

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Misuse Prevention

Recovery Work Group Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2026 from 12 to 1:30 p.m. via Zoom

(The following minutes and discussion are for informational purposes only and do not represent the position of the University of Colorado.)

Present:

Victor King, Co-chair
April Wise, Denver Recovery Group
Precious Collins, COPA
Sarah Honstein, Recovery Café Longmont
De Waldron, Advocates for Recovery Colorado
Ruth Horn, San Luis Valley AHEC
Alfonso Suazo, Community Medical Services
Brandi Drtina, No. Colorado Health Alliance
Gordan Thibedeau, Health Solutions West
Hanohn Al-Abduljalil, Denver City & County Courts
Jason Sterner, Christlife Ministries
Jen Marnowski, Safe Approaches to Marijuana
Shannon Potter, West Colorado Survivor Services
Crossroads Turning Points, Crystal Dickerson, Jacquelyn McDonald, Mitch Rich
Antoinette Sanchez, Kenneth (iPhone)
Consortium: Jen Place, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Eric Barker, Rosemarie MacDowell

Absent: See attached

Co-chair Victor King called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the March 2026 work group meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Work Group Review of Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative Landscape Report:

Co-chair Victor King opened the meeting by requesting work group members take a few minutes to review the recently issued Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative landscape report. A link and a copy of the report is attached to the minutes.

Victor referred to Map 1, page 12 of the report, noting the cluster of locations along the I-25 corridor and the lack of services available in other Colorado counties. He asked work group members to break out in smaller groups to discuss Section 5.1 of the report and to focus on identifying strengths, challenges, and how organizations can provide mutual support.

Work Group Member Comments:

Eric Barker: The reported loss of jobs is difficult to see, but provides an opportunity for some targeted work with individuals in the construction, healthcare, and retail sectors.

Brandi Drtina: I really appreciate that the report highlighted the need for internal peer support because I think a lot of recovery community organizations do a lot of great work for the community, but are not always supported properly. The North Colorado Health Alliance where I work just went through a HOPE certification, and we also received recovery friendly workplace certification. We created an internal peer support program to support staff (called Thrive).

Hanohn Al-Abduljalil: I really appreciate the report. It's great to know that this type of work is being done, and we have an opportunity to review what's working and what's not working. I like that we were given examples of how engagement looks with each other and being able to see the different organizations across the state doing good evidence-based work and providing an outline of how the work can be replicated.

De Waldron: We need a leadership buy-in for peer support spaces. I hold my own peer-exclusive boots-on-the-ground-only space for peer support professionals on Zoom, which is available to everyone across the state. NCHA is doing something similar for all staff, but there's pushback from leadership. Why is leadership pushing back on supporting peer support professionals when self-care is in our ethical code of conduct? I don't feel we get to talk about burnout when we know what the solution is.

Jen Marnowski: I don't think people understand what peer support means, looks like, and is. I think it's so new and our state is actually on the forefront. Leadership needs to be educated -- that would be one of the things I would add.

Brandi Drtina: We were getting some leadership pushback at first and we had to have our upper leadership communicate to everyone that this space needs to be there for people.

Gordan Thibideau: I thought it was a great conversation and just want to add that my organization does have peer cohort meetings. I was in one yesterday on my way back from Vail and people were getting pretty vulnerable and expressing things that are going on in their lives. They are able to talk to each other. We have a good peer supervisor in my company, at least in the west part of my company, and I feel supported if I need it.

Hanohn Al-Abduljalil: Our breakout discussed being able to function within our scope of work, and some of the larger organizations don't have as much experience with peer work and peers are being asked to do things that are more like case management. This wasn't addressed in the report, but it does come up frequently. How can an organization keep these boundaries from being blurred?

Eric Barker: Due to the volume of emails, sometimes opportunities highlighting things like peer support are missed. Is there a better way to communicate – face-to-face, flyer in a breakroom, other options?

Jen Marnowski: I like putting it in the newsletter as one of the options or putting up a flyer in the breakroom.

Jessica Eaddy: As someone who does not read most of the newsletters, if someone brings it up in staff meeting, I'll pay attention and listen, and maybe even go to a Google link or sign up at that moment.

Alfonso Suazo II: One of the things I did when I was the marketing manager with Bayaud Enterprises was create an AP-style newsletter. You keep it brief, within screen size, and people are more likely to click on and read certain things if you have a catchy title. Keep it simple.

Victor King: Some of us may still have company events that serve alcohol. Eric mentioned that some recovery-friendly organizations are intentionally alcohol-free. 5.3 on page 15 of the landscape report discusses language and cultural responsiveness. It's the smallest category and brought up the need for bi-lingual Spanish-speaking employees.

Hanohn Al-Abduljalil: Strengths-based language is so important. I do appreciate looking at cultural inclusivity because that's a huge component intersecting identities of human beings in general. I would liked to have seen a little more about what it means to have strengths-based language.

Gordan Thibideau: I think that they nailed it on the bilingual part. I feel handicapped in the rural communities I serve in the Aspen, Vail, and Glenwood Springs communities that I serve because I'm not bilingual and my company doesn't offer any language training. We have some bilingual peers.

Victor King: If you don't speak a language or have something in common then that can definitely create barriers.

Gordan Thibideau: One of the challenges in my area is the different socio-economic groups. We have some people that are really poor and some people that are beyond rich. The children of billionaires in Aspen often find themselves in treatment programs.

Alfonso Suazo II: The one thing I noticed missing on this was that we have a large refugee community in Centennial and Aurora. We also have a very large Somali community in Weld County communities. We have to recognize and understand the cultural differences, and this requires figuring out a matrix to work within these groups.

Victor King: Some people have a whole pathway while some folks don't have a lot of choices. We want to be able to create access.

Work group members concluded the discussion by sharing ways in which they practice self care.

Partner Updates:

Hanohn Al-Abduljalil announced that the Denver City and County Office of the Municipal Public Defender has an opening for a peer supervisor position. https://denver.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/CCD-denver-denvergov-CSC_Jobs-Civil_service_jobs-Police_Jobs-Fire_Jobs/job/Client-Support-Team-Supervisor_R0080418-2

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Friday, May 8, 2026, from 12 to 1:30 p.m. via Zoom

Attachments: Work group roster and Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative – Recovery Community Organization, Workforce Development, and Employee Survey Landscape Report (April 2026): https://corecoveryfriendlyworkplace.org/wpcontent/uploads/2026/04/RFW_LandscapeReport_2026.pdf