

A Snapshot of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Served at Zufall Health Center

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Purpose

To provide a demographic profile of migrant and seasonal farm workers (MSFW) seen at Zufall Health Center and describe their case management needs and reasons for visits during 2013, 2014, and 2015. A comparison of these patients is made to farm workers at the New Jersey state level, regional, and national levels in terms of health needs and barriers to care using secondary sources of information.

Background

MSFWs have disparate health care needs due to their working and living conditions, and because of their risk factors associated with poverty, isolation, depression, migrancy, language and cultural barriers. Due to their mobility and undocumented status, it is also difficult to find and count them which adds to the complexity of meeting those needs. Zufall Health is a community health center in Northwestern NJ that has received federal funding since June of 2012 to provide primary care to MSFWs. The counties served include Morris, Warren, Hunterdon, Sussex, Somerset and Essex. Figure 1 shows the number of MSFWs that have been treated at Zufall from 2013- 2015. Patients were seen either on the mobile van, which visits farms during peak season (June- Sept) to provide medical or dental care, or at one of our sites. One full time Outreach staff is assigned to visit farms and provide case management to MSFWs.

Zufall Health MSFW Clinical Patient Counts

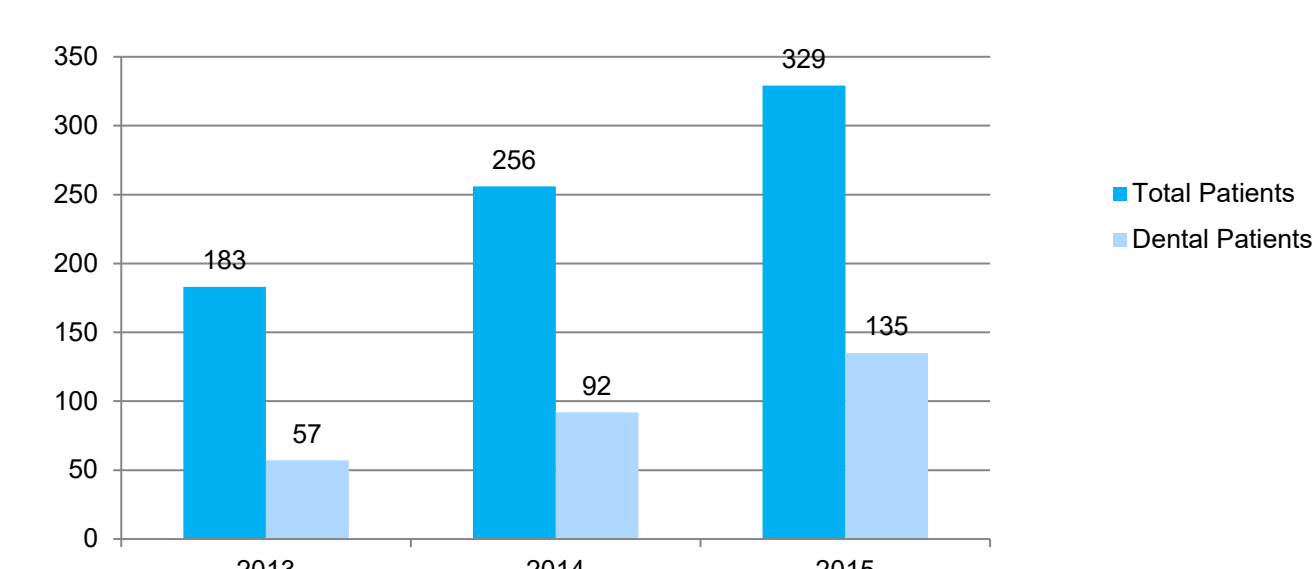


Figure 1. The number of MSFW patients has steadily increased since the start of the program.

National and Regional MSFW Profiles

The majority of all farm workers in the US are foreign born, with 68% coming from Mexico, 3% coming from Central America and 1% from elsewhere (NCFH*). In the Northeast, 79% come from Mexico, and the rest from Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Haiti and elsewhere. The predominant language spoken by MSFWs is Spanish, with most speaking little or no English. The average age a farm worker in the US is 36 and the average level of completed education was 8th grade (NCFJ*). Indigenous farm workers, mostly coming from Mexico but also from Guatemala, Ecuador and Bolivia will often speak no Spanish or English. The average individual income in 2011-2012 according to the National Agricultural Workers Survey ranged from \$15 K-\$17.5K and average total family income from \$17.5K-\$19.9K, with 25% of farm worker families having incomes below the US poverty guidelines. Eighty-five percent were paid hourly and 15% were paid either by the piece or by a combination of the hourly-piece or by salary. Federal labor laws exclude farm workers from certain rights such as overtime pay, days off, or collective bargaining. Housing for MSFWs is often substandard or non-existent. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, agriculture is often ranked as one of the most dangerous industries in the nation, involving exposure to the elements, farm-equipment injuries and heat stress. Of the 3,025 MSFW surveyed in by NCHF in 2011-2012, 58% were married, 36% were single, and 7% were divorced, separated or widowed.

National and Regional MSFW Profiles - continued

Although farm workers may have a spouse in their home country, most do not have their spouses and family with them and as a result, suffer from isolation, depression, and alcohol abuse. Male farm workers will frequently engage in high-risk behavior, having sex with sex workers that are brought onto the farms. Female farm workers routinely earn less than men, face sexual harassment and the threat of rape at work, and domestic violence at home (Farm worker Justice, Inc).

Zufall MSFW Patient Profile – Demographics

Most of the MSFWs seen at Zufall are male adults, although women and children of the workers are also seen and counted as MSFWs at community health centers. Data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey from 2011-2012 report that 79% of farm workers were male and 29% were female, slightly different than our numbers. Refer to Figure 2a. below.

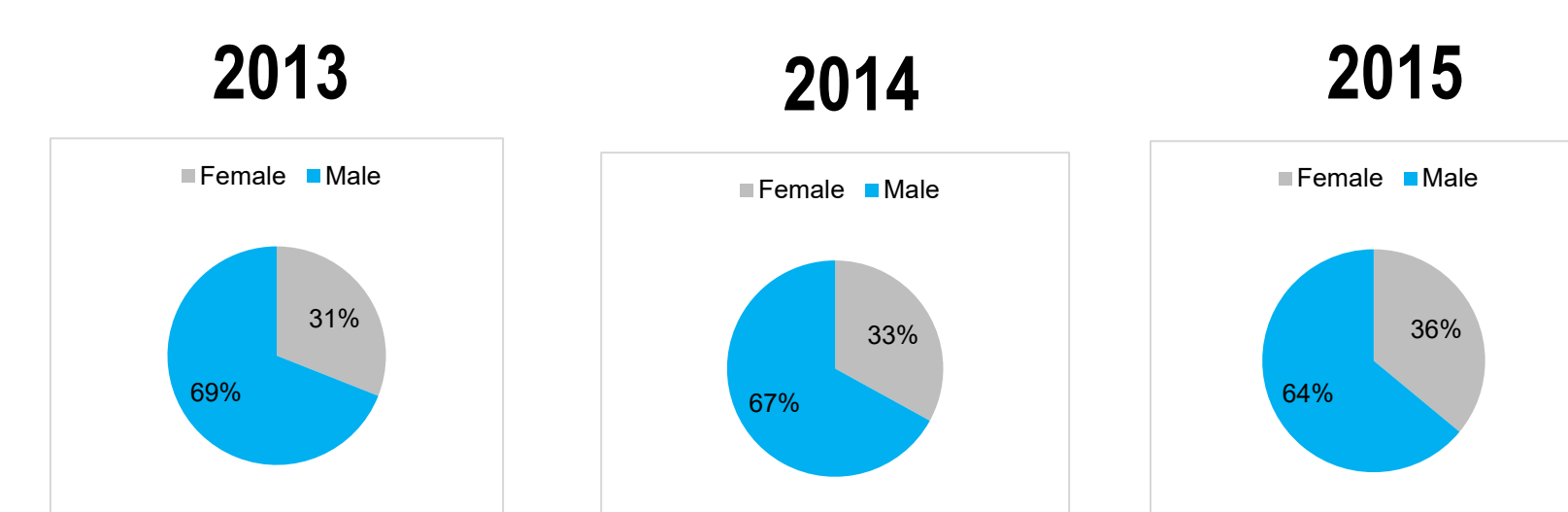


Figure 2a. The majority of MSFW patients are male.

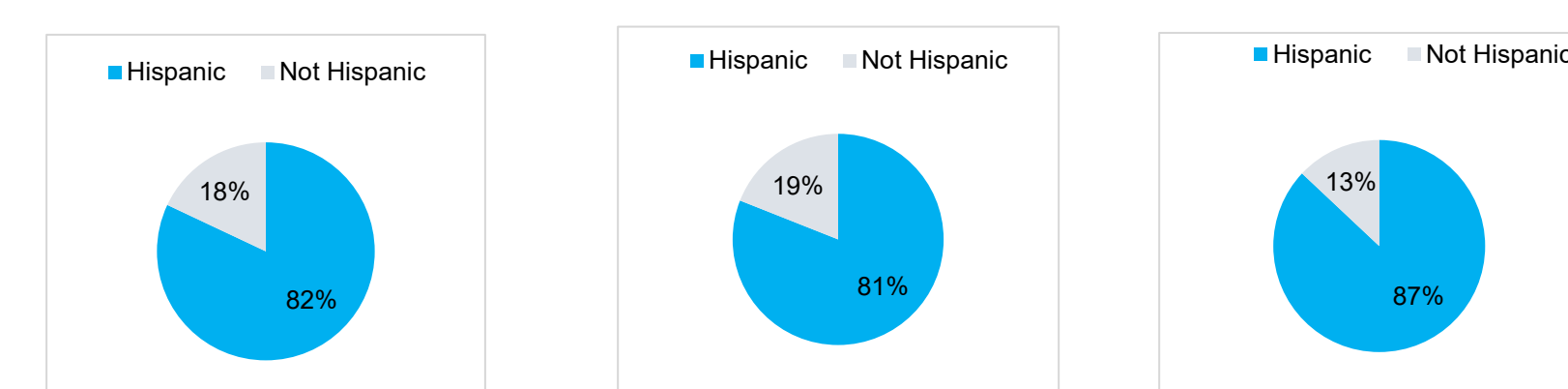


Figure 2b. Less than 20% of farm workers seeking care at Zufall are non-Hispanic and 80% or more are Hispanic.

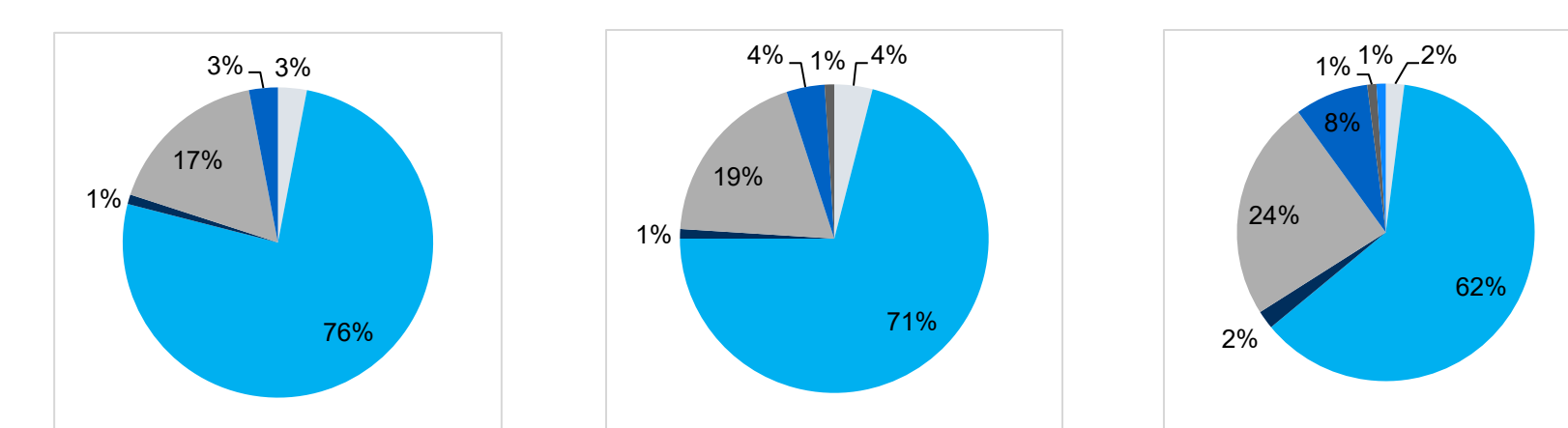


Figure 2c. The majority of MSFW patients self-report as White followed by More Than One Race.

Zufall MSFW Patients – Medical Visits

Very few seniors and children received care. Most farm workers are generally healthy and without chronic medical conditions. The incidence of sexually transmitted or infectious diseases in our population from 2013 through 2015 was very low. (1.5%) as well as asthma and contact dermatitis (2.5%). See figure 3 below.

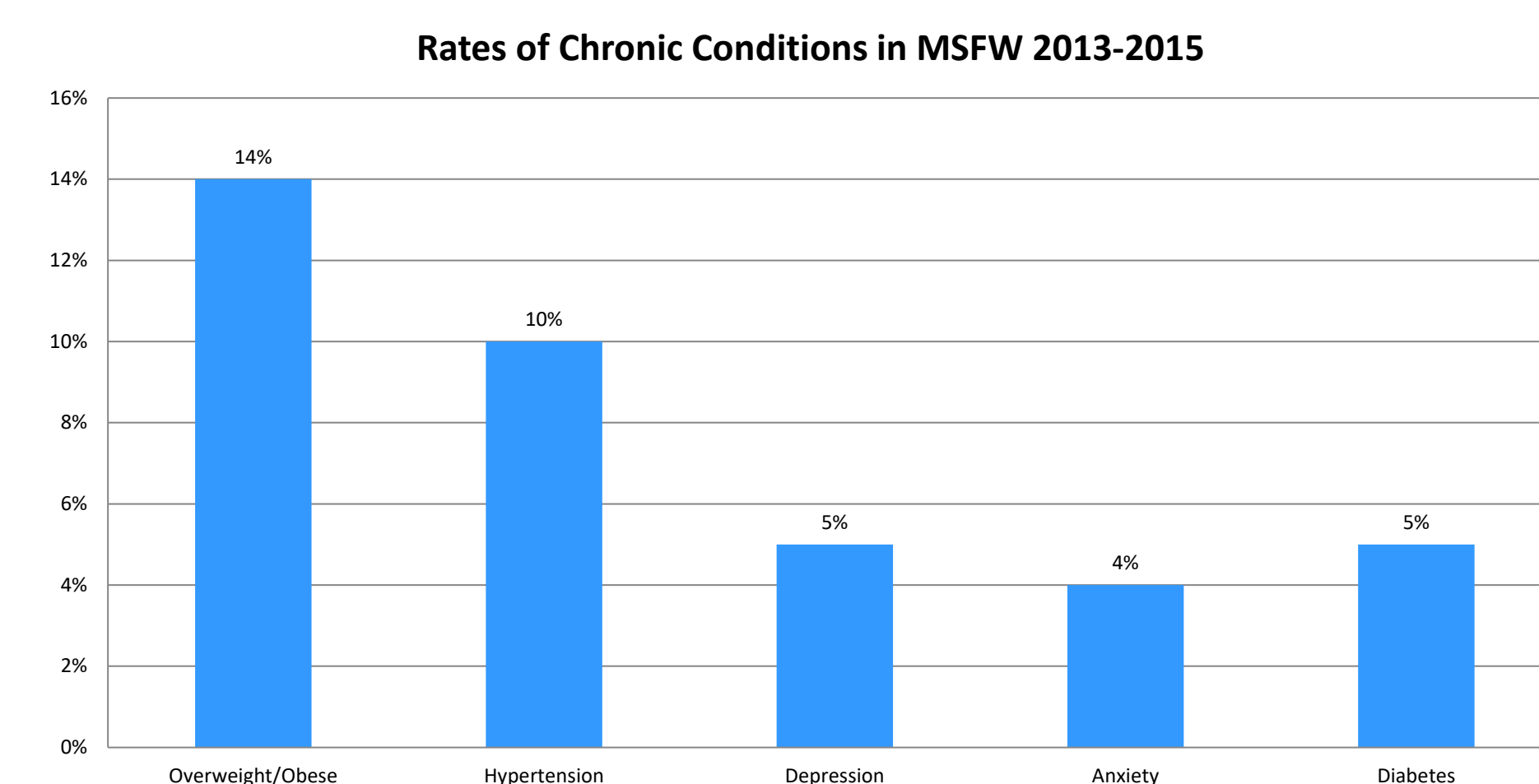


Figure 3. Overweight/obesity is the chronic medical condition that most MSFW are diagnosed with at Zufall.

Most Frequent Diagnosis and Disease Rates

We evaluated the most frequent diagnosis of MSFWs over the past 3 years to determine what services these patients have been seeking and better understand their needs. The top reasons for farm workers seeking care at Zufall include dental care, routine physical exams, vaccinations, back pain, breast exams, PAPS, hyperlipidemia and allergic rhinitis. This is similar to the top reasons farm worker seek care at the national level. Below is a table of the most frequent diagnosis reported. Note that the top 5 diagnoses remained the same at Zufall over the past 3 years.

Farm Worker Patient Diagnosis Report – Top 10

No.	Procedure	2013	2014	2015
1	Dental examination	60	90	116
2	Routine Medical Exam 18+	41	50	41
3	Need for prophylactic vaccination & inoculation, influenza	33	35	13
4	Dental caries extending into dentine	25	30	44
5	Hyperlipidemia	25	27	29
6	Back pain, unspecified	20	20	13
7	Pap & Pelvic	15	21	25
8	Routine infant or child health check	15	23	17
9	Breast Exam	14	15	19
10	Allergic rhinitis	13	14	10

Table 1. The top ten reasons the MSFW visited Zufall from 2013-2015.

Dental disease rates in farm worker patients were evaluated and determined to be the highest recorded at Zufall so far. A chart review of patients who sought comprehensive exams at the center each year revealed that overall, more than 90% of farm workers have at least one or more untreated decayed tooth at the time of the exam. The caries rate of adult farm workers (94%) at Zufall is significantly higher than the national caries rates (23%) as determined by the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Similarly, periodontal disease rates at Zufall are 57% which is significantly higher than the national rate of 8.5% according to NHANES.

Farm Worker Dental Patients

	2013	2014	2015
Total FW Dental Pts	57	92	135
Exams (Do150/Do120)	35	47	88
Overall Caries Rates	94% (n=35)	99% (n=47)	91% (n=88)
Adult Caries Rate (18-64)	93% (n=28)	97% (n=38)	93% (n=71)
Children (<18) Caries Rate	100% (n=5)	100% (n=6)	87% (n=15)
Adult Periodontal Disease (18-64)	68% (n=28)	55% (n=38)	53% (n=71)

Table 2. MSFW adult and pediatric patients have high rates of cavities.

MSFW Case Management Services at Zufall

Zufall has one dedicated full time outreach worker who is available to transport MSFW patients and their family members to all clinical sites for medical and dental appointments. Aside from transportation, the outreach worker also provides interpretation and translation services, makes referrals to social services agencies and other community partners, picks up and drops off MSFW medication from pharmacy to work camps, and visits farms to conduct general outreach to link new MSFW patients and their families to services.

Discussion

MSFW tend to be young and in relatively good physical health. On the other hand, they typically have poor dental health and suffer from depression and anxiety. There are a number of barriers that MSFW experience to receiving care. First, there are financial barriers. The direct cost of care is often too expensive and most are uninsured and do not qualify for government assistance programs like Medicaid or Medicare. There are also the indirect costs associated with missing work in order to obtain care that is important to mention. Transportation is a huge barrier because MSFWs usually live in rural areas far from a clinical site. Since most speak little to no English, language is also a notable barrier. Figure 4 below shows the number and type of case management visits provided to MSFWs.

Type and Number of Case Management Visits Provided

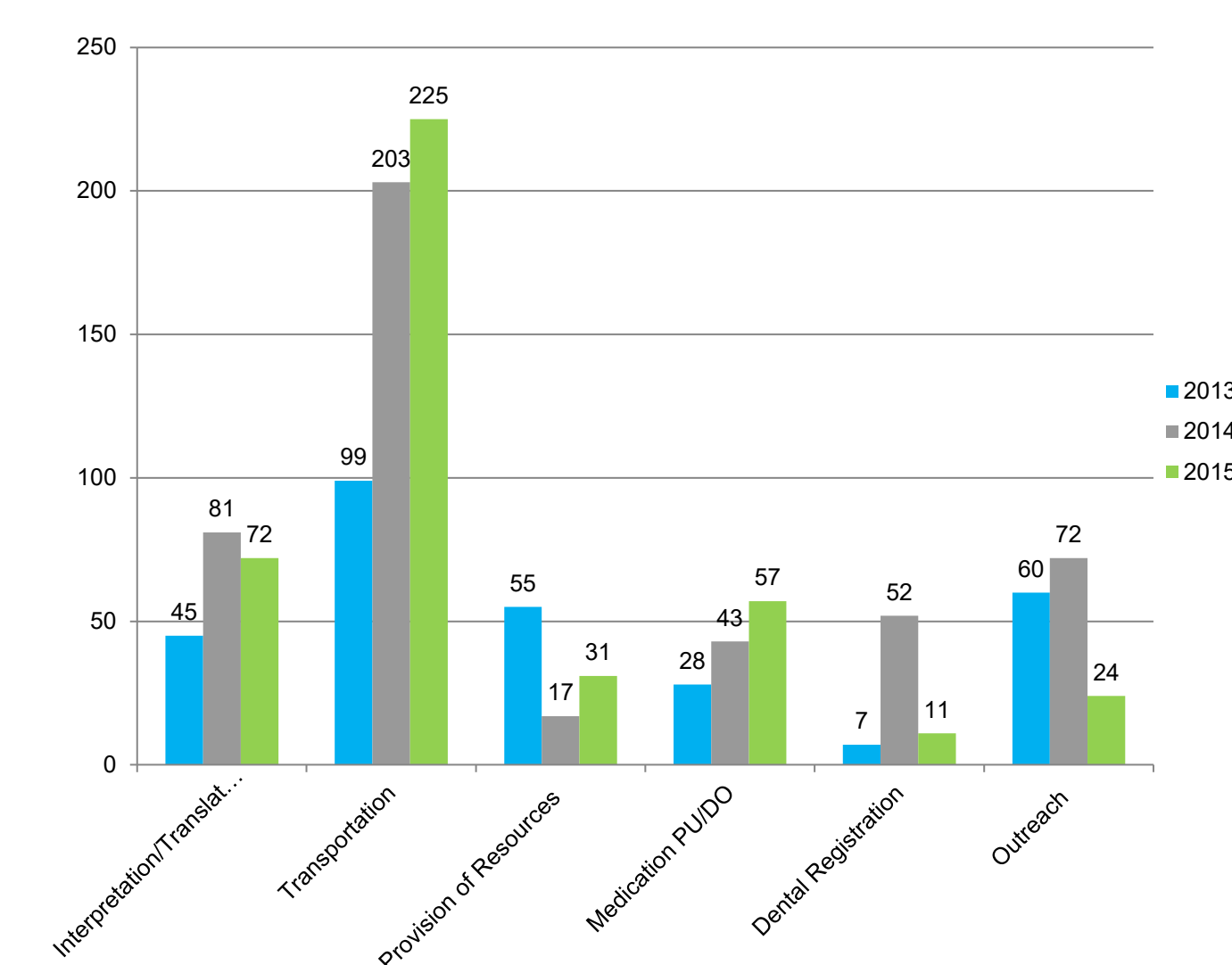


Figure 4. Transportation and translation are the two most popular types of case management services provided to Zufall's MSFW patients.



Figure 5. The Highlands Health Van travels to farm camps in rural Northwestern NJ with a full clinical teams to provide medical and dental services to MSFWs and their families.

Zufall Health helps MSFWs overcome barriers to health care by providing culturally competent, comprehensive medical and dental services on-site at our numerous locations, on our mobile van, and through vigorous outreach and case management services. See figure 5 above.

References

¹ National Center for Farm worker Health - 2011-2012 Farm worker Fact Sheet . www.ncfh.org
² Northeast Region 2-011 Migrant Health Profile. James O'Barr, MSW. Migrant Health Coordinator, Northeast Region. Hudson River HealthCare, Inc. Peekskill, New York.