

**Time Coded Interview Log, Community Health Workers in Downstate New York**  
**Interviewee, Mario Fernandez**  
**Interviewers, Aaron Paige and Elinor Levy**  
 Conducted on May 27, 2022

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Time Code Aaron Paige and Elinor Levy

Mario Fernandez

:49		Born in Guatemala in 1964. Came to the U.S. at age 20.
:55	What brought you to the U.S.	It was vacation, kind of. I was studying to be an engineer and came on vacation. His girlfriend (now wife) had family in the U.S. and wanted to visit. He got a Mexican visa (his father worked at the Mexican Consulate). He didn't have the credentials but came anyway. He was a Yankee fan.
		Went to Mexico and after a week decided to cross the border. They got caught by border patrol. They moved to New York from California. Because he didn't receive court notices and was supposed to be deported. Missed the birth of his first daughter. He is the only black mark in the family.
5:14		He loves working with the people but his body is giving out. He could retire but he doesn't want to.
6:51		Works not only for SunRiver but also for Alamo Center. The food pantry gets food and much more.
		Before here he worked in a mental health facility (but it didn't pay enough)
9:21	Job at SunRiver Health	Outreach coordinator, he is able to promote many health and other services. Do well for the community.
10:00		Worked as a forklift operator and then in construction. He came and put windows in the Alamo community center. Then continued to do other

		improvements. Then they offered to hire them.
11:22		It was required that he be a citizen, and able to drive. And be bilingual.
12:30		He tries to solve problems. He bonds with people.
		Even with the pandemic, they have to continue to work. SunRiver health and Alamo community center combined to provide more complete services.
16:53	What does a typical day look like? Outreach work.	Come for food and might stay for other services. Takes calls from the clinic. Picks up food in the pantry. Provide some special food for the kids in the summer. Transport people to appointments and such. Two days of food pantry (although food goes out all week)!
		Lots of people are coming for food now, especially people with no jobs. There is a shortage of food right now. Visa Guys - here on work Visas so they come around.
22:36	How does your work connect to health care? It is all under the umbrella of health care.	I have a guy right now who is alcoholic and about to lose his job and house. He is also diabetic. The other thing is farmworkers need vaccines and tetanus shots.
		Tries to intervene when there is trouble. Now works with the foremen who tried to chase him away in the past.
		Promotes healthy diets. Seltzer water instead of Red Bulls.
		Sometimes puts his job on the line by taking people in the van when he shouldn't.
27:00	Challenging situation.	Right across the street is housing for farmers. This guy had an emergency. There were three guys in the house who called and said this guy needed

		to go to the hospital. They had no car that day. Carried the guy halfway up the road because the truck couldn't make it down a muddy road. They got to the hospital.
	Training in health education and prevention.	Used to work in mental health before he came to Alamo. The women in his family are in the health profession. Gets training all the time. He had to take defensive driving.
		He is always asked to do things like drive to the Mexican consulate. But he has brought the Mexican consulate to the Alamo 5 times. He worked a little on Green Light.
31:30	Who are migrant farm workers?	We work with all sorts of people but the farm workers have some special benefits. He does a lot of transportation to Westchester. He takes the opportunity in the car to talk to people about health and such. Talks about prevention.
33:26	What are some of the primary needs?	Information. With information you can get anywhere. Sometimes they have to pay a taxi to come to the food pantry.
34:52	What are the services provided that people cannot get other places.	They can come here after an appointment at the clinic and get food.
35:33	Do you work in the fields?	They try to bring kits with stuff such as calamine lotion, how to check for tics. Don't drink the red bulls. Lots of alcoholism in the fields.
		Not a lot to do after work. We try to have soccer teams. But often the people work many hours a day.
		Sports (soccer) Pre pandemic soccer. Some bicycles/ they walk. There was a TV room here for a while. Watched the world cup
41:00	Where are the workers from?	Haitians, Cubans, DR, Guatemalans, Salvdorans, Venezuelans, Germans,

		French, etc
		We do healthy. We had a program with a BBQ with no beer, but soda and water. We did AIDS tests and other screenings that day as well.
		Health fairs are on Sundays so everyone comes. The Visa guys (temp workers) and others. Helps with workmans comp.
		There are people who are hear that do not read or write. One guy learned to text because he got a girlfriend.
47:25	Hunting	There are lots of farmworkers who hunt but may not understand the laws. Has to tell the people that this is not a hunting area. Worked at the Met Museum as a waiter and a bartender. Every job got better. Been at Alamo for 15 years
53:00	Can you talk about a family you really helped?	About 5 years ago, a lady from a church(about 75 families in the church) was a single lady with two kids. We could give her 3 Christmas wishes. I wish I was living alone with my kids. The rent for her room was a wish. There was a package with boots and jackets and half the rent for the month. But in the envelope was \$550 and two \$50 certificates to a grocery store. By the next year she had a job.
57	Hoping to go back to preCovid programming	During the worst of the pandemic - I worked alone. We used to do 1,000 pounds every other week. Now it is 3500 pounds a week.
57:20		10 people in Chester, 12 people in Goshen, 22 people in Middletown. They spread the world and the disease to the neighbors.
		People with no papers can't get COVID relief. In one case, Dad died of COVID and the rest of the family didn't have money.

		They don't really take precautions while traveling and they did not test for COVID.
		There used to be a school that the program used but the district took it back.
		He does rent a house to farm workers sometimes but it can be problematic.
1:17:25	What is the ethnic and cultural make up?	Puerto Ricans, Dominicans , Mexicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Belizians, Jamaicans, Colombians, Haitians, Chinese, Koreans, Russians, Poles (some who are growers)
		There is a fungus that get under the nails of the onion packers.
		Worry about getting involved or not getting involved in worker compensation. Or when a worker leaves a rental in disrepair.
1:21:45	Do the Visa guys come back to the same farm every year?	Yes and the migrant farm workers who have a circuit around the country Come back to work by contract at the same farm.
1:22:30	Do you have farms that tend to hire from one country or another?	Yes to reduce cultural clash. About 55 farms in the area. Close to 1200 farm workers in this area alone, pre COVD. About ½ locals and ½ migrant.