

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What should I do in an emergency?

A: You should go to an emergency room or call 911. No other clinics are equipped to handle life-threatening conditions. Emergency rooms will treat you even if you don't have documents or cannot pay. They are always open. You can get care for a serious injury in Vermont without returning to your home country.

Q: Are there migrant-friendly clinics for non-emergency medical or dental care?

A: For medical and dental problems for uninsured adults, the Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC) clinics in Caledonia and Essex Counties may be a good option. All NCHC clinics are very migrant-friendly. They will see workers regardless of documentation, and offer reduced-price care. All the clinic phone numbers, hours, and directions are listed inside.

Q: What if I don't speak English?

A: The NCHC clinics, the Hospital and Emergency Room in St. Johnsbury (NVRH) have Spanish translation available at all times. If you are not offered an interpreter when you arrive, you should ask for one. It is likely your visit may be translated over the telephone or a computer instead of by a live interpreter.

Q: Will my healthcare be affordable?

A: Low-cost medical and dental care is available for migrant workers in Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties. If you qualify, the NCHC clinics will only charge you \$5-\$10 for a medical consultation, and 25% of the total cost of your dental care. The St Johnsbury hospital or emergency room may discount the entire cost of your care, but it is not certain and you may wait several weeks after your visit to learn the final cost. NCHC in Newport does not offer discounted care to undocumented patients at this time.

Q: What is the best place to get medications?

A: If you're given a prescription from the NCHC, ask your doctor about the Community Health Pharmacy (888-669-9017). The CHP mails medications directly to your home. It is NOT necessary to have a credit card—you can pay by check, money order, or cash. Ask for them to print your instructions in Spanish. Most medications cost \$4 for a month's supply.

The pharmacy in the Price Chopper grocery store in

Derby or St. Johnsbury provides most antibiotics and diabetes medications for free. However, pharmacies other than the CHP may refuse to fill prescriptions brought in by employers unless the worker is present.

Q: Will I be asked for documentation?

A: Yes, most clinics will ask you for a social security number and identification. Don't worry if you don't have them! Just say you don't have identification with you. NCHC clinics and the hospital are focused on your health, not on your documents. All of the places in this pamphlet will treat any patient, no matter what their documentation status or ability to pay is.

Q: Is it safe to visit a clinic or the hospital?

A: Clinics and hospitals are very safe places—people there only want to help you. They would never call immigration. You should be most careful while driving. For the most part, immigration will not stop anyone traveling, unless any laws are broken. We recommend you take a car with Vermont license plates and make sure to obey all traffic laws.

Q: How do I get transportation?

A: This may still be the most challenging part of getting health care. A network of volunteer drivers is being established in the NEK. The number to call to inquire about the driving network is 802-524-4480 ext 467. Spanish is spoken. Asking your employer to provide transportation may be still be your best bet.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: For more information available on receiving medical and dental care in your area, go to the Northern Counties Health Care website at <http://www.nchcvt.org/>

or call 1-800-499-9405.

The information available includes a detailed description of the care, services and paperwork required at the NCHC clinics listed in this pamphlet.

Bridges to Health, a project of UVM Extension, can support you in accessing health care services. They have bilingual Migrant Health Promoters: 802-524-4480 ext 467 or 802-748-6009 ext. 376. Leave a message with your name, phone number and reason for your call. They will return your call upon receiving the message.

A Quick Reference Guide: Healthcare Access for Latino Migrant Farm Workers in Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties of Vermont



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You can receive additional copies of this pamphlet by contacting the Champlain Valley AHEC office at (802) 527-1474, feedback@cvahec.org, or at www.cvahec.org. Photo credit: Naomi Walcott-MacCausland.

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How to make a medical appointment

You can call any of the NCHC clinics listed below to make an appointment. It may be easier to have an English-speaker make the appointment. However, you may also say “Spanish” to the receptionist, and wait until a translator is put on the line. This may not work at every clinic. Many of the clinics also offer extended hours during the summer.

Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC)

NCHC is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). This means they serve underserved areas and populations and offer a sliding fee scale for the comprehensive health services that they provide to all community members regardless of income level or insurance status.

NCHC Clinics

Hardwick Area Health Center

802-472-3300, M-Th 7:30-5pm; F 7:30-4pm
4 Slapp Hill Road, Hardwick, VT 05843

Island Pond Health Center

802-723-4300, M,T,TH,F 8-5, W 8-6:30
82 Maple Street, Island Pond Vermont 05846

St. Johnsbury Community Health Center

802-748-5041, M-F, 8-5
185 Sherman Drive, St Johnsbury, VT 05819

Concord Health Center

802-695-2512
M 7:30-5, T 8-5, W 8:30-7, Th/F 8:30-5
201 East Main Street Concord, VT 05824

Danville Health Center

802-684-2275
M 7:30-5, T 8-5, W 8:30-7, Th/F 8:30-5
26 Cedar Lane Danville, VT 05828

How to get low-cost care at NCHC

NCHC clinics offer a “sliding scale” pricing system that may give you a discount on your bill depending on your income and family size. If you qualify for the discount, you may pay as little as \$5 for each consultation. It may take NCHC medical clinics up to a week after your consultation to determine your sliding scale level and the final cost of your visit. If you’d like to know the cost in advance, you should complete the sliding scale paperwork in advance. Other-

wise, you will receive your bill in the mail.

What to bring to an appointment

To apply for the sliding scale, you need to verify your income. You can do this by bringing two or three paycheck stubs or your employer can write a letter stating how much you earn. If you can’t get either of those, the clinic may let you write your income and sign a form. It is also important to know the physical address of your home (not a PO box). You should also bring any medical information you have about yourself. If you take any medications, bring along your pill bottles.

What to expect at your appointment

You should show up 15-20 minutes before your scheduled appointment if its your first appointment at that clinic. Check in at the reception window, where you’ll be given paperwork to fill out. You should have access to an interpreter at this point. Some forms are also available in Spanish. You will then sit in the waiting room until you are called for your consultation. You will first be seen by a nurse who will ask you questions. You will then be seen by a doctor, who may ask the same questions. Make sure to tell your doctor everything that’s bothering you—they can help you with many issues in one visit. Everything you write or tell your doctor is confidential.

Follow-up care and referrals

Before you leave the clinic, make sure you understand what you need to do next. Depending on your illness, the clinic may schedule you for another visit. They will usually give you a card with the date and time of your next appointment. You may be prescribed a medication. Make sure you understand what pharmacy you’ll be getting the medication from.

If you need x-rays or lab tests that are not available at a NCHC clinic, they will send you to diagnostic imaging or the lab (usually within a hospital).

If you are very sick, your doctor may refer you to a hospital which is much larger than a clinic. The hospitals in your area are the St. Johnsbury Hospital (also known as Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital or NVRH), the Newport Hospital (also known as North Country Hospital or NCH) and Copley Hospital in Morrisville. NVRH (1315 Hospital Drive St. Johnsbury) and Copley hospitals (528 Washington Highway, Morrisville) are known to be migrant worker-friendly. The hospital in Newport (189 Prouty Drive, Newport) is on the border with Canada and is not as used to receiving migrant workers.

However, there should always be Spanish interpretation available in the emergency room of all hospitals. If they don’t offer interpretation you should ask to use the phone interpretation service.

The hospital does not have a sliding scale. You will not be told the cost of your visit until after you’ve left. If your bill is more than you can afford, you can apply to have the cost reduced (known as indigent care). You may need to fill out more paperwork and wait several weeks to learn if they reduce your bill.

How to make a dental appointment

There are two NCHC dental clinics. If you have severe pain, they will usually see you within a few days. Appointments for less urgent care may only be available many months into the future. If you would like see a dentist before the next available appointment, ask to be added to their “call list”. Patients on the call list will be notified by phone if an earlier appointment becomes available.

Northern Counties Dental Center

802-472-2260 ; Monday to Friday 7:30-5:30pm
151 North Main Street Hardwick, VT 05843

Island Pond Dental Clinic

802-723-4300 ; M/T/Th/F: 8-5 W 8-6:30.
82 Maple Street Island Pond, VT 05846

During your first visit, the dentist will take x-rays and examine your teeth to determine what work needs to be done. You will usually need to make a second appointment for any procedures. If you have an infection they will prescribe you antibiotics and give you a second appointment to treat the tooth.

NCHC dental clinics have their own sliding scale paperwork. You should bring in paycheck stubs or a letter from your employer. Usually the dental clinic can determine your sliding scale and final bill at the time of your appointment. Migrant workers often only pay 25% of full cost.