

**Attendees:** Kristina Drum, Ambrosia Branson, Paul Tart, Teri Moore, Andy Riggs, Sara Ruholl, Robert Estep, Cindy Hanley, Julie Pohlman, Norm Wilson

*Minutes*

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**Agenda Item:** Introductions of attendees

**Spotlight speaker** – Ambrosia Branson, the Project Coordinator of Circle of Care, introduced the project's aim to build a network of support for children, youth, and families grieving the loss of a loved one due to substance use-related death or disorder. The project is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery with funds coming directly from the American Rescue Plan Act, and it involves a team of seven members with various experiences. The project's goal is to provide resources and training to communities across Illinois to equip our natural helpers (people who naturally interact with kiddos within their everyday or professional lives) to be able to respond comfortably and confidently to children and teen's grief. Ambrosia discussed the significant increase in children losing parents to drug overdoses between 2011 and 2021, with the rate rising from 27 per 100,000 to 63 per 100,000. She highlighted the need for additional support for these children, as current resources are insufficient. She highlighted the program's four main components: the grief support services directory, online resource toolkits, grief and substance use disorder trainings, and the Handle with Care initiative. Ambrosia also presented a landscape analysis of grief support services in Illinois, revealing a shortage of licensed clinical providers specializing in grief. The online resource toolkits are designed to provide various materials and activities based on the child's developmental age to help them cope with grief. The grief and substance use disorder trainings aim to equip different sectors to respond confidently to children's grief responses. The Handle with Care initiative, created in West Virginia, seeks to help vulnerable children through partnerships between law enforcement, educators, and mental health providers. Ambrosia also mentioned that the program is statewide and will offer five regional trainings. Ambrosia discussed the development of comfort bags for children, which will be distributed during the Threads of Hope trainings and Handle with Care' trainings. These bags will contain items like mimble balls, coloring crafts, bookmarks, and books, all designed to help children cope with difficult emotions.

**Recovery Navigator Update:** Kyle continues to conduct educational groups at Probation in both counties and the Clark County Jail.

**Communication Campaign:** The month of September focused on personal recovery stories and we have been sharing them each week on The Clark/Cumberland County ROSC Facebook page.

**Past Events:** Kristina reported that the 2nd Annual Recovery Picnic was a resounding success, expressing gratitude to everyone who contributed to the event. Attendees enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon with great food and fellowship, with the Foam Homies activity being particularly popular among the children present.

**Upcoming Events:** We are partnering with Prevention First to host a virtual panel on October 16<sup>th</sup>, Addressing Stigma/ Families & Substance Use Disorder.

**Opioid Relief Funds:** Kristina and Kyle are scheduled to present at the Clark & Cumberland County Board Meetings in October regarding the Opioid Relief Funds. A revised application requesting all of the Opioid Relief Funds has also been submitted to the Cumberland County Board.

**Survey Distribution:** Sara expressed concern about the lack of understanding of the term 'substance use disorder' and its potential impact on survey responses. Kristina agreed, suggesting a broader question to capture a wider range of responses. Andy proposed the idea of distributing surveys at meetings.

**Improving Meeting Attendance and Engagement:** Kristina expressed concern about the declining attendance at the monthly council meetings and sought suggestions on how to improve them. She considered changing the day or time of the meetings, and asked for feedback via email. Andy suggested that the lack of interest might be due to early-stage recovery attendees focusing on their personal lives. He proposed organizing activities like a family night at a bowling alley to attract more attendees.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Kristina to create and distribute a QR code for the community resource survey.
- Andy to hand out paper copies of the community resource survey at recovery meetings.
- Kristina to work with Kyle on including the community resource survey in probation packets.
- Kristina to revise the wording of the substance use disorder question in the survey based on Sara's feedback.

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#### **Reminders/Tasks:**

- Please Sign the MOUs and return them to Kristina Drum.

- Kristina will schedule additional opportunities to educate the community on the ROSC Concept.
- Who do we need at the ROSC Council meetings, and how do we get them here?
- We are planning events for the next Fiscal Year, such as the panel events. Council members are encouraged to participate in the planning to ensure their success.

**Next Meeting:** October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 4:30 p.m. at The Forsythe Center in Marshall

**New Facebook Page:** Please go like and follow The Clark/Cumberland County ROSC [Clark/Cumberland County ROSC Facebook Page](#)