



Supporting a Diverse Chicago West Side Community

Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, July 25th, 2025

10am – 12pm

Zoom Meeting Information

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/695761637?pwd=eVVOUzJlN3VUcXl6WFJzSnVNOVJXdz09>

Meeting ID: 695 761 637 | Password: 038839

Meeting Minutes

Welcome Extended by; Venessa Moreno: Expressed appreciation for members present, and continued support, also mentioned that ROSC will offer CEU's.

Participant Introductions: Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Sandra Harrison, DVA Leadership & Development Training Consultants; Cristina Banda, Illinois Family Resource Center; Lisa Kay Long, RICCA; Kenisha Dale, Trilogy; Borris Powell, Malcolm X College; Ruthie Williams, Faith Way Men's Independent; Charlotte Estell, Kalimba Foundation NFP; Linda Sharp, Individual; Toni Sutton, AIDS Foundation Chicago- Connection to Harm Reduction; Sandy R. Mays, Individual / Author; Niktoria Julian, Tomorrow's Light; Debra Laws, Renewed Hope; Kimberly Haywood, Brighter, Behavior, Choices; Angelina Sanchez, Brighter Behavior Choices Inc., NFP - The Recovery Cafe Chicago; Holly Bellinger, Individual; Roberta Williams, Individual; Sharon Cabrera, Kane County Health Department; Joshua Holliday, PrimeCare Community Health; Myleka Johnson, TASC; Tanya Johnson, Thresholds; Ann Brekke, Thresholds; Mary Dowling, West Side Heroin Task Force; Trinity Shaw, Individual; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; Venessa Moreno, CRCC; Yulanda A Thomas, CRCC; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Angel Crowder, CRCC; John Hardin, CRCC; Derrick Brewer, CRCC; Timothy Hooper, CRCC; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Aimee Rabe, CRCC; Frances Gordon, CRCC; Christopher Leavy, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC;

Our council is made up of members including Hospitals, Treatment Centers, Mental Health Facilities, First Responders, Recovery Programs, Schools, Local Government, Employment Agencies, and importantly persons with lived experience.

Goals and Objectives by; Venessa Moreno: Westside ROSC Councils overall goal is to advocate and assist with guiding and monitoring the development of an integrated system of recovery by creating a shared vision to improve availability of services by building a sustainable ROSC Council. Our objectives 1. To create communities of recovery that encourage and integrate resources for the recovering individual, families, and friends. 2. Develop supportive recovery communities that foster growth, respect and understanding of communication, those who have identified problems in the areas of substance use and mental health. 3. Implement effective that will allow for the inclusion of PLE's (persons with lived experience) voices to be heard.

Meeting Summary

Hybrid Event Setup Instructions

Vanessa and CRCC Cohost explained the technical setup to blend both formats. They instructed attendees to fill out an attendance form for CEU purposes and requested that participants stay on mute to reduce background noise. The event was scheduled to start shortly, with panelists and presenters ready to begin the program.

ROSC Council's Integrated Recovery System

The meeting focused on the ROSC Council's goals and objectives, particularly advocating for the development of an integrated system of recovery. The council aims to create communities of recovery, develop supportive recovery communities, and implement effective communication. The panelists shared their experiences and their roles in providing support to individuals and families in the area of recovery, and reentry.



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Recovery Systems and Community Support

The Ross Council meeting focused on recovery-oriented systems of care, with Vanessa introducing the objectives of creating community recovery, integrating resources, and giving voice to those with lived experience. Participants, including Kenneth Bell, Cristina Banda, and others, shared their roles and affiliations, highlighting their contributions to substance use and mental health recovery efforts. The meeting aimed to discuss breaking stigma and building support in recovery and mental health, with an overview of findings from a needs assessment to follow.

Westside ROSC Needs Assessment Review

Vanessa began the meeting with a focus on the Westside Recovery Support Council's (ROSC) needs assessment findings and upcoming panel discussion. The ROSC presented data from their annual survey, which showed that while 89% of respondents believe people with mental illness deserve respect, only 75% feel the same about people who use drugs. Key concerns included rising crime and homelessness perceptions, with 57% noting increased crime and 64% seeing more homelessness.

Afterwards the panel discussion featured representatives from various organizations discussing their work in supporting recovery and mental health, with a focus on breaking down stigma and improving access to care. The meeting emphasized the importance of collaboration and data collection in addressing community needs and securing funding for recovery support services.

Topic Discussion: Recovery & Mental Health: Breaking the Stigma, Building Support'

ROSC Council Speakers: Sandra Harrison / DVA; Tayna Johnson / Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center; Ann Brekke, LCPC, CADAC / Thresholds

Mental Health Awareness and Support

The discussion focused on mental health and substance use challenges, with participants sharing personal and professional experiences. They emphasized the importance of normalizing these issues, breaking down cultural stigmas, and creating safe spaces for people to seek help. Sandra Harrison highlighted the need for mental health first aid training to empower non-professionals to recognize and respond to mental health crises. The group discussed the impact of the pandemic in making mental health conversations more accessible and the need for integrated support systems. They also touched on the role of peer leadership and storytelling in recovery, with Sandra sharing examples from her organization's work.

Enhancing Mental Health Through Peer Support

In addition, the meeting focused on the importance of peer support services in mental health care, with CRCC OWL highlighting that peer support offers empathy, shared experience, and community, leading to improved health outcomes and reduced hospitalization rates. Sandra discussed the need for trauma-informed care, emphasizing empathy and understanding in client interactions. The group also explored community-based and culturally responsive approaches, with Charlotte and others emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and addressing implicit biases in service delivery. The discussion concluded with a reflection on the need for individualized care and cultural competence in mental health services.

Mental Health System Improvement Strategies

The meeting focused on mental health awareness and system changes needed to support communities better. Sandra emphasized the importance of education, training, and cultural understanding to address stigma and improve collaboration. CRCC OWL highlighted the need for targeted recruitment, retention strategies, and policy changes to enhance workforce diversity and improve access to mental health services. The group discussed ongoing challenges, such as unconscious biases and disparities, and encouraged continued dialogue and participation in events like the West Side Opioid Task Force's Overdose Awareness Day on August 29th.

Community Recovery and Peer Support

The meeting focused on recovery and wellness in communities, with panelists sharing their experiences and the importance of peer support. Participants discussed the value of personal stories in breaking down stigma and the need for self-awareness when working with individuals struggling with substance use or mental health issues. The conversation highlighted the importance of collaborative approaches to treatment and recovery, emphasizing the need to listen to individuals' goals rather than imposing predetermined plans.

Westside ROSC Council | 4628 W Washington Blvd, Chicago, IL 60644
ChicagoRecovery.org | ChicagoCRCC@gmail.com | 773.417.2045



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The meeting also touched on the challenges of recovery, including dealing with personal biases and the impact of stigma, and the importance of connectedness in the recovery process.

Generational Engagement and Community Events

The meeting focused on the importance of bridging generational gaps and fostering face-to-face interactions, with a call for younger participants to engage in community efforts. Announcements included a job fair, an open house at COIT on Madison and Laramie, and an upcoming International Overdose Awareness Day on August 29th. The group discussed an event on July 3rd at the Austin Town Hall, inviting organizations to set up tables and participate in panels. The conversation ended with plans for Narcan training and expressions of gratitude to attendees for their participation.

Discussion Points

- ROSC members: Complete and share the annual ROSC community survey with their networks.
- Westside ROSC Council: Continue collecting and analyzing annual community surveys to track changes and inform future funding requests.
- Community members: Complete the ROSC Community Survey to provide data for future funding and service development.
- Organizations: Share the ROSC Community Survey with their networks and participants.
- ROSC members: Attend and participate in upcoming Recovery Month events.
- ROSC members: Break down silos and collaborate more effectively across organizations.
- ROSC members: Report back findings from their respective communities to the state-level ROSC network.
- ROSC members: Identify and address gaps in services highlighted by the SWOT analysis.
- ROSC members: Focus on promoting recovery supports and peer support services.
- ROSC members: Work on employment and housing initiatives for individuals in recovery.
- ROSC members: Address legal issues and reentry challenges for individuals in recovery.
- Westside ROSC Council: Develop training programs focused on reducing stigma and improving recovery support services.
- Westside ROSC Council: Create a mentorship program to support community members in recovery.
- Westside ROSC Council: Build awareness of recovery housing needs through community education initiatives.
- Westside ROSC Council: Strengthen collaboration across sectors and coalitions to address identified gaps in services.
- Westside ROSC Council: Explore opportunities for faith-based group involvement in recovery support services.
- Westside ROSC Council: Pursue additional funding efforts to address identified service gaps.
- Organizations: Expand harm reduction education and awareness in the community.
- ROSC Council: Explore ways to increase youth services and mental health support.
- Organizations: Work on reducing stigma around mental illness and substance use through training and education.
- ROSC Council: Investigate ways to improve access to recovery housing and support services.
- Organizations: Consider implementing Mental Health First Aid training to empower community members to recognize and respond to mental health crises.
- Threshold: Continue normalizing mental health and substance use discussions.
- Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center: Continue recruiting, educating, and retaining professionals in mental health and substance use fields.
- DVA: Continue using personal stories to prompt conversations about recovery.
- Threshold: Continue offering "The Living Room" program as a 24/7 space for individuals needing support with mental health and substance use.
- Threshold's homeless outreach program: Continue reaching out to homeless individuals with serious mental illness and substance use disorders in encampments.
- Threshold: Continue the narcotics arrest deflection program, providing resources for treatment to individuals arrested with small amounts of substances without mandatory attendance.



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- Sandra: Continue offering Mental Health First Aid training to empower everyday individuals to recognize and guide people to appropriate resources.
- Threshold: Ensure culturally responsive approaches in their programs, especially during Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Threshold: Continue supporting peer leadership and integrated support in their recovery programs.

Next Steps

- CRCC OWL team: Provide support and resources to the newly formed ROSC Coalition led by Brighter Behavior Choices Recovery Cafe.
- Sandra: Continue empowering peer supporters in their recovery journey and work.
- All panelists: Continue sharing personal experiences to help reduce stigma around mental health and addiction.
- Community organizations: Implement culturally responsive approaches in supporting minority mental health.
- All attendees: Practice self-awareness and identify unconscious biases to improve service delivery.
- CRCC OWL: Send out information about the August 29th overdose awareness event and West Side Opioid task force activities.
- CRCC OWL: Distribute information about the upcoming job fair with 40+ vendors on August 1st.
- Sandra: Follow up with panelists Tanya and Ann.
- CRCC OWL: Share contact information for Keisha from Trilogy and Roberta Williams with the group.
- CRCC OWL: Send newsletter about

Closing Remarks

Venessa: Thanked the membership for sharing openly and respectfully and we will see everyone next month. Next Westside ROSC Council meeting will be hosted by Zoom on August 22, 2025. The conversation ended with a reminder to fill out the attendance form for those who wanted to receive CEUs.

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

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