WorkLife Partnership Helps Frontline Workers Thrive Despite Economic Barriers
By Linda Montgomery, Director of Engagement Services, WorkLife Partnership

As of May 2018, Colorado's unemployment rate is sitting just below 3%—nearly one point lower than the current national rate. And while low unemployment rates are often used as a barometer of economic vitality, they don't tell the full story. Challenges caused by a tight labor market can affect employers in the way of higher turnover and lack of available skilled workers. This is especially true in Colorado where low unemployment and high demand for new construction leaves contractors recruiting talent from out of state.

Fortunately, Colorado is an attractive place to live due to the state's economic growth and vast recreational opportunities. But, workers are often moving here with very little knowledge of the economic barriers that can keep them from being successful—namely the lack of affordable housing. When broken down by hourly wage, a Colorado household must make $21.97 per hour to afford rent and utilities; however, the average renter wage in Colorado is only $17.13 per hour (according to a recent study by Bell Policy Center).

Since June 2017, WorkLife Partnership has served more than 70 employees at a Colorado-based mechanical contractor—connecting them with resources to help overcome life's challenges. Fifty-three percent of these employees were **struggling with housing**, with 17% percent **living in shelters or homeless**. Forty-two percent were **unable to pay their monthly bills**, and 23% were **unable to afford food** consistently.

These cost-burdened employees, who want to show up and be productive at work, are struggling with very real-life issues that keep them from doing just that. So, as an employer, you're now faced with workplace engagement, retention, and productivity issues on top of an already tight labor market. WorkLife Partnership is positioned to work directly with frontline workers on navigating issues like understanding Colorado's housing market, finding childcare, and accessing reliable transportation—all while strengthening your workforce and bottom line.

For more information on WorkLife services, visit www.worklifecolorado.org.