

FY 26 Strategic Plan  
Three Cords Strong ROSC Alliance  
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Service Area: Woodlawn, Kenwood, Hyde Park, Oakland,  
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### **Mission**

At Three Cords Strong, our mission is to empower individuals on their recovery journeys by weaving together the essential strands of personal growth, family support, and community resilience. We believe that recovery is a continuous journey rather than a final destination and strive to embrace and support individuals on their unique paths to recovery.

### **Vision**

Three Cords Strong ROSC Alliance envisions a world where recovery is celebrated as a lifelong journey, weaving the threads of personal growth, family bonds, and community support into a resilient tapestry not easily broken.

### **Needs Assessment**

#### ***Community Survey Findings & Lived Experience Perspectives***

Community input was collected through the Three Cords Strong ROSC Community Survey, which included open-ended questions allowing residents to describe needs, barriers, and priorities in their own words. Responses reflect lived experience across Woodlawn, Kenwood, Oakland, and Hyde Park, and reveal consistent themes related to stigma, access to care, employment barriers, and interactions with law enforcement.

#### **Stigma and Treatment Access**

Respondents repeatedly identified stigma as a major barrier to seeking help for substance use and mental health concerns. Community members described fear of being judged or labeled and a lack of trust in systems meant to help. These responses underscore the need for trauma informed, culturally responsive outreach and expanded education on harm reduction and Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR).

#### **Law Enforcement and Alternatives to Arrest**

Many respondents expressed concern that substance use is too often addressed through arrest rather than care. Participants emphasized that incarceration does not address addiction and called for pathways that connect individuals to treatment, harm reduction services, and supportive resources instead of jail. This feedback directly supports the Council's priority to work with law enforcement to establish adult deflection strategies.

#### **Employment Barriers and Economic Stability**

Employment was consistently identified as a stabilizing factor for recovery and well-being. Respondents described difficulty securing work due to criminal records, gaps in employment history, and limited second-chance hiring opportunities. These insights reinforce the importance of recovery-friendly employment pathways and coordinated workforce support.

#### **Service Navigation and Coordination**

Survey participants reported confusion about where to go for help and frustration with disconnected systems. Respondents indicated that services can be difficult to locate and navigate, particularly for adults with substance use disorders, highlighting the need for clearer pathways, coordinated referrals, and community-based navigation support.

#### **Local Community Data: Kenwood, Oakland, Hyde Park, and Woodlawn**

Recent public health and mortality data underscore the urgency of recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and harm reduction-aligned interventions in the Three Cords Strong ROSC service area.

**Overdose and Substance Use Trends:**

According to the most current Cook County Medical Examiner's Office 2023 Annual Report, Cook County recorded 1,822 opioid-related deaths in 2023, with fentanyl present in approximately 90% of opioid fatalities. While countywide opioid deaths declined modestly from 2022, deaths remain significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels, and residents of historically under-resourced communities on Chicago's South Side continue to be disproportionately impacted.

The Chicago Department of Public Health Opioid Response Report highlights that opioid-related fatalities now exceed deaths from traffic accidents and homicides combined in Chicago. Opioid overdoses contribute approximately 1.5 years to the 11.4-year life expectancy gap between Black and non-Black Chicagoans, reflecting deep racial and geographic inequities in access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

**South Side Priority and CDPH SSHOTF Alignment:**

The Chicago Department of Public Health and South Side Heroin Opioid Task Force (SSHOTF) identifies Woodlawn and the surrounding South Side community areas as priority locations for overdose prevention and response. SSHOTF data indicate that South Side priority community areas accounted for a substantial share of opioid-related EMS responses in 2024–2025, with 15 priority community areas, including Woodlawn, representing 59% of all opioid-related overdose EMS responses citywide in 2024. SSHOTF further emphasizes the importance of hyper-local, community-centered strategies, including harm reduction, MAR access, coordinated outreach, and system-level partnerships, and identifies the South Side as a key area for expansion of these efforts in 2025.

**Community Health and Structural Determinants:**

The University of Chicago Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) identifies Kenwood, Oakland, Hyde Park, and Woodlawn as part of the UChicago Medicine service area and documents persistent inequities driven by structural racism, unemployment, housing instability, and limited access to behavioral health care. Across the service area, a majority of residents identify as Black (73.7%), and unemployment rates remain substantially higher than city and national averages. The CHNA further identifies mental health challenges, trauma exposure, substance use, and barriers to care as top community priorities.

Residents in these communities experience elevated exposure to violence and trauma, which the CHNA links directly to increased risk for substance use disorders, poor mental health outcomes, and justice involvement. Limited availability and knowledge of Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR), harm reduction services, and coordinated pathways between law enforcement, healthcare, and community-based providers further compound these risks for adults with substance use disorders.

Together, these data sources, including SSHOTF findings, reinforce the need for hyper-local deflection strategies that divert adults with substance use disorders away from arrest and toward treatment, harm reduction, and stabilizing supports, while strengthening community safety and public health outcomes.

Recent public health and mortality data underscore the urgency of recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and harm reduction-aligned interventions in the Three Cords Strong ROSC service area.

**Community Demographics**

Three Cords Strong ROSC serves the South Side Chicago communities of Kenwood, Hyde Park, Oakland, and Woodlawn. These areas have deep cultural history, strong community institutions,

and significant racial and economic disparities. These communities are predominantly Black (except Hyde Park), experience elevated unemployment, and face disproportionate impacts from violence, substance use, and justice involvement.

### **Substance Use, Violence, and Economic Indicators**

Data from the 2023 Cook County Medical Examiner's Report and the University of Chicago Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment highlight urgent needs:

- 1,822 opioid-related deaths in Cook County in 2023, primarily fentanyl-related.
- 739 gun-related homicides disproportionately impacted Black and Latino residents.
- 15.8% unemployment rate, nearly double the Chicago average.
- Disconnected youth (ages 16–19) at 11.6%, exceeding state and national averages.
- Persistent shortages in Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR), recovery housing, and coordinated re-entry services.
- High rates of incarceration among individuals with substance use disorders, alongside growing community and law enforcement interest in deflection and diversion as alternatives to arrest.

### **Community-Identified Gaps**

Community survey results from the fiscal year identified mental health and substance use treatment access as the most significant challenge. Respondents emphasized:

- Limited availability and awareness of MAR and harm reduction services.
- Stigma surrounding substance use, recovery, and justice involvement.
- Gaps in coordinated re-entry services linking housing, treatment, and employment.
- A need for policy advocacy, sustainable funding, and community-based outreach models.

### **Strategic Priorities (FY26–FY28) (Let's Strategize!)**

Based on updated council direction, community input, and partner readiness, Three Cords Strong ROSC will focus on two primary strategic goals for FY26–FY28. These priorities reflect areas where the council has existing momentum, strong partnerships, and the greatest potential for measurable impact.

1. Working with law enforcement to establish alternatives to arrest for adults with substance use disorders (SUD) through deflection and diversion pathways in partnership with TASC and Chicago Police Department District 003, with the intention to scale to additional districts over time.
2. Building a supportive network of services for individuals seeking employment, with a focus on second-chance hiring, recovery-friendly workplaces, and employment stability for individuals impacted by substance use and justice involvement..

***Goal 1: Work with Law Enforcement to Establish Alternatives to Arrest for Adults with Substance Use Disorders (SUD)***

### **SMART Goal (FY26):**

By June 30, 2026, Three Cords Strong ROSC will pilot an adult deflection pathway in partnership with CPD District 003 and Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC) that diverts adults with substance use disorders from arrest to treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support.

### **FY26 Objectives**

1. Finalize and present an adult deflection proposal to CPD District 003 leadership outlining qualifying offenses, referral criteria, and partner roles by March 31, 2026.
2. Co-develop and deliver deflection and destigmatization training for law enforcement officers, reaching at least 25 officers by June 30, 2026.
3. Establish a referral coordination process with TASC and community partners to support adult deflection referrals by April 30, 2026.

4. Pilot adult deflection referrals and begin tracking outcomes for diverted individuals by June 30, 2026.

#### **Progress to Date (FY26) (1-6 months)**

- Reviewed Illinois deflection-related statutes, including CESSA and SAFE-T Act deflection provisions, to align local efforts with state guidance.
- Participated in an 11-week civilian police academy to deepen understanding of CPD laws, training, and operational policies.
- Supported CPD District 003 strategic planning in collaboration with ROSC partners.
- Began development of a formal deflection proposal for District 003 command staff.
- Engaged youth-serving partners to inform recovery-centered alternatives to arrest and strengthen cross-system learning.

#### **Next Steps (FY26)**

- Present and refine the adult deflection proposal with District 003 leadership.
- Collaborate with TEECH Foundation to develop and deliver officer training focused on deflection, harm reduction, and recovery-informed engagement.
- Formalize referral workflows with TASC and participating service providers.
- Launch pilot deflection referrals and begin quarterly review of outcomes and lessons learned.

#### **FY26 Outcome Measures**

- Number of adults diverted from arrest to treatment or recovery supports (target: 20).
- Number of law enforcement officers trained in deflection and recovery-informed practices (target: 25).
- Number of partner agencies participating in the deflection referral network.
- Percentage of diverted individuals who successfully connect to recommended services.

#### **Long-Term Goal (FY27–FY28)**

By June 30, 2028, Three Cords Strong ROSC will expand adult deflection partnerships beyond CPD District 003 and support consistent, recovery-centered deflection practices across multiple Chicago Police Department districts, including the neighborhood University of Chicago Police.

#### **Long-Term Objectives (FY27–FY28)**

1. Expand deflection partnerships to at least 3 CPD districts, University of Chicago Police by June 30, 2028.
2. Institutionalize deflection and recovery-informed training within participating law enforcement agencies by June 30, 2028.
3. Strengthen coordination with treatment, harm reduction, and recovery providers to support sustained deflection referrals annually.

#### **Long-Term Outcome Measures (FY27–FY28)**

- Number of CPD districts actively participating in adult deflection.
- Total number of adults diverted from arrest to community-based services.
- Percentage of diverted individuals with documented follow-up and service engagement.
- Evidence of sustained deflection practices reflected in partner policies, protocols, or training curricula.

#### ***Goal 2: Build a Supportive Network of Services for Individuals Seeking Employment***

##### **SMART Goal (FY26):**

By June 30, 2026, Three Cords Strong ROSC will strengthen a recovery-friendly employment

network by engaging employers and workforce partners to place adults impacted by substance use disorders or justice involvement into stable employment opportunities.

#### **FY26 Objectives**

1. Engage at least 10 employers or workforce agencies to explore recovery-friendly and second-chance hiring practices by June 30, 2026.
2. Secure formal commitments or MOUs with at least 3 employers by January 31, 2026.
3. Support the placement of at least 24 unemployed or underemployed participants into competitive employment by June 30, 2026.

#### **Progress to Date (FY26)**

- Researched workforce training programs aligned with recovery-friendly and second-chance employment models.
- Participated in webinars and learning sessions focused on recovery-friendly workplaces and employment retention strategies.
- Initiated conversations with local employers to assess readiness and interest in hiring individuals impacted by substance use or justice involvement.

#### **Next Steps (FY26)**

- Continue employer outreach with a focus on education, technical assistance, and stigma reduction.
- Identify early adopter employers willing to pilot recovery-friendly hiring practices.
- Align workforce engagement with deflection efforts to support stabilization for diverted individuals.

#### **FY26 Outcome Measures**

- Number of employers engaged around recovery-friendly hiring practices.
- Number of formal employer commitments or MOUs secured.
- Number of participants placed into employment.
- Participant job retention at 90 days, where data are available.

#### **Long-Term Goal (FY27–FY28)**

By June 30, 2028, Three Cords Strong ROSC will expand a sustainable network of recovery-friendly and second-chance employers that support long-term employment stability for individuals impacted by substance use disorders.

#### **Long-Term Objectives (FY27–FY28)**

1. Expand the recovery-friendly employer network to at least 15 employers by June 30, 2028.
2. Support cumulative placement of at least 75 individuals into employment opportunities by June 30, 2028.
3. Strengthen connections between employers and supportive services to improve retention and stability.

#### **Long-Term Outcome Measures (FY27–FY28)**

- Number of employers actively participating in the recovery-friendly employment network.
- Total number of individuals placed into employment.
- Job retention rates at 90 and 180 days, where available.
- Employer-reported satisfaction with recovery-friendly hiring supports.

#### **Outreach and Communication Plan**

Purpose: Ensure transparent, inclusive, and consistent engagement with community members, partners, and stakeholders.

Key Messages: Recovery is possible through many pathways; Three Cords Strong ROSC is community-led, equity-centered, and committed to dignity, harm reduction, and opportunity.

Channels & Frequency:

- Monthly newsletters
- Weekly social media outreach
- Monthly coalition meetings
- Community forums and educational events

Target Audiences: Returning citizens, families, employers, service providers, law enforcement, community residents, funders, and policymakers.

Roles & Responsibilities: ROSC Coordinator, Outreach Lead, Peer Leaders, Communications Support, Data & Evaluation Partners.

### ***Evaluation and Performance Measures***

- Referral and enrollment logs
- Employment placement tracking
- Deflection referral tracking in partnership with law enforcement
- Training attendance and pre/post surveys
- Quarterly and annual progress reports aligned with IDHS/IL ROSC requirements

### **Long-Term Outcomes (FY27–FY28)**

- Expand adult deflection partnerships beyond District 003 to additional CPD districts.
- Increase the number of adults diverted from arrest to treatment, harm reduction, and recovery supports.
- Institutionalize recovery-informed and deflection-aligned training within participating law enforcement agencies.
- Strengthen a network of recovery-friendly and second-chance employers across the South Side.
- Improve employment stability and economic mobility for individuals impacted by substance use disorders.

### **Progress to Date and Next Steps (FY26)**

#### **Goal 1: *Work with Law Enforcement to Establish Alternatives to Arrest for Adults with Substance Use Disorders (SUD)***

#### **Progress to Date (FY26 – Current Quarter)**

- Reviewed Illinois deflection-related statutes and guidance, including the Community Emergency Services and Support Act (CESSA) and SAFE-T Act deflection provisions, to ensure alignment with current state policy.
- Enrolled in and participated in an 11-week civilian police academy to build a foundational understanding of the Chicago Police Department laws, training standards, and operational procedures.
- Collaborated with ROSC partners to support District 003 strategic planning efforts, strengthening cross-sector alignment around community safety and recovery.
- Initiated development of a deflection proposal for an upcoming in-person meeting with the District 003 Commander, outlining qualifying offenses, referral pathways, and a community-based treatment and recovery network.
- Engaged youth-serving partners, including Lost Boys, Lawrence Hall, and CHAMPS, to explore recovery-centered alternatives to arrest for younger populations and to inform adult deflection planning.
- Conducted outreach with CPD officers and units across Chicago to identify existing diversion practices, despite limited in-person access due to federal enforcement activity at district facilities.

### **Key Challenges Identified**

- Limited in-person engagement with district staff due to the current ICE presence at District 003 headquarters, necessitating reliance on phone and email communication.

- Lack of formal adult deflection pathways, despite existing youth diversion programs.
- Inconsistent understanding of deflection versus diversion among officers, requiring targeted education and shared definitions.
- Community and law enforcement focus remains heavily oriented toward violence prevention, with less recognition of substance use as a contributing factor to harm.
- Persistent stigma related to harm reduction in the Woodlawn community is limiting engagement and acceptance.

#### **Next Steps (FY26)**

- Finalize and present the adult deflection proposal to District 003 leadership, including referral criteria and partner roles, by Q2 FY26.
- Co-develop deflection training and destigmatization education for officers in collaboration with ROSC partners.
- Formalize partnerships with Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC) to support referral coordination and case management.
- Pilot adult deflection referrals and begin tracking outcomes and lessons learned by Q3 FY26.

### **Goal 2: Build a Supportive Network of Services for Individuals Seeking Employment**

#### **Progress to Date (FY26 – Current Quarter)**

- Began researching workforce training programs aligned with recovery-friendly and second-chance employment models.
- Attended webinars and learning sessions focused on second-chance hiring, recovery-friendly workplaces, and employment retention strategies.
- Initiated conversations with local employers to assess readiness and interest in hiring individuals impacted by substance use disorders or justice involvement.

#### **Key Challenges Identified**

- Employers continue to express concerns related to stigma, workplace liability, and limited understanding of recovery-friendly practices.
- Some employers remain uncertain about available supportive services that can help ensure employee stability and retention.
- Formal commitments from employers are still in development as readiness and internal capacity evolve.

#### **Next Steps (FY26)**

- Continue employer engagement with a focus on education, technical assistance, and connection to supportive services.
- Identify early adopter employers willing to participate in recovery-friendly hiring pilots.
- Align workforce development activities with deflection efforts to support stabilization for diverted individuals.