

# MSHS Supplement to the National Agricultural Worker's Survey Brief 1: Household Complexity of MSHS-Eligible Families

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# MSHS Supplement to the National Agricultural Worker's Survey Brief 1: Household Complexity of MSHS-Eligible Families

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Submitted to:

Wendy DeCoursey, Ph.D., Project Officer

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation  
Administration for Children and Families  
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# Research Brief

## MSHS Supplement to the National Agricultural Worker's Survey Brief 1: Household Complexity of MSHS-Eligible Families

In recent years, the body of research focused on the experiences of children and families eligible for early care and education through Head Start programs has grown substantially.<sup>1</sup> Despite these advancements, however, few studies have examined [Migrant and Seasonal Head Start \(MSHS\)](#)<sup>2</sup> programs and the farm-worker families they serve. MSHS programs provide child development services to migrant and seasonal families while parents engage in difficult and often dangerous agricultural work. Just like other Head Start programs, MSHS offers a variety of resources, including early education, medical and dental care, nutritional services, parental involvement activities, and mental health services.

In an effort to better understand the MSHS-eligible population and address the obstacles and barriers to accessing MSHS services that families face, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families recently co-sponsored "Migrant and

Seasonal Supplement to the National Agricultural Workers Survey – Report II," which presents data from the 2007-2011 National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS). The Supplement Report sorts through the larger NAWS sample, identifies MSHS-eligible families, and establishes regional and national estimates on a wide variety of descriptive information, including the childcare access, parent backgrounds, and family characteristics of MSHS-eligible households.

This research brief first confirms the eligibility requirements that the NAWS uses for identifying MSHS-eligible families, and then provides a general overview of the contents within the 2015 MSHS Supplement Report, with a spotlight on the household complexity of MSHS-eligible households. A companion brief examines the language and literacy of MSHS-eligible parents.

### MSHS Eligibility and the NAWS

*The MSHS Supplement Report estimates the population of MSHS-eligible families, who earn at least half of their income through agriculture work, have at least one child six years old or younger, and live below the federal poverty level.*

The MSHS Supplement Report presents estimates of the national and regional populations of MSHS-eligible children and families by approximating the proportion of migrant and seasonal farmworkers who meet three MSHS eligibility requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). *Child and Family Development Research*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/dcfdfy2014\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/dcfdfy2014_annual_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Boss, Jennifer. "Migrant Head Start Services for Infants and Toddlers." Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Early Head Start. Head Start Bulletin #69*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from: [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/for-families/Everyday%20Parenting/Parents%20as%20Teachers/edudev\\_art\\_00213\\_072505.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/for-families/Everyday%20Parenting/Parents%20as%20Teachers/edudev_art_00213_072505.html)

The eligibility requirements are that farmworker families have (1) at least one child under the age of six, (2) more than 50 percent of their income earned from agricultural work, and (3) a total income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level for their household size. MSHS enrolls children from birth through age five, offering early education to low-income migrant and seasonal families until children reach the age of mandatory school attendance. MSHS defines farm work as “agricultural work that involves the production and harvesting of tree and field crop.”<sup>3</sup> For the Supplement Report, the NAWS team uses several years of survey data on all farmworkers (2007-2011) to gather a large enough sub-sample of MSHS-eligible respondents, which supports an estimation of values for MSHS-eligible farmworkers nationally. Thus, the Supplement Report describes all MSHS-eligible farmworkers, including both those who have received MSHS services and those who have not.

## The 2015 MSHS Supplement Report on MSHS-Eligible Families

*In addition to enumerating national and regional populations, the Supplement Report describes characteristics of MSHS-eligible children and families and, for comparison purposes, migrant and seasonal families who have at least one child under age 6 and live above the poverty level. The report covers a variety of topics on childcare access, parent backgrounds, and family characteristics.*

The Supplement Report describes the following on childcare: the frequency with which families utilize different types of childcare (e.g., parental care, relative care, or center-based care); their reasons for

selecting that option; where children stay while parents work; the number of types of care that families utilize; which they use most often; their childcare preferences; and knowledge of, perceptions about, and barriers to accessing MSHS.

With regards to parents’ backgrounds, the Supplement Report describes their language skills, in both English and Spanish. It covers parents’ educational experiences (i.e., the highest grade that they have completed and whether they attend adult classes); the number of years that they have resided in the U.S. and their country of birth; and the number of employers that they have had in the past 12 months. The 2015 Supplement Report describes parents’ health and health care access, including markers of mental health such as rates of depressive symptoms and parents’ difficulty being away from family. Parent and child health insurance and parent injury history are also explored, and the report estimates the percentage of MSHS-eligible parents who are exposed to pesticides while at work.

Finally, family characteristics included in the Supplement Report include the following: household complexity, which covers the number of relatives and children who live within the economic household of respondents (including those who are not part of the respondent’s immediate family); household income; families’ receipt of social and educational services; and dwelling characteristics (e.g., number of bedrooms). In sum, the Supplement Report relies on parent reports to describe the childcare access, parent backgrounds, and family characteristics of MSHS-eligible families and higher-income migrant and seasonal families. In total, the Supplement Report offers rich demographic information on the families that MSHS programs seek to serve.

<sup>3</sup> Eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance in Head Start, Definitions, 45 CFR § 1305.2 (2007). Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1305/1305.2%20Definitions..htm>.

## Brief 1 Highlight: Household Complexity of MSHS-Eligible Families

*In order to provide information that is relevant to the unique experiences of MSHS-eligible families, the Supplement Report captures a variety of household features related to demographics, occupancy, and dwelling composition. This section focuses on three main areas of household complexity: number of children of various ages; size of 'economic household' (i.e. the number of residents who share expenses with and/or are dependents of the respondent); and number of additional residents who are not members of the 'economic household'.*

### Number of Children by Age in MSHS-Eligible Families

*MSHS-eligible families tend to have an additional child who is 6-17 years of age and they often have at least two preschool-aged children.*

As Table 1 illustrates, MSHS-eligible families tend to have multiple children, and the majority (68 percent) have two or more. The majority of migrant and seasonal families with higher incomes (61 to 69 percent) also tend to have two or more children.

**Table 1: Frequency of Number of Children in the Household**

	Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
1 child in household	28%	39%	28%
2 or more children in household	68%	61%	69%
Children who do not reside in household	4% <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>b</sup>	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between the number of children living in farmworkers' households and income group.

<sup>a</sup> Estimate has relative standard errors between 31 and 50 percent should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>b</sup> Estimates with relative standard errors greater than 50 percent are not shown.

As Table 2 shows, on average, seven out of 10 MSHS-eligible families also have a child between the ages of 6 and 13, and two out of 10 have a child older than age 13. Four out of 10 have an additional child younger than age 6. Both the MSHS-eligible families surveyed and their higher-income counterparts are more likely to have an additional child of elementary school age (ages 6-13) than either another younger or older child.

**Table 2: Number of Additional Children Reported in ‘Economic Household’**

Average Number of Other Children in Farmworker Households with one Child Younger than Six Years	Family Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
One Child younger than six years	1.0	1.0	1.0
Additional children younger than six	0.4	0.2	0.2
Children ages 6 to 13 years	0.7	0.6	0.7
Children ages 13 to 17 years	0.2	0.1	0.2
Total children ages 6 to 17 years	0.9	0.7	0.9

Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence did not indicate a significant relationship between the number of additional children reported in ‘economic household’ and income group.

### Size of MSHS-Eligible Families’ Economic Household

*One in five MSHS-eligible families has six or more relatives living in the household.*

Supplement Report data also highlight the size of migrant and seasonal farmworker families. The average total number of relatives in MSHS-eligible households is 4.3 people, while the average number for both higher-income groups is 4.1 people (Table 3). The majority of respondents live with a spouse; eight out of 10 MSHS-eligible respondents and nine out of 10 of the higher-income respondents reside with their spouses. On average, MSHS-eligible families have 2.4 children and higher-income migrant and seasonal families have 2.0-2.1 children.

**Table 3: Average Number of Relatives in the Household**

Average Number of Relatives Reported in Farmworker Households	Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
All Relatives	4.3	4.1	4.1
Spouse	0.8	0.9	0.9
All Children	2.4	2.0	2.1
Grandchildren	– <sup>a</sup>	0	0
Parents of Farmworkers	≤0.1	0	0
Siblings	≤0.1	– <sup>a</sup>	0
Other Relatives	– <sup>a</sup>	0	0

Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence did not indicate a significant relationship between the average number of relatives in the household and income group.

<sup>a</sup> Estimates with relative standard errors greater than 50 percent are not shown.

Graph 1 shows the frequency of various migrant and seasonal family sizes. The data indicate that the percentage of households with 6 or more relatives is 21 percent for MSHS-eligible households. Furthermore, Table 4 shows that 39 percent of MSHS-eligible families have multiple preschool-aged children.

**Graph 1: Frequency of Number of Relatives Reported in the Household**

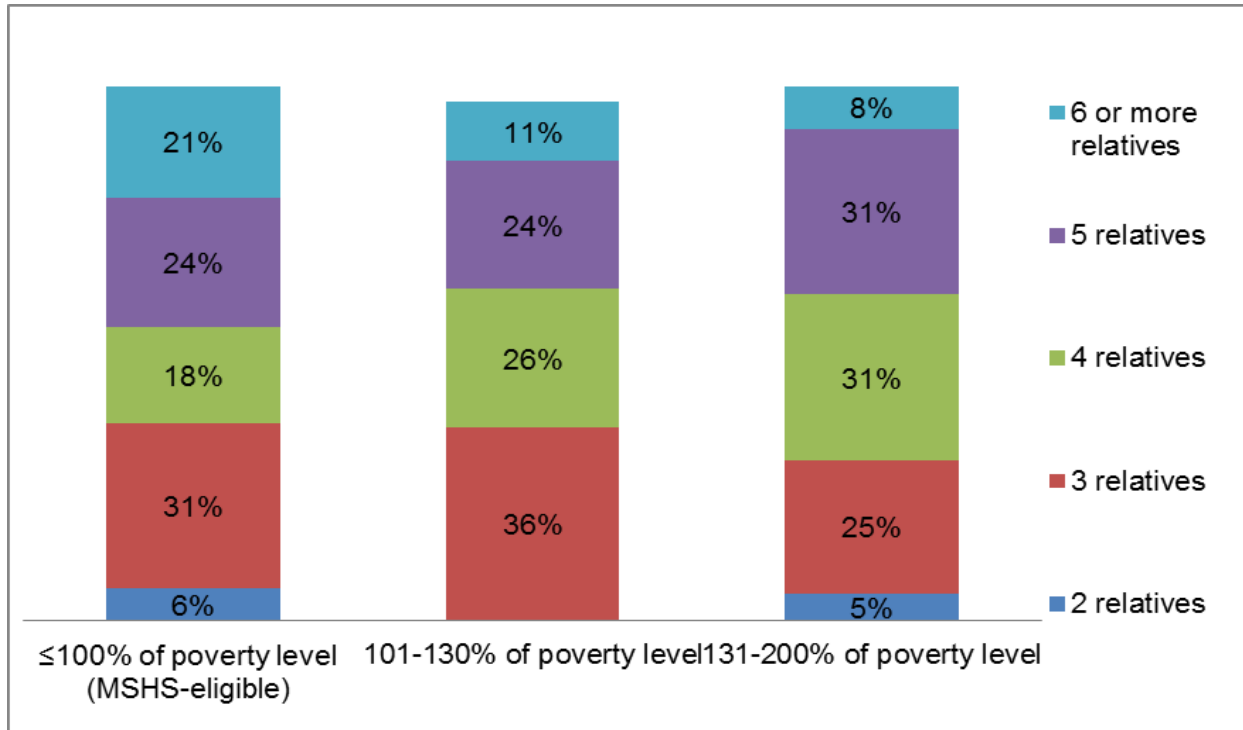


Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between the number of relatives living in farmworkers' households and income group.

<sup>a</sup> Estimates have relative standard errors between 31 and 50 percent and should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>b</sup> Estimates with relative standard errors greater than 50 percent are not shown.

**Table 4: Frequency of Number of Children under Age 6 in the Household**

	Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
Only 1 child under age 6 in household	61%	75%	72%
Multiple children under age 6 in household	39%	25%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between the number of children under age six living in farmworkers' households and income group.

<sup>a</sup> Estimates have relative standard errors between 31 and 50 percent and should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>b</sup> Estimates with relative standard errors greater than 50 percent are not shown.

## Number of Additional Residents

*Migrant and seasonal farmworker families tend to house additional residents who are not part of the ‘economic household’, and their dwellings are generally crowded.*

Farmworker families also discussed the number of additional residents of the dwelling who are not part of the respondent’s economic household (i.e., independent housemates). As Table 5 shows, MSHS-eligible households have an average of 3.2 extra residents who are economically independent. Households earning 101-130 percent and 131-200 percent of the poverty level also have an average of 2.4 and 2.2 additional housemates, respectively. These individuals may be relatives. For example, MSHS-eligible families report that they live with an average of 1.9 relatives under age 17 who are independent of the economic household (e.g., nieces and nephews).

**Table 5: Average Number of Economically-Independent Residents**

	Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
Number of additional people living in household	3.2	2.4	2.2
Non-relatives 18 years or older	0.6	0.5 <sup>a</sup>	0.3
Non-relatives 17 years or younger	0.4 <sup>a</sup>	0.8	0.5 <sup>a</sup>
Relatives 18 years or older	1.7	1.3	1.6
Relatives 17 years or younger	1.9	1.6	1.0

Table N = 626 respondents who reported at least one additional individual residing at their living unit. The chi-square test of independence did not indicate a significant relationship between the average number of economically-independent residents and income group.

<sup>a</sup> Estimates with relative standard errors between 31 and 50 percent should be interpreted with caution.

Migrant and seasonal farmworker households across income levels are crowded. As Table 6 illustrates, MSHS-eligible families have homes with, on average, 2.5 bedrooms and 1.3 bathrooms—similar amenities to the homes of families earning 101-130 percent of the poverty level (2.6 bedrooms and 1.3 bathrooms) and those earning 131-200 percent of the poverty level (2.7 bedrooms and 1.4 bathrooms). The Supplement Report also notes that MSHS-eligible families have an average of 5.5 people sleeping in their homes, while both groups of respondents from higher-income households have an average of 4.9 people.



**Table 6: Average Number of Rooms in Household Dwelling**

How many of the following do you have in your current living quarters (dwelling)?	Household Income Level		
	≤100% of poverty level (MSHS-eligible)	101-130% of poverty level	131-200% of poverty level
Bedrooms	2.5	2.6	2.7
Bathrooms	1.3	1.4	1.5
Kitchens	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other Rooms	1.2	1.2	1.2
Average number of people sleeping in (all) rooms	5.5	4.9	4.9

Table N = 1,736. The chi-square test of independence did not indicate a significant relationship between the average number of rooms in a household dwelling and income group.

### Implications for Programs

In sum, the NAWS MSHS Supplement Report offers a nuanced picture of migrant and seasonal farmworkers' households. Respondents generally reported having a spouse, at least one additional child, who was most often between the ages of 6 and 13, as well as multiple economically-independent residents. Programs and staff can consider the information on household complexity included in this brief when individualizing their approaches to families. Understanding MSHS-eligible families' household situation can inform considerations of family needs, risks and resources. For example, given that MSHS-eligible families are likely to have at least one child in the elementary school age range, establishing a plan for supporting families' engagement in the older children's education may be one approach to strengthening their overall skills for educational engagement. Perhaps the complexities of transporting children in two distinct educational systems pose a prohibitive obstacle to enrolling in MSHS for parents. While it is no substitute for having conversations with families to better recognize their specific needs and experiences, the type of information that the MSHS Supplement Report presents may enhance programs' capacity to serve communities.

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**Author: Andrew Keefe**

**Submitted to:**  
**Wendy DeCoursey, Ph.D., Project Officer**

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