

Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, January 23, 2026

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: Zachary Stamp, Individual; Anthony Baker, Kalimba Foundation NFP; Angelina Sanchez, Brighter, Behavior, Choices INC., NFP, The Recovery Cafe Chicago; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Holland Herndon, Association House of Chicago; Francisco Celis Yanez, Bethel New Life Inc.; Mary Dowling, West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force; Linda Sharp, Individual; Christy Hartmann, New Directions Addictions Recovery Services, The Other Side Sober Bar; Debra Laws, Renewed Hope; Ruthie Williams, Faith Way Men's Independent; Angela Violante, Individual; Sherri L. Keyes, Family Guidance Centers Inc.; AIMEE RABE, CRCC; Borris Powell, Malcolm X College; Cristina Banda, Illinois Family Resource Center; Shelly McElroy, Child and Family Connections #9; Stacey Burgess, Suburban Fellowship Center; Charlotte Estell, Kalimba Foundation NFP; Mosie Echols, Westside rising; Ronald Muhammad, Individual; Reylla Santos, Individual; Michael Ferguson, Family Guidance Center; Arbutus "Beauty" Winfrey, WESTSIDE TASK FORCE; Sylvester Bisaga, Way Back Inn Foundation; Carolyn Hartfield, Hartfield Consultants; Regina White, Trilogy Mental Well-being; Julia Tautges, Individual; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC; Venessa Moreno, CRCC; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Christopher Leavy, CRCC; Myleka Johnson, TASC; Sarah Esparza, Community Outreach Coordinator with Family Solutions; David Troy Stinson, Westside rising; Madison Potts, La Casa Norte; La Shaun Rickman, Brighter, Behavior, Choices Inc., NFP; Tanya Johnson, BHCW; Walter Houston, Kalimba Foundation; Evelon Ferguson, Individual; Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; Jocelyn Beckham, Adrian's Purpose; Aimee Potter, VA; Angelina Sanchez, Brighter, Behavior, Choices INC., NFP, The Recovery Cafe Chicago; Dr. Fred L. Nance Jr., CLICK Services, NFP; Yulanda A Thomas, CRCC; Angela Violante, Individual; Mariah Burt, Kalimba Foundation; Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Veronica Harrison, Individual; Dr. Angelique Orr, WESTSIDE RISING; Brandon Murray, AIDS Foundation Chicago & Center for Housing and Health;

ROSC Goals and Objectives; Yulanda T.: A Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) is a coordinated network of community-based services and supports that is person centered and builds on the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, and communities to experience recovery and improved health, wellness, and quality of life for those with or at risk of substance use and/or co-occurring conditions. The central focus of a ROSC is to create an infrastructure, or "systems of care", with the resources to effectively address the full range of substance use and/or co-occurring disorders within communities. The Objectives: 1. Create communities of recovery that encourage and integrate resources for the recovering individual, families and friends. 2. Develop supportive recovery communities that foster growth, respect and understanding of those who have identified problems in the areas of substance use and mental health. 3. Implement effective communication that will allow for inclusion of PLEs (persons with lived experience) voices to be heard.

MOU's & Linkage Agreements; Venessa M.: Reminded the attendees that an MOU and linkage agreement between CRCC/ROSC and all partners should be signed. He noted that the MOU and linkage agreement defines the working relationships between agencies, defines collaborative roles and responsibilities of the two agencies with respect to improving the local infrastructure supporting the establishment of a ROSC council. She noted that a link to the MOU was placed in the chat.



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Community Needs Assessment; Venessa M: Thank you so much for being part of our ROSC Community Assessment. The Council collected the most data to date and the team will be follow up with findings to share with the council.

ROSC Council's Integrated Recovery System

The meeting focused on the ROSC Council's goals and objectives, particularly advocating for the development of an integrated system of recovery. The council aims to create communities of recovery, develop supportive recovery communities, and implement effective communication. The panelists shared their experiences and their roles in providing support to individuals and families in the area of recovery.

Topic Discussion: People with Lived Experience (PLEs): Integrating Back into The Workforce

ROSC Council Presenters: Aimee Rabe, CRCC; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Francisco C Yanez, Bethel New Life; Stacey Burgess, Suburban Fellowship Center

Summary

Workforce Integration for Lived Experience

The monthly ROSC meeting began with introductions from several new participants, including Cristina Banda from the Illinois Family Resource Center, Reylla Santos from the Illinois Counseling Association, Christy Hartman from New Directions Addiction Services, and others. The meeting focused on the topic of people with lived experience integrating back into the workforce. Vanessa emphasized the importance of filling out the attendance link to receive CEUs and stay updated on future meetings. The conversation ended with announcements from various participants, including Shelly McElroy's upcoming father engagement meeting and Westside Rising's civics activation meeting.

Recovery System Goals and Integration

The meeting focused on Recovery Orange System (ROS) goals and objectives, which aim to create recovery-friendly communities and support individuals with substance use and mental health challenges. Yulanda discussed the importance of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between agencies and the ROS Council, and Venessa encouraged participants to reach out if they were interested in establishing an MOU. The group also reviewed a recently completed needs assessment, which will be used to inform the state. The conversation ended with a panel discussion on integrating people with lived experience into the workforce, moderated by Dora Densler-Wright, who emphasized the need for mentorship and development opportunities for individuals in recovery.

Overcoming Employment Barriers in Recovery

The meeting focused on a panel discussion about employment barriers and recovery, moderated by Vee. Panelists including Aimee Rabe, Candyce Banford, Francisco Yanez, Stacey Burgess, and others shared their personal journeys of overcoming employment challenges while in recovery. They discussed practical steps like building routines, seeking support from recovery homes, and leveraging resources from organizations like CRCC. The panelists emphasized the importance of showing up consistently, setting boundaries, and finding confidence through supportive workplaces that recognize recovery as a strength rather than a risk.

Workplace Confidence Recovery Strategies

The panelists discussed their experiences regaining workplace confidence during recovery, with Francisco, Candyce, and Aimee sharing how routines, peer support, and workforce development programs helped rebuild their self-esteem after periods of low confidence. Candyce emphasized setting small, achievable goals and maintaining hope, while Christy advised seeking available grants like WOIA and celebrating daily achievements with a sponsor or mentor. The discussion highlighted how recovery programs and peer support can help individuals transform their lives by rebuilding skills and confidence in the workplace.



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Recovery and Leadership Insights

Christy shared her personal journey of recovery and emphasized the importance of setting small, achievable goals to build confidence, suggesting that even simple tasks like brushing teeth can help change neural pathways and build momentum. Dora discussed her role as a peer specialist supervisor and highlighted the significance of training, education, and mentorship in helping individuals transition into leadership roles within the recovery field. Borris advised against offering advice to those struggling with confidence, instead encouraging individuals to find internal motivation and build a personal foundation for recovery and self-worth.

Workplace Stress Management Strategies

The group discussed strategies for managing workplace stress and protecting recovery, with several participants sharing personal experiences. Candyce emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle, including regular self-care activities and adequate sleep. Stacey described her approach of recognizing early signs of overload and staying connected with herself while maintaining professional boundaries. Francisco and Tom discussed time management and the concept of "HALT" (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired), emphasizing the need to avoid these states to prevent burnout. The discussion highlighted the importance of self-awareness, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care in the workplace.

Avoiding Burnout: Strategies and Support

The meeting focused on strategies for avoiding burnout, with participants sharing personal experiences and insights. Dora discussed her experience with burnout and the importance of recognizing when to seek help, emphasizing the role of a support system in recovery. The group also explored the significance of setting boundaries and practicing self-care, with Cristina contributing the notion that boundaries are not walls but bridges. The discussion concluded with an exploration of how lived experiences can enhance professional skills and work ethics, though this topic was not fully developed in the transcript.

Lived Experience in Professional Development

The meeting focused on the role of lived experience in professional development and advocacy. Participants shared personal stories of how their recovery journeys shaped their careers, emphasizing empathy, leadership, and the importance of sharing experiences to help others. The discussion highlighted the evolving workplace culture around disclosing recovery status and the need for permission and discernment in doing so. Participants also discussed the challenges of stigma and the significance of recovery in both personal and professional life, with a call for continued support and inclusion of people with lived experience in the workforce.

Next steps:

- Shelly McElroy: Share details about the upcoming father engagement meeting (February 6th, 12-1:30pm) with the ROSC Council and invite members to attend.
- WESTSIDE (Dr. Orr): Share information about the January 27th civics activation meeting with the group and encourage engagement.
- LaShawn: Send the flyer for the 20-year anniversary of the recovery home (May 12th week) to the group.
- Organizations interested in establishing an MOU/linkage with the ROSC Council: Put name, phone number, and email in the chat so Candyce (and team) can follow up to start the MOU process.
- Dora/Council: Consider planning a face-to-face panel with people with lived experience for a future meeting, as discussed at the end of the session.
- Dora: Discuss the possibility of a "part two" follow-up meeting to cover additional questions and continue the discussion.

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

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