

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  
**November 4, 2021, 9:30 AM** Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Tracey Gruver, Kayla Aisquith, Rachele Dugan and Nickie Kilgore (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Suzanne Misur-Porter (United Way of Rutherford County); Makala Perez, Khadiya, Trisha Ecklund and Kennett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Jennifer Drum (NC Works, Rutherford-Polk); Adam Jahnke (Charles George VA outreach); Sherrie [Stokes] (Salvation Army Hendersonville); Catherine Beaver (Henderson Dept. of Social Services); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Brenda Ploss (NC Works Veterans Careers); Sarah Lancaster (Vaya Health); Chris Berg; Beth Branagan (Transylvania County Schools); Sarah Kowalak (Henderson United Way); Micky Robinson (Isaac Homes); Jessica Ownbey (Henderson Schools); *See also the **appended Chat**.*

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

**Minutes** of October 7 online meeting were approved by common consent.

**BoS Steering Committee November meeting:**

NCCEH staff have set up a CoC Dashboard. The initial version shows about 1000 homeless served in a month, and 720 as chronic, with 101 being new this month. Only three exits were recorded. The need appears to be mostly for permanent-supportive housing that would be available to those with less than 50% area median income (AMI). This opens questions about where best to put our efforts.

It's time to consider our **local leadership** for the coming year (we'll vote on these next month). Here are the roles to consider and the currently named officers:

**Regional lead**, Kristen Martin

**Regional alternate**, Emily Lowery (with Kristen and Emily serving as co-leads)

**Coordinated Entry lead**, Kristen Martin

**Webmaster – Secretary**, Chris Berg, with web assistance from Thrive

**Project Review lead**, Alyce Knaflich

**Racial Equity lead**, Kennett Melgar

**Emergency Solutions Grant funding lead**, Suzanne Porter

**CYHAC** (Children and Youth Homeless Assistance Coalition), Beth Branagan and Michael Absher

Also, but *not* named annually, is the unsheltered PIT count lead, Trisha Ecklund.

We follow the BoS rule limiting agencies to having employees serve in two lead roles, at most.

Organizations are healthier if these roles can be rotated among members. Please consider if you can serve in any of these roles in 2022. For more information talk to the current person or to Kristen or Emily.

BoS is concerned with COVID-19 **vaccination rates** for persons identified in HMIS. Despite a suggestion that J&J one-dose vaccination would allow more access, most that have been vaccinated have been Moderna or Pfizer. Rates:

One or more doses:	HMIS: 19%	North Carolina overall: 59%
One or more, aged 65+:	HMIS: 37%	NC overall: 91%
Identifies as white:	HMIS: 20.3%	NC: 44.4%
Identifies as African-American:	HMIS: 19.6%	NC: 49.2%
Race not identified:	HMIS: 11.7%	

And some figures for Regions 1 and 2 together: HMIS: 16.9% these regions, overall: 52% with 42.4% of vaccinations as Moderna, 39.6% Pfizer, and 15.5% J&J.

Sarah reported that the Henderson Health Dept website says that children 5-11 will be offered the smaller doses as soon as next week. Other providers will be able to vaccinate children, but may have a delay.

The Steering Committee directed that PIT in January will not involve street counts by volunteers. Anyone aware of homeless people in specific locations (such as camps, cars to check, condemned houses with signs of use) are asked to let Trisha, Emily or Kristin know the locations and details.

The Committee also updated its Governance charter to install better gender-related language. They clarified the duties of alternates. PIT duties may be assigned to an Unsheltered Access Coordinator.

The Committee adopted written standards for education services, such as access to daycare for first responders, or for project staff for early childhood, to work with local liaisons for McKinney-Vento programs.

**Back@Home** Updates: Trisha said they are shifting accounts to encourage a stock-up of supplies. If you foresee a need for particular items to have for homeless service, particularly outreach, send her an email request.

Grace is working on the Rutherford County list, updating with a eye to using remaining emergency housing vouchers (which cover rent to the Rutherford FMR standard). Ten couch-surfing clients have been contacted, though the program gives priority to people living outside. Tammy is their Housing Authority contact.

Their program data is now in HMIS, with 164 cases, of which 97 are now active = unsheltered. Involved staff are Makala Perez and Danita Simpson, also Khadiya for Transylvania County, who's on today's call.

Alyce mentioned a SNAPS event on COVID and the homeless, on Nov. 15 at 1 PM. Trisha said they try to prioritize the homeless, but vaccinations are all given in-house, including third/booster doses.

They urge helping agencies to make referrals, to get people on the list for housing and services.

**Back@Home** at Thrive: They have remaining fewer than five SmartSheet clients to contact. Most current work is intakes and inspections.

**Racial Equity:** Kennett said the RE subcommittee continues to recruit members. It takes a commitment to attend the monthly meetings, and to serve on sub-group work, such as presenting findings to the Steering Committee, or setting up reports, or helping host dialog events. It's a one-year commitment. For more information talk to Laurel McNamee at NCCEH.

The next dialog will be November 9, 11:30 to 1 online, 'Where are we going now?'

**CYHAC:** Beth said they will meet by Zoom Friday, Nov. 19 at 9 AM, with no speaker. Since this closely follows the national sessions of NAEHC&Y, it will be an opportunity to digest that new material and refocus as a group.

**Coordinated Entry (CE):** Kristen said while they are working on discharges, the current list is about 452 households. They have had to refocus on CE Evaluation. These went to provider agencies, to those waiting on a list...thirty were completed in 13 regions that have submitted so far.

The most helpful forms of assistance reported were •placements in new housing, •links to food, •links to emergency shelter. 93% of responses did not report any discrimination. That seems to imply that 7% did see discrimination, but no one offered specifics. Chris said that's an uncomfortable finding, is there a way to clarify. Kristen said it is complicated, as surveys may be collected by agencies that would be subject of complaints. That's not a good place for a homeless or formerly homeless person to complain.

There are ways to improve CE and perhaps these evaluations: To lower barriers to housing or services; to replace VI-SPDAT with a better intake tool; to speed up the process; maybe to increase diversion, by obtaining

more housing or improving mediation where needed; to improve access to the electronic tools (get access through an agency iPad for example); get partner support where there may be issues such as being unable to read, or not being able to offer enough confidentiality; aiming requests at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level; or correcting data entry errors.

**Veterans:** Alyce has updated figures using the 2020 Census. It looks like 10.8% of NC vets and 14% of NC women vets have been homeless. That suggests our four counties have had 272 homeless women vets, but CE reports only five served in a year. She sees one way to help resolve this is consumer advocacy. Alyce plans to take a six-session training, with hopes of coming up with a community engagement plan. This would rely on listening to people with relevant lived experience, *and* experience with these systems. Alyce has a goal of getting up a proposal for sessions in the statewide Bring It Home conferences. She mentioned a Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> session at 11:30 with Jamie – hoping to have good wifi then.

Jessica Rice said ABCCM's SSVH (Support Services for Veteran Households) grant is providing legal support, prevention of homelessness, and ramping up the shallow-subsidy program – the current level pays 35% of rent, while proposed legislation could push this to 50%, with the drawback that contracts written at 35% could get stuck at that level. These cover 24 months assistance as a quasi-voucher. Kristen will represent ABCCM at our Coordinated Entry committee. Their staff have updated their job specs for case managers and peer-support persons.

Adam Jahnke regrets that he will be leaving Charles George VA, so next month Howard Anderson will cover their work.

Brenda Ploss said there are weekly hirings at job sites in Henderson and Transylvania, most recently by FedEx, the USPS and Viada. Most of these are in Henderson, and often at Blue Ridge Community College campuses. Job development work continues, such as work on resumes, designing career goals, or looking at training needs and skill sets. She is seeing employers willing to support new hire education. Jennifer Drum likewise reports quick placements into jobs in Rutherford and Polk.

Appreciation is offered to Veterans in connection with the November holiday.

**The next regional Coalition meeting will be Thursday, December 2, at 9:30 AM, via Zoom.**

- With respect, Chris Berg

## **Chat messages:**

09:33:12 From Trisha Ecklund: Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health

09:33:19 From Khadiya: Khadiya- Blue Ridge Health

09:35:20 From Alyce: Alyce Knaflich Aura Home Women Vets 828-771-6979 aurahome.alyce@gmail.com

09:40:48 From Brenda Ploss: Brenda.Ploss@NCCommerce.com Veterans Career Advisor with the State of NC Dept of Commerce at NCWorks Career Centers (www.NCWorks.gov) I assist veterans, their spouses and caregivers mitigate barriers to employment & training, develop job connections, and connect with veteran community and support service organizations. Please reach out - Let's collaborate.

09:42:19 From Brenda Ploss: I will be retiring effective 3/1/2022 with 30 years of service with the State of North Carolina post Army service. Starting to get happy feet :)

09:56:04 From Trisha Ecklund: [streetoutreach@brchs.com](mailto:streetoutreach@brchs.com)

09:56:58 From Brenda Ploss: At individual business sites see homeless individuals - is there paperwork we can fill out?

09:58:09 From Brenda Ploss: thank you

10:02:00 From Alyce: <https://www.usich.gov/news/usichs-core-values-as-we-create-a-new-federal-strategic-plan>

10:02:51 From Alyce: <https://nchousing.org/bringing-it-home-2022/>

10:04:14 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her); Thrive:

1 bedroom - \$526, 2 bedroom - \$693, 3-bedroom - \$862, 4 bedroom - \$993 is the Rutherford county FMR

10:05:36 From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive:

Regional Lead : Represents the region as a voting member on the Steering Committee. Facilitates local meetings. Serves as liaison between the Steering Committee and Regional Committee.

Regional Lead Alternate: Represents the region as a voting member on the Steering Committee when RL is unavailable or has a conflict of interest. Facilitates HMIS Recruitment plan with local subcommittee.

Coordinated Entry Lead: Must be a person from the SSO-CE funded agency. Facilitates local CE system. Ensures Regional committee follows NC BoS CoC CE written standards and implements required system initiatives.

Webmaster: Ensures completion of Regional Committee meeting minutes. Submits meeting agendas and minutes to NCCEH for posting.

Project Review Committee: Participates fully in review and scoring process for the annual CoC and ESG funding processes. Does not have a conflict of interest (is not a current grantee or applicant)

10:14:06 From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive: [ncceh.org/events/1530](https://ncceh.org/events/1530)

10:14:33 From Kenett Melgar-BRH: [laurel.mcnamee@ncceh.org](mailto:laurel.mcnamee@ncceh.org) if you are interested in joining the equity group

10:24:58 From Trisha Ecklund: will do!

10:30:09 From Sarah Lancaster: Alyce (and others I may not know) - I am thankful for your service on all levels. Thinking of you this Veterans Day!

10:31:54 From Brenda Ploss: Fast Veteran to work connections