

The Business Case for Total Worker Health®

Alaska Safety Alliance
TWH Workshop
April 7, 2025

Lili Tenney, DrPH, MPH
Director of Outreach and Programs,
Centers for Health, Work &
Environment



Centers for Health, Work & Environment

Colorado School of Public Health

One of ten national Centers of Excellence for *Total Worker Health*® and one of 18 national centers for training occupational health and safety professionals at the Colorado School of Public Health.

Our Mission:

Our mission is to advance worker health, safety, and well-being.

Our Vision:

We envision a world in which every worker has a safe, healthy workplace.

Learning Objectives

Describe the key components of a business case for implementing TWH strategies, including cost savings, productivity, employee engagement, and reduced health risks.

Identify at least three types of data or metrics (e.g., absenteeism, injury rates, health care costs) that your organization can use to demonstrate the impact of TWH initiatives.

Analyze real-world case studies or examples that highlight the return on investment (ROI) and value on investment (VOI) of TWH programs.

Apply strategies for framing and communicating the business case for TWH to organizational leaders and stakeholders.



Setting expectations for the hour

- The business case for TWH requires us to understand unique motivations and values of YOUR organization
- Key metrics can be used to measure and justify the value of TWH
- The value proposition of TWH organizational can change over time

Total Worker Health[®] Approach

Address conditions that contribute to poor health

Workplace	Psychosocial	Employment	Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical• Safety• Chemical• Biological• Ergonomic• Built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Burnout• Job demands• Lack of control• Interpersonal relationships• Work roles• Career concerns• Healthy leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay• Benefits• Hours• Skill development• EAPs• Workers' compensation insurance• Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family• Housing• Transport• Environment (e.g., water quality)• Demographics

Example conditions

The Promise of Total Worker Health



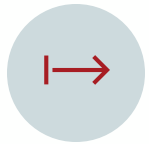
Increased
productivity



Reduced
number of
injuries



Reduced
absenteeism



Reduced
turnover



Increased profit



Reduced
quality-related
incidents



Increased
organizational
reputation



Increased job
satisfaction



Discussion

Small Group

Name a value your organization has related to TWH.

Why are you currently investing in TWH?

| What is the true value proposition for Total Worker Health?

Taking a Population Health Approach

- Epidemic of preventable chronic disease and poor health (obesity, diabetes, kidney, heart disease)
- Managing diseases has become more expensive and difficult
- Need to reach people *outside* of the clinic and hospital – for prevention to succeed
- Work affects health, health affects work
- Opportunity to have employers focus on prevention

Biggest (and most costly) Health Concerns and Issues

Stress

Smoking

Fatigue

High
cholesterol

Depression

Hypertension

Obesity

Heart
disease

Cancer

Diabetes

Employees are more satisfied and productive when these core needs are met:



Let's talk about

ROI:

Cost of an injury

Cost of poor health

vs.

VOI:

Engagement, Productivity

What is a VOI Evaluation?

What can you measure that isn't easily monetized?

- Health and safety outcomes
- Productivity (absenteeism & presenteeism)
- Employee perceptions
- Engagement
- Brand equity – workforce retention, attraction

Where to Start

Step 1: Assess, benchmark what you're doing

Step 2: Engage Stakeholders – C-suite, supervisors, managers, employees

Step 3: Define VALUE and how to measure it

Step 4: Measure and evaluate Impact

Step 5: Adjust, improve

Be the Health and Safety Champion Your Team Deserves

A healthier workplace is just around the corner. We'll help you get there.

[Take the Assessment](#)

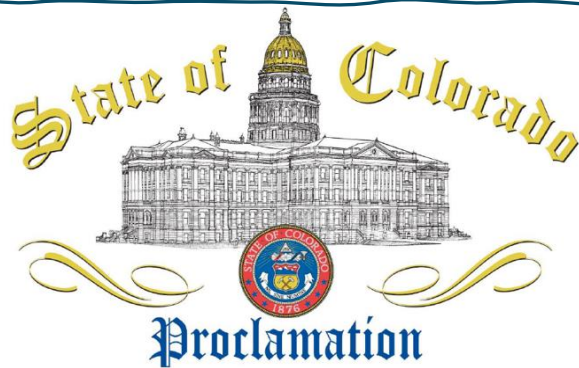
A program that champions health and safety at work. We offer evidence-based Healthy Workplace Certification™ and advising to help organizations and their team members achieve *Total Worker Health*®.

Program Impact

- 798 organizations representing 621,975 workers
- Spanning 30 counties in Colorado, 5 U.S. states, and 5 countries



Health Links success stories



WHEREAS, we recognize the value of investing in Colorado workers' health, safety, and well-being to promote health, prevent injury, and enhance workforce productivity; and

WHEREAS, we advocate for a Total Worker Health® approach that addresses workers' health through policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being; and

WHEREAS, we recognize the unique Total Worker Health® opportunities that exist in our community and celebrate organizations and employers that place value on implementing these initiatives; and

WHEREAS, we recognize and celebrate the spirit of innovation as we strive to use Total Worker Health® principles to improve the quality of health, safety, and well-being amongst workers statewide;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jared Polis, Governor of the State of Colorado, do hereby proclaim August 20, 2020 as

TOTAL WORKER HEALTH® DAY

in the State of Colorado.

GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this eighteenth day of August, 2020

Jared Polis

Jared Polis
Governor



Ambient Energy



Town of Bennett



Vail Valley Partnership



ECCV Water & Sanitation District



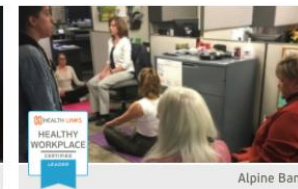
City of Aspen



Metro Wastewater Reclamation District



National Environmental Health Association



Alpine Bank



Walking Mountains Science Center



Boulder County



Aspen Grove



City of Lakewood



St. Luke's Health System



Beck Building Company



City and County of Denver



White Construction Group



Denver Public Schools



Mesa County Valley School District 51



St. Anthony Summit Medical Center



Colorado Rural Health Center



9Health Fair



Workplace Assessment

3 questions focused on using data and understanding employee needs and interests

Employee and worksite needs as well as employee interest should drive programming to better influence participation and program effectiveness.

NEEDS

- ❖ HR and benefits providers examine health care costs/claims, workers comp cost/claims, HRA or Biometric information
- ❖ Safety conducts physical worksite assessment of hazards

INTEREST

- ❖ Employee input and interests
 - Personal needs
 - Engagement survey
 - Worksite needs / hazards
 - Program interest



Workplace Assessment

Employee surveys, healthcare and workers' compensation claims data, health risk factors

11





Quality Improvement

3 questions focused on data tracking and measurement

Program evaluation provides a feedback mechanism to quantify the success of health and safety program and adjust programming to meet the dynamic needs of an evolving workforce.

Types of data

- ★ Employee participation and satisfaction
- ★ Employee morale and engagement
- ★ Health care claims and costs
- ★ Safety claims and costs

Quality Improvement

Tracking and measurement to continuously improve your health and safety program

4



Case study: White Construction Group

- Established safety culture
- President recognized the need to do more for health
- Conducted a worksite assessment that resulted in a need for mental health education and resources

Value of investment in TWH

- Increased communication about depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide
- 9% increase in participation
- 85% employee satisfaction with current health and safety programming

https://www.healthlinkscertified.org/uploads/files/2020_11_20_16_33_01_Healthlink_Case_Study_White_Construction_Group.pdf

Case studies in TWH

- Measurable changes in
 - Quantity/quality of TWH policies and programs
 - Employee satisfaction with health and safety programming
 - Employee engagement
 - Employee retention
 - Relationships with supervisors

Chris has received feedback that the team “believes leadership cares about them and their families’ health and wellness”.

By prioritizing employee interests, Chris feels that WCG has created an environment that fosters open and honest discussion about health, safety, and emotional well-being in the workplace



Review the Key Metrics



Why it Pays Off: Business Drivers for TWH

Business Driver	TWH Impact
Cost Reduction	Decreased absenteeism, lower healthcare costs, fewer injuries
Productivity	Higher employee engagement and performance
Retention	Reduced turnover and improved workplace culture
Risk Management	Fewer claims and legal costs
Reputation	Position as an employer of choice and a responsible brand



Metrics that Matter

To build a business case, use data such as:

- Injury/illness rates (OSHA logs)
- Health care claims or premiums
- Worker compensation costs
- Absenteeism and presenteeism
- Employee satisfaction or engagement scores
- Turnover rates

❖ Tip: Start with existing HR or EHS data!



Real-World Example: ROI/VOI



Recovery
Friendly
WORKPLACE



400,000

There are an estimated 400,000 individuals in recovery in Colorado.

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, 2022



\$8,500

Each employee in recovery saves employers an average of \$8,500 annually.

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, 2022



360 Million

Colorado has cumulatively lost an estimated total of 360 million work hours due to opioid use.

Esquibel, n.d.

| Strengthening your TWH business case

Exercise: Write Your Total Worker Health® Value Proposition

Instructions (5–10 minutes)

Step 1: Reflect (2–3 min)

Think about your organization and jot down:

- A **key challenge** your workforce faces (e.g., high turnover, burnout, rising claims)
- One or two **business goals** your leaders care about (e.g., improving retention, lowering costs, attracting talent)
- **Step 2: Fill in the blanks (3–5 min)**

Use the prompts below to write your value proposition.
Don't overthink—just get something down!



*"At **[your organization name]**, investing in Total Worker Health[®] helps us **[solve a key challenge]** by **[implementing strategies or programs]**. This supports our goals of **[business goal(s)]** while improving **[worker outcome or benefit]**."*



Example

At ClearPath Manufacturing, investing in Total Worker Health® helps us address high injury rates and employee stress by implementing safety coaching and mental health supports. This supports our goals of reducing costs and improving retention while enhancing worker morale and productivity.



Communicating the Business Case

When presenting to leaders:

- ✓ Align with organizational goals (e.g., productivity, safety, retention)
- ✓ Use language of **risk management** and **value creation**
- ✓ Share success stories or competitor benchmarking
- ✓ Present data in terms of cost savings or avoided losses
- ✓ Emphasize dual benefit: worker well-being *and* business success



Take Action

- Start small: pilot a mental health or fatigue management program
- Build cross-departmental support (HR + Safety + Leadership)
- Use free tools: Alaska Safety Alliance, University of Washington, TWH Centers of Excellence, Society for TWH!!, www.healthlinkscertified.org, CDC, NIOSH TWH® resources
- Track and communicate outcomes regularly

Resources

- NIOSH Total Worker Health®: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh>
- Health Links™ Employer Program: <https://www.healthlinkscertified.org>
- CDC Workplace Health Resource Center: <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion>

Stay Connected



[/company/chwe](#)



[coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/chwe](#)



[@CHWENews](#)



Colorado Study

Sample

>16,000 employees, representing

>300 employers

From multiple industries and occupations

Data

Health risk assessments

Workers' compensation claims data



<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/36/2/237.full>



Results:

Expected annual cost of lost productivity



# of employees	Lost Productivity \$
50 employees	\$5,561
100 employees	\$11,121
250 employees	\$27,803
500 employees	\$55,605
1000 employee	\$111,510
5000 employees	\$556,050