

## Gupta, national director of ONDCP, visits PROCON to attend roundtable about innovative recovery friendly workplace model

June 03, 2022 - Northern New England



Shown (from left) are: John Stebbins, Tracey Pelton, Dr. Gupta and Samantha Lewandowski

Hooksett, NH Dr. Rahul Gupta, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), was in New Hampshire to lead a roundtable discussion focused on the New Hampshire Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) initiative, which was launched by governor Chris Sununu in 2018 and is administered by Granite United Way in partnership with the state of New Hampshire. The RFW program challenges the stigma around substance use disorder (SUD) and provides businesses with the tools and resources they need to support those who have been impacted by SUD. Overall, RFWs embrace cultures where employees feel safe and heard, signaling that it is OK to ask for help and encouraging employees to do so before issues progress in severity. RFW’s model has gained national recognition for its scope and impact, and Dr. Gupta’s visit served as a testament to this.

The roundtable discussion, led by Dr. Gupta and moderated by Samantha Lewandowski, assistant program director of RFW, convened business leaders from PROCON, Grappone, Chameleon Group, Genfoot America, Inc., and Hypertherm, in addition to representatives from Granite United Way and the state of New Hampshire. Opening remarks from Eliza Zarka, addiction and behavioral

health coordinator for the governor's office, Patrick Tufts, president & CEO of Granite United Way, and Dr. Gupta, oriented attendees to the shared purpose of their respective efforts and highlighted the collaborative approach that has made RFW so successful in New Hampshire.

The Roundtable spanned a variety of topics, including discussion of what RFW is, the challenges the program has navigated, the successes its participating employers have experienced, recommendations for other states, and program needs. Participants discussed what is needed to support employees in recovery, and stable housing and supporting those who are justice-involved came up as key issues, as well as access to treatment. Dr. Gupta highlighted the importance of expanding the addiction workforce and access to Narcan, noting, "There is nothing more beautiful than to be able to save a life."

Roundtable attendees were also able to hear a first-hand account of the positive impact RFW had from Shawn Cannizaro, current co-owner of Hope 2 Freedom Recovery Homes. Cannizaro sat next to his former boss, Mark Bonta, plant manager of Genfoot America, Inc., and credited Bonta and Genfoot's RFW approach with helping him build and sustain his recovery after a decades-long struggle with addiction, saying, "I wouldn't be where I am today without Mark and RFW."

Dr. Gupta said, "Under the leadership of governor Sununu, New Hampshire had created a pathway to businesses not only helping their employees through the recovery process but improving workplace productivity as well. I learned a lot from the shared discussion today, and I hope to share this knowledge with other states as they join New Hampshire in the fight against addiction by creating Recovery Friendly Workplaces."

Lewandowski brought the discussion to a close, saying, "I want to thank Dr. Gupta and all the participants for joining us today to share and learn more about the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative and the collaborative efforts New Hampshire is taking to support those impacted by SUD. Special thank you to PROCON for hosting and to each of the businesses present for their leadership in making the initiative a success."

We have learned a lot since the launch of the initiative over four years ago, and we are grateful for the opportunity to share what we've learned and further this work at a national level."

John Stebbins, managing director of PROCON, thanked attendees, saying, "We were honored to host this insightful discussion about a terrific program that is making a difference for our employees, their families and for the employees of hundreds of other businesses across the state. Dr. Gupta and governor Sununu have been at the forefront of fighting addiction issues along with the other participants today, and I think we all learned a lot from sharing our knowledge with each other. PROCON is proud to be a Recovery Friendly Workplace, and I hope every business in New Hampshire will take advantage of the RFW program."

In New Hampshire alone, over 300 businesses are designated as Recovery Friendly Workplaces representing roughly 84,000 employees. Bucking national trends, New Hampshire is projected to reduce the number of lives lost to drug overdoses by nearly 14% from 2017 – 2021, one of the only

states in the nation to see this decline.

“New Hampshire led the nation in addressing our opioid crisis head-on with innovative programs like Recovery Friendly Workplaces,” said Governor Chris Sununu. “Through this program, we’ve worked hard to change the culture around addiction by engaging employers as part of the solution, ensuring access to tools and resources is easier than ever before. I’m thrilled to welcome Dr. Gupta to New Hampshire as he heard firsthand of the program’s success as it has taken hold across the country.”

Roundtable discussion attendees included:

- Samantha Lewandowski, Granite United Way, Assistant Program Director of the Governor’s Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative & Recovery Friendly Workplace Multi-State Liaison
- Karen Morton-Clark, Granite United Way, Recovery Friendly Advisor for the Governor’s Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative
- Eliza Zarka, State of New Hampshire/Governor’s Office, Addiction & Behavioral Health Coordinator
- Annika Stanley-Smith, Director of Substance Misuse Prevention, Capital Area Public Health Network (an initiative of Granite United Way)
- Jaime Powers, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health, Bureau Director
- John Stebbins, Managing Director, PROCON
- Kelsey Flinkstrom, HR Generalist, PROCON
- Tracey Pelton, PROCON, Executive Director of Business Development & Marketing
- Patrick Tufts, Granite United Way, President & CEO
- Mark Bonta, Genfoot America, Inc., Plant Manager
- Shawn Cannizaro, former Shift Leader at Genfoot America, Inc., current Co-Owner of Hope 2 Freedom Recovery Homes
- Amanda Osmer, Grappone, Owner
- Geoff Booker, Director of Sales, Chameleon Group
- Stacey Chiocchio, Community Citizenship Manager, Hypertherm

- . Art Staples, Staff, ONDCP
- . Anne Sokolov, Staff, ONDCP

Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFW) support their communities by recognizing recovery from substance use disorder as a strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery. RFWs encourage a healthy and safe environment where employers, employees, and communities can collaborate to create a positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by addiction. Learn more at [www.recoveryfriendlyworkplace.com](http://www.recoveryfriendlyworkplace.com).

PROCON is a single-source, architecture, engineering and construction management firm serving commercial developers throughout the Northeast. For 86-years the 4th generation company has been built on integrity, lasting partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to client success.

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