



## Meeting Overview

The January 2026 session of the Kane County Recovery Oriented System (ROSC) of Care Council convened with the objectives of strengthening interagency collaboration, resource sharing, and developing strategies to enhance recovery support services within the community. The meeting highlighted key areas such as education, peer support, and actionable initiatives.

- **Date & Time:** January 28, 2026
- **Location:** Elgin Community College (ECC), Elgin, IL. The council extends appreciation to ECC for their hospitality.
- **Facilitators:** Jarrett Burton (DuPage Coordinator Co-Facilitator) and Annette Villarreal (Kane County Coordinator)
- **Format:** Hybrid (in-person and virtual participation)
- **Attendees:** Stakeholders included representatives from recovery organizations, educational entities, peer specialists, community volunteers, and individuals with lived experience.

## Opening Session & Community Vision

Proceedings commenced with a community icebreaker, wherein participants articulated collective aspirations for recovery work. Central themes identified include:

### Collaboration & Unity:

**Community Building:** Fostering supportive networks and safe environments.

Service:

Joy: Emphasizing positivity and strength in recovery pursuits.

Featured Presentation: Elgin Community College CRSS Program

Presenter: David Meraz, CRSS Student Success Specialist

Mr. Meraz delivered a detailed presentation on ECC's state-funded Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) program, underscoring its significance in workforce development.

### Program Highlights:

Funding & Cost:

- Eligibility Requirements:
- Minimum age of 18
- High school diploma or GED



- Lived experience with mental health and/or substance use disorders (inclusive of dual diagnoses)
- Willingness to share personal recovery stories for inspiration

### **Curriculum & Structure:**

Student Support Model: Mr. Meraz, an alumnus, serves as success specialist, providing mentorship, academic guidance, and navigation of available resources.

### **Strategic Community Need:**

The presentation emphasized the urgent need for bilingual and bicultural CRSS graduates, particularly to serve Hispanic and Polish populations in Kane County, where stigma related to mental health and substance use remains prevalent.

### **Graduate Outcomes & Pathways:**

The program boasts high placement rates, with graduates employed at agencies including Kenneth Young Center, Serenity House, and Ecker Center. Additionally, graduates frequently advance to further certifications and higher education.

### **Testimonials & Impact Stories**

#### **Current Student Perspective – Leo:**

Leo characterized the CRSS program as transformative in his recovery journey, noting the program provided a crucial avenue to support the community in a collaborative environment.

#### **Graduate Success – Julie Hansen:**

A member of the program's first cohort, Ms. Hansen shared her progression from student to professional at Serenity House. She has attained a 4.0 GPA while pursuing additional certifications (CADC, WRAP, SMART Recovery) and announced a partnership to deliver WRAP training at the DuPage County Jail.

#### **From Graduate to Community Leader – Rory Green:**

Mr. Green recounted his advancement from intern to full-time coach at Serenity House, linking his professional development to volunteer leadership with CW Second Chance Ministries, which serves unhoused individuals in Elgin and Aurora.



## **Council & Community Announcements**

### **New Initiatives:**

Re-Entry Fellowship Program: Commencing March 12, 2026, in Geneva. This peer-led group will offer practical assistance (e.g., resume writing) and fellowship for formerly incarcerated people.

Pets & Recovery Subcommittee:

### **Ongoing Drives & Services:**

Diaper Drive:

Harm Reduction Van Donations: Accepting pet food, blankets, and coats for weekly outreach distribution by the Serenity House/AID van.

Geneva Drop-In Resource Lounge: Open Tuesdays, providing peer support, harm reduction supplies, and a welcoming space.

### **Partner Resources Shared:**

- Refuge Recovery Meetings: Held weekly in Naperville.
- Free Rapid HIV Testing: Available at ECC and at community events.
- "Know Your Rights" Training:

Program Data & Final Remarks (Wendy Chen, CRSS Grant Manager) Ms. Chen presented key metrics:

- 92 graduates 85% field employment rate
- 90 current students enrolled
- 100% exam pass rate
- Early registration for Fall 2026 is urged owing to limited capacity

### **Adjournment & Future Meetings**

The meeting concluded at 1:01 PM.

### **Next Scheduled Meetings:**

Kane County ROSC Council: February 2026, Elburn Town and Country Library (320 E. North St., Elburn). Discussion will focus on the community needs assessment and FY26 strategic planning.

DuPage County ROSC Council: February 2026, hosted by the DuPage County Coroner's Office.



<b>Attendance</b>
Mark Matthews
Marco Fajardo
Herb Stricklin
David Meraz
Adam Pauley
Maureen Horan
Sharon Cabrera
Wendy Chen
Leonardo Olivera
Brianna Haug
Juanita Velazquez
Julie Hansen
Adam Pauley
Danielle Hefferman
Jessica Mino
Sarah Mendoza
Courtney Duran
Nicole Delmoray