



Press release

Construction and Mental Health Leaders Call for Industry-Wide Action on Substance Use Prevention in North Carolina

El Futuro convenes construction executives, safety leaders, and behavioral health experts to strengthen workforce well-being

- Construction workers face one of the highest overdose death rates of any workforce sector, and approximately 1 in 7 construction workers lives with a substance use disorder.
- El Futuro convened construction, safety, and mental health leaders to advance practical prevention strategies that support safer job sites and healthier workers across North Carolina.
- The panel highlighted the growing collaboration between the construction industry and behavioral mental health organizations to expand access to culturally responsive care and workforce support.



Durham, Construction and mental health leaders gathered on Thursday, May 21, for a panel discussion focused on one of the construction industry's most urgent challenges: substance use and mental health among workers.

Hosted by [El Futuro](#) and sponsored by [ALCON Group](#) and [Talbert Building Supply](#), the event brought together industry leaders, safety professionals, and behavioral health experts to discuss how prevention, early intervention, and culturally responsive care can strengthen workforce safety, retention, and productivity across the construction sector.

The conversation highlighted the growing impact of substance use disorders within the industry. Construction workers experience one of the highest overdose death rates of any workforce sector in the country, and approximately 1 in 7 construction workers lives with a substance use disorder.

Panelists emphasized that addressing mental health and substance use is not only a healthcare issue, but also a workforce and business issue affecting safety, staffing, productivity, and long-term industry sustainability.

"El Futuro is working alongside industry leaders to build practical solutions that meet workers where they are," said **Luis Alvarez, El Futuro Board Member and Construction Business Owner**. "This conversation was about moving beyond awareness and toward action; creating safer job sites, healthier workers, and stronger companies."



Press release

The panel explored strategies that can be integrated directly into workplace safety culture, including:

- prevention education and toolbox talks,
- training for supervisors and safety managers,
- stronger substance use response protocols,
- and improved access to bilingual and culturally responsive care.

The event also reinforced El Futuro's growing role as a statewide partner helping expand mental health and substance use prevention capacity beyond traditional clinical settings. Through partnerships with employers, public agencies, and community organizations, El Futuro currently serves more than 60 counties across North Carolina.

As part of the discussion, construction leaders were invited to support El Futuro's Partner Club initiative, which aims to strengthen and sustain prevention efforts across the industry through cross-sector collaboration.

According to national data, substance use disorders in construction contribute to higher workplace accident rates, turnover, absenteeism, and billions in lost productivity annually. Research also shows that investments in prevention and treatment can generate substantial returns for employers through improved retention, reduced injuries, and increased productivity.

"This is about building an industry where workers can thrive," said Alvarez, "Real change will require partnerships between healthcare providers, employers, safety leaders, and communities, and that work is already beginning."

About El Futuro

El Futuro is a North Carolina-based nonprofit organization working to transform mental health care for Latino families through culturally responsive services, workforce development, training, and community partnerships.

Contact us/Contacto:

Maritza Pearce
Communications Manager El Futuro
communications@elfuturo-nc.org