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Colorado to Become a National Leader in Workplace Well-Being
Companies and Organizations Undergo Culture Change on Mental Health

DENVER – In a state with the seventh highest suicide rate in the nation, companies, organizations, and the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention are joining forces to proactively address worker wellbeing via an upcoming summit and a related year-long pilot project.

“Participants will be the first in our region to be able to prove their commitment to employee mental health, wellbeing, and suicide prevention both to those they serve and those who work for them via a new tiered certification program called H.O.P.E. Certification,” said Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas, President and Founder of United Suicide Survivors International. The Denver-based nonprofit developed the H.O.P.E. program which stands for “Helping Our People Elevate tough times” with support from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

“Focusing on the mental health of employees is more important than ever with increasing suicide rates and societal risk factors,” said Spencer-Thomas. “Doing so also creates a competitive advantage for businesses and organizations by helping them retain employees and attract customers who increasingly want demonstrable social responsibility from those they do business with, among numerous other benefits,” she continued.

The certification program aims to reduce the tragedies of suicide, overdose, and the consequences of addiction while bolstering well-being and a culture of care, according to Spencer-Thomas. It is based on implementation of a set of National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention, for which Spencer-Thomas was the lead author, and includes third party verification. New York state was the first state in the nation to adopt H.O.P.E. certification, and Colorado will become the second.

Efforts kickoff June 27 with the Workplace Well-Being Summit, at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden. In late '22, [the U.S. Surgeon General brought national attention to the foundational role that workplaces should play in promoting the](#)

[health and well-being of workers](#) amid “quiet quitting,” the Great Resignation, and the pandemic changing the nature of work for many and the relationship that some workers have with their jobs.

“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 worker well-being summit that will help Colorado workplaces learn about implementing best practices in workplace well-being, mental health promotion and suicide prevention,” said Lena Heilman, director of the Office of Suicide Prevention, a summit sponsor.

Safety-critical industries are being targeted for the summit including construction, mining, oil and gas, first responders, and healthcare which all have high rates of suicide compared to other industries. “Supporting employee mental health requires a holistic approach to well-being. This summit is a critically important event for Colorado employers in all industries hoping to develop and implement innovative mental health solutions during a challenging time for workers everywhere,” said Kevin Lombardo, President and CEO of DORN Companies. The Highlands Ranch firm is focused on workplace ergonomics and injury prevention and is one of many H.O.P.E. pilot project sponsors.

“We are thrilled to be a part of the summit as it strongly aligns with MINES’ dedication to promoting well-being in the workplace,” said Dr. Dani Kimlinger, CEO of Mines and Associates, an international business psychology firm and pilot sponsor based in Littleton. “By prioritizing mental health and suicide prevention, organizations can save lives and influence the course of human events. Attending this summit will empower organizations to elevate the well-being of their employees as well as cultivate a safe and supportive work environment,” she continued.

Early bird registration for the Workplace Well-Being Summit ends June 20. Registration is available at <https://bit.ly/45KBXv8>. For more information visit <https://www.hopcertification.com/>.

“Our hope and goal is to make H.O.P.E. certification as well known and widely adopted as LEEDs certification is in the green building industry,” said Spencer-Thomas. “We are excited that Colorado will help inspire employers nationwide with its commitment to an evidence-based, comprehensive workplace suicide prevention strategy and culture of care.” Spencer-Thomas became a suicide prevention expert following her brother Carson’s death by suicide in 2004. He was a successful Colorado businessman.

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