



On the Cutting Edge with Farm/Ranch Families with Disabilities



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Objectives

Abstract: Agriculture and mining have the highest fatality and disability rates in the U.S. The Colorado AgrAbility Project provides information, education, and service to farm/ranch families with disabilities. A five-year applied research study documents increased knowledge, consumer satisfaction, attitudinal change, behavioral change, and tax dollars support levels.

Brief Explanation of Session

A creative educational strategy that works with farm/ranch families with disabilities is the Colorado AgrAbility Project. Staying on the cutting edge in times of diminished resources is an issue not only for Extension specialists, but also for farm/ranch families with disabilities. The Project provides family life and assistive technology information, education, and service to assist in adapting to disabilities. So what? A five-year applied research study shows positive changes in Extension workshop participants' reported knowledge gained, consumer satisfaction levels, improved attitudes, improved behaviors, and tax dollars support levels. Colorado AgrAbility educational workshops are effective both with groups of farm/ranch families with disabilities and with professionals who work with them. The Colorado AgrAbility Project is unique in the nation in its creative strategy that integrates Family Life issues with engineering adaptations. It was born out of a 25% reduction in funding and diminished resources. Innovative partnerships between Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Easter Seals Colorado (ESC), USDA, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc. have resulted in \$1,020,500 increased funding, 3 new positions, new AgrAbility materials, and improved well being for Colorado farm/ranch families with disabilities.

What Is the Problem?

Farm and ranch families are at risk. Farming, ranching, and mining are among the most dangerous occupations in the U.S.

Justification

Research is needed to determine how effective Colorado AgrAbility workshops are with farmers and ranchers with disabilities and with professionals who work with them.

Objectives

The objectives are to:

1. Report two years of program evaluation results with both groups of farmers and ranchers and groups of professionals.
2. Report whether 70% of participants report increased knowledge, consumer satisfaction, attitudinal and behavioral changes, and tax dollars support levels.

Methods

To integrate engineering and human relationship aspects of adapting to agricultural disabilities, the first author offered 14 half-day morning workshops to groups of farm/ranch families with disabilities and 14 afternoon workshops to groups of professionals who work with them. The workshops provided over 600 adaptive ideas and resources for farmers and ranchers to use. The workshops also provided information to enhance producers' skills for supporting, listening to, affirming, and referring to appropriate professionals their peers and family members with high stress, anger, and depression levels. In 1998 CSUCE offered 8 workshops in 4 locations. In 1999 CSUCE offered 20 workshops in 10 locations.

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Results

The number of educational workshop participants rose from 30 professionals plus 3 farmers and ranchers the first year in eight workshops to 36 professionals plus 19 ranchers and farmers with disabilities and their family members the second year in 18 workshops. Referrals to Easter Seals Services from the educational workshops rose from 0 the first year to 9 the second year.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the educational workshops, six outcome objectives were written—70% of participant respondents will report:

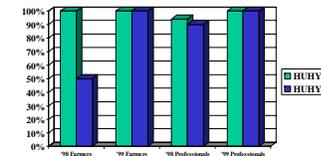
1. Increased knowledge levels.
2. That they plan to use the information presented in the programs.
3. Increased consumer satisfaction levels.
4. Improved attitudinal changes as a result of participation in the workshops.
5. Improved behavioral changes as a result of participating in the workshops.
6. That they want their tax dollars to continue to support AgrAbility programs.

All workshop participants were asked to complete self-report, paper-and-pencil pre-test surveys at the end of their three-hour workshops. The theory is that adults take in information during workshops, and knowledge gained can be assessed immediately. But it takes time to change attitudes and eventually behaviors. Post-test surveys, therefore, were mailed out to all workshop participants six to eight weeks following the workshops with postage-paid Business Reply Mail envelopes for quick and easy completion and return of the post-test surveys.

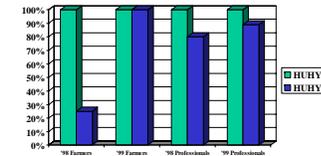
Colorado AgrAbility exceeded all six objectives:

1. 90% to 100% of participant respondents reported increased knowledge levels.
2. 100% of participant respondents reported planning to use the information presented.
3. 89% to 100% of participant respondents reported increased consumer satisfaction levels.
4. 75% to 100% of participant respondents reported improved attitudinal changes.
5. 85% to 90% of participant respondents reported improved behavioral changes (e.g. increases in affirming and complimenting others, listening to others, being a peer counselor, and recognizing high levels of stress, depression, or anger).
6. 75% to 100% of participant respondents reported that they want their tax dollars to continue to support AgrAbility programs.

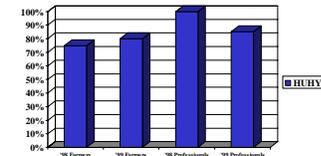
Percent of workshop participants responding that their knowledge levels increased immediately and two months later.



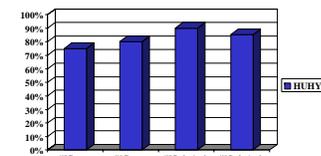
Percent of workshop participants responding that their consumer satisfaction levels with AgrAbility increased immediately and two months later.



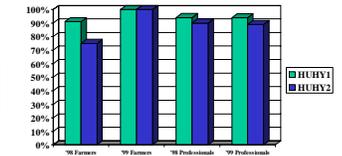
Percent of workshop participants responding that their attitudes improved as a direct result of participating in AgrAbility workshops by two months afterwards.



Percent of workshop participants responding that they did something differently that they considered an improvement as a direct result of participating in AgrAbility workshops by two months afterwards.



Percent of workshop participants responding that yes, they wanted their tax dollars to continue supporting AgrAbility programs immediately and two months later.



Significance/Use of Results

Colorado AgrAbility educational workshops are effective with both groups of farmers and ranchers who have disabilities and groups of professionals who work with them. Providing educational workshops that integrate healthy relationship with engineering assistive technology information increased referrals to AgrAbility Easter Seals Colorado. County Council can use the results both to help producers by promoting and marketing AgrAbility to producers with physical challenges and disabilities, and to refer them to Easter Seals Colorado for services.

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