

**MINUTES**  
**Region 16 Opioid Abatement Council Meeting**  
 July 24, 2024  
 2:00 – 5:00pm  
 4th Judicial District Attorney’s Office  
 105 E. Vermijo Ave, Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Main Conference Room

First Name	Last Name	Title	Present(Y/N)
<b>Voting Members</b>			
Lynette -	Crow-Iverson	Colorado Springs (COS) City Council	Y
Erik	Stone	Teller County Commissioner	Y
Lt. Jake	Markus	Proxy for Teller County Undersheriff	Y
Holly	Williams	El Paso County (EPC) Commissioner	Y (Proxy Sunny Bryant)
Carrie	Geitner	EPC Commissioner	Y (Proxy Amanda Grant)
Michael	Allen	Fourth Judicial District Attorney	Y
Doug	Trainor	COS Police Department	Y
Randy	Royal	COS Fire Chief	Y (Proxy Deputy Chief Jayme McConnellogue)
Nancy	Henjum	COS Councilmember	N
Lee	Walker	Victor Fire Department	N
Dr. Leon	Kelly	EPC Coroner	Y (Proxy Dr. Emily Russell-Kinsley Arrived at. 2:23PM)
Joseph	Roybal	EPC Sheriff	Y
Denise	Howell	Manitou Springs City Manager	Y
Patrick	Regan	Monument Police Chief	Y (Proxy Commander Tim Johnson)
<b>Non-Voting Members: Municipalities who will cycle onto the voting membership in future years</b>			
Frank	Salvato	Cripple Creek City Manager	N

Chris	Deisler	Woodland Park Police Chief	N
Troy	Johnson	Fountain City Attorney	N
<b>Current Non-Voting Members</b>			
DeAnn	Ryberg	EPC Public Health Deputy Director	N
Kim	Mauthe	Teller County Director of Human Services	Y
Michelle	Wolff	Teller County Public Health Director	Y
Bridgette	Fuson	Department of Human Services (Monument Representative)	N
<b>Non-Voting Members Appointed by Council as SMEs</b>			
Jack	Briggs	Springs Rescue Mission	N
Dr. Eric	Stein Bronsky	Physician, Medical Director CSFD AMR EPC/Teller 911 Authority	Y
David	Albrecht	Cardiologist, lived experience	N
Jason	Jorgenson	COS School District 11	N
Matt	Riviere	Advocate, lived experience	Y
Laura	Ridenour	EPC Behavioral Health	N
<b>Staff Support, Members of the Public, and Subject Matter Expertise</b>			
Amanda	Grant	EPC Deputy Director – Financial Services	Y
Traci	Gorman	EPC Contracts and Procurement Manager	N
Kenny	Hodges	EPC County Attorney	Y

**Others Present:**

Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP

Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP

David Leinweber, CO Springs City Council

Becka Barnhart, CDC Foundation

Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department Community and Public Health Administrator

Natasha Cooley, Care Coordinator Supervisor MSO Diversus Health  
Erik Olson, Director of Colorado Strategy for Face it Together  
Ashlee Shields, Teller County Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator for CHP  
Trudy Hodges, former CEO of Serenity Recovery Connection  
Sheri Trahern, CEO of Serenity Recovery Connection  
The FullCircle Program Denver

- Sam Wilson – Facility Director for Full Circle Denver
- Members
  - o Max Popma
  - o Kaitlyn Spaur
  - o Shrider
  - o Amanda Osorn
  - o Marcus Rodges
  - o Meta Osborne
  - o Sam Larsen
  - o Fiona Poppert
  - o Peter Whittle
  - o Avery Turner
  - o Gavin Scholzen
  - o Trevor

**Quorum Met? Yes (12/14)**

1. **2:08-2:12pm | Introductions and Roll Call**
  - a. Conducted as shown above.
2. **2:12-2:13pm | Consent Calendar Discussion**
  - a. **COUNCIL ACTION:**
    - i. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus motioned to approve the minutes. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone seconded the motion.
    - ii. Vote:
      1. Unanimously approved.
3. **2:13-2:15pm | ROAC Finance and Contracts Update (EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services Amanda Grant)**
  - a. Discussion
    - i. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant provided an update on the financial status relating to the Opioid Settlement. She distributed the latest report detailing over \$8 million in newly acquired funds, with a remaining \$57,000 pending deposit. She outlined the expenditures approved and the contracts currently in process, noting that all funds are allocated. Two contracts are pending, including one with CSU that was resolved and one outstanding with the El Paso Sheriff's Department.
4. **2:15-2:18pm | Updates from Colorado Opioid Abatement Learning Forum**
  - a. Update
    - i. James Corbett, Principal of Initium Health, discussed the approved categories for fund use as per state and national guidelines, a recent judicial change

affecting the Purdue Pharma opioid settlement, and a new technical assistance resource for correctional facilities aimed at enhancing Medication Assisted Treatment programs and improving post-release care.

5. **2:18-2:39pm | Community Health Partnership, Community, and Collaboration Presentation (Nicole Johnston, Suicide Prevention Project Manager and Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP)**
  - a. Presentation Summary (See FINALCHP\_ROAC16\_Presentation 7\_24\_24)
    - i. Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP outlined the mission and history of CHP, emphasizing their 30-year involvement in handling complex community health issues such as homelessness, behavioral health, and suicide prevention. She highlighted CHP's approach which focuses on listening, engaging, and innovating to transform collaborative processes and rebuild community systems.
    - ii. Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP discussed the strategic importance of collaboration in reengineering systemic flaws and enhancing community health initiatives. She advocated for a broader, more inclusive approach to problem-solving that brings together diverse voices from the community.
    - iii. Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP detailed CHP's engagement in 2017 in the community with around 50 organizations pulling together to engage in this process. In 2022, the Behavioral Health Action Network identified opioid dollars as the most critical opportunity.
    - iv. Both Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP and Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP shared challenges faced in the Region 16 grant application and decision-making processes, noting the paralysis caused by confusing deadlines and operational differences. Feedback from this process has shaped CHP's approach to fostering broader community involvement and deeper understanding.
    - v. Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP posed strategic questions about the long-term impact of collaborative efforts, imagining a future where community-driven initiatives create substantial changes. She emphasized the need for bold input and actionable solutions that could leave a lasting legacy of transformative change.
    - vi. Both presenters encouraged the council to adopt a more expansive view that transcends traditional silos, fostering innovative solutions through genuine community partnerships.
  - b. Discussion
    - i. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen asked for CHP to share the feedback they received from the community with the council.
    - ii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone acknowledged the initial complications in community engagement but appreciated the depth brought by CHP's involvement, encouraging continued collaboration.
    - iii. Dr. Eric Stein Bronsky shared that he is a board member at CHP, and that the organization had been pivotal in shaping key strategic documents that guide community responses, underscoring the importance of CHP's early and ongoing contributions to the committee's work.

- iv. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen commended the session for enhancing understanding of the intersections between law enforcement, treatment, and community health strategies.
- v. Becca Barnhart, CDC Foundation, praised the collaborative focus, noting its effectiveness in extending the reach and sustainability of health programs within El Paso and Teller counties.

**6. 2:39-3:15pm | Strategic Planning (Initium)**

a. Discussion (See Region 16 Council Meeting\_IH Presentation\_7.24.24)

i. Guiding Principle: Spend the Money to Save Lives

1. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus inquired about the due date for the first vendor report.
2. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant emphasized the importance of quarterly reporting, with the first reporting deadline of the end of December.
3. Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department and Public Health Administrator expressed concerns about the feasibility of retroactively applying new metrics to those already executed contracts. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant clarified that the intent is not to change the metrics but to solidify a template to make it easier for organizations to report on the metrics they have identified.
4. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone discussed the need for clarity around bullet point number three on slide 14, identifying appropriate staffing and operational tools for management of funds. He emphasized the need for clear operational tools and staff to manage the significant funding, and a strategic vision for future management.

ii. Guiding Principle: Use Evidence for Overdose Prevention & Improved Health Outcomes

1. James Corbett, Principal of Initium Health discussed the necessity of using evidence-based practices to maximize fund utilization.
2. Matt Riviere suggested adapting the language around prevention to better represent the varied nature of drug use to include experimentation and poisoning.
3. Mary Ellen Benson, Chief Strategy Officer for CHP emphasized bullet point number three on slide 15: "Invest in community-led and community-based efforts, to ensure funds create substantial community impacts." She stressed the importance of fostering community-level collaboration and allowing flexibility in fund usage to encourage broader participation and innovative solutions.
4. Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP advocated for direct involvement of affected community members in the planning and execution phases.
5. James Corbett, Principal of Initium Health, proposed taking inspiration from other regions to refine operational strategies.
6. EPC Deputy Administrator Sunny Bryant raised concerns about the potential conflict between data-driven and creative approaches to community health challenges. Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department and Public Health Administrator called out the importance of both approaches.

7. Trudy Hodges, former CEO of Serenity Recovery Connection discussed the use of community needs assessments to develop a strategic plan, citing past successful implementations.
  8. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen encouraged more robust data collection and sharing to improve the effectiveness of funded programs.
  9. EPC Sheriff Joseph Roybal advocated for expanding prevention strategies including his office, which focuses on treatment and recovery. He emphasized the need to address substance use issues before they escalate to the need for treatment. He highlighted the ongoing expansion of services, including in the correctional facilities, but stressed the importance of proactive measures to prevent substance use altogether.
  10. Matt Rivera, advocate-lived experience, discussed his personal loss and his offer to share his experiences with schools to highlight mental health issues, noting a lack of engagement from educational institutions.
  11. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone reported difficulties integrating behavioral health content in Teller County schools, suggesting alternative avenues such as gaming groups or youth programs for outreach due to the schools' focus on traditional education.
  12. Teller County Public Health Director Michele Wolff voiced support for youth programs in engaging young minds and noted the challenge of depending on a small group of volunteers for these activities.
  13. EPC Sheriff Joseph Roybal advocated for identifying specific vulnerable groups to enhance targeted prevention and outreach efforts.
  14. Natasha Cooley, Care Coordinator Supervisor MSO for Diversus Health described conducting DARE programs with challenges due to funding and volunteer shortages, emphasizing the program's success in maintaining student sobriety. DA Allen requested data on the effectiveness of the programs Natasha mentioned, encouraging those with proven results to propose expansion plans to the council.
7. **3:15-3:25pm | Break**
8. **3:25-3:57pm | Strategic Planning Continued (Initium)**
- a. Discussion (See Region 16 Council Meeting\_IH Presentation\_7.24.24)
    - i. Guiding Principle: Focus on Equity
      1. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone discussed the profound impact of addiction on livelihoods across various professions, questioning whether solutions should be legislative or managed through the board.
      2. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant emphasized challenges with the last bullet on slide 17: "Collect and analyze demographic information on individuals served by opioid funds from awardees," in collecting comprehensive demographic data from awardees and the importance of understanding some of the community partners will not be able to collect everything.
      3. Discussion emerged about the term 'equity,' with some council members expressing concerns about its potential to confuse or alienate participants due to its varied interpretations. The conversation shifted

towards the need for focusing on practical outcomes and the consideration of replacing the word 'equity' to enhance clarity.

4. Becca Barnhart, CDC Foundation, highlighted the importance of focusing on priority populations to address equity. Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP urged the council to consider a refined focus on priority populations to ensure that equity goals are met without alienating potential stakeholders.
  5. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen clarified that the guiding principles are recommendations and not hard and fast rules.
- ii. Guiding Principle: Develop a Fair and Transparent Process for Spending Funding
    1. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant confirmed compliance with management and retention policies per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), emphasizing the integration of all revenues into the council's funding strategies.
    2. There was a consensus on the need for technological enhancements to improve meeting accessibility, with suggestions to explore video/audio recording technologies. EPC Attorney Kenny Hodges to research whether funds can be allocated to video/audio technology for the council meetings.

#### **9. 3:57-4:00pm | Final Comments**

##### **a. Discussion**

- i. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen provided alarming statistics on the escalating crisis of fentanyl in Colorado, noting that the total cost of fentanyl-related overdoses reached an estimated \$16 billion in 2023, a stark increase from \$1.3 billion in 2017. This cost represents 3% of the state's GDP. He highlighted the DEA's seizure of enough fentanyl to potentially kill every resident multiple times, underscoring the drug's lethal potency and rising purity. Fentanyl now accounts for the majority of opioid-related overdose deaths, which have significantly surpassed the total number of homicides in the state over the last three years.
- ii. Manitou Springs City Manager Denise Howell questioned the finances regarding the allocation of funds, specifically the percentage reserved for administrative purposes.
- iii. EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services, Amanda Grant provided clarification and explained the financial structure, stating that 10% of incoming funds are reserved for administrative costs, including facilitation and accounting. She highlighted the council's conservative spending and affirmed the flexibility to adjust this reservation based on council decisions.

#### **10. 4:00-4:53pm | Public Comments**

##### **a. Discussion Highlights**

- i. FullCircle members shared powerful testimonials on overcoming addiction through community support and innovative recovery programs like FullCircle, underscoring the need for comprehensive prevention strategies that address underlying causes and support systems. The conversation also touched on the challenges of traditional drug education and the potential impacts of drug policy changes.

- ii. Meta Osborne, FullCircle member, emphasized the importance of integrating recovery and prevention measures, highlighting FullCircle's proactive approach to addressing substance abuse before it devastates lives.
- iii. Avery Turner, FullCircle member, shared his personal recovery journey, highlighting the transformative impact of FullCircle, which helped him reconnect with his family and gain employment.
- iv. Gavin Scholzen, FullCircle member, discussed his battle with opioid addiction starting from a young age when he got his wisdom teeth removed, the lack of community in traditional treatment settings, and finding hope and support through FullCircle.
- v. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen asked for insights on potential early intervention points that might have altered the paths of those affected by addiction.
- vi. Trevor, FullCircle member, noted the significance of being surrounded by sober peers as a crucial factor in his recovery, emphasizing the community aspect of prevention.
- vii. Kaitlyn Spaur, FullCircle member, discussed the importance of addressing the underlying issues that lead to substance abuse, highlighting her own experience with abuse and manipulation at a young age. She stressed the need for adequate mental health resources and awareness of warning signs among youth. Kaitlyn also noted that her attempts to seek help were ignored, underscoring the necessity of proactive prevention efforts that address root causes rather than symptoms.
- viii. Sam Larson, FullCircle member, highlighted the organization's community-focused events that foster a sense of belonging and support, which were pivotal in his recovery.
- ix. Sam Wilson, Director of FullCircle described FullCircle as a community-based recovery program emphasizing fun and engagement to maintain the interest of young participants, stressing the importance of family involvement in the recovery process.
- x. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus posed a question about the potential effectiveness of engaging after school programs in reducing drug use among youth, asking if such activities could serve as a deterrent.
- xi. Peter Whittle, FullCircle member, suggested that community-supported programs involving outdoor activities like fishing and hiking could be beneficial, although such initiatives often face resistance or lack endorsement from schools, limiting potentially positive engagement opportunities for youth.
- xii. Max Popma, FullCircle member, discussed the ineffectiveness of school-based drug education alone and advocated for addressing emotional and mental health issues as a preventative measure.
- xiii. 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen questioned the role of drug decriminalization in the context of addiction prevention and recovery.
- xiv. Matt Riviere urged attendees to visit [DevastatedCO.com](http://DevastatedCO.com) to view and share a documentary detailing his personal journey, available for free online.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53pm by 4th Judicial District Attorney Michael Allen.