



COLORADO PHARMACY
WORKPLACE
CONDITIONS AND WELL-
BEING SUMMIT FINAL
REPORT

January 15, 2025

SUPPORTED BY



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Summit Overview

The Colorado Pharmacy Workplace Conditions and Wellbeing Summit, sponsored by Regis University and University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, was held on September 30, 2024. The basis for the Summit was the Colorado Pharmacist's Society Workplace Conditions and Well-being Survey and [Report](#) issued in June 2024. The Summit focused on addressing challenges in the pharmacy profession and improving workplace conditions in Colorado. The Summit brought together various stakeholders from Colorado and national organizations to discuss key issues and work towards solutions for the betterment of pharmacy practice and the patients we serve. The morning included an overview of data collected in Colorado and from national organizations, as well as a moderated discussion amongst all attendees. The afternoon focused on breakout groups to focus on themes and potential solutions. The moderator for the Summit was Michael Hogue, PharmD, FAPhA, FANP, Executive Director, American Pharmacists Association. The detailed Summit agenda is available in Appendix A.

Over 60 individuals from the following organizations participated:

Advent Health, Albertsons/Safeway, American Pharmacists Association (APhA), American Society of Health Systems Pharmacy (ASHP), Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Association of Health Plans, Colorado Hospital Association, Colorado Pharmacists Society (CPS), Colorado Retail Council, CPESN, CVS Health, Denver Health, Department of Regulatory Affairs (DORA) Divisions of Insurance and State Board of Pharmacy, Genoa Healthcare, Good Day Pharmacy, HCA HealthOne, Intermountain Health, Kaiser Permanente, King Soopers City Market, National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), Peer Assistance Services, Inc., Regis University School of Pharmacy, RxPlus Pharmacies, UHealth, University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy, VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System, Walgreens, and Walmart. The following organizations were also invited but unable attend: *Colorado State Senate, CommonSpirit Health.*

Key Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Throughout the Summit, participants shared insights and experiences of challenges faced, specific to their unique work environments. Discussions reflected a wide range of issues from operational concerns to mental health challenges, that impact both individual pharmacists and the overall effectiveness of pharmacy teams. The following 4 themes were identified prior to the conference as key areas requiring attention and improvement: Workforce Challenges, Workplace Civility, Payment Reform and Workplace Technology and Efficiency.

The following tables represent the 4 themes and were synthesized post-meeting to summarize discussions (throughout day and small groups) and suggested actions by attendees. Recipients of this report are encouraged to carefully review these themes and consider any number of suggested actions steps they could address in their own organizations, or supporting others, through a collaborative approach, to effectively address these issues.

1. Workforce Challenges

Issues commonly identified included high turnover rates (especially amongst technicians), disconnect between upper management and frontline staff, lack of proactive communication about changes and challenges, and insufficient feedback mechanisms. Additionally, challenges were identified with professional devaluation.

Theme	Action Items
<p>Technician careers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate training opportunities • Provide consistent, stable hours throughout the year and provide livable pay and benefits • Develop a career ladder and recognition • Enhance recruitment efforts through shadowing or other programs.
<p>Work environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate meal/rest breaks or other meaningful breaks during shifts • Provide work flexibility by allowing part-time/job sharing and work-from-home options • Centralize services, such as phone, prior authorizations, billing (Note: these can be done by part-time staff and from home – see above) • Hire leadership with pharmacy degrees and frontline experience • Standardize onboarding processes for pharmacists and technicians • Increase management’s involvement in day-to-day operations • Align management bonuses to workforce retention
<p>Public Relations and Professional Identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of pharmacy careers starting with K-12 • Positive messages in the community to enhance recruitment • Ensure public understands value and capabilities of pharmacists and technicians • Work to decrease stigma associated with certain practice settings and reframe retail pharmacy technology • Improve preceptor selection for student rotations that will exhibit positive and encouraging behaviors
<p>Communication Breakdown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an “early and often” communication model • Implement tiered huddle escalation systems for rapid problem solving

2. Workplace Civility

Issues commonly identified included workplace harassment and discrimination and declining well-being, particularly amongst younger staff.

Theme	Action Items
Better protect staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate behavioral expectations to patients through signage at the pharmacy or verbal interactions as necessary• Implement de-escalation training for all staff• Establish clear policies for addressing and dismissing abusive patients (including a zero-abuse campaign) and how to address abuse, threats, violence.
Support staff well-being and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure staff voices are heard by leadership• Provide mentoring/development opportunities for pharmacy staff throughout their careers• Facilitate support from colleagues (huddles, well-being practices)• Develop awareness campaigns for the role of pharmacists and how they serve patients within in the healthcare team• Provide leadership and management training for pharmacy staff
Improve patient education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve patient understanding of pharmacy workflow, shortages, and payer issues with the goal of improving discourse between patients and staff• Develop tools/policies to help pharmacy staff communicate with patients on issues related to controlled substances

3. Payment Reform

Issues commonly identified included a broken reimbursement system, misaligned financial incentives, downward revenue pressure and concerns about the 340B program.

Theme	Action Items
<p>Medical Billing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve level of understanding, including expectations and processes to engage in medical billing. • Encourage employers to include credentialing and billing with onboarding training. • Colorado Pharmacists Society to provide resources and host education/training by HCPF, specifically focusing on enrollment and medical billing in the pharmacies, and other settings, for Medicaid members. • Improve level of understanding around becoming a credentialed provider and credentialing processes, including creation of resources to help with enrollment for both pharmacies and pharmacists. • Engage with schools of pharmacy to add to the curriculum.
<p>PBM Roadblocks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that prescriptions under pharmacist’s NPI adjudicate correctly under allowable CO scope of practice (PBMs sometimes deny valid prescriptions under pharmacist NPI). • Consolidate a list of pharmacies who are struggling to utilize their individual NPI numbers and share this with PBMs that are not acknowledging them as providers. • Find organizations who are successful in using individual NPI numbers and share their successes.
<p>Advocacy and PBM Reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support meaningful PBM reforms • Work on improving and ensuring fair reimbursement models • Support state and federal initiatives for provider status and payment for services (ie ECAPS for test and treat services) • Advocate for flexible standard of care regulatory models • Address laws limiting technology use in pharmacy practice

4. Workplace Technology and Efficiency

Theme	Action Items
Artificial Intelligence and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize and optimize central fill and automation technologies • Use AI/technology to remove administrative tasks (i.e. streamline billing, identify if medications are in stock, etc.) • Use AI/technology to increase efficiency of work (i.e. prior authorizations, risk assessment, identify/screen interventions, prompt patient needs, verify prescriptions, transfers, etc.) • Improve remote order entry and verification systems • Utilize dispensing lockers or automated dispensing machines • Develop/implement standardized clinical billing systems
Optimize Workflow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider policy revision and development to allow expansion of technician product verification • Utilize telepharmacy, support remote order entry, and allow hybrid staffing model of in person and remote • Develop patient friendly apps for telehealth
Perception/PR/Professional Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the value of the profession • Expand leadership and management training opportunities in schools of pharmacy • Change “drop off” window to welcome/consultation station

Additional Insights: Audience Polling

The polling platform Mentimeter was used to facilitate anonymous feedback throughout the Summit. Below are the results of the opening question to kick off the Summit and the commitment statements from the participants at the conclusion of the Summit.

Question: What would you like the rest of the participants to know?

- *"I would love to hear outcomes of examples shared. After X was implemented, what data supported that it was effective?"*
- *"How to work through staffing barriers created by Colorado FAMLI leave act and HFLA (healthy families and workplace act)"*
- *"The profession of pharmacy is on fire right now. That's why we are here. Not to talk about how great we are. But to realize there is a problem."*
- *"We didn't address or discuss management and leadership training best practices."*
- *"I know there are people who would have loved to have come but didn't due to fear of retaliation."*
- *"How are organizations measuring success of their new initiatives like respect works here or leadership working in stores?"*
- *"We talk economics: if many organizations had considerable profit, it would go a long way if front line staff knew where that profit is being used, if not able to support pharmacy staffing."*
- *"Are there regulatory or legislative changes that could enhance the more effective use of technology and pharmacy technicians?"*
- *"It does seem like there needs to be accountability from all aspects including education. The comment that pharmacy students are made to feel less than if not choosing residency is very problematic."*
- *"The pharmacy profession will rely heavily on the evaluation of technicians."*
- *"Student loans and financial debt plays a role in feeling "trapped" and leading to the issues of burnout and distress."*
- *"How do we empower our technicians to feel like being a technician is a career and brings them value?"*
- *"Some of the disconnect we see stems from the volume of items that need to be addressed. We need to make sure we don't get lost in the volume and pick at least one thing to tackle."*
- *"Professional satisfaction improves through collaboration. Difficult patients, disease states, etc improve when you can discuss with a colleague. No one thrives in isolation."*
- *"Pharmacy education doesn't always relate to the realities of practice."*
- *"The CPS survey has very specific ideas. If we cannot implement many of these, that is understandable, but it would be great to get a good discussion on why some of those ideas cannot work and close loop."*

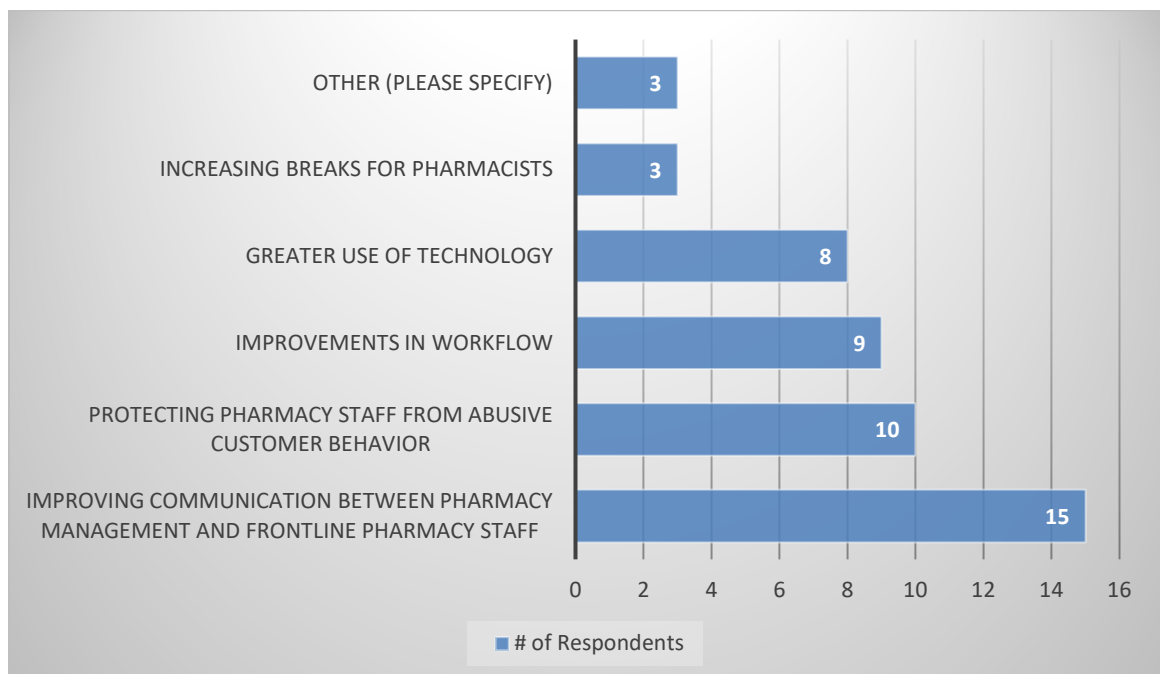
At the conclusion of the Summit, participants were asked to “Commit” to doing one thing after the Summit. The following responses were captured:

1. *“I will commit to advocating for voices that cannot always advocate for themselves.”*
2. *“Meet with organization leaders to discuss solutions within our control.”*
3. *“Promoting the profession to all I encounter.”*
4. *“Being the squeaky wheel for my community colleagues until we get some momentum.”*
5. *“Communicate better, support store level, and educate our pharmacists.”*
6. *“Continue to speak positively about the profession.”*
7. *“I will commit to listening to my peers' feedback to help develop clear communication.”*
8. *“I will commit to sharing our discussion with other leaders and carrying the torch within our organization.”*
9. *“Continued advocacy for competitive technician wages”*
10. *“Create a survey that is open to feedback and suggestions on how we can improve as an enterprise.”*
11. *“Listen and listen, keep an open mind to staff recommended actions. Ensure clear and accurate communication.”*
12. *“I will commit to educating others about the tremendous positive impact that pharmacies can have.”*
13. *“Training students on difficult conversations (such as de-escalation with patients).”*
14. *“Promoting pharmacy to high school students.”*
15. *“Better communicate expectations to staff, show them what my level of care looks like and show them the support they deserve.”*
16. *“More pharmacy advocacy!”*
17. *“I will commit to focusing on communicating and the why behind changes and listening to feedback on the processes to influence change.”*
18. *“Technician wages.”*

Results of Post-Summit Survey

As a follow-up to the Summit, a survey was sent to obtain impressions of the Summit and glean insights on the discussions. Below are the results of that survey. The response rate to the survey was robust with about half of attendees providing their input.

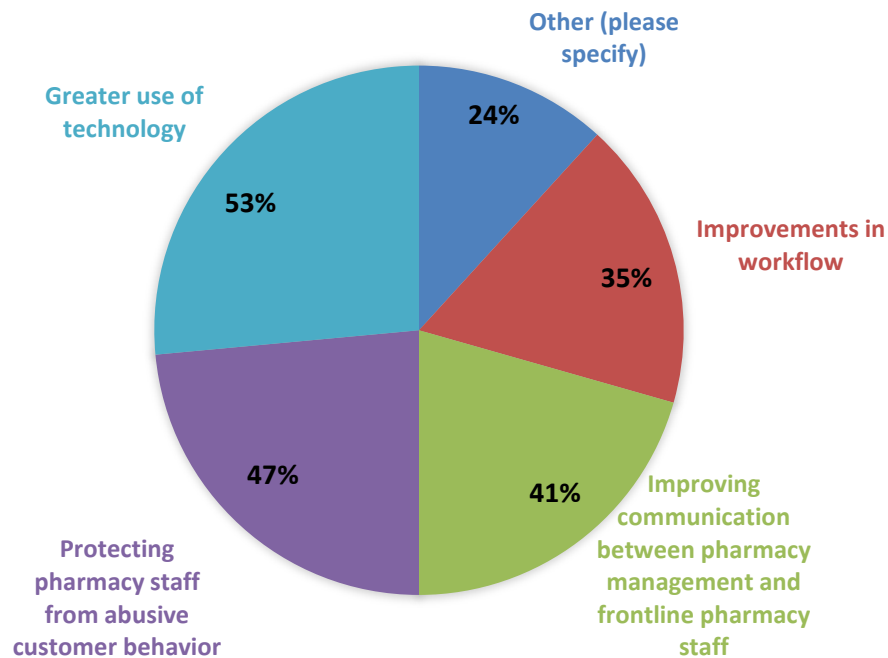
- 1. Overall, what was your impression of the Summit?** (22 respondents)
 - 68% indicated the Summit was worth their time and they will champion and lead change within their organizations.
 - Of the 32% that did not indicate it was worth their time, there was a sentiment that the Summit was helpful, but did not get the impression that selected stakeholders and upper management who were most needing of change were the least likely to embrace that need.
- 2. Several ideas were suggested at the Summit to improve efficiency and increase overall well-being for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Which of following ideas have you already implemented at your organization?** (Select all that apply.) (20 respondents)



The other category included

- reduced hours of operation,
- utilizing PRN staff to give full-time staff weekends off, and
- increasing resources for burnout.

3. Which of the following do you plan to implement in the next year? (Select all that apply)



The other category included:

- providing students with training on crucial conversations,
- corporate agility for frontline time savings,
- additional resources for staff related to burnout,
- and hiring more pharmacists outside of FTE requirements to help with burnout - non-FTE pharmacists are underutilized and undervalued.

4. What was the most useful aspect of the Summit? (31 respondents)

This question, was designed for opened end responses and included:

- networking,
- building trust,
- diversity of and hearing from other stakeholder re points of view/challenges and solutions,
- the open dialogue,
- commitments from organizations to at least do one thing,
- small group discussions and ideation.

5. What was the least useful aspect of the Summit? (31 respondents)

This question, was designed for opened end responses and included:

- Survey weaknesses not discussed
- Chains refusal to accept accountability
- Some group discussions were challenging based on the voices in the group

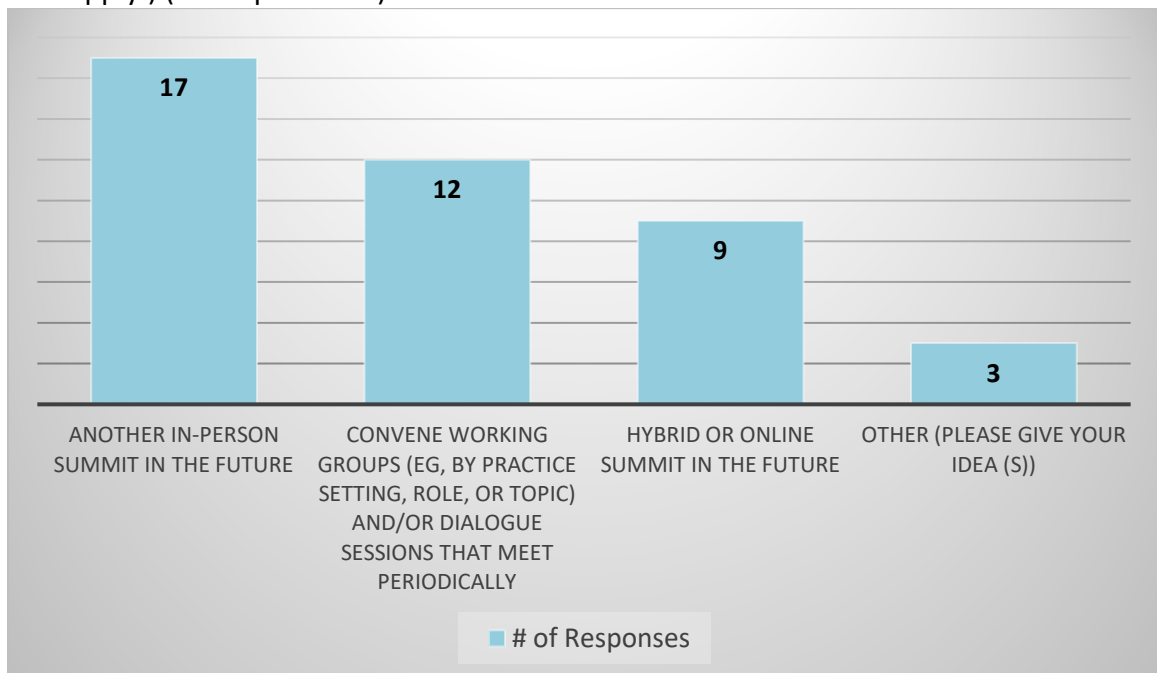
- Discussing uncontrollable items
- Those not interested in finding solutions
- Minimal frontline staff representation
- Disconnect between leaders and frontline regarding level of success for their strategies
- More time to brainstorm, morning overview less helpful and protracted the length of time of the event

6. What was your favorite idea or takeaway from the summit? (31 respondents)

This question, was designed for opened end responses and included:

- Telepharmacy
- Making small changes while working on big changes
- Impactful legislation to force change with current reimbursement models
- Protecting associates from customers/creating training of pharmacy staff to manage customer experiences/APhA ZERO Toleration Flyer
- Open communication with the workforce
- Including retention in managerial bonuses
- Increasing breaks to 45 mins to 1 hr
- Livable number of hours/week for techs
- Address the frontline worker action items line by line instead of brainstorming
- Improving communication

7. How can we continue the dialogue and the work initiated at the Summit? (Select all that apply.) (22 respondents)



The other category included

- Invite Dean's to visit pharmacies to see the current workplace barriers and

solutions,

- Get front-line people in a room for a Summit. We need to know what they want to make actual change,
- The document that came for "suggestions" needs to be addressed - line by line. Instead of "Brainstorming" literally go through the suggestions - and say why or why not they were not accepted.

Potential Next Steps

The Summit Planning Committee encourages all attendees to focus on and consider the following:

- Action steps identified herein in Tables 1-4
- Action Steps identified in the [CPS Final Report](#)
- Continued engagement in future reach outs for collaborations in Colorado

The Schools and CPS remain committed, in collaboration together, to supporting changes to the pharmacy practice landscape in Colorado to improve workplace conditions and professional wellbeing of our current and future workforce. The schools will be maintaining liaison with the Workplace Conditions and Well-Being Taskforce to support their efforts and identify areas that can be readily addressed by the schools. One such area includes the Public Relations and Professional Identity noted in Tables 2 and 4 by supporting efforts to expand public perception of pharmacy and the value/capabilities of the profession.

CPS maintains a [Workplace Conditions and Well-Being Taskforce](#) which meets twice a month with the mission to [address workplace and well-being issues](#) in Colorado and support all professionals. This is an important part of the strategic plan for CPS.

Upcoming efforts resulting from the [CPS Final Report](#) and this Summit, include:

- CPS Winter Meeting Topic Presentation given by Taskforce on January 27th, 2025
 - Reporting on the results of the Summit contained in this report
 - Continued focus on next steps as identified in the Summit and the CPS Final Report
- “Frontline Worker Only” Virtual/Hybrid Summit on February 27th, 2025. For more information, contact admin@copharm.org.

Appendix A, Summit Agenda



Colorado Pharmacy Workplace Conditions and Well-being Summit Agenda

September 30, 2024: 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutics
Room 1000 (Seminar Room)

The Morning Sessions – Laying the Foundation		
7:30 – 8:30	Breakfast	
8:30 – 8:50 am	Welcome, Opening Comments, and Introductions	<p>Ralph Altieri, PhD Dean & Professor University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences</p> <p>Samit Shah, PhD, RPh, MBA Dean & Professor Regis University School of Pharmacy</p>
8:50 – 9:00 am	Overview of Day and Ground Rules	<p>Michael Hogue, PharmD, FAPhA, FANP Executive Director, American Pharmacists Association</p>
9:00 – 9:50 am	Recap of Workplace Conditions/Well-being in Colorado and Nationally	<p>Lesleigh Potter, PharmD CPS Taskforce</p>
9:00 – 9:20 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Workplace Conditions and Well-being Task Force Report Overview 	<p>Keith Marciniak, BS Pharm Vice President, Member Relations American Pharmacists Association</p>
9:20 – 9:35 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APhA/NASPA – National State-based Pharmacy Workplace Survey /PWWR Report 	
9:35 – 9:50 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Solutions – Building a sustainable, healthy pharmacy workforce and workplace 	<p>Kasey K. Thompson, PharmD, MS, MBA Chief Operating Officer and Senior VP American Society for Health System Pharmacists</p>
9:50 – 10:00 am	BREAK	

10:00 - 10:45 am	With all this data, what is the continuing disconnect? Where is the breakdown in communications?	Michael Hogue, PharmD, FAPhA, FANP Executive Director, American Pharmacists Association
10:45 – 11:45 am	<i>Setting the Foundation:</i> What has success looked like? Sharing best practices	
10:45 – 11:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task Force Next Steps and Initiatives / Ideas from CPS membership 	Dr. Stacia Rumer, PharmD on behalf of CPS
11:00 – 11:45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderated Group Discussion 	Michael Hogue, PharmD, FAPhA, FANP Executive Director, American Pharmacists Association
11:45 am – 12:15 pm	Lunch	
12:15 – 4:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Afternoon Sessions – Solutions</p> <p>The focus will on the 5 topics below and seek to address the 5 “P’s” per topic in the context of the key stakeholders noted below.</p> <p>5 “Ps”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Policies B. Public/Patient Issues C. Payer Issues D. Professional Issues E. Perception/PR Issues <p>Key Stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employers 2. Schools 3. Boards/Lawmakers/Regulatory 4. Associations 5. Professionals 6. Payers 6. Other 	
12:15 – 3:15 pm	<p>Topics – Moderated Discussions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workforce <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Declining numbers of pharmacists and technicians b. Consistency/team dynamics <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Turnover/longevity ii. Impact of floating staff (technicians and pharmacists) 2. Civility in Pharmacy 	Michael Hogue, PharmD, FAPhA, FANP Executive Director, American Pharmacists Association

- a. Patient interactions with pharmacists and technicians
- 3. Payment Reform – No Margin No Mission

- 4. Work Place Technology and Efficiency
 - a. Influences staffing ratios
 - b. Telepharmacy in CO (new legislation)
 - c. Upskilling of tech without undue burden
 - d. Tech check tech (policy item)
 - e. When patient care suffers vs benefiting from technology

3:15 - 3:55 pm	Action Steps and Continuing the Work Initiated Today!	Emily Zadvorny, PharmD Executive Director Colorado Pharmacists Society
3:55 - 4:00 pm	Closing Comments and Next Steps	Ralph Altieri, PhD Samit Shah, PhD, RPh, MBA