

Effingham County ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, July 21st, 2025

Time: 1:00-2:00 pm

Location: 104 Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

Meeting Facilitator: Samantha Hicks

Attendees:

In person:

April Carruthers (Clay County Health Department)
Beth Wise (ECHD, Effingham County Connections)
Connie Brockett (PLE- family member)
Felicia Depoister (Effingham County ROSC Recovery Navigator, CPRS)
Jenn Galvan (Family Resource Center of Effingham Co)
Merl M. (PLE Committee)
Norbert Soltwedel (Effingham County Board member)
Olivia Jenkins (Hour House Prevention program facilitator)
Paul Kuhns (Effingham County Sheriff)
Samantha Hicks (Effingham County ROSC Coordinator)
Scott DeWeese (Outreach Coordinator, Pavilion Hospital)

Zoom:

Abigail Kauerauf (Land of Lincoln Legal Aid)
Alex Schneider (HSHS Community Health Outreach Specialist)
Brycen McFadden (Oxford House Inc Outreach worker)
Heather Meyers (Salvation Army Outreach Coordinator)
Justin Carder (Local office administrator- IDHS Division of Family and Community Services)
Kat O'Brien (Gateway Foundation Warm Hand-off Program @ HSHS St. Anthony's)
Kelly Buscher & Maria Deaconesa (Case Managers of Effingham County)
Liesl Wingert (SIU School of Medicine, Center for Rural Health & Social Development)
Lyndsey Reedy (Douglas Co ROSC Coordinator)
Madison LeMay (Effingham Co Probation Program Manager)
Maggie Gouchenouer (Investigative State Case Analyst for IL State Police)
Meghan Rewers (Director of Crisis Nurse of Effingham County)
Nathan Nichols (CEFS Public Transit)
Patrick Miller (Community Health Specialist III- IL Faith & Recovery Collaborative)
Samantha Weidner (Effingham/Clay County Health Department)

Minutes

Introductions

Council meeting attendees introduced themselves and the agencies they represent or why they were attending.

Connie stated she is new to this meeting and shared she had heard about Oxford House and ROSC helping get supplies for the house. She stated she has a son in recovery who stayed in an Oxford House and wants to get involved.

Samantha then gave an overview of ROSC for new people who are attending the meeting.

Agency barrier discussion

Samantha stated her hopes of this discussion is to discuss the barriers that the agencies attending the meeting face. Specifically, what barriers *within* the agency do they come upon when trying to help serve their clients—not the barriers that their clients face.

- **Sheriff Kuhns** asked if he could share an experience he has had recently with helping a woman in the MAR program which is a new program in county jail. He shared that the woman going through the MAR program has done everything they've asked her to do, but she doesn't have running water, air conditioning, only one outlet in the place she's in, and needs a pair of non-slip shoes for a job she just obtained. She also lives in a place where people are using. He stated she doesn't have minutes on her phone so he can't contact her. Sheriff stated that he realized in this interaction that the woman is barely surviving—so how can he expect people to be successful in the MAR program when they're not getting their most basic needs met? Sheriff stated he is at the meeting today to gather resources for the people he's serving to help them be successful.
- **Abigail** asked if her water was turned off by a landlord because if so, that isn't legal and the woman could be referred to her.
- **Heather** stated CEFS may have some assistance at the outreach office in Effingham. They also may have a resource booklet. (Someone at the meeting handed Sheriff a CEFS booklet)
- **Felicia** stated she's love to see CEFS and the jail working together to get application processes for housing and assistance set up for people before they leave the jail so that process is smoother.
- **Merl** stated his concerns and wishes for the community. He stated that the agencies who do offer social services oftentimes have contingencies to receiving help & a lot of times people who have burned these agencies in addiction can no longer access help because of that. He stated funding these agencies is a problem because the need exceeds funds allotted. He stated he wishes the county and city board would be more involved in getting agencies to work together.
- **Felicia** stated she has been able to open a few doors through advocacy for some housing establishments in Effingham.
- **Sheriff** stated he has to be careful with getting personally involved because of the position he holds in the community.

- **Beth** stated that there is potential involvement from the county and city board but there needs to be a well-defined plan in place before they'd allot funding for such things.
- **Merl** stated that their needs to be an agency who is willing to step up and take accountability and put in the work to help those in recovery—to work personally with individuals who want recovery in their lives.
- **Samantha** stated that she is hearing that a big helping agency such as Catholic Charities, CEFS, FISH, etc. need to be willing to find champion a person within that agency who is passionate about recovery and willing to put in the work and time that comes along with the nature of addiction. She stated we can fund all of these programs but it's finding the people who are going to carry out the work.
- **Liesl** stated she sits on the IL Association for Problem Solving Courts and many of the drug courts have developed 501c3s to help pay for basic needs such as those that the Sheriff was talking about. She stated she wasn't sure if Effingham has one (Samantha said yes, STAR), but there are grant funding opportunities available for that. She stated that maybe an agency such as the sheriff's office or probation could look into starting a non-profit to cover costs for the people they serve.
- **Madison** stated there is grant money for drug court and grant money from ISOC which is an integrate systems of care that provides lots of resources and the ability to meet basic needs of participants but it's hard to find buy-in from people because it's a hard program to go through and complete successfully. **Sheriff Kuhns** said he'd liked to be more involved with probation.
- **Meghan** mentioned there is a consolidated resource list through the Dept of Children and Family Services. She explained how to search for what resource someone may need and that links will pop up in reference to the search. She will drop the link in the chat. **Samantha** will get this link and email it to the Council.
- **Heather** mentioned the CASP for the Sheriff to attend which is a meeting of our area providers. **Samantha** will connect the Sheriff to Susan Wilson who facilitates these meetings.
- **Samantha** stated this discussion reminded her of the data collected from the ROSC survey last year (which is coming up again in the next month). She stated that one of the questions asked if people knew where to find resources such as housing, transportation, child care, recovery meetings, etc. She stated that a fair percentage of people simply did not know where to go for these types of resources. She stated that is another piece of ROSC and stigma reduction—her and Felicia are continuously out in the community getting these resources in people's hands.

Who do we need at this table?

- **Samantha** stated we're talking about systemic change—changes within agency's systems that reduce barriers to access for help for people trying to obtain these services. She asked the Council who else needs to be at this table.
- **Merl** stated CEFS needs to be at the table.

- **Justin** stated he's working on getting the CEO of CEFS to come to these meetings. He has a personal connection. **Samantha** stated that is great because it takes administrators of organizations to create policy and procedure change to alleviate barriers.
- **Felicia** stated Diane from CEFS. She knows her personally.
- **Sheriff** stated he wishes there was a recovery home for women in the area, like what Oxford House is doing currently. **Samantha** stated that if this house getting off the ground successfully and the community demonstrates a need for more houses, Oxford House's goal is to create a Chapter which is 3 houses in an area. Typically, it's 2 men's and 2 women's houses. **Brycen** agreed.
- **Merl** stated there is El Shaddai Maternity Home that houses pregnant women in need of a place to stay from the time they know they are pregnant up to 6 months after the baby is born.
- **Merl** stated the state's attorney, county and city board members, and judges need to be at the table.
- **Samantha** agreed but also stated that we take a small view to tackle—we want to conquer the world, but let's try to take it small pieces at a time. She asked the **Sheriff** what organization would be most helpful in directly working with to help with his needs as the Sheriff's department.
- **Sheriff** stated someone who works with housing individuals to get them out the environment they're in.
- **Samantha** asked if the Council knows of a contact for private landlords, the Housing Authority, government housing, etc.

A discussion was had about the barriers to people getting into government housing such as felony records and the cost to live there currently.

- **Beth** stated they're having families in tiny apartments that are costing \$900-\$1300 a month for government housing.
- **Merl** stated that felony records automatically disqualify someone from government housing.
- **Felicia** stated she has been working with Village Apartment which are income based in trying to advocate for people with felonies to live there. She stated this is a part of breaking the stigma. She has been successful in getting a few people in there.
- **Connie** stated that Enduring Freedom Ministries are building tiny homes for *married couples* who are unhoused.
- **Samantha** stated that the housing piece is a giant undertaking. So, maybe we can look at a smaller piece which we can make progress on and achievable with what we have currently.
- **Felicia** stated she'd like to see the jail communicate with CEFS in getting rental applications in there to start the process before someone leaves the jail as they are lengthy and oftentimes, people need help filling them out.

Continuum of care discussion

- **Samantha** gave the example of someone leaving a treatment facility or sober living house without having connections or solid support in terms of the recovery community. She stated that people are WAY less likely to recover without the like-minded and goal-oriented support. She asked where the gap is here in this community. She also stated that this area has an amazing recovery community who will take people under their wing to support them and guide them through their recovery journey. She stated ROSC used the PLE Committee all the time for transport for individuals needing to go to rehab in other areas.
- **Merl** stated that the community needs to come together and work along side each other to help those suffering rehabilitate their lives instead of making it harder for them to get sober, get jobs, and places to live to become a contributing community member.
- **Sheriff** mentioned that although he agrees, that is not law enforcements job and police officers aren't wired that way. He stated that he thinks now knowing all of this that it's going to have to happen on some level.
- **Justin** mentioned the *Deflection Initiative* through ICJA that is coming to Clay, Crawford, Effingham, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Richland and Wabash counties. **Beth** gave an overview of the initiative—it is basically an officer referral source used at the officer's discretion. An officer comes in contact with a person from a call and can refer them to a Deflection Specialist which performs "relentless engagement" with this person to get them the resources and the services they need instead of arresting them and putting them in the system. **Samantha** stated ROSC has been on the leadership team of this initiative since it's been started and will get the contact information to anyone who wants it. **Sheriff** stated he wants it and so did **Scott**. She stated that this program is heavily based upon the willingness of the police & sheriff's department for successful planning and implementation.
- **Norbert** asked if there is a sponsorship program for stuff like this—like Big Brothers Big Sisters—that will take a person in recovery under their wing to get them what they need. **Samantha** stated there are sponsors in 12-step programs but their primarily purpose is to take someone through the literature of the recovery program and help them create a relationship with a Higher Power which they can rely upon. There is no formal sponsorship program funded by anyone that does what Norbert is asking.
- **Felicia** stated that she is ready and waiting to individuals to be referred to her to help them through their recovery journey. She stated she like to make more formal partnership with agencies who would like to use her for her support.

Volunteer Transportation discussion

Samantha stated that this topic has been on the agenda for a couple months now and we haven't had time to address it. She stated it will definitely be addressed at the next Council meeting!

Other comments:

Connie stated that she is going to donate a washer & dryer to the Oxford House.

Olivia stated she is going to donate a vacuum.

Upcoming events

Samantha briefly touched on upcoming events:

- *Disc Golf & Trivia*
 - Saturday, August 2nd @ 8:30am @ Community Park, Effingham
- *3rd Annual Candlelight Vigil*
 - International Overdose Awareness Day
 - Sunday, August 31st @ 6:00pm @ Bliss Park, Effingham
- *September is RECOVERY MONTH!*
 - Ideas of ways to get the community involved? **Samantha asked for Council members to email her suggestions!**
 - S'MORE Recovery- Saturday, September 27th @ 5:00pm @ Edgewood American Legion Lake, Edgewood

Contact emails:

Effingham County ROSC Coordinator

Samantha Hicks—samanthah@hourhouserecovery.org

Effingham County ROSC Recovery Navigator, CPRS

Felicia Depoister—feliciad@hourhouserecovery.org

ROSC Program Supervisor

Jenna Hays- jennah@hourhouserecovery.org

Where to find past meeting minutes: <https://www.govst.edu/Recovery-Support/South-Central-IL-ROSC/EFCRC-ROSC-Council/>



Effingham County ROSC Facebook page



****NEXT EFFINGHAM ROSC COUNCIL MEETING****

Date: Monday, August 18th, 2025

Time: 1:00-2:00pm

Where: 104 E. Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

