

MINUTES FOR AUGUST 12, 2025 MEETING OF THE DRUG FREE ASHLEY COUNTY
COALITION

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE: Lisa Riels, Joshua Adams, Jackson Chambers, Elizabeth White, Janette Ramirez, Madilyn Ramirez, Brandon Kelley, Bubba Stafford, Keyvion Duckery, Kaedon Thomas, Tammie Black, Kholbie Thomas, Erin Truman, Jacoy Barney, Nyla Black, Dominic Evans, Ale'yah Smith, Kaleb Smith, Jessi Griffith, MJ Esquivel, Emma Perez, Memphis Benefield, Kim A.Johns, Kelley Howie, Whitney Hickman, Tempest Alexander, Mayor David Streeter, Jessie Charpentier, Vivian Guimbellot, Jordan Bailey, Ephraim Johnson, Jennifer Johnson, Allison Bussmann, Chief Johnny Oliver, Nathan M. Sullivan, Dennis Maxwell, Sherri Hendrix, Eric Shoffner, Mike Neal, Arlyn Richards, Janie Carter, Ava Alexander; **Zoom: Linda Rushing**

Intended outcomes of this meeting:

*To introduce new members and attendees and recognize youth attendees.
To share information from past conferences.
To introduce new group leaders.
To go over collected surveys.*

Announcements/Introductions:

Eric Shoffner called the meeting to order at noon with a welcome speech to attendees. Eric introduced Lisa Riels and gave her the floor.

New members' and guests' introductions:

*Lisa Riels called for prayer then made introductions
--of new attendees and visiting students
-- new members: Crossett Police Chief Clint Bradberry, Parent: Janette Ramirez; and Youth: Madilyn Ramirez*

Recent conference information:

*Eric regained the floor and
--announced the August 31st International Overdose and Awareness Day.
--acknowledged that eight adults and eleven youth attended the Next Gen Conference in July thanks to sponsorship by the Community Empowerment Council in Pine Bluff. Eric invited attendees to share their experiences from the conference.
--Jennifer Johnson, Madilyn Ramirez and her mother, Janette shared their thoughts and experiences.
--Arnetta Pugh of Phoenix Youth and Family Services sent written comments on Next Gen and a prevention conference she is currently attending in Washington, D.C.
--Elizabeth White shared her thoughts on information she learned at a conference about human trafficking and new drug lingo.
--Janie shared more comments from teenaged conference attendees.*

Minutes from previous meeting:

Eric called for any concerns regarding minutes of the July meeting. Seeing none, he received a motion from Dennis Maxwell to accept as written with Lisa Riels providing a second to that motion. The minutes were accepted.

Introduction of new leaders:

*Eric introduced new leaders in the group.
--Jennifer Johnson as new sector leader for parents.
--Nathan Sullivan as the new sector leader for education.
--Lisa Riels introduced Kin Johns as a new Curriculum Consultant for Hamburg Middle School and recognized Counselors Kelley Howie and Allison Bussmann.*

Upcoming events:

Eric listed several upcoming events.

*--The 2025 Stop Overdose provided by the AR Attorney General's Office will be held at the Hot Springs Convention Center on Tuesday, November 18. It is free and open to the public with six tracks of information and interest. Attendees must register in advance at:
<https://arkansasag.eventsmart.com/events/2025-stop-overdose-summit/>*

--In partnership with 10th Judicial District Juvenile Judge Theresa French, Laura Stacks, CEO and founder of Johnny's Ambassadors, will present several assemblies informing students and adults about the dangerously high levels of THC in today's marijuana that can cause cannabis induced psychosis and the prevalence of death by suicide. (see <https://johnnysambassadors.org>)

--December 1st in Hamburg and Crossett

--December 2nd-3rd Drew, Bradley, Lincoln and Jefferson Counties

Guest Speaker:

Eric introduced MSgt Josh Adams of the Arkansas National Guard Counterdrug Unit.

--Adams explained his position with the Drug Demand and Reduction Policy Program, and presented the results of the most recent Ashley County Youth Perception Survey (a copy of the presentation is available online at <https://drugfreeAC.org>)

--The overview of latest youth survey shows the perception of Ashley County youth is that their three greatest substance use problems continue to be: #1) Underage drinking; #2) Marijuana, and #3) Prescription Drugs

--MSgt Adams made the point that 27% of the responses stated that Friends, Relatives (including parents) are the source of substances used by the youth

--Janie Carter explained that this survey is the reaction of youth to what they perceive to be the problems, why those problems exist in Ashley County, and what needs to be done to improve or reduce the problematic issues. She further explained that information from a yearly survey called the Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) Survey directly asks what substances students in 6th, 8th, 10, and 12th grades have used in the past 30 days and in their lifetimes. More information on that survey will be discussed in future meetings and can be found at APNA Survey Arkansas (<https://arkansas.isadata.com/>)

Meeting closure:

--Mike Neal shared his thoughts on the need for mentors in kids' lives.

--MSgt Adams recognized a student who commented on youth whose parents are unconcerned and leave substances out and available to them..

--Superintendent Sullivan closed the meeting.

The next meeting will be September 9th from 12 noon to 1 pm at the E.C. Crossett Youth Center, 300 North Martin Luther King, Drive. A reminder will be emailed, and RSVP is required for lunch.