

THREE CORDS STRONG ROSC ALLIANCE

Meeting Minutes

Transitional Training Services

Location: 4455 S. King Drive, Suite 101-B

Date: August 27, 2026

Time: 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Format: Hybrid – In Person and Zoom

Facilitator: Vawnshekia Oklah

Co-Facilitator: Marjorie Howard/Francis Oklah

I. Call to Order & Opening

Vawnshekia Oklah called the meeting to order and welcomed ROSC members, community partners, and visitors. She provided an overview of the Three Cords Strong ROSC Alliance, its mission and vision, and the importance of involving individuals, families, community members, service providers, and system partners in building a recovery-oriented community.

Recent activities, including Overdose Prevention Training and National Night Out, were acknowledged.

II. Strategic Goals

The coalition reviewed its primary strategic priorities:

- Build a supportive network of employers, workforce agencies, and community partners to increase employment opportunities for individuals in recovery and returning citizens.
- Work with law enforcement to establish alternatives to arrest for individuals with substance use disorders through adult deflection.
- Expand deflection partnerships beyond CPD District 003 and into additional Chicago Police Department districts by June 30, 2028.
- Promote sustainable, recovery-informed deflection practices and training within participating law enforcement agencies.

Progress will be measured through assessment and capacity building, implementation and expansion, and sustainability and policy integration.

III. Employment Barriers & Community Survey Discussion

The primary meeting discussion focused on identifying barriers to employment for individuals affected by substance use and criminal records.

Members identified several potential barriers, including workplace drug screenings, safety-sensitive employment, physical and psychological dependence, stigma, felony convictions, professional licensing restrictions, and difficulties accessing stable employment after incarceration.

Members viewed and discussed a University of Chicago presentation by Michelle Alexander related to The New Jim Crow. Discussion focused on how the War on Drugs, mass incarceration, economic disinvestment, stigma, and criminal records can contribute to long-term barriers to employment, housing, professional opportunities, and successful re-entry.

The coalition emphasized the importance of addressing root causes—including unemployment, stigma, substance use, and re-entry barriers—rather than focusing only on the consequences of crime.

Members were asked to develop two potential survey questions related to employment barriers. Community-generated questions will be reviewed and vetted before being incorporated into the ROSC community survey.

IV. Deflection & Community Advocacy

Members discussed adult deflection as an alternative to arrest for eligible individuals experiencing substance use-related challenges. Deflection efforts are intended to connect individuals to treatment, recovery support, harm reduction, behavioral health, and other community-based resources when appropriate.

Members were encouraged to attend police beat meetings, aldermanic/community meetings, and other public forums to advocate for deflection, stigma reduction, recovery-informed approaches, and alternatives to arrest.

V. Partner Updates & Resources

Thresholds shared information regarding behavioral health and substance use treatment services, including crisis support, Living Room services, and mobile crisis response resources.

TCA Health shared information regarding assistance with Medicaid, SNAP benefits, and redetermination.

Southside Heroin/Opioid Task Force, represented by Benny Lee, contributed historical and cultural perspectives related to systemic barriers, community trauma, substance use, recovery, and community unity.

New Millennium Law

Local Church (St. Lawrence)

VI. Action Items & Next Steps

- Members will develop two potential survey questions addressing employment barriers.
- The coalition will review and vet community-generated survey questions before implementation.
- Members will continue community resource mapping and identify available resources and service gaps.
- Members are encouraged to participate in harm-reduction and stigma-reduction education.
- Members are encouraged to attend community and police beat meetings to advocate for recovery-oriented policies and deflection.
- Community members are encouraged to participate in the Three Cords Strong ROSC Council.

VII. Next Meeting

The next Three Cords Strong ROSC Alliance meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2026

IX. MEETING CLOSE

X. MEETING ATTENDANCE

1. Azeez Muhammad
2. Sharon Batiest
3. Zamaria Howard
4. Marquelah Bell
5. Michael Winters
6. Joseph Jones
7. Angela Rand
8. Cornisha Peterson
9. Francis Oklah
10. Marjorie Howard
11. Vawnshekia Oklah
12. Brittni Hoskins
13. Jason Hoskins
14. Reynard Solomon
15. Brandon Jernigan
16. Gregory Grubbs
17. Jerry Kirkman Pete
18. Brian Thomas
19. James Rodgers
20. Jeremy Hill
21. Carolyn Howard
22. Vidal Taylor
23. Jasmine Campbell
24. Angela Morgan
25. Zari Grant
26. Willie Long
27. Bennie Lee
28. Rosalba Garibay (Thresholds)
29. Florence Wright
30. Ken Bell