

FY26 Strategic Plan
Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council
May 18, 2026
ROSC Co-Coordinators - Lauren Metzler & Gerald Lott
Lead Agency - Sauk Valley Voices of Recovery

Council Mission: The mission of the Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council is to facilitate stakeholders collaborating to build and empower communities of recovery to help Lee/Whiteside Counties become more healthy and safe communities by improving health, wellness, and resiliency for individuals and families, with or at risk of substance use/mental/behavioral health inclinations.

Council Vision: The Lee/Whiteside Council will work collaboratively bringing all sectors of the community to work together to support recovery from SUD and Mental health Issues.

Needs Assessment:

Demographics of Survey Respondents

A total of **173 respondents** completed the survey. The demographic characteristics of respondents are summarized below.

Age

Respondents represented a broad range of age groups, with the largest proportion falling between **25 and 54 years old**.

- **35–44 years:** 53 respondents (30.6%)
- **45–54 years:** 38 respondents (21.9%)
- **25–34 years:** 34 respondents (19.6.%)
- **55–64 years:** 20 respondents (11.5%)
- **18–24 years:** 11 respondents (6.3%)
- **65 and over:** 9 respondents (5.2%)
- **Under 18:** 7 respondents

Gender

The majority of respondents identified as female.

- **Female:** 120 respondents (69.3%)
- **Male:** 51 respondents (29.4%)
- **Prefer not to identify:** 2 respondents

Race

Most respondents identified as White/Caucasian, with representation from several racial groups.

- **Caucasian / White:** 126 respondents (72.8%)
- **Native American:** 20 respondents (11.5%)
- **African American / Black:** 13 respondents (7.5%)
- **Two or more races:** 5 respondents (2.8%)

- **Asian:** 1 respondent (.5%)
- **Pacific Islander:** 1 respondent (.5%)
- **No response:** 4 respondents

Ethnicity

Most respondents identified as Non-Hispanic.

- **Non-Hispanic:** 144 respondents (83.2%)
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 23 respondents (13.2%)
- **No response:** 4 respondents

Income Level

Household income varied, with the largest group reporting middle-income ranges.

- **\$50,000–\$99,999:** 52 respondents (30%)
- **\$25,000–\$49,999:** 44 respondents (25.4%)
- **Under \$24,999:** 29 respondents (16.7%)
- **\$100,000 and over:** 11 respondents (6.3%)
- **Prefer not to say:** 34 respondents (19.6%)

Primary Language

- **English:** 173 respondents

• Community demographics (population, race/ethnicity, poverty level, etc.).

Whiteside and Lee Counties, both predominantly rural, face significant challenges in addressing substance use disorders (SUD). Together, these counties have a combined population of around 88,000.

Demographic	Lee County	Whiteside County
Population (~2020)	~34,145	~55,691
Median Age	~43.7 yrs	~44.4 yrs
White (%)	~83–91%	~85–86%
Hispanic/Latino (%)	~7–8%	~12–13%
Median Household Income	~\$68.4K	~\$64.5K
Poverty Rate	~11–12%	~12%
Rural/Urban	~53% rural	~44% rural

Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau & ACS estimates unless otherwise noted.

- **Overdose data from the service area.**

Overdose deaths remain a serious concern. While opioid-related deaths in Illinois declined overall in 2023, rural areas continue to experience higher rates of overdose and slower response times. Additionally, community stigma and “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) attitudes often delay or block efforts to establish essential recovery housing or treatment facilities. These negative perceptions further limit opportunities for those struggling with addiction to get the help they need.

- **Discuss the gaps highlighted by the council’s community survey results.**

The Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council Community Needs Survey illustrated a variety of needs regarding SUD in our community.

#1 There is a great amount of stigma in this community regarding alcoholism and SUD. This area is made up of many small, interconnected towns with very small social circles. We see people refusing to ask for assistance or avoiding meetings due to perceptions that they will be judged negatively by the community.

#2 Lack of youth-oriented recovery support creates an environment that is fertile for youth SUD. We are seeing an influx of synthetic drugs like Kratom. Marijuana and cannabis are becoming more available due to legalization and youth vaping is seeing an increase. These have been shown to create pathways to harder and more potent drugs. Other than health class lectures, many of our local students are not introduced to the facts of addiction or the pathways and options to recovery.

Council Outreach and Communication Plans:

- **Method:**

The Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council will communicate with the community via:

- Council Meetings
- E-mail Blasts
- Public Presentations
- Pro-social events
- Social media
- Flyers
- Billboards
- Radio/Newspaper

- **Objectives:**

The objective of all ROSC Communication is to direct the attention of the local community to solution-based recovery and to fight stigma.

- **Target Audiences:**

1. People that are in the contemplation stage of their recovery.
2. People living in recovery who are willing to share their success.
3. General population whom we hope to soften their negative feelings about addiction and build support where such can be done.

• **Communication Channels & Frequency:**

Channel	Purpose	Frequency	Responsible Party
Monthly ROSC Council Meeting	Share updates, events, training opportunities, success stories, and partner resources.	Monthly	SVVOR with ROSC input
Email Updates & Partner Communication	Share time-sensitive updates, meeting reminders, referrals, and collaboration opportunities.	As Needed	ROSC Coordinator & SVVOR
Sober Night Out	Reduce isolation and promote healthy, enjoyable alternatives to substance use	Monthly	SVVOR & ROSC coordinators
Community Outreach & Presentations	Increase public awareness, reduce stigma, and educate the community about recovery, substance use disorders, and overdose prevention.	Monthly and as Requested	SVVOR, ROSC & Peer Leaders
Outreach Flyers	Promote community events, training, recovery services, and educational opportunities across the Ogle/DeKalb region.	As Needed	ROSC Coordinator & SVVOR staff
One-to-One Engagement	Build trust, connect individuals to services, and support follow-through during transitions.	Daily	Peer recovery support staff & partner agencies

Roles and Responsibilities:

ROSC Council Co-Coordinators

The ROSC Council Coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and implementation of ROSC activities. Key responsibilities include organizing monthly ROSC meetings, preparing agendas and minutes, coordinating partner communication, supporting outreach and engagement efforts and ensuring progress toward strategic goals. The coordinator also serves as the primary point of contact for community partners. In addition, the ROSC Coordinator serves as a referral link to the RCO, connecting individuals and families with appropriate services—including

treatment and recovery support. The Co-Coordinators will each take responsibility of building stakeholder relationships in one of the two counties.

Assistant ROSC Coordinator

The Assistant ROSC Council Coordinator provides support and consistency for the ROSC Council. Responsibilities include providing recording meeting minutes, meeting notification, bookkeeping and other assistant clerical jobs.

Council Goals, Objectives, and Outcome Measures:

Goal #1: Stigma Reduction

To build a strong recovery-friendly community, the role of stigma reduction is crucial. We will reduce stigma by releasing 9 monthly stigma-reduction campaign messages on radio, newspaper and outdoor advertising by June 30, 2026 delivering educational and promotional messages to further the acceptance of and foster awareness of community need for the support of services for SUD/MH

Objectives for Year 1:

- *Analyze survey data to determine FY27 focus of campaign by March 15, 2026.*
- *Develop draft campaign messages by February 1, 2026.*
- *Develop 3 potential FY27 graphic designs by July 1, 2026.*
- *Submit messaging design options to ROSC Council for vote by July 30, 2026.*
- *Finalize campaign design and messaging for FY27 campaign kickoff in August of 2026.*
- *Release campaign message monthly beginning in August 2026.*
- *Continue planning (during Spring 2027) for next round of messages to be released during FY28.*

Progress Achieved:

- *Released "Recovery Lives Here" campaign beginning in October 2025 with bi-monthly presentations of subjects living in recovery and lost to addiction.*

Next Steps:

- *Measure Year 1 campaign impact and make adjustments based on community feedback*
- *Develop additional messages (for Years 2 and 3) based on Year 1 feedback.*
- *Will facilitate in-person presentations by campaign subjects*
- *Expand outreach through community events and partnerships.*

Outcome/ Output Measures:

- *# of Campaign subjects presented*
- *# of presentations conducted*
- *# of exposures via (radio, print, outdoor and social media)*
- *Feedback from focus groups, other data collected about campaign materials.*
- *Reduction of local stigma evidenced by annual Community Needs Assessment*

3-Year Strategic Plan (Long-Term Direction)

Goal:

The ROSC Council will continue the awareness campaign, with monthly stigma-reduction campaign messages (through social media, flyers, events and other distribution methods) released in FY27 and FY28; with the campaign concluding by June 30, 2028. The goal being a 15% increase in positive responses to recovery acceptance questions over the 2025 Community Needs Assessment

Objectives:

- *FY27 and FY28, develop 6 stigma-reduction campaign messages per year featuring a local resident that is living in recovery and a local person that has succumbed to their addiction.*
- *FY27 and FY28, conduct 2 surveys per year via social media to test campaign messaging and design.*
- *FY27 and FY28, (with one release distributed every 2 months), release all 6 finalized campaign messages through multiple platforms (social media, websites, flyers).*
- *Increase number of community survey respondents indicating they believe individuals who use substances deserve respect.*

Outcome Measures:

- # of campaign messages developed and released
- Results of social media surveys conducted
- Council feedback results
- # of campaign materials distributed and exposures
- *Increase in community awareness of recovery support services and support for individuals with substance use disorder as evidenced in annual Community Needs Assessment*

Goal #2: Ensure effective service delivery and prioritize equity for SUD/MH youth

The ROSC Community needs survey of 2025 indicates that 40% of respondents began their substance use disorder before the age of 21. The Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council will collaborate with local stakeholders to assess community need, support and feasibility of a local recovery high school to ensure that recovery support services are available to local youth thus ensuring effective service delivery and prioritize equity for SUD/MH youth.

Objectives for Year 1:

- Form work group with community stakeholders to flesh out plans for recovery high school
- Gain knowledge of operational protocols and create partnerships with presently successful recovery high schools to create operational template
- *Analyze youth SUD/MH service data of local treatment/counseling providers to determine local need and support*
- *Gain stakeholder commitment for funding options and opportunities beginning May 1, 2026.*
- *Develop informational materials with Regional Office of Education by July 1, 2026.*
- *Provide community education through 2 local events such as showing the recovery high school documentary "Generation Found" in conjunction with a Q&A educational session afterwards in order to gain community support and reduce stigma*
- *Conduct bi-weekly work group meetings (to develop messages and strategies) beginning April 2026.*
- *Host educational reception with local stakeholders and National Chair of the Association of Recovery Schools in May of 2026 to disseminate educational and informational materials in collaboration with the Regional Office of Education.*
- *Conduct visits to 4 Community High Schools to build connection/partnership with prospective students in need*

Progress Achieved:

- *Co-Coordinator visited PEASE Academy in Minneapolis and partnered with experienced recovery school. Gained valuable insight, education and direction and understood the feasibility of the project through partnerships with current recovery High school, Regional Office of Education .*
- *ROSC Council member (Regional Office of Education) visited Hope Academy in Indianapolis and learned from successful organization. Gained valuable insight, education and direction and understood the feasibility of the project through partnerships with current recovery High school.*
- *Developed workgroup and met regularly. Group includes representatives of education, specialty courts, treatment providers, recovery community and faith-based social services*
- *Conducted 2 documentary showings with 35+ participants.*

- Press release and activity garnered local newspaper and radio coverage of initiative to develop school

Next Steps

- *Collaborate with workgroup to develop additional strategies (for Years 2 and 3) based on Year 1 progress.*
- Conduct financial and census feasibility study of local recovery high school by December, 2026
- Expand support and awareness through community events and partnerships.
- Sign collaboration MOU's by and between local stakeholders

Outcome/ Output Measures:

- # of grant applications submitted by various partner organizations
- # of focus groups conducted and data collected
- Feedback from data collected by schools and local treatment providers

3-Year Strategic Plan (Long-Term Direction)

Goal:

The ROSC Council will continue to support the Recovery High School Collaborative by educating the community about the benefits of recovery supports in the education system and referring families to the Regional Office of Education when appropriate. The workgroup will apply for grants to support the collaborative and recruit community members for volunteer participation.

Objectives:

- Support the workgroup toward a functioning recovery high school available to community by Jan. 1, 2028
- Assist local high schools to create referral processes and begin referring
- Facilitate engaged support of recovery high school among local recovery community (12 Step, Harm Reduction, faith-based, etc.)
- Support the expansion of recovery high school catchment area to include students from Carroll, Winnebago and DeKalb counties

Outcome Measures:

- # of successful grant applications and donations
- # of referrals for admission to the school
- # of focus groups conducted
- Focus group feedback results
- *Increase in community awareness of recovery support services and support for individuals with substance use disorder/mental health per our annual Community Needs Assessment*