

Effingham County ROSC Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, June 15, 2026

Time: 1:00-2:00 pm

Location: 104 Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

Meeting Facilitator: Samantha Hicks

Attendees:

In person:

Beth Wise (ECHD, Family Connections & Family Resource Center Supervisor)

Carmen Richey (TASC Deflection Supervisor)

Justin Carder (IDHS Office Administrator)

Kat Pennington (Partners for Progress Deflection Specialist, TASC)

Lauren Raymond (Family Services Program Specialist, Effingham County Connections, ECHD)

Michelle Buckley (Oxford House Outreach worker, Southern IL region)

Norbert Soltwedel (Effingham County Board member)

Olivia Jenkins (Hour House Prevention program facilitator)

Paul Kuhns (Effingham County Sheriff)

Samantha Hicks (Effingham County ROSC Council Coordinator)

Stephanie Mercer (Effingham County ROSC Council Recovery Navigator)

Tommy Alsobrooks (Oxford House Senior Outreach worker)

Toni Randall (ROSC Region 4 TA)

Zoom:

Caleb Nehring (Aetna Community Outreach Coordinator)

Carrie Downen (DCFS Recruitment and Resource)

Heather Greenwood (Southeast Illinois Area Health Education Center at Wabash General Hospital)

Katy Frederick (Heartland Human Services SUD counselor/intern)

Keith Powell (Southern IL Safe Families for Children)

Kelly Buscher (Effingham County Case Management, Effingham Public Library)

Kristin Davis (Family Guidance Center's Regional Substance Use Prevention Integration Center)

Maggie Gouchenouer (Investigative State Case Analyst for IL State Police SEIDTF)

Nathan Nichols (CEFS Public Transit Mobility Manager)

Minutes

Introductions

Council meeting attendees introduced themselves and the agencies they represent or explained why they were attending this meeting. Samantha explained the mission of the ROSC Council since there were new members at this meeting.

Nathan stated County IL Public Transportation will change over to Central Illinois Public Transit. Effingham has become CIPT's grantee—this will probably happen sometime in July. Services will stay the same; dispatch is back to 6 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday.

Resource and/or event updates

Samantha stated Hour House is still looking for an Effingham County ROSC Council Coordinator to take her place. She asked the Council to pass along her contact information to anyone they might know who is interested. They can also apply on indeed or directly on the Hour House website>> <https://hourhouserecovery.org/effingham-co-coord>.

Carmen announced she will be leaving TASC/Deflection this week. She stated she is starting at Hour House as a women's halfway counselor. She stated that is where she started her journey 19 years ago, so it is coming full circle!

Beth announced they had their first recipient of their opioid funds program. There are criteria to meet such as being a resident of Effingham for 6 months, a family unit, and have to be actively engaged in recovery supports to receive any funds to help with rent, utilities, etc. She stated the point of the program is to empower individuals, not enable them, so the interview process is conducted by Beth and in-depth. Any questions can be directed to Beth at the Effingham Health Department.

Keith stated Safe Families for Children had attended a Vacation Bible School where a child asked if "they were there to take them away." He stated it was a very interesting perspective to see come from a child and encouraged the Council to seek out the perspectives of those we serve.

Heather stated there was group in Flora that she is a part of that talks to junior high kids about various topics during camps that are offered—thinking about college, financial literacy, budgeting, mental health, substance use, etc. She stated some of the school resource officers are going to come in and talk about online safety. She stated the kids are in small groups and are very interactive.

Sheriff asked if ROSC will be at the Farmer's Market September 12th for the awareness event—**Samantha** stated, yes, but we have to get insurance and also ask the infrastructure county board if it's ok to use the county parking lot behind the Sheriff's office. **Sheriff** stated he could probably get the ok without doing that. He will follow up with Samantha.

Norbert stated the county fair would be a good place for ROSC to set up a booth. **Stephanie** asked what dates the fair is held—Council member stated August 1st-7th.

Council Successes

Stephanie shared she was able to assist in getting a male into Oxford House and Sheriff's MAR program and his girlfriend into El Shaddai. She said in 2 weeks they've really turned their lives around and are heading in a good direction. Another huge success was that last week, she was able to go into the jail and talk to a couple of inmates to get them resources and support. She stated she was able to go back into the jail this week and see 5 more inmates, figure out their needs, and was able to sign 3 of them up for the MAR program. Today, she's going back to see 3-4 more inmates to support and identify their needs. She stated the success is because of Sheriff and his willingness to let her into the jail. **Sheriff** stated that he doesn't let just anyone in the jail and the jail is not open to do so, but, he's realized he needs help and so do the inmates.

He stated allowing Stephanie to do work in the jail has put a whole different spin on the MAR program and he's grateful to be helping more people. He stated this has all come about because of relationships—he got to know and trust Samantha, then has come to know Stephanie. He stated, "She is in the right place." He stated he has had tremendous help from Tommy and also a certain healthcare provider who is willing to take about anybody when it comes to MAR. He stated he is really pleased to have everyone working together.

Samantha stated that this is what ROSC is all about--- 3 year ago, this county didn't have recovery housing, a MAR program in the jail, MAR healthcare providers, peer support. She stated this is systemic change and touches the continuum of care aspect for those we serve.

Kat stated a client had given her a fake phone number—she was able to track down her client's mother who connected her to the client. The client was very apprehensive, almost combative, about going to treatment. After a couple of days, the client decided they wanted to go. While the client has been in 30-day treatment, they decided they wanted to do 90 days. Kat stated it's been really cool to see the transition with this client because she remembers when she was there herself.

Justin stated he finds difficulty in knowing how to help people with SUD because he has not lived it himself. The Council had a discussion on the way people without lived experience help—showing up to this meeting and being involved, talking about resources with his co-workers, family, others to get the word out, just being an ally who support recovery, being willing to do actionable work and following through.

Michelle stated the women in Oxford House VOLTA are all trained on their books now and most of them are working. They're trained in the service positions and will be doing interviews for house members for VOLTA on their own now. She stated it's always really awesome to see women start living their live self-sufficiently—getting jobs, paying bills, having faith in themselves and seeing their mindset shift from "I can't do this" to "I can do this." **Olivia** asked if VOLTA needs anything right now as far as donations—Michelle stated cleaning supplies and toiletry items. **Justin** explained how to create a wish list on Amazon to send to the Council.

Tommy stated the men's houses (Wabash & Lineage) have really stepped into their responsibilities as well. He stated Chapter 20 in IL has been formed here in Effingham County with their second Chapter meeting being this Saturday for the actual Chapter officers in their respective positions. He stated they are also being offered trainings on the Oxford House model. He also stated there may be an extra screening of the Oxford House documentary *Welcome Home and Oxford House story*. If there's interest in partnering, reach out to Tommy or Samantha to connect you with Tommy.

Kelly stated she wanted to give a shout out to Tommy. She stated he has been excellent to work with and that they have referred at least 2 people there and he's personally come to get them to take them to the house; he's going above and beyond to get people help!

FY27 Goals Discussion (rough draft)

Samantha went over the rough draft of the FY27 goals and objectives. She stated these goals are a continuation of the FY26 goals. She stated she would love input and feedback as we continue to reach these goals in FY27. She also stated that the Roads to Recovery & Healing Families committees are always welcoming new members who want to do actionable work towards these goals.

Goal 1: By June 30, 2027, the Effingham County ROSC Council will expand and strengthen the volunteer transportation network for individuals accessing residential treatment and recovery-related services by continuing to educate outside agencies about need for volunteer transportation and add 15 volunteers.

Goal 2: Increase awareness and assess readiness among Effingham County agencies to implement the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist/Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CPRS/CRSS) model by engaging stakeholders, gathering information, and identifying opportunities and barriers to establishing Certified Peer roles by June 30, 2027.

Goal 3: Strengthen support systems for persons in recovery and their families by June 30, 2027.

Upcoming events

- **2nd Annual S.U.R.E. (Substance Use Resource & Education) Symposium:** August 11th from 9am-4pm @ Oil Belt Christian Service Camp, Flora
- **4th Annual Candlelight Vigil:** August 31st, 6:30-8:00pm; Bliss Park, Effingham
- **Invisible Victims: Drug-Endangered Children & Human Trafficking Training:** September 24th from 9am-12pm @ Clay County Health Department, Flora

****NEXT ROSC COUNCIL MEETING****

Date: Monday, July 20, 2025 @ 1:00-2:00PM

Where: 104 E. Blohm Ave, Effingham & Zoom

Contact emails:

ROSC Council Coordinator: Samantha Hicks; samanthah@hourhouserecovery.org

ROSC Council Recovery Navigator: Stephanie Mercer; stephanieme@hourhouserecovery.org

ROSC Program Supervisor: Jenna Hays; jennah@hourhouserecovery.org

Where to find past meeting minutes: <https://www.govst.edu/Recovery-Support/South-Central-IL-ROSC/EFRC-ROSC-Council/>



Effingham County ROSC Council Facebook page

