

Notes for Southern Mountains Homeless Coalition online/Zoom meeting
Region 2 in the N.C. Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC) for Homeless
February 4, 2021, 9:30 AM Kristen at Thrive hosting, Sarah at UWHC co-hosting

Persons attending: Regional co-leads: Kristen Martin and Emily Lowery. Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Kristen Martin, Stephanie Gilliam, Carrington Cosby, and Nickie Kilgore (Thrive); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes Women Vets); Micky Robinson (Isaac Homes); Jennifer Drum (Vet Advisor, Rutherford-Polk); Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Sherry Stokes (Salvation Army); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Brenda Ploss (NC Works); Adam Jahnke (VA-LCSWA Outreach-HCHV program); Jessica Owenby and Matthew Gruebmeier (Henderson County Schools); Sarah Kowalak (United Way Henderson County); Beth Branagan (Transylvania Schools); Kristin Dunn (Camplify); Sarah Lancaster (Vaya Health); Chris Berg; Jennifer (Affordable Homeownership Foundation, Brevard). See also the appended Chat.

Kristen facilitated. She referred to ground rules spelled out in the agenda.

Minutes of January 7 meeting: Kristen asked for any corrections or comments on those minutes of the Coalition, as distributed. None were offered, so the distributed version was adopted by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee: February 2 meeting: A **rental assistance** discussion estimated over \$5000 rent debt for most families. Current funding will not meet all that. Eviction moratoriums have been extended, but there are clear loopholes. Coverage by moratorium is not automatic, and judges vary as to how extensive the protection is. Thrive recommends all clients facing eviction process be referred to Pisgah Legal to get adequate representation. The tenants must give the required declaration to the landlord.

The NC Coalition Against **Domestic Violence** [<https://nccadv.org/>] seeks legislative changes, to increase access to courts for domestic violence protection orders when courts are closed under emergencies, by assigning one judge or magistrate to be available for such actions.

Supporting the NC rural economy: The NC **Rural Center** [www.ncruralcenter.org/] supports rural broadband, health access, affordable and sustainable housing, updates to water and wastewater infrastructure, funding small business development supports and entrepreneurship. They've gained support from NC **Realtors**- a great addition. Realtors [www.ncrealtors.org/] support housing generally, including fair housing law enforcement, combating laws excluding housing that's affordable or available, rationalize development fees and approvals; they monitor local control of rentals including short-term. They monitor property insurance cost rises, an ongoing issue--they have at times blocked some increases affecting homeowners and tenants. These are problems seen in our four counties. The NC **Housing Coalition** [<https://nchousing.org/>] promotes equitable access to housing, combats the long history of racist policies and practices, promotes availability of housing in communities across the income spectrum, and public resourcing scaled to housing need. [These groups presented about their work, they are not Steering Committee members.]

The Biden Rescue Plan is not enacted, perhaps by mid-March. Currently it proposes \$6.1 bn for homeless services, \$30 bn for emergency rental assistance, and 500,000 vouchers. There is talk of making housing vouchers into an entitlement program, like SNAP and EBT benefits, not done through a separate application. That is very different, we will track that.

CoC program award: Locally this funds Thrive, for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Usually that's based on an application, but the FY20 cycle waived that and renewed FY19 grants.

Funds were upped a bit as the Fair Market Rents (FMR) had increased here. The new rent limit starts this summer. Thrive hopes to access better quality housing with that, we'll see. If not feasible, they'd add a few more units at existing FMR. Kristen will update us as more is learned. The FY21 cycle is outlined as more like the typical past cycles, without automatic renewal. CoC's are to register by March 4 (BoS does that). By May we'll likely see specific information on grant process, when the NOFA could be released, etc. Should any new agency like to apply, BoS will need an 'intent-to-apply' form – linked in Chat. Thrive does want to apply for a new RRH project, so it is submitting that form, and (as required) Kristen is notifying this regional committee. Until details are available Thrive is unsure whether it will go forward, but is laying initial groundwork. The idea is to switch away from ESG funding for Rapid Re-Housing (RRH). ESG monies might become available for shelters and outreach. That could be opportune for The Haven, Salvation Army, Blue Ridge Health or others.

Coordinated Entry evaluations: These had been waived, but will not be in this current year. For RRH new intake households, Thrive will gather the required information as soon as it has the forms, expected in March. PSH evaluations must be drawn before April 30. Shelter and Outreach evaluations will be taken between April 17 and 30. Thrive is used to this, and offered tech support to Salvation Army and Blue Ridge Health re: their outreach.

COVID vaccinations for homeless: **Trisha** has been on statewide calls advocating those vaccinations become higher priority. Homeless providers are currently in Group 3. Current work is on Group 2, age 65+ persons, and there are tight controls to insure current vaccinations comply. So Trisha is to identify any 65+ homeless, or 65+ homeless providers also, to get them appointments. She sent a survey to our leads, to get distributed and find information from the group; so when vaccine becomes available, we'll be ready to contact qualifying people and set up to vaccinate them quickly. Blue Ridge is checking with Rescue Mission on all 65+ there, guests, staff or volunteers. They are on weekly calls with Pardee and the Health Department, to try to insure equal access to targeted and marginalized populations. Let her know (email) if anyone has age 65+ persons to vaccinate. Kristen supplied Trisha with names of the qualifying people on the by-name list.

Shelters: Emily spoke of new efforts to lower barriers to create more effective emergency shelters. 'Shelter eligibility, policies and space affects performance outcomes'. A pilot program in Region 5 (Piedmont, east of Charlotte) linked several shelters to adopt the same goals. This meant Housing First, and lowering admission barriers. They all did that, and it worked. They also found ways to cut shelter wait lists, and increase timely exits to housing. It was a partnership – the regional shelters, NCCEH and National Alliance to End Homelessness. Their homelessness workload was 642 people (2020 PIT count). That is a great model, but we will need to increase shelters in HMIS to try anything like it. The Haven is the only one now on HMIS in this region. All the Region 5 improvements decreased returns to homelessness, so there was overall community benefit. Changes in language improved relations among providers, and outcomes. There was useful peer-generated learning, including how to access resources. The new common goals were part of an outreach '100-day' challenge to other shelters, including a survey.

Back@Home for Outreach: **Trisha** said Blue Ridge outreach continues with COVID protective procedures. They see a decline in symptomatic persons since the shelter outbreak at the end of December. Their phone supply is about gone, they were taken up quickly, and enabled a number of intakes, and tips on locations to check. Unfortunately, Trisha was not able to coordinate well with **Sherry** at Salvation Army due to the outbreak. Sherry reported that many mapped locations had been 'moved along' – so they are busy trying to remap. Please let Trisha know of encampment sites or

gathering places. The award of second round funding will allow a new hire of an outreach specialist. That should help the regional team. Trisha is working with their Polk clinic to establish access points. She sees the PIT count forms being useful year-round, to get people connected. One goal is to create a street-outreach map for all four counties. They cooperate with the Rescue Mission to connect people to opportunities. They target the cold-weather supplies to those staying overnight outside/away from the Mission. They will try to look in on anyone this group cares to name as a concern.

Thrive Back@Home: Kristen said two more families have been housed since the 1/7 meeting, two intakes were done and two are set up in the coming week. Two or three Permanent Supportive Housing units will also come open shortly. These will be either filled from the by-name list or by lease renewals where RRH support is expiring- in the latter case that will open RRH support to by-name listed homeless. Like Blue Ridge Health, Thrive was also awarded CARES Act Round 2 funds, that must be used by summer 2022. Thrive wants to work with property managers with sizeable portfolios, that tend to hang up when third-party-payment is indicated. They will identify their leadership teams, to talk about a pilot program with them, to try to break the stigma/assumptions about nuisance renters and show them these folks can succeed. They need to reach beyond the current one-or-two unit landlords. Anyone, please let us know if you can make introductions for us at Thrive to start that. **Michael Absher** said there's no property-manager association in Henderson.

Racial Equity: Stephanie Gilliam cited that group's three 2021 annual goals (see 1/7 minutes). Their January group meeting set up subgroups around each goal. Stephanie joined one to look at Coordinated-entry prioritization, including the SPDAT, with a hope to find more equitable ways to do it. A blog of the work was sent to NCCEH and published, she'll send Kristen that link to publicize here. They'll meet Feb. 17th.

Sarah Kowalak said the Henderson County Racial Equity Collective is hosting a movie Feb. 19th (6 PM?) to show *I Am Not Your Negro*, with a discussion to follow. She and Stephanie and Kristen may each invite a guest. If you have an interest in the Collective this is a quick way to meet participants compared to the two-day trainings. "Invite" means a Zoom link. The two-day Phase 1 trainings are very worthwhile, and locally there are plans to offer a three-hour intro, Racial Equity Institute's 'ground-water' training -if you want to dip your feet in, that's coming March 26, 9 to 12. They will send out a registration offer, \$15, by Zoom, limit 100 participants. That's pending, but you can email Sarah skowalak@liveunitedhc.org to get the offer. Limit two per organization. **Suzanne Porter** recommends watching this movie somehow, as the parallels between Baldwin's world and now are striking. **Sherry Stokes** (dialing in) wanted to join, and Stephanie will invite her. (See Chat emails at 10:09 and after for other invitation offers)

Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition (CYHAC): Beth Branagan said CYHAC next meets Fri. March 19, 9 AM, by Zoom. January's meeting was canceled, Beth was ill and Trisha (guest speaker) couldn't make it. Kim Guice resigned from being co-chair: please consider stepping up to help Beth. If you have a topic or speaker to bring forward for March, please also email her. **Michael** offered to help!

Point in time (PIT) count and HIC (housing inventory): Trisha reported that despite weird conditions they are connecting with unsheltered people and connecting them to the by-name list, setting up for the coordinated entry system. It's a model for what should happen year-round. **Sherry** said she and a few volunteers have visited camps (despite guidance). Locations under bridges by walking paths were identified to police. They've been evacuated. She's had to try to relocate the people. She's

checked 90% of Google mapped prior locations. But unsheltered are being extremely transient. Example: Four camps near WalMart, visited twice one week, but gone the next. The cold weather has a big impact. People get a shelter for a night or two, then come back to camp but it's been trashed. So they have to salvage and try to find another safer spot. Sherry gears up, snacks, cold weather items, surveys. The unsheltered have been pretty receptive. But they vary about giving contact (phone) info. It's iffy- does it work? Do they have minutes? Some transients are impacted by construction site work. If contact info is refused, request they drop by, at Salvation Army, Thrive, Blue Ridge Health, periodically. Or meet at the Mission if they try to lunch there. Blue Ridge does have a few, say five, phones to provide. **Alyce Knaflich** recommended getting an alternate phone # (of someone they are apt to check in with) as another contact route. Stephanie said Facebook Messenger (when they're in a free wifi area) is useful: Set up an outreach Facebook page to link to, and get word out about that. [General approval!]

Matt Gruebmeier asked (Chat) about any contacts to unsheltered children or youth. Sherry hasn't seen them, but in vehicles there's some evidence, and Trisha agreed. Kristen said these vehicles are used to take kids to school, even when the kids sleep at a friend's or Grandma's or such. Salvation Army hears kids are more readily taken in, having fewer issues.

Coordinated Entry update: 399 individuals, in 242 households. Kristen hopes it will continue to reduce, as it has lately. As mentioned in the Steering Committee portion, an evaluation is upcoming.

Hendersonville **Connection Center** (anticipated): A capital campaign to establish this is starting up. It would consolidate intakes for homeless and indigent service seekers to process in one place rather than a run around.

It could also be a potential extra protection from cold weather injuries.

The Coalition **Webmaster** has new employment and must withdraw. We seek a person to do these uploads, who is not affiliated with an agency already employing any Coalition lead person. The job is to upload approved minutes to a site, period. **Sarah Lancaster** said Vaya is moving staff in March, so may have someone then.

See also a volunteer in Chat.

Veterans: **Alyce** put items in Chat. Homeward Bound is buying a hotel in Asheville, to be efficiencies for homeless. It's bad. People sleeping in streets. Red Roof Inn, Super 8, Steadfast House, plus VRQ. She thinks Transformation Village is now being housing. The government is expelling, they scatter like roaches, can't keep in contact. Getting a contact point to check in at, as you discussed, that would be great. That Naples-I-26 exit Shell station is a place, including the truck stop. Also in Chat: about Veterans Home Loan program, for mortgage help; and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, open to anyone seeking eviction-prevention relief: a Hope Hotline #.

Kristen: as time is short, feel free to note Veterans or Outreach items in Chat, or email them to Kristen; if outreach, she will pass on to Trisha and Sherry.

Bree (Brenda Ploss) will send an email to Kristen to forward to Coalition.

Sarah Lancaster heard about a change to HUD-VASH criteria. Kristen believes it's about broadening those eligible beyond holders of honorable discharges. Alyce said a Dishonorable Dischargee can now apply for a discharge upgrade, to thereby be eligible. And they now require two years of active service to be eligible for VA benefits, not 30 or 60 days.

New items to send out: If you send an update to Kristen, please specify if you want it to go out to the full Coalition. Otherwise it will not be broadcast.

The next regional meeting is set for March 4, 9:30 AM, by Zoom. - Chris Berg

The Chat follows.

09:30:29 Emily Lowery : Emily Lowery, The Haven of Transylvania County Emily@havenoftc.org
09:30:37 kristin dunn : Kristin Dunn, Camplify, Kristin@camplifync.org
09:30:41 Kristen Martin (she/her/hers) : Kristen Martin, Thrive
09:30:44 Josh Shelton : Josh Shelton, Thrive
09:30:45 Alyce Knaflich : Alyce Knaflich aurahome.alyce@gmail.com
09:30:48 Micky Robinson : Micky Robinson, Isaac Homes Youth Shelter
09:30:53 Trisha Ecklund : Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health
09:31:03 nickie kilgore : Nickie Kilgore Thrive nkilgore@thrive4health.org
09:31:08 Carrington Cosby (she/her/hers), Thrive : Carrington Cosby, Thrive (I have to leave at 10:00 for another training)
09:31:09 Jessica Ownbey : Jessica Ownbey, Henderson County Public Schools
09:31:11 Bree : Brenda.Ploss@NCCommerce.com 919.710.3748 NCWorks Career Center Veterans Career Advisor
09:31:41 Jennifer Drum : Jennifer Drum-Veteran Career Advisor for Rutherford-Polk
09:31:48 Adam Jahnke - adam.jahnke@va.gov : adam.jahnke@va.gov 828-578-8544, Veterans Affairs Outreach Social Worker
09:33:00 bbranaga : Beth Branagan, Transylvania County Schools
09:33:47 Stephanie Gilliam : Stephanie Gilliam, Thrive
09:33:49 Matthew Gruebmeier : Matt Gruebmeier, HCPS
09:33:57 Matthew Gruebmeier : mwgruebmeier@hcpsnc.org
09:44:34 Kristen Martin (she/her/hers) : <https://www.ncceh.org/bos/currentcocapplication/>
10:00:51 Chris Berg : Emily, is there a publication on that pilot program, or one planned?
10:02:07 Alyce Knaflich :
<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2021/02/04/homeward-bound-plans-buy-hotel-house-homeless/4375269001/>
10:06:11 Sarah Lancaster : Some Owners may participate in association(s) in surrounding counties given several own units in Buncombe and Henderson.
10:09:06 Sarah Kowalak : skowalak@liveunitedhc.org
10:09:14 Stephanie Gilliam : sgilliam@thrive4health.org
10:10:25 kristin dunn: I just finished it so I'll have a code if folks wanted to email Kristin@camplifync.org
10:10:39 kristin dunn : yep :)
10:11:24 Alyce Knaflich : VA Home Loans 887-827-3702
www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/cares-act-frequently-asked-questions.asp
10:17:02 Alyce Knaflich : Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Hope hotline 888-995-4673 <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus>
10:18:23 Matthew Gruebmeier : I'm curious. Are you finding unsheltered children and youth, also?
10:20:20 Matthew Gruebmeier : Thank you

10:22:17 Matthew Gruebmeier : Please make sure to reach out to us when you identify children or school-aged youth who are sharing the housing of others or otherwise homeless. Thank you!
Matt: 828-273-9527 (cell)

10:22:50 Matthew Gruebmeier : Jessica: 828-388-0294

10:23:18 Bree : I will email NCWorks Veterans Services Info and Job List to Kristen to send to all in February +.

10:24:48 Jennifer - Affordable Homeownership Foundation, Brevard : I am interested in being the webmaster

10:29:58 bbranaga : On a personal note, my sister just sold her house and is building a house and needs to rent until it is built. She hasn't been able to find anything to rent outside of the large apartment complexes. So, just wanted to share that if it is impossible to find something when you have resources, hard to imagine how difficult for our folks with limited resources.