



Meeting Title: Kankakee County ROSC Council Meeting

Date: April 28, 2026

Location: Virtual

Facilitator: Magdalena Campos

Attendees: Michelle L. Pruum (NAMI Will-Grundy); Rev. Anibal Vega (Kankakee County Community Services Inc.); Adam McCurdy (Manteno Community Fire Protection District); Gloria Kennedy (Duane Dean BHC The CREW); Ben Rudolph (ROSC Region 2 technical assist.); Rev. Eugene Edwards (Duane Dean Behavioral Health); Chris Thompson (Certified Peer Support Specialist Kankakee Mental Health Court); Dominica Dybas (Chicago DEA); Kennilyn Hickory (Birth to Five Illinois); Michelle Hibbard (Rosecrance); Sarah Winkel (Project Sun); Donnell Austin (Deputy Chief Kankakee Police); Liz Gibson (Birth to Five Illinois); Troy Luie (City of Kankakee); John Bevis (Kankakee County HD); Rosa (Help at Home); Paula Ekstrom (Wilmington Coalition); Morgan Roberts (UI Ext.); Anthony Begesha (Kankakee HD); Michelle Hibbard (Rosecrance); Neesha Stringfellow (HLM); Tarcia Leak (HLM); Magdalena Campos (HLM); Celeste Fonseca (HLM)

Status Report on items pending from last meeting: N/A

Who	Task	Status

2:00pm - 3:00pm

Welcome & Presentation by
Michelle L. Pruum, Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness
(NAMI) Will-Grundy

Overview/Notes

- **Welcome & Overview:** The HLM Recovery Kankakee County Council Meeting commenced with a warm welcome and introductions, particularly highlighting new participants who bring diverse expertise to the council. Adam McCurdy, EMS Coordinator and Battalion Chief from the Manteno Fire Protection District, introduced himself and offered his support to the group. Dominica Dybas, representing the Chicago DEA Diversion Control Section, shared her professional and personal commitment to recovery and substance use prevention, noting her involvement in outreach and recent participation in Prescription Drug Take Back Day. Reverend Anibal Vega, Executive Director of Kankakee County Community Services, described his organization's 40-year history of providing a wide range of social services, including housing, utility assistance, and homelessness support, as well as his dual role as a local pastor. Morgan Roberts from the University of Illinois Extension explained her focus on food and health systems, addressing food insecurity, healthy aging, and social connectedness across Kankakee, Will, and Grundy Counties.
- **Update on local substance use and mental health trends:** Anthony Begesha from the Kankakee County Health Department provided a detailed update on local substance use and mental health trends. He identified rural outreach as a significant gap, citing barriers such as limited internet access, technology, and transportation. He reported a substantial 55% decrease in overdose deaths from 2023 to 2024, attributing this progress to expanded Narcan distribution and training efforts. Specifically, 8,522 Narcan kits have been distributed and 293 individuals trained across 73 events so far this year. Upcoming outreach includes participation in the Riverside Mental Health Awareness Fair and local farmers markets, as well as continued involvement in community events like National Night Out. He also noted the success of recent drug take-back initiatives and the need to increase Narcan supply at future events due to high demand.
- **NAMI Will-Grundy Overview and Mission:** Program Coordinator Magdalena Campos introduces Michelle Pruum from NAMI Will-Grundy to present their services. Michelle L. Pruum, Executive Director explains the mission of NAMI and its history as a peer support network for mental health. She provided an in-depth overview of NAMI's free, peer-led mental health support services, which are accessible to both individuals living with mental health concerns and their families. NAMI offers support groups (including for teens and parents), educational programs such as "Ending the Silence" and "Family to Family," and wellness planning classes. All services are free, require no insurance or formal diagnosis, and are facilitated by individuals with lived experience. Michelle emphasized the importance of reducing barriers to mental health support and the value of peer connection, noting that NAMI's programs are available in multiple locations and virtually, with some participation already from Kankakee County residents. She encouraged attendees to reach out for more information and to consider expanding NAMI's offerings in Kankakee County.
- **Community Engagement and Updates from Partner Organizations:** Deputy Chief Donnell Austin introduces himself and discusses the challenges of community service and the need for reliable resources. Magdalena Campos shares her experience at the Walk Against Violence in Kankakee and emphasizes the importance of consistent community engagement. She highlights the role of the ROSC as a resource hub for

connecting partners and stakeholders and introduces the question for participants to identify areas needing additional resources for substance use prevention, treatment, or recovery.

- **Identifying Community Needs & Closing:** Anthony Begesha from the Kankakee County Health Department suggests improving outreach to rural areas due to lack of internet access and transportation. Deputy Chief Donnell Austin of the Kankakee Police Department emphasized the importance of reliable, actionable resources for first responders. He shared his perspective on the need for sustained, trustworthy partnerships, noting that first responders are often the initial point of contact for individuals in crisis, whether due to substance use, homelessness, or other socioeconomic challenges. He stressed the need for resource connections that are dependable and actionable, expressing a desire for ongoing collaboration rather than one-time interventions. Gloria Kennedy from Duane Dean Behavioral Health mentioned in the chat, housing for those going through recovery with daily check ins and follow ups. Liz Gibson from Birth to Five Illinois also mentioned, Prevention and early intervention, especially for youth and families. Prevention including school-based education, family support programs, mental health services, and community awareness efforts that address root causes such as trauma, stress, and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). Sarah Winkel from Project Sun mentions Prevention: Every store/gas station you walk into, it is a “candy” store for vaping, alcohol. It is also inviting for kids.
- **New Partners:**
 - Adam McCurdy from the Manteno Community Fire Protection District introduces himself as the EMS coordinator and battalion chief.
 - Dominica Dybas from the Chicago DEA's Diversion Control Section introduces herself and discusses her role in outreach and prescription drug control.
 - Reverend Anibal Vega from Kankakee County Community Services introduces himself and outlines the services provided by his organization.
 - Morgan Roberts from the University of Illinois Extension introduces herself and explains her focus on food and health systems.