

## **Westside ROSC Council**

**Lead Agency: Chicago Recovering Communities Coalition**

**Friday, November 17, 2023**

**10am – 3pm**

**Zoom Meeting Information**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/695761637?pwd=eVVOUzJlN3VUcXl6WFJzSnVNOVJXdz09>

**Meeting ID: 695 761 637 | Password: 038839**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome Extended by; Venessa Moreno:** Expressed appreciation for members present, and continued support, and to those who were attending ROSC meetings for the first time. Also mentioned that from now on ROSC will be offering CEU's.

**Participant Introductions:** Serenity House/DuPage ROSC, Guildhaus, CRCC, NIRCO, Faith Way Men's Independent Living Facility, Veteran PLEs, Salvation Army, Chris Rabe, Phoenix Recovery Support Services LLC., Cook County Health, Kalimba House

Our council is made up of members including Hospitals, Treatment Centers, Mental Health Facilities, First Responders, Recovery Programs, Schools, Local Government, Employment Agencies, and importantly persons with lived experience.

**Goals and Objectives by; Venessa Moreno:** Westside ROSC Councils overall goal is to advocate and assist with guiding and monitoring the development of an integrated system of recovery by creating a shared vision to improve availability of services by building a sustainable ROSC Council. Our objectives 1. To create communities of recovery that encourage and integrate resources for the recovering individual, families, and friends. 2. Develop supportive recovery communities that foster growth, respect and understanding of those who have identified problems in the areas of substance use and mental health. 3. Implement effective communication that will allow for inclusion of PLE's (persons with lived experience) voices to be heard.

Open Discussion: Westside ROSC Council Community Assessment

**Council Updates by; Dora Wright:** The December 22, 2023, ROSC meeting is going to be in person, it is going to be a Summit, possibly a working lunch, and we will also provide CEUs. There will be multiple speakers so, please mark your calendars. It is so important that we continue to do the work for the Westside ROSC Council because we have so many people to serve and so many gaps to fill. I want to thank all of you for attending. The address and time are being confirmed. We will keep you updated.

**Speaker: Debra Lewis, MAHRD; NIRCO: Westside ROSC Council Supporting Veterans in Recovery**

I'm Debra Lewis and I am a United States Veteran. I served in the United States Navy for 20 years, retired in 2010. I was a hospital corps man, almost like a medic. I was fortunate to get my nursing license and because of this health education is really very important to me. The biggest thing that I think I bring to any arena is being able to let the community know about different health initiatives and insecurities, especially those that apply to our Veteran population.

Veterans are anyone that served in the United States military before 1980 you only must have done 90 days, after 1981 it was changed to 2 consecutive months that made you a veteran in the military and your discharge status. That means, you had to have an honorable discharge. I bring that up because your eligibility depends on how long you served and how you were discharged determines if you're able to receive care at the VA case.



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## Supporting a Diverse Chicago West Side Community

I retired from the Navy with an honorable discharge. I had service connection; I was discharged with a disability. Whereas the VA pays me a monthly pension and I receive all my health benefits. In some instances, that's not the case.

When Vets don't have the ability to get support from the VA, where do they go? They come to us in the community for their behavioral health, recovery support and social services. Most vets prefer to receive care in the civilian sector because they do not trust the VA system. Those Vets are absorbed into the community and who seek our services.

Illinois is the 10th largest Vet population in the United States. The women Vet demographic in Cook and Lake County are the largest population. These are the areas we are serving from the providers right here in this council meeting. Not only do we work to provide services to our community members, but we also look at how we can carve out programs specific for the vets in our communities. Coming home from the military is unique and is not always welcoming. It's learning how to adjust all over again. My whole adult training was forged from the United States military, the preconceived notion that everything be ran like the military and I bumped heads with others coming back. This made it difficult to assimilate into civilian life.

Vets have a higher propensity for having justice involvement. When Vets end up in jails that regiment jail life resembles the military structured life that is being craved. Some die after retirement because for so long they were used to a certain way of living. Being back home we are just ourselves without military structure, I was left to my own abilities. Sometimes not having assurance, low self-esteem, not knowing who I am leads to depression, suicide and self-medicating with drugs and alcohol. It brings a propensity for mental health issues that's all at the heart of what we do in the recovery work. Being able to meet those where they come from helps us to receive them into our recovery community and helps us to better take care of them.

As I mentioned, some of the major issues facing vets, a lot of those are suicide, mental health challenges, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder, mental health disorders, divorce, and isolation. Unfortunately, things don't end well if Vets do not receive the services they need. They need support to live a healthier life outside the military. The ROSC goals play a part in serving Vets and these supportive needs.

Our goal is to keep the vets alive. We have different events every year, we ask; What is it that you may need and how we can do better to serve you in the community? The whole point of the presentation is: not forgetting about the veteran population and how we can connect with them to create a welcoming community where they can seek out help for their mental health and challenges with addiction.

### **Discussion Highlight Talking Points:**

**Question:** What will be your suggestion to provide information to both Hines Hospital and Jesse Brown VA about our recovery services we have available in the community to support Vets in recovery?

**Answer:** You can start small. Connect with the Recovery Coordinators at the VA locations. You can share calendars with the coordinators when events are taking place so they can provide recovery friendly community events for their Vets. Invite the VA out to see the value your services would provide to their Vets. Invite the coordinator to a ROSC Council meeting so they can see the different services available and can start to create relationships with members.

**Sterling:** I am a veteran, and I did not know that Jesse Brown VA had a recovery coordinator. I think this is a great opportunity now knowing that there's a recovery service person there to link with and share what we provide in terms of housing.

**Dora:** A lot of the difficulties that my family members had growing up were coming back into civilian life. It's a different culture, a different way of living. It's important to be able to get services visible so that they may know where to go. My family didn't know where services were available to help those who were struggling with mental health and addictions coming back from war.



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**Debra:** You can reach out to your VA hospital and your American Legions to provide them with information about local services and to advertise services that you do. Put it out there with the Legion in hopes it will create a partnership. Learn how to operate together instead of your own program. Get a connection to serve the heart of the community instead of serving a handful of people.

**Q: What is the American Legion?**

A: The American Legion the disabled veterans. These are almost like social clubs. It's a place where veterans come to where they feel comfortable with likeminded people, sharing stories who get it because of shared experience.

**Dora:** We are a part of the resource team; we need to be able to service more veterans. Hines is a bit larger and difficult, but we are moving into the West Suburban ROSC and welcoming them. We know that Vets are falling through the cracks, and we want to make sure our recovery services are visible and easily found. People do inquire about veteran housing, specifically veteran housing for women.

**Closing Remarks**

Venessa: Thanked the membership for sharing openly and respectfully so there could be a group effort to address some of these issues facing our Veteran population. We look forward to seeing everyone next month at our Symposium meeting.

Next Westside ROSC Council meeting will be hosted via Zoom December 22, 2023

**Please Join Us in Building a Sustainable Westside ROSC Council**

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