



Supporting a Diverse Chicago West Side Community

Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, May 22, 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; Candyce Banford: The meeting began with Candyce welcoming attendees and providing an attendance link for ROSC Council meetings and events. She confirmed audio and video functionality for participants. Candyce 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: Eli Kramer, Healthcare Alternative Systems; John Hardin, Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition; Rodrick Williams, Individual purposes; Victoria Taylor, Kalimba Foundation; Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; Mariah Burt, Kalimba Foundation; Walter Houston, Kalimba Foundation; Charlotte A. Estell, Kalimba Foundation NFP; Shelia Blockson, Musch Love NFP; RON MILNER, BOODLE.COM, INC - CPS VENDOR; Maria Gonzalez, Organization; Vegletta Lewis, Loretto Hospital; Cristina Banda, Illinois Family Resource Center; Niktoria Julian, Tomorrow's Light; Johanna Gonzalez, IDHS - DBHR; Tanya Lynette Johnson, Behavioral Health Workforce Center; Linda Sharp, Individual; John J. Reed, Individual; Wateka Kleinpeter, Independent Contractor; Michelle Meyer, Kane County Health Department; Mary Dowling, West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force; Angelina Sanchez, Brighter Behavior Choices INC., NFP - The Recovery Cafe Chicago; Ingrid Campos, Breaking Barriers Collectively ROSC Council; Aimee Rabe, CRCC; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Mimi Tsang, Midwest Asian Health Association; Ingrid Campos, Breaking Barriers Collectively; Inga Totty, Individual; Quinella Penermon, Treatment Alternatives for Stronger Communities; Tamara Smith, The Livingroom Program; Christopher Leavy, CRCC; Peter Galka, CRCC; Sheila Haennicke, Individual; Jocelyn Beckham, Adrian's Purpose Sober Living; Carla Whitted, Individual; Tamara Smith, Individual; Laura Leon, Individual; Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Helen Land, Individual; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Venessa Moreno, CRCC; Shelly McElroy, Child and Family Connections #9; Jennifer Jordan, Individual; Irma Nunez, Individual; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC; Yulanda A Thomas, CRCC

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; Candyce B: Reminded the attendees that an MOU and linkage agreement between CRCC/ROSC and all partners should be signed. 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. Place your contact information in the chat to get agreements in place.

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: Where Do We Go from Here Inc.; **ROSC Council Presenters:** Helen Land

Quick Recap

This was a Westside ROSS (Recovery Oriented Systems of Care) Council meeting focused on the presentation "Where Do We Go from Here?" by Helen Land, founder of a Chicago-based nonprofit organization supporting mothers who have lost children to untimely causes. Helen shared how the



Westside ROSC Council

Supporting a Diverse Chicago West Side Community

organization provides safe and compassionate environments for grieving mothers through one-on-one engagement, private Facebook groups, zoom support meetings, and annual events, emphasizing support beyond traditional therapy. Several mothers, including Sheila B. and Carla W., shared their personal stories of losing children to overdose, murder, and other causes, discussing their grief journeys and how they found community support. The discussion included conversations about faith and spirituality in the grieving process, with participants sharing how they navigated anger toward God and found healing through community support. The meeting highlighted the need for more grief support resources, particularly on the west side of Chicago, and emphasized the importance of peer support from those who have experienced similar losses.

Summary

ROSC Meeting Preparation Discussion

Helen and Candyce discussed preparations for an upcoming ROSC meeting, including presentation slides and attendance tracking. Helen requested that Candyce make her a co-host for the slides and asked about two specific attendees, Carla and Sheila H., whom she wanted to speak to near the end of the meeting. The meeting began with introductions from various organizations, with Candyce managing attendance and technical aspects while Helen prepared for her presentation portion.

Recovery Oriented Systems of Care

The meeting began with introductions from participants representing various organizations including CRCC, Kalimba Foundation, Illinois Family Resource Center, and others. Yulanda provided an overview of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC), explaining its goal to create coordinated community-based services for individuals with substance use and co-occurring disorders. The main discussion topic was "Where Do We Go from Here?" presented by Helen Land, founder of the nonprofit organization Where Do We Go from Here for mothers who have lost children to untimely causes. Vanessa introduced Helen's work, describing how the organization helps women navigate the grieving process and build resilience beyond traditional therapy approaches.

Mother's Support Organization Introduction

Helen Land introduced her organization "Where Do We Go from Here, Inc." which was founded in November 2022 to support mothers who have lost children to various causes including gun violence, illness, overdose, suicide, and natural causes. The organization provides multiple support services including one-on-one engagement through texts and calls, private Facebook groups for sharing memories, and monthly Zoom grief support groups. Helen outlined their future objectives to empower grieving mothers for sustainable emotional development and mentioned ongoing initiatives including first responders training and healthcare support programs.

Support for Grieving Parents Program

Helen shared her personal experience of losing her eldest child Talana to a massive aneurysm and described how grief can be devastating, especially for mothers who have lost children. She explained her efforts to support other mothers experiencing similar losses through a program that includes retreats, partnerships with local organizations, and plans to establish a 501c3 organization to generate revenue for program continuation. Helen emphasized the importance of understanding and supporting grieving parents, noting that losing a child affects people from all backgrounds and can lead to serious challenges including substance abuse.

Grief Support and Recovery Session

Candyce facilitated a grief support session with Helen, where several participants shared their experiences of losing children. Sheila B., who found her son's body in 2021, discussed her journey through grief and recovery, including her relapse and eventual return to a support program three years ago. Sheila announced her foundation's upcoming suicide awareness event on September 26th at Shine Bright, featuring Father Flager as keynote speaker. The discussion highlighted how grief manifests in different ways and the importance of support groups in the healing process.

Grief Support Resource Gaps

Helen and Shelia discussed their work with grief support organizations, particularly focusing on the lack of resources for grieving mothers on Chicago's west side compared to other areas. Shelia shared her role as a Narcan distributor and her efforts to raise awareness about fentanyl risks, particularly among seniors and in hospitals. The discussion highlighted the need for more comprehensive grief support services that address not just violent deaths but also accidental overdoses and suicides, with Helen emphasizing how important peer support from other grieving mothers has been in her healing process.



Westside ROSC Council

Supporting a Diverse Chicago West Side Community

Narcan Machines and Community Support

Sheila shared her experience losing her son David to a fentanyl overdose in 2021 and described how she became involved with the Westside Heroin Opioid Task Force, which led to the installation of Narcan machines across the CTA system in partnership with CTA, Cook County Health, and Chicago Recovery Alliance. She emphasized the importance of community support for grieving parents and encouraged others to attend Helen's "Where Do We Go from Here?" support group meetings. The discussion included mentions of recent losses from gun violence and overdose, with participants sharing their experiences of societal pressure to "get over" grief.

Support for Mothers of Lost Children

Carla W. shared her experience of losing her son Jonathan to murder in April 2023 and described how she found support through Helen's organization "Where Do We Go from Here?" after her cousin directed her to the group's Facebook page. Carla became the executive administrator of the organization, which provides a safe space for mothers who have lost children to share their grief and support each other. Helen thanked the audience and the CRCC for providing the platform for their stories, emphasizing the importance of supporting people who have lost children.

Faith and Grieving Process

The meeting focused on sharing personal stories of loss and discussing the role of faith in the grieving process. Helen shared her contact information, including her phone number and email, for the group. Ron Milner, who lost his brother in a plane crash at O'Hare Airport, asked the group about their relationship with God and Jesus during grieving. Several participants, including Helen, Shelia, and Carla, discussed their personal faith journeys and how they coped with loss, sharing experiences of anger toward God followed by reconciliation and finding peace through their beliefs.

Community Faith and Grief Support

Sheila discussed the importance of community and compassion in faith, while Tanya shared her perspective as an ordained pastor and social worker, emphasizing that grief is not linear and that faith can provide support during difficult times. The discussion highlighted the value of addressing unprocessed grief in the community and the role of support networks in healing. Participants expressed gratitude for the shared experiences and resources, including information about mental health services and support tools like the 988-suicide prevention hotline.

Grief Support Community Sharing

The meeting focused on sharing personal stories of loss and grief, with participants discussing how their experiences have connected them to a supportive community. Helen emphasized the power of stories in building connections and encouraged attendees to practice self-care over the holiday weekend. The group discussed their non-religious organization's approach to supporting mothers who have lost children, with participants sharing resources and offering support to each other.

Next steps:

- Candyce: Follow up with organizations that do not have an MOU/linkage with CRCC; collect contact information from chat and reach out next week to establish collaboration. Provide Helen's contact information (already placed in chat) and be available for follow-up calls from participants seeking further information or support.
- Helen: Share contact information (phone and email) for "Where Do We Go from Here" with interested participants and ensure it is posted in the chat for easy access.
- Joanna: Share "Where Do We Go from Here" resource information with cousin who recently lost her son, when appropriate.
- Yulanda: Contact Helen for support regarding grief over the loss of her best friend.

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

Funded in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services,
Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.