

The Power of the Everyday: Rebuilding Culture, Engagement, Trust & Purpose

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Who We Are – Presenters



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Who We Are



Community Mental Health Affiliates, Inc. (CMHA) is a private, nonprofit behavioral health care provider headquartered in New Britain, Connecticut, with eight service locations across central and northwest Connecticut. CMHA partners with individuals, families, and communities to promote recovery from mental health and substance use challenges, serving more than 7,000 adults and children each year.

CMHA is Connecticut's first fully Joint Commission–accredited Behavioral Health Home and a SAMHSA-designated Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC).

cmhacc.org



Parents' Foundation mission is to provide individuals with serious mental illness a supportive living environment where they can live and grow. Since 1992, Parents Foundation has provided residential mental health living in Connecticut, offering a supportive community where adults build independence, confidence, and meaningful lives. Families gain peace of mind knowing their loved ones are cared for with dignity, compassion, and respect.

parentsfoundation.org

**Two organizations.
Different experiences.**

One shared question.

How did we intentionally create a workplace where people feel connected, heard, valued, and supported?

This is our journey.

Today We Will Explore

- **Reconnecting People to Purpose**
 - How do we connect everyday work to something bigger?
- **Leadership Sets the Cultural Standard**
 - How do everyday leadership behaviors shape culture?
- **Psychological Safety Fuels Innovation and Trust**
 - How do we build trust, psychological safety, and employee voice?
- **Aligning Systems to Reinforce Values**
 - How do our systems, recognition, and communication reinforce culture?

Learning Objectives – Activity

How would you describe your organizations culture right now?



Connected



Exhausted



Disconnected



Growing



Hopeful

CMHA Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

How did CMHA get here?

Employee Satisfaction Focus

2024 survey

57%

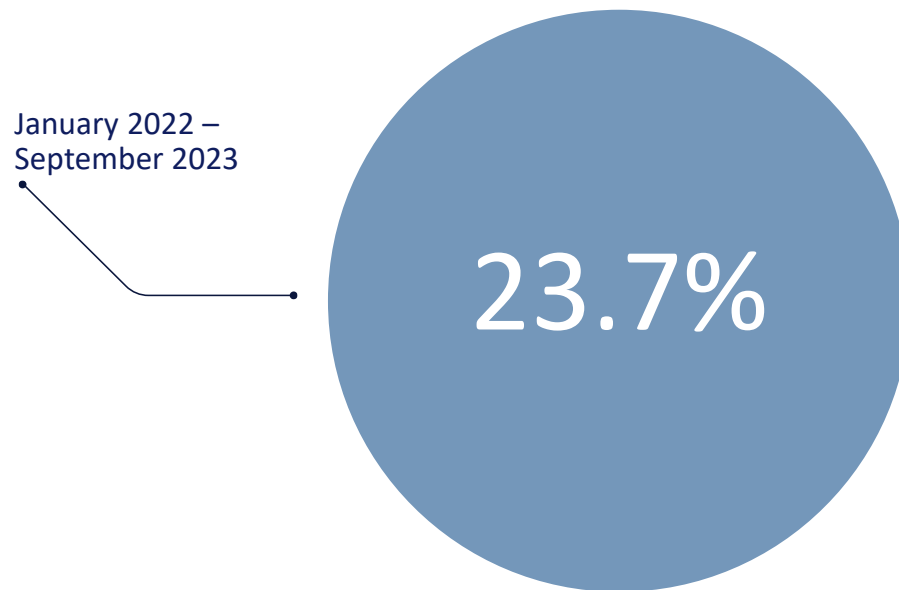
Overall workplace
experience score

Score	Theme	Trend Apr 2023
54%	ENGAGED 3 Statements	↓ 10
66%	CLOSELY ALIGNED 3 Statements	↓ 12
44%	EMPOWERED TO EXECUTE 5 Statements	↓ 14
65%	RESPECTED & SUPPORTED 5 Statements	↓ 8
68%	ENABLED TO GROW 3 Statements	↓ 6
50%	FAIRLY VALUED 4 Statements	↓ 6

PFTL Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

How did PFLT get here?

Retention Focus



Internal Anonymous Survey Via Jotform

CMHA Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

How did we get here?

- Lack of consistent and clear communication from all levels of leadership
- Did not have the right leadership in the right seats
 - Senior level leadership not aligned in messaging
- Made decisions without effectively communicating, which created panic
- Feedback and information from employees was not surfacing
- Impact of Pandemic

How did we kick-off our journey?

- Developed a 3-year Strategic Plan primarily focused on rebalancing agency Culture:
 - Leadership development
 - Leadership clinical capacity
 - Organizational mission & values
 - Aligning programmatic goals
 - Communication strategies and branding



PFTL Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

We focused on our staff's well being to improve retention.

Retention isn't about keeping employees, it is about creating an environment where people want to stay, grow, and contribute.

How did we get here?

- Prioritizing staff wellness
- Investing in growth and development
- Clear and consistent expectations
- Strengthening new hire experience
- Listening to our staff
- Responsive leadership & organization adjustments
- Building a culture of support and accountability



CMHA Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

How did we kick-off our journey?

Feedback

- Engaged in 16 Executive Leadership Rounding sessions
 - Developed action plans and/or made immediate changes

Communication

- Assessed leadership structure
 - Too many layers
- Communicated progress on a regular basis
 - Intentional changes based on staff feedback
 - Strategic vision/plan goals aligned with feedback
 - Leadership structure

PFTL Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

How did PFTL kick off their journey?

Feedback

- Held two all staff feedback sessions and invited candid feedback from frontline staff
- Asked frontline staff what made shifts harder and what changes would help both residents and staff
- Used employee surveys to test whether staff felt respected, heard, and able to grow

Communication

- Set daily leader huddles and worked to extend huddles across all shifts to include weekends
 - Explained decisions and expectations directly to staff
 - Closed the loop on all staff suggestions

CMHA Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

What did we do to connect people to purpose?

- Updated our new employee orientation – Week of Welcome (WOW)
 - Focus on connecting new hires to each other and community
- Updated our mission statement
- Updated our values
- Restructured our clinical meetings
- Town halls
- Surveys

CMHA invests in building healthier communities by enhancing the quality of life for the clients we serve.

Updated our values and created 'I' statements.

Compassionate

I am compassionate. I act with kindness, dignity, mindfulness, & with a shared sense of humanity. I build trust & strengthen relationships. I approach difficult conversations with courage & curiosity.

Multifaceted

I am multifaceted. I adapt, collaborate, & respect varying perspectives & ideas. I utilize my skills to provide meaningful support to foster growth.

Honest

I am honest. I cultivate trust, strong relationships, & promote ethical behavior. I act with integrity, truthfulness, transparency, & accountability in all interactions.

Adaptable

I am adaptable. I embrace change, open to creative solutions, & foster collaboration, while communicating openly to drive continuous improvement.

5 Ways to Connect People to Purpose

Enhancing mental health support through non-clinical supervised living.

1. Update employee orientation

2. Simplify the mission

3. Rebuild the meetings

4. Create real employee voice

5. Bring purpose into the everyday

PFTL Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

What is your leadership structure and what is the lay out for 'chain of command'



Make communication clear, consistent, and connected.

CMHA Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

What did we do to connect people to purpose?

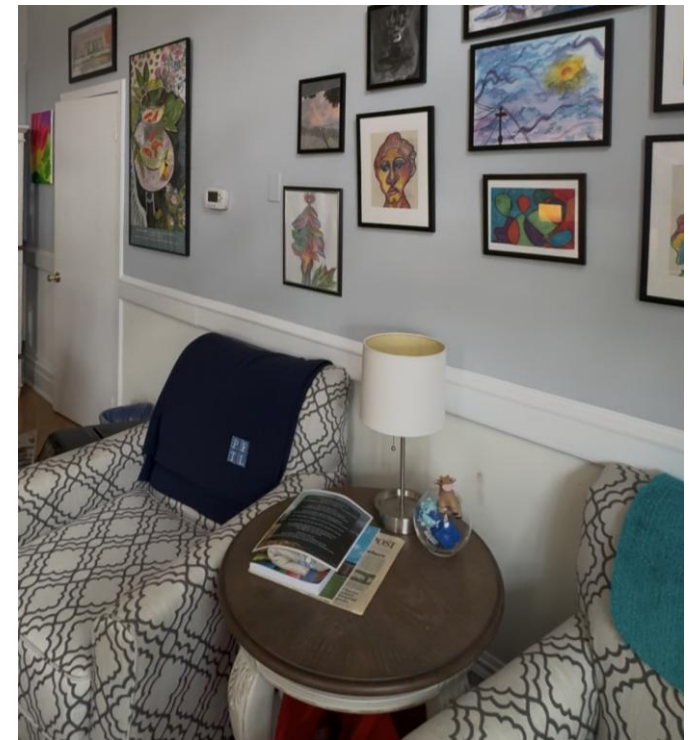
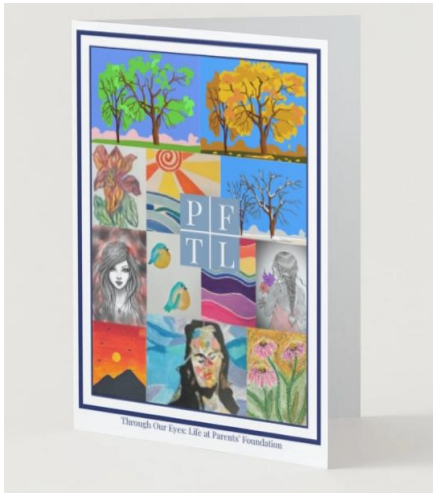
- Branded our values with gifts for staff



PFTL Journey: Reconnecting People to Purpose

What did we do to connect people to purpose?

- Employee recognition and embedding the culture in the day to day with branded items.



Open Discussion: Reconnecting People to Purpose

Identify several ways your team(s) can reconnect daily tasks to organizational purpose.

Our Journey: Leadership as Culture Carriers

What is leadership's role in our culture reset?

- Role models of core values
- Consistency between words and actions
- Building capability and accountability at all levels

Why does Leadership accountability matter?

- Culture is shaped by what leaders **do**, not just what they say
- Employees mirror leadership behaviors
- Accountability drives:
 - Trust
 - Performance
 - Engagement
- Strong cultures don't happen by chance—they are **led intentionally**

CMHA Journey: Leadership as Culture Carriers

What did we do to strengthen our Leadership?

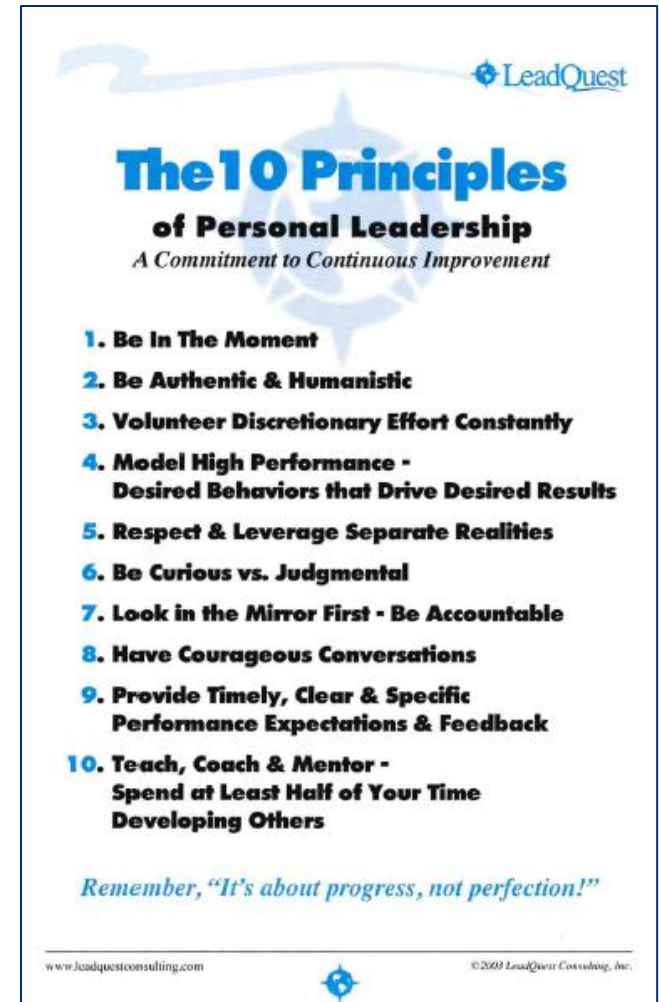
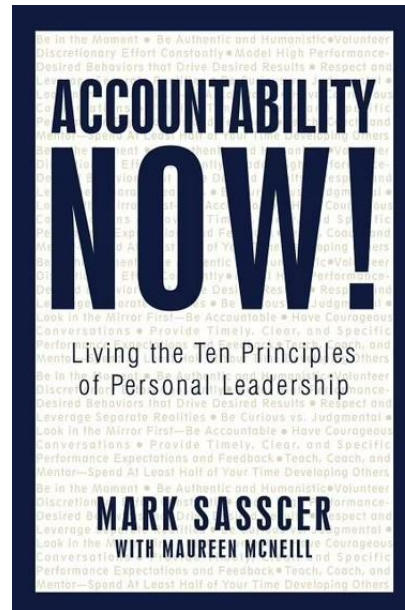
- Introduced leader accountability partners
 - Check in regularly
 - Give honest, sometimes uncomfortable feedback
 - Hold each other accountable for doing what they said they would do
- Participated in a free program on 'Supervision' through the Yale School of Medicine
 - Directors and front-line managers were trained on:
 - Quality of Care, Administration, Professional Development, Support
 - Created a workgroup to develop an electronic supervision form in our HRIS
- Developed an Internal Leadership Academy
 - Adopted Leadership Principles
 - Solicited feedback from leaders – what professional development trainings did they find most important
 - Focused EQ assessment, workshops and Implicit Bias first before training on tactical skills.



CMHA Journey: Leadership as Culture Carriers

What did we do to strengthen our Leadership?

- Created Leadership Principles
- Created a leadership competency assessment
- Developed a new Leader Internal Training Program
 - Two-day training dedicated to learning the administrative responsibilities of being a leader —
#TheCMHAWay!
- Developed Leadership Competencies embedded in job descriptions



PFTL Journey: Leadership as Culture Carriers

Ways to Strengthen Leadership

- Check in regularly
- Give honest, sometimes uncomfortable feedback
- Hold each other accountable for doing what they said they would do
- Set leadership competencies
- Competencies embedded in every leader's job description

TRAININGS

SET PRINCIPALS

EQ ASSESSMENTS

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Open Discussion: Leadership as Culture Carriers

From a leadership perspective, what behaviors in your organization signal alignment or misalignment with your stated values?

Our Journey: Psychological Safety & Amplifying Employee Voice

What is psychological safety?

- Admitting mistakes openly
- Offering ideas, even if they might fail
- Challenging the status quo respectfully
- Giving and receiving honest feedback
- Asking questions without feeling “stupid”

What have we done to create psychological safety?

- Made it safe for employees to speak up
 - Open discussion in group supervisions
 - Open dialogue during Client Care meetings
 - Anonymous surveys
 - Trained leaders to come from a curious perspective (our principles) and coach/mentor at least 50% of their time
 - Normalized risk taking and learned lessons from mistakes

Our Journey: Psychological Safety & Amplifying Employee Voice

What can shift culture?

Every Organization has a Culture Story

- Leadership changes
 - Management style, priorities, decision-making approaches
- Communication breakdowns
 - Inconsistent, unclear or insufficient – creates confusion, frustration
- Disconnect between values and daily experience
 - If behaviors contradict values, credibility and trust erodes
- Organizational growth
 - As organizations expand, systems and practices that once supported a cohesive culture may become less effective
- Lack of employee voice
 - Undervalued or overlooked
- Change fatigue
 - Overwhelmed and creates uncertainty

Open Discussion: Define Psychological Safety

**An employee brings you a
problem you've heard before.**

What is your first response?

Our Journey: Psychological Safety & Amplifying Employee Voice

How do we 'hear' our employees?

- Make sure all employee voices are heard in meetings (*not just the loudest*)
- Regular on-site rounding's to solicit feedback
- Town Hall / All Staff meetings
- Surveys
 - Engagement
 - Annual awards
 - Mission statement

Our Journey: Aligning Systems with Core Values

How do we ensure our structures support culture goals?

- Hire for core values alignment
- Embed core values into performance management
- Use recognition and accountability systems
- Support core value-driven decision making

CMHA Journey: Aligning Systems with Values

Performance Management System

- Align with Core Values
 - All behavioral competency questions roll up to a core value
- Align with 10 Principles of Personal Leadership
 - Managers rated on leadership behaviors
- Weighted – 20% on what you do 80% on how you do it

Internal Mentorship Program

- Strengthen leadership capacity in front line managers
- Improve staff engagement and retention
- Build internal leadership succession
- Support mission-driven leadership aligned with organizational values
- Increase operational effectiveness and service impact
- Created an application process
 - Application for mentor
 - Application for mentee
 - Mentor & mentee agreement

Hiring Practices:

- Interview questions align with Core Values
- Scorecard
- Hiring with a purpose, not to just fill a vacancy

Welcome new leaders to the organization and celebrate employee promotions internally and externally.



CMHA Journey: Aligning Systems with Values

Appreciation Cards



You are being recognized for:

Select one or more Core Values:

- ☐ Commitment to Integrity
- ☐ Spirit of Caring
- ☐ Focus on Continuous Improvement
- ☐ Focus on Fiscal Responsibility

Reason for Recognition:

To: _____
(print full name)

Date: _____

Dept: _____

From: _____
(print full name)

If you would like to enter a raffle drawing for a complimentary CMHA day, please tear off this section of the card and submit in a recognition dropbox.



PFTL Journey: Aligning Systems with Values

Growth and Opportunity

- Offer training, across department learning
- Opportunities to take on more responsibility
- Use coaching and career conversations to help staff identify next steps

Care and Accountability

- Make expectations clear and address concerns with respect and consistency
- Recognizing staff for specific actions that support their growth as well as their job responsibilities

Employee voice changes operations

Open Discussion: From Insight to Action

**Identify one system in your organization
that may need better alignment.**

- AND -

**What is one commitment you will
act on within the next 30 days?**

CMHA Journey: From Insight to Action

Where we are now!

2025



& 4 Awards

Workplace Experience Score



↑ **15**

Up 15 points from
May 2024

-1

1 point below
benchmark

2026



Workplace Experience Score



↓ **1**

Down 1 point from
Mar 2025

-4

4 points below
benchmark

PFTL Journey: From Insight to Action

Where PFTL are now!

89%

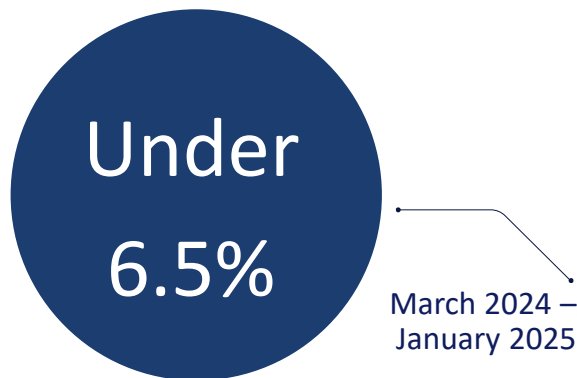
Overall Satisfaction

29 of 44 employees responded (66%)

2026 Employee Survey

100% of respondents reported

- Respect from their manager
- Belief in PFTL's mission and values
- Feeling comfortable being themselves



Earlier retention measure:
under 6.5% turnover

Where we will keep working

- Career conversations 72.4%
- Team communication 79.3%
- Psychological Safety 75.9%
- Fair Compensation 75.9%

Q&A and Thank you!

Our Contact Information



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