

Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, April 24, 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: Cristina Banda, Illinois Family Resource Center; Anthony Baker, Kalimba Foundation NFP; Angela Violante, Individual; Eli Kramer, healthcare alternative systems; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Valerie Harris, The Makings of You Foundation; Niktoria Julian, Tomorrow's Light; Moses Akintunde, ORANSTEPS OF HOPE; Mary Dowling, West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force; Rosalina Barrera-Colon, PEER Services Inc; Shelly McElroy, Child and Family Connections #9; Regina White, Trilogy Mental Wellbeing; Stacey Wills, Manteno Family Guidance Center; Walter Houston, Kalimba Foundation; Michael Ferguson, Family Guidance Center; John J. Reed, Individual; Francisco Celis Yanez, Bethel New Life, Inc.; Charlotte A. Estell, Kalimba Foundation; Ruthie Williams, Faith Way Men's Facility; Richard Wilkens, Campaign for a Drugfree Westside Inc; Elijah Barfield, Family Guidance Inc; Rodrick Williams, Individual; Wateka Kleinpeter, Independent contractor; Tom Johnson, CRCC; John Hardin, Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition; Quinella Pernermon, Treatment Alternatives Services for Community TASC; Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; Helen Land, Individual; Dr. Fred Nance Jr, C.L.I.C.K. Services NFP; Sandy R. Mays, Individual; Venessa Moreno, CRCC; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC; Francisco Celis Yanez, Bethel New Life, Inc.; Angelina Sanchez, Brighter, Behavior, Choices INC., NFP - The Recovery Cafe Chicago; Tanya Johnson, BHWC; Jocelyn Beckham, Adrian's Purpose Sober Living; Derrick Brewer, CRCC; Joshua Holliday, Individual; Borris Powell, Malcolm X College; Ingrid Campos, Individual; Linda Sharp, Individual; Angela Violante, Individual; Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Yulanda A Thomas, CRCC; Carla Garcia, Metropolitan Family Services; Gayle, individual; Carolyn Hartfield, Hartfield Consultants;

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 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: The Makings of You: Strength, Survival, And the Path to Healing

ROSC Council Presenters: Valerie Harris, LCSW, CADC, CEHWC

Quick Recap

The Westside ROS Council meeting on April 24th focused on introductions, networking, and a presentation on Soul Therapy by Valerie Harris. During introductions, participants shared their names and organizations, highlighting the council's role in connecting agencies and supporting community resources. Valerie Harris presented her framework called Soul Therapy, which addresses intergenerational trauma and supports long-term recovery through culturally responsive approaches. The discussion included insights on how historical and generational trauma impact behavior and the importance of community-based healing. Agency updates followed, with participants sharing upcoming events, programs, and resources, including information about harm reduction efforts and testing kits. The conversation ended with a reminder about increased community activity due to warmer weather and the importance of distributing resources like Narcan and testing strips effectively.

Summary

Westside ROS Council Meeting

The Westside ROS Council meeting began with introductions and welcome remarks from Venessa. She outlined the agenda, which included a presentation by Valerie Harris on youth strength and healing, agency announcements, and networking opportunities. Venessa emphasized the importance of introductions and networking among council members to facilitate collaboration and resource sharing. The meeting was in its early stages, with plans to move on to agency announcements and open discussions later.

Substance Abuse Recovery Networking Meeting

The meeting focused on introductions from participants representing various organizations involved in recovery and substance abuse support. Participants included representatives from foundations, task forces, recovery centers, and other support organizations. Venessa facilitated the session, emphasizing its purpose as a networking opportunity to strengthen services on Chicago's west side. The meeting was in its early stages, with participants just completing introductions, and was transitioning to an overview of the ROS Council when the transcript ended.

Recovery-Oriented Systems Council Updates

Yulanda presented Recovery-Oriented Systems (ROS), explaining it as a coordinated network of community-based services focused on supporting individuals with substance use or co-occurring conditions. Venessa announced that the ROS Council wants to establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with participating organizations, including Tomorrow's Light and HAS, to formalize their collaborative relationships. The meeting was transitioned to a presentation by Valerie Harris, a LCSW and CADC, when technical difficulties with screen sharing occurred.

Soul Therapy Framework Presentation

Valerie presented her Soul Therapy framework, a structured 4-week workshop series designed to help individuals understand the stories behind their behaviors by addressing intergenerational trauma and nervous system regulation. She explained that behavior makes sense when understanding both the story and the body's experience, noting that trauma is stored in the body and can be passed down through generations. The discussion highlighted the importance of community-based healing and cultural context in recovery, with participants sharing resources and asking questions about incorporating faith-based elements and individual therapy approaches.

Cultural Competency in Mental Health

Helen emphasized the importance of being culturally grounded when providing services, sharing her personal experiences growing up in an African American community and discussing how cultural differences affect healthcare and mental health services. Valerie expanded on this topic, explaining how historical context and trauma are interconnected, particularly for Black women, and described her work creating culturally safe spaces for discussion. Both speakers highlighted the need to understand and address cultural factors when providing mental health services, with Valerie noting that while her current focus is on Black women, these principles apply to all people.

Soul Therapy Presentation Discussion

The meeting focused on a presentation about soul therapy by Valerie, who discussed a structured healing-centered approach to help individuals understand how they regulate their bodies and support long-term recovery. Venessa shared her personal experience reading a book recommended by Valerie about living between two cultural worlds, which helped her understand generational trauma and find beauty in her border identity. Derrick commented on the presentation, sharing his own experience with uncontrolled nervous system responses due to past trauma and appreciating the message about inherited traits without permission.

ACEs Training and Workshop Planning

Belinda offered to conduct an adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) training for the group and agreed to email Venessa for more details. Following a presentation by Valerie, participants expressed appreciation and interest in her upcoming workshops, which are currently designed for Black women. Venessa noted that Valerie's workshops have generated a waitlist and encouraged her to consider expanding the program to meet demand.

Community Events and Harm Reduction

The meeting focused on sharing upcoming community events and discussing harm reduction efforts. Francisco announced events at Bethel New Life including a film screening and jazz music celebration, while Mr. Mays shared information about his recovery books and YouTube channel. The group discussed the need for increased outreach during warm weather, with Venessa emphasizing the importance of getting resources like Narcan and testing kits into the community. Regina and Michael shared concerning findings from outreach work, including high blood pressure in older male clients, which led to a discussion about dangerous chemicals in street drugs and the availability of testing kits through the city. The conversation ended with information about accessing harm reduction supplies, including test strips and Narcan, both through organizations and individually at CPL locations.

Closing by; Venessa M.: 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 May 22, 2026. The conversation ended with a reminder to fill out the attendance form for those who wanted to receive CEUs.



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Next steps:

- All participants: Fill out the attendance link provided in the chat
- Organizations without an MOU with the ROS Council: Put your name, phone number, and email in the chat to set up an MOU
- Valerie: Email the PowerPoint presentation to Vanessa
- Belinda: Email information about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training to Vanessa
- Francisco: Send event flyers (Rooted documentary screening and Syncopated Spirits celebration) to Vanessa
- Organizations with job openings: Provide job opening information to Boris for the virtual job fair
- All participants: Reach out to Michael or use the city link in chat to access drug testing kits and Narcan
- All participants: Increase outreach efforts during warm weather and share information about outreach activities with the Council
- All participants: Attend next month's meeting on May 22nd

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

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