

Building Community & Capacity of Care Farms Benefiting Adults With Intellectual and Developmental Differences in the United States: A Demographic Study

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PURPOSE: The goals of this research project are to collect data on current care farms in the United States and to expand awareness of the support they offer. Care farming uses agricultural activities as a therapeutic base for promoting health and wellness. Care farms are common and well funded throughout Europe and the United Kingdom but the movement is still developing in the US. We hope that in the near future, producers presenting as neurodivergent will be recognized by the USDA as an underserved population so funding can be increased to build capacity of care farms in the US. This research project will determine demographic/descriptive characteristics related to care farming and adults with intellectual and developmental differences (I/DD).

DESIGN: The study design is descriptive quantitative. Data are collected through surveys sent to various care farms. Email addresses from the Care Farm Network were used to send the surveys, one to each care farm. To qualify for the study, the care farm had to be located in the US and serve adults with I/DD.

METHOD: The 42 question survey was developed by the four researchers and questions were analyzed by adding responses and using means and averages.

RESULTS: 41 surveys have been completed for a return rate of 34%. Types of farms include 27 (66%) animal husbandry or animal assisted intervention with the rest being vegetables (3), greenhouse (4), fruit orchard (3), and flowers (4). 33 (80%) were nonprofit (501C3) and the others were for profit (6) and LLC (2). The oldest farm was founded in 1969 and 12 were recently founded 2020 - 2023. Most farms rely on volunteers (30). Many farms have a structured training program for the adults they serve. More results will be shared on the poster.

CONCLUSION: Results from the care farm study will be used to help build resources and capacity. Occupational therapists can support care farms by recommending these organizations to adults with I/DD and their family members.

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