

Northern Cook County ROSC September 2026 Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Friday, September 18, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM CT

Location: Zoom

Facilitator: Jenny Lamantia, ROSC Coordinator - PEER Services

Attendance

- Jenny Lamantia - PEER Services / NCC ROSC
- Natalie Larson - PEER Services KEY Coalition
- Cherese Ledet - YWCA Evanston North Shore
- Jessica Hulten - No Shame On U
- Adam Pratt - Live4Lali
- Jillian Kilcoyne - Alpharus Health
- Johanna Garastien - Erie Family Health Centers
- Mario Raines - Maximus
- Kristi Madison - Symetria Recovery
- Caprice Jones - Connections for the Homeless

Welcome and Introductions

Jenny Lamantia, ROSC Coordinator, called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves and their organizations. The group reviewed the purpose of the Northern Cook County ROSC, a community-based network that brings people, systems, and resources together to support recovery, reduce stigma, and improve access to care.

Recovery Month Reflection

In recognition of Recovery Month, participants reflected on what recovery means to them, what a recovery-friendly community could look like, the barriers people face, and the sources of hope they see in the community. Members noted that substance use and recovery are becoming more visible in community settings and that more open attitudes and conversations can help reduce stigma. A member shared her personal story of entering recovery and reflected on how limited and inaccessible conversations about recovery were in the 1980s. She noted that recovery communication has grown substantially since then, while underscoring the continued need for recovery information and support to remain accessible and openly discussed.

Community Conversation and Resource Sharing

The main discussion focused on where barriers are being observed in the community and what the coalition and its partners can do to help fill those gaps. Participants considered what is already working, which needs are not fully addressed by current services, and how recovery supports can be easier for individuals and families to find, understand, and access.

Key Barriers Identified

- Access to basic needs and the resources that support stability.
- Transportation barriers that make it difficult to reach appointments, programs, and recovery supports.
- Limited access to communication tools, including reliable cell phones, which can interfere with follow-up and connection to services.

Participants emphasized that these barriers can compound one another. A person may know that help is available yet still be unable to contact a provider, travel to an appointment, or meet basic needs while trying to engage in services.

Community Hopes and Opportunities

Members expressed hope for continued coalition participation and for the growing willingness of community settings to discuss substance use and recovery openly. NCC ROSC was identified as a useful space for partners to build relationships, share information, and identify practical solutions to strengthen recovery support across Northern Cook County.

Connection and Referral Coordination

The group discussed the importance of streamlining referrals to appropriate services. Participants described a need for clearer communication across organizations and a more coordinated, wraparound approach to ensure that individuals seeking assistance are not left to navigate multiple systems on their own. Participants also emphasized that services must be equitable and nonjudgmental, so people feel respected, safe, and able to access support without stigma.

A no-wrong-door approach was discussed: regardless of where someone first asks for help, they should be connected to the specific resource or service they need. This approach can improve follow-through, reduce repeated storytelling, and make community supports easier to access.

NCC ROSC Updates and Ways to Engage

Jenny outlined ongoing opportunities to stay engaged with NCC ROSC and PEER Services, such as the NCC ROSC Community Survey, recovery support resources, Medication-Assisted Recovery info, and Step Up for Recovery happening on Sunday, October 4th with PEER Services at the Evanston Lakefront. Partners were invited to share these with their networks and to keep bringing community needs and resource updates to upcoming meetings.

Action Items

- Continue identifying local barriers to basic needs, transportation, and communication access.
- Strengthen cross-referrals and develop clearer pathways to appropriate community resources.
- Explore practical ways to support a wraparound, no wrong door approach across partner organizations.
- Promote NCC ROSC participation, the Community Survey, and upcoming recovery-focused opportunities.

Meeting Highlights

- Recovery-friendly communities depend on visible, stigma-reducing conversations about substance use and recovery.
- Basic needs, transportation, and cell phone access were identified as key barriers to connection and follow-through.
- Coalition relationships can help streamline referrals and make resources more accessible to community members.
- A coordinated no wrong door approach can help ensure individuals are connected to the right support regardless of where they first seek help.
- Equitable, nonjudgmental services are essential to building trust and making recovery supports accessible.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM. Attendees were thanked for their time, partnership, and continued commitment to recovery support in Northern Cook County.

Next Meeting

Date: Friday, October 16, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM CT

Location: Zoom