

# IVP IN ACTION CASE STUDY

## Innovative and Culturally Responsive Approach to Suicide Prevention Among Agricultural Workers



University of Hawai'i

The [University of Hawai'i](#) implemented an innovative approach to prevent depression and suicide among farmers by **elevating well-being and resilience through a network of agricultural (ag) resilience navigators**. The ag resilience navigators assisted their ag peers through the shocks, uncertainties, and challenges associated with farming. These navigators are generally also farmers, ranchers, and allied ag producers who have expressed interest in providing leadership and support to their community.

### HIGHLIGHTS

The grant laid the foundation for ongoing collaboration, dialogue, and collective action toward equity and social justice by nurturing relationships, fostering empathy, and empowering individuals.

Trained and certified agriculture (ag) resilience navigators across all islands gained skills in financial well-being and social connection.



95

Farm visits



9

Ag Navigators  
certified

### APPROACH

The University of Hawai'i recruited navigators across all islands (O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i) to undergo training and technical assistance to build skills and confidence to conduct regular farm visits, conduct well-being assessments, and provide resources to farmers. Training on the domains of well-being was provided to help ag navigators conduct assessment "report cards" after each farm visit. The domains of well-being include life satisfaction/meaning and purpose, emotional, financial, physical pain (pain, safety, ergonomics), social connections, diet/nutrition, and sleep. The visits aimed to understand the diversity of needs and current challenges within Hawai'i's agriculture community; they served as a conduit to offer support, social connections, and referrals to services as needed. The project aimed to address the fundamental need for solid relationships and build social/community capital to address the main stressors in farming- financial, work-life balance, and physical and mental health.

### KEY PARTNERS



Department  
of Health



Agricultural  
Workers



Certified  
Therapists



At the conclusion of the one year seed grant, nine ag resilience navigators across all islands (O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i) had been trained and certified, and conducted 95 farm visits. The training included two full-day workshops that focused on financial well-being and social connections. After the final training session, ag workers expressed increased confidence in their ability to conduct check-ins/assessments. However, the navigators felt that a qualitative response format, rather than a quantitative one, would be best to assess the mental health challenges faced by ag workers.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Fostering Connectedness is Key**  
Positive family relationships and emotional support help alleviate challenges associated with agricultural work
- 2 Building Trust is Essential**  
Building trust with agricultural workers is central to doing effective assessments that can lead to appropriate referrals
- 3 Applying Culturally Responsive Approaches Strengthens Bonds**  
Culturally responsive approaches are necessary to build trust and address the unique needs of Ag workers in Hawai'i
- 4 Mentoring Increases Individual Capacity**  
Farmers assisting their peers boosted their own resilience and increased empathy
- 5 Addressing Mental Health Needs Require Partnership**  
Mental health challenges cannot be solved by mental health services alone

## LEARN MORE



In this pre-recorded webinar, Dr. Thao Le from the University of Hawai'i discuss the unique mental health needs of agricultural workers in Hawai'i and how the ag navigator program is making a difference.

Explore more and connect with the ag navigator program at the University of Hawai'i  
<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/sow-well/hawaii-ag-mental-health-mentorship-program/>

