

Region 5 Systems Opioid Steering Committee (OSC)

May 12, 2026 – 1:00-3:00
Region 5 Systems / Hybrid
3600 Union Drive
Lincoln, NE

Members Present: (in person) Taisa Brumagen, Erik Delaney, Tyler Keup, Sandy Morrissey, Rachel Mulcahy, Ben Murry, Laura Osborne, Simera Reynolds, Amy Reynoldson, and Ed Thornbrugh

Members Present: (virtual) Bryan Davis, Amy Holman, Jessica Loos, Nekon Nitbouapha, Jeff Sorenson, LeAnn Stevenson, and Christa Yoakum

Members Absent: Chris Allende, Heather Anders, Grant Brueggmann, Ryan Carruthers, Makenzie Crew, Jeff Curry, Ryan Dale, Cheyenne Drudik, Oscar Gonzales, Raegan Hain, Maria Hatfield, Kerry Kernen, Stephanie Knight, Jill Kuzelka, Jeri Johns, Vic Johns, Laura McDougall, Dave Miers, Michon Morrow, Brian Peters, Jill Pokorny, Ryan Pospisil, Traci Reuter, Dean Rohwer, Will Schmeekle, Kim Showalter, Sonya Turco, Terra Uhing, Sheila Vinton, Rebecca White, and Joseph Wright

Others Present: Donna Dekker, Tommy George, Theresa Henning, Trina Janis, and Joe Pastuszak

Welcome

Trina called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

Minutes from March 10, 2026

Following committee review, Rachel Mulcahy made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Ed Thornbrugh. Motion carried by a majority vote in favor. There were no abstentions.

Outcomes Report

Joe Pastuszak presented the updated outcomes report. Flex funds data outcomes are still being processed and are quite large. They will be shared with everyone at the July meeting.

Stakeholder and Opioid Steering Committee Surveys

Five people completed the survey. There was a comment from one of the members saying they didn't receive the survey, possibly being blocked by a firewall. There was conversation about changing the way the survey is sent out?

Survey Outcome – Key Takeaways:

- Document Distribution:
 - Continue providing documents prior to OSC meetings.
 - Materials may be sent either as attachments through the meeting invitation or distributed separately.
 - Any documents added after the initial invite will be sent separately to ensure timely access.
- Review Time:
 - Participants indicated adequate time to review materials before meetings.
 - Current practice of sending materials one week in advance is effective and should be maintained.

- Application Process Usability:
 - The grants page layout was identified as somewhat confusing.
 - Some links may be difficult to locate or are overlooked.
 - Recommendation to improve visibility, organization, and labeling of links to enhance usability and reduce missed information.

Presentation on Recent Overdoses in Lincoln

Jeff Sorenson, Lincoln Police Department

Recent overdose data was reviewed, highlighting a spike between March 26 and April 10, during which 9 opioid-related overdoses occurred; 6 resulted in death, with a 7th fatality later confirmed. At this time, no specific outlier source or impacted population group has been identified. State laboratory findings indicate that methadone has been present in several cases, suggesting it may be contributing to polydrug overdoses. Further review is ongoing to better understand methadone and if it played a role in some of the recent incidents.

Kratom use was identified as a growing trend, with increasing prevalence in the community. Concerns were noted regarding severe withdrawal symptoms, which may be more intense than traditional opioid withdrawal. Kratom is often marketed as an energy booster or fatigue fighter, contributing to its wider use. Discussion included the possibility of supporting legislative efforts to regulate or make kratom illegal, with OSC potentially helping to organize advocacy efforts. It was also suggested to collect local data and personal stories to better understand impact and support informed decision-making.

Officer Sorenson noted that, based on report reviews, increased community access to Narcan (naloxone) has enabled individuals to administer the medication prior to the arrival of law enforcement or first responders. This early intervention is contributing to improved overdose survival outcomes. Continued emphasis was placed on expanding Narcan availability, training, and public awareness to support timely and effective overdose response within the community.

Tommy George, Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department

Wastewater sampling is conducted at two treatment plants (Theresa St. – weekly; Northeast St. – every other week) using 24-hour composite samples. Tommy explained the process of pulling samples. The samples are then sent to Biobot Analytics to test both substances and their metabolites, providing insight into community consumption. Results are reported as mean concentrations. As Tommy goes through some of the data and charts, he placed emphasis on careful interpretation and responsible sharing of data, ensuring it is used for public health purposes and not misrepresented or applied to individuals.

Save the date: September 1, 2026

Still in the planning stage – Save the Date cards will be going out soon.

Next Meeting

July 14, 2026, 1:00-3:00 Hybrid, 3600 Union Dr. Lincoln, NE 68516