

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 3, 2022, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

Persons on the call: Regional co-leads: Kristen Martin, Emily Lowery.

Kristen Martin, Kristin Dunn, Nickie Kilgore, Kayla Asquith, Tracey Gruver, Josh Shelton and Rachelle Dugan (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Suzanne Misur-Porter (United Way of Rutherford County); Makala Perez, Danita Simpson, Grace Rauch, Trisha Ecklund and Kennett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Captain Sherrie Stokes (Salvation Army); Trina Rushing (Henderson Library); Amber Story (Partners Behavioral Health M); Jessica Ownbey (Henderson Schools); Brenda Ploss (NC Works Veterans Careers); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Catherine Beaver (Henderson Dept. of Social Services); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Kristen Goossens (Safelight); Chris Berg. See also the **appended Chat**; but one or more messages may be incomplete.

Kristen Martin facilitated. Please see the agenda for a ground rules statement.

Minutes of January 6 online meeting were approved by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee January meeting (Kristen): Introductions were made of new members serving for 2022. They discussed upcoming work on PIT and HIC (Point in Time count, Housing Inventory Count) and how these data would be handled. There was a review of Emergency Solutions Grants awarded during all of 2021.

BoS Steering Committee February meeting (Kristen): The BoS data dashboard is in development, with tests of overall data handling. An extension to present regional data should be ready soon. One focus is chronicity- how time impacts services to homeless. The information is expected to help regions and projects to define their goals appropriately, and to inform situations where funds could be diverted to other uses, with more specific context.

A bill in Congress that challenges the Housing First model, H.R. 6018, Housing PLUS Act of 2021 (in House Financial Services committee, introduced by Rep. Andy Barr (KY)), drew extended debate. It was said 'not to be evidence-based'. NCCEH staff referred to inaccurate information offered at a press conference.

Michael Absher forecast the bill will die without action. Kristen expected a steering team will circulate a draft letter on the bill, which she will forward to the regional list.

A new workgroup on **Equity in Coordinated Entry** will form. Technical assistance will guide this team, including those with lived homelessness experience, and veteran data implementers, to work with the screening process and replace the problematic SPDAT, to make services more equitable for various people of color. Volunteers are sought, particularly

- people with lived experience of homelessness
- people with Asian, Latin American, Indigenous or Pacific Island background
- victim service providers or consumers
- veterans
- youth

Alyce Knaflich will follow up at the Lived Expertise BoS subcommittee on February 11 (meets 2nd Fridays).

Resource Fair preparations: Henderson: **Trina Rushing** and a group meets this morning at Salvation Army to refine plans for that space. They will need to decide between end-of-March/early April, vs. later, likely April 29 or May 6 (all Fridays). Trina expected the later date given Covid prevalence.

Rutherford: **Kennett Melgar** and **Suzanne Porter** plan to meet with local workers on a March or later date. Others in the Blue Ridge homeless outreach team will help.

Transylvania has not met yet.

Polk will be taken up by Blue Ridge outreach, including some expected new hires.

PIT count: Trisha Ecklund said she was not able to produce HMIS reports this morning. Kristen said that this should be as complete an annual count as ever produced in this region, Thrive staff and the outreach teams checked on 120 or 130 households on the unsheltered by-name list, and all known shelters have reported bed occupancy for HIC. Kristen expected that the count will reflect increased numbers per current longer-range tracking efforts, but she also was aware that with cold weather on count overnight, some would manage to find a couch space, so will not be counted in PIT.

Back@Home Outreach: In addition to PIT, the outreach teams are stocking up on supplies and bus passes to assist those in each county. Kennet Melgar said Blue Ridge is seeking outreach workers, a somewhat more general job including helping farm workers, but where lived experience of homelessness would be meaningful. Please mention this to your contacts. The jobs are described at <https://www.brchs.com/careers/>.

Back@Home Housing: Kristin Dunn continued work with the data center on our list of prospects for this housing assistance. Her client intake total is now 77, up six this month, but 16 are still not housed. She had planned to meet an 80%-expend target at the end of March through the bulk buy of hotel vouchers, but has been told this is not an eligible use. It becomes unclear how to offer emergency shelter when isolation is needed. Some \$45,000 is at stake. Her spending pattern still allows her to project that 91% of funds will be used when the grant expires. She sees one-bedroom units offered online, but agencies will often not lease to third-party payment tenants. Thrive is considering how to more effectively recruit landlords to participate.

Brenda Ploss said her program has needed hotel stays for a number of individuals and a family of five, so this restriction is troubling. Suzanne Porter lamented rising early to meet a needy person on her own doorstep, someone on her worklist who had reached her office when it had closed, so was left outside overnight.

Racial Equity: Kennet Melgar reported the 2022 RE team introduced its new members, stated its goals are to identify any way in which BoS processing contributes to racial disparities in homeless assistance. Highlights from 2021 were covered, the CoC wide survey questionnaire on equity, and the series of supported dialogs, and access to NAEH and BIH conferences. It helps that a good number of the 2021 team remain active. Two groups will cover: 1. An equity initiative, 2. A dialog team. The equity team will cover the impact of anti-discrimination efforts on policies. These groups will meet in February.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition, will meet virtually on March 12th, 9 AM. Michael Absher said a Child and Family Resource Center person will speak on healthy transitions, and may touch on first-onset psychosis.

Lived Expertise Council: Alyce Knaflich and **Rachelle Dugan** attended. It's important to have involvement of Latin-heritage people. Alyce saw low participation from regions east of Gastonia. Anyone with an interest can contact Laurel McNamee at NCCEH, who sends out the zoom invitations.

Kristen expressed pride that this region is well represented at state-level work groups.

Coordinated Entry housing prioritization continues. Kristen said our current by-name list is 370 households, including 422 individuals. These totals are noticeably less than last month.

Michael Absher said he was delighted that a young resident of Only Hope shelter relocated recently to join his mother in an apartment leased through Thrive's work. They had been separated over nine months.

Veterans: Alyce reported second-hand that the VA's VASH program- homeless housing and services- has increased funding and can provide a somewhat greater range of services. She is concerned by ongoing issues serving women vets, including transportation. She recently helped a vet submit a complaint about ABCCM not fulfilling promised help to obtain job training at Goodwill. She is discouraged about unexplained delays in housing women vets at Transformation Village, or in accessing hotel-stay support, or seeing veterans lose housing because a rent-support arrangement was terminated with no notice to the vet. On a brighter note she is glad that the Aura Homes Hendersonville rehab project has had its electrical work approved. Kristen asked Alyce to bring concerns to Monday's Coordinated Entry meeting.

Announcements and discussion: **Brenda Ploss** will be retiring shortly from NC Works. She hopes to continue to help as a volunteer.

Kristen Goossens said Safelight will have a new case manager at the shelter, starting on the 21st.

Alyce and Kristen have both relayed word that the NCCEH 'Bring It Home' conference will be virtual. Kristen urged many of us to register for what is effectively a greatly discounted opportunity.

Southern Mountains was selected to be a pilot region, to link discharged patients to Coordinated Entry (and service referrals) using the NC Cares 360 system. That is, Emergency Room physicians or support will be 'checking a homeless box' as part of processing. This is to reduce times when medical facilities discharge to "Home", when that glosses over cases of Home = street. The new protocol will flag for our Outreach programs. It is an opportunity to try making this work and critique the problems.

Kristin Dunn is having trouble connecting with Haywood Street Ministries in Asheville, which has some medical respite beds. Kennet said they are under staffed – he didn't know if Michael Flint still works there.

Emergency Housing and Vouchers: The Cherokee Nation is **releasing** 414 **vouchers** to the Balance of State. These can support rehousing or permanent supportive housing clients, and should be readily available to extend support for families and individuals housed through **Back@Home**, as that funding will end this year. These ports of vouchers will occur through specific Smart Sheet referrals. It should enable outreach to those on the Coordinated Entry list, though we're still frustrated by unwilling lessors. Trisha and Kennet will review cases to try. Alyce is also frustrated, and wondered if a public-appeal story could be urged in all four counties, to "take a chance on one person". Kristin Dunn is aware that the Isothermal housing vouchers are also 90 day expiration – December issues go void in March. It is possible to apply for extension, but on emergency vouchers extensions seem limited to 30 days.

The next regional Coalition meeting will be Thursday, February 3, at 9:30 AM, via Zoom.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:30 AM Kristen Martin, Thrive
From Rachelle Dugan (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:30 AM Rachelle Dugan; Thrive
From Amber Story (her/she) to Everyone 09:30 AM Amber Story- Partners
From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 09:30 AM Kristin Dunn, Thrive
From nickie kilgore to Everyone 09:30 AM Nickie Kilgore Thrive
From Josh Shelton (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:31 AM Josh Shelton - Thrive
From Kayla Aisquith (she/her)- Thrive to Everyone 09:31 AM Kayla Aisquith, Thrive
From Tracey Gruver to Everyone 09:31 AM Tracey Gruver Thrive
From Makala Perez & Danita Simpson, BRH to Everyone 09:31 AM Makala Perez, BRH

From Jessica Ownbey to Everyone 09:31 AM Jessica Ownbey, HCPS
From Grace Rauch to Everyone 09:31 AM Grace Rauch, BRH
From Makala Perez & Danita Simpson, BRH to Everyone 09:31 AM Danita Simpson, BRH
From Trina Rushing to Everyone 09:31 AM Trina Rushing - Henderson County
Public Library
From Kenett Melgar (He/Him/His) | BRH to Everyone 09:31 AM Kenett Melgar- BRH
From Sherrie's iPhone to Everyone 09:31 AM Captain Sherrie Stokes The Salvation
Army Henderson / Polk / Transylvania Counties
From Michael Absher to Everyone 09:31 AM Michael Absher - Only Hope Wnc
From Emily Lowery to Everyone 09:31 AM Emily Lowery, The Haven of
Transylvania County
From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 09:32 AM Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health
From Alyce to Everyone 09:35 AM Aura Home Women Vets 828-771-6979
aurahome.alyce@gmail.com Alyce Knaflich
From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:37 AM
[https://www.ncceh.org/media/files/page/f7369934/bos-sc-meeting-slides-ppt-2-1-2022-fi
nal_EFG13FV.pdf](https://www.ncceh.org/media/files/page/f7369934/bos-sc-meeting-slides-ppt-2-1-2022-final_EFG13FV.pdf)
From Michael Absher to Everyone 09:39 AM
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6018?r=5&s=1>

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 09:49 AM reports to data center
From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 09:49 AM I'm having connection issues... still
working remote. I'm waiting to hear back from data center about our PIT report
because it wouldn't pull in my hmis but once we have that to confirm we will be
submitting final reports to data center

From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 10:10 AM I agree!
From Brenda Ploss to Everyone 10:14 AM Respect.
It has indeed been an honor and a privilege to serve WNC Veterans and their family
members/caregivers AND to work with each and every one of you. You are the heroes in
my eyes. You stand tall and ready to serve all our community members in need.
The Army Veteran in me shouts out "Hoorah!"
Thank you for your undying support and service to all. With your assistance,
Veterans in our community are seen and heard.

From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 10:20 AM Haywood Street Ministries Medical
Respite
I think they have 11 beds in Asheville total