

# FY23-FY25 STRATEGIC PLAN

## *Southland Recovery Coalition*



**SOUTHLAND RECOVERY COALITION**

943 EAST LINCOLN HIGHWAY ✦ FORD HEIGHTS, IL 60417

[WWW.SOUTHLANDRECOVERY.ORG](http://WWW.SOUTHLANDRECOVERY.ORG)

## OVERVIEW

Recovery is defined as a process of change through which an individual makes a commitment to improve their health and well-being, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Although an estimated 400,000 south suburban of the nearly 700,000 residents are in recovery from a substance use disorder, recovery is often misunderstood. Recovery is a highly personal endeavor, and the exact process is unique to each individual.

The South Recovery Coalition conducted hundreds of surveys and listened closely to hundreds of people with lived experience of recovery and used their thoughts and expertise to guide this plan. Recovery is more than clinical treatment, although treatment can be a component of recovery. Recovery is about reclaiming a person's everyday life. People in recovery need stable housing, purpose, health, and community support. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines these as the four pillars of recovery, and this plan builds on those pillars.

This two-year strategic plan for FY23 - FY25 sets forth a vision of a system of care that supports individuals and families impacted by those suffering from addiction throughout their lives, and that vision will guide us as we focus on next steps to improve recovery resources. The Southland Recovery Coalition is committed to making the work in this plan happen, and we look forward to partnering with people and organizations across the Southland region to give all residents the opportunity to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and reach their full potential.

***The mission of SRC is to eradicate the stigmas associated with addiction recovery by promoting systemic improvements to the overall health, wellness, and recovery of individuals and families impacted by substance use, addiction, and mental illness.***

## Southland Recovery Coalition Partners

**Angelia F. Smith, Executive Director, Cornerstone Community Development Corporation, NFP Lead Agency**

Ms. Smith was appointed the Executive Director of Cornerstone CDC in 2005 (formerly known as the Ford Heights Community Service Organization, Inc. Ms. Smith is also a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and DePaul University. Ms. Smith is also Notary Public, Certified Notary Signing Agent, Certified Illinois Municipal Treasurer and Licensed Insurance Producer in the State of Illinois. Ms. Smith's professional and educational background has a major emphasis on business and financial administration. Although her most of her professional experience has been in the private sector, she has worked with non-profit agencies inclusive of Human Enrichment Development Association, child welfare and social services agency and the Catholic Charities' senior services agency. Ms. Smith currently serves as President of the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA), member of the Executive Committee of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Cook County; Co-Chair of the South Suburban Council on Homelessness (SSCH). She is the Treasurer of the Southland Human Services Leadership Council. Her private sector experience includes twenty years of management roles in banking as Assistant VP of Operations, seventeen years of Municipal public service the capacity of Director of Administration and Finance.

***Yvonne M. Orr, Executive Director, Indigenous Community Service Center (ICSC)***

ICSC is a tax-exempt Indigenous-Aboriginal Tribal Religious nonprofit organization founded in 2014 and headquartered in Will County, IL, with programmatic and training spaces located in the south suburban region, on the south side of Chicago, as well as Joliet. The mission of the Indigenous Community Service Center is to create and sustain health and human services excellence and enhance the nature and flow of resources to under-served and/or low-income youth, individuals, and families in the greater Chicagoland region. ICSC is a holistic community-based agency hub for enriching lives and preparing individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, excel academically and learn marketable skills in the following areas: Social Justice, Academic Enhancement, Social Development, Crisis Intervention, Recovery Support Services, and Life Skill Enrichment. ICSC has served over 15,000 youth and their families since 2017, with a variety of comprehensive services and recovery and mental health and wellness resources. Yvonne has been in the communications and nonprofit industry for nearly 30 years and formerly was the Chief Professional Officer of United Way's South-Suburban Regional Office. She is a certified community organizer, Recovery Coach, Peer Coach, and Credit Restoration Specialist. She has a BA from Hampton University in Political Science; completed master's work at Spertus Institute in Human Services Administration; and is pursuing an Executive MBA with a concentration in Organizational Leadership at the Quantic School of Business & Technology.

***Kathryn Straniero, Executive Director, Together We Cope (TWC)***

A prevention agency based in Tinley Park, Illinois, TWC provides resources to families in temporary crisis, enabling them to stay in their homes. Since 1982, Together We Cope has been bridging the gap for south suburban residents in 27 communities by supplying food, shelter, clothing and referrals, empowering them to return to self-sufficiency. With over 200 volunteers, generous community donations of food, clothing and household goods, and groceries purchased from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, TWC serves more than 1,500 families each month. Their efforts are aimed at preventing homelessness for hard-working families and individuals who experience an unexpected temporary loss of income. We are able to provide basic necessities like food, shampoo, diapers and clothing and help with prescriptions, past due rent, mortgage, utility payments, school supplies and Christmas presents for children. By providing help in these areas, it allows families to use their limited money on housing, utilities, and medical needs while they work hard to get back on their feet again. Ms. Straniero is also the Bremen Township Supervisor. Kathryn received a liberal arts degree from Marymount College. She has a long career in public service and has served on Arbor Park School District 145 Board of Education, where she was an advocate of early childhood education.

***Pivoting During a Pandemic: Hosting Virtual Meetings & Workshops***

Many nonprofit organizations have also undergone huge adjustments, both to better serve their communities and just to stay afloat. In April 2020, SRC completely shifted from its traditional services to offer new programs that address the pressing issues of COVID-19. Current challenges helped to highlight the flexibility and thoughtfulness that SRC had to demonstrate moving forward to work to overcome the issues brought by COVID-19. Through the challenge, we uncovered creative, innovative, and inspirational solutions from to continue its programs and activities along a diverse range of focus areas, geographies, and missions. SRC was able to quickly pivot and adapt to meet new demands, provide new services, and prepare to serve a new future using virtual, social media, and distributing PPE with collateral materials. For FY23, we will operate in hybrid mode (both in person and virtually by hosting ROSC Council meetings via Zoom); having pop ups at various sites throughout SRC's targeted region; and having guest speakers to help raise recovery awareness.

### **Recovery Awareness Amidst a New Society (i.e., gender equality, social justice, Gen Z & Y)**

The world is entirely different today than it was in 2020. SRC aims to increase public awareness surrounding mental health and addiction recovery. We seek to initiate policy through community outreach and education, programs, and presentations with a recovery focus and ensure the voices of individuals in recovery are represented.

#### **SRC FY24 Goals**

- Host more pop ups in the Southland to raise recovery awareness.
- Increase opportunities for recovery for underserved and under-resourced populations and communities including people of color, youth, older adults, LGBTQI+, south suburban/rural, veterans and people with disabilities.
- Identify health disparities in high-risk and vulnerable populations and ensure equity for recovery support services through partner agencies (i.e., UMARC as our RCO).
- Expand awareness about best practice models that help recovery providers and advocates implement holistic, self-care strategies to improve recovery outcomes.
- Re-establish SRC's in-person Recovery Conference to increase recovery awareness.
- Re-establish SRC's in-person, monthly ROSC Council meetings periodically during the year.

Through our involvement in various civic and community groups, the Southland Recovery Coalition is working to educate the public about Mental Health & Wellness, Addiction Disease and Recovery. We focus on engagement and empowerment by removing the stigma of recovery in our community. Those in long term recovery have become productive, contributing members of Society. Through our involvement with community coalitions, we will participate in forums and workshops in schools, churches, barber/beauty shops, companies, and partner organizations. In short, we meet people where they are. We work with people with lived experience to help us advocate for "the voiceless".

***Healing is an art. It takes time. It takes practice.  
It takes work. But, most importantly, it takes love.***

This strategic plan outlines three objectives essential for building up the Southland's capacity to support recovery in all its forms.

#### **Create a Recovery-Oriented System of Care.**

This focuses on building a foundation to support a recovery system in the Southland.

#### **Provide Access to Recovery-Oriented Clinical Care.**

Recognizing that many people with substance use disorders do not access treatment, SRC seeks to connect them with recovery supports during pre and post treatment for recovery success.

#### **Equip Communities with Recovery Supports.**

Finally, recovery happens in communities and through community-driven leadership. This helps equip communities and local leaders — such as law enforcement, city councils, and public health agencies — to use this plan to strengthen their local recovery system.

This plan will move the Southland Recovery Coalition to build a community that is working together toward a common understanding of recovery — while recognizing that recovery is a personal, individualized experience. ***All Pathways Lead to Recovery*** is the motto of SRC.

A primary focus is on the **Community Needs** to equip neighborhoods and towns with a range of recovery support services for their residents. This document lays out a plan to address those needs. It is the Southland Recovery Coalition's strategic plan for recovery.

Recovery is a process, not an end state, and often people undergoing this process need more continued support than they are getting. Community members in the South region focus groups indicated that communities of color have a disproportionate burden of health problems. The ongoing long-term divestment in the South region was considered a serious problem by several residents. Participants stated that African Americans, Latinos and immigrants were more likely to live in low-income neighborhoods with fewer job opportunities. Residents emphasized the need to give locally owned businesses incentives to establish in low-income neighborhoods. School districts in low-income communities of color were often described as substandard. In addition, many of the survey respondents from the South region indicated that they had experienced discrimination in their daily lives. From high unemployment to incarceration and recidivism rates, the south suburban region contains some of the most impoverished areas in the nation. Moreover, crime rates oftentimes coincide with some form of undiagnosed mental illness and/or addiction that an individual is trying to "feed" by committing criminal acts to supplement the habit. The Southland Recovery Coalition strives to create a more caring, understanding, and supportive environment for those in recovery by raising awareness about substance use as well as working collaboratively for systems to change.

With the staggering number of Opiate Overdoses in recent months, the use of Narlozone (Narcan) has been instrumental in saving lives. We provide training in the administration of this life saving medication.

We are out in the community, reaching out to those that need us, and to those who want to help. We help raise recovery awareness through outreach, pop-up events, and SRC's speaker series. This includes SRC's the Millennial Mental & Recovery Awareness Summit (first held in June 2022); "Coping during COVID in Recovery" panel discussions featuring a psychologist and community members participating to provide tips to practitioners and members to help those in recovery cope; and Mental Health & Wellness in Recovery.

### **Structural racism and its systemic effects of social and economic determinants of health**

In all of the assessments, the social and structural determinants of health were identified as underlying root causes of the health inequities experienced by communities in south suburban Cook & East Will County communities that, unfortunately, also make up a population of displaced workers, households in food deserts, and poverty. Disparities related to socioeconomic status, environment, safety and violence, and structural racism were highlighted in the Southland region as being key drivers of health outcomes.

### **The Southland Regional Effect of Crime, Violence & Poverty in Substance Use**

Violent crime disproportionately affects residents living in communities of color in Chicago and suburban Cook County.<sup>1</sup> In addition, homicide and firearm-related mortality is highest in the South and Central regions and in African American and Hispanic/Latino communities. Community residents in the South region indicated that a lack of positive community policing, gang activity, drug use/drug trafficking, the presence of guns, domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, property crimes (home break-ins, theft, muggings), and poorly maintained foreclosed or vacant properties were some of the primary reasons that they felt unsafe in their communities.

Exposure to violence not only causes physical injuries and death, but it also has been linked to negative psychological effects such as depression, stress, and anxiety, as well as self-harm and suicide attempts.<sup>2</sup> Additional systems level issues identified by focus group participants include treatment for mental illness and substance use in lieu of incarceration, outreach and advocacy to veterans and former military, advocacy and support for older adults and caregivers, advocacy for the rights and fair treatment of immigrants and refugees, and sustainable funding alternatives for community based organizations.

The Southland Recovery Coalition's geographic area of focus is the south suburban region, which includes the southeastern suburbs of Cook County and the Eastern corridor of Will County. Once a vibrant manufacturing community, the south suburban region has experienced severe disinvestment over the last decade. Further, layoffs, foreclosures, lack of access to resources and mental health issues have pushed the region into leading the rise of substance use and alcoholism, particularly with adult males ages 40 and up. Minority youth in this region are also showing high rates of substance use, contributing to the opioid crisis in the targeted areas. Substance use has greatly decreased the life expectancy for those living in disinvested areas of the Southland. Further impacting the ability of individuals to achieve a quality of life are the multiple modalities faced along with trying to manage their sobriety. Data shows the mortality rate of those in smaller communities as a stark contrast to Chicago's rate of 77 years of age.

### **The Formation of a Coalition out of Crisis Needs Related to Substance Use Disorder**

Southland Recovery Coalition was formed in 2018 to stop the excessive trends of opioid addiction, lack of responsiveness to those in recovery, and poor infrastructure within the south suburbs to fully support those impacted by substance use. Within the proposed service area, a quick Google search as well as the use of several mapping technologies, turn up "zero results" when looking for behavioral/ mental health providers, recovery communities, and/or agencies that are equipped address the multiple modalities that occur for those in recovery. Also, some individuals do not have adequate public transportation to get to the providers that do offer services, with some traveling up to three hours to get to a provider located in the western part of the south suburbs (west of I-57) from the eastern part of the south suburbs bordering Will County.

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<sup>1</sup> Data Sources for Violent Crime: CDPH 2014, CCDPH 2009-2013, IDPH 2012

<sup>2</sup> Mayor, S. (2002). WHO report shows public health impact of violence. The BMJ, 325(7367).

With the strength of its initial partners' experience in providing recovery support services as well as being PRSS Providers, SRC has the capacity and ability to provide a range of recovery-oriented services that can be expanded to reach our targeted communities on a deeper scale. True recovery is about much more than whether someone is taking a substance or not. It is about a person's life: physical, psychological, spiritual, and practical. It can be about healing the hurts of the past and finding an attractive future and they believe in. SRC will be a strong advocate for those in recovery and those impacted by substance use.

From advocating for better public transportation with lawmakers to ensure that people can get to treatment providers to providing a network of services and supports—SRC plans to address the full spectrum of substance use problems, from harmful use to chronic conditions. Through education, communities are strengthened by recovery-oriented activities that can prevent inappropriate substance use before it occurs. Education also raises awareness about the disease and SRC believes there is a need for a dynamic recovery community that provides: Shared experience and understanding; An 'all pathways to recovery', self-defined recovery philosophy; and a vehicle through which to challenge stigma, discrimination, and prejudice.

**Our vision in action**





**We bring awareness to the community & connect families and those addicted with recovery resources.**

**We are actively fighting the drug epidemic by being solution-driven in our goal to save lives.**

**Our approach to recovery**



SRC is creating a recovery-oriented system of care in the south suburban region of Cook County which includes: Ford Heights, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Glenwood, Lansing, Lynwood, Sauk Village and the southeastern corridor of Will County which includes parts of Park Forest, Steger, and University Park; along with Crete and Monee. Individually, our partners have been hard at work to provide a supportive recovery community and believe that the formation of a ROSC Council will greatly help to expand our work while building a holistic, comprehensive network of services, and organized effort to develop a strong public health approach focuses on prevention of substance use problems in the general population. SRC endeavors to create an infrastructure and coordinated system of care with the resources of its partners to effectively address the full range of substance use problems within the south suburban region. SRC has identified critical service gaps to those impacted by substance use towards developing the goals and objectives of this strategic plan.

### **Pivoting During a Pandemic: Hosting Virtual Meetings & Workshops**

In April 2020, SRC completely shifted its focus to offer new programs that address the pressing issues of COVID-19. Current challenges helped to highlight the flexibility and thoughtfulness that SRC had to demonstrate moving forward to work to overcome the issues brought by COVID-19. Throughout these challenging times, SRC uncovered creative, innovative, and inspirational solutions from to continue its programs and activities along a diverse range of focus areas, geographies, and missions. SRC was able to quickly pivot and adapt to meet new demands, provide new services, and prepare to serve a new future using virtual, social media, and distributing PPE with recovery and health-related materials.

## **The Gaps: What are the Greatest Needs in South Suburban Cook County's Recovery Landscape?**



### **Defining Recovery in Our Terms**

The landscape and gap analysis found that SRC's communities, policymakers, and health care providers need a common understanding of recovery to comprehensively advance policies and practices that will help south suburban residents recover from substance use disorders. These terms are defined to educate the readers of this document.

**Recovery:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

### **Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care:**

Clinical systems that support person-centered and self-directed approaches to care that build on the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, and communities to take responsibility for their sustained health, wellness, and recovery from alcohol and drug problems.

### **Recovery Community Organization:**

An independent nonprofit organization that organizes recovery-focused advocacy, hosts community education and outreach programs, and/ or provides peer-based recovery services.

**Recovery Capital:** The resources (social, physical, human, and cultural) necessary to begin and maintain recovery from substance use disorder.

### **Medication-Assisted Recovery:**

(also known as medication-assisted treatment) combines medication to normalize brain functioning with counseling and behavioral interventions. This is considered an evidence-based practice that reduces overdose deaths, reduces drug use, and improves social functioning.





### **Community Connections to Recovery Support Services.**

The Southland region's health care providers, substance use disorder experts, and community leaders often do not know what recovery support services are available in their communities.

### **Community Recovery Housing.**

Housing is one of the basic needs for people in recovery, but there is a lack of accessible and affordable sober living options for people in recovery in the south suburbs and barriers to accessing housing options.

### **Community Peer Specialists.**

Peer specialists provide evidence-based support to people in recovery, but the area does not know the capacity of this workforce in local communities. People in recovery highlighted the need for peer specialist support statewide.

*SRC is focused on creating healthy communities*

## HEALTH

*Overcoming or managing one's diseases or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.*

## HOME

*Establishing a stable, safe, and recovery-supportive place to live.*

*A stable, positive environment is critical*

*Healthy relationships matter most in recovery*

## COMMUNITY

*Engaging in creating a foundation of relationships and social networks to provide support, friendship, love, and hope.*

## PURPOSE

*Participating in meaningful daily activities and having the independence, income, and resources to participate in society.*





**Southland Recovery Coalition (SRC) ROSC Council**  
**Serving the Southern Cook and Northern Will Counties**

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