



## COVID-19 Grantee Spotlight: Student Action with Farmworkers



This agricultural season, Librado Mendoza will join a cohort of 20 bilingual and bicultural **Student Action with Farmworkers** (SAF) interns that will provide critical health, legal, and educational resources to over 3500 farmworkers in the Carolinas. He worked as an intern last summer and has returned this year.

Starting in June, SAF interns will provide teleservices to farmworkers, including conducting assessments, providing COVID-19 and other health information, and creating videos and other online tools. They will also make and drop off masks, food, medicines, and other essential resources to migrant workers in labor camps.

**"I am very passionate about helping others. I come from a humble immigrant beginning, and my parents have taught me to put others before myself. It is especially important for me to practice that value in these difficult times.**

**Although this pandemic affects all of us, it affects us differently and not always equally. Our essential farmworkers face difficult work environments, and yet they continue to work day in and day out to feed this state and country."**

Librado Mendoza,  
2020 Into the Fields Intern, SAF

**Farmworkers have been deemed essential, and during the pandemic, they are harvesting our crops to secure our food supply.** In the Carolinas, most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico who work in the fields, packing houses, and food processing plants. The majority of farmworkers earn less than \$20,000 annually and are food

insecure. Migrant farmworkers usually live in employer-provided labor camps in rural, hard-to-reach areas. They often lack health insurance, paid leave, and workers' compensation. Their precarious work arrangements are made even more so because of their immigration status as the majority are undocumented.

Farmworkers working in the fields are already reporting losing their jobs because of COVID. Those that are still employed face a lack of hygiene supplies and housing to quarantine if necessary. **Farmworkers are particularly at risk during this time as they face many barriers to accessing essential services because of isolation, language barriers, and lack of connection to services in the community.** They work in close proximity to each other and have little opportunity to take breaks to use the bathroom and wash their hands.

SAF interns are essential in the service delivery system for migrant workers. Because most of the interns are Latinx and many are from farmworkers families, they can easily build trust with the workers. **Partner organizations rely on SAF interns to link farmworkers to bilingual and bicultural supports in the community by providing information about services, educational workshops, interpretation, essential resources, and case management as workers navigate new systems.** In addition to the direct assistance SAF interns provide, they will also join SAF's efforts to advocate for paid sick leave, unemployment benefits, protective equipment, access to healthcare, and other protections for workers at the state and federal level.

---

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare societal inequities that Southern Partners Fund has fought since its incorporation. SPF's capacity for enabling its grantee partners to build coordinated rapid response teams in their communities is well documented. SPF's grantee organizations rely on Justice Fund for Disaster Relief and Renewal grants to identify their most vulnerable populations and connect them to agencies and services that can help. In turn, vulnerable populations in these communities trust SPF grantee organizations to provide them with the best support available. In many communities, our grantee partners are their first responders.

COVID-19 is currently the primary focus for the Justice Fund for Disaster Relief and Renewal while SPF aggressively seeks new funding partners. To date, SPF has raised over **\$4M out of a \$10M funding goal** and is already issuing its first round of grants to partner organizations throughout the rural Southeast.

---

**For more information on Student Action with Farmworkers or on contributing to SPF's Justice Fund for Disaster Relief and Renewal,** please click [Donate](#) to visit our website or contact us by phone with the contact details provided below.

[Donate](#)

*ADVANCING SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE RURAL SOUTH*

[info@southernpartnersfund.org](mailto:info@southernpartnersfund.org)

P: (404)-541-9091

[www.southernpartnersfund.org](http://www.southernpartnersfund.org)

