

Colorado AgrAbility Impact Report

Empowering Colorado's Agricultural Community for Over 25 Years

For over 25 years, CSU Extension's AgrAbility Project has supported farm and ranch families in the face of physical challenges, limitations, and disability. AgrAbility Rehabilitation Specialists are trained in providing farm-specific property assessments, assistive technology recommendations, and resource connections for agricultural communities.

In 2021, the [Behavioral Health Recovery Act \(Colorado SB21-137\)](#), expanded AgrAbility to include behavioral health support services, stress management resources, and suicide prevention initiatives for farmers, ranchers, agriculture workers, and rural communities. This investment significantly increased AgrAbility's capacity with four new Regional Behavioral Health Specialists and three CSU campus-based faculty members that specialize in rural health.

Together, this team has partnered across rural Colorado to assess community needs and develop culturally responsive trainings, resources and programs.

Strengthening Behavioral Health in Rural Colorado

AgrAbility's Behavioral Health Specialists deliver a range of "agri-culturally" informed workshops, trainings, and programs tailored to the unique strengths and challenges of rural life. Key outcomes in 2024 included:

- **Engaged 2,720+ rural community members** through behavioral health education and outreach.
- **Delivered 98 agriculture-specific well-being presentations** such as: *Managing Stress During Calving Season*, *Tools for Women Managing the Farm*, and *Dealing with Depression During the Winter Months*.
- **Provided 104 consultations** to clinicians, rural organizations, and educators on behavioral health strategies.
- **Facilitated over 20 "Legacy" Viewing Parties with 600+ attendees.**
 - Legacy is a powerful documentary that explores the beauty and hardships of agricultural life. These events provide space for open conversations, reducing stigma around mental health in agriculture. Discussions often lead to additional community training sessions, including COMET and other suicide prevention and psychoeducational workshops.
- **Conducted 17 COMET Trainings for 197 community members.**
 - Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory (COMET) is a suicide prevention program designed to align with rural values, empowering friends and neighbors to recognize and respond to mental health challenges before a crisis occurs.



Expanding Clinical Support and Trainings

AgrAbility co-administers the Colorado Agriculture Addiction and Mental Health Program (CAAMHP) with CO Farm Bureau, ensuring that agricultural populations have access to free therapy services. AgrAbility also provides LandLogic training to rural-serving clinicians, a cognitive behavioral therapy training program designed to educate clinicians and resource providers on the unique stressors and strengths of agricultural populations, equipping them with tools to effectively support agricultural populations. Key 2024 outcomes include:

- **Provided 329 therapy vouchers to agriculture workers** seeking mental health support.
- **Trained 200+ health care professionals in the LandLogic Model.**
- **100% of clinicians**, working primarily with agricultural clients, reported that LandLogic provided practical tools they could immediately apply in their practice.

Promoting Independence for Farmer and Ranchers with Disabilities

AgrAbility is dedicated to ensuring that farmers and ranchers with physical disabilities or limitations can continue working safely and successfully in agriculture. The program offers farm-specific assistive technology recommendations, workplace modifications, and resource connections to support independence. Key 2024 outcomes include:

- **Conducted on-property assessments and provided direct service to 97 farmers and ranchers with physical disabilities.**
- **More than one-third of AgrAbility clients were Veterans**, reinforcing the program's role in supporting former service members in agriculture.
- **Provided specialized training to four CSU Occupational Therapy Graduate Students** in rural and agricultural occupational health.



AgrAbility client using a his new "push-cart" to make his day-to-day more accessible.

Engaged Scholarship & Student Involvement

Not only do AgrAbility's campus-based faculty focus their research and community engagement projects on agriculture and rural health, but they also provide valuable training and hands-on experiences to the next generation of professionals. This year, key outcomes include:

- **Trained 300+ students in best practices** for rural and agricultural health.
- **Provided direct mentorship and training to 12 undergraduate and graduate students** through internships and assistantships focused on rural health.
- **Engaged 300 rural-serving behavioral health providers in a needs assessment** to identify training gaps and resource needs.
- **Secured funding to evaluate the impact of CAAMHP** and explore opportunities to expand therapy session offerings.



AgrAbility Occupational Therapy interns at a property assessment with a client.



Meet the AgrAbility Team



Rebecca Hill, Ph.D.

A co-director of AgrAbility, Rebecca is an Agricultural Economist and Extension Professor with a research focus on rural community development.



Robert Fetsch, Ph.D.

A co-director of AgrAbility, Bob is a State Extension Specialist and focuses on evaluating the quality of life of AgrAbility clients.



Chad Reznicek, LPC

A licensed professional counselor with a background in trauma, substance use, and suicide prevention, Chad serves as the Statewide AgrAbility Behavioral Health Specialist.



Kirsten Wulfsberg, LPC

A licensed professional counselor with 20 years of experience in psychiatric crisis management, Kirsten serves the Mountain Region as a Behavioral Health Specialist.



Jim Kummerlee, LCSW

A licensed clinical social worker and therapist, Jim supports rural and aging populations in Northeast Colorado as a Behavioral Health Specialist.



Julie Elliott, LPC

A licensed professional therapist with a rich background in ag, Julie serves the farmers and ranchers on the Western Slope as a Behavioral Health Specialist.



Melissa Fenton, Ph.D.

An assistant professor in the Dept. of Human Development & Family Studies, Melissa's research and engagement focuses on the prevention of behavioral health problems among rural populations.



Janell Pisegna, Ph.D.

An assistant professor in the Occupational Therapy Dept., Janell focuses on rural health disparities among individuals with disabilities.



Ana Gutierrez-Colina, Ph.D.

An assistant professor in the Dept. of Human Development & Family Studies, Ana's research aims to improve the health of Hispanic youth and families in rural Colorado.



Natalie Bachmeier, MPH

A Public Health Specialist, Natalie supports communications and strategic planning to expand services to underserved rural communities.



Ashley Buchannon, M.S.

A Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, Ashley provides on-site visits and direct services to farmers and ranchers across the state.



Hannah Cefalo, MPH

A Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, Hannah provides on-site visits and direct services to farmers and ranchers.

