



MERC Meeting Summary

February 19, 2026

Council Members in Attendance:

Katie Wilson- CHS/MERC Coordinator

Dan Hutchison- CHS

Kara Wardein- CHS Engagement Specialist

Cora Hughes- United Congregation of Metro East

Conswala Jones- CHS/St. Clair County ROSC

Ty Bechal- Sona Lake Recovery Center

Sheridan Jordan- CHS/Clinton County ROSC

Jason Farley- NAMI Southwest IL

Joe Jackson- St. Clair County 708 Mental Health Board

Kathy Kehrer- CHS

Dustin Percy- Oxford House

Dusty Hanner- CHS

Elbert Jennings- IL State Police Community Engagement/Outreach

Tracy Dones- CHS/Faith and Recovery Collaborative

Tisha Lancaster- IDHS

Paul Fischer- Porchlight Collective SAP

Jen Nagel-Fischer- Porchlight Collective SAP

Violette Book- CHS

Guest in attendance

Lisa Massa- (Guest Speaker) – DCFS Resource and Recruitment Specialist

Deadra Humphrey-Vinson – DCFS Resource and Recruitment Supervisor

Presentation from guest speaker: Lisa Massa from DCFS Office of Resource and Recruitment share information about the need for and how to become involved in Foster Care. Lisa shared a brief overview of DCFS’ mission and pillars before providing an overview of the Foster Care System. She shared that less than 3% of IL children are involved in care, which has ranged from 16-18 thousand over the past year. Currently there are over 550 children in foster care in Madison County and 780 in St. Clair County. Lisa shared the steps a child goes through on their journey once the initial report is made and the role that foster parents play in providing support, safety, and growth. DCFS has immediate needs for foster parents, especially for children aged 0-5 and 18+. Foster parents received financial compensation and DCFS covers expenses related to health care, daycare, and other things. Lisa is willing to meet with your agency or any group to provide education about becoming a foster parent. She is also willing to attend community events to provide resource information. If you’re interested in learning more, please contact Lisa at Lisa.massa@illinois.gov or call her at (217) 685-4813. You can also learn more by going to <https://dcfs.illinois.gov>

Workgroup updates:

Attendance at workgroup meetings has been low (thanks so much to those who have attended!). If you have volunteered in the past to participate in one of the workgroups, please connect with Mark/Katie to confirm you’re still able to participate or if things have changed and you’re no longer available. New members are also needed.

Announcements/upcoming events:

Dusty Hanner shared that Chestnut will be updating language on resource materials to replace “NARCAN” with “naloxone”. These updates are being made to reflect changes to who we receive naloxone from. The overdose education and naloxone distribution team will now provide NARCAN and Padagis naloxone nasal spray. Also, some of the resource materials the team passes out have been printed in Spanish. For any questions or request for training, naloxone, or resources please email narcana@chestnut.org

Dustin shared that Oxford House will be opening 5 new houses in the next couple of months. These will be located in Granite City, Alton, and Fairview Heights. To learn more email Dustin at dustin.pearcy@oxfordhouse.org