

Effective Partnerships with Organizations Serving Farmworkers

In Maine, growers hire hundreds of farmworkers each year in Washington County. Approximately 1,750 of the estimated total 2,680 farmworkers hired work in the harvesting and processing of blueberries. Many government and non-profit organizations collaborate to serve farmworkers at one location, the Raker's Center.

The Raker's Center initially started as a temporary resource center for farmworkers during the blueberry harvest in Washington County. It has now been in operation for



over 20 years. The Center has become the 'first stop' for migrant workers and their families arriving in Washington County for the blueberry harvest. After travelling long distances, families need support services for either health, groceries, clothing, or automobile repair. Representatives from the Maine Department of Labor, the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, Maine Migrant Education, Migrant Health, Legal Services, and several other organizations are onsite

daily at the Raker's Center for approximately three weeks during the blueberry harvesting season.

The combined presence of various service providers under one roof is seen by many as a successful model. These organizations orient farmworkers to services such as, career services at the One Stop, employment and training programs for eligible farmworkers, education for dependent children, legal aid, health care, and other supportive services. The Raker's Center has each family or individual travelling alone fill out an intake sheet indicating their needs and reason for visit. These in-take sheets provide the metrics at the end of the day. The first three or four days of operation are always the busiest because workers arrive before the work has begun. On average, the Center sees 400 – 600 clients during the first week. This partnership allows farmworkers and their families to effectively access many services in one place during their stay in Washington County.

Photo: Treva, an intern, assisting in compiling the Demographic survey (Raker's Center in 2015).