



April 2017

IRRC Spring Newsletter

Directors Message

Welcome to the spring edition of the IRRC newsletter. We are excited to report interesting and positive developments that are continually manifesting as a result of collaboration between our 14 IRRC member states. In this edition we highlight program activities of the New Mexico Migrant Education Program, the benefits of interstate collaboration are described in an article submitted by the South Carolina MEP team, and we have included a thought provoking article on a technique known as “the conversational interview”. Also, the IRRC workgroup activities continue to push us along in exciting and productive new directions.

We have more IRRC states with draft or final copies of their state ID&R plan through use of the state ID&R plan template and from workgroup technical assistance. Our year 2, newly revised IRRC Competency Skills Assessment is ready for use and is installed on our online learning platform. We have received at least one formal request for TRI (targeted response to ID&R) assistance and support this summer. The TRI workgroup is preparing for another summer of highly productive and impactful visits to some of our IRRC receiving states.

Many changes are in the winds as our member states process the new ESSA changes rolled out by OME a couple of weeks ago. Through collaboration, we are confident that IRRC will serve a vital role in providing tools, materials, networking opportunities, and training and professional development opportunities so that the transition from the old to the new can be accommodated as smoothly and as constructively as possible. If there is anything we can do on our end to make this more of a reality, please reach out and let us know.

As always, thank you for your continued participation and support. Many noteworthy things have been achieved thus far through IRRC collaboration. We look forward to many more achievements as we strive together to fulfill our IRRC project goals and objectives so that member state programs can be improved and strengthened. - Michael Maye– IRRC Director



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Special points of interest

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Working with IRRC

Being involved with the IRRC project has been very helpful to the NM MEP Program particularly in the area of ID&R. Participation has helped us to expand our capacity through trainings, networking opportunities, and through onsite technical assistance. During year 1 we received two TRI (Targeted Response to ID&R) visits during which experienced recruiters assisted with recruitment efforts and shared useful approaches to ID&R. During these visits over 100 new eligible migrant students were identified and recruited. Our team was also exposed to highly effective ID&R methods such as: mapping, effective planning, community-based recruitment and networking, etc...

The New Mexico Migrant Education Program

New Mexico is known as “The Land of Enchantment”. Geographically it is the fifth largest state in the country. But with a population of just over 2 million people it is the 36th most populous state. 60% of the state’s population lives within a 50 mile radius of Albuquerque. Of all the states in the United States New Mexico has the highest percentage of Hispanics who live there. A portion of these are descendants of the original Spanish colonists who lived in this area for over 400 years dating back to 1598. It has the fourth largest percentage of Native Americans compared with the state population. New Mexico became the 47th state in the Union in 1912. A major oil discovery in 1928 brought untold prosperity to the Lea County area of New Mexico. An original well that pumped 700 barrels of oil from that year continued to produce oil until 2002. During World War II, the first atomic bombs were designed and manufactured at Los Alamos, NM. The first atomic bomb was tested in a stretch of desert that is now known as the White Sands Missile Range.

Hatch, New Mexico is famous for its chile. Hatch chile is a uniquely flavored chile pepper that cannot be found anywhere else. Temperature, climate, soil composition, and growing conditions are factors that give chile grown in and around Hatch, New Mexico its unique and notable flavor.

The New Mexico Migrant Education Program has over 650 students. This is an 11 % increase over the 2015-16 year and a 40% increase over the last four years. 200 new students have been added to the rolls over the past three years. In terms of qualifying activities, New Mexico has both a seasonal and temporary population. 70% of New Mexico’s migrant population is concentrated in the southwest area of the state and are mainly seasonal workers. The activities

these workers engage in are related to crops such as: chile, onions, pecans, and watermelons. Migrant workers on the eastern side of the state are primarily temporary workers with dairy work being the main qualifying activity. The area in and around Dexter, New Mexico has one of the highest concentrations of dairy farms among counties in the entire country.

The New Mexico Migrant Education Program has used a district based model but is in the process of transitioning to a regional model with strong support from school districts. Through a purely district based model there has been difficulty getting out to locate and serve students where they actually live and work. With the help of regional recruiters, districts will receive much needed field support for outreach and will also have the ability to use sub-grants for more services.

A unique factor about the New Mexico MEP is that we border both Mexico and Texas. More eligible migrant families come to the United States from Mexico than from any other country. Texas is also one of the largest “sending” states of any state in the country. This has posed an interesting predicament with the issue of how long a student or family must be in a location to establish residency or eligibility. It is not uncommon for workers to find employment on a farm in New Mexico but maintain their residency across the state border in Texas. Very short term stays are very common.





New Mexico is home to many dairies.

Recruiter of the Quarter Bernardo Lopez

How long has Bernardo been with the NM MEP?

Bernardo began in the spring of 2014. He is into his fourth year with our program.

What is interesting and unique about Bernardo's background ?

Bernardo grew up doing migrant work in our state and was identified as a migrant student. He attended NM state university as a CAMP student and graduated with a social work degree. He has always been drawn to bettering himself as well as his community. He helped with a program in North Carolina in which he engaged in outreach efforts to help and assist the migrant community.

What factors make Bernardo effective as a MEP recruiter?

Bernardo can work with all types of people. He is comfortable talking with a migrant family in their home or in the field, communicating with a district administrator, working with other migrant personnel, helping with training new recruiters, or talking to employers or other organizations about the program. Bernardo is humble, good-natured, conscientious, self-motivated, and unassuming. He is in this work for the right reason- to help people! Bernardo is a tremendous asset to the New Mexico Migrant Education Program. In his three years with the program his efforts have led to a steady increase in our student numbers. He establishes and maintains positive communication and relationships with families, co-workers, administrators, and community members. Bernardo is very effective.

Reflections on IRRC TRI (Targeted Response to ID&R) Activity in South Carolina during Year 1

While reflecting on our ID&R process and results over the past year, I now realize the great extent to which we have benefited from our collaboration with the IRRC and its member states. From the very beginning of the project, our State program coordinator Dr. Jennifer Almeda had voiced our “Priority for Service” status for receiving assistance from the Targeted Response to ID&R (TRI) technical support teams. As the state ID&R coordinator, our dire need for help was readily apparent. The limited funding and staff for the SC MEP over the years have become much like an endless “cumbia trance” that we are working hard to snap out of through strong intra/interstate coordination and the leveraging of consortium resources. Luckily, the future of ID&R is here through the creation of TRI and we couldn’t be happier.

With the help of the IRRC and NY ID&R Director Will Messier, I was fortunate enough to attend New York MEP’s ID&R Training in Saratoga Springs last May. As I listened to the high-quality information that was being presented to these recruiters it became obvious why the NY MEP ID&R team is such a powerhouse in the MEP game. This was the epitome of interstate collaboration and it laid the framework in my mind for improvements I sought to make in our own ID&R process. Ultimately it was here that we began to discuss the logistics of our TRI visit by NY ID&R personnel and IRRC Director Michael Maye.

The process for requesting TRI assistance is straight forward and provides States with the ability to customize the visit to best suit their ID&R needs from professional development and re-interviews to hardcore ID&R and field work. A question your ID&R team should probably ask itself is, “*What do we want to accomplish during this TRI visit and what specific area(s) of our state should we target?*” In our case, we were able to identify a region of our state that boasts a large agricultural industry but has historically been low in student numbers. This area is known as the “Pee Dee” region in North Central-East South Carolina. Ultimately, we envisioned the TRI team members providing us with recruitment assistance and gathering information and leads in the region for our team to follow.

The key to a successful TRI is planning and preparation. Through coordination with Emily Hanahan, a NY recruiter and member of the TRI workgroup, we were able to develop an extensive directory of farms, potential housing areas and community agencies for the region via agricultural websites and searches, the H2A work order database and information from our own maps and database. In addition, we created contact sheets in order to document encounters in the field and a google map of all the sites listed in the directory. Investing time into the preparation for the site visit is a

critical step in the TRI process in order to be as efficient and effective as possible in a given timeframe.

On July 7th when the New York team stepped off their plane into the smoldering summer heat of the southeast I imagine they probably were wondering what they had gotten themselves into. The heat had instantly melted all of the gel in Kenny Carmona’s hair! As a group we quickly began an orientation to review our COE and discussed various ID&R scenarios specific to South Carolina that the recruiters may encounter. For the following three days the recruiters worked very long hours doing what they do best. We debriefed daily and I made sure to stay in constant communication with the navigators of each team as they were in the field. One of the keys to the success of the trip was the recruiters’ adaptability to any on-the-ground changes that were needed in order to be as productive as possible. If the teams felt a certain area was much slower and without much migrant labor, they made note of it and quickly moved on.

Overall the visit was highly successful and the TRI recruiters were able to find thirty children and youth in just three days. Also of great importance were the quality leads and field notes the recruiters left for us to follow up on. This directly led to the recruitment of fourteen more children and youth in the weeks following the visit. In order to build and maintain trust with the students, families and out-of-school youth that were identified, we had previously arranged for our summer interns to spend two consecutive weeks in the region following the TRI visit to provide services and continue to explore leads. No matter how small the MEP or how few recruiters or service providers exist, it is imperative that someone follow up with the newly identified children and youth and provide services. Otherwise, the ID&R efforts in the future could be jeopardized due to a lack of trust and skepticism of the migrant communities.

The TRI technical support team is an invaluable resource to states like ours that are in need of peak-season ID&R support in regions that lack recruiters and local sub-grantee programs or simply lack experience. The IRRC TRI team has created a model that allows for rapid and efficient sharing of resources which can ultimately benefit the Migrant Education Program as a whole. SC MEP looks forward to the TRI visits for years to come as a sustainable method of supporting ID&R activities across member states. A special thanks to:

Will Messier
Kenny Carmona
Odilia Cofta
Emily Hanahan
Michael Maye
John Farrell

The Conversational Interview

In Migrant Education Programs across the country, state, regional, and local administrators and coordinators spend a great deal of time and energy figuring out the most effective and impactful ways to properly train recruiters as to how to effectively identify and recruit eligible migrant children. Such training embraces every aspect to do with recruitment such as: completing a COE, understanding rules and regulations, eligibility determination, interviewing skills and techniques, data security, safety, community networking, etc... For a recruiter, especially a new and relatively inexperienced recruiter, the real dilemma is, “when I approach a family who doesn’t know me and has never seen me, how do I create a rapport and a space in which they will be willing to accept me, trust me, and share basic information about themselves so that I can make an accurate determination about their eligibility?” There is no one right way to answer this question or solve this dilemma. It often takes recruiters several years to hone the ability to immediately put people at ease and instill trust and confidence. But a successful approach in the general way can be summed up in the phrase “the conversational interview”. This is an interaction in which you need to gather specific information and details but there is a relaxed, personal, human, and informal dynamic to the context. In a formal interview, the kind that would take place in a government office or a doctor’s office, the interviewer goes through a series of explicit questions that the interviewee answers. This can be effective and the person being interviewed willingly shares because the context in which they are being interviewed is very clear to them. For MEP recruiters, the context of the interview is not always clear to families, especially at the beginning. For this reason, the family being approached and spoken to must be “won over” through trust, compassion, and friendliness.

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What is unique about the conversational interview and what are some of the key elements to this kind of relating?

Listening
Patience
Trust
Flexibility

The conversational interview, unlike the formal interview, is fluid, natural, and is a two-way street.

Listening is a vital element. When a family is approached and an introduction is made, a recruiter most always has a moment to make a good impression and to establish a positive rapport. It is vital to take an interest in and show concern for anything that is shared by the family. When responding to your questions, families may share things that are not directly related to eligibility issues. It is much better to demonstrate interest and concern and to listen patiently and carefully. Never dismiss what is being said simply

because it does not directly relate to the eligibility information you are looking for.

Patience is a virtue. Even if a family is friendly, it may take a few minutes for them to feel comfortable enough to openly share personal information. Offer them this time and latitude through a friendly, patient, and relaxed space. A successful interview has been conducted when a positive rapport with a potentially eligible migrant child or family has been established and enough information has been shared so that an accurate eligibility determination can be made. A successful interview takes a little time. As a family responds to your questions and prompts they may recall a comical situation or may have some kind of concern or difficulty they have not been able to resolve. Listening patiently and sympathetically will go a long way in fostering a trusting space through which the family will display a willingness to share and confide in



Conversational Interview cont.

the recruiter. A family's willingness to share accurate information with a recruiter is about trust.

Trust is a more vital factor than how well a family remembers their work history or their past movements. It is even more important than the recruiter's technical understanding of rules and regulations. There are a host of approaches and techniques that help a recruiter to develop a trusting rapport with potentially eligible migrant children and families. More than can be included in a single article. But a terrific and highly effective tool at your disposal is an understanding and implementation of the "conversational interview". If communication with a family is sincere and genuine and the recruiter conveys a true desire to be helpful and responsive to the needs of the family, then a very productive dialogue can be achieved under most circumstances.

Flexibility, the ability to adapt to unforeseen and changing circumstances, is vital to effective recruitment. If you visit a family but it appears they are in a hurry to go somewhere or are just getting home and need to get dinner started, sometimes it is better to politely ask if it is better to return another time that is more convenient for them. During your travels you will encounter many families and individuals who are not eligible for the Migrant Education Program. Once you determine a family or person is not eligible, do not be so quick to dismiss them and move on. Our migrant communities and populations do not organize themselves according to our eligibility rules. It is often the case that a person is not eligible but is nonetheless a central figure in the community and is highly respected and trusted. Taking a few moments to politely explain the program and getting to know them can pay large dividends. A friendly rapport with the right person or persons could lead to the identification and recruitment of dozens of eligible migrant students through networking, family association, and friendly relations.

After an interview has concluded, or at the end of a day during which you conducted many interviews, reflect on your results and then examine what led to the outcomes experienced. Do you make a habit of smiling as you approach new families? Is your attire informal but neat? Are your initial questions simple, pleasant, non-threatening, and conversational in nature? Do you carry with you massive binders or books that cause the family to wonder if you are from an investigative or law enforcement agency?

Hopefully these reflections will help you to project a presence and create a space that is friendly, positive, fluid, and natural. These are the important components to the process known as the "conversational interview".



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