

Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, December 19, 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: The meeting began with Venessa welcoming attendees and providing an attendance link for ROSC Council meetings and events. She confirmed audio and video functionality for participants, including Loretta Omale, who joined later. Venessa emphasized the importance of filling out the attendance form for staying connected and updated on future meetings and events and continued support, also mentioned that ROSC will offer CEU's.

Participant Introductions: Sandra Harrison, DVA Leadership & Development Training Consultants; Mariah Burt, Kalimba Foundation; Holland Herndon, Association House of Chicago; Linda Sharp, Individual; Michelle Meyer, Kane County Health Department; Brandon Murray, AIDS Foundation Chicago & Center for Housing and Health; Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; Stacey Wills, Family Guidance Center; Anthony Baker, Kalimba Foundation NFP; John J Reed, Individual; Michael Ferguson, Family Guidance Center; Yulanda A Thomas, CRCC; Debra Laws, Renewed Hope; Melisa Hernandez, The PR Project SSP; Niktoria Julian, TOMORROWS LIGHT; John Hardin, CRCC; Vegletta E Lewis, Loretto Hospital; Wateka Kleinpeter, Independent Contractor; Derrick Brewer, CRCC; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Venessa Moreno, CRCC; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC; Christopher Leavy, CRCC; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Darryl Harrison, DVA Leadership & Development Training Consultants; Wibert Cook, Individual; Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Aimee Rabe, CRCC; Kelsey Staley, Trillium Place New Leaf; Jennifer Jordan, Individual; Arbutus "Beauty" Winfrey, WESTSIDE TASK FORCE; Helen Land, Where Do We Go From Here, Inc.; Carolyn Hartfield, Hartfield Consultants; Walter Houston, Kalimba Foundation; Charlotte Estell, Kalimba Foundation NFP

Summary

Recovery Communities and Holiday Empowerment

The ROSC meeting welcomed new participants, including Brandon Murray, the new Harm Reduction Program Manager at AIDS Foundation Chicago, and Mariah, a peer coach with the Kalima Foundation. The meeting focused on self-care and empowerment during the holidays, with an emphasis on creating recovery-oriented communities and fostering effective communication among participants with lived experiences. Venessa encouraged attendees to network and connect with one another and introduced the concept of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to define working relationships between agencies. The conversation ended with a call for organizations without MOUs to reach out and collaborate, and John was tasked with monitoring the chat for further inquiries.

Community Survey and Holiday Empowerment

The meeting began with Dora discussing a community needs assessment survey, emphasizing its importance for understanding local needs, particularly in the context of a recession and food desert. Participants were encouraged to share the survey widely and were assured of its confidentiality. The discussion then shifted to the main topic of the meeting, self-care and empowerment during the



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holidays, with Yulanda introducing the speakers, Dora Danza Wright and Sandra Harris. Technical difficulties with Sandra's video connection were briefly addressed before the meeting continued.

Holiday Self-Care for Recovery Staff

Sandra and Dora co-facilitated a presentation on self-care and empowerment during the holidays, focusing on strategies for recovery staff to manage stress and maintain their wellness. They discussed the increased client needs during the holiday season, the pressure to stay strong, and the importance of setting boundaries to prevent burnout. The speakers emphasized the need for radical self-care, challenging societal norms and reclaiming autonomy, while also addressing the physical and psychological effects of chronic stress.

Self-Care Strategies for Well-being

Dora presented mental and physical self-care, emphasizing the importance of mindfulness, affirmation, and taking time to rest and recharge. She shared personal experiences with stress, high blood pressure, and the need for adequate sleep to maintain well-being. Dora also discussed the benefits of physical activities like dancing and walking, as well as the importance of a healthy diet and respecting oneself. Sandra highlighted the benefits of sunlight exposure, including vitamin D production and its positive effects on mental health and sleep patterns.

Self-Care Strategies for Team Wellness

Sandra discussed the importance of self-care and provided practical tips, including pausing before responding, drinking water, and knowing when to ask for support. She emphasized the need for intentional self-care, especially for those in recovery, and highlighted the importance of being trauma informed. Sandra also shared various coping tools such as grounding between interactions, journaling, and mindfulness, and encouraged building community among team members. The conversation ended with an announcement about housing resources for clients in the Aurora area.

Holiday Boundaries and Emotional Well-being

The meeting focused on setting boundaries during the holiday season, emphasizing the importance of protecting both clients and one self. Sandra discussed the challenges of balancing financial stress and family expectations, suggesting creative solutions like homemade gifts to reduce pressure. Dora shared personal experiences with family triggers and emphasized the importance of acknowledging emotional struggles, encouraging attendees to communicate their needs during difficult times.

Holiday Stress Management Strategies

Sandra discussed strategies for managing family stress during the holidays, emphasizing the importance of setting boundaries, planning, and practicing mindfulness. She highlighted the need to stay connected with a support network and focus on personal gratitude, while also addressing the signs of emotional exhaustion and the importance of protecting one's recovery. Sandra encouraged attendees to create exit plans for challenging situations and to prioritize their well-being by taking necessary steps to maintain their recovery.

Journey to Self-Discovery and Recovery

Dora shared her personal journey of self-discovery and recovery, emphasizing the importance of knowing oneself, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care. She discussed how she learned to identify and manage stress and burnout, and highlighted the need for radical self-care, including seeking help when needed and making time for healing. Dora also stressed the importance of prioritizing oneself and building boundaries to maintain peace and protect energy.

Boundary Setting for Personal Well-being

Dora and Sandra presented on the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining alignment between body, mind, and soul for personal well-being. They emphasized the need for a holiday care plan, which includes identifying coping tools, establishing accountability, recognizing red flags, and having an emergency exit plan. The presentation highlighted the significance of peer-to-peer



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support and encourage attendees to prioritize their own wellness by setting boundaries, seeking support, and taking small steps for self-care. Dora also shared her favorite books that helped her maintain balance and faith in her recovery journey.

Self-Care and Boundaries During Holidays

Sandra and Dora presented a powerful session on self-care and boundaries, emphasizing the importance of taking care of oneself while supporting others, especially during the holiday season. They shared personal stories and provided practical tips for maintaining boundaries and prioritizing self-care. The team discussed the value of PTO and wellness benefits, with several members expressing gratitude for CRCC's supportive environment. The session concluded with messages of thanks and support from the team, highlighting the strong sense of community within CRCC.

Closing by; Dora W.: 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 January 23, 2026. The conversation ended with a reminder to fill out the attendance form for those who wanted to receive CEUs.

Next steps:

- John (monitoring chat): Collect contact information from organizations interested in establishing an MOU and follow up to initiate MOU process with those organizations.
- All participants: Fill out the community needs assessment survey (link provided in chat) if not already completed.
- Dora: Send the list of recommended holiday reading/books to Carolyn (and possibly others who requested).

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

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