

BRIDGING THE GAP SUB-COMMITTEE

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MEMBERS

Judge T. Morgan, Monica Hunt, Sarah Palmani, Garry Clift,
Bronna Kahle, Terry Collins, Sheriff Troy Bevier,
Kevon Martis, Tim Kelly

MEETING LOCATION

Commission Chambers
Second Floor, Old Court House
301 N. Main St,
Adrian, MI 49221

Minutes: Wednesday, July 16, 2025

I. Call to Order

Present: Commissioners: Kevon Martis, Terry Collins

Also Sheriff Troy Bevier, District Court Judge Todd Morgan, Community Development

Present: Coordinator Francine Zysk, Community Impact/Advocate Bronna Kahle, Medical Examiner Office Manager Sarah Palmani, Health Officer Monica Hunt, Citizen Garry Clift, Mental Health Rep. Tim Kelly, Communications Coordinator Jen Ambrose, Admin. Coordinator Carissa Zubke, MSP Representatives Detective Lieutenant Sean Street and Detective First Lieutenant Marc Moore, Christa Graham-Lenawee Now/Blissfield HS Teacher, County Administrator Kim Murphy, Deputy Administrator Shannon Elliott, Catholic Charities Representative: Rachel Dochstader

The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm by Commissioner Martis.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of Minutes: June 18, 2025

Motion by Collins, to approve the minutes of June 18, 2025, seconded by Bevier. Motion carried.

III. Old Business

No discussion.

IV. New Business

A. Process Update

Sheriff Bevier recused himself from scoring the proposal from the RHINO unit, due to him sitting on the RHINO Board.

Motion by Collins, to recuse Sheriff Bevier from scoring the RHINO proposal, seconded by Kahle. Motion carried.

B. Michigan State Police RHINO - RHINO Narcotics Proposal

Detective Lieutenant Sean Street and Detective First Lieutenant Marc Moore from Michigan Department of State Police, RHINO Unit were present to discuss their Request for Proposal. Currently, the Region of Irish Hills Narcotics Office (RHINO) is a targeted, data-driven enforcement and harm-reduction organization to address opioid trafficking and overdose in Lenawee County.

The proposal is for \$80,000 to support RHINO's targeted opioid enforcement operations, intelligence sharing, and overdose prevention efforts in Lenawee County. This funding would be used to cover personnel expenses related to investigation, surveillance operation equipment, evidence collection equipment, and data management tools for real-time information sharing with EMS, public health, and treatment partners in the community.

*Detective Street highlighted the goals of the proposal to effectively target, dismantle, and disrupt drug trafficking networks: **1) Targeting drug trafficking networks, 2) Identifying High-Level Drug Suppliers, 3) Gather Intelligence for Law Enforcement.***

Street explained the importance of gathering intelligence for law enforcement. Data information assists in identifying high-level drug suppliers, aiming to disrupt the supply chain. Information sharing can provide timely and accurate information on drug trafficking activities, individuals, emerging trends, and new distribution methods to assist with targeting, building cases for prosecution, and helping agencies refine sources and combat drug trafficking.

Improving collaboration between RHINO and Lenawee County agencies is essential. Street emphasized that during RHINO investigations, detectives often engage in one-on-one conversations with individuals struggling with substance use disorders. Strengthening partnerships with local resources—and ensuring RHINO detectives are well-informed about the services available in the county—would allow them to effectively connect individuals with the help they need. Street also highlighted the importance of establishing a seamless referral process by developing clear protocols and guidelines to ensure individuals are directed to appropriate treatment facilities.

Detective Street shared how evaluation of effectiveness would be accomplished. Performance metrics may include the following:

- Number of high-level drug supplies identified*
- Successful prosecutions*
- Seizures of illicit drugs*
- Reduction in drug-related incidents or overdose deaths*

Detective Street discussed how data sharing with the prosecutor's office and local law enforcement could increase overall collaboration and effectiveness. Further, RHINO's effectiveness evaluation could include these agencies reviewing data on treatment admissions, overdose rates, community feedback, and other relevant indicators.

Street next focused on the importance of Public Awareness, the need for transparency, and communicating RHINO's efforts. Sharing information with the public helps to relay the dangers of opioid use and the importance of seeking treatment. Collaboration can send a powerful message to the community and enhance public confidence in the efforts being undertaken.

Public awareness could be accomplished by developing educational materials that are distributed throughout community centers and online. Providing accessible information regarding opioids, their risks, signs of addiction, and available treatment options is vital for education. Media engagement such as press releases, town halls, forums, and workshops are another resource for awareness. In addition, seeking feedback from those in recovery and from families affected by opioids could strengthen efforts and encourage help-seeking behavior in the community.

Terry Collins opened the discussion by asking if the RHINO unit had requested funds from any other County, as all MI counties may have received Opioid settlement funds. Detective Street confirmed they have not applied for any other opioid funds. Collins inquired if these funds would be localized and used in Lenawee or throughout other counties. Street stated the RHINO focus is on Lenawee, but they also work in Hillsdale County. The funds will be used to support the RHINO team and that the team will travel, depending on where a case that started in Lenawee goes.

Collins questioned that the application states this is a new program; how is this proposal different from the work they are already doing? Street shared other RHINO operations would remain the same, but the opioid funding would help to support the communication gap/barrier between law enforcement and healthcare providers/resources in the community. They would like to create a unified way to coordinate treatment, whether that be with medical treatment, residential, or mental health professionals.

The question was asked if the request was one-time funding or ongoing? Street stated that he would like to see ongoing funding. However, right now, they would like to establish the initial program, look at the data and verify its impact before asking for any future funding.

Bronna Kahle questioned how data/intelligence information gathered would be stored, monitored, and housed? Detective Street discussed that it is something that would need to be further worked out. RHINO has a large data system currently, but generally not shared. Street stated this would need to be determined in discussions with collaborating agencies.

Palmani questioned what collaboration is currently being done between prosecutors, law enforcement, etc.? Street stated those relationships are currently established, but what's missing is the focus on opioid-related issues, like treatment and determining how to assist persons with SUD. Overall, the goal includes increasing the conversations about the opioid crisis between RHINO, law enforcement, prosecutors' offices, and community resources.

Tim Kelly asked what current barriers are there between RHINO, medical providers and treatment providers? Street discussed that currently, communication between RHINO and medical providers/treatment providers is non-existent. He would like increased knowledge

regarding medical treatment availability and operations, to allow for a better referral process. As mentioned earlier, during RHINO operations and 1:1 contact with individuals with SUD, this would be a great opportunity to educate individuals and provide education/referrals.

Judge Morgan discussed the funding breakdown; \$2,500 is for training, personnel expenses, and equipment; how will this proposal directly impact individuals in Lenawee? Detective Street stated funding is not going directly to individuals but rather to support the RHINO team in their operations. Any way of stopping the distribution of drugs is beneficial. Also, that 1:1 contact with individuals who are distributing drugs may also have a substance-use disorder and could benefit from a referral/education process.

C. Catholic Charities of Jackson, Lenawee, & Hillsdale Counties - **Seeking Safety Program**

Rachel Dochstader was present from Catholic Charities of Jackson, Lenawee, & Hillsdale. Catholic Charities was established in Lenawee County in 1958 and was licensed by the State of MI in 2003 to provide substance-use services.

Dochstader has worked as a substance-use case manager for Catholic Charities and the Lenawee Recovery/Sobriety Court, along with many years as a licensed Foster parent. In her work, she has consistently seen families with substance-use disorders. During her time, she has not only fostered children, but also trained foster parents regarding brain trauma and development.

Research consistently shows patterns between those with SUD and involvement with the family court system. Substance use and trauma are also consistently found together. The families that they see often involve parents with unresolved childhood trauma. The proposal today is to request funding for a Trauma Informed Educational program. Included in the RFP is data from 2024: Catholic Charities provided 6,504 substance-use and mental health services in 3 counties. Their Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) conducted 373 forensic interviews last year, 125 of those in Lenawee. The foster care program assists about 35 children per month, and they have assisted many graduates through their Road Map to Graduation.

Many parents involved in Child Protective Services (CPS) are experiencing various struggles, such as addiction, loss, shame, fear of losing children, and more. Often, there is a relapse that occurs. Catholic Charities would like to fill this gap.

The requested funding would be used for the Seeking Safety-Based Educational Program. It is an evidence-based, trauma-informed intervention specifically designed to help people with co-occurring trauma and substance-use disorders. This program will be available to families involved in the CPS system and who have a history of substance use. The program entails a weekly 1-hour group session, for a total of 8 weeks. Using the seeking safety model, participants will learn to use coping skills to manage trauma, reduce the risk of relapse, and build a healthier future. The primary objective is to reduce the re-occurrence of CPS involvement and promote sustained sobriety among parents.

To evaluate the participants' impact, Catholic Charities will use screening tools like: MAST,

DAST, and ACES. Feedback from the participants will be requested, along with f/u after 6 months and annually. Success will be measured by group completion rates, maintained sobriety, and reduced re-engagement with CPS. Catholic Charities will be offering their current space for the program. While this is a new program, it is rooted in proven practices. The program has been implemented nationally with good results. Dochstader highlighted the benefits of funding this program. It is an investment in the long-term healing of families, helping to break the cycle of trauma and addiction that passes from one family to the next.

Terry Collins opened the discussion, asking if Catholic Charities have applied for any Opioid settlement funding from the other counties. Dochstader confirmed that Catholic Charities had not applied for funding. Also, this program will be implemented and serve Lenawee County only. Currently, the program will start with 1 group class. Dochstader stated that if they find the program to be successful, they will consider starting a second group class. Discussion continued regarding the expenses of 1 class vs. 2 classes; the primary expense will be the purchase of the lessons' booklet. Operating and personnel expenses would not increase until the future, if the program expanded.

Palmani requested some examples of the Seeking Safety Program, which was founded in 1995. Dochstader stated each participant would receive a course workbook. A lot of the work is take-home work; stating changes and therapy often happen at home. Additional activities could include a program graduation certificate. Discussion continued regarding the current CPS referral process. Dochstader stated that currently, youth CPS case referrals are provided to all Lenawee agencies. She is unsure how the referral process for Seeking Safety will work in Lenawee, since it is not currently being done.

Kelly discussed how the families being served may not be involved with opioids, but rather all substance-use disorders. Dochstader discussed the gap she has seen with biological parents; currently they get standard training from Catholic Charities. However, it does not include how substance use can affect the individual. If they cannot understand the effects, they will not understand how it affects their family and children. Which would be the focus of this program. She shared that the seeking Safety Program already has an established curriculum, handouts, and program.

Morgan asked if they would accept referrals for families not involved with the CPS? Dochstader stated they are not limiting enrollment to only CPS cases; many of the substance-use referrals currently come from LCMH. Anyone with CPS involvement or risk of involvement would be the primary clients of the program. A question was asked about the sustainability of the program; Dochstader stated the funding for the program would be picked up by Catholic Charities in the future; they would also research other available grants and possibly community partners. Dochstader discussed that Catholic Charities is a non-profit organization with low overhead expenses. Therefore, if awarded, opioid funding would go primarily to those in need.

Kelly questioned what type of follow-up would be done for the participants and how the children would be supported? Previously, Dochstader discussed there being a 6-month and annual follow-up, post-completion. Further, she stated that after working with the participants, the additional support needs could be determined. Also, all individuals working with Catholic Charities are always welcomed back.

For child support, Catholic Charities has two child therapists and, if on Medicaid or health insurance, it is a covered benefit.

V. Public Comment

No comment.

VI. Commissioner Comment

Comm. Martis recommended removing this section from future agendas.

Comm. Martis recommended the committee members to reach out for any future questions or recommendations.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Bevier, seconded by Collins to adjourn the meeting at 3:49pm. Motion carried.