

Retention Strategies Hiding in Plain Sight

WORKFORCE WELLBEING & RETENTION

Naomi DuCharme · Founder & CEO, Integrating Wellness Solutions

CPRC & CPC · Total Worker Health® Facilitator · CHST

www.integratingwell.com · naomi@integratingwell.com · 907-830-1100

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Think of a time you voluntarily left a training program or a job.

Without naming names or any incriminating detail, why did you go?



Now think of a training program or job you stayed in.

What made you stay?

THE FOCUS SHIFT

From building the pipeline to keeping who's already in it

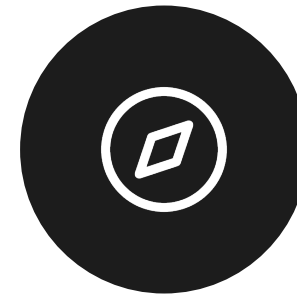
Workforce development has rightly focused on the pipeline: training, recruiting incentives, and wraparound supports like childcare, housing, and transportation. Today we shift to a different question: what role does physical, psychological, and psychosocial safety play in workforce retention?



**Individual
Organizations**



Industries



Statewide

Three lenses to help make Alaska a top state for workforce wellbeing.

MAKING THE CASE

Why Alaska's workforce needs holistic safety

The physical reality

7.1 vs 3.3

fatalities per 100,000 FTE workers, Alaska vs. U.S.

69% of Alaska's workplace deaths hit prime-age workers, 25–54

The psychological shift

Highest in the U.S.

Alaska's age-adjusted suicide rate, 2024

Workplace suicides and drug overdoses are rising even as machinery-related deaths decline

The economic case

\$4 : \$1

return on every dollar invested in mental health

92% of workers say employer support for psychological wellbeing matters to them

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries; Alaska Health Analytics & Vital Records / KFF analysis of CDC WONDER, 2024; NIOSH/CDC analysis of Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2011–2022; World Health Organization (Chisholm et al., The Lancet Psychiatry, 2016); APA 2023 Work in America Survey.

PHYSICAL SAFETY, BEYOND COMPLIANCE

How an unaddressed injury cascades



1

Time away

Musculoskeletal and traumatic injuries are consistently the leading driver of missed workdays and workers' compensation claims.



2



Career exit

In physically demanding Alaska trades like maritime, aviation, extraction, construction a lasting limitation can end a career in that trade entirely, not just a job.



3



Behavioral health spiral

About 1 in 3 workers' comp claims with a prescription include an opioid. Unmanaged pain and the stress of returning to a hazardous environment are documented drivers of anxiety, depression, and substance use after injury.

Physical safety is the gateway to behavioral health. This is the case for prioritizing it beyond compliance.

Source: Travelers analysis of workers' compensation opioid prescribing; NIOSH; CDC.

Culture outweighs compensation & policies

10.4x

more predictive of employee attrition than compensation

A toxic workplace culture is the single strongest predictor of voluntary turnover: stronger than pay, workload, or job insecurity.

19%

of U.S. workers describe their current workplace as toxic

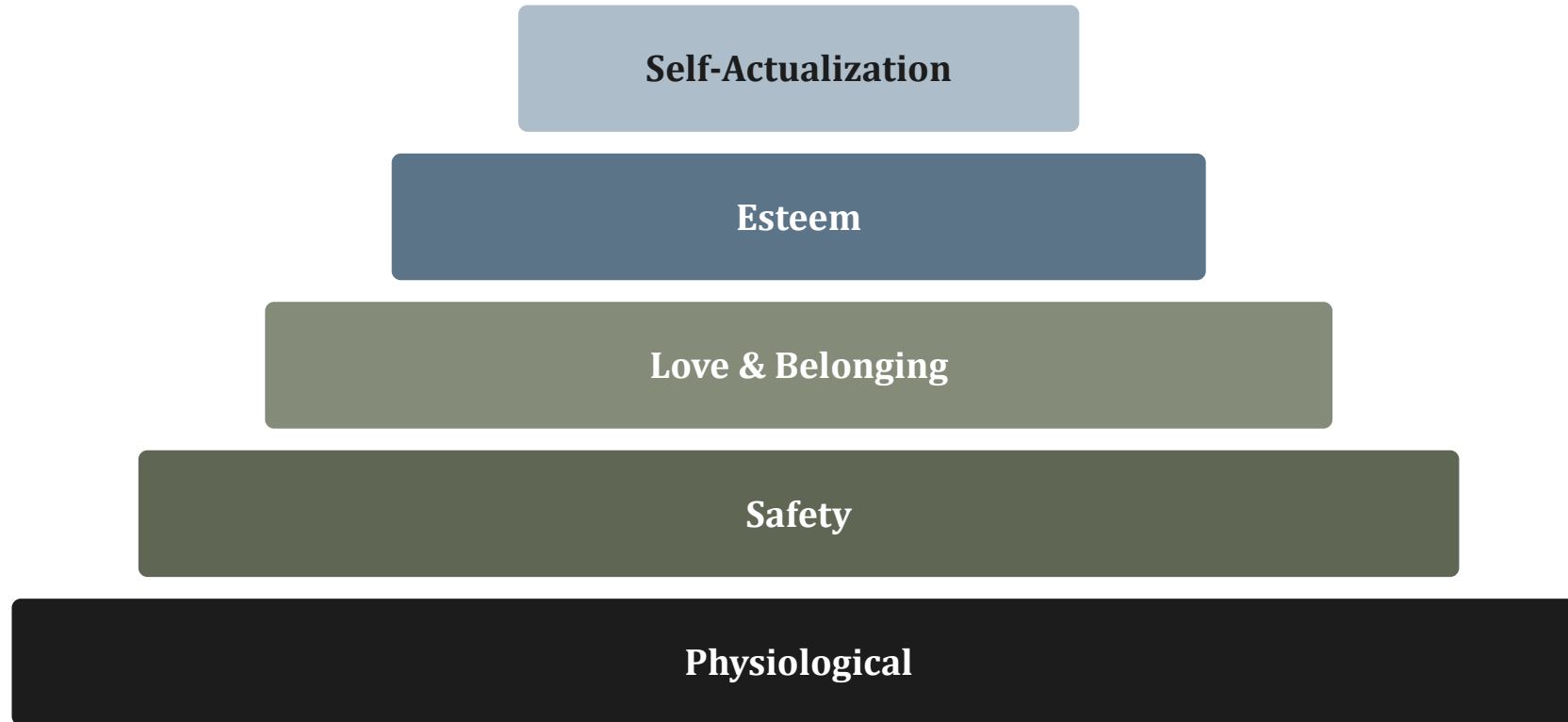
Toxic workplaces are strongly linked to harassment, disengagement, and turnover; and workers overwhelmingly say their employer's support for psychological wellbeing shapes whether they stay.

Compensation gets people through the door. Culture and leadership are what keep them there.

Source: MIT Sloan Management Review, "Toxic Culture Is Driving the Great Resignation," Sull & Sull, 2022; APA 2023 Work in America Survey.

AT THE FOUNDATION

People's needs are simple



Maslow's hierarchy of needs : the same foundation

THE WORKFORCE SAFETY HIERARCHY

Your strategic action plan

01

SURVIVE

Physical Safety First

- Audit high-risk sectors for compliance and modern equipment
- End “push-through” culture in hazardous or extreme conditions
- Ensure employees can report hazards & they are actually addressed
- Ensure rapid trauma care access on remote job sites

02

RETAIN

Psychological & Psychosocial Safety

- Conduct psychosocial risk audits: workload, role clarity, supervisor conduct
- Train leaders in self-awareness & self-regulation, emotional intelligence, systems thinking to reduce individual blame culture, recovery supportive
- Build retaliation-free speak-up channels

03

FLOURISH

Promote Wellbeing

- Localized, culturally competent benefits
- Peer-to-peer networks
- Support wellbeing initiatives
- Support employees prioritizing their health (breaks, recovery meetings, doctor appointments)

Don't skip steps. Protect their bodies first, secure their psychological peace second, fuel their growth third.

EFFICACY OF SOLUTIONS

Stop starting at the bottom

The common mistake is defaulting to training and personal coping tools first. NIOSH's Total Worker Health® hierarchy shows those are the least effective levers on their own.

MOST EFFECTIVE**LEAST EFFECTIVE**

Source: NIOSH Total Worker Health® Hierarchy of Controls.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Examples



Individual Organizations

Run culture and climate assessments with genuine workforce engagement. Train leaders in self-awareness, emotional intelligence, healthy stress management, de-escalation, and non-punitive feedback, systems thinking over individual blame.



Industries

Industry-specific prevention: construction workers die by suicide at roughly 5 times the rate of all other jobsite fatalities combined. Construction Industry created a Suicide Prevention Week & has partnered with organizations like AFSP for tailored materials



Statewide

Recovery Friendly Workplace initiatives: building recovery-supportive employers into the state's workforce and public health strategy. Examples: New Hampshire, Colorado

Source: CDC / Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR).



YOUR TURN

Two Minutes Per Person.

In your group: what is one thing you would focus on in your organization, your industry, or statewide using the physical, psychological, or psychosocial lens we discussed today?

Return for Share Out



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Coming Soon

Alaska Safety Week



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