



Southland Recovery Coalition ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 1/28/2026 9:30 AM to 10:07 AM

LOCATION: Zoom

PRESENTER(S): Marianne Bithos, President, NAMI Metro Suburban

TOPIC: The Realities of Mental Health & Wellness

ATTENDEES		AFFILIATION	ATTENDEES		AFFILIATION
1	Angelia F. Smith	Lead Fiscal Agent; Cornerstone ED	11	Marianne Bithos	NAMI Metro Suburban
2	Yvonne M. Orr	ROSC Coordinator; BEE CDC	12	Christine Cornaccia	Together We Cope
3	Capucine McGinnis	Cornerstone CDC, Workforce Coor	13	Latrena Silas	Women, Family & Youth Specialist
4	April Thompson	Cornerstone CDC; HHI	14	Maya Crawford	Cornerstone CN; BEE CDC
5	Isaac Marrufo	Cook County Dept of Health	15	Andrea Coletta	Together We Cope
6	Kenneth Bell	Region I TA	16	Kaylon Vaughn	Cornerstone CDC
7	Johanna Gonzalez	Statewide ROSC	17	Elena Rivera	Family Guidance Centers
8	Souheir Rahman	Together We Cope	18	Denise Jones	Tender Touch Inc.
9	Katie Huffman	Together We Cope	19	Maya Hardy	United Way of Metro Chicago
10	Yasmeen Hishmeh	Together We Cope			

MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting was called to order by Angelia F. Smith, who welcomed attendees. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves and share their organizations in the chat. The meeting included introductions from new and returning members.

In Memoriam

Yvonne M. Orr requested a moment of silence in remembrance of SRC’s longtime recovery supporter and Cornerstone’s Director of Workforce Development—Leonard Noble, who passed away suddenly mid-January. More recently, the United Mental Health & Addiction Recovery RCO recognized him as its 2025 Recovery Champion for his decades of service fighting for and mentoring those in recovery. As a friend, mentor, and supporter of SRC and its efforts to expand recovery awareness, Leonard will be sorely missed by all who knew and worked alongside him.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Strategic Planning

Yvonne reviewed the latest updates to the Strategic Plan based on input from the ROSC Council membership and informed data from the most recent community survey results. She stressed that overdose data and trends suggest an uptick in our region, however, awareness of what recovery means and potential places to seek help was also on the rise.

Community Engagement

Yvonne reviewed the updates to the Strategic Plan based on the Community Survey.



Southland Recovery Coalition ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 1/28/2026 9:30 AM to 10:07 AM

Community Survey Results: Service Gaps

The Southland Recovery Coalition conducted a comprehensive community survey to identify gaps in recovery services. Key findings include:

Access Barriers:

- Difficulty finding mental health and substance use treatment services (strongly agreed/agreed by majority of respondents)
- Limited availability of Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR) providers
- Insufficient harm reduction services like Narcan and syringe service programs
- Within the service area, Google searches and mapping technologies yield zero results for behavioral/mental health providers or recovery communities in some areas
- Inadequate public transportation, with some individuals traveling up to three hours to reach providers

Equity Concerns:

- Disparities in access to care based on income level, insurance status, race, ethnicity, primary language, disabilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, and citizenship status
- Communities of color experience disproportionate burden of health problems and discrimination

Qualitative Data: Community Voices

Through focus groups and key informant interviews, community members identified critical recovery supports needed:

- Peer support services and recovery coaching
- Safe, affordable recovery housing options
- Workforce development and job readiness training
- Comprehensive wraparound services (housing assistance, transportation, legal aid, healthcare navigation)
- Reentry support for justice-involved individuals
- Trauma-informed care and culturally competent services
- Community-based recovery spaces and drop-in centers

Based on the inordinate amount of respondents (71%) that selected “neither agree nor disagree/neutral” when asked if MAR is an effective treatment for substance use disorders in the community survey-- community members emphasized the need to better understand what MAR is.

Key Messages

Core messages guide all communications:

- People who use drugs deserve respect - Stigma is a barrier to recovery
- Collaborative effort - Working together across sectors strengthens our community
- Inclusivity - Every person, regardless of background, deserves access to recovery supports
- Accountability - We meet people where they are with compassion and evidence-based support
- Community-driven - Those with lived experience guide our work



Southland Recovery Coalition ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 1/28/2026 9:30 AM to 10:07 AM

GUEST SPEAKER - Marianne Bithos, NAMI Metro Suburban

Yvonne introduced Marianne who shared insights on some of the complexities of mental health and wellbeing for those in recovery. Marianne shared insights on S.A.D. Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of clinical depression that follows a seasonal pattern. Most commonly, people experience winter-pattern SAD, where symptoms start in the fall or winter and improve in the spring.

To be diagnosed with SAD, symptoms must occur during specific seasons for at least two consecutive years. This is not just about feeling cold or gloomy. It is about changes in brain chemistry tied to daylight. SAD is linked to reduced sunlight affecting your internal clock, mood-regulating chemicals, and sleep patterns.

For more detailed information, check out the [National Institute of Mental Health's Seasonal Affective Disorder](#) page.

She also discussed *how mental health affects relationships*. Mental health conditions can significantly impact how we connect with others. For example, depression might cause someone to withdraw from loved ones, while anxiety can create overwhelming fears about relationship security.

When someone is struggling, communication patterns often shift. They might have difficulty expressing needs, setting boundaries, or responding to emotional cues. It is important to remember that these challenges do not reflect a lack of care or commitment; rather, they highlight the need for intentionality and specialized tools to maintain a healthy connection.

At NAMI Metro Suburban, they see these dynamics regularly through their support programs. While mental health challenges can make relationships more complex, they also offer an opportunity to build deeper empathy and resilience when navigated with the right support.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next in-person meeting: February 25, 2026, via Zoom and March ROSC Council Meeting in person.
- Marianne mentioned that NAMI would have a Bowling Event on February 22nd with more info to come.

CLOSING

Angelia and Yvonne both thanked attendees for their service and wished everyone a good day.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:07 AM

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 | 9:30 AM **via Zoom***

Zoom Info: <https://bit.ly/SRCrosc-monthly>

Meeting ID: 836 3638 1377 | Passcode: 746782