Westside ROSC Council

Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition

Friday, September 25, 2026
10am – 12pm
Zoom Meeting Information
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/695761637?pwd=eVVOUzJ1N3VUcXl6WFJzSnVNOVJXdz09
Meeting ID: 695 761 637 | Password: 038839

Meeting Minutes

Welcome Extended by; Jesse Heffernan: Jesse Heffernan, ROSC Council Coordinator, welcomed participants and introduced a new logo and updated branding for the Westside ROSC Council, to be implemented across all council materials to reflect a more unified identity.

Participant Introductions: Angela Violante, Individual; Angel Lagares, Latino Recovery Advocacy; Stephanie Sajuan, Individual; Brandon Murray, AIDS Foundation of Chicago; Sedona Brodersen, AFC/CHH; Andrea Porter, RETINC; Glynnus Alexander, Garfield Counseling Center; Belinda Farr, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; James D. Gall, MADO Healthcare; Stephanie Brooks, Reassemble ED and Training; Niktoria Julian, Tomorrow's Light; Niya Sutherland, NAMI Metro Suburban; Carl Toliver, Reassemble Education and Training; Mary Dowling, West Side Heroin Opioid Task Force; Linda Sharp, Individual; Stephanie Elswick, Lutheran Child and Family Services; Walter Houston, Kalimba Foundation; Ruthie Williams, Faith Way Men's Independent; John Hardin, Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition; Richard Wilkens, Campaign for a Drug Free Westside Inc; Bettye Hope Faulkner-Ridley, Hope Outreach Inc.; Wanda Pierce, Individual; Tom Johnson, CRCC; Vegletta Ericka Lewis, Loretto Hospital; Candyce Banford, CRCC; Dora Dantzler-Wright, CRCC; John Wright, CRCC; Jesse Heffernan, CRCC; Cleveland Barrett, Individual; Tanya Johnson, BHWC; Kenneth Bell, Statewide ROSC; Moses Akintunde, Individual;

Topic Discussion: Cultural Competence and Linguistic Responsiveness in Recovery Services; ROSC Council Presenters: Angel Lagares, Latino Recovery Advocacy (LARA).

Quick Recap

The September 25, 2026 monthly ROSC meeting included introductions, agency updates, and a presentation on cultural elements in building recovery communities. Jesse Heffernan welcomed participants and introduced a new logo for the Westside ROSC Council. Dora Dantzler-Wright announced upcoming events including the Shatterproof Chicago Walk and a Breast Cancer Awareness Month celebration. Brandon Murray from AIDS Foundation of Chicago shared success stories from the organization's harm reduction program, while Angel Lagares, founding director of LARA, presented on the importance of cultural competence and linguistic responsiveness in recovery services, drawing on his work in Florida and Colombia. The meeting closed with discussion of next steps on cultural responsiveness and upcoming presentations from Patty Metcalf (Faces & Voices of Recovery) and Tyler James (Chicago Transit Authority).

Summary

Westside ROSC Council Meeting

The meeting began with introductions from participants representing agencies including Red Ink, Cook County Health, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and others. Jesse Heffernan announced a new branding initiative featuring an updated logo to be implemented across council materials. The meeting focused on the council's goal of creating coordinated community-based services for individuals with or at risk of substance use disorders, including developing recovery communities and ensuring effective communication that includes people with lived experience.

Community Events and Updates

Dora Dantzler-Wright announced that CRCC will attend the Shatterproof Chicago Walk on September 26th at 7am in Lincoln Park, and will host a community celebration for Breast Cancer Awareness Month on October 17th. Brandon Murray shared outcomes from a harm reduction framework used with clients, reporting that two out of three clients are making attempts at sobriety. Niya Sutherland announced that LaGrange Living Room will celebrate its 10th anniversary on

October 24th, and that she also facilitates NAMI Smarts for Advocacy training. Jesse mentioned recent positive meetings with the Chicago Transit Authority and local police regarding potential collaboration opportunities.

Recovery Grant and Housing Opportunities

Dora Dantzler-Wright announced that CRCC received a federal Building Communities of Recovery grant for west Chicago, with positions available over the next three years. Jesse invited council members to share information about purchasing buildings for sober living or related grants, which led to discussion of the Illinois Association of Extended Care (IACE).

Recovery Homes Technical Requirements Discussion

John Wright explained the technical requirements for licensed recovery homes in Illinois. Jesse introduced the Collective Impact Model as a potential framework for the council's work and announced plans to host an interest meeting in October on transitioning to a collective-impact hybrid model. The meeting then turned to a presentation by Angel Lagares of LARA, a Latino recovery advocacy nonprofit, on the role of cultural elements in building recovery communities, drawing from his personal recovery journey and his work in Florida.

Cultural Competence in Addiction Recovery

Angel Lagares presented on cultural competence in addiction recovery services, sharing personal stories about family members lost to substance use disorder and his work promoting recovery in Latino communities. He emphasized the importance of providing services in clients' native languages and adapting recovery approaches to different cultural contexts, and discussed the need for bilingual peer support and training materials, highlighting systemic barriers including the war on drugs and mass incarceration that have disproportionately affected minority communities.

Cultural Responsiveness in Recovery Programs

Angel shared challenges and successes in promoting cultural responsiveness, particularly in Florida's recovery and treatment programs, highlighting Spanish-language programs funded through grants in 2023 and 2024 and collaboration to create Spanish-language resources for Narcan and other treatments. He noted progress with organizations such as SMART Recovery offering Spanish-language meetings, and Spanish translation for emergency services including 211 and 988.

Bilingual Training Programs Presentation

Angel presented his work in Florida with SAMHSA, including bilingual training programs, cultural initiatives, and technical support for RCOs. He described his process for working with community organizations: assessing local language and ethnic needs, identifying available bilingual staff, and developing tailored culturally responsive systems before conducting in-person training and community engagement. On the question of a past Shatterproof collaboration, Angel noted that work was conducted four to five years ago with ongoing efforts to update treatment resources.

Cultural Wellness Service Framework

Jesse facilitated discussion of community organizing and recovery support services, with Angel presenting examples from Florida and emphasizing the importance of cultural relevance in service delivery. Angel shared details on "Ecosystem of Wellness," an integrated, person-centered well-being framework he is developing with colleagues, intended to be more culturally appropriate and inclusive than existing models. The group discussed the need to go beyond simple translation of existing recovery support materials to address cultural differences in how communities connect with and access services.

Cultural Responsiveness in Recovery Services

Angel presented further on harm reduction and cultural responsiveness, stressing that policy change, not good intentions alone, is essential to implementing cultural competence effectively. John Wright voiced support for the presentation and highlighted the ongoing need for advocacy around Narcan distribution and overdose reporting. Asked how to bring cultural-responsiveness initiatives to leadership, Angel recommended engaging decision-makers such as mayors and pastors directly, using community statistics to demonstrate the importance of including excluded populations in services.

Community Harm Reduction Strategy

Angel advised Brandon to work with bilingual community members who understand local needs rather than handling outreach alone, with harm-reduction approaches tailored to specific communities. The group discussed the importance of understanding community needs, creating culturally responsive outreach materials, and working to change policy to support substantial change in recovery services.

Next steps:

- **Angel**
- Send the Ecosystem of Wellness framework to Jesse via email.
- **Dora**
- Attend and represent CRCC at the Shatterproof Chicago Walk on September 26th.
- Host a community celebration for Breast Cancer Awareness Month on October 17th.
- **Jesse**
- Share the new Westside ROSC emblem and branding materials with the council.
- Put information about the Shatterproof Chicago Walk in the chat.
- Reach out to agencies without a signed MOU and provide the form.
- Organize an interest meeting in October to discuss transitioning the ROSC Council to a Collective Impact model.
- Send out Angel's slides and the Ecosystem of Wellness framework to attendees.
- Send out the community survey in bilingual (English/Spanish) format to ROSC Council members.
- Send out information about the next meeting featuring Patty Metcalf on October 23rd.
- Send out information about the November meeting featuring Tyler James, Chicago Transit Authority.
- Send out the MOU form to attendees who requested it.
- **John Wright**
- Share the Zoom link and information for the Illinois Association of Extended Care (IACE) meetings.

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.

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