



AG WELLNESS/FARM STRESS

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN FARM AND RANCH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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Utah Rural Opioid Consortium – Collaborative Care Model

DISCLOSURES

The Utah Rural Opioid HealthCare Consortium - Collaborative Care Model (UROHC-CCM) is a Rural Communities Opioid Response – Mental and Behavioral Health Program funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

FULL DISCLOSURE!

What I'm not!

- An expert in behavioral healthor Substance Use Disorder.... or Opioid Use Disorder or.....
- An expert in rural health
- A native Westerner
- ~~Living in a rural community~~

What I am!

- Rural at heart
- Nurse
- Researcher
- With well, but often clumsy, intentions



OBJECTIVES:

1. To define farm stress and the unique aspects of agricultural work that contribute to farm stress.
2. To understand the implications of farm stress on physical and mental health, relationships with families and friends, and the health of communities.
3. To identify signs of farm stress.
4. To understand the attitudes and stigma that farmers and ranchers may have that impact their willingness to seek or be receptive to help.
5. To identify resources that are available for farmers and ranchers, their families, and health care professionals.



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Check In



AGRICULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

- Farm and ranch families comprise 2% of U.S. population
- 1 U.S. farmer feeds 169 people here and abroad
- Farmers receive 15 cents out of every retail dollar!

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH NEVADA?

Farming and ranching is
interwoven into rural
Nevada communities

18,902 direct jobs

3,120 farms
(decreased by 9% since
2017)
Average 1,889 acres

Third largest industry
\$960 million output

43% of farmers are
women

Top commodities:
Dairy products
Hay
Cattle & Calves



FARM STRESS



FARM STRESS DEFINED

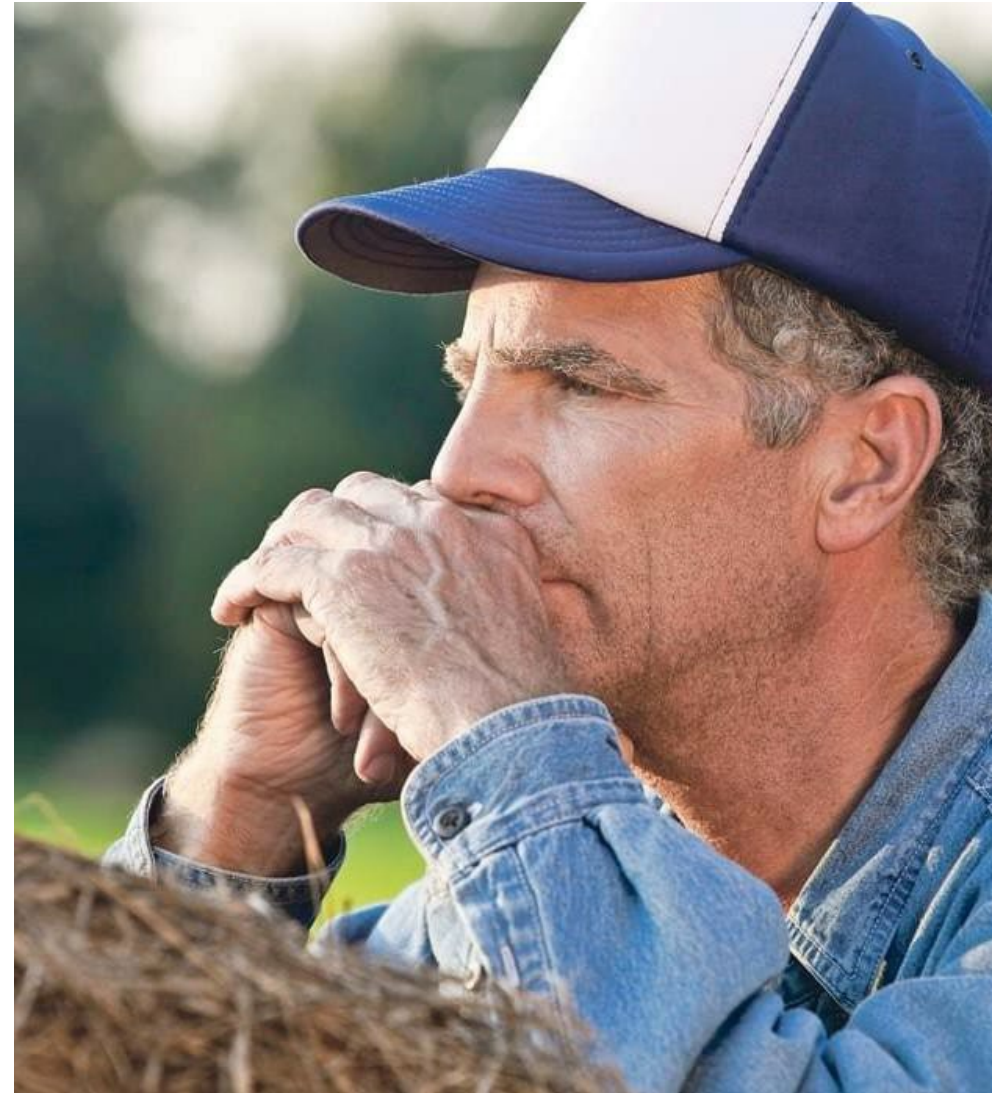
- The stress experienced by farmers/ranchers/agricultural workers and their families because of the agricultural work environment
- Mental, emotional, behavioral, physical and socioeconomic impacts



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FARM STRESS RISK FACTORS

- Factors outside their control
 - Changing weather patterns/weather variability
 - Labor and supply shortages
 - Changing farm policies
 - Loss of livestock or crops
 - Financial (volatile markets, commodity prices)
- Occupational stresses
 - Debt
 - Excessive workload, extreme work conditions
 - Physical labor/injury
 - Pesticide use
- Intergenerational stresses
 - Aging farmers
 - Obligation to continue the family farm/ranch
 - Fear of losing the land



<https://www.films.msstate.edu/series/on-the-farm>

OLDER FARMERS

- Over half of nearly 2 million U.S. farms are operated by persons over 55 years of age
- Average age of U.S. farmers is 58.1 years (57.4 years in Nevada)
 - 38% of farm operators were 65 years and older in 2022
 - Number of older farm operators increased 12.1% from 2017
- 40% of the nation's farmland is owned by farmers 65 years and older



FARM STRESS IN NEVADA

- Perceived Stress Scale: 81% with medium stress
- Top 5 stressors:
 1. production costs
 2. Workload
 3. lack of time
 4. legislative issues related to agriculture
 5. work/family balance
- Nevada ranks 11th in suicide rates
 - In 2023, suicide rate decreased in Clark County and increased in rural southern (26%) and northern counties (36%)

FARM STRESS SIGNS

- Changes in sleep/eating patterns
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Withdrawal from friends and family/or activities
- Aggressive/disruptive behavior
- Increased irritability
- Farm/ranch/livestock care/upkeep
- Change in work routine
- Physical stress symptoms
- Increase in mental and physical health problems/injury

IMPACT OF FARM STRESS

- Mental health:
 - Depressive symptoms are 1.5 – 4.5 times higher than national average
 - Substance use and opioid use disorders may be higher
 - Male suicide rates are 2-3 times higher than national working male average
- Physical health:
 - Increased risk of injury, chronic pain, ADRD, Parkinson's Disease
 - Stress most highly correlates with injury risks
 - Suffer highest fatality risk of any age group in agriculture
- More vulnerable for social isolation
 - Small social networks, more likely to live alone
- Impacts farmers and their families, and ultimately the community
 - Decreased relationship quality (family, community)
 - Often intergenerational

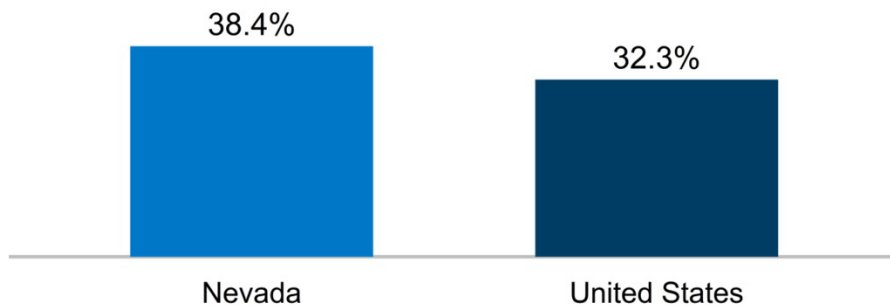
OLDER FARMER SUICIDE

- One study found that almost half of farmer suicide decedents were over 65 years old (Miller et.al. 2022)
 - 44.5% farmer/rancher compared to 16.7% non-farmer/rancher
 - Firearms the most widely used method for all ages
 - Older suicide decedents more likely to be male
 - Older farmer suicide more likely to have physical health problems, experienced a death of family/friend, or eviction/loss of income
 - Less than half of older farmer suicide decedents were married

NEVADA

Higher symptoms of anxiety and/or depression (2023)

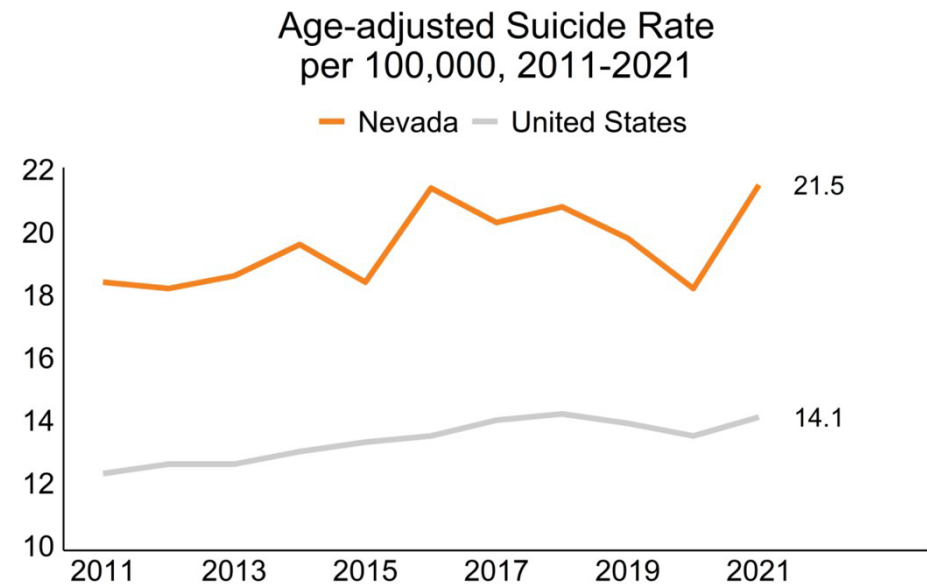
Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder, February 1 to 13, 2023



NOTE: Adults (ages 18+) having symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder were determined based on having a score of 3 or more on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and/or Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.
SOURCE: KFF analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2023

KFF

Age-adjusted suicide rate per 100,000 (2011-2021)



SOURCE: KFF analysis of CDC Multiple Cause of Death 2011-2021 on CDC WONDER Online Database.

KFF

In 2020, all rural and frontier counties in Nevada were classified as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.



Substance Use Disorder in the Agriculture Work Force

Incidence of SUD in farmers and ranchers

- Higher incidence of alcohol consumption than nonfarmers
- Rural areas have higher incidences of opioid misuse
 - Limited data suggest that incidence is equivalent or higher in farmers and ranchers



NCFR Policy Brief, Vol 4 (2); 2019

<https://films.msstate.edu/on-the-farm-v2.html>

Risk of SUD

- The same stressors for farm stress increase risk for SUD
- The hard physical work over long hours and increased risk of injury increase risk of prescription opioid misuse
 - One study reported that 69% of farmers surveyed knew someone using opioids, and 54.3% had used opioids at some time in their life
 - Opioid use deaths for farmers, fisherman, and forestry industries are more than 5 times higher than general population

Farm Town Strong Morning Consult Poll



Farm Town Strong

Morning Consult Poll:

Conducted: October 26-29, 2017

Surveyed: 2,201 Rural Adults

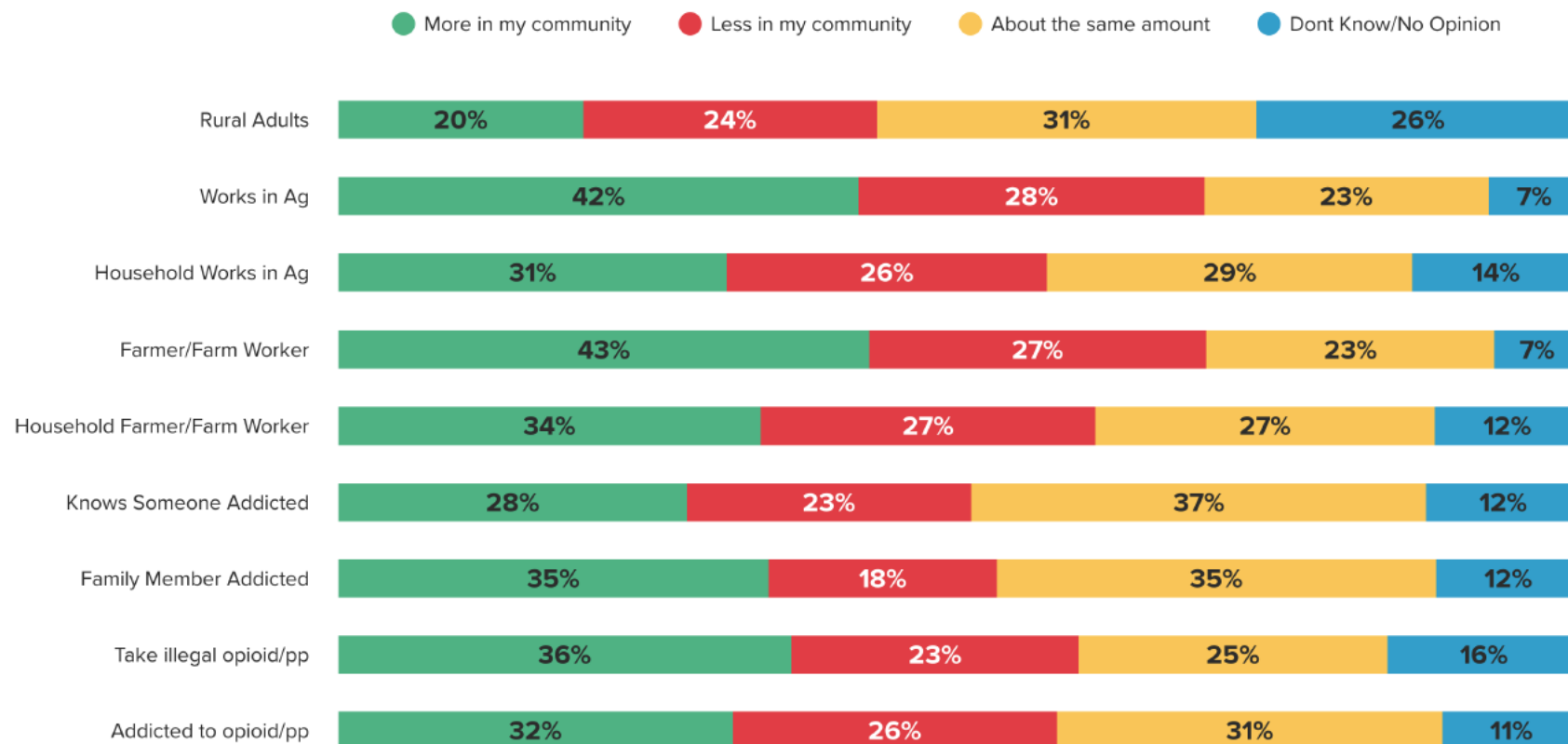
Farmers & Farmworkers Segmented in Reporting



What farmers say about opioid misuse in their communities

Though strong pluralities of farmers, as well as those who work in agriculture, say there *is* more opioid abuse in their communities.

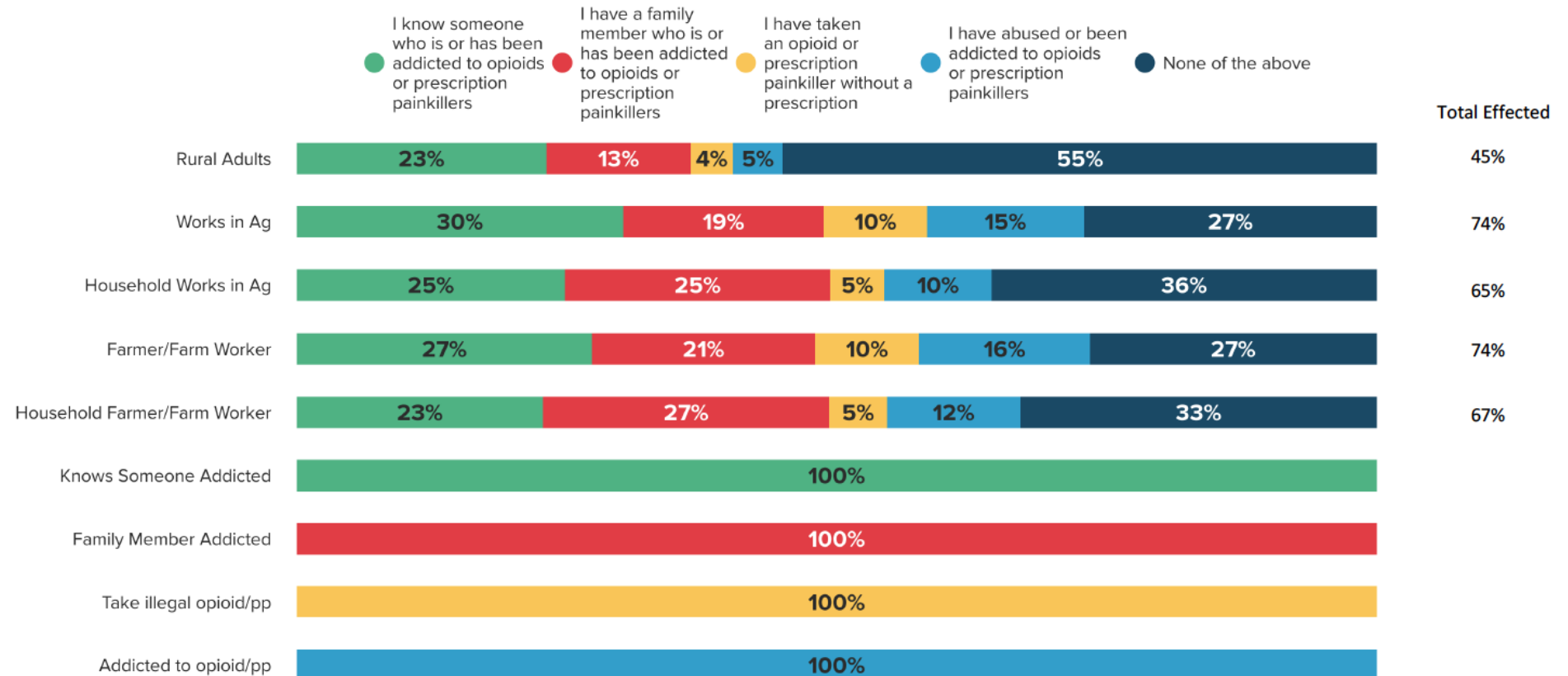
Compared to the rest of the country, would you say there is more opioid abuse in your community, less opioid abuse in your community, or about the same amount?



Farmers have been impacted by opioid misuse

Three in four farmers, farm workers (74%) say they are or have been directly impacted by by opioid abuse.

Which of the following best applies to you?



Access to prescription opioids

Three in four farmers, as well as those who work in agriculture generally, say it would be easy for someone in their community to access a large amount of prescription opioids or painkillers without a prescription.

How easy would it be for someone in your community to access a large amount of prescription opioids or painkillers without needing them for a medical purpose?





Addressing Farm Stress



WHAT CAN WE DO?



Be an active listener – farmers state they are most likely going to talk to family or friends



Be nonjudgemental – show empathy



Encourage those experiencing stress or SUD to reach out to people they trust



Support and educate key family and community about farm stress and coping strategies



Encourage treatment – know your local healthcare and community resources



Advocate for more health care – including behavioral health - resources in rural communities

COPING STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE

- Seek Social support
- Healthy Lifestyle choices
- Mindfulness and relaxation techniques
- Financial management
- Time management

NEVADA AG PRODUCERS' INTEREST IN EDUCATION

Interested in

1. Problem solving
2. Nutrition/cooking
3. Physical activity
4. Succession planning
5. Financial

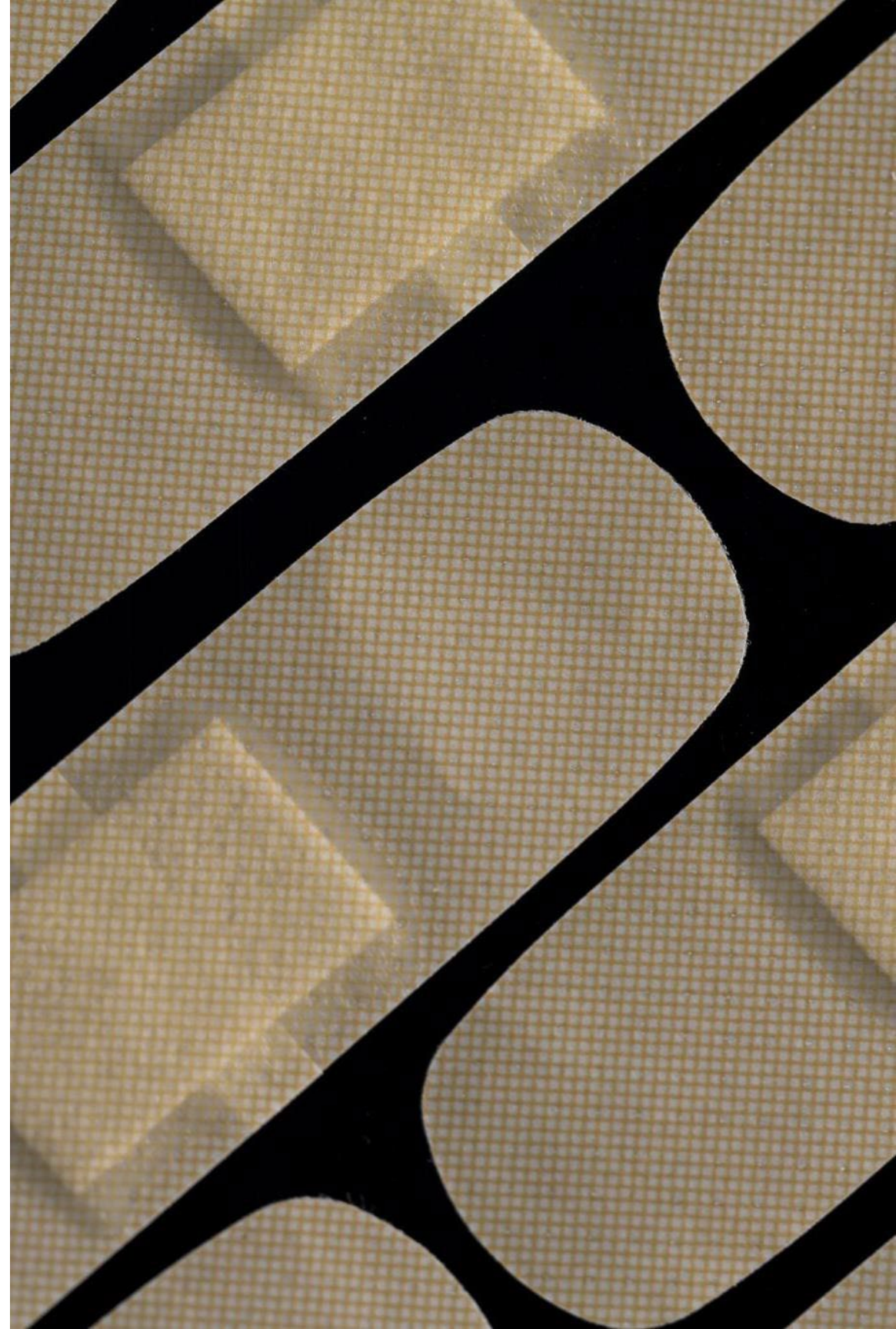
Not interested in

1. Tobacco/marijuana /vaping cessation
2. Grief
3. Support groups
4. Alcohol/drug
5. Career
6. Mental health ☹️

Most interested in learning about these topics online (self-guided) followed by podcast and online webinar or class

ADDRESSING ADDICTION IN PARTICULAR

- More community prevention programs
 - Across ages
- Increased screening (SUD, trauma, mental health) in primary care clinics
- Increased capacity for primary care to provide MAT
- Address and combat stigma



STIGMA

“We’ve got to get farmers to see they are more than their farm. They’re more than the acres that they run, they are more than the livestock that they run.” Nathan Brown, Ohio Farm Bureau

STIGMA AMONGST FARMERS/RANCHERS/ AGRICULTURAL WORKERS – “YOU JUST NEED TO SUCK IT UP”

- Agrarian Imperative
- Expectation to be strong
- Mental health is a weakness

“We hear farmers and farm families that don’t want others in the community to see their truck parked in front of a mental health center. I have met with farmers at a fire station because they did not want their family or their workers to know they were seeking help.” – *Becky Weisman, Therapist*

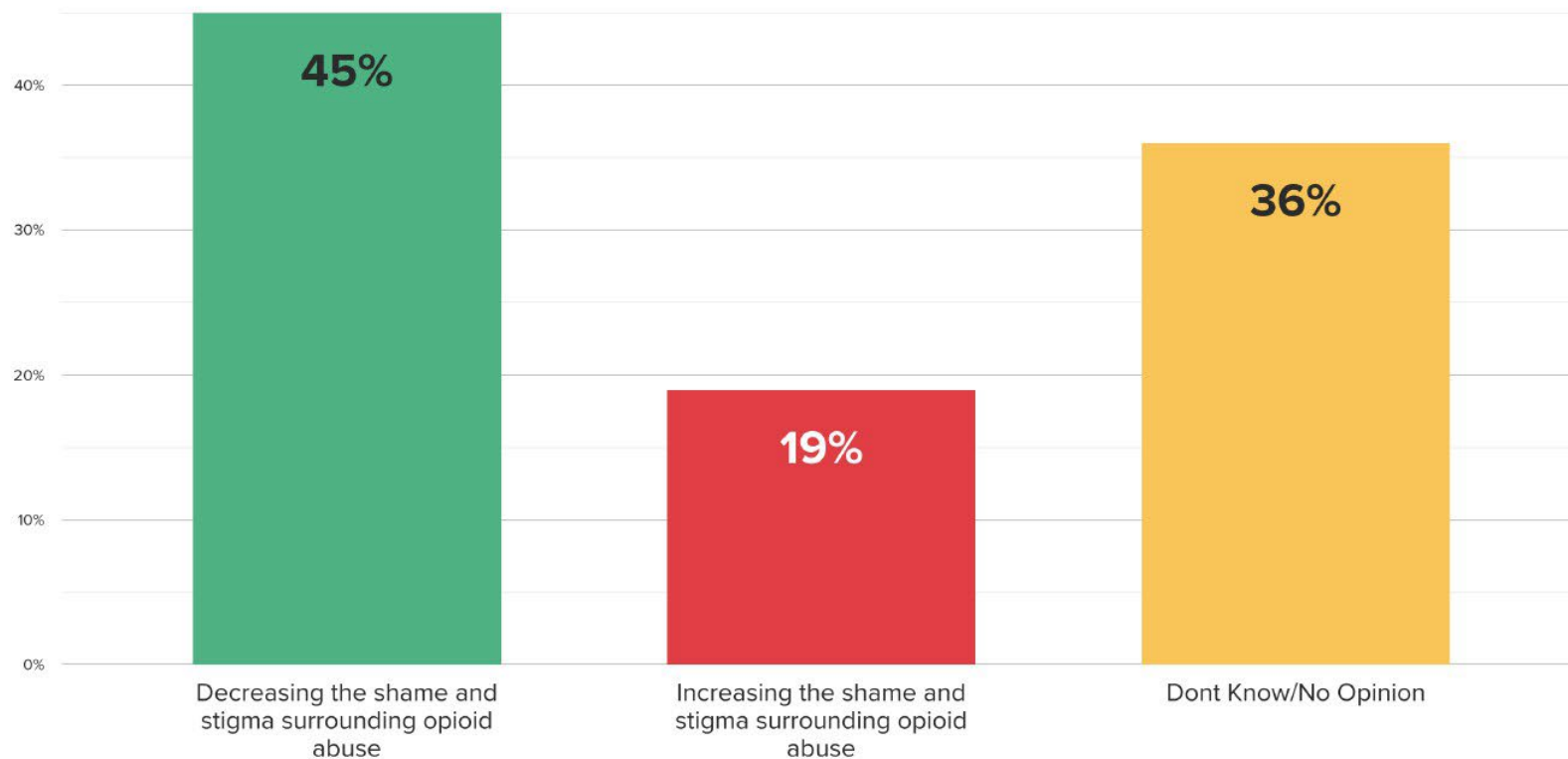
“There has been such a stigma around mental health for so long that a lot of those resources have left, or never were in our rural communities as much as they should have been,” – *Nathan Brown, Ohio Farm Bureau*

- Older rural adults and rural men have stronger negative stereotype attitudes (stigma).

Stigma – all respondents

To help solve the opioid crisis, nearly half say **decreasing** shame surrounding opioid abuse would be more effective than increasing it.

Generally, which of the following would be more effective in helping solve the opioid crisis?



Our work is cut out for us because.....

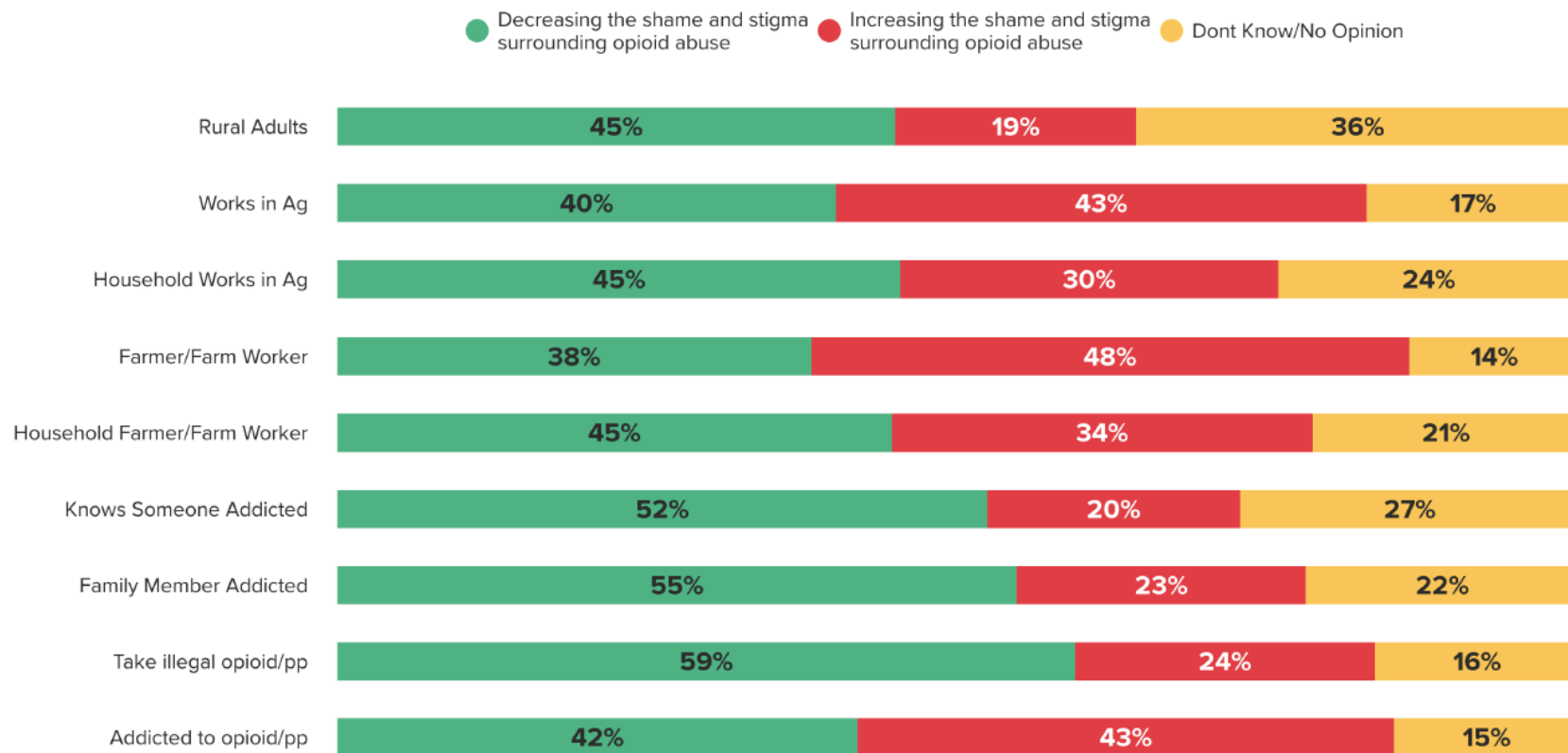


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Stigma – Agriculture Respondents

Though, farmers say *increasing* stigma would be more effective by a 10-point margin.

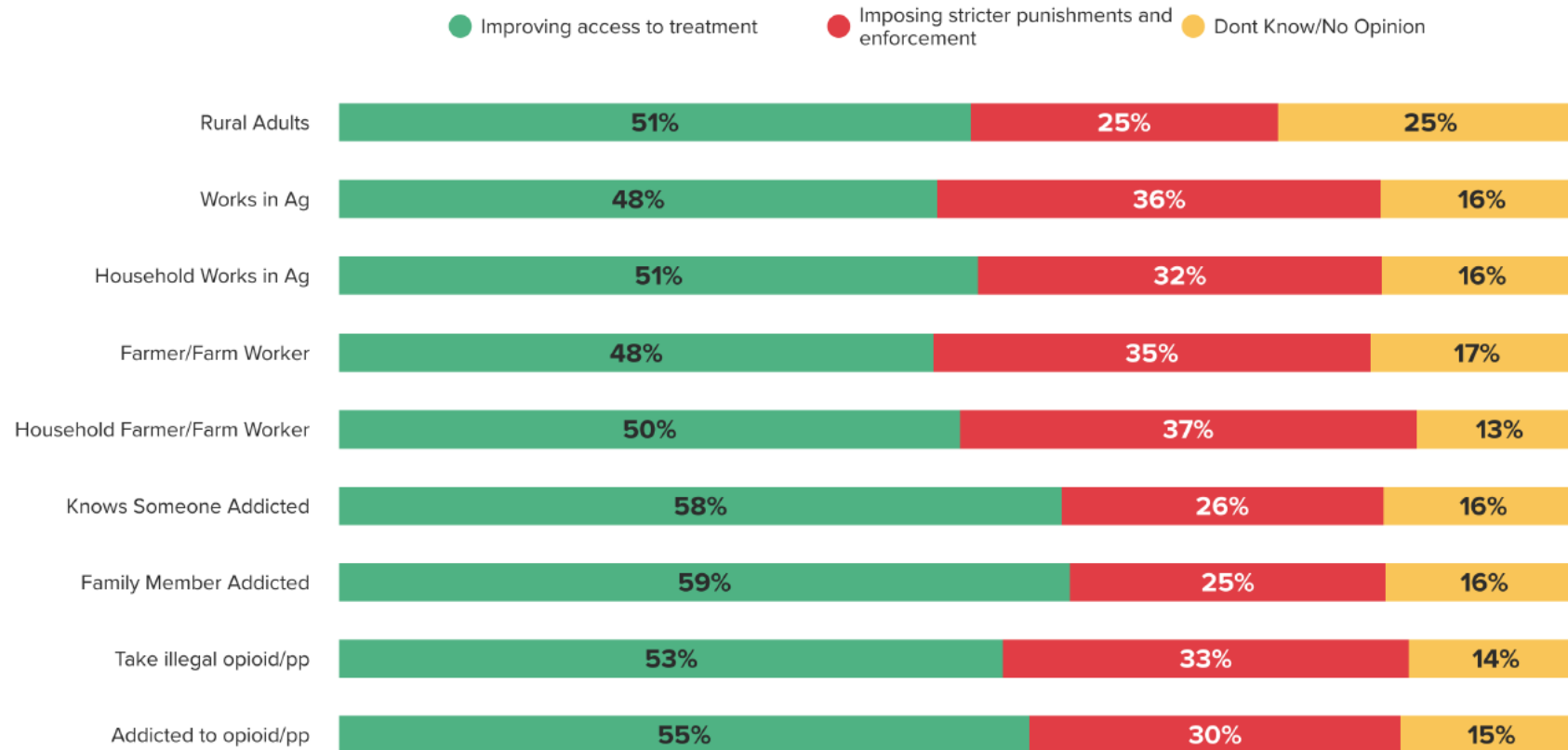
Generally, which of the following would be more effective in helping solve the opioid crisis?



Treatment versus enforcement

Those with family members addicted, as well as those who know someone generally, are especially likely to say treatment over enforcement would be more effective.

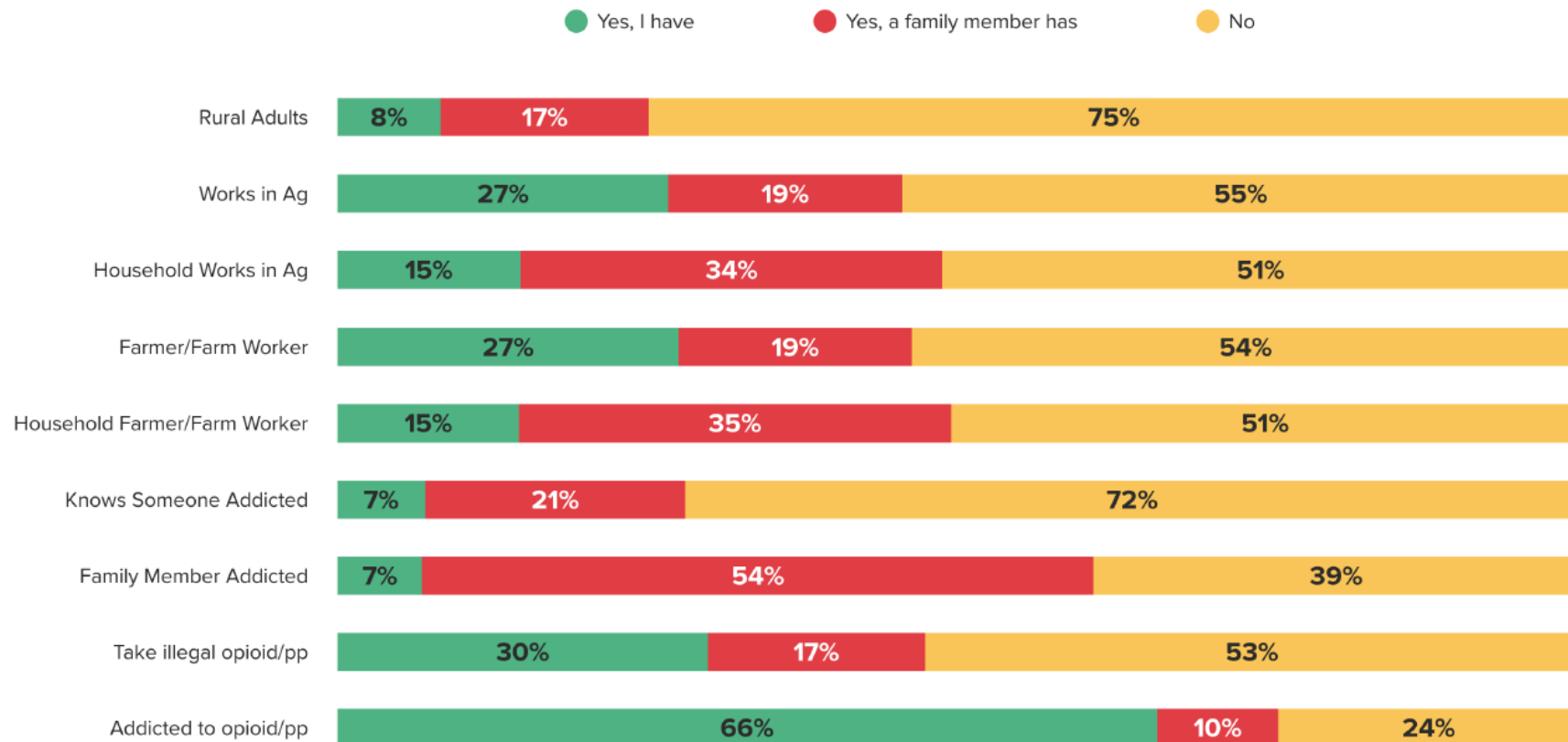
Generally, which of the following would be more effective in helping solve the opioid crisis?



Accessing addiction care

Farmers and farming households, as well as those who work in the agriculture industry, more likely to say they or a family member has sought care for addiction.

Have you or a family member ever sought care for addiction or substance abuse of any kind?



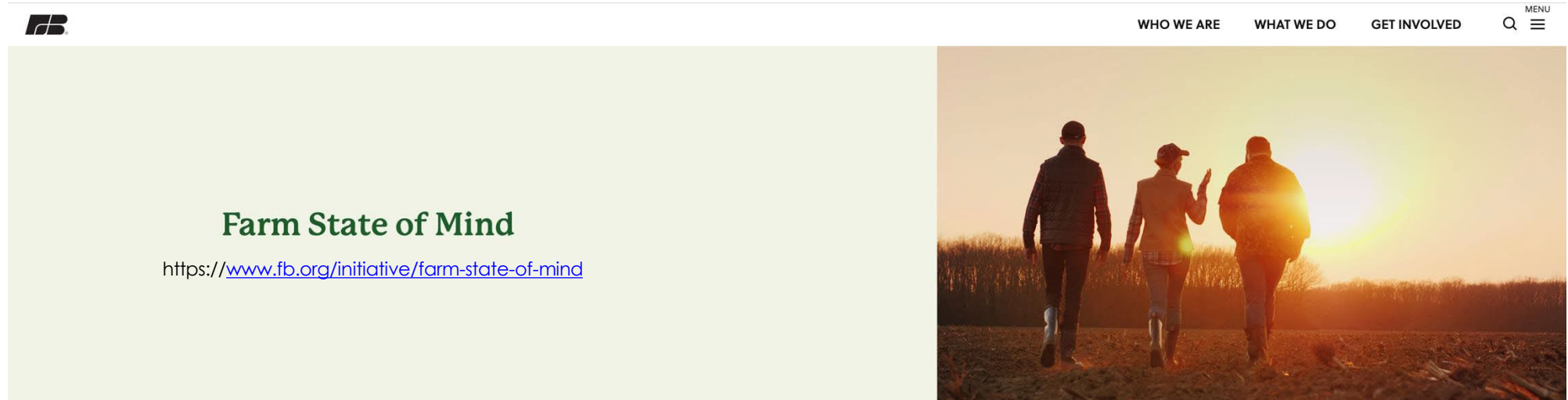
Want to learn more?



NATIONAL TRAINING RESOURCES

- The LandLogic Model (for clinicians)
 - <https://www.thelandlogicmodel.com/>
 - purposefully incorporating a farmer's land - the quintessential resource for a farmer - into behavioral health interventions
- Changing our Mental and Emotional Trajectory (for community members)
 - <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/family-medicine/research-and-innovation/pbrns/hprn/projects-and-programs/comet>
 - teaching people to intervene when they encounter someone who is in a “vulnerable space” and help shift the person's mental health trajectory back to a place of wellness

OTHER ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCES



- American Farm Bureau - Farm State of Mind
- AFB and National Farmers Union - Farm Town Strong
- AgriSafe Network – Health resources
- American Psychological Association – Farmer Stress
- National Farmer's Union Farm Crisis Center

WHY DID YOU ANSWER THE WAY YOU DID?



Why did you answer the way you did?



Who are key stakeholders that should be included in this conversation?



What are ways farm stress could be addressed with farmers/ranchers/miners in your community



What are ways SUD could be addressed with farmers/ranchers/miners in your community?



If you'd like to continue to be part of this conversation, share your email.

THANK YOU!

Resources on farm stress available on this Google Drive



With gratitude to our UROHC-CCM team and partners!

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/dugout-ranch/>