



ROSC Meeting – Ogle/DeKalb Counties

Date: October 15, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Facilitator: Shannon Tully

Format: Virtual / Hybrid



Attendees

- **Shannon Tully** – Facilitator
- **Gerald Lott** - Executive Director (SVVOR)
- **Marta Jarka** – NM Ben Gordon Center
- **Joyce Lewis** – Ogle County Health Department
- **Ben Rudolph** – ROSC Region 2 Technical Assistant – berudolph@chestnut.org – 309-397-3888
- **Penny Stark** – Recovery Centers of America – p.stark@recoverycoa.com
- **Paul Benson** – Safe Passage – pbenson@safepassagedv.org
- **Deanna Cada** – DeKalb County Community Mental Health Board – dcada@dekalbcounty.org
- **Erika Hahn** – OMNI
- **Jake Albers** – SVVOR – jacob.albers@svvor.org – 815-631-9153
- **Amanda Douglas** – Lake County ROSC Coordinator (CPRS)
- **Lupita Serrano** – Lee County Health Department
- **Melanie Marrandino** – MSW, Aurora University – marrandinomelanie@gmail.com
- **Karl Arellano, LCSW** – Sterling VA Clinic – karlan.arellano@va.gov

- **Whitney Miller, LCSW** – Roberts Counseling – lcsw.wmiller@gmail.com
 - **Brandi O’Rorke** - Lead Coach (SVVOR)
 - **Sprocket** – Penny’s dog 🐾 (special guest appearance)
-

Meeting Highlights

Community & Event Updates

- **Gerald** opened the meeting by highlighting several successful recent events:
 - **RecoverCon**, which drew about **175 attendees** and received great feedback.
 - **Day Out in the Prairie** and a **Disc Golf event**, both well-attended and community-driven.
 - **Program Updates:**
 - **35 intakes** were completed last month.
 - **Two new recovery coaches** were hired, though **Jamie** returned to RCA.
 - **Notable increase in referrals from DeKalb County.**
 - **11 women** are currently residing at **Cledy’s House.**
 - **Partnerships:** The team has **reconnected with The Phoenix** to explore future collaboration.
 - **Campaigns:** The **Recovery Lives Here campaign** officially launched.
-

Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative

Discussion Overview

- **Gerald** shared insights from visiting other RCOs nationwide.
 - In **Nevada**, the **Foundation for Recovery** trains employers on supportive policies like permitting time off for recovery meetings.
 - Businesses that participate receive **Recovery Friendly Workplace certification** and **tax incentives** — incentives not yet available in Illinois.
- Gerald encouraged the group to **focus on taking real action**, asking, *“What do we want to do about it?”*
- **Marta** mentioned she keeps a **list of employers** open to hiring individuals in recovery, as long as there’s no violent background.
- The group discussed developing a **curriculum for employers** to promote understanding and inclusion of employees in recovery.
 - Possibilities include hiring **training specialists** and defining a **point of contact** for employees who feel singled out.
 - **Target:** Have a draft curriculum by **March 2026**.

Experiences & Input

- **Joyce Lewis** shared that her brother-in-law struggled to find employment post-incarceration, underscoring the need for empathy and advocacy.
- **Ben Rudolph** noted that, as a former therapist, he worked with **liaisons** who communicated with employers to resolve issues like tardiness or conflict.
- **Marta** proposed assigning a **coach as an advocate** to build stronger relationships between employers and employees in recovery.
- **Gerald** added that the goal should be to **“wrap around” both the employee and employer**, recognizing the unique challenges individuals in recovery face.
- **Deanna** suggested **partnering with local Chambers of Commerce** to strengthen outreach.

- **Gerald** noted that while a **national Recovery Friendly Workplace** program exists, the team needs to realistically consider capacity — *Do we have time for more meetings? Will employers support the effort?*
- The group agreed to **form a committee** to explore this initiative further, consisting of **Penny, Marta, Erika, and Amanda**.



Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Details
October 24, 2025	Haunted House	Community engagement event
November 6, 2025	<i>The Anonymous People</i> Film	Screening at Dixon Theater
—	ROSC Surveys	\$100 monthly prize for survey participants



Community & Program Updates

- **Joyce Lewis** shared plans to meet with **Bruce Black** at **Cledy's House** next week to measure for **hydroponic systems** for both **Legacy** and **Cledy's House**.
 - Residents will receive training, potentially integrating it into **therapy programs**.
- **Erika** announced a forthcoming **flyer** about **Sara Wright (ISU)**, who offers **nutrition education** workshops.
- **Penny** noted that **SVVOR is recruiting new board members**.
 - Interested individuals should contact **Penny or Gerald**.
 - Meetings are **every other month**, last about **45 minutes**, and are held **at lunchtime**.
 - More involvement from **DeKalb County** is especially needed.

- **Penny** also asked how **RCA can better support ROSC**, expressing interest in active collaboration.
- **Marta** emphasized the importance of **promoting the Illinois Youth Survey** among schools, principals, and teachers.
 - Illinois has **never published statewide results**, and she plans to confirm whether **Ogle and Lee Counties** are participating.
- **Hope for Tomorrow (Aurora)** announced the **closure of its men's sober living home**.
- **Marta and Penny** discussed educating the **healthcare community** — particularly **urgent cares and emergency rooms** — on substances like **Kratom** and **Xylazine**, noting the need for greater awareness.
- **Paul (Safe Passage)** reminded everyone that **October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month**.
 - **Safe Passage** will participate in **Pumpkin Fest**.
 - Plans are underway to **train first responders** on engaging individuals in domestic violence situations.
 - Those interested in participating should contact **Paul**.

Action Items

Action Item	Responsible Party	Timeline
Develop “Recovery Friendly Workplace” curriculum	Committee (Penny, Marta, Erika, Amanda)	By March 2026
Continue outreach to inclusive employers	Marta, Paul, Jake	Ongoing
Partner with local Chambers of Commerce	Deanna Cada	Ongoing
Promote Illinois Youth Survey to schools	Marta Jarka	Next quarter

Advance hydroponics project at Cledy's & Legacy	Joyce Lewis, Bruce Black	In progress
Recruit new SVVOR board members	All partners	Ongoing
Expand healthcare education on Kratom & Xylazine	Marta & Penny	Before next meeting



Closing Notes

- The meeting reflected strong energy and commitment to **action over discussion**.
- The **Recovery Friendly Workplace committee** will reconvene to plan next steps.
- Members expressed appreciation for collaboration and continued momentum across counties.