**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Protecting Farmworkers from Sexual Harassment & Human Trafficking**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to protecting farmworkers from sexual harassment and human trafficking. So without further ado I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Bhavani Arabandi, workforce analyst, National Monitor Advocate Team, U.S. Department of Labor. Bhavani?

BHAVANI ARABANDI: Thank you, Jon. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the webinar on protecting farmworkers from sexual harassment and human trafficking, supported by the National Monitor Advocate System and the National Farmworker Jobs Program at the U.S. Department of Labor. It is really exciting to see the great turnout for the webinar from around the country, and we are happy to spend this time with you.

Jon, can you bring up that initial poll, the opening poll? Wow. It's really great to see the nice diversity of people and especially wonderful to see the number of outreach workers and workforce professionals that provide direct service to our farmworker and other communities.

So it is my pleasure to introduce my co-moderator and – (inaudible) – Juan Regalado. Juan has worked for the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration for the past 15 years and has been the national monitor advocate since 2008. As the national monitor advocate Juan monitors and reviews state workforce agencies for the compliance with Wagner-Peyser regulations affecting migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Juan also provides technical assistance to the regional offices and state workforce agencies in carrying out Wagner-Peyser regulations and programs.

Jorge Acero, our presenter today, is the state monitor advocate in Maine and has been in this role since 2014. As the SMA or the state monitor advocate he ensures the migrant and seasonal farmworkers are afforded equal access to employment services. He also works with farmworkers to resolve issues relating to wages, housing, and discrimination, among other things.

Along with farmworkers, Jorge works closely with employers in Maine and has partnerships with nonprofit organizations and federal, state, and local agencies. Jorge is also on the Maine Attorney General workgroup on human trafficking and on the Maine state commission on sexual and domestic violence.

The objectives for today's webinar are to learn about the prevalence of sexual harassment and human trafficking within the farmworker community, WIOA regulation on sexual harassment and human trafficking, leveraging resources and support from state administration and partners, and developing a sexual harassment and human trafficking training plan that outlines audience, needs, objectives, strategy, and key training content.

The webinar will be in the form of a live podcast where I will be posing questions to our presenter Jorge Acero and some to Juan Regalado as well. Some of the questions we will be discussing today are, what was the driving force behind WIOA regulations and state level work? How does it relate to the Department of Labor's mission? How did Maine lay the groundwork for this? What are some of the challenges faced? What is the impact, and would this training be useful for other programs?

In the recent months the Me Too movement has captivated the attention of the American public and has reverberated around the world. Similarly, sexual harassment of farmworkers and human trafficking have also been – (inaudible). For example, this is a headline from Frontline's year-long investigation where they conducted hundreds of interviews of farmworkers that revealed that sexual harassment and sexual assault are a national problem. While many farmworkers experience this, few cases make it to the court for the fear of reprisal.

This New York Times article published in 2018 talked about – talks about a human rights watch report which surveyed 52 female farmworkers and found that nearly all of them had experienced sexual violence or knew others who had. One woman told investigators in this article, basically – in this report that her workplace was called "field de calzon" or "field of panties."

The same article reported an Iowa immigrant farmworker who told her lawyer, "We thought it was normal in the United States that in order to keep your job you had to have sex." The article also cited another study of Mexican women working in the Central Valley in California, 80 percent of whom had experienced sexual harassment.

In this Time article Latina farmworkers wrote a letter of solidarity to the courageous women and men in Hollywood who have come forward with their experiences of sexual harassment and assault in the wake of Harvey Weinstein scandal. "Dear sisters," they say, quote-unquote, "We write on behalf of the approximately 700,000 women who work in the agriculture field and packing sheds across the United States. We do not work under bright stage lights or on the big screen. We work in the shadows of society in isolated fields and packing houses that are out of sight and out of mind for most people in this country. Your job feeds souls, fills hearts, and spreads job. Our job nourishes the nation with fruits, vegetables, and other crops that we plant, pick, and pack."

And most recently in the January 2018, the Atlantic article, this discusses about how undocumented workers without papers and workers on temporary visas are extremely vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace. This exploitation, the article says, takes many forms, including unfair labor practices, working without fair pay, and sexual harassment and assault. These are damning testaments to the working conditions of farmworkers in the U.S.

Many of you might have seen the Time's Up campaign. This is an ad for that. "Dear sisters," it says, "No more silence. No more waiting. No more tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or abuse. Time's up." The campaign was announced in an open letter placed in full-page ads in the New York Times and the Spanish language newspaper La Opinon. In their letter they link the harassment and exploitation coming to the surface of Hollywood to systemic inequality and collected – (inaudible) – between gender gaps in their own industry and – (inaudible) – elsewhere.

Surveys from the United States have revealed 25 percent or one in four women in the workplace experience sexual harassment or assault. Nearly 65 percent of women on college campuses experience sexual harassment or assault, and 80 percent of women in agricultural fields experience sexual assault or harassment.

The problems of abuse and harassment of farmworkers is clearly a cause of concern among persons who have already migrated, but it does not necessarily begin there. Although transnational migration and migration within national borders have benefitted many people, there's a growing recognition that sex trafficking and labor traffic of migrant workers have become global problems. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform commercial sex through the use of fraud, force, or coercion. According to ILO, the International Labor Organization, there are nearly 4.8 million people in forced sexual exploitation.

From the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, labor trafficking is a form of human trafficking – (inaudible) – while forcing individuals to perform labor or services against their will for little or no pay. Labor trafficking happens across many industries in the U.S. such as agriculture, food service, and hospitality.

Again, according to the ILO, the International Labor Organization, there are nearly 24.9 million people worldwide who are considered to be situations – considered to be in situations of forced labor. A report by Polaris, an anti-trafficking organization, found that 91 percent of the cases involving modern-day slavery in agriculture involved foreign nationals. Many of these workers are on guest worker visas or temporary visas associated with the employment role, as is common in agricultural workers who come on a visa called an H-2A.

For the farmworkers population that we work with, while their abilities include the nature of work, which is often seasonal, farmworkers are often migratory. So they work – move from place to place to find work. Geographic isolation at farms which are often located in remote areas. New and temporary immigration status, and last but most importantly, the fear of retaliation, of being fired or deported or an increase in violence.

With this background and state of affairs at the national level, let's turn to a quick poll. At the local level what is the prevalence of sexual harassment and human trafficking among farmworkers or others in your own state? Please respond on your screen. Wow. This is incredible. So as we can see, about a quarter people – a quarter of the people think or about half the people think it's between high and moderate, whereas a lot of people aren't sure. This also goes to the actual problem with sexual harassment and human trafficking. It's prevalent, but very little is known or discussed openly. It's very invisible, and it's such an underbelly to our workers if it's really, really problematic. Thank you for your answers on that one.

So now, let's turn to our presenters with questions about how we can improve the situation. For the audience, please feel to send us your questions via the chat feature on your screen. If timely, we'll pose your follow-up questions to our presenter. Juan, these first questions are for you.

What are the driving – what was the driving force? What are the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act regulations on sexual harassment and human trafficking? And what was the driving force behind including these in the WIOA regulations?

JUAN REGALADO: Thank you, Bhavani, and hello, everyone. This is Juan Regalado, national monitor advocate, and thank you, Jorge, for agreeing to present during today's webinar and thank you, Bhavani, for putting it together and for the kind words during your presentation. I'm very glad that today's turnout is so overwhelming, from outreach workers to state monitor advocates to administrators. I'm very glad that you all can join us here today, but I'm not really surprised, given today's topic.

You will find the reference to the sexual harassment and human trafficking awareness training at 20 CFR 653.107 (b)(7). At the end of this webinar we provide you the text of this section of the regulations. As most of you know, a couple of years ago the department had the opportunity to update the language and the content of the regulations to implement amendments made by Title III of WIOA to the Wagner-Peyser Act, specifically to the regulations at 20 CFR Part 653, which focuses on the services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. These regulations had not been updated since 1980. So it was a great opportunity to bring them up to date.

As far as the driving force, Bhavani, behind – including the section in the WIOA regulations, personally, I feel that it was because we had a female in the conversation. As most of you know, Leana Shannon, a member of the National Monitor Advocate Team here in the national office, took the lead on the updating of the regulations.

So as Leana and I came across the section on the responsibilities of the outreach workers, Leana felt very strongly that we should include this type of language on the training being provided to outreach workers. As it turned out, during the rulemaking process and the public comment period, many commenters expressed support for the inclusion of training on sexual harassment in 653.107 (b)(7).

So I'm very glad for Leana's contribution and – (inaudible) – that we were able to keep this language in our regulations. So I know Leana's listening in on the webinar. So, Leana, I want to thank you very much for your contributions.

At this time I will turn it over to Jorge.

JORGE ACERO: Hello, everyone. This is Jorge Acero, the state monitor advocate in Maine. Thanks, Juan. Thanks, Bhavani, and of course extended thank you to Leana for her work on this. What was the driving force behind my involvement?

Well, essentially, becoming a state monitor advocate was the first one, but once I did become the state monitor advocate and had took the role, I began to learn there were more activities that I would be involved with besides the routine outreach work to farmworkers. I became a member of the Maine Attorney General's human trafficking work group.

That work group is quite large, and members represent nonprofits and agencies throughout the state that work with human trafficking, receive individual grants, and are dedicated to providing services to victims of human trafficking, mostly sex cases but now they're beginning to look more in depth at labor, general labor, and now farm work.

After that, once that – in 2014 we had a training at the monitor advocate – the National Monitor Advocate Conference where there was a focus there that the training presentation on human trafficking identification, referral, and victim services by a U.S. Department of Justice individual and a United States Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division.

And that really encapsulated what the role would be of our responsibility at the Department of Labor, and later I think Dave referenced or somewhere I found a reference to the TEGL number 9-12 that was issued in October of 2012 which essentially is human trafficking, the role of the public workforce system in the delivery of services and referrals to victims of trafficking.

So all of these things just fell into place my very first year. Again, that – after I returned from the National Monitor Advocate Conference, a couple weeks later I was contacted to testify or present, if you will, at the convening of the Maine advisory committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Human Trafficking round table. They were doing an in-depth study in Maine. What is happening in terms of human trafficking? How are organizations responding? What is the level? Do we know that human trafficking is going on? And that was a very interesting process.

And then we fast forward to 2016 and WIOA and 653.107 (a)(7), the requirement that outreach workers be trained. That right there then pretty much sealed the deal for me that I needed to take responsibility to bring this onto the radar of my local offices, my – the career centers that I work with in the areas of high agricultural activity, but also my Farmworker Resource Network. I belong to a group of collaborators that provide services individually through Maine migrant health, mobile health, the National Farmworker Jobs Program coordinator, the migrant education program; several – a couple of legal aid organizations. And they all have outreach workers as well.

So because of that, that's where essentially the ball started rolling on bringing this awareness to the forefront.

Hello?

MS. ARABANDI: Wonderful. Thank you, Jorge. Juan, we have a question from the audience that was wondering if you could take this. If – one of our audience members asked, "Do you have a map or statistics about the number of human trafficking and sex trafficking survivors in each state?"

MR. REGALADO: Thank you, Bhavani. We don't have that information, I mean, as far as EPA is concerned, but we can definitely check into that and then we can get back to this group and get the word out on that kind of information that might be available.

MS. ARABANDI: All right. Great. Thank you, Juan. And this is – this information is really hard to get because the survivor – I mean, the victims and survivors of human trafficking and sexual harassment assault are so invisible and made silent that it's very hard for a lot of people to come forward, and it's very hard to track it. But we are hoping to do this in the near future, if that helps.

MR. REGALADO: Well, and also, after that first polling question, that kind of threw a – my mentality a curveball. Thinking of spring training coming up for baseball, huh? Thinking that the awareness that is out there on whether it's overwhelming or moderate and then what really caught my attention is the fact that so many people are not aware of what's happening in the fields, and I think that's our goal here today and to bring this to the forefront of our discussions.

And I'll have more on this later on throughout the webinar, but I thought I'd just share that with everybody at this point.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. That's an excellent, excellent observation. So going back to –

MR. REGALADO: Thank you.

MS. ARABANDI: – our questions, this question – this next question is for both you, Juan, and Jorge. How does it relate to the Department of Labor's mission? Juan, can you start us off on this question, and then we'll go to Jorge?

MR. REGALADO: Yes. Thank you, Bhavani. The mission of the department, if I may, is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, jobseekers, and retirees of the United States, improve working conditions, advance opportunities for profitable employment, and assured work-related benefits and rights.

I truly believe the welfare of our farmworkers is extremely important, as well as having the opportunity to have a system for continuous improvement. As more and more states provide this kind of training, we hope that we will have not just trained outreach workers but more AJC staff trained on the awareness of sexual harassment and human trafficking in the fields and how to – and especially how to refer these cases to enforcement agencies.

It's one thing is knowing what's going out there and the fact that through our complaint system I often remind folks that we first have a local resolution, except in these cases. Sometimes there's – they can be very serious and we need to make sure that everybody is aware of how to refer these cases to enforcement agencies. I will turn it over to Jorge now.

MR. ACERO: Well, as the TEGL 9-12 essentially officializes it, really the mission, and it – a combination of the TEGL, the role of the public workforce system in doing so, and then the presenters in Washington, D.C. during the 2014 training spoke of the U.S. role in terms of victim services as part of our employment and training activities under Wagner-Peyser and now WIOA.

So basically, that one of the things that we have to realize, though, is that in the American Job Centers and our career centers and oftentimes even at the outreach level, we oftentimes see victims after the fact, after they've gone through the trauma, after perhaps another service provider has assisted them maybe and so on.

So where we kick in is to take that role of providing the type of services that we have available, but we're confronted, though, however, with these folks are – have baggage in certain ways. Not in a negative sense but because they've just had a traumatic experience and are vulnerable still, are having a difficult time in readjusting back. And our goal then is to work with them.

They may have barriers to employment; for example, a limited job history, no resume, or lack of skills, except in some cases only knowledge about the very industry or occupation where the survivor was exploited. And there may be other issues such as language, mental health, physical health, other medical issues, and so on. So we have to become aware of that, and that's part of the work that we're facing.

The other one is as barriers to the service delivery, the challenge to find work for them that is not in the same industry or occupation where the survivor was exploited, how to help survivors access career ladders, for example, and other things. If those monitor advocates or – and their staff that were maybe at the 2014 training or could look back at the presentation, it's discussed there as well.

And also, we then build after those experiences. The promising practices would be things such as safe positive work environments that they should be brought into, wrap-around comprehensive case management that really assists these folks in adjusting, and working with employers so that employers also are sensitized to the needs and special needs of the victims and survivors. And also, just take into consideration that different ages are required different strategies. Thank you.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Jorge, for that. That was very, very useful, and I know we've been getting some best sites and helpful resources in – through the chat room. We are happy to take a look at this and will post any that are relevant along with our conference materi- – webinar materials at the end.

So, Jorge, how did you lay the groundwork for this in Maine?

MR. ACERO: Well, essentially, as I mentioned, at – once WIOA came around and I kicked into place the need to bring Maine and my local offices into compliance with that WIOA requirement, that 653.107, that the outreach workers, and I – what I did was I prepared a bulleted outline plan on how to bring the two local offices that are located nearest the areas of highest agricultural activity into compliance and presented it to my division director and to the two regional bureau managers.

And I also brought it up to the attention of my service provider group, the Farmworker Resource Network, at our quarterly meeting and just came out and said, you know what, United States Department of Labor now in WIOA expects me to work very much closer with you on these types of issues and to collaborate with you much closer as we provide services to MSFWs. So that's really how the ball started rolling was through that outline plan and so on.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Jorge. That's very useful. So one of the questions that we got was, if the new – give me a second. Sorry. I'm scrolling. "Do we know who largely perpetuates the assaults? Other migrant workers, employers unknown to the victim, public assailants, or all of the above? Juan, would you like to answer the question?

MR. REGALADO: Thank you, Bhavani. We really – up to this point we really haven't had – we haven't tracked this type of information through our complaint system, but anecdotally, just like I – whenever I asked any of the state monitor advocates what is the number one type of complaint that you get through the – through our complaint system, that would be the nonpayment of wages.

The same thing with the data on these types of cases. We don't have any national data per se because we haven't been able to track that information, but anecdotally, it's – and from personal experience, very close to me, and what I've heard as I talk to farmworkers is within the industry itself, mostly supervisors, other farmworkers. But it's in the fields and mostly comes from supervisors that are out there and – but that's just anecdotal information and from personal information that I have.

MS. ARABANDI: Okay. Thank you, Juan. Another question that has come up from our chat room is, "Can you give us a sense of the proper channels to follow if we encountered a case of sexual harassment or human trafficking in the field?"

MR. REGALADO: Thank you. That's a great question also. I would say – we do have a complaint system, and that complaint system was established, again, as a result of the Judge Richey court order many, many years ago. It's there so that farmworkers can have a safe place to come in and file these complaints.

It's a system that is there to assist farmworkers in filing these complaints and processing these complaints, and it is the reason why I strongly encourage our partners, farmworker advocacy groups use this system because once the individual files a complaint, any type of complaint but especially these complaints, the – it is the state monitor advocate's responsibility to follow these complaints all the way through resolution. So it's one way of tracking and to making sure that complaints are resolved for these individuals.

And sometimes you might not have somebody that is filing a complaint – an official complaint using our system, but you might have information that you're – you've become aware of the information that is something happening. That is what we call an append violation, and also get to know your outreach workers, if you're not outreach workers and you are conducting outreach.

Get to know your state monitor advocates, and they can provide you information on the append violation process because if we have that kind of information, say especially when we have a job order in our local employment service offices, it is the responsibility of the local office manage to ensure that they investigate these types of complaints, and if they are dealing with sexual harassment or human trafficking, we refer them immediately to the enforcement agency but we'll make sure that we keep track and we follow up to resolution of these complaints or apparent violations.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. And I want to reiterate a little bit of what Juan said. We – I mean, the best thing to do if you come across a complaint of this nature is to contact your state monitor advocate. In Maine it would be Jorge, and in other states it would be whoever this individual is. But also look up other organizations, rape crisis centers, hotlines, and things that you have that would have more expert supportive services in these areas.

So let's take a quick break and come up with a little poll for the audience. Please answer, are you a member of a human trafficking workforce at any level? And the poll shows that the majority, overwhelming majority of folks are not. And this is something that we can do for the future. One of the best things you can do is join working groups on human trafficking.

Learn about what's happening in your local areas and your state. Stay informed. Information is power. Knowledge is power, and one of the best things you can do is to stay informed about these kinds of things happening. And once you are a part of this, I mean, this would be the way to go ahead. I mean, this is exactly how Jorge started out in Maine.

So moving on back to Jorge, how did you keep the ground swell going, and how are you going to sustain this?

MR. ACERO: Well, it's something that we can't do on our own, by – I can't do it by myself, and one thing is that I have to keep it on the radar. More importantly of what my – the way I feel comfortable keeping it is to make sure that my Farmworker Resource Network always has it on their – on our radar when it comes to the pre-season planning for outreach, for pre-season planning for resource center activity, and so on.

But also, for example, we've invited trafficking and sexual assault community groups to join our Farmworker Resource Network. We have one person that's there now from the city of Portland that she received a grant on – for human trafficking, and so she's a constant member. One of our legal aid group members, through a grant also, hired a full-time attorney whose job includes statewide advocacy for farmworker victims of sexual harassment and violence. And so through this and then continued bringing it up during local office visits of our – the career centers, mentioning it during the visit perhaps at a staff meeting and so on, and refreshing – training refreshers.

And one thing that I have an idea and it was – and I learned about this, that it's important to build, for example, a multi-disciplinary referral network. In other words, a network of my service collaborators but that – but also reaching out to the community service providers that work with sexual victims response services. And that's slowly growing, and what we need to do is develop a process, a protocol to refer issues, to refer the victims and survivors for assistance and services. That's really – it's a continuous job, essentially, continuous services.

And then I developed a sexual harassment and – training by speaking with – once the idea of the outreach worker training gained acceptance, I contacted one of the most active community groups in Maine, the Maine coalition against sexual assault, for advice and suggestions on organizing a training.

Now, they were not familiar with how to talk to the subject of harassment in the farm field, but they said, well, we can do this because it's basically adapting what our training is and discussing it in terms of the individual in the farm and the individual out in the farm field and what their experiences are during these traumatic events.

And so we worked together and we had several discussions on the phone and how that might work and when they came together the goal was that outreach workers would benefit the most in terms of identifying signs, learning about how to identify and how to – markers of possible sexual harassment and/or trafficking in the field, the packing house, or the labor camp. And other areas the training would focus on would be the how to talk to the victim or referral to someone they could speak to about the issue.

And the training itself, the attendees included our local staff from three career centers, three American Job Centers in Maine, mostly management and a couple of upper level staff, and all members of the Farmworker Resource Network and their outreach workers from each of those organizations. The trainers provided valuable tools in the form of links to publications on the topic.

An important one which deals directly with the issue produced and published through a joint partnership of the California Rural Legal Assistants, and many of you in California might know it. It was produced with a group such as Esperanza, the Immigrant Women's Legal Initiative of Southern Poverty Law Center, – (inaudible) – (Camptecinas ?) and Victim's Rights Law Center. So those of you from California may be familiar with this. It's the Sexual Violence Against Farmworkers: A Guidebook for Social Service Providers. It's an incredible handbook and very, very useful.

MS. ARABANDI: Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you, Jorge. This is absolutely important information for those of us who are trying to emulate your success in our own states and things. So this is absolutely great.

So what are some of the challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them or change them into opportunities?

MR. ACERO: Well, the challenge in terms of, say, training outreach workers from the American Job Centers is that my outreach – my American Job Centers do not have outreach workers. I am the outreach worker in Maine for the Department of Labor. Our career centers are very small, very little staff, and of course funding, as you know, is our issue. Even though those career centers are a stone throw away from farm fields, we have very, very little actual farmworker traffic into the career centers themselves.

The migrant workers that come to Maine, when they come during the peak of the season, they are going directly to the farm, directly to work, and then they leave at the end of the season. That's why we have to work very quickly with the service providers and ourselves to set up pop-up resource centers, if you will, and be out there in the field on a regular basis. American Job Centers in my area just can't do that. They don't have the staff or the facility or the time to be able to do that. So I do it. And so the challenge was convincing that maybe we could do it out of the job centers and so on.

But the other possibilities in terms of challenges, who would do the training of the staff? Well, again, the management decide, well, I should just go ahead and find out how to do the training, do the training myself, provide the training myself, and so on. And that's why I reached out to my organization collaborators that I know out in the public sector.

And then the challenge, essentially, for me it was a combination of to bring my offices and my department, my bureau into compliance with WIOA and then the best part, the buy-in from the state administrators was, well, I would be doing most of it, but also that, once I did organize the training and so on, it was free. It was no cost.

Why? Because my collaborating partners, my organizations that I work with, they do this as a public service to – these trainings. They provide these trainings to police departments, to community groups, to whoever wants them, and that was perfect. If you tell one of your administrators that you can have the staff of a career center trained for no cost, they'll buy in.

MS. ARABANDI: That's great to hear, Jorge, and absolutely. I think it's so important to both get experts on the training and not doing this yourself because we are not necessarily the experts. There are lots of – (inaudible) – that are well-trained and who have survivor-informed training that's – that are very, very effective. So it's very important to bring in the experts and definitely have the state administrators buy in in all of these things.

So moving on, Jorge, as a result of the efforts you've described today, what has been the impact of all of this? And I know this is an ongoing effort as well.

MR. ACERO: Right. Right. No. It is an ongoing. The immediate impact really – well, three local office management and some staff were trained. Then our – more importantly, it was really put on the radar of our Farmworker Resource Network, and there were about 26 folks in the room from my Farmworker Resource Network organizations for that event. And I don't have any specific success stories other than, now, we're all aware.

It's aware that we must be aware when we're walking into a field, when we're walking into a labor camp that we must be aware of other things besides the standard things that we look at for housing violations or just speaking to the workers. But just be more cognizant of the possibility that there could be other things going on and be more sensitive to a person's needs, if they need to speak to you in private and so on.

I haven't received any complaints. More than anything, in terms of my career centers and the management, it's that they also have become cognizant of the issues and are now, through information and resources that I've provided, connected to the agencies which may be of assistance in their areas that they could call on. And the goal really, for now, it's something that I – we work with on a regular basis that we should all have in our day-to-day work is continuous improvement with what we do.

Keeping the issue in our conversations about outreach planning, as I mentioned earlier, the services to MSFWs, potential to bring the training now there's – in a more universal manner to all – as Juan mentioned earlier, to all staff in the Maine Department of Labor, for example, and through all the career centers so that they might serve all of their customers depend- – it doesn't matter what program, whether it's farmworkers or any other program that we might be running and so on. So that's really the outcome thus far.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Jorge. That was excellent. I know – I mean, it feels like this is a small effort, but the more people that are involved, I think the bigger the impact. The impact kind of grows every day.

Juan, as a follow up to this, I wanted to ask you a quick question. What do you see if these kinds of efforts were to be replicated around different states and different organizations? What do you see is – as the impact on the farmworker community?

MR. REGALADO: Well, thank you. That's a good question, Bhavani. Well, I think, because we now do have it in our regulations, we expect that the state workforce agencies – and because it's not necessarily the responsibility of the state monitor advocates. However, in most cases it will probably be one of the duties of the state monitor advocates, depending on the states, because ultimately it is the state workforce agency responsibilities to ensure the outreach workers are being trained.

We are – as our regional monitor advocates are reviewing our states, as we go out from the national office perspective to review the states, we want to make sure that this is happening, and we want to make sure that we work closely with – as Jorge's ahead of the line. Texas is ahead.

Other states are also already conducting training, but we want to make sure that we have the training being provided to outreach workers, to not just only be aware and then, as we've already mentioned, and refer these cases but also to get the word out as part of the information that they provide to our farmworkers. I know there are a couple questions, and I'll just touch on quickly and – regarding the H-2A oversight. And we're responsible for the oversight of the H-2A program.

So I'll go back to one of the questions. Reasons why I said they should go through our system. Another reason is because, if these farmworkers are in farms where there are H-2A workers and – or if they are H-2A workers, we have the responsibility to ensure that the – we initiate the discontinuation of services to these employers if they're found in violations of the regulations.

And we could also stop – we can close these job orders and, basically, they would not be eligible to participate in the H-2A program. So that kind of impact we have already, and we hope to see more impact as we move through this process and get the awareness out to the local areas, local offices, local AJCs, and in the states.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. And I want to readdress something you've often mentioned in our meetings with monitor advocates, that if it's a migrant and seasonal farmworker that is making a complaint, we have a commitment as monitor advocates to see it through resolution.

Whether we pursue informal resolution or refer it to other agencies and things, we have a definite commitment to do this. And we're also partnering with the National Farmworker Jobs Program in an upcoming memorandum of understanding that brings us to work closely with them on cross-training, professional development, and issues of sexual harassment and human trafficking as well.

MR. REGALADO: Right.

MS. ARABANDI: So I think this kind of – I mean, I feel this kind of grounds will have the ripple effect in terms of the things that can come out of these kinds of partnerships.

MR. REGALADO: Great. Thank you.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you. Jorge, back to you. How would this training be useful for other programs such as YouthBuild, adult services, and you already train AJC staff, but if you could speak broadly and if you have any best practices to share with the audience? Jorge, are you on mute?

MR. ACERO: Yeah. Sorry about that.

MS. ARABANDI: No worries.

MR. ACERO: Yes. Well, it would be very useful for programs and their associated staff, as I mentioned earlier. For example, just folks here in my bureau are already asking – when they found out that I was presenting during this webinar, they're already asking when training will be organized across all of our career centers here in Maine and their staff. With this type of training, as we mentioned, staff would be sensitized to serving indicators while working with customers or be aware of unique needs of a victim that are brought in for services by other organizations, which is often the case.

That's really – oftentimes, especially in larger job centers, AJCs, that it's partners or nonprofit agencies working with folks that bring those folks into the career centers to introduce them to the workforce system, to introduce them on how to look for work, how to register in the local job bank, for example. So it really is applicable across all programs, and it's really about learning to apply that and work with the customer that you have.

MR. REGALADO: If I may, Bhavani.

MS. ARABANDI: Yeah.

MR. REGALADO: I'd like to add to that.

MS. ARABANDI: Yes, please.

MR. REGALADO: So thank you, Jorge. You're right, and as we were preparing for this webinar, I mentioned to the group that where I come from in the Salinas Valley we – our lettuce, our salads are prepared in bags right in – they put all the ingredients together, all the veggies together, and they call – we call those value-added products. And I think in this training we have the opportunity to provide that value added to our training.

Once we put the training together, like has happened in Maine already, we can disseminate it across the AJC centers and not just – and when we talk about the AJC centers, we talk about a big system that brings together all these partners of the workforce development system. So we can definitely expand it to include the AJC staff and partners and put it together so that we can all benefit because we're all dealing with people, and then these things are not – somebody in one of the courses – (inaudible) – what's happening in the human trafficking in this coming Sunday on Super Bowl, things like that? So what sexual harassment I guess. We're dealing with people, and it's happening in all areas, not just farmworker but definitely we want to focus on our farmworkers right now.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. So now, we have another quick poll for the audience. Has your organization provided or developed any training on combatting sexual harassment and human trafficking? Please take a minute to answer this. Wow. It looks like – as results are filtering in, it looks like it's about 50/50 where –

MR. REGALADO: That's what I was going to say. About 50/50.

MS. ARABANDI: Yeah. It looks about 50/50 where a lot of organizations – some organizations have provided training, whereas others have not. And for those who have not had any kind of training in this matter, this might be something you want to bring up with your own organizations as well, saying this is an area of concern and this is something we desperately want information on. Thank you. Thank you, John.

And this last question is for both of you, Jorge and Juan. Any last take-aways for our audience as they go about setting up collaborations and services in their own states? Jorge, we'll start with you first.

MR. ACERO: Well, first of all, we really need to understand or – that the object is not really to become an expert and be fully, fully trained on the subject matter but rather to learn – to be connected, to be connected to the organizations that can help you assist those victims that you might run into.

So really for me the takeaway is look for organizations involved with this issue and begin a collaborative relationship. It doesn't happen overnight. You'll find, as I did, that oftentimes these local organizations are networked with larger statewide and even national groups. And this is where accessing good resources begins. Attend their meetings. Attend their trainings. Invite them to present to your groups.

And also trainings and planning of trainings need to involve survivors. It's important, if possible – I know, for example, I went to a wonderful gathering recently in Portland, Maine by the Southern Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine, an organization that helps victims.

And during the event they brought out Ms. Maine and Ms. Maine is a victim of sexual assault and she gave a testimony as to the services that she received from this organization and other organizations that gave her and empowered her to become what she is today, which is she's now a person that has great self-confidence, speaking in public, representing the state at events and so on in her role as Ms. Maine.

So it's really about working with the survivors, when possible, learning directly from survivors, when possible, and then it's not important to be an expert but more important to be connected to those that can help you.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you. Thank you, Jorge. Yes. Juan?

MR. REGALADO: And believe me. Jorge and I did not share our answers on this one, but this is what I had for my initial response. One of my take-aways is that state monitor advocates don't have to necessarily start from scratch in putting together the training plans. They can reach out to taskforces that are already in the states. These taskforces have been in place for a while. They can also reach out to federal enforcement agencies such as EDLC to assist in providing the training.

Another one of – a great comment regarding not having to – (inaudible) – experts. Jorge, that's great. And serving survivors. I – and then I'll end with this. As far as our titles and I know we have regional monitor advocates, state monitor advocates, and the national monitor advocate team. The title of monitor advocates and we monitor and review and all that, but I think in this case I think we need to all be advocates, all be advocates. And I think this is one of my take-aways today that we need to be all advocates for farmworkers and make sure that we train them and we make them aware of the situations and assist them in any way we can. Thank you.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan and Jorge. Both of you make absolutely very, very good points. Jorge's point about involving survivors in planning your training. You don't have to have them in the front of the room and talk about experiences. They can be involved in planning the content of these trainings. And Juan's point about all of us being advocates I think is absolutely imperative in this climate. So thank you both for those points, take-aways, and everything.

And I just want to add a quick comment we got from New York, and they say, "All frontline staff are trained on human trafficking indicators, and refreshers are provided yearly." That's incredible. What a great practice to follow and emulate. Perhaps we can get in touch with you and maybe you would be – we'd be happy to have you on one of our webinars as well.

So moving on. I think we have some time now to address some questions that have been coming in. So, Jorge, do you want to start with this question, "Are there any tools or materials available that can help state departments with prevention of human trafficking?"

MR. ACERO: There are a lot of tools. I mean, there are a lot of links. There are national organizations, international organizations, and really by connecting with your local groups you can access those. The group that I mentioned earlier, the California Rural Legal Assistants, for example, just getting on their webpage, the Southern Poverty Law Center.

There are all kinds of organizations, and yes, there are tools that are available. The book that I mentioned or the handbook, it's Sexual Violence Against Farmworkers: A Guidebook for Social Service Providers. That's a very, very good eye opener. It really does provide a nice framework and a plan. So there are a lot of tools. I can't provide them all right at this minute, but certainly, through a little bit of research you can access those out there. Thanks.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Jorge. And yes. There absolutely really amazing websites out there. Our own Department of Labor's ILAB is a great resource, the International Labor Organization is a fabulous resource. Department of Homeland Security has a wonderful campaign called the Blue Campaign that talks about the various forms of human trafficking, sex trafficking, and all kinds of things. So these are all wonderful resources, and thank you for sharing that.

Another question that we had was about WIOA, I believe, and WIOA stands for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which was enacted in 2014. So these are new regulations, and they have been revised. And this is connecting back to what Juan said at the beginning, that we had a team member who emphasized including sexual harassment training and human trafficking training for outreach workers, monitor advocates across the board and connecting with various partners. So thank you for that question.

Juan, this question is for you. "If a farm is found to be exploiting, whether through sexual assault or trafficking, can they continue to apply for H-2A visas?"

MR. REGALADO: I touched on – thank you, Bhavani. I touched on a little bit, but one of our mandates from ETA to our Wagner-Peyser state workforce agencies and outreach workers is that we visit visa farms where there are H-2A employees working.

If there have been U.S. workers placed on these farms, it is the responsibility of the state workforce agency to conduct field checks to ensure that the employers are complying with the full terms and conditions of employment, but if there are no domestic workers or U.S. workers hired and there are H-2A workers, it's still the responsibility of the outreach workers to make site visits to these employers, again, to ensure that the employers are complying with the full range of the terms and conditions of employment.

So again, if they are found through either investigations or maybe sometimes even repeated causes, the state can initiate the discontinuation of services to these employers on the job order site. We also refer these cases to the Chicago National Processing Center that handles the H-2A applications, and these employers can be barred from participating in the H-2A program.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. Jorge, this next – this question is for you. You mentioned a book, and one of the audience members wants to know what was the name of that book again.

MR. ACERO: Oh, yes. And I've – yeah. I just mentioned it again a little bit ago. It was the one that's produced in joint partnership with the California Rural Legal Assistants and several important organizations. It's called Sexual Violence Against Farmworkers: A Guidebook for Social Service Providers.

MS. ARABANDI: Jorge, would you repeat that once more?

MR. ACERO: Sexual – the title of the handbook is Sexual Violence Against Farmworkers: A Guidebook for Social Service Providers.

MS. ARABANDI: Wonderful. Thank you. It is a handful to remember, but I'm sure if you Google some of the keywords you should be able to find it.

MR. ACERO: It's available in Spanish as well.

MS. ARABANDI: Great. Thank you. Juan, this question is for you. "Is it possible to list state-by-state advocates, if known?"

MR. REGALADO: Well, I think at the end, Bhavani, we do have some resources available, and one of them is a link to the – at the end of our webinar; right – the PowerPoint presentation. There's a link to our migrant seasonal farmworker website where folks can access either the National Farmworker Jobs Program – (inaudible) – website or our monitor advocate website, and they can provide the list of – the directory for the state monitor advocates across the nation.

And we'll also – and will – the national monitor advocate team will come together, along with our supervisor who's on the call, by the way, also, is – and then we can put some of the resources available up on our Ag Connection at the WorkforceGPS website also.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Juan. And this next question, "Is there anywhere we can find the specifics for our area? Where do we find who we could contact for my state and/or county?" As Juan mentioned, on our website there is a list of state monitor advocates along with regional monitor advocates and information about the national monitor advocate team. We're happy to – if you were to contact any one of us, we are happy to direct you further, but that person to start out with would be your state monitor advocate listed in that directory.

And the next question is, "Where do we find these taskforces?" Jorge or Juan, would you like to take that?

MR. ACERO: I can take it.

MS. ARABANDI: Yeah.

MR. ACERO: In short. Well, really every community I think in every – in – across the United States has rape crisis centers and homeless shelters and organizations that work with those agencies. That's where the taskforces would be. It's connecting with them and the work that they're doing and how much are they expanding. The federal government has been providing grants to allow, for example, a focus on human trafficking for some homeless shelters, and other ways of – other organizations as well have been providing grant money.

So I really believe that just by – if you're not already in contact with coalitions that assist rape victims and survivors of trauma, of sexual harassment, and so on, that's where to start. Those are the taskforces. And then there might be something in your own state government that you might not be aware.

Like here in Maine now, we do have the state commission on sexual violence – on sexual harassment and domestic violence, and on that commission, for example, we have people that are attorneys, that are members of other organizations that help victims, and we have actual – we also have victims as members, survivors and they provide a great insight. And so it's just doing a little bit of research in your state and in your community and making contact with those organizations you find.

MS. ARABANDI: Thank you, Jorge. Juan, do you have anything to add to that?

MR. REGALADO: Well, I hope the – I'm going to put the state monitor advocates on the spot. I hope that question did not come from a state monitor advocate, but if it did not, those folks that asked that question, reach out to your state monitor advocates.

They should be aware of these taskforces within the states, and if they're not, then we definitely can assist in that because they're mainly scattered throughout the state. Mostly members of these taskforces are members from the Department of Justice, the EEOC, regional offices of EEOC, the Department of Justice, our own regional offices. So we can provide that information also as part of our resources that we can put up on the Ag Connection.

MS. ARABANDI: Great. Thank you so much, Juan. And I also want to acknowledge that we have a lot of links and other resources coming in from the audience members, and we're happy to look at these. And at the end we will be posting some of the resources that we talked about as well on the event page. So please come back and take a look at it next week, and we should have more information there.

All right. So wrapping up. We gathered a few resources to help you. The first is the WIOA regulation that we – that was mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. 653.107 (b)(7) talks about outreach worker responsibilities and the kind of training that is supposed to be provided. The next resource is the Training and Employment Guidance Letter that Jorge has mentioned about human trafficking, the role of the public workforce system in the delivery of services and referrals to victims of trafficking.

So for those of you who talked about how would we go about doing this, perhaps this would be a good place to start as well. We will also be posting information about the MOU, the memorandum of understanding TEGL that is set to come out very, very soon, which connects state monitor advocates with the National Jobs – Farmworker Jobs Program grantees and provides co-training and cross-training and professional development and things.

Towards the end of this we also have our websites. The monitor advocate system and the Farmworker Jobs Program would be found at the same site. And you'll also find a link to Agricultural Connection that contains news stories and events related to the farmworker community. If you haven't done so already, please subscribe to it to get the latest information.

And finally, this is the contact information for our speakers. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions. It's been a pleasure to moderate this webinar, and thank you for being a great audience. I'm going to turn it back to you, Jon.

(END)