



Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, June 26, 2026

10am – 12pm

Zoom Meeting Information

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/695761637?pwd=eVVOUzJlN3VUcXl6WFJzSnVNOVJXdz09>

Meeting ID: 695 761 637 | Password: 038839

Meeting Minutes

Welcome Extended by; Dora Wright: The meeting began with Dora welcoming attendees and providing an attendance link for ROSC Council meetings and events.

Participant Introductions: Angela Violante, Individual: Niktoria Julian, Tomorrow's Light: Lee Rusch, West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force: Linda Sharp, Individual: Regina White, Trilogy Mental Wellbeing: Francisco C. Yanez, Bethel New Life: Dr. Fred Nance Jr., C.L.I.C.K. Services NFP: Robert Johnson, Family Guidance Center: Andrea Shales, Rosecrance Behavioral Health: John J. Reed, Individual: Inga Totty, Individual: Riley Shales, Streamwood Behavioral Health: Katie Boynton, Illinois Extension: Marsha Zanders, Breaking Barriers Collectively: Mary Dowling, WSHOTF: Angelina Sanchez, Brighter Behavior Choices INC., NFP - The Recovery Cafe Chicago: Tiffany Webb, Healthcare Alternative systems: Sonya Ebhotemen, Jesse Brown VAMC: Quinella Penermon, Treatment Alternatives for Stronger Communities: Eli Kramer, Healthcare Alternative Systems: Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois: Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC: John Wright, CRCC: Venessa Moreno, CRCC: Justin Wolfe, Individual: Bahiyyah Khalilallah, SROSC: Steve L Rosenthal, Individual: Carolyn Hartfield, Hartfield Consultants: Luke Sirois, Individual: Vegletta Lewis, Loretto Hospital: Borris Powell, Malcolm X College: Jocelyn Beckham, Adrian's Purpose Sober Living: Nicole Parson, Habilitative System Inc.: Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC:

ROSC Goals and Objectives; Venessa: A Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) is a coordinated network of community-based services and supports that is person centered and builds on the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, and communities to experience recovery and improved health, wellness, and quality of life for those with or at risk of substance use and/or co-occurring conditions. The central focus of a ROSC is to create an infrastructure, or "systems of care", with the resources to effectively address the full range of substance use and/or co-occurring disorders within communities. The Objectives: 1. Create communities of recovery that encourage and integrate resources for the recovering individual, families and friends. 2. Develop supportive recovery communities that foster growth, respect and understanding of those who have identified problems in the areas of substance use and mental health. 3. Implement effective communication that will allow for inclusion of PLEs (persons with lived experience) voices to be heard.

MOU's & Linkage Agreements; Venessa: Reminded the attendees that an MOU and linkage agreement between CRCC/ROSC and all partners should be signed. The MOU and linkage agreement defines the working relationships between agencies, defines collaborative roles and responsibilities of the two agencies with respect to improving the local infrastructure supporting the establishment of a ROSC council. Place your contact information in the chat to get agreements in place.

ROSC Council's Integrated Recovery System

The meeting focused on the ROSC Council's goals and objectives, particularly advocating for the development of an integrated system of recovery. The council aims to create communities of recovery, develop supportive recovery communities, and implement effective communication. The panelists shared their experiences and their roles in providing support to individuals and families in the area of recovery.

Topic Discussion: Lessons Learned & Applied: The Makings of a Harm Reductionist; **ROSC Council Presenters:** Lee Rusch

Quick Recap

The West Side ROSC Council held its monthly meeting on June 26, 2026, where Lee Rush from the West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force presented a comprehensive overview of the organization's work over the past 7 years. Lee shared his personal journey from working at YMCA youth outreach programs in the 1970s to becoming a preventionist and detailed how the West Side Task Force evolved from coordinating opioid response efforts in 2019 to implementing harm reduction strategies including nasal naloxone distribution, street outreach, and community partnerships. The presentation highlighted key achievements including a 42% decline in overdose deaths in Cook County in 2024 and the distribution of thousands of naloxone doses,



Westside ROSC Council

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while also addressing current challenges such as potential funding cuts under the new federal administration and the need for continued community collaboration across multiple sectors.

Summary

West Side ROSS Council Meeting

Dora Dantzler-Wright served as interim director and introduced the meeting's agenda and presenter. The meeting began with introductions from council members and participants, including Lee Rush from the West Side Heroin Opiate Task Force who was scheduled to be the main presenter. Several participants joined remotely from various locations, with some experiences of technical difficulties with audio connections.

Career Journey in Addiction Prevention

Lee presented his career journey from his early work at the YMCA to his current role with the West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force, spanning over 50 years. He shared his experiences as a street outreach worker for Northwest Youth Outreach in the 1970s, working with young people affected by substances like PCP, and his later work with Prevention Partnership co-founding the Greater Alliance Prevention Systems project. Lee emphasized the evolution from prevention to harm reduction approaches and highlighted influential mentors like Monsignor Ignatius McDermott who shaped his perspective on addiction and recovery services.

Community Prevention Partnership Strategy

Lee discussed Prevention Partnership's work forming prevention core teams using a community systems approach in various Chicago neighborhoods and building parent-led intervention teams at specific schools. The discussion focused on identifying key sectors needed at community tables, with participants suggesting law enforcement, pastors, youth, education, and large organizations as important stakeholders. Lee also highlighted a new Illinois law (Act 1040321) requiring emergency medical services to report overdoses to the federal ODMAP system, which helps health departments create targeted intervention maps and respond to overdose clusters more effectively.

West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force

Lee presented on the West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force, explaining that it was established in 2016 with Rep. LaShawn K. Ford requesting Prevention Partnership take the coordinating role. The task force identified key needs including awareness, education, collaboration, community engagement, and naloxone distribution, leading to the successful implementation of Access Narcan which provides free nasal naloxone to organizations. Lee outlined harm reduction practices including naloxone distribution, syringe service programs, and medication-assisted treatment, while noting that overdose prevention sites remain a topic of community discussion with about 80% supporting some action, though legislation has not passed again this year.

Medication-Assisted Treatment Terminology Discussion

Lee discussed the community systems approach to prevention and harm reduction, emphasizing collaboration. When asked by Boris about the distinction between medication-assisted recovery and medication-assisted treatment, Lee clarified that they use the terms interchangeably but acknowledged that some in the community distinguish between them based on timeframes and settings. Dora added that medication-assisted treatment typically refers to medication plus outpatient treatment and noted efforts to reduce stigma by using less stigmatizing language like "recovery."

Westside Heroin Task Force Overview

Lee presented a comprehensive overview of the Westside Heroin Opiate Task Force's harm reduction efforts, tracing the organization's evolution from its founding in 2019 through current initiatives. She highlighted key achievements including a 42% decline in overdose deaths in Cook County and successful partnerships with organizations like Chicago Recovery Alliance and CTA for Narcan distribution. The discussion included concerns about potential federal policy changes that could impact harm reduction programs, with Lee encouraging attendees to comment on related proposals by July 5th. The conversation ended with announcements about upcoming events including International Overdose Awareness Day on August 28th and a networking breakfast for sober living and transitional housing providers.

Next steps:

Lee: Send information about the Opioid Learning and Recovery Collaborative (OLRC) to Venessa for distribution. Add interested individuals to the Westside Heroin Opioid Task Force email list for outreach schedule and updates.

Venessa: Follow up with attendees who expressed interest in enrolling in the Access Narcan program. Reach out to Marsha Zanders (Breaking Barriers Collective) to initiate an MOU with the ROS Council.



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Next steps:

Collaboration

- Attendees interested in outreach: Email Lee Rush at LeftsideTaskForce@yahoo.com to express interest in joining outreach efforts or observing.
- Organizations interested in gambling prevention presentations: Contact Tiffany Webb at tweb@hoscares.org to schedule free presentations/workshops.
- Attendees interested in networking: Contact John Luke for details about the recovery home breakfast and networking event on the south side.
- Attendees interested in International Overdose Awareness Day: Use the flyer link shared by Mary Dowling to get event details and attend on August 28th.

Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council

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