The Schreiber Research Group

Workforce Development

January 17, 2025, via Zoom

**Attendees:**

Maddie Peloff, TSRG

Tara Castaneda, Eastern Plains Youth Corps

Jason Key, TSRG

Cynthia Sollenbarger, Ark Valley Casa

Terry, Community Member

**Work Group Mission and Norms:**

Mission:

Support people in recovery from substance use disorders who are reentering the workforce, as well as recovery friendly employers in southeastern Colorado

Norms:

* One person speaking at a time.
* Be respectful of other’s ideas and suggestions.

Meeting purpose:

The meeting focused on strategies to support individuals in recovery and integrate them into the workforce. The group discussed key considerations for a workforce program, including the need for funding to incentivize employers to hire recovering individuals. The group proposed solutions, such as possibly paying their salaries of individuals in recovery for a period to reduce risk. The group also discussed Jason's role as an AmeriCorps member, which will involve literature reviews, surveys, and interviews to develop recommendations for building the program. The team aims to establish a workforce center in La Junta, though expansion to other counties is a possibility if successful.

Agenda items:

* Challenges and Support for Recovery Workforce
  + Tara discusses the challenges faced by people in recovery and the need for support, mentioning the Oxford house and the role of the Workforce Development Group in connecting with recovery support networks.
  + Maddie clarifies whether the discussion is about employers or people accessing services, emphasizing the importance of a solid foundation of employers.
  + Cynthia suggests that recovery groups like AA and NA would also need such information and support.
  + Jason highlights the need for funding to incentivize employers to hire people in recovery, suggesting a program where employers are paid a salary for a certain period to reduce risk.
* Portugal's Successful Recovery Program
  + Jason shares a success story from Portugal, where a shift in funding from police to substance use disorder treatment led to job creation programs that paid employers to hire people in recovery.
  + The program resulted in a 50% reduction in overdose rates over a 10-year period, demonstrating the effectiveness of such initiatives.
  + Cynthia mentions the stigma associated with people in recovery and the need for education and motivation to change perceptions.
* Jason's Role and AmeriCorps Project
  + Maddie introduces Jason's role as an AmeriCorps member, outlining his responsibilities, including a literature review, surveys, and interviews with people in recovery.
  + The goal is for Jason to prepare a report on recommendations for building the program by the end of his year of service.
  + Maddie discusses the focus on Otero County and the potential expansion to other locations if the workforce center in La Junta is effective.
  + Jason and Maddie clarify the relationship with AmeriCorps and the funding for Jason's role.
* SEBREA Presentation and Workforce Development
  + Maddie and Tara discuss the SEBREA presentation, which will introduce the recovery workforce development program and goals for partnerships with recovery-friendly workplaces.
  + Terry brings up the topic of felonies and the importance of policy changes to support people with felonies in finding employment.
  + Jason explains the Ban the Box Initiative, which prevents employers from asking about felonies until the face-to-face interview stage.
  + Tara and Maddie discuss the market analysis conducted by TSRG and the summary of resources for people in recovery in the southeast region.
* Next Steps and Networking
  + Maddie outlines the next steps, including continuing to work with Jason and having him conduct research.
  + Jason and Maddie discuss the AmeriCorps day of service at the fairgrounds.
  + Tara describes the reporting requirements and the streamlined process which allows her organization to effectively comply with AmeriCorps reporting requirements.
  + The conversation ends with a discussion about networking, building relationships, and the importance of identifying recovery-friendly workplaces.

Next meeting:

Date: February 17, 2025 Time: 12pm Location: Zoom