



PARSE Full Coalition Committee Meeting

February 20, 2025

Moderators:

Allison Weingarten, Co-founding member of the coalition to prevent addiction and support recovery and employment.

Jonathan Rosen, Co-founding member of the coalition to prevent addiction and support recovery and employment. Also is an Industrial Hygienist, which is the health side of workplace health and safety.

Attendees:

Chris Assini, Director of Policy FOR-NY

Jennifer Donadio Project Director Rural Recovery FOR-NY

Dr. Angelia Smith-Wilson, Executive Director FOR-NY

Dylan MacQuoid, Legislative Director from Assemblyman Steck's office

Kim Bernstein, Legislative Director from Senator Fernandez's office

John Rork, THRIVE Watertown NY

Angela Lockhart, NYS OASAS Statewide Coordinator NYS OASAS Employment Support

Scott Curry, Disability Resource Coordinator at NYSCION, Sullivan County

Deborah Koivula, RN with SPAN

Carrie Dunn-Herrera, Assistant Director of Health Promotion, Healthy Capital District

Joelle Monaco, Joelle Monaco Consulting

Nicholas Durkin MHPC

Maggie Wiener, MDB Inc.

Sara Melber, Program Research Specialist at New York State Department of Health

Patrick Magee, Mountain Top Cares Coalition

Madeleine Green, MDB Inc.

Marisa Planck, NYC Dept. of Health, Bureau of Alcohol & Drug Use Prevention

Chimzy

T. Thaddaeus Brown, Phoenix House Program Coordinator/Supervisor, Brooklyn Community Recovery Center

Allison opened the meeting to invite Kim Bernstein to speak about her office's efforts to advance Recovery Ready Workplace legislation. While the bill was not taken up this year, Senator Fernandez's office decided to pursue a Recovery Ready Workplace pilot program with a budget of \$1 million this year with the goal of introducing the RRW bill next year. Kim urged the Coalition to continue advocating for the RRW bill to remind legislators of the need to support Recovery Ready Workplace initiatives. Kim recommends the PARSE Coalition

prepare a memo of support from the group organization names or logos with testimonials in support of RRW and share it with legislators.

John Roark shared that they recently held an informational meeting with 25 employers in the Watertown area, and educated them on the benefits of RRW's. Some employers shared success stories when employing people in recovery. John is also setting up meetings with 30 HR Directors from 30 different companies to set up mock interviews with his clients to practice their interviewing skills. John is also planning a symposium in partnership with the probation department in Jefferson County to have folks post probation discuss their journey with THRIVE's clients, with the focus on recognizing their strengths and not just the challenges. weaknesses. overcoming obstacles. On that note, Jonathan noted that the probation officers can also advocate for their clients with a letter of recommendation. John notes that they now work with over 1,000 individuals in his county.

Dylan MacQuoid, the new Legislative Directory in Assemblyman Steck's office shared that the RRW passed the committee unanimously, and they will try to get it to the floor as fast as possible. Assemblyman Steck gave a news interview on Channel 6 in Albany region. Dylan posted the link to the story: <https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/new-york-lawmakers-propose-workplace-recovery-program-for-injury-related-addiction-steck>

Chris Assini asked if the bill will get to the floor before the Senate's "one house" is completed, but Dylan said unfortunately not likely but will become a post budget bill that will hopefully get taken up. Jonathan noted that passage of the RRW bill will do much for the economy, it addresses the labor shortage, absenteeism, lost productivity, overuse of health benefits, while at the same time helping people in recovery. Chris also asked how RRW legislation is faring in the Assembly's "One House", and Dylan shared that it would be positioned as a standalone bill to go through the Ways and Means committee. Assemblyman Steck is not pursuing the pilot program and prefers to focus on the bill and then eventually have a grant program administered by the state to work with the businesses.

Allison asked Dylan whether Assemblyman Steck would be open to reconsidering how much funding would help the Coalition's prospects in advancing RRW, but Dylan does not expect the Assemblyman to change his mind.

Deborah Koivula shared through her work with SPAN (Statewide Peer Assistance for Nurses), that many nurses have been affected by substance use disorder and SPAN has been able to do some pilot work to address this. Deborah, who has lost 17 nurses in the past six years to various causes, including accidental and intentional overdoses, expressed her passion for supporting nurses and addressing the stigma surrounding substance use. She emphasized the importance of using the story of nurses to prioritize the issue and garner public support. Deborah also highlighted the significant gaps in healthcare culture's support for recovery and the need for compassion towards those struggling with substance use.

Scott Curry's organization SCION (New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network) hosted a meeting where Jonathan Rosen led a presentation on Behavioral Health in the Workplace. SCION is composed of Disability Resource Coordinators who operate in career centers across NY State working directly with employers, unions, and individuals with disabilities, mental health issues, and overcoming substance misuse.

As a result of the meeting Scott got good feedback from organizations interested in Recovery Ready Workplaces.

Jonathan and Allison shared the following details on a March 2025 meeting at the North Country Human Resources Consortium on March 13, 2025 in Plattsburgh titled “Talent Acquisition in a Tight Market”. Speakers include Michelle Armani – ETS Staffing, Executive Director of Ready4Real; Jonathan Rosen and Allison Weingarten – PARSE Coalition, Albany (New York State Coalition to Prevent Addiction and Support Recovery in Employment)

John Rork asked about the \$1 million pilot project’s goals and funding purpose. Allison and Jonathan shared that they hope to secure funding for PARSE Coalition members to enlist businesses to become Recovery Ready Workplaces. If his organization were to be funded, John would like to be able to add one person to his staff to help advance RRW, Jonathan noted that there would need to be an application process in place among sectors to reach businesses either through outreach, training, or certification depending on the type of employer.

Carrie Dunn-Herrera noted that the pilot program funding for an entity or champion in certain regions to implement all things that represent a RRW would be great, and it would be a good way to collect data, outcomes and then go out to other businesses and share the positive outcomes in reducing absenteeism, accelerating careers and more. Setting up quantifiable data of pre and post surveys of RRW businesses would help to further along the RRW legislation.

John Rork offered to share very impactful testimonials of employers from his area on the importance of hiring those in recovery. were very impactful.

Allison reintroduced the pilot program funding with Dylan was asked by Chris Assini if there is anything at all that can be done to persuade Assemblyman Steck to consider offering the pilot program to PARSE. Dylan offered to send along a list of key Ways and Means committee members, as it could prove beneficial. Chris noted he has been reaching out to three of the members on the committee.

Allison shared PARSE goals:

- Creating an RRW toolkit. Maggie and Maddie at Allison’s organization at MDB are assisting Allison with the toolkit. Jonathan notes that many toolkits he has seen are cluttered with too many details and recommends brief talking points in an introductory toolkit package. He also noted that different industries and organizations have different needs and as a result toolkits need to be tailored to their needs. Allison noted with the current limited resources that the initial toolkit should be a simple “tier one toolkit” that is adaptable for use across all businesses. Joelle shared that her organization is sponsoring a statewide conference taking place in Albany in October which is a good place to promote RRW efforts. Chris noted that all of the toolkit information has been gathered but needs to be finalized.
- Instructor Training

Annette Bernhardt from the Gino Macchio Foundation shared that they have greatly expanded the number of people in recovery being served in their Put Recovery to Work program from about 12 to 53 people in the past few months. The program is designed to support people in recovery who need financial support as they embark on their next step in the recovery journey. Funding is focused on removing financial barriers to gainful employment. Funding can cover car insurance, housing, and ride share transportation to and from work or

counseling. The program is overseen by the Suffolk County Department of Health. Counselors play a key role in the program as they recommend scholarship candidates.

Meeting was adjourned.