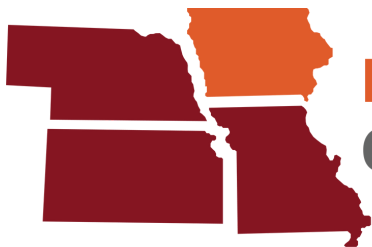




# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



**HEALTHIER WORKFORCE**  
CENTER of the MIDWEST

# 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 A. Evanoff, MD, MPH, Associate Director; Principal Investigator, Mental Health in Construction
- Nathan Fethke, PhD, CPE, Deputy Director and 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 Principal Investigator, Supervising the Future of Remote Work
- Ann Marie Dale, PhD, OTR/L, Principal Investigator, Refining Workplace Opioid Guidelines for Dissemination through a Social Marketing Approach
- Jess Williams, PhD, Principal Investigator, Understanding the Implementation of *Total Worker Health* in Rural Nursing Homes
- Jon Davis, PhD, Principal Investigator, Opioid Treatment and Work-Related Injuries

## *partners*

- Elizabeth Ablah, PhD, MPH, Co-Investigator, Outreach
- Lauren Remspecher, MPH, CHES, Co-Investigator, Outreach
- Lisa Henning, Co-Investigator, Outreach
- Karen Rehm, Co-Investigator, Outreach

## *outreach and implementation*

# Supporting the Worker 360° Award

Nebraska Safety Council's Worker 360° Award, created in partnership with the Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest and the Nebraska State Chamber of Commerce, was designed to recognize employers across the State of Nebraska for their efforts in creating and maintaining safe working environments and implementing

comprehensive wellness initiatives. Employers create teams with authority to act and make financial decisions in order to manage wellness and safety initiatives. To be eligible, employers must evaluate their safety and health needs through insurance claims data, injury reports, health risk assessments, health scorecards (e.g., CDC, HERO), and/or other metrics. This information is used to set goals and to develop and implement strategies to address areas of concern. Goals must address both health and safety with an emphasis on eliminating or preventing overall risk. Examples of these goals include required number of hours of safety and health training per employee, employee training on hazard corrections and



more importantly, empowering them to make corrections, requiring corrections for identified hazards to occur within 24 hours, changes in the workplace to manage stress, and providing benefits and paid time off policies. Finally, employers must be able to show impact on outcomes such as absenteeism, injury rates, and turnover. The Worker 360° Award recognizes that integrating health and safety can take time and is designed to provide a pathway for employers to expand their programs to address a more holistic view of worker well-being. The 2022 Worker 360° Award recipients were Omaha Performing Arts, UN Foundation, and Ameritas. Companies were recognized at the annual Nebraska Safety Council conference.



*outreach*

## Collaborations with Iowa NIOSH Centers

In order to maximize reach and resources, several collaborations occurred between the Healthier Workforce Center and the Heartland Center for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH-funded education and research center), the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (NIOSH-funded agricultural health center), and the Injury Prevention Research Center (CDC-funded research center). Hawkeye on Safety, held in September 2021, provides continuing health and safety education to workers from all industries, with a particular emphasis on facilities management and the building trades. The Healthier Workforce Center presented on suicide prevention in the construction industry and had a display promoting the “You OK?” suicide prevention campaign.

In March 2022, the Healthier Workforce Center collaborated with the Heartland Center on the Spring Occupational Health Symposium which addressed a number of critical topics with a *Total Worker Health* lens including diversity, equity and inclusion; work life balance; culturally responsive care; fatigue and work solutions; ergonomics of remote work; and workplace burnout. Registrants were offered continuing education credits for the one-and-a-half-day conference.



Three Iowa federally-funded Centers (Heartland Center, Great Plains Center, and Injury Prevention Research Center) collaborated to host the 6th annual Occupational Safety and Health Student Research Conference at the University of Iowa in April 2022. The keynote speaker, Dr. Athena Ramos (Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health), discussed her work with Latino immigrant and migrant populations working in meatpacking and cattle feed lots to identify health and safety risks with an eye toward interventions.

The annual Farm Progress Show was held in Boone, Iowa in August 2022. The HWC and the Great Plains Center jointly tabled at the health and safety tent. This year, we engaged visitors in mapping their farms then discussing and identify traditional and non-traditional hazards. HWC also shared training resources for supervisors, parents, and teachers of young agricultural workers.





## research and implementation

# Focus on Mental Health of Workers

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for workplace mental health interventions. The HWC has adopted a multidisciplinary approach to meet this need by working with various partners (Tippie College of Business, Occupational Medicine) to develop and disseminate resources through multiple outreach channels.

Several Center products targeted the role of leadership in addressing stress and mental health in the workplace. For example, a video addressing burnout and a podcast featuring the value of gratitude in the workplace present tangible solutions for employers and supervisors to implement. A policy brief described organizational approaches to addressing mental health, highlighting the need for prevention and early intervention.

Two new Employee Assistance Program(EAP) podcasts featured service providers describing the value and versatility of assistance these valuable services can provide to employees and their families. They also help employers identify trends in their usage that can add value by forecasting the need for new policies, practices, and programs in the workplace.

We continue to address opioid use and mental health in the construction industry. Dr. Ann Marie Dale led a Center project to develop opioid management guidelines for the construction trades, and served on an Olin Brookings Commission Panel that developed policy recommendations for tackling the opioid crisis in the U.S. Dr. Evanoff's Center project conducts interviews with construction stakeholders to identify current programs targeting behavioral health. Dr. Evanoff also received funding from the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development to continue characterizing current mental health programs among construction employers.

Employee surveys conducted during the pandemic and the University of Iowa and Washington University St. Louis led to two additional projects. Dr. Brad Evanoff

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**MENTAL HEALTH**  
Workplace Programs, Practices, and Policies

**OVERVIEW**  
Work is beneficial for mental health, providing meaning and purpose, a sense of accomplishment, self-efficacy and self-esteem, and recognition of an individual's contribution. However, aspects of work can also negatively impact health. There is often a reluctance to discuss mental health issues, including substance use, in the workplace. This stigma can negatively impact worker well-being. Workplace policies and practices demonstrate leadership support and provide a plan for action. It is important to move beyond individual solutions to address how the organization of work can impact mental health.

**BENEFITS OF ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH**  
Addressing mental health (e.g., anxiety and depression, substance use, psychotic disorders, work-related stress) can lead to **decreased absenteeism, lower turnover, increased productivity, reduced costs, and higher employee engagement.** Treatment is cost-effective, over 80% of employees treated for mental illness report improved levels of work efficiency and satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

**1 OUT OF EVERY 5 ADULTS HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS**  
→ Mental illness is common  
→ Mental illness is a treatable health condition  
→ Only 50-60% of adults with mental health conditions are getting the services they need  
→ Learning and talking openly helps reduce stigma  
→ Reducing stigma can save lives  
→ It's never too late and never too early to get help

**STIGMA KEEPS PEOPLE FROM GETTING TREATMENT**  
Does your workplace include access to:  
□ An Employee Assistance Program  
□ Referrals to community services  
□ Free or subsidized lifestyle coaching  
□ Counseling  
□ Behavioral health treatment  
□ Telepsychiatry  
□ Prescription drug therapy  
□ Inpatient or outpatient treatment

**DEFINITION OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH**  
"...a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."  
-World Health Organization, 2014

HEALTHIER WORKFORCE  
CENTER of the MIDWEST

→ [www.healthierworkforcecenter.org](http://www.healthierworkforcecenter.org)

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received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration for a project promoting resilience and mental health among the health professional workforce. Dr. Beth Livingston is working on a project with the Information Technology group at the University of Iowa to evaluate the impact of alternative work arrangements and supervisor behaviors on employee well-being.

HWC members delivered 28 presentations addressing mental health and substance use at various conferences and workplaces (e.g. Master Builders of Iowa, Kirkwood Safety Conference, Governor's Safety Conference, and Hawkeye on Safety), with several entities requesting repeat presentations. Many of these groups are in rural areas with limited access to mental health resources. After attending one of our presentations, Bayer U.S. - Crop Science in Muscatine, Iowa invited us to participate in the Mental Health Awareness Campaign #BreakTheStigma. In June 2022, Dr. Rohlman presented to members of the plant during a lunch and learn and met with leadership to discuss current challenges and opportunities to introduce new programs and policies supporting workers' mental health.

In addition, the HWC continues to disseminate the "You Ok?" suicide prevention campaign materials developed in partnership with the Associated General Contractors of Missouri and OSHA St. Louis. The campaign was co-branded with the Midwest Laborers organization, translated into Spanish, and disseminated to employers and organizations throughout our region. Multiple organizations have requested additional materials as they have expanded their mental health programs. For example, one construction site indicated that they contracted with their insurer to not only concentrate on suicide/mental health during the month of September but to continue this work going forward. They will also provide hands-on training to all their staff.

*Midwest Laborers' International Union of North America (MW LiUNA) adopted the suicide prevention campaign, distributing materials to 50 locals, 6 district councils, 7 training centers, and almost 1,000 contractors.*

“

**This year we created 'packets' for each employee to use personally or professionally...**

**We want to make sure everyone who comes on our job site to work, that we are here for them for anything they may need.**

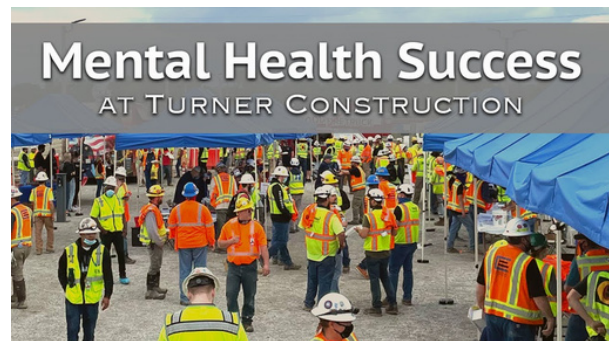
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*outreach*

## On-Demand Outreach Products

Throughout FY 2021-2022, the Outreach Core continued to produce evidence-based video, audio, and print resources featuring best practices from employers, researchers, and practitioners. In order to expand our library of foundational principles and competencies of *Total Worker Health* education we developed a number of products. [Information Privacy: Protect Worker Data](#) describes one of the five Fundamentals of *Total Worker Health*®. [Assessing Worker Well-Being](#) describes the new, freely available NIOSH Worker Well-Being Questionnaire (WellBQ) that was developed in collaboration with the NIOSH Office for *Total Worker Health*® to support the identification of areas of need and can be used to measure changes over time within a workplace.

A new video, [Introduction to the Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest](#), was developed to summarize the Center's objectives and research projects. Ongoing research by HWC's Ann Marie Dale of Washington University in St. Louis was featured in a video showcasing strategies to address [Mental Health Success at Turner Construction](#).



The Healthier Workforce Center sponsored three virtual Connections Meetings with the Nebraska Safety Council in 2021, which resulted in the development of several outreach products including a podcast about [Leadership Behaviors](#), featuring Colonel John Bolduc, Superintendent of Law Enforcement and Public Safety for the Nebraska State Patrol. In 2022, Parker Hannifin was recognized as a Worker 360 Award winner by the Nebraska Safety Council, Nebraska State Chamber, and the Healthier Workforce Center. [Successful Safety Culture](#) at Parker Hannifin outlined their winning approaches in a subsequent podcast.

Center partners and NIOSH *Total Worker Health* Affiliates at the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition and Nebraska Safety Council provided interview referrals to employers and industry leaders enhancing worker well-being through robust benefit programs. In the podcasts, [The Value of EAPs](#) and [Increasing Workplace EAP Utilization](#), the regional experts outlined best practices for leveraging EAPs to impact mental health in the workplace. The EAP podcasts were co-promoted by the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition, further increasing individuals reached.

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Several outreach products were developed through collaboration with the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business. Dr. Eean Crawford addressed [Employee Engagement](#) in a podcast discussing how employers can engage workers in remote and hybrid work environments. A second video focused on workplace solutions to address [Burnout](#), an emerging issue identified by our regional partners.

We also interviewed Dr. Nicole Del Castillo of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine for a podcast addressing the benefits and strategies to ingrain [Gratitude in the Workplace](#).

[Non-Standard Work](#), features Dr. Lorraine Conroy of the Center for Healthy Work, a NIOSH Center of Excellence for *Total Worker Health*®, at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The video showcased some of the same topics Dr. Conroy had addressed as the keynote speaker of the 5th Annual Occupational Safety and Health Student Research Conference which took place at the University of Iowa College of Public Health.

### *Be Health Connected*

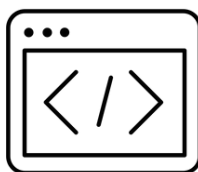
Center partners at the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition developed a podcast, *Emerging Priorities for Total Worker Health*®, as part of their ongoing Be Health Connected podcast series. This feature episode reached

**6,830**  
individuals

## Outreach by the numbers...



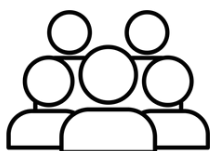
64,091 video views



1,258 resources  
downloaded



943 podcast plays



18,000 website views



13,361 Twitter impressions

*collaborative learning community*

## **More than Just a Paycheck: Creating a Workplace that Attracts and Retains Employees**

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the work environment and the way we work. Many workers shifted to remote work. Others left the workforce for reasons such as burnout or caregiving responsibilities, and those that remained found an environment that was drastically changed. The worker shortage has impacted health and safety in the workplace, as employers struggle to find skilled workers to fill positions, and workers find themselves undertrained and overworked. In August 2022, we invited regional employers and practitioners to discuss these issues and how to tackle them from a *Total Worker Health* perspective in our inaugural Regional Collaborative Learning Community, titled *More than Just a Paycheck: Creating a Workplace that Attracts and Retains Employees*. The goals were to characterize how work influences health and well-being and impacts recruitment and retention; describe factors that impact recruitment and retention including workplace health and safety; and identify ways to create a workplace that improves recruitment and retention. Fifty attendees representing 11 states joined the conversation.



**Regional Collaborative**  
**LEARNING COMMUNITY**



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