

Child Care and Farm Families

All parents are concerned with the safety and well-being of their children. With justification, farm families often express an even greater concern for their children's safety and health because farming is the only business in which children live and play at the work site. Frequently, they are exposed to hazardous machinery, chemicals, and other unsafe situations.

According to the Rivara study (completed in 1997 of data compiled nationally from 1990-1993) an average of 26 children ages 5 and under are killed annually on America's farms. These children are likely to be injured as innocent bystanders when they are accompanying adults or when unsupervised in the work area of a farm. In addition, it is likely that a young child who is injured on the farm will sustain injuries far more severe than would an older child or an adult. Their small size alone, puts them at a far greater risk on the farm.

Child care is one of the factors that will reduce children's exposure to work hazards, therefore, developing child care options for farm families is important. Due to the nature of farming, this can be difficult because:

- Rural isolation often makes transportation difficult.
- Child care may be needed only during peak season.
- During peak seasons, the hours requiring child care may be before and after typical day care service is available.
- Equipment breakdowns and weather changes lead to unanticipated time needs.

The unpredictable seasonal peaks and varied work schedule of farming lead to frustration by parents when trying to plan for child care.

Suggestions for ways to provide child care for your kids include:

- Parents, grandparents, other relatives, and older siblings can take turns watching younger children.
- Set up a baby-sitting cooperative in your area. Rotate the duty of providing day care with other farm families.
- Develop a baby-sitting exchange with neighbors, using the bartering system. For Example: Trade bake goods or garden vegetables for X hours of babysitting.
- Encourage your local child care center to provide flexible hours during peak seasons.
- Hire a baby-sitter to come to your home during peak seasons.

Protect young farm children by providing child care. Prevention could save a life!

