

MINUTES
Region 16 Opioid Abatement Council Meeting
September 25, 2024
2:00 – 5:00pm
4th Judicial District Attorney’s Office
105 E. Vermijo Ave, Colorado Springs, CO 80903
4th Floor Main Conference Room

First Name	Last Name	Title	Present(Y/N)
Voting Members			
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 (Joined at 2:25pm)
Michael	Allen	Fourth Judicial District Attorney	Y (Joined at 2:30pm)
Doug	Trainor	COS Police Department	Y
Randy	Royal	COS Fire Chief	Y (Proxy Steve Johnson)
Nancy	Henjum	COS Councilmember	Y
Lee	Walker	Victor Fire Department	N
Dr. Leon	Kelly	EPC Coroner	Y (Proxy Dr. Emily Russell-Kinsley)
Joseph	Roybal	EPC Sheriff	N
Denise	Howell	Manitou Springs City Manager	Y
Patrick	Regan	Monument Police Chief	Y (Proxy Commander Tim Johnson)
Non-Voting Members: Municipalities who will cycle onto the voting membership in future years			
Frank	Salvato	Cripple Creek City Manager	N
Chris	Deisler	Woodland Park Police Chief	N

Troy	Johnson	Fountain City Attorney	N
Current Non-Voting Members			
DeAnn	Ryberg	EPC Public Health Deputy Director	Y
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
Non-Voting Members Appointed by Council as SMEs			
Jack	Briggs	Springs Rescue Mission	N
Dr. Eric	Stein Bronsky	Physician, Medical Director CSFD AMR EPC/Teller 911 Authority	N
David	Albrecht	Cardiologist, lived experience	N
Jason	Jorgenson	COS School District 11	N
Matt	Riviere	Advocate, lived experience	N
Laura	Ridenour	EPC Behavioral Health Manager	Y
Staff Support, Members of the Public, and Subject Matter Expertise			
Amanda	Grant	EPC Deputy Director – Financial Services	Y
Kenny	Hodges	EPC County Attorney	Y

Others Present:

Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited

Joseph Iovino, Clinical Lead for Recovery Unlimited

Nick Grassi, Project Analysis for Financial Services

Scott Anderson, El Paso Communications

Liani Murphy, Program Director for Serenity Recovery Connection

Erik Olson, Director of Colorado Strategy for Face it TOGETHER

Sam Wilson, Facility Director of FullCircle Denver

Declan Thompson, Event Coordinator for FullCircle Denver

Amanda Osorn, FullCircle Member

Jackie – FullCircle Member

Dianna, FullCircle Member

Colby, FullCircle Member

Travis Williams, Chief Development Officer for Springs Rescue Mission

Shannon Johnson, Associate Professor and the Chair of the Social Work Program at UCCS

Sean Dean, UCCS

Mya Cappellino, Director of Marketing for Initium Health

Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP

David Leinweber, CO Springs City Council

Quorum Met? Yes (12/14)

1. 2:05-2:10pm | Introductions and Roll Call

- a. Conducted as shown above.

2. 2:10-2:15pm | Consent Calendar Discussion

a. **COUNCIL ACTION:**

- i. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus motioned to approve the minutes. Commander Tim Johnson seconded the motion.
- ii. Vote:
1. Unanimously approved.

3. 2:15 – 2:45 | Recovery Unlimited Presentation (Jessica Blount, Clinical Director, and Joseph Iovino, Clinical Lead)

a. Summary

- i. Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, presented an overview of the organization, which has been owned by Dawn Martin since 2011. Jessica, who has seven years of experience in the field, highlighted the mission of Recovery Unlimited: to address the root causes of addiction rather than merely treating it. The organization provides comprehensive services, including intake assessments for substance and mental health disorders, a three-day-per-week therapy program for clients in active use, and aftercare programs tailored to individual needs.
- ii. Peer specialists offer one-on-one support to clients, and Recovery Unlimited aims to remove the stigma associated with addiction by integrating primary care services. They also offer Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) options, such as Suboxone and Vivitrol, which help clients manage their recovery more effectively. The medical team ensures integrated care, monitoring clients' progress in therapy while providing necessary medications.

b. Discussion

- i. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone inquired about Recovery Unlimited's capacity and challenges, particularly regarding referrals amid the fentanyl epidemic. Jessica emphasized the need for additional resources and highlighted the difficulties clients face in wanting to stop using substances.
- ii. Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, noted that staff recruitment and retention are crucial, as client motivation can fluctuate, even among court-mandated individuals. She identified key partnerships, including Crossroads and detox centers, while acknowledging challenges with securing beds.
- iii. Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department Community and Public Health Administrator raised concerns about service access for housed versus unhoused

populations, noting that 85% of community corrections clients have a place to stay.

- iv. Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, addressed reimbursement challenges, indicating that their billing practices are strong, though funding can be inconsistent. COS Councilmember Lynette Crow-Iverson highlighted struggles with Medicaid funding in Denver.
- v. COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum asked about gaps in the system, particularly for individuals transitioning from prison, to which Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, responded that significant gaps exist, especially regarding life skills and familiarity with telehealth. She estimated that 15-20% of their population faces these challenges.
- vi. Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, praised peer specialists for their effective mentoring and support, especially in guiding clients through transitions.
- vii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone asked about service accessibility for clients outside Colorado Springs, and Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, explained that in-person meetings are preferred for high-risk clients. She also mentioned that transportation has improved with assistance from Med Rides.
- viii. James Corbett, Principal of Initium Health, asked about the sliding fee scale; Jessica Blount, Clinical Director of Recovery Unlimited, confirmed they accept uninsured clients and approximately 90% of their clients are on Medicaid, noting they allow clients on methadone but do not prescribe it.

4. 2:45-2:50pm | ROAC Finance and Contracts Update (EPC Deputy Director - Financial Services Amanda Grant)

a. Updates

- i. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant updated the council on contract status, highlighting improvements in clarity since the last meeting.
- ii. Council received over \$5 million in 2023 and almost \$9 million in 2024
- iii. Expenditures include facilitator fees, RFP process costs, and a 10% administration fee, which is under review for reallocation.
- iv. Approximately \$8.9 million is available for allocation.
- v. Teller County Commissioner, Erik Stone inquired about the timeline for administrative reconciliation regarding 2023 expenditures. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant proposed conducting annual reconciliations for fund assessment. Teller County Commissioner, Erik Stone also expressed the need for the council's consent to reallocate those funds into the budget at the next meeting.
- vi. All contracts are signed except one, which is pending approval.

5. 2:50-2:55pm | Contract Renewal for Facilitation (Amanda Grant, El Paso County)

a. Updates

- i. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant noted that the current contract with Initium Health expires in December, prompting the need for a renewal decision for an additional 12 months under the same terms.
- ii. COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum expressed appreciation for the communication from Initium Health, highlighting organized information and positive experiences.

- iii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone echoed these sentiments, commending the transparency and technological advancements made, particularly regarding the development of the website.
- iv. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant affirmed that Initium Health is meeting and exceeding expectations in their contract obligations.

v. Vote

- 1. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus motioned to extend the contract, and EPC Commissioner Carrie Geitner seconded the motion.
- 2. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone called for a vote, and all members present voted in favor of the contract extension.

6. 2:55-3:00pm | Updates from Colorado Opioid Abatement Learning Forum (Initium)

a. Updates

- i. Initium provided updates on the upcoming Regional Opioid Abatement Conference in Loveland, which was a key topic at the recent learning forum.
- ii. The agenda for the conference was shared with the council.
- iii. It was announced that the learning forum would forgo the October monthly meeting due to the proximity of the conference date.
- iv. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone expressed uncertainty about whether it would be appropriate for the county to cover hotel expenses for conferences like this one. He indicated that this may warrant future discussions regarding budget implications.

7. 3:00-4:15pm | Strategic Planning (Initium) and Break from 3:30 - 3:40pm

a. Funding

- i. Initium Health presented a proposed funding approach that includes:
 - 1. Bi-Annual Grant Application: An open application cycle with two key review dates for grant funding across five scopes of work.
 - 2. Ad Hoc Application: A flexible mechanism to fund additional programs based on community needs or identified funding gaps.
- ii. The proposed timeline for launching funding opportunities includes:
 - 1. First round of applications due January 31, 2025.
 - 2. Second round of applications due July 31, 2025.
- iii. Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department Community and Public Health Administrator sought clarification on how the ad hoc funding process would work, asking if organizations could apply at any time under this stream and how requests would be prioritized and managed by the council.
- iv. COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum expressed her appreciation for the communication and organization of the process. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant highlighted the advantages of the proposed bi-annual grant process, stating it offers more flexibility and is less burdensome on administrative resources compared to contract services, which typically require more stringent oversight.
- v. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone confirmed that feedback from council members indicated a supportive stance on the proposed funding structure, emphasizing the need for clear communication to potential applicants regarding the application processes and timelines.

- vi. The council acknowledged the importance of developing a scoring rubric to assess applications effectively. This rubric will help ensure that funded projects are held accountable for meeting their objectives and delivering tangible outcomes.
- vii. EPC Deputy Director of Financial Services, Amanda Grant cautioned that funding from settlements is front-loaded, meaning that while there may be significant funds available initially, these amounts will dwindle over time. She urged organizations to seek alternative funding sources to maintain sustainability beyond the initial grants.
- viii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone emphasized the importance of incorporating sustainability metrics into the rubric for proposals, ensuring that applicants understand the long-term expectations and funding limitations. He also highlighted the need for transparency regarding available funds and application processes on the council's website.
- ix. Discussions included exploring innovative methods for data collection to obtain more accurate insights into substance use among youth. This approach would help the council better understand the scope of substance use and inform future funding decisions.
- x. The council recognized the significance of having public health representatives engaged in discussions regarding youth prevention strategies, as their expertise can guide effective program development and implementation.
- xi. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone raised concerns about the reliability of the Healthy Kids Survey, noting that only 30% of kids responded, which could skew results and fail to represent the actual situation regarding youth substance use.
- xii. EPC Commissioner Carrie Geitner emphasized the importance of having reliable data to measure youth substance use and its impact on the community. She suggested that self-reporting tools, like the Healthy Kids Survey, may not accurately reflect the reality of youth experiences.
- xiii. Teller County Public Health Director, Michelle Wolff discussed the potential for using more robust data collection methods, which could provide a more accurate measure of substance use among youth without relying on self-reported data.
- xiv. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone suggested reaching out to Colorado State University (CSU) Extension to inquire about their data collection efforts, emphasizing the need for a collaborative approach to gather comprehensive data on youth substance use trends.
- xv. Nicole Johnston, Project Manager for CHP highlighted the necessity of integrating public health perspectives into discussions around data collection.
- xvi. The council discussed the need for innovative solutions to gather data, as traditional methods may not be capturing the full picture. There was consensus on the importance of tailoring data collection efforts to the specific needs of the community.
- xvii. EPC Commissioner Carrie Geitner mentioned that to affect outcomes, the council needs a clear understanding of what constitutes success. This requires establishing baseline measurements and utilizing effective metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of youth prevention programs.

xviii. The council agreed to explore further opportunities for data collection, considering partnerships with local agencies and research institutions to improve the quality and reliability of data available for decision-making.

b. Future Promotions of Funding Opportunities

- i. Initium Health presented a comprehensive strategy to raise awareness of funding opportunities available through the Region 16 Opioid Abatement Council, targeting local organizations and community members in El Paso and Teller County. The key message emphasized that funding is accessible for organizations that apply, with information directed to the Pikes Peak Region 16 website. To promote these opportunities, Initium Health proposed several strategies, including the development and distribution of a press release to announce funding availability and targeted print advertisements in local newspapers. Additionally, they recommended implementing an email outreach campaign, crafting targeted messages for local organizations and stakeholders to detail the funding opportunities and application processes.
- ii. Initium Health presented the new website design and logo for the first time, receiving feedback from the council on its aesthetic and functionality.
- iii. Teller County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jake Markus recommended incorporating purple into the design, noting that purple is the official color for Recovery Month, while COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum noted that their county uses blue.
- iv. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone recommended enlarging the map on the website to better illustrate the regions served.
- v. Steve Johnson, CO Springs Fire Department Community and Public Health Administrator appreciated the simplicity of the design, noting that it should be easier for users to find RFP information.
- vi. COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum highlighted the need to explain the source of the funds to increase transparency.
- vii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone proposed adding a "Funding Dashboard" to provide real-time updates on available funding and past awards.
- viii. EPC Commissioner Carrie Geitner suggested including past award amounts in the application process to promote transparency and innovation among applicants, helping them understand funding trends.
- ix. Teller County Public Health Director, Michelle Wolff recommended displaying a prominent contact number (e.g., 988) for crisis support on every page of the website.
- x. COS Councilmember Nancy Henjum mentioned the potential benefits of sending press releases from multiple organizations to broaden reach and impact.
- xi. The council discussed the possibility of linking to resources provided by local mental health alliances and emphasizing community support for families affected by substance use.
- xii. EPC Commissioner Carrie Geitner underscored the importance of gathering accurate data on youth substance use and exploring innovative measurement tools to enhance the understanding of community needs.
- xiii. Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone encouraged ongoing discussions about how to effectively communicate funding opportunities, emphasizing that strategic outreach would be crucial to ensure maximum engagement and participation from local organizations.

8. 4:15 – 4:18pm | Public Comments

- a. During the public comments section, Sam Wilson, Facility Director of FullCircle Denver raised awareness about a potential funding opportunity for youth prevention services, sharing that he received two phone calls this week from families seeking assistance. One inquiry came from a grandparent of a 13-year-old, and the other from the mother of a 16-year-old, both looking for services to support their children. Sam Wilson emphasized the urgent need for such resources and encouraged the council to consider these requests as they discuss future funding opportunities

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18pm by Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone.