

Healthier Workforce Center Center of Excellence for *Total Worker Health* FY23 Annual Report

About Us

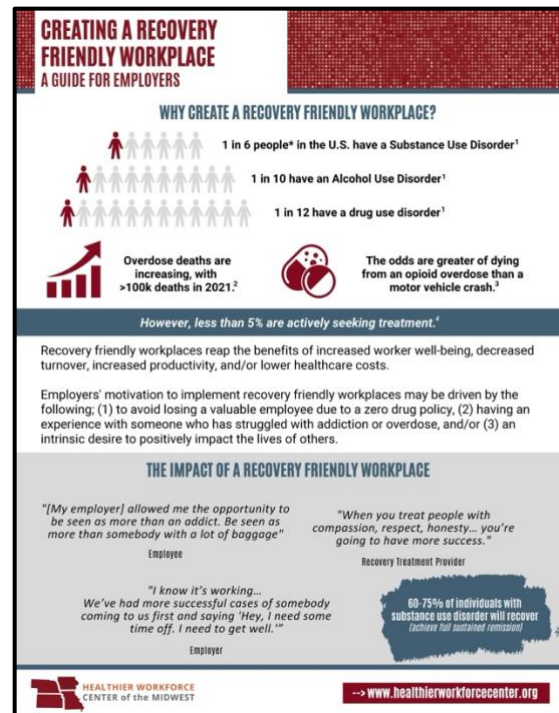
The Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest (HWC) represents a collaboration between the University of Iowa, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Kansas Medical Center, Penn State University, WorkWell Kansas, the Nebraska Safety Council, and the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition. The HWC is one of ten NIOSH Centers of Excellence for *Total Worker Health*[®]. The Center was established in 2006 and is built upon extensive investigator experience in occupational health and safety, ergonomics, and health promotion. The vision of the HWC is to create a safe, healthy, and productive workforce.

Personnel

Diane Rohlman, MA, PhD, Center Director
Bradley Evanoff, MD, MPH, Associate Director; PI, Mental Health in Construction
Jonathan Davis, PhD, Director of Pilot/Feasibility Projects Program
Shelly Campo, PhD, Outreach Director
Laura Keniston, MHA, Outreach Coordinator
Michael Guhin, BA, Multimedia Specialist
Megan TePoel, MS, Center Coordinator
Beth Livingston, PhD, MBA PI, Supervising the Future of Remote Work
Ann Marie Dale, PhD, OTR/L, PI, Refining Workplace Opioid Guidelines for
Dissemination through a Social Marketing Approach
Jess Williams, PhD, PI, Understanding the Implementation of Total Worker Health in
Rural Nursing Homes
Elizabeth Ablah, PhD, MPH, Co-Investigator, Outreach
Annie Fitzgerald, CHES, Co-Investigator, Outreach
Karen Rehm, Co-Investigator, Outreach

Collaborative Learning Community: The Why and How of Recovery Friendly Workplaces

1 in 6 people in the U.S. have a substance use disorder (SUD), and overdose deaths are increasing, with over 100,000 deaths in 2021 (1,2). However, less than 5% of those with a SUD are actively seeking treatment (3). In August 2023, we invited regional employers and practitioners to discuss these issues and how to tackle them from a Total Worker Health® perspective in our second Regional Collaborative Learning Community, titled *The Why and How of Recovery Friendly Workplaces*. Led by Dr. Ann Marie Dale who provided an overview of the problem, additional insights into NIOSH efforts to support this initiative were provided by Jamie Osborne, MPH. Dr. John Narine, president of Recovery Friendly Leader, described strategies for leaders to support employees impacted by substance use and why employers should adopt a recovery friendly workplace. Watch the [recorded webinar](#) or review the [workplace policy brief](#).



Recovery Friendly Workplaces Policy Brief

*Ages 12 and up

1. SMHSA (2023). SAMHSA Announces National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Results Detailing Mental Illness and Substance Use Levels in 2021. <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/20230104/samhsa-announces-nsduh-results-detailing-mental-illness-substance-use-levels-2021>.
2. CDC (2021). Drug Overdose Deaths in the US Top 100,000 Annually. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm.
3. Frone MR et al. (2022). Workplace Supported Recovery from Substance Use Disorders: Defining the Construct, Developing a Model, and Proposing an Agenda for Future Research.

Outreach and Implementation: Resources for Protecting Young Workers

Young workers (under 25 years old) make up almost 12% of the workforce. Despite the many benefits to youth working, they are two times more likely to get injured on the job. Developing brains and bodies, lack of impulse control, and a reluctance to speak up when they have questions and concerns put them at increased risk.

Employers can implement workplace policies and programs to protect these vulnerable workers. These include implementing workplace policies and providing training for supervisors on using effective communication strategies, assigning tasks appropriate for age and ability, and educating young workers on their rights in the workplace. Learn more through our [new podcast](#) and [workplace policy brief](#).

Previous funding for Center investigators resulted in the development of videos, interactive activities, and free online trainings for young workers* and supervisors of young workers**. These resources are also freely available on our website at the links below. Together, they provide a variety of approaches to protecting young workers on and off the job.

For Young Workers

- [Promoting U Through Safety and Health: A Curriculum for Young Workers*](#)

For Supervisors

- [Protecting Young Workers: A Guide for Employers](#)
- [Podcast: Young Worker Safety, Health, and Well-Being](#)
- [Supervisor Training, Videos, and Let's Talk Activities \(English and Spanish\)**](#)

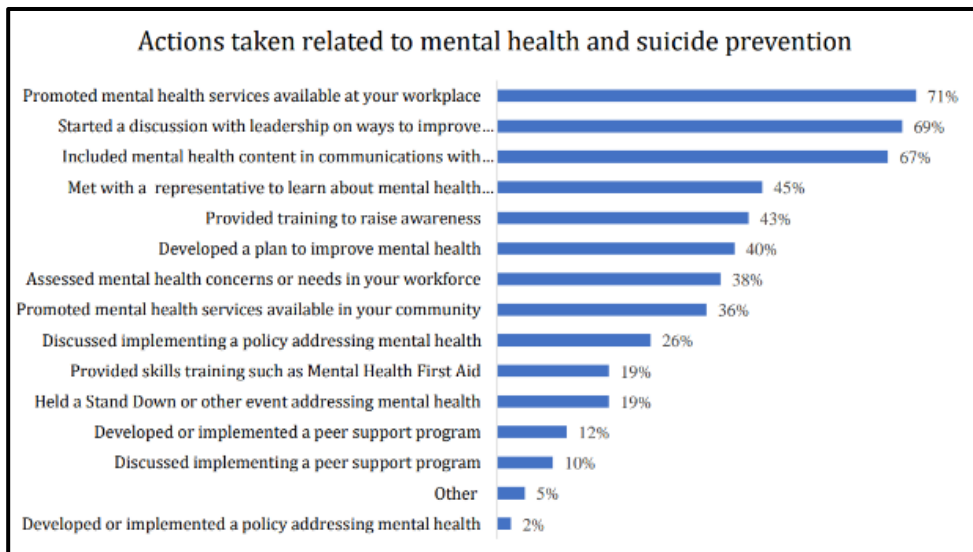


* PUSH is an Oregon Healthy Workforce Center Project funded through the NIOSH Total Worker Health® Center of Excellence Grant U19OH10154

**The training for supervisors of young agricultural workers was supported by the National Children's Center for Rural Agricultural Health and Safety (NIOSH: U54 OH007548).

Outreach and Implementation: Suicide Prevention Campaign

Workplace campaigns can be used to raise awareness about mental health and available resources and can also lead to actions at the organizational level that will have an ongoing positive impact on the workforce. To examine the reach and impact of our suicide prevention campaign launched in 2019, a survey was conducted among people who received the materials. In addition to sharing the resources with workers and leadership, 40% of the respondents indicated their workplace developed a plan to improve mental health. Others provided training such as mental health first aid, developed a peer support program, or implemented a policy addressing mental health. For many employers, campaigns can be an easy-to-implement, low-cost intervention that begins to address this critical topic.



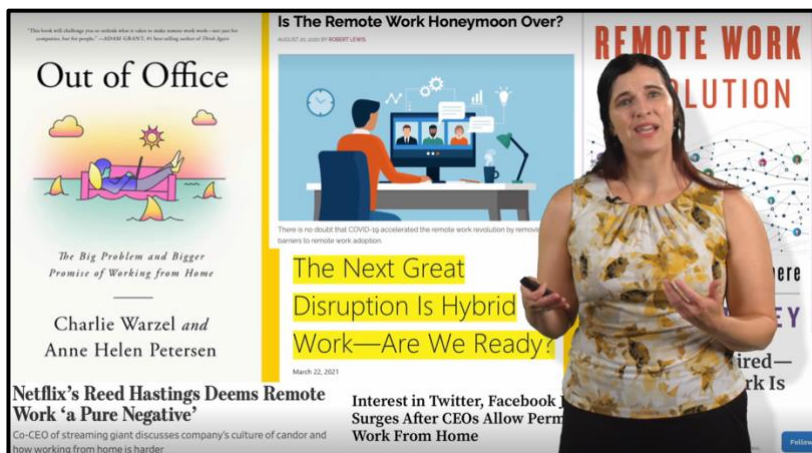
Actions taken by organizations after receiving suicide prevention campaign materials.

In the past year, over 1,600 people learned about the campaign through presentations by the HWC.

Research Highlight: Supervising the Future of Remote Workers by Promoting Supervisor and Worker Well-being

There is a critical need to understand how changing workplaces, including the adaptation to remote work, impacts well-being. Remote supervisors may be experiencing increased stress and lower productivity. Though remote work trainings available for supervisors have increased, there is no current evidence-base assessing the efficacy of these trainings, and existing trainings fail to address the well-being of supervisors or employees, focusing on productivity alone. Dr. Beth Livingston, faculty in the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business, is leading a Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest research project to train remote managers on how to improve the productivity and well-being of themselves and their employees.

First, managers progress at their own pace through five online modules with videos and quizzes. Afterwards, they participate in a one-hour online meeting facilitated by an experienced trainer.



Screen capture of the online training

Initial evaluation of the training intervention is in progress. Early results suggest that managers responded well to the training. Managers rated the online training on average a 4.44 out of 5 on a training satisfaction scale. After the meeting with a trainer, 94% said they felt more confident managing their remote employees.

The research team also received multiple emails and in-person comments about the quality of the training, including that the training was among the best they had received at the organization. The training will be launched in additional organizations in the coming months.

Pilot Project: Turnover Among Truck Drivers

High job turnover is an ongoing issue in the U.S. trucking industry. A pilot grant funded by the Healthier Workforce Center examined the reasons that long-haul truck drivers leave their jobs and offered suggestions for retaining current workers. Dr. Ashamsa Aryal, a former PhD student in Occupational and Environmental Health, used the [NIOSH Worker Well-being Framework](#) to understand why long-haul truckers enter and leave the transportation industry. Further, Dr. Aryal sought to identify long-haul truckers' health concerns and strategies to increase worker retention.

Health conditions, differences in job expectations, and work demands were identified as reasons why drivers leave the industry. Workplace policies and culture, such as lack of supervisor support, long hours away from home, company size, and lack of benefits, also contributed to drivers leaving a company.

These findings led to recommendations to improve worker health and retention:

- Make health and wellness part of training for new and current workers,
- Set realistic job expectations for new hires,
- Build relationships among drivers and dispatchers, and
- Create policies that limit the time drivers spend away from home.



Dr. Aryal graduated with her PhD in Occupational and Environmental Health and now works as the Chief Epidemiologist/Public Health Evaluator at the Arkansas Department of Health where she integrates Total Worker Health approaches into her work. This work was published in September 2023 in the journal [Workplace Health and Safety](#).

Addressing Emerging Workforce Well-Being Issues through Outreach Initiatives

The Outreach Core of the Healthier Workforce Center continues to produce informative, evidence-based brief audio, video, and print resources focused on complex emerging issues including suicide, immigrant worker well-being, recovery friendly workplaces, and young worker safety.

A podcast interview with Dr. Athena Ramos shed light on the challenges faced by immigrant workers in demanding food-chain industries and suggested various strategies for [Protecting Worker Well-Being in Immigrant Populations](#).

HWC leadership expertise was showcased in several outreach products addressing timely issues that were impacting employers and the workforce in our region. The HWC's Director of Pilot/Feasibility Projects Program, Dr. Jonathan Davis, addressed [Work-Related Factors Impacting Suicide](#) in a podcast that described how he has leveraged the National Violent Death Reporting System to explore high risk industries, why work-related suicides happen, and how the workplace can make a positive impact. Center Director, Dr. Diane Rohlman, discussed [Young Worker Safety, Health, and Well-Being](#) in a podcast that was produced shortly following legislative changes in Iowa that permitted 14 year olds to work in potentially hazardous workplaces. Dr. Rohlman explained why youth are vulnerable and how employers can effectively train and communicate with young workers to protect their health and provide a safe workplace for all.



Michael Guhin (HWC Outreach Team) interviews an upcoming guest for the Workplace Matters podcast

In response to increasing interest from stakeholders in our region, the HWC hosted a Collaborative Learning Community focused on Recovery Friendly Workplaces. Numerous outreach products have been produced in response to the discussions about best-practices for Recovery Friendly Workplace initiatives. The first product released during Recovery Month in September 2023 featured Eric Cohen from Ace Pipe in Kansas City, Missouri describing how [Peers in Recovery](#) can play a vital role in supporting coworkers.

Another outreach product was developed in response to the previous Collaborative Learning Community, focused on [Recruitment and Retention](#). Mandy Parchert, Workforce Development Business Partner at HNI, and Nicole Crain, Executive Vice President at the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI), addressed how a health and safety approach to recruitment and retention puts the worker first.

Outreach by the numbers:

1,728 resources downloaded

22,383 website views

1,391 hours watched on YouTube

30% e-newsletter open rate, 10% e-newsletter click rate
(double the industry-average)