

## Lake County ROSC Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 25, 2026

10:30 am -12:30

Virtual Meeting Topic: LC ROSC The Importance Of A Warm Handoff

**ROSC** - 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 purpose of this meeting is to be intentional about building and maintaining strong relationships with the faith-based community. Providing recovery related education, resources to assist this community to become a recovery focus, friendly, and prepared to embrace those in the process of change.

Amanda Douglas opened the meeting.

LaSheena Jenkins , Manager of NIRCO's Warm Hand Off program was introduced. She shared that Warm Handoff's purpose is to bridge service gaps after identifying individuals arriving at NIRCO with no prior connection to referring organizations.

The Warm Hand Off Project's methodology, year-end-data, and sustainability plan as funding concludes.

### **Warm Handoff vs. Referral Framework**

**Warm handoff definition:** Transfer of care through face-to-face, phone, or video interaction **in the presence** of the person being helped, ensuring trust and connection are transferred alongside information.

### **Key distinctions:**

- **Referral:** Contact info given; individual follows up alone; outcome unknown
- **Warm handoff:** Staff initiates direct contact; participant present during process; connection witnessed and supported; outcome tracked

**Real-world impact:** Team drove a woman leaving domestic violence recovery to shelter and stayed with her through intake, ensuring she didn't enter alone during moment of uncertainty.

## **Program Data and Impact**

### **Annual metrics (one-year period):**

- 1,865 outreach contacts conducted
- 300+ warm handoffs delivered
- 428,000 supports provided
- 536 Narcan kits distributed
- 18 MOUs established with community partners

### **April 2026 intake profile:**

- 100% identified housing as primary need
- 87.5% had substance use disorder
- 75% had co-occurring mental health challenges

**Demographics served:** Majority identify as Black or Hispanic; 16 peers primarily speak Spanish, confirming bilingual access is a warm handoff requirement, not optional feature.

**Housing stability:** 15 households kept from losing housing through rental assistance for individuals with substance use disorder/opioid use disorder.

## **Common System Failures**

### **Pitfalls identified:**

- System gives resource list without follow-up
- Assumes peer can navigate independently
- Transfers information without transferring trust
- Marks case complete at referral point

### **Peer experience when handoff fails:**

- Calls go to voicemail; expected to articulate needs eloquently
- Don't show up because they expect rejection
- Walk into new system feeling like stranger
- Fall through gap between providers

**Core principle:** The peer doesn't fail the handoff—the handoff fails the peer.

## **Partner Directory and Contact Coordination**

### **Organizations added to ROSC warm handoff directory:**

- Adult Probation SAP program (LaVelle)
- Justice Impacted Families
- Public Defender's Office Social Work
- TASC
- Abraxas, Woodridge, Southwood Interventions

**MOU request:** TASC requested initiating MOU process with Lake County ROSC.

## **Collaboration Requirements**

### **What partners should provide:**

- Updated contact information reaching actual person, not general inbox
- Name of specific person who can receive warm calls
- Secondary contact when primary person leaves organization
- Information needs for receiving peer well

**Co-located model:** NERCO operates through co-location at partner sites, going to people rather than expecting them to find services.

## **NIRCO Service Access**

**Walk-in protocol:** NERCO accepts walk-ins; even if only intake is completed during visit, individual will be served and appointment scheduled for return.

**Advance scheduling:** Organizations can call Amanda to schedule intake in advance and arrange proper transfer channels.

**Intake contact:** Amanda designated as initial contact for scheduling and transfers.

## **Balancing Support and Independence**

### **Approach to peer autonomy:**

- Build rapport and listen to story to pinpoint capabilities
- Ask directly what peer feels confident doing
- Create partnership: "I can talk to them about this part, but I need you to advocate in this area"
- Case-by-case assessment through intentional presence
- Trust-building enables peers to share limitations

**Peer specialist excellence:** Sheila Wagner highlighted for personalized callback/follow-up efforts, finding high notes and silver linings, bringing whole self to work as lived experience value.

Amanda again shared the ROSC Connect App implementation and platform capabilities.

- Member calendar for community events with volunteer opportunities
- Partner directory with direct organizational contacts
- In-house electronic referrals with signature capability
- Integration with community portal

**Adoption requirement:** All attendees directed to sign up and sign in via QR code; app will serve as primary tracking and coordination tool going forward

Amanda then opened the meeting for all to share their upcoming events.

## **Upcoming Community Events**

- **Lake County Opioid Initiative 5K:** August 30th, recovery and overdose awareness event
- **Mental Health Awareness Fair:** Jesus Name Apostolic Church, Sunday after 9:30 AM service
- **Teen Summer Program:** NIRCO Hub, 12-2 PM this week, ages 13-19, planning summer activities
- **Digital Boot Camp:** July 6th at Hope Center, two-week class (Mon-Wed, 10 AM-12 PM), basic computer skills training, graduates receive free laptop upon passing assessment
- **Third Annual Faith-Based Brunch:** June 13th, NIRCO Hub, 10 AM-2 PM, Narcan training and panel on faith organizations addressing community challenges
- **Waukegan Pride:** Saturday, May 30th, parade at 2 PM, festival at 3 PM

NIRCO Services offered by JIF (Justice Impacted Families)

**Anger management:** Thursday hybrid sessions, Friday in-person at NIRCO Hub (afternoon), Spanish sessions on Mondays.

### **Parenting programs:**

- Eight-week parenting class every Thursday at NERCO Hub
- Parenting from Behind Bars: Four-week program, twice weekly at Lake County Jail (Division 6 South), accepting referrals through Jessica.

### **Mission and Vision**

**Mission:** Creating a community that embraces and cultivates recovery while reducing stigma of substance use disorder and mental health.

**Vision:** Recovery-ready community where every individual and family has equitable access to prevention, recovery support, wellness, and long-term stability.

**Purpose:** Align and strengthen community systems so individuals, families, and communities impacted by substance use and mental health challenges can achieve long-term recovery.

### **Action Item**

- Amanda: Add faith-based brunch summit save-the-date to ROSC app
- Amanda: Transfer Deidre's meeting notifications from personal to work email
- Organizations: Submit warm handoff contact people to be added to partner directory
- All attendees: Familiarize with Ross Connect app features and begin using for coordination
- TASC (Ryan): Initiate MOU process with Lake County ROSC

### **New Attendees**

- **Marcelo Avarar:** First-time attendee
- **Sean:** Peer recovery support specialist for NACASA Behavioral Health, first-time attendee

Next ROSC Meeting June 25, 2026, at 10:30 am.