



Council Members

Attorney General James Uthmeier
Chair

Sheriff Dennis M. Lemma
Delegate Chair

Secretary Taylor Hatch
Vice Chair

Amy Ronshausen
Governor's Appointee

Dr. Guy Wheeler
Senate President's Appointee

Sheriff Robert A. Hardwick
Office of the Speaker's Appointee

Commissioner Chris Dougherty
Florida Association of Counties

Commissioner Lee Constantine
Florida Association of Counties

Mayor Keith James
Florida League of Cities Appointee

Council Member Josh Fuller
Florida League of Cities Appointee

Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo
Florida League of Cities Appointee

Statewide Council on Opioid Abatement

In-Person Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2026

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M. EST

Welcome/Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Delegate Chair, Sheriff M. Lemma. Roll call was taken by Aaron Platt.

Attendance Summary

Sheriff Dennis Lemma, Delegate Chair

Secretary Taylor Hatch, Vice Chair

Guy Wheeler, Senate President Appointee (Virtual)

Commissioner Chris Dougherty, Florida Association of Counties Appointee (Virtual)

Commissioner Lee Constantine, Florida Association of Counties Appointee (Virtual)

Mayor Keith James, Florida League of Cities Appointee (Virtual)

Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo, Florida League of Cities Appointee

Opening Remarks

Sheriff Dennis Lemma opened the meeting by welcoming council members and providing opening remarks.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

A motion passed to approve minutes from the October 22, 2025, meeting.

Motion: Council Member Lee Constantine

Second: Council Member Jolien Caraballo

State of the State: Florida's 2025 Opioid Recovery Efforts

Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Assistant Secretary Amanda VanLaningham provided a presentation to the Council on the State of Florida's implementation of the Opioid Settlement initiatives. Assistant Secretary VanLaningham also provided an overview of the Department's role in Florida's behavioral health system of care and Florida's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.

The Pearl Project

Joy Zedler, Executive Director of The Pearl Project, along with Stephen Zedler, Pearl Project Development Director, provided an overview of the project and their family's journey through parenting children with neonatal exposure to substances. The Pearl Project addresses childhood trauma through attachment-based trauma-informed methods of care by teaching those methods to parents who are caring for children who have experienced early childhood trauma.

Opioid-Related Interventions and Crisis Intervention Training for First Responders

Broward County Sheriff, Dr. Gregory Tony and Associate Dean Rony Shir from the University of Miami Herbert Business School shared data on the National Public Safety and Opioid Readiness Initiative. The initiative provides fully funded, evidenced-based training for first responders who confront complex challenges from the opioid epidemic. The presenters discussed academic and curriculum oversight, course format, and core training components of the initiative.



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Recovery Peer Jail Program

Sara Barkley, Chief Executive Officer of Fellowship Recovery Community Organization (FRCO), and Dean Pasquale, FRCO Peer Support Program Director, presented on the Broward Sheriff's Office/Fellowship RCO Peer Jail Initiative. The initiative is a peer-led recovery support program that engages incarcerated individuals with substance use challenges while they are in custody and through reentry into the community.

General Discussion

Council Member Constantine inquired about a \$4 million expenditure from opioid settlement funds. Delegate Chair Lemma along with Co-Chair Hatch advised the expenditure served to assist with statewide substance use prevention efforts.

Council Member Caraballo requests Council meeting dates and times be discussed and voted on with enough lead time for members to adjust their schedules to ensure attendance.

Co-Chair Hatch advised that any individual who wishes to present before the Statewide Council on Opioid Abatement can contact her or Assistant Secretary for Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Amanda VanLaningham.

Public Comment

In-Person

Lissa Franklin, Vice President of Southeast Florida Recovery Advocates: Ms. Franklin advocated for open transparency with regards to how settlement funds are utilized.

Michelle Cannon, an advocate representing Yaya Por Vida, asked questions regarding a recent Orlando Sentinel article related to opioid settlement funding and the Department's opioid settlement dashboard. She also commented on the importance of transparency in the administration and reporting of opioid settlement funds.

Maureen Kielian, President of Southeast Florida Recovery Advocates, advocated for accountability and transparency regarding settlement funds, and for increased recovery community representation on the Opioid Council.

Virtual

Dana McCool, advocate representing the recovery residence Foundations to Freedom, Ms. McCool thanked the Council for their work and advocated for increased funding for Certified Recovery Residences.

Lenette Serlo, Founder and CEO of Generation O, an organization for opioid exposed children thanked the Council for their work and advocated for opioid exposed children.

Closing Remarks

Sheriff Lemma provided closing remarks and thanked council members. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 PM.