

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  
**January 6, 2022, 9:30 AM** Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Kristin Dunn, Tracey Gruver, and Rachelle Dugan (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Suzanne Misur-Porter (United Way of Rutherford County); Makala Perez, Danita Simpson, Trisha Ecklund and Kennett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Captain Sherrie Stokes (Salvation Army); Jennifer Drum (NC Works, Rutherford-Polk); Joell Steininger (VA Homeless Program); Catherine Beaver (Henderson Dept. of Social Services); Alyce Knafllich (Aura Homes); Brenda Ploss (NC Works Veterans Careers); Sarah Lancaster (Vaya Health); Chris Berg; Cheriden Lewis (Veterans Services of the Carolinas); Beth Branagan (Transylvania County Schools); Trina Rushing (Henderson Library); Sarah Kowalak (Henderson United Way); Jessica Ownbey (Henderson Schools); Kristen Goosens (Safelight); Amber Story (Partners Behavioral Health M); Robert Caldwell (Child Development & Early Education). See also the **appended Chat**.

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

**Minutes** of December 2 online meeting were approved by common consent.

**BoS Steering Committee December meeting** (Kristen):

The (new) Balance of State Dashboard is now presenting annual data (Oct. 2020-Sept. 2021). It shows an Inflow of 7500+ people, an Outflow of ~3100, 1900 Permanent Housing exits, and 790 Move-ins, for all of BoS agencies and projects. About 5 households per month left Permanent Housing. Plans are to develop regional reports during the year.

Leadership: Regions confirmed their 2022 lead members. At-large members were named: Tiffany Eskew (New Bern), Tori Keeton (NC Rural Center), Tommy Holderness (Legal Aid NC), and Thrive case manager Rachelle Dugan.

Other BoS issues are covered under Racial Equity, Lived Experience and Coordinated Entry reports below.

**Back@Home Outreach:** Trisha Ecklund said work to set up for PIT Count is ongoing, and will be covered at end of this meeting. Michaela put up inflow/outflow data for Street Outreach in December (our highest counts): Inflow=30 individuals, Outflow=19. Outflow may mean: Housed; Contact was lost; left our area; or deceased (one person). Outreach is concentrating on getting and distributing supplies to unsheltered people, as the Rescue Mission is unable to intake at present. Rutherford now represents 6~7 of our Inflow. [Supplies info garbled]

**Resource Fair:** Alyce reported on a Dec, 13<sup>th</sup> meeting for Henderson (Tricia Rushing is lead). That group asks agencies to consider Fair participation on a Friday – suggested dates are March 25, April 1 or 29, or May 6. They said with Covid a warmer season, outdoor event would be best, at Jackson Park, or by Maple St/Farmers Market. Alternates may be possible, the Library (though that's confining) or Salvation Army Gym (not checked yet). When the Connection Center facility opens that will figure in. Given the ample lead time Kristen urged the group to propose a hard date. Emily and Beth have not met yet on Transylvania. Matt Gruebmayr is not available to discuss Polk. Kennett and Suzanne have talked but do not now have a Rutherford date. Later discussions can cover what products we hope to offer, such as Hope Coalition (e.g., Med-lock boxes)

**Back@Home Housing:** Kristen Dunn reports ~71 households have been supported to date. That includes discharges, self-resolved cases, and current cases with pending assistance. The grant is 67% expended; current expense projection is 97% expended when it terminates in June. 'Current cases' includes aid to people seeking

units with help of Thrive staff (and a few intakes that left our area). Kristen Martin is pleased about the expected outcome, as it was a larger grant amount than anticipated to use in a tight housing market, and a spending shortfall could threaten other programs. Please continue to steer landlords to Thrive! Ms. Dunn confirmed this – if you see a vacant apartment sign please send her the tax (owner) record. She is leasing two today and did one yesterday, it's busy.

**Regional Equity: Kenett** said a November meeting reviewed the 2021 training series. They now want to consider a 2022 series. They continue to recruit to this BoS Subcommittee. Anyone with an interest please contact Laurel McNamee – email is in Chat. They've discussed the BoS Antidiscrimination policy, as it needs changes to address equity concerns. They will meet in January.

**CYHAC:** Beth said they met this past month. The next meeting is January 21<sup>st</sup>, at 9 AM via Zoom. Trisha and Matt will talk about the resources available using the Coordinated Entry form mentioned above.

**Lived Expertise Advisory Council** (a new BoS body): Alyce said the group will meet Jan. 14, at 11:30, contact Laurel at NCCEH (see Chat) to join. Alyce recommended looking at a HUD webinar (Jan. 12, 2 PM; Kristin offered to forward the link notice) on engagement and training to integrate folks with experience as homeless into decision-making toward reducing the problem.

**Coordinated Entry (CE):** There are 392 households, including 476 people, on the region's by-name list. In December the CE group talked about improving ways for unsheltered homeless to access or contact providers. HMIS offers a new related report. CE will discuss how it will be accessible.

Thrive and Blue Ridge Health have requested several Emergency Housing vouchers from Isothermal Housing Authority (Tammy Phillips). There's been one related meeting, Kristen hoped our Entry prospects in Rutherford could attend.

This Continuum of Care is getting tech assistance about how Racial Equity could impact Coordinated Entry. A prioritization work group at BoS now covers that, backed by NCCEH staff. Kristen expects the outcome will be a replacement of VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index) with a different screening tool. The current tool uses 30+ questions to assess 'vulnerability'. This is to assist in decisions about who needs permanent housing support programs, who is most likely to be able to self-resolve their housing needs, and the range between. An equity concern, implied by how VI-SPDAT gathers information, has been discussed for several years.

### **Veterans:**

Alyce said Aura Homes served 31 women vets in various ways in 2021. She sees good progress in the Hendersonville building rehab work. A capital campaign will be coming to finish the structure, equip it and hire seven full-time staff. On December 21<sup>st</sup> the HUD VASH [staff?] provided varied assistance – groceries, apartment move-in kits, laundry vouchers, furniture. Alyce fears COVID persistence means this kind of work will be ongoing indefinitely.

Joell Steininger reported VA has one Polk vet now leased, seven in Rutherford with one more pending, one in Transylvania, and one in Henderson with another pending. Our VA has housing vouchers now. If anyone knows of a homeless vet please contact Howard Anderson or Joell. As Alyce mentioned, we received \$102,000 at this VA Center. It is available to assist homeless vets or those in VASH programs, covering transportation, cell phones, emergency hotel shelter stays. They are preparing for PIT Count. Kristen seeks their participation in this region's Coordinated Entry process.

Cheriden Lewis said Veterans Services of the Carolinas is working on its final report. She hopes to bring numbers to our next meeting.

Jennifer Drum had no report (Rutherford-Polk), but will help with PIT count.

Brenda Ploss said NC Works continues to offer virtual workshops. Anyone interested please contact the NC Works Asheville Career Center (see Chat).

**PIT Count:** Trisha offered a volunteer training slide show. The single-day-in-January Count is now augmented by other intake information, a change. The new collections occur throughout the year, on a simplified data form. The process changes should recognize needs as they arise, and enable quick responses and (we hope) solutions.

There will still be a 'one-night' data collection for January 27, and will include recontacts to those on our by-name list. There will be a parallel count of those in shelters, using a counting-us app. The results will continue to affect distributions of funds. The homeless definitions remain the same; Unsheltered as those overnighing in places not designed for human habitation; Sheltered as those lodged at facilities dedicated to sheltering homeless people specifically.

Trisha's group will focus on Unsheltered. She's checking the local shelters to confirm they are prepared to submit using the app. Domestic Violence shelters should be included, such as Safelight. Please check with SAFE, Path, and Out of Ashes.

Trisha reviewed the uses of Counts. There will be some street outreach teams created to look for unlisted people. Three forms will be used: A VI-SPDAT assessment form; an unsheltered referral form; and an unsheltered-observation-only report form, for those who could not be engaged (but appeared homeless), or were unable or unwilling to be interviewed. She showed blank examples of these forms. The referral form will have a local add-on if particular needs are noted (food, water, hygiene stuff, health related, clothing/covers/blankets, safety). The observation form is limited to reporting what is seen, but has information to make any followup easier. Trisha has asked the Free Clinics to use the referral forms, also doctors at Pardee, Hendersonville Rescue Mission staff, DSS, social agencies and school staff. Trisha will edit the referral forms to note email, fax and phone-in ways to submit. Kristen sent an earlier version out this morning by email.

Trisha skimmed over slides recommending a detailed interviewing procedure. She will make all slides available to requesters, or anyone can join the CYHAC group on January 21<sup>st</sup> where Trisha will discuss this. She mentioned types of sites likely to be surveyed, and how to work safely (in two-plus person teams). The Blue Ridge outreach workers will be contacts for volunteering: Makala Perez and Danita Simpson in Henderson, Grace Rauch in Polk and Rutherford, and Khadiya Ross in Transylvania.

Volunteers in Covid at-risk groups are advised to not do patient-facing work or interviews, though remote help may be useful. Volunteering at other times of year may also help, such as the followup verifications the week after January 27<sup>th</sup>, or as Coordinated Entry case advocates, or to persuade local official decisions to be more supportive of affordable housing opportunities. The workload around January 27<sup>th</sup> and followup does not now look like it will be a heavy burden.

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

- With respect, Chris Berg

## **Chat messages:**

From Kenett Melgar-BRH to Everyone 09:29 AM

Kenett Melgar Blue Ridge Health

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone 09:29 AM

Good morning! Catherine Beaver, Henderson County DSS

|                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| From Makala to Everyone 09:29 AM                                                                                                                         | Makala Perez, BRH and Danita Simpson, BRH                      |
| From Tracey Gruver (she/her) to Everyone 09:30 AM                                                                                                        | Tracey Gruver, Thrive                                          |
| From Sherrie's iPhone to Everyone 09:30 AM<br>serving Polk / Transylvania / Henderson Counties                                                           | Captain Sherrie Stokes Corps Officer The Salvation Army        |
| From Alyce to Everyone 09:30 AM                                                                                                                          | Alyce Knaflich aurahome.alyce@gmail.com 828-771-6979           |
| From Brenda Ploss Vet Rep to Everyone 09:30 AM<br>Advisor, NC Dept of Commerce                                                                           | brenda.ploss@nccommerce.com NCWorks Veterans Career            |
| From Jennifer Drum to Everyone 09:31 AM<br>Rutherfordton/Polk                                                                                            | Jennifer Drum...NCWorks Veteran Services with                  |
| From Jessica Ownbey to Everyone 09:31 AM                                                                                                                 | Jessica Ownbey, Henderson County Public Schools                |
| From bbranaga to Everyone 09:31 AM                                                                                                                       | Beth Branagan, Transylvania County Schools                     |
| From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 09:31 AM                                                                                                           | Kristin dunn, kdunn@thrive4health, Thrive                      |
| From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 09:32 AM                                                                                                                 | Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health                               |
| From Joell Steininger to Everyone 09:32 AM                                                                                                               | Joell Steininger VA Homeless Program                           |
| From Sarah Kowalak to Everyone 09:32 AM                                                                                                                  | Sarah Kowalak, United Way                                      |
| From Emily Lowery to Everyone 09:32 AM                                                                                                                   | Emily Lowery, The Haven of Transylvania County                 |
| From Rachelle Dugan (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:32 AM                                                                                               | Rachelle Dugan; Thrive                                         |
| From Chariden Lewis to Everyone 09:34 AM                                                                                                                 | Chariden Lewis, Veterans Services of the Carolinas             |
| From Sherrie's iPhone to Everyone 09:41 AM<br>Sherrie.Stokes@uss.SalvationArmy.org                                                                       | Alice, contact me & we will check our booking calendar.        |
| From Kenett Melgar-BRH to Everyone 09:50 AM<br>laurel.mcnamee@ncceh.org                                                                                  | If you are interested in the equity group please email         |
| From Chariden Lewis/VSC to Everyone 09:53 AM<br>possible!                                                                                                | I would like to share this with our peer support specialist if |
| From Brenda Ploss Vet Rep to Everyone 10:05 AM<br>Assistance +).                                                                                         | NCWorks Workshops - Call 828 251-6200 (Employment              |
| From Brenda Ploss Vet Rep to Everyone 10:24 AM<br>Verification Calls + related, if needed. Unfortunately I am not able to be a part of the street count. | Kristen/ Trisha / Joell: Please contact me re: 2022 PIT Count  |
| From Makala to Everyone 10:27 AM                                                                                                                         | streetoutreach@brchs.com                                       |

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 10:29 AM

tecklund@brchs.com

From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 10:29 AM

Thank you!

Kristen Goossens 01:05:59

Kristen Goossens Safelight

From astory to Everyone 10:30 AM

Amber Story; Partners BHM

From Robert Caldwell to Everyone 10:30 AM

Robert Caldwell - DCDEE