



Southland Recovery Coalition ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 9/30/2025 9:30 AM to 10:45 AM

LOCATION: Zoom

PRESENTER(S): Uduak Ntuen, PharmD, RPh, BSc – Medical Affairs Strategist

TOPIC: “Is it all over your face?: Understanding the Physical Implications
of Substance Use

ATTENDEES			AFFILIATION		
1	Angelia F. Smith	Cornerstone CDC, Exec Director	14	Martinez Sutton	Proactive Community Services
2	Yvonne M. Orr-Blake	ROSC Coordinator; BEE CDC	15	Sherri Keyes	Family Guidance Centers
3	Capucine McGinnis	Cornerstone CDC, Workforce Coor	16	Denise Holman	Cook County Dept of Public Health
4	Kamil Walton	Cornerstone CDC, Deputy Director	17	Kaylon Vaughn	Cornerstone CDC
5	April Thompson	Cornerstone CDC; HHI	18	Elena Rivera	Family Guidance Centers
6	Leonard Noble	Cornerstone, Workforce Dev Dir	19	Denise Jones	Tender Touch Inc.
7	Lamont Wallace	PLE, Comm Nav, Cornerstone; BEE	20	Katie Huffman	Together We Cope
8	Uduak Ntuen, PharmD	PLE, Comm Nav, Cornerstone; BEE	21	Michael Ferguson	Family Guidance Centers
9	Kimberly Haywood	Breaking Barriers Collectively	22	Erica Bledsoe	Kates Community Initiatives ROSC
10	Kenneth Bell	Region I TA	23		PLE
11	Deb Beckman	Statewide ROSC	24		PLE
12	Yasmeen Hishmeh	Together We Cope	25		PLE
13	Souheir Rahman	Together We Cope	26		PLE

MEETING SUMMARY: Southland Recovery Coalition ROSC Council Meeting

The meeting opened with a warm welcome and roll call led by Angelia Smith. Yvonne Orr-Blake introduced guest speaker Dr. Uduak Ntuen (affectionately known as “UD”), highlighting her expertise in dermatology, gastroenterology, neurocognitive disorders, and medical affairs strategy.

Introduction of Guest Speaker

The meeting began with Yvonne introducing Dr. Ntuen, otherwise known as UD. She is a strategic, results-driven medical affairs professional. She has experience across medical, regulatory, and commercial strategy, and a confident foundation in gastroenterology, neurocognitive disorders, medical devices, dermatology, and immunology. She excels at driving impactful fields and medical strategies, fostering KME relationships, and delivering therapeutic training aligned with dynamic business needs. UD has a track record of developing medical content and shaping cohesive medical affairs strategies while collaborating cross-functionally to support successful pre- and post-clinical drug launches. UD is passionate about health equity and innovation and committed to advancing medical science to improve patient outcomes and strengthen partnerships with healthcare leaders.

Participating in Clinical Trials

Dr. Ntuen shared briefly about the importance of people of color participating in clinical trials. For background insight, Pharma has a reputation for being money-driven and unethical practices. People of color can be part of the solution, though. Most times, when something comes to market, there’s not enough BIPOC representation to truly enable us to know how new market meds affect us—positively or adversely.



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As an executive, UD shared the issues of being the only African American in the room in meetings and it's not often that she sees people who look like her in the room, whether it's brown or women. What's worse is having people discussing the fate of individuals that are non-Caucasian, from various ethnicities and areas of the world, yet making decisions about how we look, react, are cured of diseases and/or how our diseases can be mitigated.

She noted the importance of participating in clinical trials and being aptly represented. She shared that sometimes you can be paid and that we all have a role to contribute to science and have visibility.

Dr. Ntuen provided an excellent presentation on the implications of substance use on the body physically. Our outward appearance tells a lot about what's going on inside of our body. Oftentimes, individuals do not realize that when we put things in our body, whether it's food, whether it's substances, whether it's medication, there's outward appearances to what is happening within the body. *See Presentation for insight.*

PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Clinical Trials & Representation

Dr. Ntuen emphasized the importance of BIPOC participation in clinical trials, noting:

- Pharma's historical reputation for unethical practices and lack of diversity
- The need for visibility and representation to ensure equitable outcomes
- Clinical trial demographics often skew toward white males, limiting generalizability
- Participation offers benefits such as compensation, free care, and contribution to science

Physical Implications of Substance Use

Dr. Ntuen's presentation explored how substance use manifests physically, particularly through the skin:

- The skin is the body's largest organ, covering up to 21 square feet and weighing 8–10 pounds
- It plays a critical role in immune defense, vitamin D conversion, and overall health
- Substance use, stress, and poor nutrition can compromise skin integrity and appearance
- Skin conditions may reflect internal imbalances, including hormonal shifts and organ stress

Mental Health Connection

Yvonne noted that many physical symptoms discussed also overlap with mental health and behavioral health indicators. Dr. Ntuen affirmed the importance of compassionate engagement and understanding the emotional toll of substance use and recovery.

STRATEGIC PLAN NOTES

Yvonne reviewed last year's focus areas. The group agreed to continue targeting:

- Youth and special populations
- Communities with lower median income
- School-based outreach and presentations
- Older adult feeding programs supported by visiting nurses

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Updates were shared on upcoming Region 1 ROSC Council events and pop-up initiatives
- Attendees were reminded to watch for emails regarding the community survey and outreach opportunities

MEETING ADJOURNED> **Time:** 10:45 AM | **Next Meeting:** October 29, 2025