

Southern Mountains Homeless Coalition (Region 2 BoS)
June 6, 2019 - Blue Ridge Community Health Services (BRCHS), Hendersonville
Eleanor Meloun Community Room, 9:30 AM

Facilitation was by Co-lead **Kristen Martin**, supported by Co-lead **Emily Lowery**. Visiting: **Kim Crawford** of the State Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) office, and **Brian Alexander** of NCCEH BoS staff.

Minutes for May 2 considered for acceptance as distributed by email. **Alyce Knaflich** moved approval of the distributed draft, and it was adopted as final by common consent.

The **May Balance of State (BoS) Steering Committee** call: Continuum of Care (CoC) funding competition: One new proposal is anticipated in our region. Email will be sent about a North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH) webinar for new proposers. Any new applicant is required to fill out an advance notice of intent to apply – see the NCCEH website. The HUD NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) is expect at the end of June or in early July, which starts the calendar for filing applications. Kristen went over the CoC list of priorities to be met by the overall grant, including Infrastructure (HMIS and Coordinated Entry), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), and efficient use of all funds, including through reallocations. Thanks to Alyce, who will serve as our regional rep for the Project Review phase of the competition. Our regional priority list: PSH, then RRH; these were largely determined by the 80 or so chronically homeless on our waiting list. Sample scorecards for the competition are available.

ABCCM is submitting a grant for employment of veterans, and requested a BoS letter of support; approved. (David Carr, regional lead for veterans, is absent due to an injury).

The **June Balance of State (BoS) Steering Committee** call: The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) change to a new State system (to boot up June 12), will require use of paper forms to enter info over about 10 days. ****Use of HMIS is strongly encouraged!**** Providers that do so greatly assist the Coordinated Entry process of suitably assigning housing. The access licensing is free to providers. There will be some new forms to comply with the system change, for consent rules and share-information planning.

ESG regional lead elections were confirmed – **Suzanne Porter** serves as ESG Lead in our region. Our strategy for ESG is to emphasize outreach to new providers, with a hope of getting at least one provider in each county.

The anti-discrimination policy is being revised. A webinar at the end of June will give details.

Brian Alexander outlined the **role of NCCEH**, a private nonprofit which offers training and technical assistance to 12 CoCs, including the balance-of-state (BoS) which it administers through a staff of four which Brian directs. BoS staff aim to enable local applicants to devise strategies and locate resources to end or alleviate homelessness. Focuses include grantee and regional assistance. They are in turn supported by HUD staff, which have been found to offer high quality help both in this state and from the DC offices. An overarching challenge is lack of funding.

Point-In-Time (PIT) 2019 count update (Emily): NCCEH reports that across 52 counties in BoS, 755 ‘households’ and 850 people were found ‘unsheltered’ as defined by HUD – not spending the night in a place designed/fit for human habitation. Southern Mountains region had counted/surveyed 40 people unsheltered: 22 in Transylvania County, 16 in Henderson, one each in Polk and Rutherford. These low figures are partly explained by the bitter cold of the survey overnight/morning, so that some who usually camp pooled resources to buy overnight lodging.

Elizabeth Moss said the IAM impression is that unsheltered population is greatest in summer; should the count be done then? Brian said that PIT is mandated to occur nationally in the last ten days of January by HUD; this has been so for 20+ years, so retaining consistency is valued. It supplements the usual performance measures, and the longitudinal analysis of the systems, which otherwise only are captured in HMIS. In NC the findings are understood per local situations such as the lack of street outreach programs here. In this area there have been occasional summer counts in Henderson and Transylvania. The number of count volunteers should make a significant difference, as many campers tend to be up and gone shortly after daybreak, giving a short time for count teams to interact. Some see an advantage to having the phone app as the count tool, as it requires full information, and seems less intrusive than past practices- though it means local count teams don’t get summaries quickly. The use of local advertised outreach/post-count-day resource events was discussed as good followup. Volunteers participating: 30 in Henderson, 12 in Rutherford, 11 in Transylvania, 3-4 in Polk. Suzanne spoke of giving a fuller count of ‘at risk’ persons identified to

their County Manager. Brian saw value to knowing who is 'at risk' of homelessness; and to doing lots of local training. If any area wants to do a summer count, please discuss it with Emily.

Schoolhouse Connections: Beth Brannigan and Kim Kleiss have organized an 'end family homelessness' subcommittee: A meeting is planned July 19, 9 AM, with regular followup in alternate months (July, September,...) on third Fridays. The plan is to rotate among counties- exact locations are not yet set. Schoolhouse Connections plans to provide relevant gift cards (how will these be distributed?). Alyce pointed to efforts to feed homeless children, via backpack and bag lunch programs, using food trucks, or links to free-lunch servers. Suzanne and Elizabeth Moss are aware of back-to-school events; Kristen will send out their fliers.

Coordinated Entry (CE) update (Kristen): An evaluation is under way, which will split focus for PSH, RRH and other CE activities. There's a current effort to tweak Vi-SPDAT intakes; and to get these done in new locations. About 18 agency staffers have been trained in our region. Of 225 on our current wait list, all but 20 are now completed in HMIS. The next CE meeting will be in this room, on June 13th at 11 AM. We currently have unassigned RRH funds to house new people(!) due to fund re-allocations. The more people that participate in CE, the better; we can serve folks in all 4 counties.

Veterans: David Carr reports the SSVF funds are exhausted; they will replenish after Sept. 30. Alyce reports housing women vets in Buncombe and Haywood, including a woman known in Henderson. **Brenda Ploss** notes seeing more women willing to identify as veterans across our region. We're making some progress in cutting the psychological barriers, but more is needed.

Bringing it Home conference, Raleigh: Emily, Eric _____, Kristen and **Carrington Cosby** attended. By design they all attended different breakout sessions. Feedback: It's a valuable and relatively affordable conference.

Kristen took the Coordinated Entry track: There are advantages to having more local voices in determining placements (for efficiency and effectiveness). A prominent question was what to do for the undocumented, as there are 'sticky' issues re federal funds.

Emily looked at Emergency Shelter: There is a crisis-response role in shelters. Charlotte provided a recommended model, with low-barrier operation (open through daytimes) with staff to support volunteers. The Haven wants to go in this direction...Liz (Charlotte director) sent them a handbook.

Carrington looked at a shelter example merged with a drop-in center, able to provide trauma-informed care, also to administer Narcan and other harm reduction; also to strengthen RRH programs to be effective and provide units that 'fit' client need. An ongoing needed resource is a large number of interested landlords to contact. Note: RRH is not poverty prevention. We need to be ready to attempt Shared housing placements – it demands creativity to do so, but the placements are badly needed. Some of this is recognizing useful data (to improve programs as we go along; what info helps identify appropriate sharing?). Brenda said to 'connect people with passions'. Alyce cited Aura Homes' use of a 3-bedroom unit for shared housing.

Eric is unfortunately ill; he attended the policy change sessions.

All conference program slides are on the NCCEH website.

Emergency Solutions Grant program: Kim Crawford (a former Region 6 lead and agency director) continued discussion of RRH. She emphasized the need for placements that allow continuing community support. She's aware of three deaths in RRH that were preventable, likely due to lack of this support. Street life 'survival hits your body'. Brian said this is added reason to try to pair people up. Alyce criticized programs that demand one person-one apartment placements as bad policy. We have to address fear issues, to overcome even the mental health and substance abuse challenges.

We have to get past the issue of available rentals being so often substandard. Homeward Bound, for instance, is working with Groce United Methodist Church to provide two 'apartments' in a big church building. **Suzanne** wants to attempt an Oxford House model, so that old church parsonages can be put to good use. Some of these could be substance-abuse specific. Kim said that Family Promise uses this type of model, sometimes connected to a drop-in center.

Kim said the **ESG office** (three on staff) focuses on regulatory interpretation, to "stay in the box and figure it out". They will issue a Request for Proposals in July – it offers regional funding as a 'fair share', they have similar priorities to CoC, but can offer broader activity support: Homeless prevention, shelters, and street outreach as well as

RRH and PSH. They prioritize Housing First and low-barrier programs, but do not compromise shelter. They need applicants to know the written CoC standards. They need applicants to follow what their applications say. They need adherence to Coordinated Entry standards. Programs that implement 'other house rules' or organizational behavior that effectively is unstated rules, can't be funded.

Coordinated Entry can offer real benefits in effectiveness and efficiency; it thrives on trust. Implementers must realize that the most critical (and chronic) cases are going to be the most expensive to work with. The point is not to 'pick and choose' cases that would be simple. Do not go for the cases likely to self-resolve. Use HMIS correctly. We look for CAPERs (program reoorts) that get around affordable housing issues. Ideally, an RRH placement can complete in 7 days. That's done when advance work in housing-locating, in inspections, and in case management, is enabled. You can train for RRH entry; you can't do the funding decision on your own. Please look for conflicts of interest; look at local written standards; look at what's important for your community.

The request for applications is targeted for July 16th. It will have all the instructions. The office plans workshops on August 13-14-15, from 10 to 2 each day; locations will be Asheville 13th, the site will be more than adequately sized); also Burlington on the 14th, and Greenville NC on the 15th. We want to be that funding partner!

Emily noted that ESG will stretch to help; they are funding ESL for some Latino families through ESG.

Southern Mountains Coalition **will not meet** during July (note the July 4 holiday). The next Coalition member meeting will be August 1. Coordinated Entry will meet in both June and July.

With respect, Chris Berg, secretary