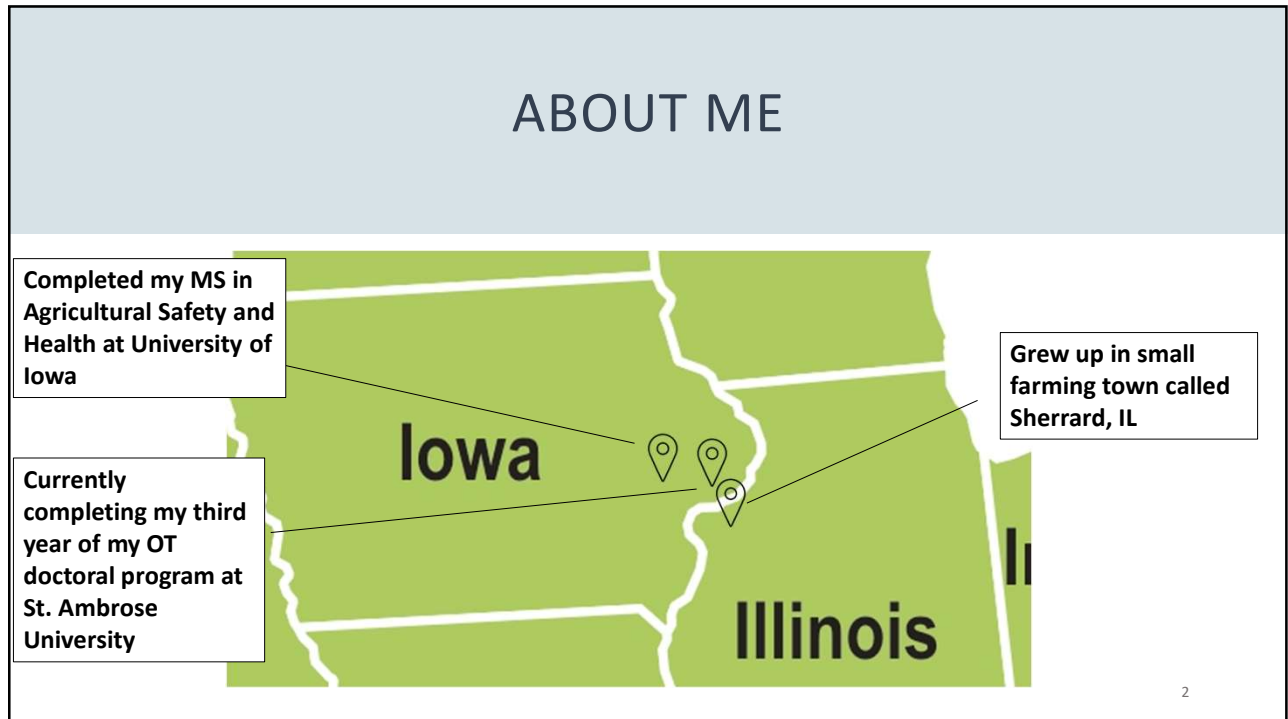


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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Farmers experience high rates of **stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide**. These are due to unique stressors of owning and working the farm as well as physical and social barriers to accessing mental health care services. **Occupational therapists** are in a position to assess and address mental health conditions in farmers and refer farmers and their families to mental health resources online and in their community.



3

OBJECTIVES



UNDERSTAND
Risk factors for mental health conditions related to the occupation of farming.



IDENTIFY
Screening and assessment tools to use with the farming community.



DISCUSS
Ways to address farmer mental health within treatment sessions.



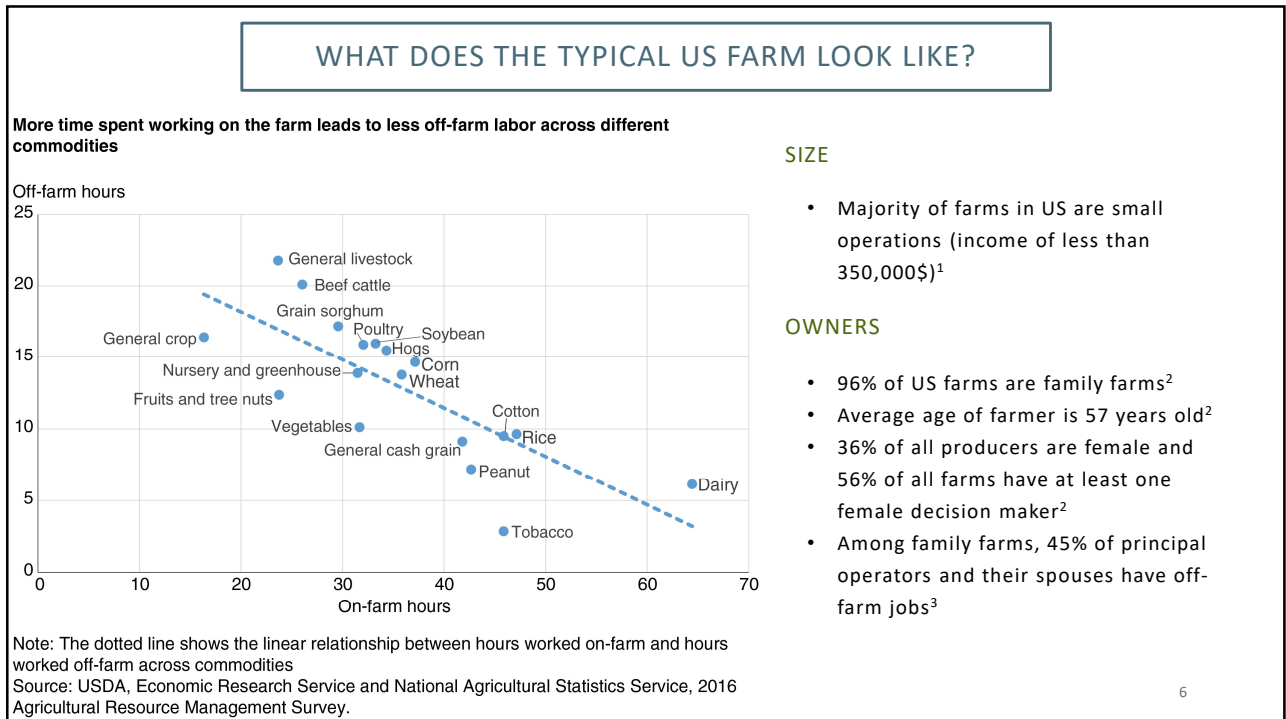
PROVIDE
Online and community resources that could benefit the farming population.

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FARMER MENTAL HEALTH

PREVALENCE

- Farmers have a higher rate of suicide compared to the general population and across other workforces.
- One 2016 report found that the suicide rate among male farmers was **43 per 100,000** compared to 27 per 100,000 for males across all occupations.⁴
- In a 2021 study, researchers found that **29.3%** of agricultural producers met the criteria for **depression** compared to 8.4% of all U.S. adults and **27%** met the criteria for **generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)** compared to 19% in the general population.^{5,6}

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- Among the highest rates of injury and illness across other occupational sectors, though rates have been found to be underreported.⁷
- Farmers have chronic conditions due to aging and years of demanding physical work and exposure to hazards on the farm.⁸
- One 2018 study found that **19%** of farmers had a disability. The most prevalent disabilities among them were **physical difficulties** and **hearing difficulties**.⁹
- **33%** of farmers who committed suicide were reported to have a precipitating health condition compared to 20% in the general population.¹⁰

CHRONIC ILLNESS AND PAIN



8

8



FINANCIAL BURDEN

INCOME \neq PROFIT

- Average farm income is \$43,053²
- Around 43% of farms had positive net cash farm income in 2017²

RISK ASSOCIATED WITH FARMING¹¹

- Production risk
- Price or market risk
- Financial risk
- Institutional risk
- Human or personal risk


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ACCESS TO MEANS

- 74% of farmer suicides were by firearm compared to 50% in the general population¹⁰
- Farmers have access to other means on the farm (machinery, chemicals, etc.)¹⁰

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BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTHCARE

- 
Limited amount of time¹²
- 
Access to affordable, adequate health insurance¹³
- 
Distance to healthcare facilities¹²

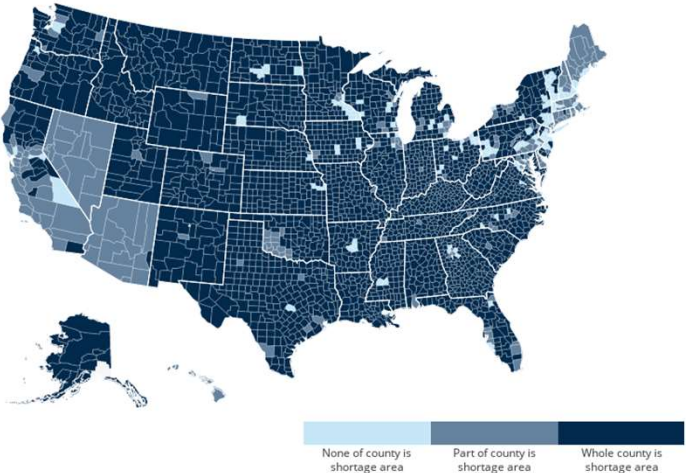


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BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- 
Lack of mental health providers in rural areas^{12,14}
- 
Stigma surrounding mental health^{12,15}
- 
Values: self-sufficiency, work ethic^{12,15}

Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health, by County, 2022



Source: [data.HRSA.gov](https://data.hrsa.gov), November 2022



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OCCUPATIONAL IMBALANCE



Lack of sleep¹⁶



Social isolation¹⁷



Limited leisure time^{16,17}



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Occupational
Therapy's Role



14

WHY OT?^{18,19}



Qualifications



Opportunity



Time



15

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INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. Farming may **not** be the patient's primary job, or the farmer may be retired.
2. Ask specific questions about their **farm work** (what kind of farming (crops/livestock/dairy), who farms with you, how long have you been farming, how has it been these past couple of years).
3. Ask specific questions about **sleep, social engagement, and leisure activities** (how much sleep do you get a night, do you feel rested, what do you do in your free time, are you able to spend time with your family and friends).
4. Explain to the patient that you recently learned about how challenging farming can be and that it can take a toll on a farmer's mental wellbeing. Then see if you can ask a few questions to see how they're doing.

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SCREENING QUESTIONS

PSS-4

Perceived Stress Scale ²⁰

- 4 questions
- Free online
- Assesses stress levels within the last month

PHQ2

Patient Health Questionnaire – 2 item ²¹

- 2 questions
- Free online
- Meant to be a quick screen for depression

GAD2

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale – 2 item ²¹

- 2 questions
- Free online
- Brief way to screen for generalized anxiety disorder

SHA

Staying Healthy Assessment ²²

- Can use questions for quick screen of substance abuse
- In the past year, have you had: (men) 5 or more alcohol drinks in one day? (women) 4 or more alcohol drinks in one day?
- Free online

*SCREENINGS RECOMMENDED IN FARMRESPONSE CLINICAL CONVERSATIONS TOOL DECISION TREE AVAILABLE THROUGH COMPLETION OF AGRISAFE FARMRESPONSE TRAINING²³

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ASSESSMENTS – BRIEF-COPE ²⁴

- Cost: Free – available online
- Administration time: approximately 10 minutes
- Use to see what coping strategies a person uses in times of stress
- Contains 14 subscales:
 - Active coping
 - Planning
 - Positive reframing
 - Acceptance
 - Humor
 - Religion
 - Using emotional support
 - Using instrumental support
 - Self-distraction
 - Denial
 - Venting
 - Substance use
 - Behavioral disengagement
 - Self-blame

Brief-COPE (Brief-COPE)

Instructions:

The following questions ask how you have sought to cope with a hardship in your life. Read the statements and indicate how much you have been using each coping style.

	I haven't been doing this at all	A little bit	A medium amount	I've been doing this a lot
1 I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.	1	2	3	4
2 I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	1	2	3	4
3 I've been saying to myself "this isn't real".	1	2	3	4
4 I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.	1	2	3	4
5 I've been getting emotional support from others.	1	2	3	4
6 I've been giving up trying to deal with it.	1	2	3	4
7 I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.	1	2	3	4
8 I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.	1	2	3	4
9 I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.	1	2	3	4
10 I've been getting help and advice from other people.	1	2	3	4
11 I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.	1	2	3	4
12 I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	1	2	3	4
13 I've been criticizing myself.	1	2	3	4
14 I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	1	2	3	4
15 I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	1	2	3	4
16 I've been giving up the attempt to cope.	1	2	3	4

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ASSESSMENTS – LIFE BALANCE INVENTORY (LBI)²⁵							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: Free – available online • Administration time: approximately 10 minutes • Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall life balance score • Subcategory scores (health, relationships, challenge, and identity) • Stress level using the Perceived Stress Scale • Use to identify areas of occupation that may be unbalanced (social engagement, leisure, etc.) and specific activities a farmer may want to spend more time doing 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Your overall life balance score</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;">2.45 (moderately balanced)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>Your score indicates how satisfied you are with the match between how much time you <i>desire</i> doing all your activities and how much time you are <i>actually</i> doing the activities.</p> <p>Health subcategory score</p> <p>These are the activities you do or want to do that are considered important for physiological health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking care of personal hygiene and bathing • Getting adequate sleep • Relaxing • Getting regular exercise • Eating nutritiously • Managing your health needs <p>Your score indicates how satisfied you are with the match between how much time you <i>desire</i> doing these activities and how much time you are <i>actually</i> doing the activities.</p> <p>These are the activities considered important for physiological health that you do NOT do or want to do:</p> <p>Relationship subcategory score</p> <p>These are the activities you do or want to do that are considered important for relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things with family members • Doing things with spouse/significant other • Doing things with friends • Taking care of children or family members • Having an intimate sexual relationship • Participating in groups (clubs, classes, etc.) • Meeting new people </td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: top; padding: 5px;">2.17 (moderately balanced)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Relationship subcategory score</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;">2.70 (very balanced)</td> </tr> </table>	Your overall life balance score	2.45 (moderately balanced)	<p>Your score indicates how satisfied you are with the match between how much time you <i>desire</i> doing all your activities and how much time you are <i>actually</i> doing the activities.</p> <p>Health subcategory score</p> <p>These are the activities you do or want to do that are considered important for physiological health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking care of personal hygiene and bathing • Getting adequate sleep • Relaxing • Getting regular exercise • Eating nutritiously • Managing your health needs <p>Your score indicates how satisfied you are with the match between how much time you <i>desire</i> doing these activities and how much time you are <i>actually</i> doing the activities.</p> <p>These are the activities considered important for physiological health that you do NOT do or want to do:</p> <p>Relationship subcategory score</p> <p>These are the activities you do or want to do that are considered important for relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things with family members • Doing things with spouse/significant other • Doing things with friends • Taking care of children or family members • Having an intimate sexual relationship • Participating in groups (clubs, classes, etc.) • Meeting new people 	2.17 (moderately balanced)	Relationship subcategory score	2.70 (very balanced)
Your overall life balance score	2.45 (moderately balanced)						
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Relationship subcategory score	2.70 (very balanced)						

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ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN TREATMENT SESSION

1. Take client to a **private area** to do exercises/activities
2. Use information from the initial interview to **initiate conversation** on engagement in occupations.
3. Have client complete self-report questionnaires/assessments at home and bring results to next session. **Discuss any red flags** identified.
4. Once red flags have been identified, provide client with **appropriate resources**. If you have immediate concerns about their safety, discuss with supervisor and follow workplace protocol.
5. Depending on the situation, **take the time to call** the help hotline, general practitioner, mental health counselor, etc. with the client. You could also input the numbers into their phone or show them the online resource on your own computer.

REMEMBER: Asking a person if they've ever thought about suicide or have a plan to commit suicide does **NOT** make them more likely to commit suicide.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Make sure you are up to date with current events in farming. Farmers want healthcare providers who understand their work.²⁶ This may lead to greater trust and engagement in discussions of mental healthcare.
 - Watch the news, read the local newspaper, do your own research online
- Avoid using words like “mental health” and “depression” as much as possible due to the stigma associated with them. Try using words like “wellness”, “life balance”, “stress”.¹⁷

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

LOCAL MENTAL
HEALTH PROGRAMS

LOCAL RELIGIOUS/
SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES

LOCAL EXTENSION
OFFICE



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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

FARMER/ LENDER MEDIATION PROGRAMS

- Coalition of Agricultural Mediation Programs (CAMP)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- United States Division of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA)

TRANSITION/ SUCCESSION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP) through USDA farmers.gov
- UMN Extension



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OTHER RESOURCES

FARM ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

- AgriSafe
- AgrAbility
- Farm Aid


MORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

- [Rural Response to Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Overview - Rural Health Information Hub](#)



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FURTHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

FARMRESPONSE TRAINING

- 3.5 hour online, self-paced training through AgriSafe
- Access to FarmResponse Clinical Conversation tool and list of resources at end of training
- CEU credits

AGRICULTURAL QPR

- 1.5 hour live, online training through AgriSafe
- Understand how to respond to a farmer in mental health crisis

AGRICULTURAL SAFETY AND HEALTH: THE CORE COURSE

- 4 day live, online training through Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health
- Comprehensive training on farmer health and safety
- CEU credits

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SUMMARY

Farmers experience unique stressors that contribute to high rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide. Occupational therapists are in a position to identify, assess, and address a farmer's mental health within their practice.



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THANK YOU

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Live Binder:

<https://www.livebinders.com/b/3046680>

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