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CONVERGENCE BETWEEN FATHER AND YOUTH REPORTS OF HIGH RISK SAFETY BEHAVIOURS ON THE FARM

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Parents assign dangerous farm work to children. Injury and death rates in the Southern USA are high with 40% of US farm youth fatalities (Adekoya and Pratt, 2001) and 30% of youth injuries (NASS, 2001). It is important to understand the degree of similarity in data obtained from youth and their fathers about high-risk behaviours of youth. This study examined reports of 86 farm youth and their fathers about the youths engagement in 25 high risk behaviours. Youth were aged 10–16; when families had more than one child, the youth who was most involved in farming participated in the study. There were significant differences between father and youth reports; fathers markedly underestimated risky behaviours engaged in by youth. For example, only 1% of fathers believed that their child had engaged in the extremely dangerous behaviour of stepping over a running PTO; 11% of youth had done this. Only 8% of fathers believed that the youth had operated a tractor on a steep slope; 66% of youth had done so; 21% of fathers believed youth had operated a tractor near a ditch or creek, 86% of youth had done so; 33% of fathers believed youth had operated a tractor at night, 69% of youth had done so; 59% of fathers believed youth had operated a tractor on a public road, 90% of youth had done so. Youth reported operating tractors at much younger ages than did fathers. Methodological implications of findings are discussed, as are recommendations for safety interventions.