FOOTHILLS RECOVERY AND EMPLOYMENT ECOSYSTEM

The collaborative effort of the Foothills Recovery and Employment Ecosystem (FREE) initiative is to establish a comprehensive, community-driven recovery-to-work ecosystem. Efforts led by Sunrise aim to bridge the gap between recovery from Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and sustainable employment, providing individuals with the support, skills, and resources necessary for lasting success in the workforce.

Who is involved?

FREE involves a broad community of stakeholders representing health, education, training, social services, and industry. The collaborative nature of the initiative distinguishes it by its inclusiveness and ensures a holistic approach to address the complex challenges associated with SUD recovery and employment.

Why is this effort needed?

The FREE initiative is a response to the pressing challenges posed by SUD in the rural counties of Rutherford, Polk, McDowell, and Cleveland in Western North Carolina. Substance use has emerged as a significant barrier to individual growth, community stability, and local economic health, leading to the disenfranchisement of a substantial portion of the workforce.

Where is funding coming from and what is being done with it?

The ARC INSPIRE Planning Grant has been instrumental in conducting a thorough needs assessment, analyzing critical data on overdose deaths, emergency room use, and economic challenges in the target counties. It has allowed for the establishment of subcommittees, engaging key partners and stakeholders, and initiating a collaborative process to address the unique needs of each county.

How will we achieve success?

The success of the FREE initiative hinges on the commitment and collaboration of stakeholders. The engagement of diverse partners ensures a comprehensive and sustainable approach to supporting individuals in SUD recovery on their journey to meaningful employment.

The vision of FREE is a future where recovery and employment are seamlessly intertwined, and the mission is to actively bridge the gap, creating a supportive and integrated ecosystem that empowers individuals on their journey from recovery to meaningful, sustained employment.

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