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Workplace Suicide Prevention Implementation through H.O.P.E. Certification Program

Six Colorado Organizations Selected to Undergo Major, Demonstrable Culture Change on Employee Mental Health Following New York Pilot Effort



DENVER – Kicking off August 30, six Colorado businesses and organizations will participate in a year-long pilot project to improve worker well-being by implementing state-of-the-art workplace mental health promotion, suicide prevention, and addiction recovery best practices. By earning the [newly released H.O.P.E. Certification](#), they will prove - with third-party verification - their commitment to promoting employee mental health and suicide prevention to their workers, clients, and customers. Developed by a Denver-based nonprofit, United Suicide Survivors, the tiered certification program stands for “Helping Our People Elevate tough times.” Supported by initial funding from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Anthem, H.O.P.E. Certification is based on the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention.

To learn more about the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention visit: WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com

“We are thrilled that employers from numerous industries are recognizing both the urgent need for and the win/win of prioritizing the mental health and well-being of their workers,” said Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas, United Survivors president and co-founder and lead H.O.P.E. trainer. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Coloradans

ages 10-44. Colorado ranks 7th nationally for states with the highest suicide rates, and 71% of the state's firearms deaths were suicides.

Spencer-Thomas has been promoting workplaces taking an active role in suicide prevention efforts since the loss of her brother, Carson, a Colorado businessman to suicide in 2004. She is the lead author of the evidence-informed set of suicide prevention best practices, known as the [National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention](#) in 2019.

H.O.P.E. Certification involves implementing the nine practices embedded in these guidelines. Businesses and organizations earn bronze to platinum status based on their level of implementation. New York was the first state to undergo H.O.P.E. Certification earlier this year. Colorado will be the second.

"We are so proud to be part of this work. We were excited when looking at the evaluation of our pilot but not only the hard data - the change that has happened is visible within these agencies from all the work the teams have done," said Jenna Heise, director of implementation for the Office of Mental Health's Suicide Prevention Center of New York.

Three teams from the construction industry, which has one of the highest rates of suicide of any industry, earned certifications: CNY Group, the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825 and New York State Laborers Health and Safety Fund.

For more information on the New York State H.O.P.E. Pilot visit:

<https://www.hopcertification.com/successes>

- [Impact Report of New York State Pilot](#)
- [Highlight Reel of New York State Pilot](#)

Regarding the Colorado pilot effort, a diverse group of organizations will be coming together to create a community of practice. Representing numerous Colorado counties, participating businesses and organizations from construction, health/mental health, and nonprofits include: Encore Electric of Lakewood, Saunders Inc. of Englewood, Olson Plumbing & Heating Co. of Colorado Springs, Mtech Mechanical of Westminster, Banner Health, and MINES and Associates of Littleton.

United Survivors chose these large and middle-sized organizations to undergo the certification process following an introductory Workplace Well-being Summit in Golden in June and subsequent application.

Upwards of 100 workers and leaders from 18 businesses and organizations across the state participated in the daylong summit, in part learning about the guidelines and certification (see picture above). Participating industries included construction, health care, utilities, accommodation, and food service. Prominent themes were workplace

challenges to well-being, work-life disruption, ongoing impacts of COVID, and labor shortages. 100% of attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the summit.

The largest takeaways based on pre and post-survey data were in understanding specific practices outlined in the national guidelines and understanding how to create a plan; however, there were statistically significant gains in all categories except "our workplace team members collaborate effectively on implementing a workplace strategy." For most, that is yet to be determined. The first training for the Colorado cohort is on August 30 at Gallagher Insurance, Risk Management & Consulting Service's office in Centennial. The firm is a program sponsor.

"The majority of suicide deaths in Colorado occur among adults ages 25-64, many of whom are part of a workforce. In order to meet the needs of Colorado adults and to support comprehensive suicide prevention across the state, the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention is excited to support this program focused on workplaces," said director Lena Heilman. The state Office of Suicide Prevention sponsored the summit.

For 24/7 mental health and crisis support, call or text 988 - the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

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About United Suicide Survivors International, Inc. (501c3)

United Suicide Survivors International (founded 2016) is an independent international membership organization that serves as a home for people who have experienced suicide loss, suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts and feelings, and their friends and families -- collectively known as people with lived experience with suicide -- to leverage their expertise for large scale change. We envision a world where lived expertise becomes the fulcrum that leverages all suicide prevention efforts. We put the lived expertise of suicide attempt and loss survivors into action through leadership, collaboration and advocacy. www.UniteSurvivors.org