





2025 Recovery to Work Program Data Report

Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery

Introduction

Recovery to Work: Building Pathways to Sustainable Employment Through Stabilization

The Recovery to Work (RTW) Program represents a fundamental shift in how Surry County addresses workforce reintegration for individuals in recovery from substance use disorder. Unlike traditional rapid-placement employment programs that prioritize immediate job placement metrics, RTW operates as a **stabilization program** designed to prepare individuals for long-term workforce success by addressing the complex, interconnected barriers that prevent sustainable employment.

Understanding the RTW Approach

RTW recognizes that recovery and employment are deeply interconnected—sustainable employment supports long-term recovery, while recovery-informed supports increase job readiness, placement success, and retention. The program targets justice-involved individuals and community members seeking a second chance at employment and job training, with a focus on those who face compounded barriers to workforce participation including criminal records, active legal obligations, transportation limitations, and recovery-related needs.

The program follows a comprehensive six-step process: initial engagement and assessment, soft skills and job readiness training, industry-specific certifications (such as NC DOT Flagger Certification), financial literacy education, strategic job placement with employer coaching, and critically—ongoing support and retention services during the first 90-180 days of employment, a period associated with the highest risk for relapse and job instability.

Serving the Highest-Barrier Population

RTW outcomes must be understood within the context of the significant employment barriers faced by participants. From September 2022 through June 2025, the program served 246 participants, with 70% identifying methamphetamine as their primary substance of concern—a drug that presents specific challenges for treatment and employment placement due to its effects on cognitive function and behavior patterns. Transportation emerged as the most significant structural barrier, affecting 64% of participants in a county lacking comprehensive public transportation infrastructure.

Justice-involved participants—comprising 36% of referrals from probation services—face additional challenges including criminal record stigma, employer hesitancy, court compliance requirements, and active recovery needs. Community feedback reinforces that stigma remains a major barrier to reintegration, with employers frequently expressing concerns regarding reliability, criminal history liability, and substance use relapse risk.

Many participants also experience generational unemployment patterns, untreated trauma, mental health challenges, and limited soft skills exposure.

Measured Success Through a Stabilization Lens

The RTW program's employment outcomes reflect meaningful achievement among individuals navigating the county's highest employment barriers. In calendar year 2025, 17 participants obtained employment with an average observed retention of at least 10 months. Over the broader September 2022 to June 2025 period, the program achieved a 30% job placement rate among all participants, with a 77% interview-to-hire conversion rate—indicating effective job matching and participant preparation.

These outcomes are particularly significant when contextualized against the barriers participants face. Research supported by the National Institute of Justice indicates that individuals who obtain employment after release are approximately 20% less likely to recidivate compared to those who remain unemployed. RTW operates at a critical interception point between recovery, the justice system, and the workforce, reducing gaps between release and workforce participation during a high-risk transition period.

Beyond Individual Placement: Community and System Impact

RTW extends beyond direct participant services by strengthening the broader workforce ecosystem in Surry County. In 2025, the program engaged 56 businesses, conducted monthly community meetings, hosted 2 job fairs, and implemented workforce training programs including Flagger Certification for 14 participants. The program supported 40 participants through workforce services, with 32 participants demonstrating measurable improvement.

This comprehensive approach—combining recovery-informed workforce strategies, employer engagement, certification training, and sustained retention support—positions RTW not merely as an employment program, but as a system-impact initiative supporting recovery stability, reduced recidivism risk, and economic development. Employment outcomes achieved through the Recovery to Work Program represent success among individuals navigating criminal justice involvement, stigma, transportation challenges, and workforce readiness gaps, underscoring the vital importance of targeted, recovery-informed employment supports.

The following report details the RTW program's comprehensive approach, participant demographics, employment outcomes, community impact, and the systemic barriers addressed through this critical stabilization initiative.

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Program Overview

The Recovery to Work (RTW) Program supports justice-involved individuals by providing workforce readiness training, industry-recognized certifications, and supportive services that reduce barriers to employment. Transportation and other supports are integrated to promote economic stability, job retention, and successful community reintegration.

Program Purpose and Target Population

The Recovery to Work Program prepares individuals to successfully reenter the workforce following periods of absence related to substance use disorder, incarceration, or instability. Services are directed toward community members seeking a second chance at employment and job training, with a focus on justice-involved individuals who face compounded barriers to workforce participation. The program operates on the understanding that recovery and employment are deeply interconnected. Sustainable employment supports long-term recovery, while recovery-informed supports increase job readiness, placement success, and retention.

The Recovery to Work Process

The Recovery to Work Process: Key Steps

Step 1: Initial Engagement & Assessment

Individuals typically enter the Recovery to Work Program through referrals from treatment providers, correctional facilities, or community partners. Program staff conduct individualized assessments to identify employment history, recovery needs, barriers, and readiness for workforce participation.

Step 2: Soft Skills & Job Readiness

Foundational training focuses on soft skills, job readiness, resume development, interview preparation, and professional expectations. This phase addresses common workforce reentry challenges, including confidence, communication, and balancing employment with recovery and reentry responsibilities.

Step 3: Industry-Specific Certifications

Participants may enroll in industry-recognized certification programs aligned with local workforce demand. For example, in 2025, NC DOT Flagger Certification served as a primary credential pathway, providing participants with immediately marketable skills.

Step 4: Financial Literacy

Financial literacy training supports participants in managing income, budgeting, and planning for financial stability as they transition into employment.

Step 5: Job Placement & Coaching

Program staff act as intermediaries between participants and employers, facilitating appropriate job matches and supporting both parties during the placement process.

Step 6: Ongoing Support & Retention

Continued engagement supports job retention, recovery stability, and problem-solving during early employment. Following job placement, Recovery to Work continues active engagement with both the participant and the employer. Ongoing retention support includes:

- Regular follow-up check-ins with participants
- Problem-solving for workplace challenges

- Coordination with probation or court requirements
- Transportation stabilization
- Communication mediation between employer and participant, when needed
- Reinforcement of recovery supports

This continued engagement is critical during the first 90–180 days of employment, a period associated with the highest risk for relapse, job instability, and supervision violations. By supporting both the employee and employer, RTW increases the likelihood of sustained employment and workforce reintegration.

2025 Employment Outcomes

In calendar year 2025, 17 Recovery to Work participants obtained employment, with an average observed length of employment of at least five months. These outcomes reflect early employment stability among participants navigating justice involvement, recovery, and reentry-related barriers.

- **17 participants obtained employment**
- **Average observed employment retention: ≥ 10 months**
- **Provided workforce access to community and justice-involved participants**

Typical Employment Sectors (2025)

Participants obtained employment across sectors including:

- Construction & Roadway Flagging
- Manufacturing
- Warehousing & Logistics
- Landscaping & Outdoor Labor
- Entry-Level Skilled Trades

These sectors align with local workforce demand and offer accessible entry points for individuals rebuilding employment history.

Community & Workforce Impact 2025

Recovery to Work extends beyond direct participant services by strengthening the broader workforce ecosystem in Surry County. Through employer engagement, community collaboration, and workforce development initiatives, RTW supports both individuals and the systems that influence employment access.

Results Base Accountability Alignment: Community Impact

How Much Did We Do?

- 56 businesses engaged and served
- Monthly community meetings conducted throughout 2025
- Ongoing business outreach across multiple sectors
- 2 job fairs hosted
- Workforce training programs implemented (Flagger Certification: 14 participants)

How Well Did We Do It?

- Consistent employer engagement across the year
- Targeted outreach aligned with workforce needs
- Industry-relevant certification programs delivered
- Resume development and job readiness support provided

Is Anyone Better Off?

- 32 participants demonstrated measurable improvement
- 40 participants served through workforce services
- 17 participants successfully obtained employment
- ≥10-month average employment retention

Recovery to Work is not only serving participants, but also actively strengthening the local workforce system through employer engagement, community collaboration, and workforce development initiatives.

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Justice-Involved Integration

Recovery to Work functions as an employment bridge for justice-involved individuals transitioning from detention to the community, reducing gaps between release, employment readiness, and job placement.

Research supported by the National Institute of Justice indicates that individuals who obtain employment after release are approximately 20% less likely to recidivate compared to those who remain unemployed, with stable employment further strengthening the reduction in reoffending (National Institute of Justice, 2019).

Justice-Involved Population Served

Justice-involved individuals who participated in Recovery to Work (RTW) Programs in calendar year 2025, included individuals transitioning from incarceration, probation, or other court-supervised settings who faced compounded barriers to employment, including limited recent work history, criminal records, active legal obligations, transportation limitations, and recovery-related needs.

Serving this population requires specialized, recovery-informed workforce strategies that recognize the complexity of reentry and the structural barriers that often prevent justice-involved individuals from securing and maintaining employment.

Reentry and Workforce Alignment

Recovery to Work operates at a critical interception point between recovery the justice system and the workforce. The period immediately following release or community reentry is associated with elevated risk for unemployment, relapse, non-compliance, and recidivism. RTW aligns employment readiness, certification training, and job placement services with reentry timelines to reduce gaps between release and workforce participation.

By engaging individuals early and coordinating employment supports alongside recovery and reentry needs, the program helps stabilize participants during a high-risk transition period and supports continuity between detention, community supervision, and employment.

Employment as a Stabilizing Factor

For individuals in the community and for justice-involved individuals, employment serves as a key stabilizing factor that supports recovery, accountability, and successful community participation. Meaningful employment contributes to

financial independence, improves compliance with court and supervision requirements, and reduces reliance on crisis-driven systems.
Employment outcomes achieved through the Recovery to Work Program should be interpreted within the context of this high-barrier population. Placements reflect success among individuals navigating criminal justice involvement, stigma, transportation challenges, and workforce readiness gaps, underscoring the importance of targeted, recovery-informed employment supports.

System Impact and Public Benefit

Recovery to Work complements broader justice-system and community goals by supporting workforce participation as a pathway to long-term stability. By reducing missed employment opportunities, supporting accountability, and addressing key barriers during reentry, the program contributes to improved individual outcomes while reducing strain on public systems.

Alignment with County Performance Reporting

Recovery to Work contributes to:

- Workforce reintegration
- Justice-system diversion
- Economic stabilization
- Community safety
- Reduction in system strain

Recovery to Work supports the broader county objective of shifting from punitive response to rehabilitative, workforce-centered reintegration.

Key Takeaway

Recovery to Work employment outcomes reflect placements among individuals facing the highest barriers to workforce participation. Program performance demonstrates the value of coordinated recovery-informed employment strategies for justice-involved populations.

Participant Composition 2025

Justice-Involved vs Community Participants

Recovery to Work served two primary engagement pathways:

Justice-Involved Participants

Referral Sources:
- ⇒ Probation
- ⇒ Court systems
- ⇒ Post-release reentry
- ⇒ Community supervision

Workforce ReEntry Challenges:
- ⇒ Criminal record barriers
- ⇒ Court compliance requirements
- ⇒ Transportation instability
- ⇒ Employer hesitancy
- ⇒ Active recovery needs

Service Alignment Strategy:
- ⇒ Compliance-aligned scheduling
- ⇒ Structured employer engagement
- ⇒ Retention-focused monitoring

Community Participants

Engagement Pathway:
- ⇒ Substance Use Treatment
- ⇒ Early recovery
- ⇒ Transitional housing
- ⇒ Economic instability

Workforce Barries:
- ⇒ Gaps in employment history
- ⇒ Limited certifications
- ⇒ Financial instability
- ⇒ Transportation barriers

Service Alignment Strategy:
- ⇒ Workforce readiness coaching
- ⇒ Certification navigation
- ⇒ Employer matching
- ⇒ Placement support
- ⇒ Retention Coaching

Strategic Insight

Segmenting participants allows Recovery to Work to tailor service intensity, align employment timelines with legal obligations, strengthen employer partnerships, and improve long-term retention outcomes.

This structured differentiation ensures RTW operates as both a workforce development program and a system-impact initiative supporting recovery stability and reduced recidivism risk.

Challenges & Systemic Barriers

Transportation Barriers

Transportation remains the most significant barrier, affecting 64% of participants. Surry County lacks comprehensive public transportation infrastructure, making access to employment, training, and interviews difficult during early reentry.

Stigma & Employer Concerns

Participants frequently encounter stigma related to substance use disorder and criminal records. Employer concerns often include reliability, legal risk, and workforce readiness.

Workforce Readiness Gaps

Many individuals require additional time and support before they are prepared for employment, particularly in developing life skills, confidence, and stability. Community interview findings reinforce that stigma remains a major barrier to reintegration. Employers frequently express concerns regarding:

- Reliability
- Criminal history liability
- Substance use relapse risk
- Workplace insurance implications

RTW mitigates this barrier through employer education, active follow-up, and job coaching support.

Workforce Readiness Gaps

Community feedback highlights:

- Generational unemployment patterns
- Untreated trauma
- Mental health challenges
- Limited soft skills exposure

Participants often require extended preparation before placement. This explains the high volume of soft skills sessions relative to total placements.