

Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2025

submitted 6/26/24
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The Lee/Whiteside County ROSC Council recently conducted a community needs assessment seeking to understand the needs of the substance use recovery community. There were several needs illustrated in the findings however, the sample size was small. While the Council was able to produce initial findings, it is our opinion that more data is needed to confirm the conclusions of the needs assessment.

As the Lee/Whiteside Council moves into Year 2 (FY25) of activity the Coordinator is submitting this initial 3 year strategic plan. It is understood that further data and input from Council members will provide color and adjustment to this plan. It should also be mentioned that the Lee/Whiteside Council moves in tandem with the Ogle/DeKalb ROSC Council in most areas and activities. Economy of scale, efficiency of activity and resources will show that it is best that the two Councils combine in the future.

The Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council is inextricably linked to the Sauk Valley Voices of Recovery organization. SVVOR is a recovery community organization dedicated to building a robust and inviting recovery community and strengthening all local recovery efforts without regard to pathway. As a supporter of all pathways to recovery, the RCO and both ROSC Councils work with private for-profit organizations, government agencies and offices, non-profits, churches and members of the recovery community individually and in groups. The only requirement for support from the RCO and ROSC Councils is an earnest effort to improve recovery capital and outcomes in our community.

Mission:

The mission of the Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council is to facilitate stakeholders collaborating to build and empower communities of recovery knowing that Lee/Whiteside Counties recover to become 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.

Vision:

People can and do recover. Recovery is reality! Individuals and families determine the support and services they need. Services and support are continuous and cohesive across different phases of care and are coordinated across the various agencies involved in their delivery. Support of recovery is a community responsibility and value. The system is inherently flexible, so it can be responsive to different pathways to recovery. Recovery requires action and ultimately the recoveries are the ones who have to do the work and follow through. More people enabled to practice recovery principles makes for an overall healthier community.

The Council:

The Lee/Whiteside ROSC Council consists of representatives of several groups. Our membership participates in monthly meetings to discuss issues/concepts and initiatives presented by the Coordinator. They also have the opportunity to share their needs and create cooperative opportunities. The Coordinator of the ROSC has access to

a great variety of innovative strategies to combat substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health issues. The Coordinator utilizes the monthly meetings to expose the Council members to these strategies in hope that the presentations will generate interest among the members. The ROSC Council operates on limited funding and hopes to foster shared enthusiasm for new local efforts executed by member collaboration.

The Community Needs Assessment:

The report generated by the Needs Assessment in March of 2024 indicated several findings with regard to the Lee/Whiteside service area.

- Alcohol is the number one abused substance in the community
- Public Transportation is a major need of the recovering community
- Almost one quarter of those that responded began using recreational drugs/alcohol in middle school, ages 10-13
- When asked, the places most associated with drug use in our community are bars and taverns
- Our community believes we are in need of more inpatient treatment options
- For youth from 8th grade to 12th grade, alcohol consumption increases as they get older
- Tobacco, vaping, marijuana and prescription pill use among teens in our area is in alignment with statewide numbers
- The most problematic substances in our community are stimulants, alcohol and marijuana

Along with the survey we interviewed 25 members of the ROSC Councils. To determine their interests and recommendations. We found that Treatment/Detox were most requested, Youth Education and Medically Assisted Treatment were next and Collegiate Recovery and Housing for People in Recovery were the top answers.

Goals:

- 1) Consolidate the 2 ROSC Councils into 1

SVVOR has had difficulty in finding and keeping ROSC staff. Our primary concern is the limited pool of candidates when "being in recovery" is a job qualification. There are also issues due to the fact that the ROSC does not operate independently of the RCO. Many times our ROSC Coordinators are confused about how to keep the momentum of the ROSC without the capacity to commit the staff and resources of the RCO. This is compounded by the fact that there are 2 ROSC Councils even though we try to keep them running concurrently.

SVVOR would like to create 1 ROSC Council Coordinator job with a higher salary and take the requirement of "being in recovery" out. We believe we can find a strong community organizer with social work experience that can lead a combined council.

- 2) Collegiate Recovery Community at Northern Illinois University

The largest college/university in our 4 county area is Northern Illinois University. It is an extremely popular school and a great majority of people from our community have a relationship with this institution. We believe that building a Collegiate Recovery Community on the NIU campus is a way to bring recovery further into the mainstream of our community. We also believe that establishment at NIU will lead to smaller junior colleges in our area opening to the idea of recovery on campus.

A CRC as we define it will include:

- a) Support meetings on campus
- b) Connection with recovery resources in the community
- c) School policies that encourage open recovery among students
- d) Sober activities on campus for students and the general public
- e) Eventual expansion to include separate housing and scholarships

Collegiate Recovery Communities are not a new concept and we have assistance from established school programs like Indiana University.

3) Recovery Farm

The ROSC Councils were introduced to a concept of sober living by Stefani Robinson of Cathy's House in Medina, OH. Stefani explained how her RCO partnered with the local Park District to utilize a farm for recovery living. She detailed how the Recovery Farm provides more than just sober living. It is an opportunity for men to learn vocational farming and animal husbandry. The farm also produces vegetables that are donated to the local food pantries.

Considering the rural nature of our community, we believe the farm concept for sober living might be a great fit. More housing was a major concern of our stakeholders. When SVVOR opened a sober home in a neighborhood in Dixon, IL, the neighbors were very concerned. On a farm, there would be no close neighbors. We have seen that small 5 acre "farm-ettes" are relatively affordable in our area. We also know that there are many agricultural employers that might provide employment for trained and experienced farm workers once trained.

4) Youth Education and Engagement

Further youth education about drugs and alcohol was determined to be a need in our community. There are several local agencies attempting to educate children of all ages. Our investigation implied that there is more opportunity to connect with children in more innovative and engaging ways. While the ROSC Councils have not found strategies to model a program after, it seems all Council members are interested in continuing to investigate options.

5) Assist in bringing more Treatment/Detox and MAR opportunities to the 4 counties

When SVVOR was founded in 2019, one of the first needs identified was additional treatment and detox beds for Medicaid and uninsured patients. That need has not changed. In 2020, Patrick Phelan of Sinnissippi Centers did some financial modeling on a possible purchase of a facility for a treatment center in Lee County. His work determined that under even the best circumstances, such a facility would lose over \$350,000 annually. Subsequently, SVVOR has assisted in driving local patients to treatment and detox options across the state and spent thousands of dollars in travel.

The ROSC Council needs assessments all indicate that building a treatment center is necessary. Our discussions with stakeholders say that it will certainly be a partnership of several agencies that will bring this to fruition. The ROSC Council will continue to hold this as a priority.