

Effingham County ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, March 16th, 2026

Time: 1:00-2:00 pm

Location: 104 Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

Meeting Facilitator: Samantha Hicks

Attendees:

In person:

Carmen Richey (Partners for Progress Deflection initiative Supervisor, TASC)

Justin Carter (Illinois Department of Human Services)

Kasey Kemme (U of I Extension Office Director)

Norbert Soltwedel (Effingham County Board member)

Paul Kuhns (Effingham County Sheriff)

Samantha Hicks (Effingham County ROSC Council Coordinator)

Stephanie Mercer (Effingham County ROSC Council Recovery Navigator)

Zoom:

Austin Dambacher (Sangamon County ROSC Coordinator)

Carrie McKinzie (Professional Relations Manager, Gateway Foundation)

David Alvarez (Technical Assistance Specialist, Opioid Learning and Response Collaborative, Prevention First)

Heather Greenwood (Southeast Illinois Area Health Education Center at Wabash General Hospital, team lead for the Partners for Progress Deflection Initiative)

Jeannetta Workman (Wright Choice Counseling therapist, CADAC)

Josh Forbes (Moultrie County ROSC Council Coordinator)

Keith Powell (Safe Families for Children)

Kelly Buscher (Effingham County Case Management, Effingham Public Library)

Kristin Davis (Family Guidance Center- Prevention Integration Coordinator)

Liesl Wingert (SIU School of Medicine, Center for Rural Health & Social Development)

Meghan Rewers (Director of Crisis Nurse of Effingham County)

Nathan Nichols (Mobility Manager for CEFS, Central Illinois Public Transit, Effingham County Public Transportation)

Samantha Widener (Early Childhood and Special Projects Director for the Effingham and Clay County Health Departments)

Stephanie Jackson (HSHS Medical group, APRN, MAR provider)

Stephanie Nevilles (TASC Deflection Supervisor)

Susan Kessler (Bethany Christian Services, Intact case worker)

Tommy Alsobrooks (Senior Outreach Coordinator, Oxford House)

Whitney Devine (ROSC Program Manager, Sangamon County)

Introductions

Council meeting attendees introduced themselves and the agencies they represent or explained why they were attending. Samantha gave an introduction to explain the mission of the ROSC Council since there were new members at this meeting.

Committee Updates

Samantha H. states that the Road to Recovery committee has changed the target audience for the volunteer transportation list. She stated the committee came to the consensus that we should switch from faith-based volunteers (churches) to recovery meeting groups. The reason being is because there is less of a barrier to getting volunteers who know what to expect when transporting someone with SUD. She stated the committee has compiled a document of de-escalation techniques, risks & liabilities of transport, Naloxone training, & waiver. She stated she has sent the waiver to the Hour House executive director for review & to pass along to legal if needed. Next steps are for the group to finalize the document to distribute to recovery group members who are interested in transport, have them sign the waiver, and add them to the list.

Keith P. stated the Healing Families committee is finding our niche. He stated we are making progress in identifying a more focused goal so it can be measurable, specific, and attainable. He stated the committee is reaching out to other potential committee members to be a part of the group to create a well-rounded view. **Samantha** asked that anyone on this call who works directly with families who experience SUD (e.g. grandparents raising grandchildren, a parent of a child who is using, etc.) to please consider joining the committee & to reach out to her to get the Zoom link & committee meeting dates/times. She stated Lauren from Effingham County Connections 0-3 program has reached out to be a part of the group.

Samantha stated from the People with Lived Experience Committee—Justin & herself created questions to distribute to Tommy, Madison, Jenn, Rebecca, & Kelly. She stated the questions focus on client's responses to barriers they face currently or have faced in the past in regard to recovery. She stated we all know transportation is a barrier, but what exactly is the barrier—no gas money, no working vehicle, don't have driver's license? These questions were created to get to the root of the barrier. She stated she will email the group who volunteered to ask these questions for an update.

Council progress updates

Samantha stated she emailed out the Strategic plan which outlines the short-term & long-term goals of priority projects, next steps, and how the outcomes will be measured. She pulled up the document for Zoom participants (in-person had copies) & went over it. She stated she updated the document for this Council meeting to show the progress made and next steps added since July 1st, 2025. *She emphasized Council members to look at the "Next Steps" for each goal & to see if anyone could help in that specific capacity.*

Samantha asked for clarification from the Council to see if these are the kind of updates the Council was referring to in our last meeting. The Council stated yes.

Samantha also added she is required to send a quarterly report to IDHS with these exact updates and asked the Council if that's how they'd like to receive updates as well. **Justin** stated that would be fine so Samantha didn't have to duplicate work. The Council agreed. **Samantha** stated the next quarterly report is coming up soon so she will email that one out once it's completed.

Illinois Youth Survey + National Drug & Alcohol Facts week

Samantha stated herself and SRO Cody Hartke were at EJHS & EHS for NDAFW. She stated we saw about 500-600 kids during that week. She stated the most missed question from 6th-12th graders was "It is a sign of weakness and poor moral character if someone continues to use drugs and/or alcohol, even if it causes harm—true or false." She stated most students answered true. Correct answer is false. She stated this shows how early stigma of SUD starts. **Norbert** asked if there are surveys being done in the schools about this kind of information to mitigate substance use. **Samantha** stated the Illinois Youth Survey is a very comprehensive survey that asks these kinds of questions, but also questions about school environment, home environment, where do kids sleep, do they have food, etc. **Kristin** and **Kasey** gave some information about the IYS & if it's being conducted in the schools in Effingham County. **Kristin** stated the IYS is administered every other year on even years. The schools start registering in fall of the odd years, and then it's administered in spring of the even year during the months of January-April. If there's not more than 2 participating schools in that county, the information is not available on the IYS website >> <https://iys.cprd.illinois.edu/> << due to privacy. **Kasey** stated it looks like the latest data available for Effingham schools in 2022, which means there weren't enough participating schools in 2024. This year is administering year. **Keith** stated this could be good data for our Healing Families committee. **Kristin** stated Hour House Prevention staff try to recruit schools to participate. She stated Oliva Jenkins covers Effingham County. **Heather** referenced the work done in Clay county in the schools and speakers for students that have come in. She stated the kids are yearning for the help and we have to keep talking to them about this stuff. She stated survey data is great, but what is really impactful are the stories from the students experiencing this stuff day to day.

Marijuana + pregnant women

Norbert asked if using marijuana affects the baby when women are pregnant. **Samantha** asked for Council input.

Stephanie J. stated yes, to a certain degree. She will gather more information and circle back to the Council.

Samantha W. stated yes, it does and there should be documentation in most OBGYN offices. She stated there is a lot of science regarding nicotine and alcohol and how it affects the fetus if the mother is using those substances. She stated since marijuana has become legal in the last 10 years, we will see more data in the coming years to support this claim. She stated the health department gives handouts to moms about these issues, but stated moms shouldn't be shamed into stopping cold turkey. She stated the moms need to consult medical professionals about the best course of action. If the mom isn't healthy mentally, it's more likely she won't be healthy physically either and that doesn't do any good for the baby.

Upcoming events

Samantha listed the upcoming events on the agenda & asked for information about renting chairs for an awareness event in September for Recovery month. **Kasey** stated Kinks Tents & events. **Austin** stated churches have a lot of chairs for events.

Open Discussion

Council members discussed transportation barriers. They discussed the services of Lyft, Uber, FISH Human Services. **Samantha** stated Grant Johnson does Lyft in Effingham, but seems to be the only one and not consistently. She stated a ride from Effingham to Mt. Vernon would be \$60-\$100 as stated by Nick Phillips who talked to Grant. The group talked about liability insurance. **Whitney** stated she drove for Uber & other ride shares and it is illegal for someone to drive without their own insurance. She stated you have to scan in all of the documentation for that. She stated the transporter is the one liable. **Justin** stated someone who drives for a ride share is basically an independent contractor.

Next steps after the meeting

Samantha will email group about PLE questions to clients.

Kasey will get contact for Farmer's Market for awareness event.

Samantha will email Quarterly Report to Council.

Stephanie J. will get more info about marijuana use in pregnant women.

Samantha will create a quarterly newsletter for Council with successes!

Upcoming events

- **Spring Resource Fair: Thursday, March 19th**; 3-6pm @ The Thelma Keller Convention Center, Effingham
- **Mason Christian Church Women's Conference: Saturday, March 28th @ Mason Christian Church, Mason**; 8am registration (\$20), 9am-2pm; speakers, breakout sessions, breakfast & lunch provided
- **Recovery Roll Bowl: Tuesday, April 28th, 5-7pm; Silver Dollar Lanes in Effingham**; participating agencies so far:
 - Crisis Nursery
 - Family Resource Center & Effingham County Connections
 - Safe Families for Children
 - SAFE
 - Catholic Charities
 - CIPT
- **Tails & Trails: Friday, May 15th @ 9am (tentative)**; *wanting mental health agencies & animals shelters to be a part of the event @ Ballard Nature Center, Altamont*
- **2nd Annual S.U.R.E. (Substance Use Resource & Education) Symposium: August 11th** from 9am-4pm @ Oil Belt Christian Service Camp, Flora
- **4th Annual Candlelight Vigil: August 31st, 6:30-8:00pm; Bliss Park, Effingham**

- **Invisible Victims: Drug-Endangered Children & Human Trafficking Training:**
September 24th from 9am-12pm @ Clay County Health Department, Flora

****NEXT ROSC COUNCIL MEETING****

Date: Monday, April 20th, 2025 @ 1:00-2:00PM

Where: 104 E. Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

Contact emails:

ROSC Coordinator: Samantha Hicks; samanthah@hourhourecovery.org

ROSC Recovery Navigator: Stephanie Mercer; stephanieme@hourhourecovery.org

ROSC Program Supervisor: Jenna Hays; jennah@hourhourecovery.org

Where to find past meeting minutes: <https://www.govst.edu/Recovery-Support/South-Central-IL-ROSC/EFRC-ROSC-Council/>



Effingham County ROSC Facebook page

