



SOCCEED, Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters

Meeting Summary for 1-20-26

Next Meeting is: 2-17-26

Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting and/or provided information before, during, or after. The information shared today will have a positive impact on all of our communities.

The following is a summary of today's meeting:

The theme for the SOC's 2026, "Create Don't Wait" emanated from a sense of need, a need to look past all of the seemingly endless problems, and a need to see that there are solutions, there is hope. With what often feels like a continuous bombardment of negative news, shootings, drugs, robberies, and the like, it is so easy to get lost in all of that and to think, solutions are neither realistic or even possible. That kind of thinking while to an extent, understandable creates a cycle of helplessness that ensures, the spiral downward continues, locking people in the very thing they desire to escape. In the midst though of what may seem to be insurmountable problems, can come people, often ordinary people who take a different path and decide to spend their time and energy on making things better.

This reminded me of Clara Barton, a nurse who saw suffering and disorganization during the American Civil War. Wounded people, including soldiers whose suffering was prolonged by delays in goods and services because there seemingly lacked an efficient and effective framework to ensure care. Inspired by the work of the newly established Red Cross movement in Switzerland, Clara sought to broaden their concepts and bring that model to the United States. She proposed that a single organization could provide relief not just during wartime, but also for natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Barton's persistent advocacy paid off. On May 21, 1881, she founded the American National Red Cross in Washington, D.C. The organization was officially incorporated in 1905, establishing a charter that remains the basis for its work today, which includes disaster relief, blood drives, and

community health services. Clara Barton and her supporters transformed the problem of disorganized, temporary aid into a permanent, structured, and compassionate solution that continues to help millions of people in times of crisis. This stands today as a tribute to the power that even a single person can have to effect change. She saw a problem, she came up with a solution, no hesitation.

Our January meeting in keeping with the theme for 2026, “Create Don’t Wait” showcased two Kansas City area organizations that embodied the same actions, the same spirit of Clara Barton. Everyday people who saw a need and invested the time in finding solutions. The SOC was pleased to welcome the following featured presenters and their own respective “Clara Barton stories”:

- Robert Williams, President and Lead Group Facilitator and Monique Koger, CEO: Co-Parenting Ikigai
- Marsha Wiard, Executive Director: Opals Embrace

1. Robert Williams and Monique Koger

Website: <https://www.coparentingikigai.org/>

Email: Co parenting Ikigai: support@coparentingikigai.org

- The slide deck for the presentation will be posted to the SOC’s website and remain up until the February meeting. After that, please contact me to see that at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov
- Robert shared his personal story and how he overcame a difficult past.
- The organization focuses on fathers and other gaps in services.
- They are able to assist the community with a variety of resources one of which is providing a 1 bedroom apartment (when available) to someone needing to escape a difficult situation.
- Discussed some of the risk factors for repeating cycles of incarceration such as your self-image, poverty, substance abuse, and not being given the support needed to adjust to life after incarceration.
- There is a father daughter event coming up and that flyer will also be on the SOC’s website.
- Discussed what we can do to support one another.

2. Marsha Wiard

Website: <https://www.opalsembrace.org/>

Email: mwiard@thefamilyconservancy.org

- The brief slide deck will be posted to the SOC's website and remain up until the February meeting. After that, please contact me to see that at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov
 - Marsha shared her personal story of a difficult childhood and how that impacted her.
 - Discussed were the many services and supports that Opal's Embrace (named after Marsha's grandmother) can provide to fill gaps in services and needs of our respective communities.
 - Discussed the application process for assistance.
3. Diana Perry with the Missouri Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health was not able to attend but will do so at another meeting. She was going to present important information on early childhood and mental health developments.
 4. The SOC has established a panel that addresses AFN and other needs of our community members as it pertains to the FIFA WC 2026 coming to our areas. This panel will help planners of FIFA WC and the SOC's partner organization, the KCR COAD ensure that critically needed services, housing, and more remain accessible despite an influx of at least an estimated 650,000 more people into our communities. The COAD/SOC met with the chief planners and security officials of the FIFA WC and have especially taken on the important issue of AFN or access and functional needs. If you would like to be a part of this panel to make the needs of your clients and community known, please reach out to Jennifer at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov
 5. Some additional resources and information provided during or after the meeting were:
 - The weather in our region is expected to become even more dangerously cold from Friday-Sunday. Please watch the SOC's website for any changes in resources and further, consult the Ray Way Resource Directory on the SOC's website. This has 2 dozen categories and one of which is Cold Weather Help. You can also find updates on weather at: [https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.weather.gov/media/eax/DssPackett.pdf_!!EErPFA7f--AJOW!BZzrlkEbUAO_51Zv4Ab6K0KfD9i8PZydpV49uCazTLkhw54DnvDcoXoCuUblGRt_-KtdlSfFZhIKFr3t3dkrLyxL9wRLoaXVl5oZ\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.weather.gov/media/eax/DssPackett.pdf_!!EErPFA7f--AJOW!BZzrlkEbUAO_51Zv4Ab6K0KfD9i8PZydpV49uCazTLkhw54DnvDcoXoCuUblGRt_-KtdlSfFZhIKFr3t3dkrLyxL9wRLoaXVl5oZ$)
 - The SOC's Children and Youth in Disasters along with the COAD's committee on Children in Disasters will be in the Independence schools this Spring to educate all on preparedness and the unique needs of children in disasters including recovery from such.

- I reminded all that the SOC has 2 dozen community-based initiatives that remain active and highlighted a few of them. A complete listing can be found on the website of the SOC.
- I asked that with the extreme cold weather approaching, if you know of anyone in need of a coat or anything else, please DO NOT HESITATE to reach out to me, Jennifer.
- Our next meeting is on February 17th at 1 p.m. on Webex.
- Meeting adjourned after some comments and discussions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. L'Heureux, Ph.D.

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