news/addresses>)

Executive Orders ([/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.html](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html))

Administrative Orders ([/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml))

Direct Appointments (</governor/news/appointments>)

Advice and Consent Appointments (</governor/news/acappointments>)

Statements on Legislation

([/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml))

Administration Reports (</governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml>)

Transition Reports ([/governor/news/reports/approved/reports\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml))

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

## Social

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

TikTok (<https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?>)

## Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

## Statewide

[NJ Home \(/www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(/www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(/www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(/www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(/www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(/www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(/www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(/www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023  
Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000

(https://tech.nj.gov/)