

## Ability Solutions for Agricultural Communities

### Mental Health Afflictions in Agricultural Communities

Mental health afflictions include anything that can impact thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors. This part of health can progressively worsen because it can go unnoticed as a stress of normal everyday work and home duties. Mental health is an important topic that affects everyone.



Source: Lumen Learning

Farmers, ranchers and farmworkers are at a higher risk to have their mental health impacted because agriculture is consistently one of the most stressful occupations in the U.S. Agricultural workers are constantly faced with factors that are out of their control like weather, pests, changing produce market prices, fluctuating interest rates and more recently, novel viruses. This business can add a lot of pressure and stress to a farmer, especially when the farm has been in a family for generations. The thought of losing the family land, their legacy, and income can add additional stress that can lead to changes in behavior.

Changes in behavior could include: having low/no energy, eating or sleeping too little or too much, substance use/abuse, activities that used to bring joy no longer do, etc. Isolating oneself is another behavior to look out for because it could make it that much more difficult to reach out for help and allow others see warning signs of someone struggling with their mental health.

It is important for farmers to work towards a positive mental health so they can work safely and provide for their families. Helping mental wellness can start with getting enough sleep, getting some exercise in and seeking professional help when needed. Mental and behavioral health affects not just the farmer but also their families. Families can be one of the best sources of resilience but if the mental health of one family member is suffering, this can impact the whole family.

### How can California AgrAbility help?

California AgrAbility staff is trained in mental health first aid to be able to prepared to aid farmers and farmworkers if needed. Program representatives work closely with community clinics and programs providing mental health respite and behavioral health services. California AgrAbility works collaboratively with these providers to help facilitate an understanding of farm culture and the needs of farm families.



Source: Parenting for Professionals

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**Ability Tools**  
Ability Tools connects Californians with disabilities to assistive technology devices, tools and services to make life easier.

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## What can I do to help someone I know is struggling with their mental health?

When we think of first responders or first aid we often think of CPR or calling 911, but sometimes first aid starts with mental health first aid, an informed community member can make a difference. Start the Conversation: Ask a loved one or friend if they have had thoughts of suicide? It is important to talk to someone before it's too late. Below are some resources that provide information related to mental health support resources. Resources include trainings that you can attend to learn about symptoms of a mental illness and how to respond to these signs. Suicide prevention is key and one question could save a life.

### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)  
(703) 524-7600

NAMI is a grassroots advocacy group founded in 1979 by family members of people diagnosed with mental illness. With over 1,000 NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates, their peer-led mental health education programs, in person support groups and online discussion groups offer an accessible path for loved ones to know the steps to take if a loved one is showing symptoms of a mental health condition.



### Rural Health Information Hub

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/farmer-mental-health>

RHIhub is an online resource committed to aiding healthcare in rural communities. They provide information on the latest news, resources, funding, data and opportunities, and rural health projects in all 50 states. RHIhub has increased efforts to include more dedicated pages to mental health and behavioral health topics that greatly affect the farming community.



### Western Region Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP)

[www.farmstress.us](http://www.farmstress.us)  
Farm Aid Line: 1-800-FARM-AID  
(1-800-327-6243)

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

WRASAP is comprised of lead agencies representing 13 states and 4 territories. High levels of stress have been present in agricultural communities, and with the economic turmoil associated with COVID-19, this program provides access to the resources needed, when it's needed, for farm families. The program is rooted the principle of working together to cultivate rural resilience for all, including farmers, ranchers, and agriculture workers as they navigate increasing stress.



### Mental Health First Aid

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>

Mental Health First Aid is a national program, created in 2001, that offers courses on mental health and substance abuse problems. These trainings introduce service providers and community members with the skills to initially help someone going through a crisis.

The Mental Health First Aid certifications are skills-based trainings that teach and allow trainees to practice how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse.



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[nifa.usda.gov/program/agrability](http://nifa.usda.gov/program/agrability)

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CalAgrAbility serves farm and ranch families affected by disability and illness protecting the quality of life and preserving livelihoods.

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