

Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council
Meeting Minutes
Date: Friday, August 21, 2026
Location: Via Zoom
Time: 1:00 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Erica Bledsoe (KCI) at 1:12 PM.

Attendees

- Cheronne Mayes (KCI)
- Ron Bratcher (KCI)
- DeShunn Bray (KCI)
- Erica Bledsoe (KCI)
- Regina White (Trilogy)
- Kenneth Bell (Chestnut)

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Cheronne Mayes

2nd: Ron Bratcher

Introduction to ROSC and Kates Community Initiative ROSC Council

A Recovery-Oriented System of Care (ROSC) Council is a collaborative group of community stakeholders—including service providers, people in recovery, family members, and local organizations—who work together to strengthen and improve recovery support services. The council focuses on building a coordinated system that promotes long-term recovery, reduces stigma, and ensures individuals have access to the resources they need, such as housing, employment, healthcare, and peer support.

Kates Community Initiative ROSC Council is a community-driven coalition that brings together partners and voices with lived experience to support individuals and families impacted by substance use and mental health challenges. The council is dedicated to creating pathways to recovery by connecting people to services, advocating for equitable resources, and fostering a supportive, recovery-friendly environment within the community.

Engagement in Wrightwood/Ashburn and Stigney/Burbank

Kates Community Initiatives continues to make a meaningful impact in the Burbank and Ashburn communities by connecting residents with valuable resources, supportive services, workforce development opportunities, and recovery-focused programming. Through community outreach, partnerships, educational initiatives, and resource navigation, Kates Community Initiatives works to strengthen community engagement, promote wellness, and ensure individuals and families have access to the support they need to thrive.

The ROSC Council appreciates the participation of community members, partner organizations, and volunteers whose involvement helped increase awareness of local resources and support services to the Ashburn and Burbank communities.

Kates Community Initiative is committed to being present at the table for important conversations surrounding community safety, substance use, prevention, recovery, and the well-being of our neighborhoods.

As part of that commitment, Ron Bratcher represented Kates Community Initiative at a community meeting with the Burbank Police Department. The meeting provided an opportunity to listen, share concerns, build relationships, and discuss ways community organizations and law enforcement can work together to address issues impacting residents.

Several important concerns were discussed, including fentanyl and substance use, drag racing and dangerous driving, theft and vandalism, and tobacco and nicotine use among minors.

Fentanyl continues to be a serious public-health and community concern. Its impact reaches individuals, families, first responders, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and the recovery community. Kates Community Initiative believes addressing this crisis requires education, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery support, and early intervention. Our goal is to connect individuals and families with accurate information and resources that can help prevent substance use from becoming a life-threatening situation.

The discussion also addressed concerns surrounding drag racing and dangerous driving, including situations where substance use or impaired judgment may contribute to risky behavior. Drag racing places drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and other motorists at significant risk. Kates Community Initiative believes prevention should include youth education, mentoring, positive alternatives, substance-use prevention, and teaching responsible decision-making.

Concerns were also raised regarding theft, vandalism, and other criminal activity that may intersect with problematic substance use. While substance use does not automatically lead to criminal behavior, it can intersect with issues such as financial instability, untreated behavioral-health needs, impaired judgment, and other challenges. These issues can affect businesses, families, property owners, and residents throughout the community. Kates Community Initiative believes the response should include accountability while also addressing underlying needs through prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery, education, and workforce development.

The meeting also highlighted concerns regarding tobacco and nicotine use among minors. Addressing youth tobacco and nicotine use requires parents, schools, community organizations, retailers, and young people to work together. Youth need honest education, positive alternatives, mentoring, and safe spaces to discuss peer pressure, stress, mental health, and substance use.

Kates Community Initiative believes public safety is a shared responsibility. Law enforcement, community organizations, schools, families, and residents all have an important role in creating healthier and safer communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important conversation and look forward to continued collaboration with the Burbank Police Department and community partners. Kates Community Initiative remains committed to prevention, education, accountability, recovery, community engagement, and connecting individuals to the resources they need to build healthier and more productive lives.

We are committed to being more than a voice in the conversation—we are committed to being part of the solution.

Raw Survey Data

Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council continues to make significant progress in advancing harm reduction awareness throughout the communities it serves. Based on recent outreach and engagement efforts, harm reduction awareness has increased by 83% in the Ashburn community and by 72% in the Burbank community.

These results reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to community education, outreach, collaboration with local partners, and the promotion of evidence-based harm reduction strategies. The Council recognizes the importance of continued engagement to further expand awareness, reduce stigma, and connect community members with available resources and support services.

Old Business:

Kates Community Initiative is proud to partner with the WINGS Program to bring greater awareness, education, and resources to the community surrounding the issue of domestic violence.

As part of this partnership, WINGS provided an important presentation to the community focused on domestic violence, safety, empowerment, advocacy, and available support services. The presentation created a safe space for participants to learn about the warning signs of abuse, the different forms domestic violence can take, and the importance of supporting individuals and families impacted by violence.

The WINGS Program plays an important role in helping survivors and families navigate the challenges associated with domestic violence by connecting them to resources such as emergency shelter, counseling, legal assistance, housing support, crisis intervention, advocacy, and safety planning.

Kates Community Initiative recognizes that domestic violence is not simply a private or family matter—it is a community issue that requires awareness, education, compassion, and collective action. Partnerships such as this allow us to bring valuable resources directly to the people who need them while helping to reduce stigma and ensure individuals know they are not alone.

We are grateful to WINGS for sharing their expertise and resources with our community. Kates Community Initiative remains committed to building partnerships that promote safety, empowerment, prevention, healing, and stronger communities.

Together, we can break the silence, connect survivors to support, and create communities where everyone has the opportunity to live safely and free from violence.

Kates Community Initiatives provided naloxone training to residents in the Burbank and Ashburn communities to increase awareness and strengthen overdose prevention efforts. Participants learned how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose, properly administer naloxone, and respond effectively during an emergency. The training equipped community members with lifesaving knowledge and resources while promoting harm reduction, preparedness, and a stronger, more informed community.

Kates Community Initiatives conducted stigma reduction efforts in the Burbank and Ashburn communities to promote understanding, compassion, and inclusion for individuals impacted by substance use and behavioral health challenges. Through education and open dialogue, community members were encouraged to challenge misconceptions, reduce judgment, and recognize the importance of support and recovery. These efforts helped create a more welcoming environment where individuals feel empowered to seek resources, treatment, and support without

Kates Community Initiatives participated in the Health and Wellness Fair held at Monument of Faith Church in Chicago on August 1, connecting residents from the Ashburn community with valuable health, wellness, recovery, and supportive resources. The event gave community members a chance to get information, connect with service providers, and learn about resources that support healthier lifestyles. Kates Community Initiatives' participation strengthened community partnerships and increased awareness of services designed to promote health, wellness, and overall quality of life.

Kates Community Initiatives participated in the Health and Wellness Fair at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) on August 1, alongside Senator Mattie Hunter, to engage residents from the community and connect them with health, wellness, recovery, and supportive resources. The event provided an opportunity to share information, build community partnerships, and increase awareness of services that promote healthy living and overall well-being. Kates Community Initiatives' participation reinforced its commitment to bringing valuable resources and opportunities directly to the communities it serves.

Kates Community Initiatives partnered with Alderwoman Stephanie Coleman of the 16th Ward to support her Health and Wellness Summer in the Park series. This collaboration provided an opportunity to engage residents in a welcoming community setting while sharing valuable health, wellness, recovery, and supportive resources. Through this partnership, Kates Community Initiatives strengthened community connections and helped promote healthier lifestyles, increased resource awareness, and overall community well-being. Event was canceled due to the weather.

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Open Issues:

Kates Community Initiatives supported workforce development and reentry efforts in the Burbank and Ashburn communities by connecting individuals returning to the community with employment resources, career guidance, and supportive services. Through education, referrals, and community partnerships, participants were encouraged to build job-readiness skills, explore career opportunities, and develop pathways toward economic stability. These efforts help reduce barriers to employment and promote successful, sustainable reintegration into the community.

New Business:

Kates Community Initiatives promoted men's and women's health in recovery throughout the Burbank and Ashburn communities by providing education, resources, and supportive conversations focused on overall wellness. The initiative encouraged participants to prioritize physical, emotional, and mental well-being while connecting them with community health and recovery resources. These efforts helped empower individuals to make healthier choices, strengthen their recovery, and build healthier, more supportive lives.

Kates Community Initiatives reconnected with the Mental Health Transition Center within the Cook County Department of Corrections to strengthen collaboration and expand support for individuals transitioning back into the community. This renewed connection provides an opportunity to share recovery resources, workforce development opportunities, community-based services, and reentry support. By strengthening this partnership, Kates Community Initiatives can help promote continuity of care, successful reentry, and stronger connections to community resources.

Kates Community Initiative proudly supported International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st, joining communities around the world in honoring the lives lost to overdose, supporting individuals and families impacted by substance use, and raising awareness about overdose prevention. Our participation reflects our commitment to reducing stigma, educating the community about the dangers of fentanyl and other substances, promoting access to lifesaving resources, and connecting individuals to treatment and recovery services. Kates Community Initiative believes that every life matters and that prevention, education, compassion, and recovery

support are essential in addressing the overdose crisis. Together, we remember, we educate, we support, and we work toward a community where fewer lives are lost to overdose.

Kates Community Initiative is proud to host Thrive Together: Community Health, Wellness, and Resource Fair on Tuesday, September 15th, from 12:00 PM–2:00 PM at 7815 South Claremont Avenue. This community-centered event is designed to connect residents with valuable health, wellness, recovery, behavioral health, workforce development, and supportive resources all in one place. Through partnerships with community organizations, healthcare and wellness providers, workforce agencies, and supportive service providers, Thrive Together will create an opportunity for individuals and families to access information, ask questions, connect with resources, and learn about services available within their community. Kates Community Initiative believes that healthier communities are built through connection, education, prevention, and access to meaningful support. Thrive Together is more than a resource fair—it is an opportunity to bring people together, strengthen connections, and remind our community that support, opportunities, and resources are all in one place.

In November, Kates Community Initiative will provide a harm reduction presentation focused on Sexual Awareness and Health. The presentation will provide an open and educational space for community members to discuss sexual health, healthy relationships, consent, prevention, risk reduction, and making informed decisions. The session will emphasize the importance of understanding how sexual health can intersect with substance use, mental health, and overall wellness, while promoting safer practices and reducing stigma. Kates Community Initiative believes that harm reduction begins with education, honest conversations, access to resources, and meeting people where they are. Through this presentation, we hope to empower participants with knowledge and practical resources that support healthier choices, personal safety, and overall well-being.

In December, Kates Community Initiative is proud to present Change the Story: Coffee and Conversation, a community panel discussion entitled “From Setbacks to Second Chances: Pathways to a Better Future.” The discussion will focus on recidivism, reentry, rehabilitation, recovery, and the barriers individuals face when returning to their communities after incarceration. The panel will create an open and honest conversation about the factors that can contribute to repeated involvement with the criminal justice system, including substance use, unemployment, housing instability, limited access to supportive services, and the stigma associated with having a criminal record. More importantly, the conversation will highlight solutions, second chances, and pathways toward successful reentry. Kates Community Initiative believes that reducing recidivism requires more than accountability—it requires opportunity, meaningful support, workforce development, education, recovery resources, mentorship, and strong community connections. Through Change the Story, we aim to challenge stereotypes, elevate lived experiences, connect individuals to resources, and remind our community that a setback does not have to define a person's future. Everyone deserves an opportunity to change their story, rebuild their lives, and move forward toward a better future.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Cheronne Mayes

Second: Regina White

This meeting was adjourned by Erica Bledsoe (KCI) at 2:01PM PM.

NEXT MEETING: Friday, September18, 2026, at 1:00 PM via Zoom.