

Regional Collaboration: Seeking Sustainability + A National Demonstration The Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN)

FRSAN: The Basics

- Authorized in The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (i.e., The Farm Bill)
- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to make competitive grants to support cooperative programs between state Extension services and nonprofit organizations
- Each FRSAN shall provide stress assistance programs to individuals engaged in farming, ranching and other agricultural-related occupations

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FRSAN: The Basics (cont.)

- Funds shall be awarded to initiate, expand or sustain programs that provide professional agricultural behavioral health counseling and referral for other forms of assistance as necessary through farm telephone helplines and websites
- Make available community education, support groups, outreach services and activities, and home visits to deliver assistance in situations in which a farm resident is homebound

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FRSAN: The Basics (cont.)

- Appropriation of about \$5 million for FY10 considered plausible
- Initially phase in seven AgriWellness states, plus possibly 2-3 additional with eventual expansion to all agricultural areas of the country
- AgriWellness was leading proponent and Coalitions in the 7 states were instrumental in its passage

Case for FRSAN

- Prevalence of suicide, depression, work-related injuries, other social pathologies, is higher in agricultural populations
- This is significantly due to stress; stress driven by financial difficulties and weather-related disasters
- Current economic conditions underscore need for FRSAN as part of safety net for agricultural producers and workers

Case for FRSAN: Health Need

- The suicide rate of male agricultural people in the U.S. in the late 1990s: 33.3 per 100,000
- The fatality rate of the entire U.S. agricultural population in 2006: 30 per 100,000
- The fatality rate of farmers involved in crop and animal production in 2006: 25.2 per 100,000

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Case for FRSAN: ROI Perspective

- ERS estimated that the average farmer would earn \$83,622 in 2007
- The average farmer who completes suicide is a male in his late 50s who would have approximately 15 more productive years if he remained alive
- It can be estimated that over a 15 year period a farmer suicide results in the loss of \$1,254,330

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Case for FRSAN: National Occupational Research Agenda

- Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry Sector Council Agenda*
 - Intermediate Goal 5.5 – Develop and promote adoption of effective interventions to enhance psychological well-being of workers and to minimize the adverse effects of stressful agricultural working conditions (e.g., economic forces, weather and isolation)
 - Action step 5.5.3 – Develop, implement and evaluate culturally appropriate educational and outreach programs for promoting psychological well-being of agricultural producers, farm workers and their families. Involve agricultural workers in their development and delivery

*Adopted, December 2008

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Case for FRSAN: What If?

- Since initiation of agricultural safety and health centers, AgrAbility and other initiatives in the 1990s, farming-related injuries have declined 35%
- Would the suicide rate of farmers decline if the FRSAN is available everywhere?

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Two-pronged Strategy to Secure Appropriation from Current Congress

- Sen. Herbert Kohl (WI), Chair of Subcommittee on Agricultural Appropriations, asked to submit an appropriations bill
- USDA asked to include program in its budget request

More on Advocacy Dimension

- AgriWellness director and staff produce promotional messages and media coverage
- AgriWellness delegation met in late January with key Congress members, and HHS and Ag Dept leaders.
- AgriWellness President Charlie Griffin does follow-ups in Washington, DC,
- Powerful Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley sends a "Dear Colleague" member in support of this measure

Plausible Results

- In FY10 (starts just 3 months from now) a minimum of \$165,000, and possibly a much larger figure could begin to flow to states to support initiatives recommended by state coalitions
- Initiatives started as pilots under state priority project funding could gain longer-term stability and target/customize to needs

Resources

- ROI for Nonprofits by Tom Ralser Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2007.
- Rural Healthy People 2010: A Companion Document to Healthy People 2010 by L.D. Gamm, L.L. Hutchison, B.J. Dabney and A.N. Dorsey (Eds). College Station, TX: the Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, 2003.
- Hope in the Face of Challenge: Innovations in Rural Healthcare by T.D. Rowley. Kansas City, MO: National Rural Health Association, 2004.

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