Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council
Meeting Minutes
Date: Friday, September 18, 2026
Location: Via Zoom
Time: 1:00 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Erica Bledsoe (KCI) at 1:05PM.

Attendees

- Cheronne Mayes (KCI)
- Ron Bratcher (KCI)
- DeShunn Bray (KCI)
- Erica Bledsoe (KCI)
- Regina White (Trillogy)
- Kenneth Bell (Chestnut)
- Marzell Collins (Monument of Faith Church-Ashburn)

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Cheronne Mayes

2nd: De Shunn Bray

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 decreased by 17% in the Ashburn community and by 13% in the Burbank community in FY26 due to our surveying of the youth sector.

The Council discussed the importance of strengthening harm reduction education within the youth sector to promote awareness, prevention, and informed decision-making among young people. Key focus areas include substance use prevention, overdose awareness, fentanyl education, and the importance of recognizing the signs of an overdose and knowing how to respond appropriately. Additional emphasis will be placed on educating youth about naloxone (Narcan), reducing stigma associated with substance use and mental health challenges, and connecting young people to appropriate support services and community resources.

The discussion also highlighted the need for age-appropriate, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed educational opportunities that encourage open dialogue, peer awareness, and healthy coping strategies. The Council will explore opportunities to collaborate with schools, youth-serving organizations, community partners, and families to expand harm reduction education, increase access to prevention resources, and support the overall health, safety, and well-being of youth within the service area.

The Council discussed expanding harm reduction education and prevention outreach by establishing connections with the alternative school networks, including Safe Achieve Alternative School, as well as private and Catholic school systems throughout the service area. These partnerships would provide opportunities to deliver age-appropriate education on substance use prevention, overdose awareness, fentanyl exposure, naloxone education, mental health awareness, and stigma reduction.

Additional outreach efforts will focus on engaging community youth centers and other organizations that provide programming and support for young people. The goal is to increase access to prevention education, promote healthy decision-making, strengthen protective factors, and connect youth to appropriate behavioral health and recovery support resources.

The Council emphasized the importance of building relationships with school administrators, counselors, youth program coordinators, and community stakeholders to identify opportunities for presentations, workshops, resource distribution, and collaborative youth-focused initiatives. Moving forward, the Council will explore potential partnerships and outreach opportunities to ensure harm reduction education reaches youth across diverse educational settings and community environments

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:

The Council discussed the UMARC Recovery Conference held on September 11, 2026, at the Hilton Oak Lawn. The conference provided an opportunity to engage with recovery professionals, community organizations, and stakeholders committed to advancing recovery support services. Participation in recovery-focused events such as this supports collaboration, professional development, resource sharing, and continued efforts to reduce stigma surrounding substance use and mental health challenges.

The conference also reinforced the importance of person-centered, recovery-oriented approaches and strengthening partnerships to improve access to services and resources for individuals and families impacted by substance use disorders.

The Council reviewed the ongoing Workforce Development Workshops facilitated through Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council. These workshops are held every Wednesday and are designed to support justice-involved individuals and people in recovery as they work toward employment, career advancement, and long-term stability.

Workshop topics focus on employment readiness, resume development, interview preparation, job search strategies, workplace expectations, and connecting participants with employment opportunities and community resources. The initiative recognizes that workforce development is an essential component of recovery, successful reentry, and self-sufficiency.

The Council emphasized the importance of reducing employment barriers, promoting equitable access to workforce opportunities, and strengthening partnerships with employers and workforce development agencies to support sustainable employment outcomes for the populations served.

The Council discussed the Health and Wellness Fair held on September 15, 2026. The event focused on promoting community health, wellness, prevention, and access to supportive services and resources.

The fair provided an opportunity to connect community members with health and wellness information, community-based organizations, and resources that support physical health, mental wellness, recovery, and overall quality of life. Community outreach initiatives such as this help increase awareness of available services, encourage preventive care, and strengthen relationships between residents and service providers.

The Council recognized the importance of continued community engagement and collaboration to address barriers to care, reduce stigma, and promote a holistic approach to health and recovery throughout the service area.

Open Issues:

NO OPEN ISSUES

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

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.

The Council discussed the upcoming Workforce Development Training scheduled for November 17, 2026 at 10:00AM, at Prairie Trails Public Library District, located at 8449 S. Moody Ave., Burbank, IL 60459. The training will focus on supporting justice-involved individuals and people in recovery by providing workforce development education, employment readiness resources, and information to help participants overcome barriers to sustainable employment.

The training will emphasize the importance of career planning, resume preparation, interview skills, job search strategies, workplace professionalism, and identifying employment opportunities that support long-term stability and self-sufficiency. The event will also serve as an opportunity to connect participants with community resources and workforce support services.

Kates Community Initiatives ROSC Council will continue to promote workforce development as an essential component of recovery, successful community reentry, and personal growth. The Council will explore opportunities to engage community partners and encourage participation among individuals who may benefit from these services.

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: Ron Bratcher
Second: Cheronne Mayes

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

NEXT MEETING: Friday, October 16, 2026, at 1:00PM via Zoom.