

Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council

Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, February 20, 2026

Location: Virtual (ZOOM)

Time: 1:00 PM

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Erica Bledsoe (KCI) at 1:06 PM.

2. Attendees

- Cherone Mayes (KCI)
 - Ron Bratcher (KCI)
 - Kenneth Bell (Chestnut)
 - DeShunn Bray (KCI)
 - Jahari Stamps (S.H.A.R.P. Organization)
 - Mariah Horne (KCI)
 - Wilma Abi-Rashed (KCI)
 - Erica Bledsoe (KCI)
 - Deona Williams
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3. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Ronald Bratcher

2nd: DeShunn Bray

4. Old Business

a. Community Engagement in Wrightwood/Ashburn and Stigney/Burbank

- **Wrightwood / Ashburn (Chicago)**
- **Limited Access to Behavioral Health & Recovery Services**
Many residents seeking mental health, substance use treatment, or recovery support must travel outside the immediate neighborhood. The shortage of nearby providers can lead to long wait times and inconsistent care.
- **Transportation Barriers**
Although public transit exists, some parts of Ashburn—particularly residential pockets

like Wrightwood—are not directly connected to rapid transit. Residents may rely on multiple bus transfers or personal vehicles to reach services, healthcare, or employment opportunities.

- **Economic and Employment Challenges**

While Ashburn is often considered more stable than some neighboring communities, residents still face job insecurity, underemployment, and limited access to workforce development programs located within the community.

- **Youth Engagement and Safe Spaces**

There is an ongoing need for more structured youth programs, mentorship, and after-school opportunities to help prevent involvement in risky behaviors and to provide positive outlets.

- **Awareness of Available Resources**

Many services exist across Chicago, but residents often report difficulty **finding out what programs are available or how to enroll**, especially for behavioral health and recovery support.

- **Stickney / Burbank Area**

- **Limited Local Social Services**

Suburban areas like Stickney and Burbank often have **fewer community-based social service providers** compared to Chicago. Residents frequently have to travel to nearby cities for counseling, recovery programs, or case management.

- **Transportation and Mobility Issues**

Public transportation coverage is more limited in suburban areas. Residents without reliable vehicles may struggle to reach healthcare providers, workforce training, or recovery meetings.

- **Stigma Around Behavioral Health and Substance Use**

In smaller suburban communities, stigma can discourage individuals from seeking help for mental health or substance use disorders because of concerns about privacy and community perception.

- **Language and Cultural Barriers**

Burbank and surrounding areas have a **large and growing immigrant population**, which can create barriers when services are not culturally responsive or available in multiple languages.

- **Disconnection Between Providers and Residents**

Many residents are unaware of county or regional resources (like recovery support, harm reduction services, or family assistance programs) because information is not consistently shared within suburban community networks.

b. Raw Survey Data

The **Kates Community Initiative ROSC Council** continues to collect raw data to better understand the needs of residents in communities such as Wrightwood/Ashburn and Stickney/Burbank. This information helps ensure that recovery supports and community resources are aligned with the real challenges people face.

The council gathers data through **community surveys, outreach events, listening sessions, and collaboration with local service providers**. These efforts allow residents, individuals in recovery, and families to share their experiences related to substance use, mental health, and barriers to accessing services.

The raw data collected helps the Kates Community Initiative **identify service gaps, understand community trends, and guide strategic planning**. By using community-driven data, the ROSC Council can develop targeted outreach, strengthen partnerships, and improve access to recovery resources for individuals and families in the region.

5. New Business

c. Statewide ROSC Meeting-Tuesday, March 17, 2026, via ZOOM.

d. Region 1 ROSC Meeting-Tuesday, March 24, 2026, via ZOOM.

e. Statewide ROSC In Person Meeting-April 21, 2026, Heartland Community College, Normal, IL.

6. Open Issues

The **Kates Community Initiative** will be hosting Community Resource and Wellness Fairs in **Ashburn and Burbank** to connect residents with essential services and promote overall wellness.

These events brought together local organizations, service providers, and community partners to share information about **recovery support services, behavioral health resources, employment opportunities, and family support programs**. Residents will have the opportunity to speak directly with providers, ask questions, and learn how to access services available in their community.

The fairs also focused on **holistic wellness**, highlighting the importance of mental health, physical health, and community connection. By creating a welcoming space for residents to gather, the Kates Community Initiative helped increase awareness of available resources while reducing barriers that often prevent individuals and families from seeking help.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Cherone Mayes

Second: Ronald Bratcher

This meeting was adjourned by Erica Bledsoe (KCI) at 1:56 PM.

NEXT MEETING: Friday, March 20, 2026, at 1:00 PM