



Sustainable Farm Families Alberta 2017-2018

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

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Evaluation Highlights 2017-2018

Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) Alberta is a multi-faceted health and safety education program operated by the Farm Safety Centre. Developed specifically for the rural farm context, the program consists of workshops delivered by farm facilitators and nurse facilitators that occur annually over three years. To support change, the participants also receive regular follow-up in-between workshops. While the specific content covered each year is different, every workshop includes a physical health assessment, numerous farmer to farmer discussions, as well as health and farm safety information. Previous evaluation results indicated that the program engaged the farmers in thinking about their health and safety and built commitment to returning to complete the three-year program.

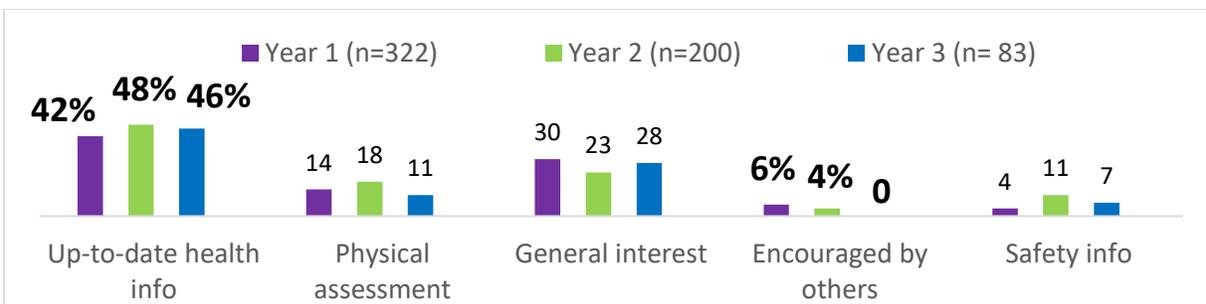
The evaluation of SFF Alberta in 2017-2018 sought to understand the impact of the program over time as participants proceed through the program. Multiple mixed methods were used to collect data from program staff, current workshop participants, people who did not return for subsequent years of the program and people who completed the program.

Program Implementation

In 2017-2018, SFF Alberta engaged a **total of 812 people** across all three years of the program. While the curriculum topics were consistent with previous years of the program, a systematic evidence-informed revision of the substance abuse curriculum was particularly well received by the Hutterite participants.

As in previous years, most of the SFF Alberta resources were dedicated to meeting Hutterite demand for the program. In fact, the **number of new Hutterite participants has more than tripled** from 100 in 2015/16 to 394 in 2017/18.

In each year of the program, Hutterites came to the workshops for **health information**. Local Producers also returned to the workshop for health-related programming. Over time, the Hutterite participants required **less encouragement** from others to attend (all rates in %).



The physical assessment and conversation about results with the RN continued to be an important component of the workshop. Overall, both Local Producer and Hutterite participants found the workshop sessions to be **useful** and **relevant** to their lives.

What Was the Impact of SFF Alberta in 2017-2018?

Health and Well-Being

As they progress through the program, Hutterite participants began to understand health as more than healthy eating and active living. In Year 2, in addition to physical and mental health, their personal Action Plans targeted social health, safety and other (spiritual) health. Hutterites found the focus on mental health and stress management particularly relevant. There is also evidence that by multiple levels, settings and stakeholder groups within the colony, the workshops contribute to **strengthening health literacy** among Hutterites.

“We [as a colony] must learn to handle stress. ... Any information we get on stress management is helpful.”

(Hutterite Year 2)

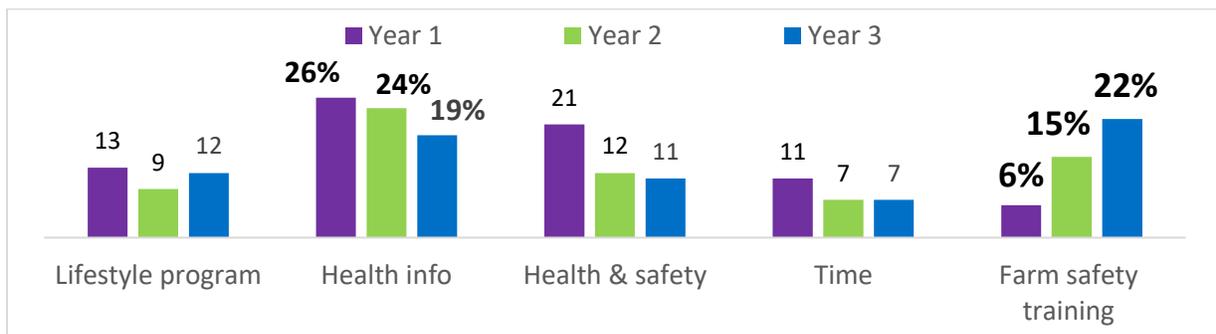
Farm Safety

After each year of SFF Alberta, Hutterite participants reported **heightened awareness of safety** around the colony for adults and children. In both Year 1 and Year 2 workshops, more than half of the Colony Action Plan goals focused on safety. According to focus group participants, they would *“Make farm safety goals based on the most important safety hazards around the colony”* (Hutterite Year 3).

Link between Personal Health and Farm Safety

Both Local Producer and Hutterite participants understood the link between personal health and farm safety, and were especially aware that **stress compromises safe thinking**. Reducing stress, whether by creating positive work environments or enhancing mindfulness and pro-active thinking, were identified by participants as key strategies to improve farm safety.

As Hutterites gained health knowledge, and strengthened health literacy, their **recognized need for farm safety training increased** (Year 1 n=322, Year 2 n= 200, Year 3 n= 83; all rates in %).



In 2017-2018, it also became evident that change processes on the Colonies extended beyond the workshop participants. On some Colonies children and youth participated in workshop activities, such as the alcohol presentation and Colony Action Planning. **Alignment between children's and adults' priorities for Colony safety** revealed a connection between children's learning in the Farm Safety Centre's in-school Safety Smarts program and SFF workshops.

Overall, across the different years, Local Producers and Hutterites believed the workshops were **worthwhile** and **a good investment of time**. Evaluation results show that the workshops start important conversations about farmer mental health, anxiety and stress management. In the Colony context, the workshops strengthen health literacy competencies as participants learn to think about health and safety information in the context of their lives. While Local Producers' understood the link between health and safety, after the workshops most are still seeing farm safety resources that are easy to implement.

Recommendations

The steadily increasing rate of Hutterite participation since 2014-2015 leaves little doubt that SFF Alberta has responded to Hutterite interest in health and safety information. If the program is able to continue, the evaluation learnings suggest the following points for consideration.

1. Develop a multi-pronged approach to farm safety across the lifespan.

- Collaborate with Hutterite leadership to develop a safety program for youth that foster mentor relationships across generations.
- Take a lifespan approach to engage children, youth and adults in distinct, but complementary, ways.

2. Balance responsiveness to context and evidence-informed processes.

- Consistently complete systematic, evidence informed reviews of workshop curriculum during summer months.
- Ensure revisions are respectful of and responsive to Hutterite context and culture.

3. Include easy-to-use, practical and evidence-based farm safety tools for each year of the program.

- Support strengthened health literacy and interest in farm safety by ensuring practical, ready-to-use tools for on-the-spot safety training are available in all workshops.