



# Computers and Connectivity in Farmworker Housing

## Evaluation Report

September 2018

### Overview

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) is a non-profit organization that works with young people to improve the lives of farmworkers. During the 2018 season, SAF secured funding from the North Carolina Farmworker Health Program to provide computers and Wi-Fi hotspots at four labor camps to increase access to resources and to facilitate communication with families back home to positively impact the mental health of the farmworkers.

### Computers and Connectivity Project

In May and June of 2018, SAF installed a desktop computer with Spanish language keyboard, Wi-Fi hotspot, headphones and splitters, and a lock and trained the farmworkers on how to operate the computers and utilize the uploaded resources. Resources included occupational health videos, employee rights videos, English as a Second Language materials, and the Conectate Carolina app for information on local resources. Workers also learned how to connect to their families through Facebook or WhatsApp. Each camp received a computer manual/book in Spanish and created a group charter to address how to use and share the computer. Additionally, SAF interns made two visits per camp to conduct theater and documentary activities and discussions about mental health and computer use with about 115 farmworkers.



Desktop Computer at a camp in Roxboro, North Carolina

### Evaluation

SAF contracted with an external evaluator with the main goals of the evaluation to:

1. Improve the design and implementation of behavioral health and technology interventions with farmworkers
2. Assess the impact of the intervention on farmworkers (e.g., access to resources and communication with family)
3. Build evaluation capacity among SAF staff and Into the Field health fellows

Four focus groups were held August - September of 2018 (approximately two months after the computers had been installed) with 36 male farmworkers. Participants were all from Mexico and Spanish speaking with the majority between the ages of 20 and 40. For comparison, we conducted a focus group at one additional camp that did not participate in the project, but had access to Wi-Fi. The focus groups were facilitated by SAF's Into the Field fellows, who were trained by the evaluator. SAF staff and partner agency staff assisted with notetaking. To document which computer applications and resources were used most by the farmworkers, we conducted an activity using sticky dots in which participants voted for their most utilized programs. The focus groups were audio recorded and analyzed by the evaluator and presented to SAF staff to interpret the findings and discuss implications for future programming.



Bigger words indicate that that resource was voted most used with sticky dots during the focus groups. <https://www.wordclouds.com/>

## Results

Among those surveyed, 83% used the computer and 94% used the Wi-Fi from their phones and most used both.

22

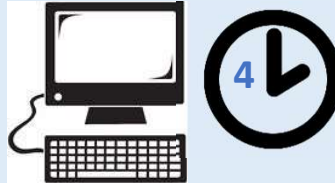
Attended the computer training



Among  
the 35  
surveyed

29

Used the desktop computer



An average of 3.8 hours per week

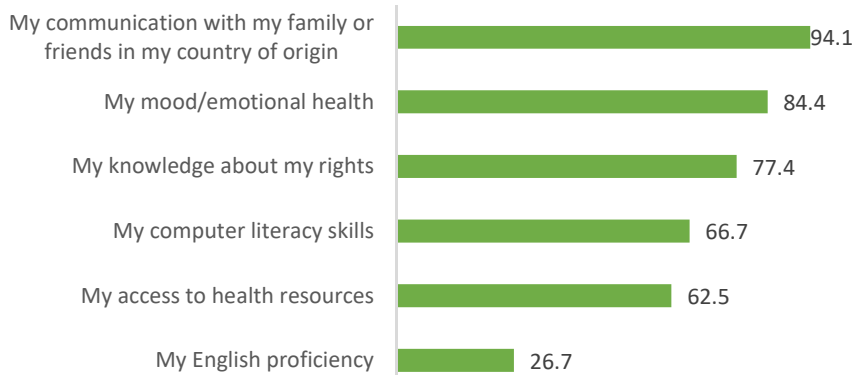
33

Used the Wi-Fi hotspot with their phones



An average of 10.6 hours per week

### How much did having a computer improve?



Percent that answered a lot or some when asked to rate each item's helpfulness on a scale from none, a little, some, or a lot. **94% said that the computer helped a lot or some with communication back home.**

### How did you feel to having a computer and Wi-Fi at your camp?

"You can say the Internet is the only form of entertainment. Because you come back from work and you don't do anything."

Focus group participant In Dunn, NC

"When you're on the computer you forget about work."

Focus group participant In Roxboro, NC

### Challenges

- Several farmworkers missed the computer training or expressed wanting to use certain resources but not knowing how.
- The hotspots were limited to 10 devices, though more than 10 farmworkers lived in the labor camps.
- When many cell phones (10) were connected to the hotspot, the connection was slow.

### What programs or resources were used the most?

"When we had free time, we would gather here to watch movies instead of each person shutting themselves in their room."

Focus group participant In Roxboro, NC

"I use it a lot to call my little one [who is two years old]. I can see him with WhatsApp or [Facebook] Messenger. With my mom... with all my family."

Focus group participant In Dunn, NC

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The Computers and Connectivity program was well received by all of the farmworkers interviewed and they most appreciated the ability to connect their phones to Wi-Fi to communicate with family members and friends at home. To improve the program in the future, the following is recommended:

- Prepopulate the computers with Spanish language websites, applications, and videos. Provide more interactive ESL resources with a broader range of vocabulary. Consider providing a table or desk for the computer.
- Schedule more than one training to reach workers and provide more follow-up to troubleshoot problems.
- Find a feasible technical solution to allow multiple devices to connect to Wi-Fi without slowing down the connection. Consider limiting streaming and downloading to less popular usage hours.