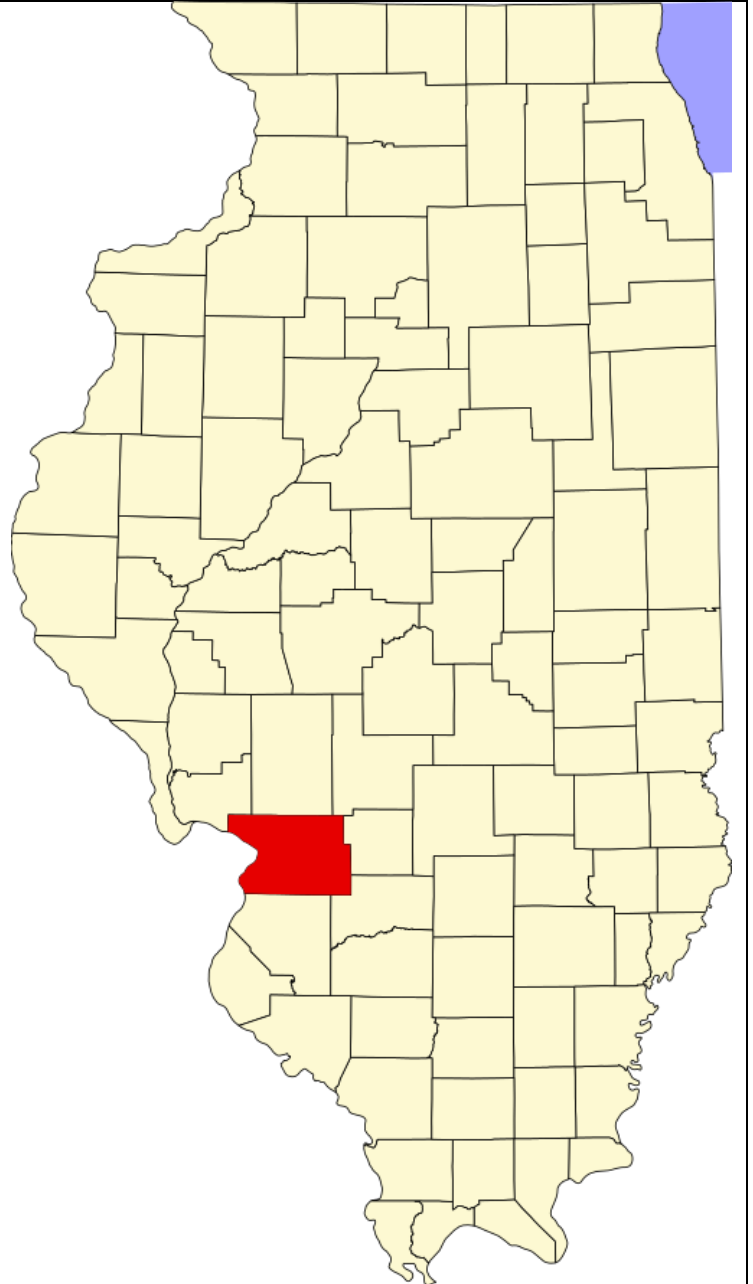


**FY26 Strategic Plan  
Metro East Recovery Council  
Chestnut Health Systems  
12/30/2025**



*Funded in whole or part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery*

**Council Mission:** Collaborating to build and empower communities of recovery.

**Council Vision:** A community system that nurtures and supports individuals and families seeking or maintaining recovery for themselves or a loved one.

## Needs Assessment

- **Madison County Demographics**

|                                    |                |  |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| <i>census.gov (2024)</i>           | <b>Madison</b> |  |
| <b>Total Population</b>            | 262,752        |  |
| Male                               | 48.50%         |  |
| Female                             | 51.50%         |  |
| <b>Population by Age</b>           |                |  |
| under 5 years                      | 4.90%          |  |
| 5-18 years                         | 21%            |  |
| 19-64 years                        | 55%            |  |
| 65 years and older                 | 19.10%         |  |
| <b>Population by Race</b>          |                |  |
| White alone                        | 86.30%         |  |
| Black Alone                        | 9.70%          |  |
| Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native        | 0.40%          |  |
| Asian Alone                        | 1.10%          |  |
| Hispanic or Latino                 | 4.40%          |  |
| Two or more                        | 2.50%          |  |
| <b>Median Household Income</b>     | \$74,800       |  |
| <b>Persons in Poverty, percent</b> | 11.10%         |  |

- **Overdose Data:**

The ongoing Opioid Epidemic has greatly impacted Madison County, with most recent reports showing an opioid fatality rate per 100,000 capita of 37.1, which ranks them amongst the highest in the state (IL Department of Public Health's Overdose Report).

- **Gaps Identified in Community Survey:**

Over the past several months, Community Health Specialists from MERC and other council members have collected information from residents Madison County. DBHR provided the ROSC with a template including ten questions and allowed each ROSC to propose additional questions before giving the final approval to conduct the survey. MERC used Survey Monkey to conduct this survey and worked to disseminate it digitally by sharing a QR code and a link to the survey. A digital flyer was also created, presented at council meetings, and shared with MERC's email distribution list (who were also asked to share). The QR code was also printed on flyers that were left in many agencies and businesses so people could take or scan to take the survey. MERC also worked to

engage underrepresented communities in this survey and went to underserved areas and collaborated with several local food pantries to meet people and ask them to fill out physical copies of the survey.

MERC received 204 responses from this survey. This data is being used to inform the recovery council in the areas of awareness of and access to treatment, stigma related to accessing treatment and attitudes about those in need of and/or engaging in services. Efforts were made to collect data from a variety of communities and individuals within Madison County. It was encouraging to see that around 71% of responders reported feeling that people who use substances deserve respect and around 93% reported people with a mental illness deserve respect, however this still indicates a significant amount of stigma is present in the community. The data shows a range of awareness about available treatment services with around 53% of participants reporting they know where to find mental health and substance use services. However, only around 42% reported knowing where to find MAR services and 36% reported knowing where to find harm reduction services like Narcan and Syringe service programs. This data indicates a gap in education about available services. This data also shows a variety of responses in regard to the availability of mental health and substance use services for everyone regardless of income, insurance status, race, etc. with around 42% agreeing that mental health services are available to all and 36% agreeing that substance use services are available to all. This indicates a gap in available services to the community at large. While around 52% of participants reported knowing where to start if they or someone they love is seeking help for substance use or mental health concerns, MERC would like to see progress made with the nearly 40% that reported not knowing how to start.

- **Additional Qualitative Data:**

- Basic Info from HSHS 2024 Madison County Needs Assessment: HSHS conducted a community health needs assessment with the intention of identifying and prioritizing community health needs in Madison County. While doing so, they reviewed several different sources of data and also developed and circulated a community survey to obtain first-hand information about health areas of concern from 85 community stakeholders. They saw six initial areas of need identified: Affordable Housing, Chronic conditions, Mental/behavioral health, Oral health, Substance use disorder, and transportation. They worked these areas through a process that included a forced ranking exercise and they also solicited input from community members. After this process, HSHS approved the recommended priorities, and they were adopted by their board of directors as the community health needs assessment priorities: 1. Mental/behavioral health. 2. Chronic Conditions. 3. Substance use disorders. The top three areas of concern gleaned from this process demonstrate the level of effort needed by the ROSC to provide support and build capacity for recovery support services.
- Responses from Madison County IPLAN (388 Responses from Community Health Assessment Survey): Madison County residents were asked to report on the most urgent health issues the county is facing, and respondents listed mental health and substance misuse as number one and two on the list (with number three being access to care). These concerns outranked things like cancer, heart disease, obesity, etc. The perception of the county respondents is supported by the overdose trends that continue to surpass state and national averages with the most up-to-date data showing an opioid fatality rate per 100,000 capita of 37.1 (in comparison Cook county is 34.4) The health department took this information into account and the Madison County Board of Health adopted mental health, substance use, and access to care as health priority areas. Chestnut Health Systems (MERC's lead agency) was identified as one of the county's major resources to help address these concerns.

# Council Outreach and Communication Plan

## Purpose:

- Increase awareness of the ROSC Council and the opportunities for involvement in the work of the Council.
- Engage the community sectors to help:
  - Reduce stigma aimed at those who use substances, have mental health problems, and those who are accessing recovery supports
  - Address gaps in awareness of mental health, substance use, medication assisted recovery (MAR), and recovery support services
  - Promote and increase access to harm reduction services.
- Continue to strengthen and grow relationships with existing and new Council members.

## Objectives:

- Engage needed sectors to address the gaps in our community related to the lack of knowledge of services for mental health and substance use disorders,
- Expand network of community partners to assist in communication campaigns (press release, social media blasts, email blasts, the potential for POD Cast videos) to reach as much of the county as possible.
- Enlist support from sectors to increase MERC's Social Media presence and reach on Facebook and Instagram. These connections will help build our presence by sharing posts (about resources and community recovery events) and engaging with posts (likes and comments).
- Recruit and engage members from underrepresented sectors to increase council meeting attendance and involvement in council work groups.

## Target Audiences:

MERC members identified five underrepresented sectors after reviewing and evaluating the membership roster that outlines council meeting attendance. While we will engage all sectors, these groups will specifically be targeted during the upcoming year.

- Faith Based Communities -There are extensive opportunities with the faith-based groups in Madison County becoming engaged in the work of the ROSC Council and we will work to build a healthy rapport with the Faith Based Community in our work. Sharing with these groups is important because to many, they are trusted and regarded as a "safe place" for community members to reach out to in times of need. Engaging with faith-based organizations can lead to significant positive outcomes and connection in communities. We will share information related to the role they can play in the council such as connecting resource information to those in need. We will do this by outreaching and request stakeholder interviews and inviting these organizations to our monthly council meetings.
- Persons with Lived Experience (PLE's)/Families - We will work to grow PLE representation and our Advisory Board. Sharing with this group is important because they have first-hand experience in living with or being affected by mental health and substance use, and essential insight into navigating the treatment and recovery landscape. We will have group emails, text message groups for the entire advisory board, text message groups for workgroups, and messaging/events shared through Facebook. We will do this by inviting these individuals to our monthly council meetings and to support our efforts for Community outreach, as their voices and experiences matter.
- Medical Community/ Service Providers - Physicians and other medical personnel are aware of our efforts and how they can support individuals in recovery and their families. We have formed a close relationship with the HSHS hospital in Highland (with opportunities for growth in Alton with the HSHS and OSF hospitals also in

Granite City and Maryville). They attend meetings regularly and help to support the council's efforts and projects. We will make sure they are informed of all meetings, initiatives, and events through personal communication, emails, flyers, zoom calls, social media. They are an important part of our efforts in Madison County. People living with SUD/ MHD often turn to hospitals for treatment, partnering with health care organizations will help those with these disorders have a better outcome of recovery.

- Law Enforcement/Probation Dept./State's Attorney/Coroner - Officers/Probation Dept./Coroner are an opportunity for growth in the local sectors and townships of Madison to find where/how they can be involved. Although we do not have consistent attendance at monthly meetings by this group, we will coordinate efforts to remain committed to keeping them up to date on the work of the council through emails, one-on-one outreach, meeting minutes, event flyers, and social media posts. It has been very important to keep this group informed as they have supported many of our efforts in the community. Law enforcement often times is the first to respond to a crisis with no formal training ( this is changing though ) on how to handle the individuals with mental health related issues and those with a SUD (substance use disorder), partnering with them allows MERC to provide the updated resource list so they can help the individuals get the help they need an in the hopes of reducing possible further interaction with local authorities.

#### **Key Messages:**

- Messaging will be about collaboration efforts on projects, updates on planning events, stigma reduction and education, sharing information on other organizations projects, and communicating progress to members of the council.

#### **Communication Channels & Frequency:**

- We communicate about the work of the Madison County Recovery Council through our Facebook page, Instagram account, event posters, email notifications, meeting agendas, meeting summaries and group text messages. We communicate at least once a week. Mark Knott and Kaitlyn Wilson take the lead on communication, with members of the council often helping by sharing information within their organizations or their social media platforms.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

- MERC's lead agency team members will continue to handle the responsibilities of the social media platforms in the future as we build a presence where we have had little activity in the past. In the future we may have some members from our Advisory Board who have technological knowledge to help with Social Media platforms.

#### **Evaluation and Feedback:**

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach and communication plan, we will track attendance at monthly council meetings to determine if there is an increase in involvement from underrepresented sections, track engagement on social media (including the number of new "Friends", the number of people interacting with our posts, the number of people sharing content, etc.), and review the plan quarterly with the council to determine if adjustments need to be made.

## Goals to Address Community Challenges

### Goal #1:

Reduce stigma aimed at people who use substances, are experiencing mental health problems, those who are seeking treatment or recovery support services, through a stigma reduction campaign that includes hosting or co-hosting educational public awareness events once per quarter, totaling 4 events by June 30, 2026.

### Objectives for year 1:

- Develop and conduct community survey to determine baseline data related to stigma by December 30, 2025.
- Analyze survey data to identify priority areas (zip codes) of focus by January 15, 2026.
- Develop a workgroup (comprised of council members, key stakeholders, peers, etc.) that will meet monthly to drive planning and implementation of educational campaigns/events to reduce stigma by September 30, 2025.
- Conduct at least 10 key informant interviews to gain perspective on perceived and experienced stigma in the community by March 31, 2026.
- Update social media page (Facebook) and update once per week to share and promote stigma reduction messaging and educational events by September 30, 2025.
- Develop plans, messaging, and host or co-host four stigma reduction educational public awareness events with one event occurring during each quarter (by September, December, March, June) of the fiscal year, June 30, 2026.

### Progress Achieved:

- Community Survey was developed and approved by August 30, 2025, and surveys were collected through December 15, 2025.
- ROSC council workgroup was proposed and developed during monthly council meetings and have started meeting monthly as of July 2025.
- Scheduled and met with over 5 community partners to learn about their experiences and perceptions of stigma.
- Updated the Madison County ROSC Facebook page and started an Instagram page.
- Hosted three "Stigma Conversation" events and participated/co-hosted community events (such as Overdose Awareness Day, and local RCO's Recovery Month event).

### Next Steps:

- Continue planning and development of upcoming community education/promotion of service events.
- Continue key informant interviews to gather additional insights and evaluate impact current efforts to reduce stigma.
- Continue efforts to build presence on social media, including increasing the number of contacts (friends) and regularly posting content relevant to the established goals.
- Continue to recruit workgroup (and council) membership and active participation to help drive planning and implementation of the work.

### Outcome/Output Measures:

- Collected 204 surveys.
- Connected with over 5 community members and stakeholders to gather information and insights.
- Conducted monthly council and workgroup meetings.

**Goal #1 Three-Year Plan:**

To address the stigma connected to harm reduction and use of MAR services, MERC will host or co-host an educational public awareness event once a quarter, totaling 12 events, and see a 10% reduction in reported stigma each year, by June 30, 2028.

**Objectives:**

- Yearly, develop, host, or co-host four educational public awareness events informed by the community survey data.
- Yearly, create and disseminate messaging to promote each educational public awareness event.
- Monthly, engage the council work group to drive planning, promotion, and execution of events.
- Yearly, conduct four focus groups to review effectiveness of events held.
- Yearly, conduct community survey to collect data on stigma.

**Outcome Measures:**

- Number of educational public awareness events hosted or co-hosted.
- Number of messaging campaigns to promote events conducted.
- Number of work group meetings held.
- Focus group feedback results/summaries.
- Reduction of stigma reported in community surveys.

**Goal #2:**

To address gaps (identified through survey data) in awareness of mental health, substance abuse, MAR, and recovery support services, the ROSC will increase community knowledge of services available and increase awareness of how to access them by 5% by June 30, 2026.

**Objectives for Year 1:**

- Develop and conduct community surveys to determine baseline knowledge by December 30, 2025.
- Analyze survey data to assess gaps in awareness of services and identify priority areas (zip codes) of focus by January 15, 2026.
- Develop a workgroup (comprised of council members, key stakeholders, peers, etc.) that will meet monthly to drive planning and implementation of educational campaigns/events to promote awareness by September 30, 2025.
- Develop (workgroup) 6 draft campaign messages: including social media posts, digital flyers, physical presence at events by February 1, 2026.
- Review campaigns with the council and at least 1 focus group (outside of the council) to assess impact by February 28, 2026.
- Release campaign messaging monthly through June 2026.

**Progress Achieved:**

- Community Survey was developed and approved by August 30, 2025, and surveys were collected through December 15, 2025.
- ROSC council workgroup was proposed and developed during monthly council meetings and have started meeting monthly.
- Updated Madison County ROSC (MERC) Facebook page.
- Utilized community events attended as an opportunity to provide education to the community about available services/resources and how to access them, promote local

behavioral health and recovery support services and to directly connect community members to providers at the events.

**Next Steps:**

- Analyze survey data to discover current attitudes associated with MAR and harm reduction.
- Use survey data zip codes to identify where to target messaging.
- Finalize the development of messaging and begin to implement the plans for the campaigns.

**Outcome/Output Measures:**

- Collected 204 surveys.
- Held monthly council meetings where this goal was discussed and 3 specific workgroup meetings have been held so far.
- Since the development of the Facebook page 146 “Friends” are following who can promote/share when to social media campaign is launched.

**Goal #2 Three-Year Plan:**

To address gaps in awareness of mental health, substance abuse, and recovery support services, MERC will increase community knowledge of services available by hosting or co-hosting 12 educational public awareness events and increase awareness of how to access services by 5% each of the next three years for a total increase of 15% by June 30, 2028.

**Objectives:**

- Yearly, develop, host, or co-host four educational public awareness events informed by the community survey data to promote available services and resources.
- Yearly, create and disseminate messaging to promote each educational public awareness event.
- Monthly, engage the council work groups to drive planning, promotion, and execution of events.
- Yearly, conduct four focus groups to review effectiveness of events held.
- Yearly, conduct community survey to collect data on community awareness.

**Outcome Measures:**

- Number of educational public awareness events hosted or co-hosted.
- Number of messaging campaigns to promote events conducted.
- Number of work group team meetings held.
- Focus group feedback results/summaries.
- Increase of awareness of services reported in community surveys.

**Goal #3:**

To increase access to harm reduction services, the ROSC will distribute (through social media, flyers, events, etc.) information and education related to harm reduction at least 4 times by June 30, 2026.

**Objectives for Year 1:**

- Outreach and meet with local MAR and harm reduction (such as local Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution-OEND) teams to learn about current services and current levels and types restrictions and available services by September 30, 2025.

- Research, attend training/webinars to learn about current harm reduction policies to gain a better understanding of what is available and what is not available or permitted at this time by September 30, 2025.
- Analyze survey data to assess attitudes about people who use substances and MAR services by January 15, 2026.
- Develop a workgroup (comprised of council members, key stakeholders, peers, etc.) that will meet monthly to drive planning and implementation of harm reduction education campaign by September 30, 2025.
- Develop (workgroup) 4 draft campaign messages: including social media posts, digital flyers, physical presence at events by February 1, 2026.
- Review campaigns with the council and at least 1 focus group (outside of the council) to assess effectiveness by February 28, 2026.
- Release campaign messaging quarterly through June 2026.

**Progress Achieved:**

- Community Survey was developed and approved by August 30, 2025, and surveys were collected through December 15, 2025.
- ROSC council workgroup was proposed and developed during monthly council meetings and have started meeting monthly.

**Next Steps:**

- Analyze survey data to discover current attitudes associated with MAR and harm reduction.
- Use survey data to inform campaign planning and identify where to target messaging.
- Finalize the development of messaging and begin to implement the plans for the campaigns.

**Outcome/Output Measures:**

- Collected 204 surveys.
- Held monthly council meetings and workgroup meetings where this goal was discussed.
- Since the development of the Facebook page 146 “Friends” are following who can promote/share when the social media campaign is launched.

**Goal #3 Three-Year Plan:**

To increase awareness of harm reduction services, MERC will increase community knowledge of services available by hosting or co-hosting 12 educational public awareness events and increase awareness of how to access services by 10% each of the next three years for a total increase of 30% by June 30, 2028.

**Objectives:**

- Yearly, develop, host, or co-host four educational public awareness events informed by the community survey data to promote available services and resources.
- Yearly, create and disseminate messaging to promote each educational public awareness event.
- Monthly, engage the council work groups to drive planning, promotion, and execution of events.
- Yearly, conduct four focus groups to review effectiveness of events held.
- Yearly, conduct community survey to collect data on community awareness.

Outcome Measures:

- Number of educational public awareness events hosted or co-hosted.
- Number of messaging campaigns to promote events conducted.
- Number of work group team meetings held.
- Focus group feedback results/summaries.
- Increase of awareness of harm reduction services reported in community surveys.