



# The Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit



# Welcome to the Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit

We at the Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention thank you for your interest in learning more about establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW).

Our goal is not to distribute another “drug-free” workplace policy, rather, the purpose of this toolkit is to provide you with a comprehensive document that identifies the steps employers can take to enhance your organizational effectiveness and become a workplace which supports all employees, especially those in recovery from addiction. Strategies that Recovery Friendly Workplaces across the nation, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) have carefully implemented, rigorously evaluated, and deemed effective serve as a central foundation in developing this Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative.

Because of the proven value that employees in recovery bring to the payroll, we are pleased to disseminate information on evidence-based practices and services to address problematic substance use in the workplace and support employees in sustaining their recovery.

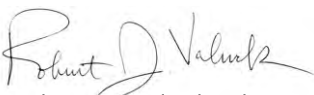
The following SAMHSA recovery definition was adopted by the Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and is used to guide the context and recommendations outlined within this document. We encourage all Colorado businesses to adopt and internalize this definition as they work towards establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace:

***Recovery** is a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. (SAMHSA)*

Because we know addiction has no limitations and that there are many employees who use substances and are not considered to have a substance use disorder (SUD), the general term “substance use (SU)” is utilized throughout this toolkit as it captures and invites a larger population of employees that this initiative is designed to serve and support, at any level of their health and wellness journey. You will find that suggested practices in this toolkit, such as embracing a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and incorporating relevant organizational policies, are common amongst most businesses today and might already be in place at your organization. These practices are proven to work and can be used universally for all employees in any industry. This toolkit merely illustrates how these practices can be applied to employees in recovery and the research-based benefits your organization can gain.

Most employers understand the link between employee well-being and their bottom line. This toolkit is one piece of an overall approach which can improve both. Employers are encouraged to review the resources provided at the end for additional tools and assistance opportunities. We encourage you to share this information with your supervisors and leadership team and implement the suggestions and practices within as they have helped many organizations improve employee performance and retain a healthy, safe, and productive workforce!

Most Sincerely,



Robert J. Valuck, PhD, RPh, FNAP

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These materials are adapted from Recovery Works: Recovery Friendly Toolkit, created through a collaboration between the Connecticut Departments of Labor, Public Health and Mental Health & Addiction Services.

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# 1

THE RECOVERY  
FRIENDLY  
WORKPLACE

## What is a Recovery Friendly Workplace?

A Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) is an organization that uses evidence-based policies and practices to unite the entire organization by recognizing recovery from addiction as a strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery.

RFWs encourage a healthy, safe, and productive work environment where employers, employees, and communities can collaborate to create positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by addiction.

By engaging and applying the research-based practices suggested in this toolkit, organizations are taking a proactive role in creating a set of positive outcomes for their company, including:



## Who Can Use This Toolkit?

The suggestions offered in this toolkit can be applied to any organization in any industry. Organizations are encouraged to customize their Recovery Friendly Workplace practices to meet their legal and safety requirements, reflect the characteristics of their employees, and enhance the image and values of the organization.

## How Long Does it Take?

There is no set time to become a Recovery Friendly Workplace. Because of factors such as the severity of any substance use problems and the workplace culture already established, each organization will vary on the amount of time spent on becoming a RFW. The focus ought to be on the effort to make a positive difference in your workplace and the impact it can have on employees seeking to enter or maintain their recovery.





*“We are happy to be a part of someone’s recovery and that means providing a positive workplace where employees feel welcomed and get the help they need. The Recovery Friendly Workplace has been helpful in us having a resource to turn to for someone who needs help.”*

— Kati Pittendreigh, Manager at NH RFW The Galley Hatch

# 2

INTRODUCTION  
TO PROBLEMATIC  
SUBSTANCE USE,  
ADDICTION, AND  
RECOVERY



## 2.1 The Progression From Substance Use to Addiction

“Addiction” is the condition of an individual who has lost control over their use of a substance or engagement with a problematic behavior. Although an addiction can be quite problematic, it is treatable and can be managed effectively and overcome. Studies show leaders who educate themselves on why people use substances and how it can progress to addiction are more effective in understanding how to support employees in recovery.

### WHY DO PEOPLE USE OR RETURN TO USE?

Most people can relate with the idea of wanting to alter their mood when experiencing unwanted feelings, such as stress, anxiety, grief, and more. For some, that may look like over-eating. For others, that may be shopping or drinking a glass of wine. The National Institute on Drug Abuse provides four main reasons why individuals typically use substances:



#### To feel good

Substances produce intense feelings of pleasure and euphoria that can increase the desire for a person to continue “the chase” for this feeling.



#### To feel better

People who experience anxiety, stress, depression or any uncomfortable or unwanted emotion may use alcohol or other substances to change how they feel.



#### To do better

The pressure to improve performance or focus at work can play a role in experimenting or continuing substance use.



#### Curiosity and social pressure

The need to feel accepted by co-workers, such as participating in a work happy hour, can increase the pressure of partaking in substance use.



## DIFFERENT LEVELS OF USE AND BEHAVIORS

While there are employees who do not use substances, there are employees who do, and may be using legally or illegally. Examples of frequently used substances include alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, opioids (heroin, fentanyl, and prescription pain medication), amphetamines (cocaine, methamphetamine), benzodiazepines, barbiturates, LSD, ketamine, and/or other prescription medication or illicit drugs.

The following is a general overview of different levels of substance use to assist in understanding the various ways employees may be using substances:



### Experimental Use

This involves trying out substances for the first time. For example, experimentation can occur when feeling pressured by work culture or social groups. If introduced when the individual is vulnerable, the chance of increased use is greater.



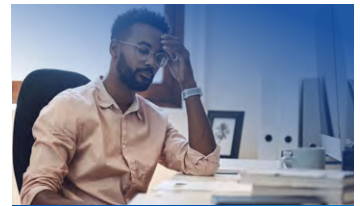
### Social Use

This is a common stage among employees. In this stage, supervisors might hear of employees going out to bars together, engaging in a happy hour culture and may occasionally come to work hung over. While this type of use may not appear to cause disruption to a “normal” or manageable lifestyle to some, coming to work hung over generally results in decreased productivity and increased safety risks for the organization.



### Problematic Use

In this stage, motivation to work declines and behavior changes become obvious. Employees with problematic use are more likely to show up to work under the influence and impaired. These employees exhibit a noticeable decline in performance such as missing deadlines, increased absenteeism, and a tendency to be tardy to work or meetings. For these employees, pre-occupation with substance use begins to eclipse duties and other interests, such as relationships and responsibilities. Additionally, secretive behaviors and isolation may begin.



### Addiction/Substance Use Disorder

In this stage, the continued use of substances becomes uncontrollable and persists regardless of negative consequences. Severe physical, emotional and mental declines are noticeable. Poor performance, job loss, and increased health care expenses are present. Family and friends may be alienated. Financial and legal problems often occur, and suicidal or self-destructive behaviors may be present.

**IMPORTANT TO KNOW: You do not need to wait for a diagnosis or difficult situation to occur to implement the practices in this toolkit. This toolkit can help employees who are at any level!**

## ADDICTION IS A MEDICAL CONDITION


**Strictly speaking, “addiction” is a medical condition.** In 1987, the American Medical Association officially designated “addiction” as a disease, a disease which changes the way the brain functions, prioritizing desires over responsibilities, often interfering with the ability to work, go to school, and have good relationships with friends and family.

**“Substance use disorder” is the clinical term used to describe the disease of addiction.** It is a recurrent use of alcohol and/or other substances that leads to harmful consequences, including significant impairment, health problems, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.

**Addiction does not discriminate** based on a person’s socioeconomic bracket, gender, age, race, educational background or position within an organization.

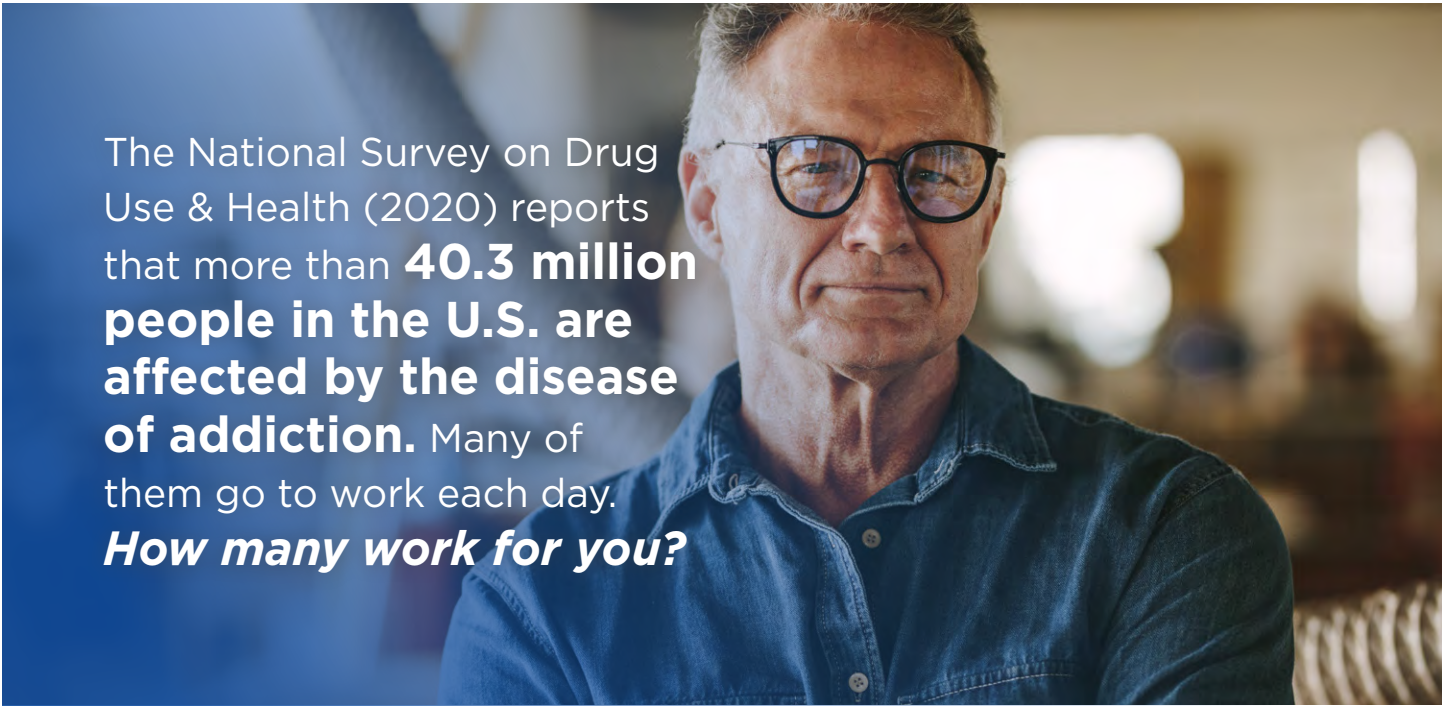
**Although this toolkit focuses primarily on recovery related to substance use,** addiction can occur with processes or behaviors as well. This may apply to compulsive behaviors related to shopping, gambling, gaming, eating, exercising, sexual behaviors, and others.

**Most importantly, addiction is a treatable condition** comparable to someone with cancer, diabetes, or depression and recovery is the expected outcome of treatment.



*“Recovery from a highly treatable yet often maligned and stigmatized disease is possible and—coincidentally—it is essential to walking other people through recovery! We aren’t just here to help someone in a charitable sense. No. We benefit enormously from their recovery. In fact, it’s the people in recovery who often have something truly special to offer everyone around them.”*

—Patrick Gauthier, Director of Healthcare Solutions at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.



The National Survey on Drug Use & Health (2020) reports that more than **40.3 million people in the U.S. are affected by the disease of addiction.** Many of them go to work each day.  
***How many work for you?***

## CAUSES & FACTORS

The exact cause(s) of a substance use disorder, or “addiction,” are not known, but experts have pinpointed the following areas that increase the risk of addiction:

**Family history:** Often, a link to family history and genetic predisposition exists.

**Environmental factors:** This includes family life, school, peer pressure, societal pressures, and exposure to addictive substances.

**Developmental factors:** Research has indicated when substance use begins early in life (prior to age 18), there is a greater likelihood of it evolving into addiction.

**Other factors, including:**

- History of traumatic experiences or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- On-the-job injuries
- Emotional hardship
- Depression
- Stress
- Low self-esteem

## 2.2 What Is Recovery and How Can Employment Help?

**Recovery is a process of change** through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.

This definition does not describe recovery as an end state but rather a continuous process of progression in one's life and can apply to a history of substance use, mental health concerns, and/or physical challenges. Complete symptom remission is neither a prerequisite of recovery nor a necessary outcome of the process.

### FOUR PILLARS OF RECOVERY

There are four pillars which are universal in creating and sustaining a life in recovery:

			
<b>Health</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Learning to overcome, manage, or more successfully live with symptoms and making healthy choices that support one's physical and emotional well-being.	A stable and safe place to live.	Relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.	Meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteer work, or creative endeavors; increased ability to lead a self-directed life; and meaningful engagement in society.

**As evidenced by the fourth pillar, employment is an essential element for sustaining recovery and maintaining financial independence.** Work is one of the best predictors of positive outcomes for individuals with a history of substance use. Individuals who are employed compared to those unemployed are more likely to demonstrate:

- Lower rates of returning to problematic substance use
- Higher rates of long-term recovery
- Less unlawful activity
- Fewer parole violations
- Improvements in quality of life
- More successful transition from residential treatment back into the community

## MANY PATHS TO RECOVERY

In 2020, the CDC and the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that **3 out of 4 people who experience addiction** eventually enter into and maintain their recovery.

The pathways of recovery can look different for each employee and may include professional clinical treatment, use of medications, support from family and friends, faith-based approaches, peer support, and other methods. The following list highlights common pathways to recovery that when supported by employers, increases the opportunity for healthy and productive employees:

- **Managed Use Model or Harm Reduction:** Approaches to help individuals manage their substance use to minimize harmful consequences (e.g., education to prevent alcohol poisoning, overdose, blood-borne pathogens, sexually transmitted infections, etc.).
- **Medication-Assisted Recovery:** The use of medication in combination with counseling to manage physiological and behavioral aspects of addiction.
- **Mental Health Services:** Group and/or individual services such as counseling and therapy.
- **Natural Change:** Being able to change unhealthy habits into healthy habits without outside assistance.
- **Peer-Based Recovery Support Services:** Nonclinical, peer-led services from an individual with lived experience, such as recovery coaching and community/mutual support groups (12-step groups are an example of this).
- **Treatment:** Residential or outpatient programs that include medical, therapeutic, social treatment and supports.



*“We had some employees, one in particular, who had some attendance issues that ultimately led to her dismissal. A couple years after that, the individual called us back and requested to be considered for rehire. She said to me that the reason she was so undependable before is because she was hooked on heroin. Long story short, we agreed to bring her back on a trial basis. She excelled, so we kind of looked at the Recovery Friendly Workplace as a potential source for employees that other folks may not have been looking for. The most rewarding part about becoming a Recovery Friendly Workplace is seeing these folks go from being perceived as a net drain to a net contributor. I take every opportunity I can get to talk to other local businesses about Recovery Friendly Workplace environments.”*

—Dana Lariviere, President & CEO at NH RFW Chameleon Group



# 3

HOW  
PROBLEMATIC  
SUBSTANCE USE  
IMPACTS THE  
WORKPLACE

## 3.1 A Growing Concern

**Substance use and overdose rates have significantly increased in recent years.** The COVID-19 pandemic in addition to an existing opioid crisis, has disrupted the health of many employees. The costs of substance use to employers have soared to billions of dollars through lost production, absenteeism, and other expensive costs, as employers and much of the world's economies struggle to regain stability. Because of this, there is a rising need for solutions and strategies to help address problematic substance use in the workplace and prevent the associated costs to employers.

**5.2 million young adults**  
(1 in 7 aged 18-25)  
**needed substance use treatment.**

.....  
**Only 1.6% or 547,000**  
**received treatment.**


**15.1 million adults**  
(1 in 14 aged 26 or older)  
**needed substance use treatment.**

.....  
**Only 1.4% or 3 million**  
**received treatment.**

### THE IMPACT IN COLORADO

**Not surprisingly, there has been an increased focus on substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic.** With the ongoing opioid overdose epidemic and problematic use of other substances, Colorado has experienced its share of suffering. Communities, families, and individual lives have been shattered, employers in all industry sectors are affected, and our economy has been impacted as well.

- 1 in every 5 Coloradans drinks alcohol excessively, contributing to about five deaths per day.
- Colorado has lost \$5 billion in economic costs due to excessive drinking.
- In 2020, 1,477 Coloradans died of drug overdoses—the most overdose deaths ever recorded in the state, and a 38% increase from 2019, according to data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).
- Opioid overdoses rose by 54% in 2020, accounting for nearly two in three overdose deaths in Colorado.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, the yearly number of marijuana-related hospitalizations increased by 101 percent.
- Fentanyl (a potent opioid) overdoses more than doubled between 2019 and 2020 and increased by ten times since 2016.
- If opioids had not drawn 27,400 prime-age workers out of the labor force, the state's economy would have grown about one-fifth faster.
- Colorado has cumulatively lost an estimated total of 360 million work hours due to opioid use.



A 2019 poll by the National Safety Council revealed that **75% of employers say that their workplace is impacted by opioid use**, and only 17% of them feel prepared to deal with it. **If you are one of the 83% who are not prepared, this toolkit is for you!**

### CHALLENGES TO OBTAINING & MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

Several potential barriers to employment may exist for employees who use substances, such as:

- Unstable work history
- Continued problematic substance use or recurrence after a period of abstinence
- Employers misunderstanding the disease of addiction
- Legal challenges
- Organizational policies which create barriers to hiring people with a legal history
- Scheduling conflicts with recovery support meetings, counseling, and/or treatment

Today, employers are moving from a “zero-tolerance” mentality that emphasizes discrimination and punishment, to a “recovery-friendly” work environment that lowers the barriers for maintaining recovery, emphasizing support, hope, and the economic potential of healthy, engaged employees.

## 3.2 The Economic Costs

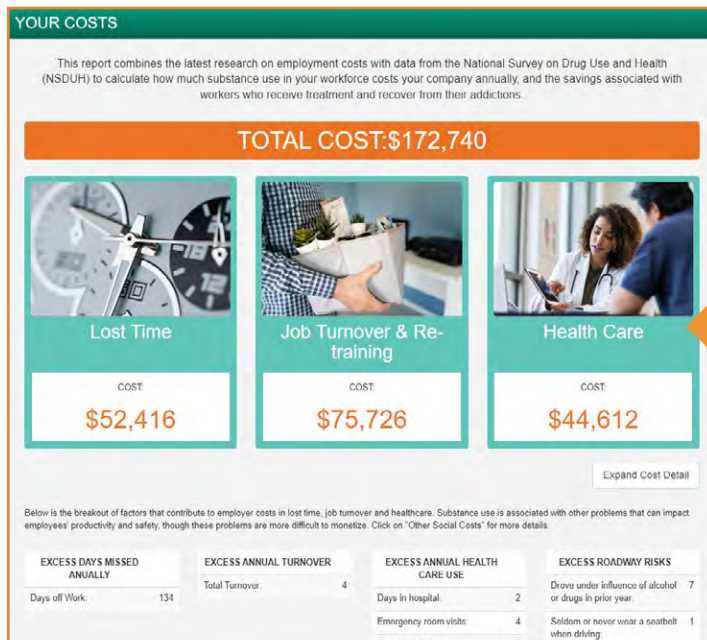
Organizations are increasingly recognizing the negative consequences of problematic substance use in the workplace. In 2020, substance use cost U.S. employers and taxpayers \$696 billion in absenteeism, low productivity, and healthcare.

Studies show that employees who problematically use substances:

- Are absent about 50% more than their co-workers; an average of 24.6 days per year.
- Cost employers anywhere between \$2,600 and \$14,000 annually per employee associated with absenteeism, turnover, lost production, workplace injuries, and health care.
- Have resulted in an increase of 30% in unnecessary costs to employers in the past 3 years.

### A SUBSTANCE USE COST CALCULATOR FOR EMPLOYERS

The National Safety Council has a Substance Use Cost Calculator for Employers. This online tool estimates the total expense in lost production time, job turnover & retraining, and healthcare costs related to substance use for employers in all states, including Colorado. To use this tool, enter your state, the number of employees, your industry, and the calculator will estimate how many employees and dependents use substances (*this number is based on data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the Bureau of Labor Statistics*).



For example, using this online calculator, you can see the costs estimated for a Colorado Professional/Management/Administration Company with 100 Employees.

**Is untreated substance use worth these costs?**

To use the calculator, please visit: [nsc.org/forms/substance-use-employer-calculator](https://nsc.org/forms/substance-use-employer-calculator)

#### WORKPLACE INJURIES & WORKER'S COMP

Research on occupational safety suggests that on-the-job substance use can increase accidents and injuries. Additional studies reported similar findings on work injuries. In recent years, the U.S. Surgeon General reported that the U.S. spends about \$35 billion a year to treat the disease of addiction and another \$85 billion annually to treat the injuries, infections, and illnesses associated with substance use.

#### ABSENTEEISM AND PRESENTEEISM

Whether calling out for the day or leaving work early, lost workdays due to substance use is costly. Employees who problematically use substances are absent about 50% more than their co-workers. Managers, team leads, or co-workers pick up the slack, request overtime, and subject themselves to a decline in job duties.

Because of individuals absent from the labor force due to opioids, it is estimated that since 1999, Colorado's economy cumulatively lost \$21.0 billion in actual economic output.

Presenteeism costs businesses about ten times more than absenteeism. "Presenteeism" refers to workers who are physically present on the job but are either impaired or incapable of performing their job duties.

Production loss is the result of absenteeism and presenteeism.

#### TURNOVER

Employee turnover is another cost related to substance use and is taken seriously because: (1) it's expensive; (2) it disrupts a business's productivity; and (3) it may become increasingly difficult to recruit and train. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that employee turnover can cost organizations about six to nine months of an employee's annual salary, and the National Safety Council (NSC) found that workers who use substances problematically are 40% more likely to report having more than one employer in the last year. A 2020 Retention Report by the Work Institute revealed that 3 in 4 employee turnovers are preventable.

**The good news:** Businesses implementing Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiatives report an increase in their employee retention rates.

#### HEALTHCARE COSTS

Many businesses' healthcare costs are a concern and continue to rise as substance use goes unaddressed. An NSC report cites workers who problematically use substances cost employers about 61% more in healthcare than workers who are in recovery from the disease of addiction.

#### THE HUMAN COST

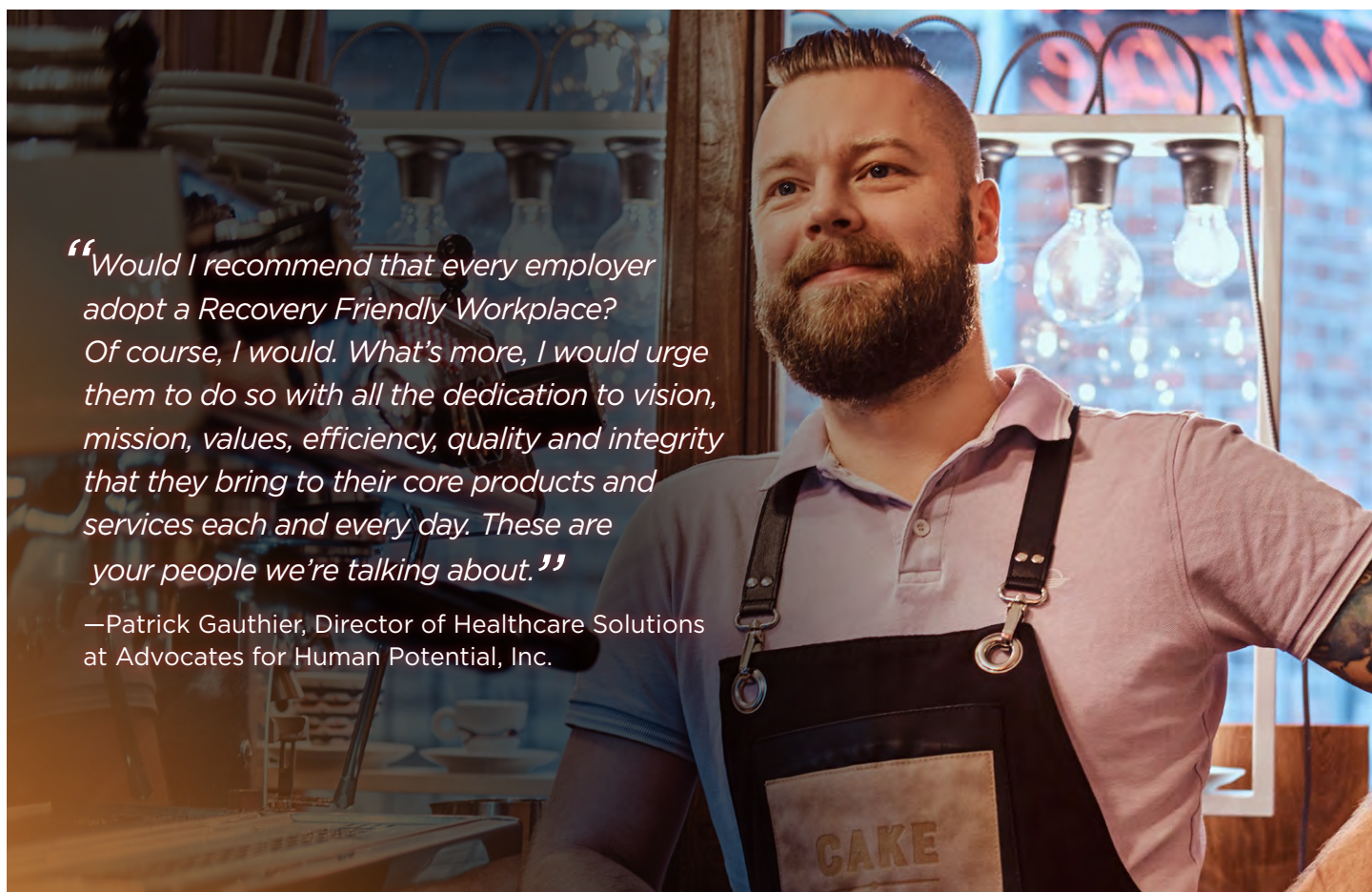
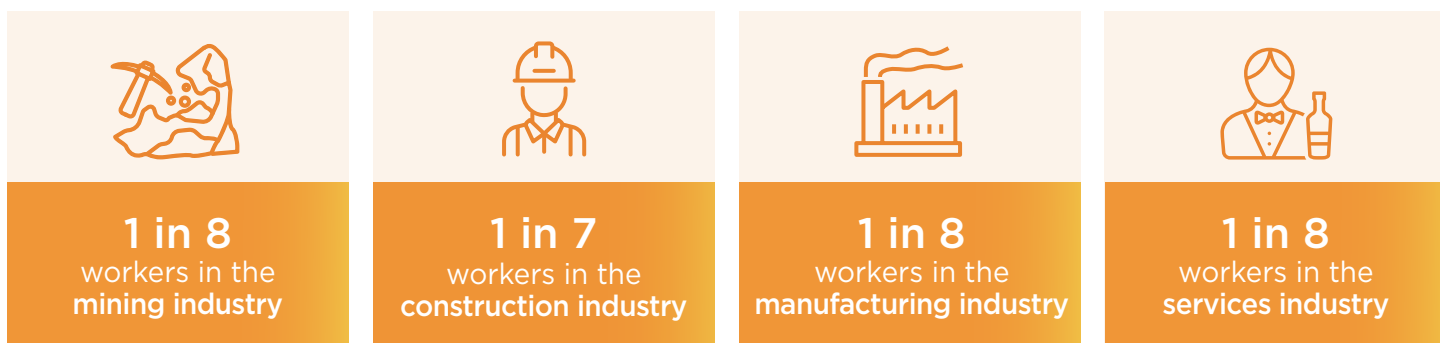
Many of us have seen and know firsthand the human toll the disease of addiction can take. Motor vehicle crashes, legal trouble, domestic abuse, workplace accidents, health problems, and economic hardship are just a few outcomes. Unfortunately, the ultimate price is the loss of an employee's life.

## 3.3 The Power of a Recovery Friendly Workplace

Employers and employees both suffer when problematic substance use is left untreated. On the other hand, employers and employees both benefit when the focus is on the solution, establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace. With a successful RFW, organizations can effectively improve the factors impacting their employees' well-being and the company's bottom line.

**One in 12 workers battles the disease of addiction.**

A report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration stated that alcohol or other drug addiction affects:



## WHY DO WE NEED RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACES?

Seventy-five percent of adults with addiction are part of the U.S. workforce. In 2018, an estimated 164.8 million people aged 12 or older used a substance (about 60.2 percent of the U.S. population). In fact, a 2021 survey of 1,011 U.S. employees found that 1 in 5 admitted they've used alcohol, marijuana, or other substances while employed remotely. *What does this mean?* Substance use can occur at any level of an organization—from the front-line to executives. Consequently, all employees deserve a chance to pursue recovery.

Successful Recovery Friendly Workplaces not only enhance the lives of employees in recovery, they also improve the financial situation of the company. While some cost savings might be more direct than others, improvements in employee morale, attendance, productivity, and engagement may be evident right away.

### Employers who have implemented successful Recovery Friendly Workplaces report:

- Decreases in absenteeism, accidents, downtime, turnover, and theft
- Decreases in the use of medical benefits
- Increases in retention rates and appropriate use of personal time off
- Improvements in health status, morale, and productivity
- Better value out of their payroll
- A positive return on investment
- More employees willing to come forward and ask for help!

## WHY EMPLOY INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY?

It's no secret that individuals impacted by addiction have gone through their share of obstacles in life. Those that have overcome this adversity can offer unique strengths that can't be found in other candidates. Nationally, there are an estimated 22+ million people in recovery—succeeding in establishing healthier homes, lives, and workplaces. There are an estimated 400,000 people in recovery in Colorado alone!



**There are 22+ million people in recovery.**

Qualitative and quantitative research reveals people in recovery are an asset to their organizations because of their drive to have a better life, increased commitment and dedication to the job, and abilities to maintain engagement, performance, and productivity.

### In fact, studies show that each employee in recovery:

- **Is absent approximately 13.7 days fewer each year** compared to those not in recovery and 3.6 days less than the general workforce.
- **Saves employers an average of \$8,500 annually** in turnover, absenteeism, presenteeism, and healthcare costs.
- **Saves employers an average of \$500 annually** in health plan usage costs compared to those not in recovery.





# 4

THE STEPS  
TO BECOME  
A RECOVERY  
FRIENDLY  
WORKPLACE

## 4.1 The 5 Foundational Steps

*Being willing to strengthen the workplace culture, value people in recovery, and implement evidence-based practices for your organization's benefit is an achievable process.* Based on research and experience, the steps to get there act as a guide to help you establish a meaningful and effective Recovery Friendly Workplace.



## 4.2 Step 1: Identify the Purpose and Objectives of a Recovery Friendly Workplace

### THE PURPOSE

***Purpose gives the organization a reason to exist and its employees a reason to go to work.***

The first step in establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace is to identify its purpose and who it will serve.

As mentioned earlier, a Recovery Friendly Workplace is an organization that uses evidence-based policies and practices to unite the entire organization by recognizing recovery from addiction as a strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery.

With an estimated 400,000 Coloradans in recovery, many of which are employees, this initiative is designed to serve those employees as well as those who may still be struggling.

### THE OBJECTIVES

***To achieve this purpose, Colorado has identified and adopted two objectives that give this toolkit a clear direction:***

**Objective 1: Establish a culture that values a healthy work environment and offers opportunity for employee recovery, wellness, and retention.** (*See Section 4.4*)

*With a supportive culture, employees have the opportunity to be successful. To accomplish Objective 1, employers are strongly encouraged to:*

- Evaluate if the current culture glorifies, normalizes, or perpetuates substance use.
- Evaluate if the current culture and policies reduce barriers for employees to enter recovery.
- Assess if the organization's principles align with a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Address any gaps that may be present.

**Objective 2: Implement core practices that address problematic substance use and offer the opportunity for employees to maintain recovery and wellness.** (*See Section 4.5*)

*With a healthy and supportive cultural foundation in place, employees are given the opportunity to maintain a healthy and productive work life. To accomplish Objective 2, employers ought to:*

- Enforce organizational policies that align with company's principles and culture.
- Facilitate employee education to increase safe and healthy attitudes and behaviors at work.
- Engage in customized leadership training to maximize the effectiveness of the Recovery Friendly Workplace.
- Offer evidence-based services and programs to support employee well-being and productivity.

## 4.3 Step 2: Adopt and Practice Principles

*Principles are foundational beliefs intended to guide culture, expected behaviors, and best practices in the workplace.* To achieve the purpose and objectives of a Recovery Friendly Workplace, organizations must understand who they are and what they collectively believe. The principles listed are adopted from SAMHSA’s Guiding Principles of Recovery, which are founded on research, practice, and the personal experience of recovering individuals.

### RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE PRINCIPLES

Because these principles are beliefs all organizations are encouraged to embrace to establish a successful Recovery Friendly Workplace, we encourage you to read them as if you already claimed each belief.



## We Believe In...

### Unity

First and foremost, unity is the cornerstone of a solid team of employees, which includes people in recovery. By caring for the well-being of all our employees, we as an employer can foster a unified, healthy, and productive workplace.

### Honesty

Honesty is fundamental to employer–employee relations and is essential to employees achieving recovery and maintaining a recovered way of life.

### Hope

Addiction is a highly treatable disease and people in recovery live long and productive lives when given the opportunity. It is in everyone’s best interest for the workplace to convey this motivating message of hope to its employees.

### Trust

Trust, like honesty, is fundamental to employer–employee relations. Employees want to trust us as an employer to do the right thing and offer people an opportunity to recover and return-to-work. Employees trust the workplace will not stigmatize and discriminate. Employers trust the struggling employee will seek and accept the help they need to achieve and maintain their recovery. Organizations trust the health, behavioral health and recovery support programs in our communities. And we trust everyone will come to work ready to do their best, participating fully as a member of the team.

### Awareness

Substance use exists on some level in every workplace. We do not ignore the problem. By acknowledging addiction as a disease, making resources and tools available to support recovery, and promoting prevention and treatment throughout the organization, we will remain a Recovery Friendly Workplace.

### Uniqueness

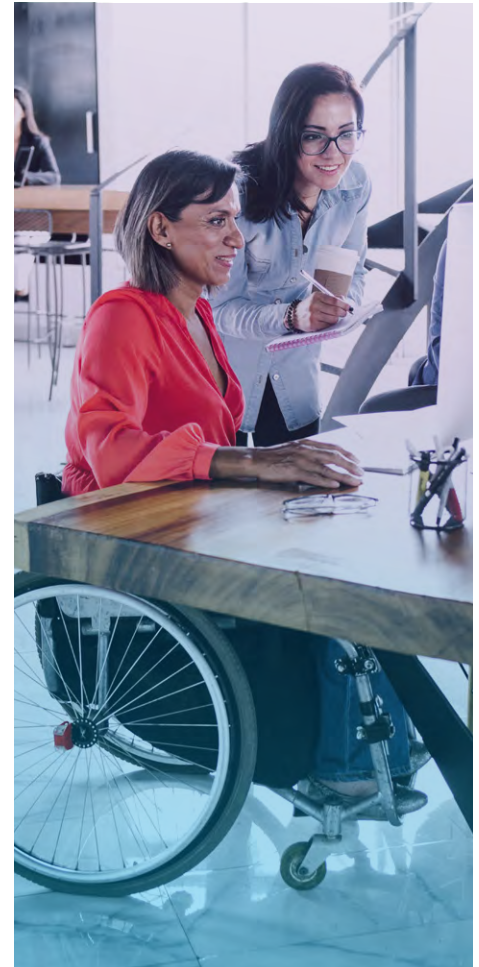
No two people are exactly alike. Recovery is personalized to meet each person’s unique needs. Each employee defines their own goals in life and participates in designing the path to achieving their goals. As such, the workplace can appreciate each person’s unique needs, talents, and contributions by offering an array of programs, services, and accommodations to meet and support individual needs. Each person can be expected to bring the very best of their unique talents to work. Respecting and appreciating the uniqueness of all people— including people in recovery —is core to a Recovery Friendly Workplace.





## Responsibility

Employers are responsible for providing the opportunity to effectively address substance use and to develop a recovery friendly working environment. We also know, acknowledge, and respect the fact that each employee is responsible for their own recovery and performance at work.



## Relationships

An important factor in the recovery process is the presence and involvement of people who believe in the person's ability to recover, and offer hope, support, and encouragement. Employers play a vital role in this process. The old adage that our greatest resources are our human resources is especially true when working with people in recovery. We believe in forming and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships with employees, knowing that supportive relationships reinforces recovery and increases engagement.



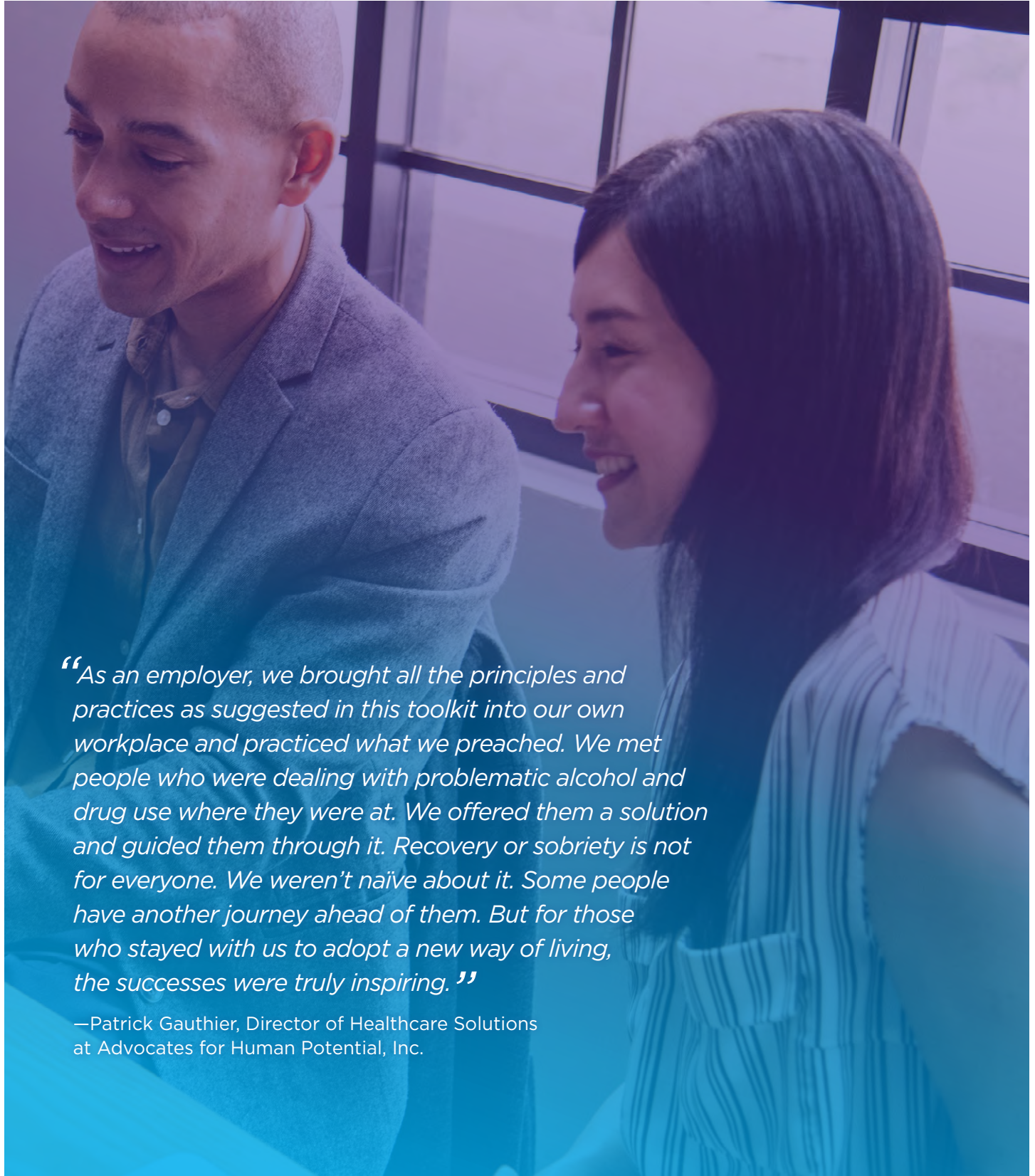
## Humility

Addiction is a medical condition, and we make every effort to set aside any presumptions and judgments regarding recovery. Employers and employees who are open-minded and willing to learn from experts, those with lived experience, and each other will warmly embrace recovery in the workplace.

## Purpose

Purpose gives the organization a reason to exist and its employees a reason to go to work, and it gives individuals with a history of substance use a reason to stay in recovery. All employees have a purpose in the organization they work for and can make an impact that benefits society.

**Question to Ask:** Which of these principles most align with your current work culture, and which would you like to strengthen as you develop your RFW?



*“As an employer, we brought all the principles and practices as suggested in this toolkit into our own workplace and practiced what we preached. We met people who were dealing with problematic alcohol and drug use where they were at. We offered them a solution and guided them through it. Recovery or sobriety is not for everyone. We weren’t naïve about it. Some people have another journey ahead of them. But for those who stayed with us to adopt a new way of living, the successes were truly inspiring.”*

—Patrick Gauthier, Director of Healthcare Solutions  
at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.

## 4.4 Step 3: Establish the Recovery Friendly Foundational Culture

*The Recovery Friendly Workplace is intended to unify the entire organization*, not to target a specific demographic, position, or segment of an organizational chart. When an employer fosters a Recovery Friendly Workplace environment, they are making a decision to minimize adverse working conditions and factors that may contribute to employee problematic substance use and boost elements that build resiliency for all employees. Employers who are recovery friendly embrace the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion and a mindset of overall organizational well-being. This serves as a foundation for effective implementation of all Recovery Friendly Workplace practices.

### ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT CULTURE, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

**Policies dictate what needs to happen and practices determine how it happens.**

*Each workplace has its own challenges related to health and wellness in addition to differing readiness to approach these topics.* Organizations and industries are also affected by substance use to a different degree.

It is important to understand the current needs of employees who will be best-served by the Recovery Friendly Workplace and assess the organization's readiness for implementing Recovery Friendly Workplace practices. In addition to the [Substance Use Cost Calculator](#), conducting a needs assessment can gauge the extent to which the organization supports their employees in recovery.

**A needs assessment is the process of identifying the *current* state of an organization, determining the desired future state of the organization, and outlining a plan to bridge the gap between them.**

When assessing the current state of your organization, involving all major segments of your workforce will provide a more accurate perspective. Many successful workplaces have found that cooperation, collaboration, and shared responsibility between management and staff are the cornerstones of a successful Recovery Friendly Workplace.

### Determine the Organization's Readiness By Getting a Baseline

*Document what the workplace is like right now.* This pretest, or baseline, information gives something to compare with after the Recovery Friendly Workplace has been developed and implemented.

This can be accomplished by assessing costs associated with absenteeism, accidents, and turnover rates. A needs assessment can also include a review of workplace legal mandates, executive mandates, mission, goals, culture, internal and external constraints, facilities, resources, and the knowledge base. A variety of additional data points can also be considered in this assessment such as, health plan and pharmacy claims, pharmacy data, behavioral health related disability trends, health risk assessment results, and [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) trends such as management referrals and utilization.



Understanding and addressing factors that affect employment for individuals in recovery are critical to the Recovery Friendly Workplace’s success. **For your assessment, consider the following:**

ASSESSMENT	WE DO THIS WELL	THIS MAY NEED EXPLORATION & IMPROVEMENT	THIS MAY BE A PROBLEM AREA FOR US
Our organization knows that substance use impacts 1 in 11 workers, therefore we do not need to wait for a crisis to arise. We believe our organization could benefit from a Recovery Friendly Workplace.			
Our organization understands what to do when an employee needs help. We are not zero-tolerance.			
Our organization understands the value and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion and that is reflective in the way we hire, retain, and engage employees with a history of substance use and those in recovery.			
Our organization accepts the disease of addiction as a medical condition.			
Our organization solicits ideas from our employees to contribute in supporting recovery in the workplace. We understand that employees who participate in the solution can increase the chances for recovery.			
Our organization addresses stigma related to mental health and substance use. Our employees feel comfortable accessing our resources and support.			
Our organization trains its leaders on how to handle substance use amongst employees.			
Our leaders understand how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries and are aware of the resources they can provide.			
Our leaders model the behavior we expect out of our employees.			
Our organization evaluates to what extent alcohol or other substances use exists in our workplace culture. We consider if our events involve alcohol and if our employees gather regularly outside of work at bars or other social events that promote alcohol or other substance use. We also consider how comfortable our organization would be hosting an event that does NOT involve alcohol.			
Our organization coordinates or encourages participation in activities that promote health (wellness, philanthropic, community-focused activities).			
Our organization provides <b>equitable</b> benefits, and we have effectively communicated and promoted resources available and supportive to recovery.			

## Understand the Employee's Individual Needs

***One of the essential areas in establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace is understanding employees' individual needs.*** Research shows that all employees have basic needs in organizations, such as the need for job security, mentorship, wages and salary, healthy relationships with co-workers and leaders, equitable programs and services, and inclusion. In addition to basic needs, these employees' unique needs may also include flexible schedules to allow for attending support or treatment appointments, as well as a responsive workplace which addresses factors that cause barriers to well-being. When employees' needs are understood and met, it can serve as one of the biggest factors to help sustain their recovery as well as improve their performance, engagement, and commitment to the workplace.

## Expert Consultations

***Consulting with experts can be extremely helpful for gaining a broader perspective*** on the issues that you might face in your particular workplace. Consulting with people who know your industry well, are familiar with your organizational structure, and know the issues surrounding substance use in the workplace can help you design a formal survey tailored to your workplace's particular circumstances and needs. These experts might include researchers, union representatives, an EAP or local non-profit organization representative, and/or external human resource experts.

## PREPARE THE WORKPLACE

***Every role in an organization has key responsibilities in building an environment supportive of all its workers, and yes, also of those in recovery.***

### The Employer's Role

***Organizational leadership is largely responsible for setting the supportive tone for Recovery Friendly Workplace efforts.*** Employers must disseminate the rationale for the Recovery Friendly Workplace in ways that are practical, personally meaningful, and relevant to job responsibilities. When an employer takes this approach, employees are more likely to participate.

### The Human Resources' Role

***Human Resource staff have a responsibility to implement policies and procedures equitably within an organization.*** They also have an integral role in protecting the safety of all employees. Therefore, they are a critical partner in communicating Recovery Friendly Workplace policies and practices effectively.



## The Leader's Role

*Because of their direct interactions with employees, leaders, such as supervisors and managers, have numerous responsibilities* that are critical to the success of a Recovery Friendly Workplace, such as:

- Objectively evaluating and discussing performance with employees.
- Treating all employees fairly, in a respectful manner that is free from judgement and bias and does not attempt to diagnose employees.
- Acquiring and applying the knowledge regarding Recovery Friendly Workplace practices fairly and firmly.
- Highlighting positive behaviors that are healthy, safe, and productive—and offering constructive, informal feedback to clarify expectations, correct misperceptions, and communicate standards.
- Sharing the resources offered by the employer and encouraging employees to self-refer for treatment, counseling, or other support.
- Keeping the lines open for communication.
- Advocating for employees.


## The Employee's Role

*Establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace that is safe, healthy, and productive is everyone's responsibility*, including each employee. It is an employee's responsibility to perform the necessary functions of their job in a safe and healthy manner, and it is strongly encouraged that employees seek the appropriate support(s) through all available resources.




## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

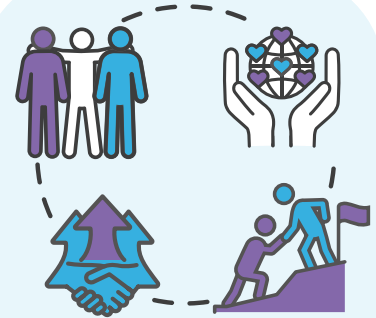
*It is critical today to understand and promote the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace.* This refers to the ways in which employers engage with, value, and support employees despite their race, age, gender, ability, nationality, etc. These principles also apply to the people in your organization who are in recovery. Broadening DEI to include those experiencing addiction as well as other mental health concerns is a critical component in a Recovery Friendly Workplace.



**Diversity:**  
Acknowledging and accepting the presence of differences between employees in an organization—to include employees with a history of substance use.



**Equity:**  
Providing fair opportunities for all employees based on their individual needs.



**Inclusion:**  
Hearing and valuing all employees, regardless of their differences.

Reports show that when employees feel they are included, accepted, and belong at work, employers experience:



- Increased employee retention, engagement, and commitment
- Increased productivity and results
- Improved learning and performance
- Improved health
- Improved work relationships

*“With the implementation of these principles, and the support of the individual employees’ recovery needs, the culture of Step Denver has transformed dramatically. The organization has almost no employee turnover, client satisfaction has increased considerably, employee sick time is almost never utilized, and the moral and interpersonal employee interaction is extremely positive.”*

—Paul L. Scudo, Executive Director of Step Denver, Men’s Addiction Recovery Program

## Transcend Stigma in the Organization

**According to the World Health Organization, stigma is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion.** Many employees in recovery experience stigmatization that leads to prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and limited opportunities to participate fully in employment based on a history of substance use. Perpetuating stigma surrounding the disease of addiction spreads the problem and negative costs associated to your business. SAMHSA and the CDC recommend workplaces provide training to managers and workers to overcome the misunderstanding and bias against employees in recovery.

### Ways to Reduce Stigma in the Organization:



- Provide education regarding the myths and misconceptions about the disease of addiction and other mental health disorders
- Share success stories and positive depictions of individuals in recovery
- Share information regarding recovery support
- Offer forums to educate employees on the disease of addiction

**Mindful Language.** *Employers are strongly encouraged to commit to help reduce the stigma related to mental health and addiction through careful use of language in the office.* If deemed necessary, such as a training or private HR conversation, utilizing language considered to be “person-first” is necessary to decrease stigma in the workplace. While there is no set of rules applicable to all businesses, the following guideline can help you:



- Do not refer to others by a known or suspected diagnosis. If people have a condition; they are not the condition. Using terms like “addict” or “diabetic” identifies the person as their disorder, as opposed to saying, “a person with an addiction or diabetes.”
- Refrain from using mental health terms to generalize behaviors. (i.e., do not say someone is ‘OCD’ because of preferring neat surroundings). This can be demeaning and increase stigma.
- Avoid using terms such as ‘crazy’, ‘nuts’, ‘insane’, etc., which continue to foster misunderstanding and stigma.
- Be educated and mindful of any stigmatizing language used, even in privacy.
- Focus on creating an environment where people feel comfortable seeking support.
- In essence, “Treat others the way you want to be treated,” including how you speak about them.

for More on ways to eliminate stigma can be found in the [Resources for Employers](#) section of this toolkit.

## Hire Employees With A Background

***Some employers require a background check before deciding whether an employee can be hired or keep their job.*** If enough time has past since a prior conviction, this is a talent pool worth consideration for hire!

- **Recovering Employees = Motivated Employees.** There are instances where people with a history of substance use have been involved with the criminal justice system. An estimated one-half of all individuals in the criminal justice system have experienced problematic substance use. Justice involvement presents unique barriers for people who have made a decision to turn their life around, enter into recovery, and wish to obtain and maintain work.

Part of valuing a diverse workforce includes hiring any type of person who is the right fit for the job, even if they have a past. Research highlights when employers hire employees with a past record, because they believed they were right person, they witnessed a quality of work that was as high or higher than those without a record. It is suggested that employers give job applicants with records a fair chance and assess applicants equitably based on knowledge, skills, and abilities rather than their background, especially if there has been significant time since an incident.

- **“Ban the Box”** or [Colorado Chance to Compete Act](#). Also referred to as “fair chance hiring,” this policy aims to reduce unemployment for individuals convicted of a felony by preventing employers from asking about criminal histories on job applications. As of January 2020, 35 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 150 cities and counties have adopted a “Ban the Box” policy for public employment. In Colorado it is called “Chance to Compete.” Twelve states, including Colorado, have also mandated the removal of conviction history questions from job applications for private employers.
- **Work with an Employment Specialist.** SAMHSA advises that evidence-based supportive employment programs, such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS), have worked with justice-involved individuals and help them not only obtain employment, but keep it. The return on investment is over three times higher for IPS compared to traditional vocational services. To date, there has not been a group of people discovered for which IPS has not been effective. As such, we encourage businesses to be open to working with an employment specialist, if contacted. Supportive employment specialists take the time to get to know each business and each individual applicant to create a good match. Employment specialists will provide follow-up services to assist with onboarding, training, and continuous support for both the employer and employee.
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit.** The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal income tax credit that encourages employers to hire job seekers most in need of employment and on-the-job experience. Targeted at specific groups, such as individuals with a past felony conviction, the WOTC can reduce employer federal tax liability by as much as \$2,400 to \$9,600 per new hire.



## 4.5 Step 4: Implement the Core Practices of a Recovery Friendly Workplace

*With a clear understanding your organization's purpose, objectives, beliefs, and culture, you are ready to effectively implement practices central to achieving and sustaining a Recovery Friendly Workplace.*

Successful Recovery Friendly Workplaces have at least the following core practices:

[4.5.1 Organizational Policy](#)

[4.5.2 Employee Education](#)

[4.5.3 Leadership Training](#)

[4.5.4 Evidence-based Services and Programs](#)





### 4.5.1 Organizational Policy

**Policies provide a roadmap for achieving your organization’s mission.** Substance use-related policies that align with your workplace culture and principles are one cornerstone of a successful Recovery Friendly Workplace. These policies are critical to promote healthy and productive organizations and reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of workplace substance use as well as any barriers to achieving and maintaining recovery.

#### OBJECTIVE

**Policies related to substance use help ensure employee understanding of your position on problematic substance use** and support of recovery in the workplace. At minimum, effective policies include:

- Rationale (e.g., employer’s stance, laws, regulations, organizational goals).
- Expectations for compliance (e.g., who, what, when, where).
- The protections of employees who come forward and ask for help including:
  - Options offered for assistance and how the resources can be used (more details can be found in the [Evidenced-Based Services and Programs](#) section).
  - Leave options available if an employee needs to take time away from work to engage in treatment/support services.
- Consequences for violating the policy (e.g., discipline, referral for assistance, termination).
- Whether or not drug testing is a part of the policy and under what circumstances this would occur (additional details below).

#### DO I NEED TO DRUG TEST MY EMPLOYEES?

**While Colorado employers have the right to drug test employees, it does not necessarily mean that you need to.** The decision to test employees can depend on several factors, such as federal regulations or the type of occupations in the organization (whether safety/security-sensitive). Many employers choose not to drug test potential or existing employees due to experiencing a workforce shortage and wanting to fully staff their organizations. Many employers also express that what employees do when they are outside of work is not their concern.

However, if your organization does choose to adopt drug-testing policies, it is critical those policies are in alignment with your recovery friendly culture and universally implemented; they cannot be “selective” to just certain employees under certain circumstances. For instance, if it is determined an employee will be tested if they are involved in a workplace accident, testing must take place for every employee involved a workplace accident, whether they are a front-line or C-suite employee.

### Positive Drug Tests

While it is up to the employer to choose whether to drug test employees or not, it is also their discretion as to the course of action to be taken and/or services offered to employees when there is a positive drug test. These details ought to be included in your policy in addition to how the organization plans to protect the confidentiality of employee drug-testing records.

Although Colorado is an “at-will” state regarding employment termination, due to the cost of turnover and the intent to help employees be successful, it is typically to an employer’s benefit to avoid turnover and support struggling employees by providing/mandating time off and engagement with the employee assistance program (EAP).

### Department of Transportation

Employees who work in a DOT-regulated, safety-sensitive job are required to be referred by their employer to a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) if they have a positive drug test. A SAP is a specially-trained professional who evaluates employees who have violated a DOT drug and alcohol regulation and makes recommendations concerning education, treatment, additional testing, and follow-up.

Employers can support recovery by having a written Self-Identification Policy, which encourages safety-sensitive employees to ask for help before a DOT rule violation occurs. When a written self-identification policy exists, the employer does not need to confirm with a drug test, the employee doesn’t incur a DOT rule violation, and can move forward to get help. Because the DOT is federally regulated, this policy can be applied to any state within the U.S. For more information, please contact the DOT Office of Drug & Alcohol Policy & Compliance regarding Substance Abuse Professionals at [transportation.gov/odapc/sap](https://transportation.gov/odapc/sap). For a sample self-identification policy, please see the [Resources for Employers](#) section at the end of this toolkit.

## ETHICAL & LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

***When it comes to creating or revising workplace policies***, employers typically have questions and concerns, such as:



- Is this something I really have to do?
- What, exactly, is being required of me?
- Will it be expensive?
- Will it make my employees angry or resentful?
- Can I get into trouble if I do something wrong?
- How do I avoid getting sued?

These are all legitimate concerns. As it pertains to Recovery Friendly Workplaces and other employee-related policies, it is important for all employers to become familiar with laws and regulations related to the following:

- Employee privacy and confidentiality
- Federal, state and local regulations (including Colorado’s marijuana legalization)
- Potential conflicts between state laws vs federal laws
- Employer rights vs employee rights
- Union relationships
- Industry regulations and standards
- Reasonable suspicion and drug testing regulations
- Worker’s Compensation
- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Mental Health Parity Act
- Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA)
- Equal Opportunity Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act (more on ADA below)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (more on HIPAA and confidentiality below)

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, of 1990, as amended in 2008, establishes requirements for equal opportunities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications for citizens with disabilities. People in recovery from a mental illnesses or substance use disorder typically fall under the protection of the ADA. However, each situation is unique, and there is no ‘one size fits all’.

The ADA requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with physical or mental disabilities that do not impose an undue hardship on the employer. A “reasonable accommodation” is an employer-approved adjustment in the work environment, or in the way a job is performed, that enables an individual to perform the essential functions of their position. Employees are encouraged to connect with their HR department or consultant for any questions related to the interactive process required under the ADA. Additional information is available in the [Resources for Employers](#) section of this toolkit.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH CONFIDENTIALITY?

**Overall, employee health issues must be kept confidential in the workplace.** Fear of stigma and being discriminated against can prevent many individuals struggling with substance use from seeking help from their managers. Confidentiality is not only the employee's legal right, but when employers adhere to confidentiality regulations and communicate this to its staff, it helps employees feel protected from job loss, legal ramifications, embarrassment, and judgment related to their health status.

It is important to understand the confidentiality of employees' medical information is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, openly discussing an employee's medical/health status or making reference to an employee's medical/health status in the office without the employee's consent could be a violation of HIPAA and could result in fines or other sanctions to your organization.

## COMMUNICATION OF POLICIES

**A key to having effective Recovery Friendly Workplace policies is ensuring they are clearly communicated to all staff.** Clear communication of these policies reduces misunderstanding and uncertainties while increasing opportunities for productive operations. It is important for employers to provide easy access to written policies and advise employees where they can reference it at any given time (lunch/break room, intranet, employee portal, etc.). It is equally as important for the leadership team to communicate such policies through demonstrated support and modeled behavior in all regard ([please refer to 4.5.3. Leadership Training](#)).

You can communicate your Recovery Friendly Workplace policy or changes to your existing policy simply by using the following statement:

*“Our company has made a commitment to become a Recovery Friendly Workplace.*

*We are an equal opportunity employer. This means we value the diversity, inclusion and health and safety of all employees, including those in recovery from a physical, mental health, or substance-related concern.*

*It also means we are committed to reducing any stigma associated with problematic substance use and mental health concerns in our organization.*

*As we become a Recovery Friendly Workplace, please know that we will be communicating policies and practices intended to bring about positive results within our workplace and the community. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact [Name of contact.]”*

Additional recommendations regarding adapting Recovery Friendly Workplace-related policies to your organization are included at the end of this toolkit; recommendations may vary based on location, industry, and business. The best way to avoid legal concerns is to collaborate with human resources, legal counsel, health and safety representatives, consultants, or experts to develop and universally-implement organizational policies. This ensures that relevant organizational policies, regulations, practices, and sanctions are compliant with applicable statutes and corresponding regulations. For resources about constructing an organizational policy, including sample written policies, please see the [Resources for Employers](#) section at the end of this toolkit.



## 4.5.2 Employee Education

Education is key to uniformly adopting and modeling safe and healthy attitudes and behaviors at work. Executives, management, and non-supervisory employees at all levels need information about the workplace challenges associated with the problematic substance use. It is equally important that the entire workforce be familiar with the benefits of the Recovery Friendly Workplace, particularly when they are supported by other health and wellness programs and activities. Research shows that for the Recovery Friendly Workplace to effect positive change, everyone must be willing to understand and actively support the process.

### OBJECTIVE

***Providing education related to problematic substance use, addiction, and recovery to all employees increases opportunities*** for recovery, optimal job performance, and workplace safety. At a minimum, successful Recovery Friendly Workplace employee education includes:

- The definition of addiction and recovery
- Types and effects of substances
- Symptoms of problematic substance use
- Anti-stigma information to address myths and misconceptions regarding mental health and substance use disorders
- The effects on performance, conduct, co-workers, and the organization as a whole
- The organization's substance use policy and Recovery Friendly Workplace efforts
- Relevant health topics, resources, programs, services, and accommodations available that are supportive to and promote recovery
- The employee's confidentiality and privacy rights

Means of educational activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Distribution of written materials
- Interactive presentations
- Webinars
- Lunchtime employee forums
- Employee substance use awareness days
- Other activities that meet the needs of employees and fit the model of the business

*“It was important that the employees know and understand that their personal recovery was paramount to the organization’s overall success. Healthy employees in a workplace supporting their personal recovery ultimately encouraged those employees to perform at optimal levels and provide the best services to the clients we were serving.”*

—Paul L. Scudo, Executive Director of Step Denver, Men’s Addiction Recovery Program



### 4.5.3 Leadership Training

*Leaders have a key role in establishing a Recovery Friendly Workplace*, which includes addressing problematic substance use and providing supportive resources and programs that encourage healthy and productive behaviors. Customized leadership training that takes into account the particular characteristics of your organization is strongly suggested to maximize the effectiveness of your Recovery Friendly Workplace.

#### OBJECTIVE

*Leadership training ensures that all supervisors, managers, directors, etc. understand their specific responsibilities* for initiating and carrying out Recovery Friendly Workplace practices. Depending on the size of your organization, you may have internal staff who can deliver this training, or you may seek for a consultant or local initiative to deliver it for you. It is important that all supervisory and management staff receive the same training to ensure consistency across the organization.

Successful Recovery Friendly Workplace leadership training includes: Policies relevant to identifying workplace performance problems, including reasonable suspicion; laws related to employment, leave, disability and reasonable accommodation; the roles of managers, human resources, and EAP resources.

#### Identifying Problems

An essential focus of leadership training is recognizing and addressing workplace performance issues.


It is not the employers' job to diagnose a substance use or mental health disorder; however, observation is key to early detection of emerging patterns of performance and attendance problems. Early detection allows managers to address potential problems before performance or attendance deteriorates to the point that the employee has little chance of remediating the situation. Addressing potential issues before they become serious problems is an important step in establishing a safe, healthy, and productive workplace.



While the following list is not all-inclusive, it does represent common signs that may suggest an employee is experiencing personal issues which could affect job performance:

- Deterioration in work attendance or performance
- Alteration of personal appearance
- Mood swings or attitude changes
- Withdrawal from responsibility or contacts with associates
- Unexplained disappearance from the work area
- Disruptive behavior patterns, including sleeping on the job or inability to concentrate
- Defensive attitude concerning any problems

**Question to ask:** Have we noticed a pattern of these signs among any of our employees and are they different from their usual behavioral patterns?



*“We learned from people with long-term recovery from substance use disorders what it really takes to include, involve, communicate, respect, and understand people at various stages in the recovery process. We learned from them how important it is for people to remain productive members of the workplace and community. We understood how best to approach people, to engage with them, to educate and support them. We developed our training accordingly and—as a long-term consequence of engaging, listening and ‘understanding’—we helped thousands of people into recovery.”*

—Patrick Gauthier, Director of Healthcare Solutions at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.

### Documenting Concerns

Documentation is an essential practice for identifying patterns in performance or attendance concerns, as well as advancing corrective action. Employers who provide employees with a well-defined job description upon hire are providing a guidepost for measuring performance throughout the term of employment. When problems with attendance or performance are observed, immediate documentation allows managers to see if there is a pattern clearly. Documentation ought to be behavior or performance-based, specific, and objective in describing instances where the employee failed to meet workplace standards and/or duties.

**Remember:** Document concrete facts and observations rather than opinions, gossip, or assumptions, and document consistently for all employees.

### Addressing Workplace Performance Issues

Constructively addressing the problem is a necessary step in assisting employees experiencing a performance problem. Constructive confrontation prioritizes care and concern for the employee's well-being by highlighting your interest in assisting them to succeed in the workplace. Leadership training ought to include customized scenarios for how this can be done in your workplace. If your company has an EAP, the program can provide additional guidance on this process, including how to approach an employee during a crisis.

You will be more effective if you have a log of specific examples to refer to when addressing the employee. Examples will enable the employee to understand the true nature of your concern, serve to motivate, and then help you assign the appropriate corrective action.

**Remember:** Appropriate documentation includes an outline of the performance issue, the desired behavior or performance measure, the plan for change, and a timeline for which the improvement is expected. Some organizations call this a performance improvement plan or a performance action plan.

*“My boss sat me down at one point when I was actually going through addiction myself and he said ‘I don’t want to turn my back on this. I know you need help and we want to see you get help.’ So he offered me an ultimatum, and it was one of the most positive things that could have ever happened for me because today I sit here with 3.5 years clean from addiction. My boss could have found any other employee to fill my spot, but instead he said that I was a valuable part of the team and wanted to see me get better. From there, I decided that I was going to go to rehab and get help. I came back to work healthy and today I am now a manager.”*

—Kati Pittendreigh, Manager at NH RFW The Galley Hatch

### Referring Employees to Appropriate Services

Providing referrals to appropriate services can be a part of your performance improvement plan and help your employee get back on track. It is advised to partner with Human Resources and/or an EAP, if available, for additional support with difficult employee situations. It is important to remember that not all performance concerns are related to mental health or substance use and to not make assumptions or diagnose. However, an employee with continued performance concerns that is not reflective of a lack of training or ability, may benefit from a referral to supportive resources.

**Remember:** Leaders who understand the responsibilities of offering relevant support related to recovery, are better equipped to help employees.

### Reintegration

Recovery from addiction or other mental health and medical problems can be a process. For any of these issues, providing a supportive environment for re-entering into the workplace is key. Employers ought to consider a return-to-work meeting in which the employee and manager discuss any concerns, appropriate support measures, transition plans, and post-return follow up. Training on how to effectively plan for reintegration works best when it's tailored to your workplace and aligns with your workplace policy.

**Remember:** You don't have to figure it out alone. Your EAP provider can also be a resource during this process.

## MORE ON RECOVERY FRIENDLY LEADERSHIP

*Leaders who show support and set the right tone for the Recovery Friendly Workplace efforts understand* how critical their influence on health and well-being through leadership behaviors, attitudes, and decisions is. Research indicates leaders who engage in professional development to increase their knowledge of recovery and enhance their abilities to connect with and support employees impacted by addiction are more likely to sustain a Recovery Friendly Workplace and its benefits. As such, it is important to consider how training leadership on Recovery Friendly Workplace practices can help the organization function better and lead to better team performance. More information on where you can find training for leaders can be found in the [Resources for Employers](#) section.

#### 4.5.4 Evidence-Based Services and Programs

All employees are subject to experience relationship and family turmoil, medical, financial, or legal problems, and other psychological stressors. Providing employees with support for issues that affect their well-being and performance will enhance the effectiveness of your Recovery Friendly Workplace. Research shows employers who offer effective and affordable evidence-based services and programs see an overall enhancement in the organization's productivity, work climate, employee well-being, and quality of work.

##### OBJECTIVE

*Offering business-based well-being related programs and services are proven* to allow employees to perform the essential functions of their job to the best of their abilities. The benefits that are crucial for employees in recovery include:

##### PTO and Flex Time

Part of being a Recovery Friendly Workplace means understanding employees may need to engage in recovery-focused activities during work hours. Therefore, it is critical to provide employees with time and opportunity to attend community support groups, counseling sessions, or just have a mental day off once in a while when needed—**no questions asked**. Research shows employers who furnish employees in recovery with options for personal time off, mental health days, and flexible hours and work schedules without requiring a reason found that their employees were willing to take them and re-engaged with their work and team with better focus and performance.

##### Adequate Health Plans and Coverage

Healthy employees perform better. Employers can play a vital role in ensuring access to health care options to support employee health. Employers with health plans are encouraged to evaluate their health insurance programs to ensure they have adequate coverage for substance use and mental health treatment. The Mental Health Parity Act (as mentioned in Ethical & Legal Considerations subsection of [4.5.1 Organizational Policy](#)) ensures that insurance coverage for mental health conditions is comparable to those offered for physical health conditions. Employers without health plans ought to consider providing guidance and time to employees regarding choosing a comprehensive plan through Colorado's health insurance marketplace-covering both substance use and mental health treatment needs. For the access to the marketplace, please visit [www.connectforhealthco.com/](http://www.connectforhealthco.com/).

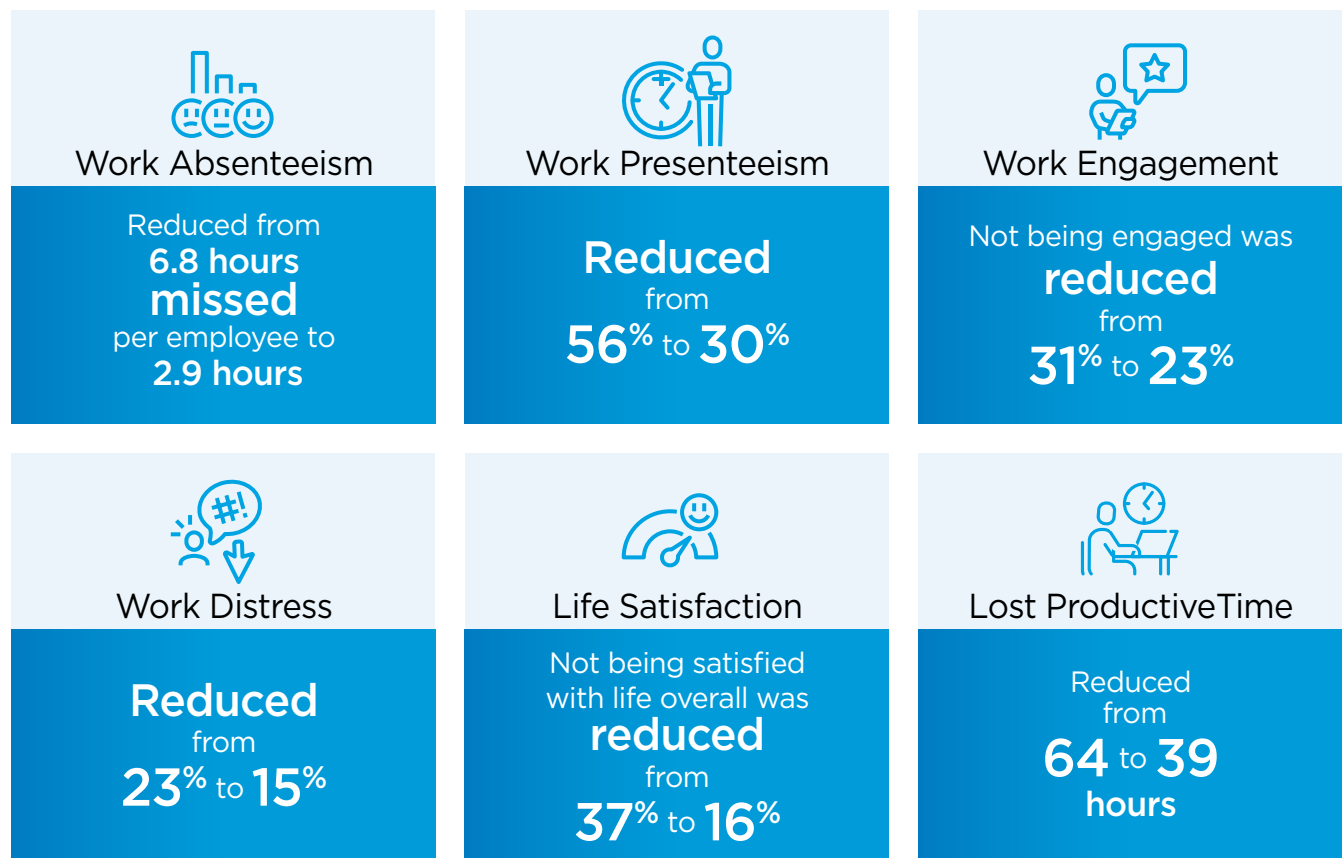
## Community Resources

Whether or not your organization provides health plan benefits, considering other community and non-profit initiatives and resources can assist leadership in supporting employees impacted by addiction and lower barriers for employees seeking help, following through with recovery, and productively re-engaging with work. Remember, there are many paths to recovery and many programs to help employees find their own path. Some programs available to Colorado can be found in the [Resources for Employees](#) section of this toolkit.

## Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

EAPs are an employer-paid service which offer services to employees who may have personal struggles adversely affecting their performance in the workplace. EAPs offer free and confidential assessment, counseling, referral, and follow-up services to employees and their family members. Additionally, EAPs can provide needed education and training to all levels of the organization on topics related to substance use and wellness.






**Do EAPs really work?** According to SAMHSA, organizations ought to strongly consider adding EAP services for employees if it currently does not. A 2021 report called the Workplace Outcomes Suite, made available by the International Employee Assistance Professional Association, evaluated over 38,000 employees before and after they received services from an EAP. It revealed that for every 100 employees, only 2 counseling cases need to be utilized through EAP for the workplace to breakeven on their return on investment. In fact, most workplaces saw a return of over \$5 of every \$1 invested in EAP services during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes are represented in:



**What to look for when choosing an EAP?**

You may find EAP services being offered by health insurance companies as part of their benefits package or by a small “boutique” company.

It is important to know that an effective EAP provider offers:

 <p>Services free of charge to your employees for a set number of appointments.</p>	 <p>Programs focused on proactively addressing employee concerns and encouraging support.</p>	 <p>Support in reintegrating the employee into the workplace.</p>	 <p>Adequately trained personnel to deal effectively with problematic substance use.</p>	 <p>Data including outcomes and service quality measures to evaluate program effectiveness.</p>
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**Member Assistance Programs (MAP)**




MAPs are provided by a union. Similar to EAPs, MAPs can vary widely in design and scope. Unions have a long history of addressing member, family, health, welfare, and working condition concerns. MAPs support a wide range of prevention, problem identification, referral, and counseling services and activities for workers and their dependents.

**Active Promotion of Services and Programs**

Employers that desire to attract and retain productive talent understand the importance of demonstrating care for employee wellness.

By proactively communicating the organization’s services and programs, employees can have a better understanding of what’s available to them and a better chance of using them.

Here are a few suggestions to encourage utilization by employees:

 <p><b>Emphasize confidentiality</b></p> <p>Stress that the use of certain programs, such as EAP, is confidential and employees are free to discuss all problems without it getting back to the employer.</p>	 <p><b>Promote services and programs constantly</b></p> <p>Actively promoting the types of programs offered and the benefits of participation brings awareness of what’s available and demonstrates to employees that their leaders care and support them using these services and resources.</p>	 <p><b>Ask employees what they need</b></p> <p>Feedback is essential for gaining insight into what supportive resources and measures employees need to be successful in recovery and at work. As you explore what your employees need to do their best at work, it can bring awareness to what is available right now.</p>
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## 4.6 Step 5: Sustain the Recovery Friendly Workplace

As with any other business venture, successful Recovery Friendly Workplaces are on-going and evolving. Sustain your Recovery Friendly Workplace and keep the organization responsive to changing conditions by conducting periodic reviews and evaluations to ensure your business has what it needs to support employees in recovery and maintain productivity.

### QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Simply put, Quality Improvement (QI) is defined as a continuous effort of examining processes or services to make them more effective. Three complementary sets of activities that allow Recovery Friendly Workplaces to collect the various types of data needed to inform action planning that will strengthen the implementation and impact of a Recovery Friendly Workplace are:



Performance review



Process assessment



Evaluation

### Why Develop a Quality Improvement Process?

Quality improvement aims to improve outcomes, create efficiencies, and address any needs or gaps identified. QI can tell you if what you are doing is working, cost-effective, and the data can be used to:



#### Validate

if the Recovery Friendly Workplace produces increased retention, appropriate use of personal time off, and improved productivity.



#### Verify

if the Recovery Friendly Workplace has seen employees comfortable with coming forward and seeking support and assistance.



#### Re-establish

Recovery Friendly Workplace goals and confirm if they support the organization's mission.

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The purpose of reviewing employee performance data is to document and quantify essential job duties and assess the quality with which they are being performed. Performance reviewing assumes that staff are supported by policies and procedures that facilitate their ability to carry out their work.

The following are examples of Improved Performance in a Recovery Friendly Workplace:



Reduction in absenteeism or increase in appropriate use of personal time off



Reduction in health care claims



Increase in productivity





## PROCESS ASSESSMENT

Process assessment allows employers to examine whether policies and procedures hinder or promote effective Recovery Friendly Workplace implementation. It also assesses efficiency outcomes allowing organizations to overcome barriers to a Recovery Friendly Workplace. Coupling performance reviewing with process assessment provides organizations with a comprehensive picture of how effective your Recovery Friendly Workplace practices are.

The following are examples of improved processes in a recovery friendly workplace:



Offering flexible work hours so employees can attend meetings or other supportive resources



Offering mental health days



Partnering with an employee assistance program or other local program



## EVALUATION

Recovery Friendly Workplace evaluation is the systematic process of reviewing practices to discover how well they are working to achieve intended goals, linking each goal to something measurable. For example, if one of the goals is to “reduce employee turnover,” determine exactly what this means and how this will be measured. Such broad goals are often measured by defining more concrete strategic objectives such as “increased volunteer use of EAP.”

The following are examples of Improved outcomes in a Recovery Friendly Workplace:

 <p>Decrease in employee turnover</p>	 <p>Decrease in overall healthcare costs</p>	 <p>Increase in voluntary use of EAP</p>	 <p>Increased employee retention &amp; engagement</p>	 <p>Reduction in positive drug screens</p>
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## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CHECKLIST

Recovery Friendly Workplace practices are continually being studied and advanced. Keep abreast of best practices and programs by consulting with EAPs and other professional associations and organizations who provide up-to-date information about such practices. You could also include a periodic employee group review of the Recovery Friendly Workplace for suggested appropriate changes. Defining, reviewing, and evaluating outcomes over time also allows organizations to test the effectiveness of Recovery Friendly Workplace adaptations to determine its sustainability.

### GENERAL QI ASSESSMENT

Consider how this can be tailored to your organization

ASSESSMENT	WE DO THIS WELL	THIS MAY NEED EXPLORATION & IMPROVEMENT	THIS MAY BE A PROBLEM AREA FOR US
Our organization completed an initial assessment and understood our baseline to guide our implementation of a Recovery Friendly Workplace.			
Our organization has evaluated if the current culture glorifies, normalizes, or perpetuates substance use.			
Our organization has evaluated if the current culture and policies reduce any barriers for employees to enter recovery.			
Our organization has assessed if our principles align with a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.			
Our organization has identified and addressed any gaps that may be present to become an effective Recovery Friendly Workplace.			
Our organization enforces organizational policies that align with company's principles and culture.			
Our organization facilitates employee education to increase safe and healthy attitudes and behaviors at work.			
Our organization engages in customized leadership training to maximize the effectiveness of the Recovery Friendly Workplace.			
Our organization offers evidence-based services and programs to support employee well-being and productivity.			
Our organization is achieving our other established goals and objectives.			
Our organization has considered where our opportunities for improvement are.			



# 5

RECOVERY  
FRIENDLY  
WORKPLACE  
RESOURCES

## 5.1 Resources for Employers

A critical element to running an organization is having the means and support available to operate in the best way possible. The following is a concise list of resources that can promptly support your Recovery Friendly Workplace.

### RESOURCES FOR TRAINING LEADERS ON RECOVERY

#### Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative

The Center for Health, Work, & Environment uses *The Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit* to work with partners and employers to educate businesses, guiding them in creating workplaces that support workers struggling with common behavioral health conditions, including substance use and addiction. The RFW Initiative provides education, training, and resources to help managers and individuals implement workplace practices and support for employees in treatment and recovery.

[coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/research-and-practice/centers-programs/chwe/practice/recovery-friendly-workplace-initiative](https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/research-and-practice/centers-programs/chwe/practice/recovery-friendly-workplace-initiative)

#### Recovery Friendly Leader

Recovery Friendly Leader is a non-profit organization that provides solution-based education and training for business leaders on how to provide support and practical guidance for their employees impacted by addiction. This organization envisions a world where all business leaders are equipped with the skills, tools, and resources they need to support employees within the Recovery Friendly Workplace and keep the organization safe, healthy, and productive.

[recoveryfriendlyleader.com](https://recoveryfriendlyleader.com)

### RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING RECOVERY IN THE WORKPLACE

#### *Alcoholics Anonymous* “Big Book”

*Chapter 10 – To Employers*

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous has been the source text that has helped millions of people, including employees, struggling with alcohol, other substances, and behaviors into recovery. Chapter 10 was written by the personal experience of an employee with a history of substance use and is directed to employers as it relates to employing like-individuals. The author speaks to organizations and leaders about addiction and offers strategies to support both the workplace and the employee’s recovery.

[aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_bigbook\\_chapt10.pdf](https://aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bigbook_chapt10.pdf)

#### Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation

The CDC is the nation’s leading science-based, data-driven, service organization that protects the public’s health. The CDC has constructed a site designated for workplace supported recovery resources. There are a number of materials and links to information regarding topics such as: workplace drug use, treatment facilities, recovery and wellness, drug-free workplace toolkit, supervisor handbooks on alcoholism, evidence-based policies and interventions, support for employees struggling with recovery from addiction, and much more.

[cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/resources.html](https://cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/resources.html)

## Compris

Compris is a digital self-assessment that helps your employees assess their addiction risk and strengths, identify other mental health challenges, know if they are ready for treatment, and stay on track once they enter a program. Available in both English and Spanish, Compris is completely confidential and can be used as a stand-alone or integrated with your employee assistance provider (EAP) program to connect employees with appropriate treatment. Compris offers every employee who completes the assessment a customized wellness guide tailored to their needs and a more comprehensive report to offer clinicians upon their request and consent.

Your employees may take the assessment [here](#).

To learn more, please visit: [compriscore.com](http://compriscore.com)

## Employee Assistance Programs

As previously described, EAP programs are designed to address employee performance and productivity by addressing concerns that lead to unproductivity. EAPs are a key element to help companies become recovery friendly. Below is the contact information for the Colorado chapter of the International Employee Assistance Professionals Association who can provide a directory of all EAPs offering services in Colorado.

Rocky Mountain Chapter – International Employee Assistance Professionals Association

Ph: 1-720-588-3087

[rockymountaineapa.org](http://rockymountaineapa.org)

## The Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

JAN is a service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). It is the leading source of expert, confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and provides one-on-one consultation to employers and employees, as well as service providers and others, free of charge.

[askjan.org/](http://askjan.org/)

If you have a question about workplace accommodations or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation, make contact with JAN at (800) 526-7234.

## The National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC)

The NAADAC's members specialize in addiction prevention, treatment, recovery support and education and have instituted professional development tools and resources necessary for businesses. Originally developed for addiction treatment and professional industries, the tools within these resources have been adopted and utilized in establishing Recovery Friendly Workplaces.

[naadc.org/professional-development](http://naadc.org/professional-development)

## Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities and offers the following to help establish a Recovery Friendly Workplace:

1. *Prepare Your Workplace* contains information and resources related to preparing workplaces for drug-free policies and programming.  
[samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit/plan-implement-program/prepare-workplace](http://samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit/plan-implement-program/prepare-workplace)
2. *The Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center* provides communities, clinicians, policymakers and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings.  
[samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp](http://samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp)
3. There are many local drug-free workplace coalitions or other community-based groups that may be able to provide assistance to your employees. Contact SAMHSA's Drug-Free Workplace Helpline,

1-800-WORKPLACE (967-5752), as a resource to help you find these resources for your employees.

### **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

SHRM is an association of human resource professionals whose mission is to empower people and workplaces by advancing HR practices and by maximizing human potential. The following is a toolkit that discusses employing and managing persons with addictions, warning signs of substance use; guidance on communicating with employees, accommodations, and possible actions; information on legal issues; and sample substance use policies.

[shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/personswithaddictions.aspx](http://shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/personswithaddictions.aspx)

SHRM also has local, regional chapters an employer can contact for information and professional consultants. For a list of regional chapters, visit: [hrvillage.com/associations/colorado.htm](http://hrvillage.com/associations/colorado.htm)

### **Workplace Mental Health**

The Partnership for Workplace Mental Health is a program of the American Psychiatric Foundation. The Center for Workplace Mental Health provides employers the tools, resources and information needed to promote and support the mental health of employees and their families. The Center engages employers and other partners in eliminating stigma, reducing barriers to care, raising broader mental health awareness, improving and implementing mental health programs, and designing benefits that improve employee mental health. This work is done through turn-key programs, toolkits, employer case studies, topical resources, publications, and more.

[workplacementalhealth.org/employer-resources](http://workplacementalhealth.org/employer-resources)

## **RESOURCES FOR CONSTRUCTING AN ORGANIZATIONAL & DRUG TESTING POLICY**

The following resources are a starting point in developing a Recovery Friendly Workplace policy. It is important that you construct your policy in accordance with current Colorado State and Federal Laws as well as any regulations specific to your organization:

*Addressing Substance Use, Misuse, and Relapse in the Addiction Treatment Workforce* (Samples Policies can be found in Pages 29-71)

[naadac.org/assets/2416/substanceuse\\_misusetoolkit9.pdf](http://naadac.org/assets/2416/substanceuse_misusetoolkit9.pdf)

*Developing a Drug-Free Workplace Policy.*

[samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit/develop-policy](http://samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit/develop-policy)

*Model Plan for Developing a Comprehensive Drug-Free Workplace Program.*

[samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/workplace/ModelPlan508.pdf](http://samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/workplace/ModelPlan508.pdf)



## SAMPLE SELF-IDENTIFICATION POLICY (to be added to an employer's policy under 382)

In order to comply with 49 CFR Part 382.121, an employer's self-identification policy must include all of this information. Anything less would not be considered compliant.

Smith Company encourages drivers who recognize that they may have a problem with drugs and/or alcohol to seek assistance for resolving that problem before they have a DOT violation due to a positive test result or because they engaged in other DOT prohibited conduct.

A driver who admits to a drug and/or alcohol problem will not have a DOT violation. He/she will be given an opportunity to obtain a chemical use assessment from Smith Company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Prior to the assessment, however, Smith Company will require the driver to sign a release of information that will enable Smith's Designated Employer Representative to receive the results of the assessment, and to receive subsequent reports related to the assessment, and the driver's successful completion of all recommendations for assistance.

The following conditions must apply to the driver's self-admission:

- The driver's admission cannot be made during his/her on-duty time. It must occur prior to the driver's reporting for duty on any particular day.
- The driver's admission cannot be made in an attempt to avoid a required DOT drug test.
- Under 49 CFR Part 382.121, DOT requires Smith Company to remove the driver from safety-sensitive functions, including driving.
- When Smith Company is satisfied that the driver has complied with the EAP's recommendations for assistance, Smith Company will return the driver to safety-sensitive functions, provided that:
  - Prior to returning to safety-sensitive functions, the driver will be required to provide a negative DOT drug and/or alcohol test result on a Return-to-Duty test, and
  - After being returned to safety-sensitive function, the driver will be subject to follow-up non-DOT testing, as permissible by Smith Company's policy for non-DOT drug and alcohol testing, under the laws of this state.
- A driver who self-identifies under this policy, and who then fails to comply with the EAP's recommendations will be considered to have engaged in conduct prohibited by the DOT in 49 CFR Part 382, Subpart B, and will not be permitted to return to safety-sensitive function until he/she has successfully complied with the SAP return-to-duty process.

Smith Company will adhere to the following terms, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 382.121;

- Smith Company will take no adverse action against a driver who admits to drug and/or alcohol use under the terms above.
- A driver who self-identifies under this program will be given reasonable time to obtain the required assessment and assistance. Under independent authority, Smith Company requires the assessment process to be initiated within three (3) days of the driver's disclosure.
- A driver who complies with all requirements, and who complies satisfactorily with the EAP's recommendations for assistance, will be permitted to return to safety-sensitive functions.
- A driver who cooperates and successfully complies with this program will not be considered to have had a DOT violation of prohibited conduct under 49 CFR Part 382, Subpart B.



## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION TO REDUCE STIGMA

### Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

The Colorado Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention coordinates Colorado's response to the crisis of misuse and abuse of prescription medications such as opioids, stimulants, and sedatives. This organization has provided the following resource to help Colorado support recovery by understanding the difference between helpful and harmful language.

[corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Supporting-Recovery-1-Pager-2021.pdf](https://corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Supporting-Recovery-1-Pager-2021.pdf)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC has constructed a site designated for stigma reduction and understanding addiction to support recovery.

[cdc.gov/stopoverdose/stigma/index.html](https://cdc.gov/stopoverdose/stigma/index.html)

### U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs present a *Practical Guide for Employers on Well-being in the Workplace*. This guide intends to help businesses of all sizes take measures to prioritize mental health and emotional wellbeing in the workplace.

[hiringourheroes.org/resources/wellbeing-in-the-workplace-guidebook/](https://hiringourheroes.org/resources/wellbeing-in-the-workplace-guidebook/)

## RESOURCES ON FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

### Employer's Council

*(formerly Rocky Mountain Employer's Council)*

Employer's Council is a training and consultation firm that has helped Colorado employers with the complexities of HR and employment law for over 80 years. Whether you are a non-profit, government, or commercial organization, Employers Council's attorneys tailor the advice and approach so that each member receives effective and efficient employment law advice as it applies to an organizations' unique needs and

objectives within its industry.

[employerscouncil.org/](https://employerscouncil.org/)

### National Organization on Disability (NOD)

The National Organization on Disability's mission is to increase employment opportunities for Americans with disabilities. Their programs and services enable companies to realize the competitive advantages of hiring people with disabilities. [nod.org](https://nod.org)

### U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' mission is to inform the development of national civil rights policy and enhance enforcement of federal civil rights laws. Their article titled, *Sharing the Dream: Is the ADA Accommodating All*, discusses substance abuse under the ADA and the coverage for individuals with a diagnosed substance use disorder under the ADA.

[usccr.gov/files/pubs/ada/main.htm](https://usccr.gov/files/pubs/ada/main.htm)

### U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

The DOJ's Civil Rights Division enforces federal statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), disability, religion, familial status, national origin, and citizenship status, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a law that protects people with qualified disabilities in many areas of public life. [ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor62335](https://ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor62335)

### U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

The DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities. Their Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) provides assistance on how to support individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment. [dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/employment-first](https://dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/employment-first)



## 5.2 Resources for Employees

Employees are the greatest asset a business can have. Therefore, providing them with the resources they need to stay healthy and productive is vital. Below you will find a concise list of resources that can support your employees in their recovery.

### YOUR FIRST RESOURCE

#### Your Organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Provider

EAPs are designed to assist employees in resolving personal problems that are affecting work performance. These problems can include, but are not limited to, substance use, relationships challenges, or financial concerns. EAP services are free of cost and usually made available not only to the employee but also to the employee's spouse, children and non-marital partner living in the same household as the employee. EAPs services might be offered with your company's insurance benefits, or your company may already be partnering with a local/national EAP provider.

### HELPLINES

#### Colorado Crisis Services

988 or 1-844-493-8255

Text "Talk" to 38255

If you or someone you know wants to talk about any mental health, substance use, suicidal or emotional concerns, the Colorado Crisis Services can help, 24/7/365. You'll be connected with a trained professional who will provide free, confidential support, and who can connect you with additional resources if needed.

[coloradocrisisservices.org](https://coloradocrisisservices.org)

#### SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

This is a confidential, free, 24/7 informational service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.

[samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](https://samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)

### RECOVERY SUPPORT, TREATMENT, AND MEETINGS

#### Colorado Individual Placement & Support

Supported employment is a program that helps people in Colorado with mental illness and/or substance use problems find and keep jobs, while at the same time providing employers with access to motivated employees. Colorado's Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment is one of many types of vocational programs that helps people with mental illness or substance use problems find meaningful jobs with success.

[cdhs.colorado.gov/behavioral-health/ips](https://cdhs.colorado.gov/behavioral-health/ips)

#### Colorado LADDERS

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) offers this referral resource for information and services for prevention, treatment, and recovery from substance use and mental health conditions.

[colorado.gov/ladders](https://colorado.gov/ladders)

### Colorado Mental Wellness Network

Through education and advocacy, the Colorado Mental Wellness Network seeks to provide opportunities for individuals to improve the quality of their lives, give back to the community through meaningful roles, and to change the perceptions of behavioral health. Their Colorado Recovery & Support Directory provides a search tool to find programs in Colorado that support recovery. [coloradosupport.org/](http://coloradosupport.org/)

### Resources Supportive to Recovery

This site was created as a guide for anyone looking for a community recovery support group. It lists a variety of addiction support groups that provide a solution for anyone who desires recovery or anyone who is just curious and wants to attend. [drjnarine.wordpress.com/resources/](http://drjnarine.wordpress.com/resources/)

### Resources Supportive to Affected Family & Friends

Addiction and its effects can extend to our families and friends as well. This resource guide contains information intended to be helpful to family members or friends impacted by a loved-one's substance use or overdose. [corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Affected-Families-and-Friends-Resource-Guide.pdf](http://corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Affected-Families-and-Friends-Resource-Guide.pdf)

### COLORADO PEER-BASED RECOVERY SERVICES

Peer-based services offered by individuals with their own “lived experience” in Colorado are constantly changing. The Recovery Advocacy Project maintains a resource guide for peer-delivered services and can be found [here](#).



# GLOSSARY

Below is a handful of valuable terms that will enable you to understand how certain vocabulary was used regarding a Recovery Friendly Workplace.

**Absenteeism.** The practice of missing work due to substance use.

**Accommodations.** Adjustments made or permitted in the workplace that allow employees in recovery to perform the essential functions of a job to the best of their abilities. Accommodations offered under the ADA is an example.

**Addiction.** A disease that can manifest through recurrent use of alcohol, other drug(s), or compulsive behaviors such as gambling, food, and sex, and if left untreated, leads to harmful consequences, including significant impairment, health problems, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. The clinical term for substance use addiction is “substance use disorder.”

**Behavioral Health.** The area of health care that is concerned with substance use and mental health disorders.

**Community and Mutual Support Groups.** A group that provides opportunities for people to recover through sharing personal experiences. Examples: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), SMART Recovery, etc.

**Competitive Integrated Employment.** Work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis for which an individual with a disability is compensated, receives benefits, interacts, and is presented with opportunities that are similar to other employees without disabilities.

**Confidentiality.** The ethical principle or legal right to hold private all medical and other sensitive information related to employees, unless consent for disclosure is provided.

**Constructive Confrontation.** A key mechanism used within EAPs to address poor work performance, motivate employees on ways to resolve problems and improve performance including the use of EAPs, and explain the consequences of continued poor performance.

**Cross-addiction.** Two or more addictive behaviors that co-occur. This can include alcohol, other substances, food, sex, etc.

**Culture.** The shared attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that comprise the work environment.

**Discrimination.** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of employees, including those in or not in recovery.

**Diversity.** Acknowledging and accepting the presence of differences between employees in an organization.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** An employer-paid program designed to address employee performance and productivity by addressing concerns that lead to unproductivity.

**Equity.** Providing fair opportunities for all employees based on their individual needs.

**Inclusion.** Hearing and valuing all diverse employees.

**Drug-free Workplace.** An employment setting where all employees adhere to a program of policies and activities designed to provide a safe workplace free of substance use.

**Leader.** An individual placed in a role that influences, guides, and supports employees to keep the workplace safe, healthy, and productive.

**Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT).** The use of medication combined with behavioral therapy to treat substance use disorders.

**Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD).** An approach to opioid use treatment that combines the use of FDA-approved drugs with counseling and behavioral therapies for people diagnosed with opioid use disorder (OUD). (Examples of FDA-approved drugs include: Buprenorphine and methadone).

**Needs Assessment.** The process of determining how to bridge the gap between the organization's current and desired state.

**Objectives.** A determined and defined set of most important tasks that give direction for Recovery Friendly Workplace policies and practices.

**Organizational Policy.** A set of written and communicated regulations that describe how the entire organization will behave to achieve a specific goal(s).

**Peer-based Support Services.** Nonclinical, peer-led services from an individual with lived experience, such as recovery coaching and community/mutual support groups.

**Person-first Language.** A way of communicating about employees that emphasizes the person before the condition. Example: Rather than describe someone as a "former junkie,"

he or she would be described as a "person in recovery." *Please note:* Person-first language does not permit the release of an employee's medical status without their consent.

**Practices.** Any activity the organization conducts to achieve and sustain the Recovery Friendly Workplace.

**Presenteeism.** The practice of being physically present at work but are either impaired or incapable of performing the job duties.

**Principles.** Foundational beliefs that are intended to guide culture, behavior's expected, and best practices in the workplace.

**Purpose.** The reason the Recovery Friendly Workplace exists.

**Quality Improvement.** A continuous effort of examining processes and practices to make them more effective.

**Recovery.** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.

**Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW).** An organization that uses evidence-based policies and practices to unite the entire organization by recognizing recovery from addiction as a strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery.

**Resource.** A source of support or aid that can be readily drawn upon when needed.

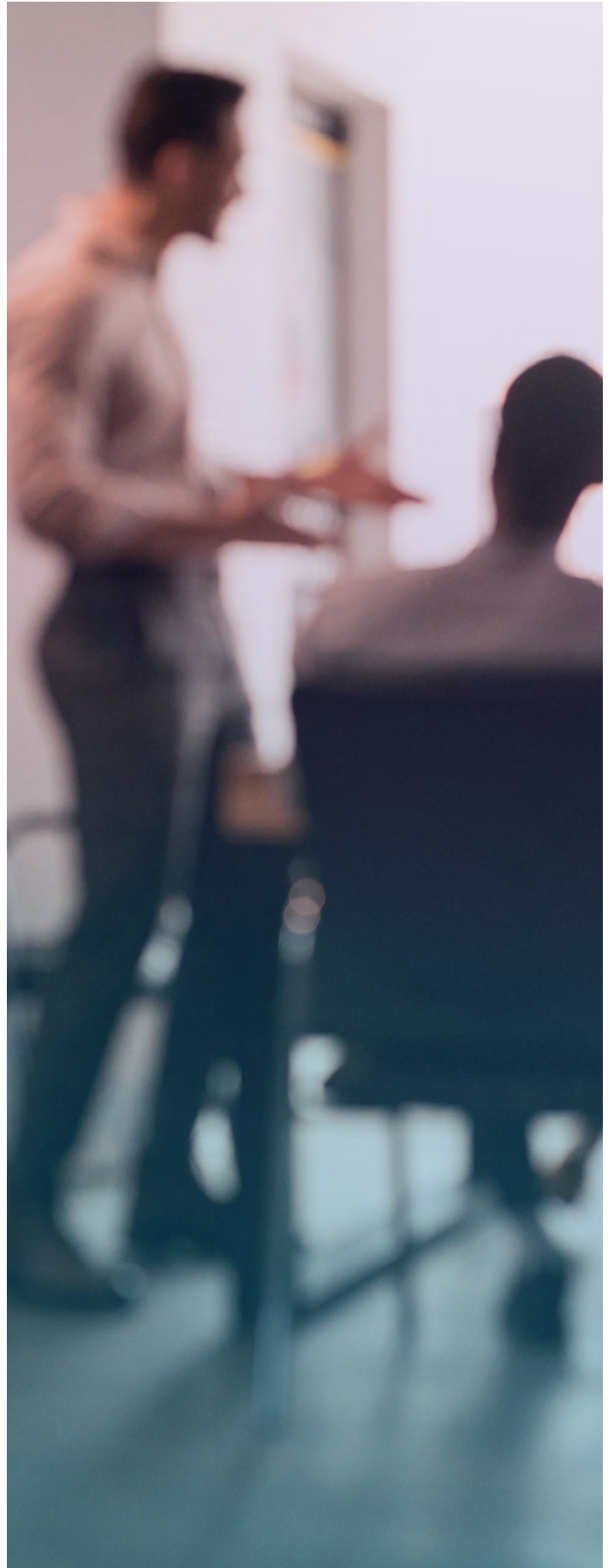
**Stigmatization.** A negative attitude towards or stereotyping that leads to prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and limited opportunities to participate fully in employment.

**Return to Use.** A term used to describe when a person goes back to or has a recurrence of substance use or compulsive behavior after a period of recovery.

**Substance Use Disorder (SUD).** The clinical term used to diagnose a recurrent use of alcohol and/or other substances that leads to harmful consequences, including significant impairment, health problems, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.

**Trigger.** A stimulus that produces a reaction which may increase an employee's vulnerability to use substances.

**Turnover.** The costly rate at which employees are replaced in the workforce.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & SOURCES



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**Substance Use—Colorado (Ras-Col)**, a HRSA grant initiative through **Memorial Regional Health** in Craig, Colorado. The **Steadman Group** and capstone students **Carly Kuehl MPH** and **Deanna Kapitanec MPH** helped with the initial ideas and text for the project.

## CONSULTATION

*The Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit* was reviewed with the following leaders who have experience in establishing Recovery Friendly Workplaces, organizational policy and practices related to substance use and mental health, and success in helping companies hire and retain employees in recovery.

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### **Patrick Gauthier**

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### **Pamela Corson, PHD, LPC, CADC, CEAP.**

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### **Paul Scudo**

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### **Samantha Lewandowski**

Assistant Director of the New Hampshire Governor's Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative, administered by Granite United Way in partnership with the State of New Hampshire.

## SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT & PROJECT CONSULTANT

*The Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit* was researched and developed by Dr. John Narine.

### **John Narine, DBA, CEAP**

Dr. John Narine is a person in recovery. John is a Certified Employee Assistance Professional and received his Doctorate in Business Administration by completing a qualitative research study on *Leadership Strategies to Prevent Substance Abuse Relapse and Optimize Business Viability*. He is also the author of *Leading Workplace Addiction*, which is heavily based on his research conducted, and founder of *Recovery Friendly Leader*, a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower business leaders on solution-based strategies that help them provide support and practical guidance for their employees impacted by addiction to keep the workplace safe, healthy, and productive. As an employee who has struggled with addiction, John understands and can relate to others who constantly live in fear of being judged or fired while trying to keep up demand. John is a passionate recovery advocate who is wholeheartedly committed to the success of Recovery Friendly Workplaces. Website: [drjnarine.wordpress.com](http://drjnarine.wordpress.com).



## SOURCES

We gratefully acknowledge these sources that have been reviewed for background information:

American Psychiatric Association Foundation—  
Center for Workplace Mental Health

American Addiction Centers

Center for Disease Control

Colorado Department of Public Health  
and Environment Journal of Occupational and  
Environmental Medicine

National Association for Alcoholism and Drug  
Abuse Counselors

National Institute on Drug Abuse

National Institute of Health

National Opinion Research Center

National Safety Council

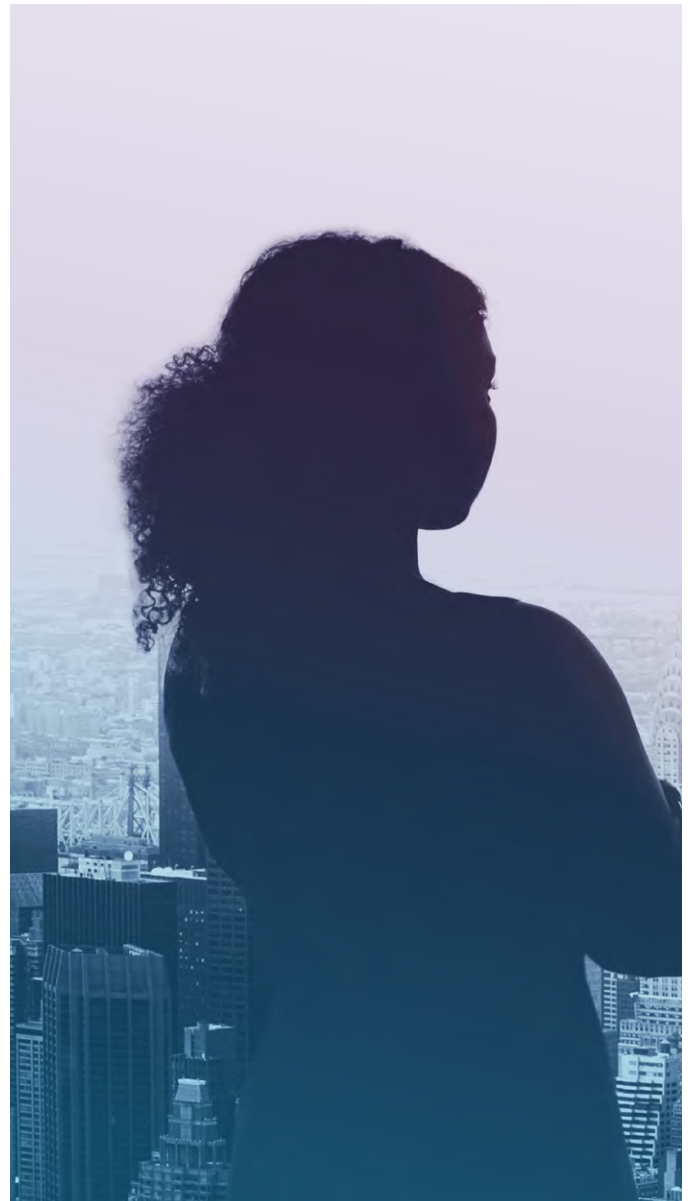
New Hampshire Recovery Friendly Workplace  
(including other participating states)

Occupational Safety & Health Administration

SAMHSA: Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services

Society for Human Resource Management

Other Peer-Reviewed Journals and Publications



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*The Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit* has been developed to raise awareness with businesses about how to respond to the risks associated with the use of substances. The content is meant for educational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice or replacing the work needed to develop a responsible drug-free workplace program. As such, it should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a legal professional, or other competent advisor.

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## ABOUT US



The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention's mission is to reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse in Colorado by developing policies, programs, and partnerships with the many Colorado agencies, organizations, and community coalitions addressing one of the state's major public health crises. For more information, visit [www.corxconsortium.org](http://www.corxconsortium.org).



Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

SKAGGS SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

The Consortium is part of the Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention at the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, which is among the top 20 pharmacy schools in the nation. It is located at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Colorado. For more information, visit [pharmacy.cuanschutz.edu](http://pharmacy.cuanschutz.edu).

**Center for Health, Work & Environment**

colorado school of public health

The Center for Health, Work & Environment is an academic center within the Colorado School of Public Health that advances worker health, safety, and well-being. To effectively address the future of work, we aim to ensure a healthier and safer workplace for all. Main offices for the Center are located at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Colorado. [chwe.ucdenver.edu](http://chwe.ucdenver.edu)



The Rural Alliance Addressing Substance Use Disorder-Colorado (RAS-Col) is a group of local and state organizations working together to improve prevention, treatment and recovery from the growing problem of substance use disorder and overdoses in Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties. We work toward building a community in which substance use disorders are better understood, stigma diminishes, prevention and treatment save more lives, and all people feel valued and supported. [ras-col.com](http://ras-col.com)



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Dr. John Narine is a person in recovery. John is a Certified Employee Assistance Professional and received his Doctorate in Business Administration by completing a qualitative research study on Leadership Strategies to Prevent Substance Abuse Relapse and Optimize Business Viability. He is the author of *Leading Workplace Addiction* and founder of Recovery Friendly Leader. [drjnarine.wordpress.com](http://drjnarine.wordpress.com).



## What Is Your Next Step?

- ✓ **MAKE BEING A RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE A PERMANENT SOLUTION** for how you do business.
- ✓ **[VISIT THE RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE INITIATIVE](#)** to schedule a free one-on-one session with a Recovery Friendly Advisor today.
- ✓ **LET'S WORK TOGETHER** to celebrate your successes and keep recovery alive!

Want to learn more? Visit our website by scanning the QR code.

