

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
June 2, 2022, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Kristin Dunn, Rachelle Dugan, Kat Black and Josh Shelton (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Grace Rauch, Makala Perez, Kenett Melgar, Michaela Baynard and Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); John Thomson (Out of the Ashes, Forest City); Beth Branagan (Transylvania Schools-but leaving, see below); Matt Gruebmeier (Henderson Schools); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Ellis Pinder (NC Works/veterans); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Jessica Joyner (Vaya Health/Housing Support, Transylvania); Robert Caldwell; Chris Berg. See also the **appended Chat**.

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

Minutes of May 5 online meeting were approved by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee: Their May meeting was reported last month. Their June meeting is next week. It will be discussed at our July 7 regional meeting.

Coordinated Entry (CE) update: Kristen's agency, Thrive, and Blue Ridge Health have been steadily interviewing and assessing new people, to connect them to HUD and other opportunities for housing and related help. As a result our region has a by-name list of over 550 people awaiting housing placement or assistance. This is related to resumption of evictions in court, and to recent sales of rental housing by established landlords. We respond, by supplementing rent resources from private grants, and by encouraging landlords to continue to offer less-expensive housing.

A CE placements/services **evaluation** is underway via surveys. Thrive has had good response rates from those now housed, but few of those still homeless are moved to reply. Blue Ridge Health Outreach is also surveying those they connect with. We will provide more updates on this.

Early Childhood Community Engagement: Beth Branagan met with Partners for Impact about a CCSA [Child Care Services Assn] pilot project. She compared it to Schoolhouse Connection, which led to our forming CYHAC, the Child and Youth Homeless Action Coalition. They emphasize making shelters more child-friendly. They want parents/caregivers to be able to connect younger children to Head Start or other development opportunities. This project will launch in August or September and run till Nov. 2023. Partners for Impact will be visiting regularly to assist, with a next meeting July 11 or 12 tentatively. Emily Lowery will head the Shelter oriented work, and Beth will organize child service providers. Beth is leaving Transylvania Schools and beginning work with North Carolina Homeless Education program as a program specialist. Her new job will connect McKinney-Vento programs in schools to early education programs. Beth's new supervisor welcomed Beth's interest in continuing with CYHAC and the upcoming Partners for Impact work.

CYHAC met in May to hear Kristen Martin explain Thrive's services. Members may get involved with the Partners for Impact project but there will be no regular meeting till September.

Michael Absher said the State now has agreed to recognize Only Hope WNC as an emergency youth shelter. Only Hope will adopt HMIS record keeping and use our Coordinated Entry system. Michael also said a new contract with Family Preservation/Healthy Transitions makes Only Hope the 'pot-holder' for homeless youth moving into their own housing. This is a ~\$45,000 dedicated kitty. Michael will forward info to Kristen about ways to refer to/access that, it can serve ages 16-25. Kristen will incorporate that into Coordinated Entry meetings as appropriate.

Kristen reviewed the remarkable work of our Coalition and CYHAC, to add on functions which supported young people without stable homes during COVID social and health closures, and enabled homeless to access day care vouchers. “Our region keeps getting asked to do pilot projects” because of this past and continuing work especially with young people. “CYHAC is rocking it!”

Outreach committee: Trisha Ecklund will invite Ron Howard to participate. She’s not heard when Sherri Stokes of the Salvation Army could meet. Trisha expects meetings two Wednesdays a month, but that’s not yet set. They’ll meet both in-person at Seventh Avenue Clinic, and virtual/Zoom. They will case-conference for street and unsheltered homeless persons, and discuss related matters. Blue Ridge has added outreach staff, that’s Michaela (on this call) working in Polk County and training on HMIS, and Michael in Haywood County. Case-conferencing applies to all four counties in our region. Kristen heard recently from an outreach worker in Rutherford, and she will get that person’s info to Trisha. Trisha welcomed transportation and shelter placements help from Emily and The Haven in Transylvania, thank you!

Resource Fairs: Trina Rushing and Sherri Stokes are not on this call, so Kristen will defer talking about Henderson’s Fair until July.

Emily Lowery said the **Transylvania** Fair went well, with many more visitors (~40) than at previous events; that could be due to snacks, gift bags, door prizes etc. Visitors had hoped to access phone resources though. The agencies present did good work. Lifeworks got new applicants; the schools connected to two families needing summer food support; DSS was positive; Connect linked to a grandmother raising her grandson; Cheriden Lewis ID’d two vets and two vet spouses for housing or employment assistance, and others spoke of good networking going on. Emily is glad of all the help present. Thrive gathered four homeless assessments there, and twelve at the Henderson Fair.

Kenett Melgar said the **Rutherford** Fair was well attended with many support agencies present. He attended the three recent fairs, and said the arrangements improved as presenters figured out ways to communicate in the setting. Alyce Knafllich agreed. She learned about new-to-her resources, and heard visitors hoping there were more health care help services, more employment help, and more housing available... Kristen reflected that invitations to this series were based on the Coalition’s mailing list. At times other providers have been asked to come, such as Hope Coalition, they offered lock boxes for medicines. Targeting certain Section 8 housing project managers might help. Suzanne Porter agreed generally.

Thrive Housing: Kristin Dunn said [Back@Home](#) funding is terminating. The Rapid Re-Housing budget is 96% spent. As assistance disappears, some families are taking on \$100 monthly payments, or half-rent, or full rent, as they are able. Thrive is juggling other funds to help this along. Rachele Dugan’s HP (homelessness prevention) budget is about 88% spent, so some assistance will continue for a while. The Permanent Supportive Housing program is full. Day-One Family funds are anticipated but can’t be used till July 1. Also, Emergency Housing Vouchers are (occasionally) helpful, when those with high SPDAT scores and extended periods of homelessness are willing to try to stabilize. Thrive tries to route these cases so that ongoing Section 8 help can be brought in after the Emergency period.

Staff changes: Josh Shelton is continuing at Thrive but no longer doing housing cases. Kat Black is new and taking up [Back@Home](#) transition and other housing cases.

Housing Fund Competition: Kristen Martin said Continuum-of-Care (CoC) funds for Rapid Re-Housing will be available to apply for fairly soon, but there will be a new process involved. Kristen, Trisha and Emily are invited to absorb this change at a NCCEH event, as is Chris as regional secretary; Kristen is adding Alyce and Suzanne to the invitation as they have experience with funding recommendations.

Racial Equity update: Kenett said the group got some recent training on advocacy at several levels of government. The RE Dialog series reopens on Tuesday, June 21st, with an open-to-all session, that will focus on how stress and trauma affect people of color experiencing homelessness. They also discussed how the current

anti-discrimination policy is adequate for the more familiar areas needing protection, but may need broadening. A revision that Laurel ____ worked on is recommended to the Steering Committee, who may consider it June 7th. If adopted the RE group expects training to soon follow, perhaps even the next day = June 8th. Kristen will forward any training and dialog invitations to all.

Lived Expertise: Alyce said their panel at the state Bringing It Home conference drew over 100 attending and many comments. The Advisory Council presenters felt they made a significant impression, displaying how homelessness gets real. Tomorrow the group will interview a coast dweller/Council candidate to try to better reflect NC lived experiences across this varied state, as currently most serving are from this Region. They next meet June 10th at 11:30. The state Advisory Council (or LEAC) members are urged to be more active in their own regions.

Kristen believes 22% of this call's participants have been homeless, or more if McKinney-Vento rule is used. This matters. Hire appropriately. Advocate appropriately. If you haven't been there, use your Privilege. This area has benefited from brave story-tellers, and more of that is needed. Everyone sees access to housing getting worse, as there's not enough affordable housing – not only low cost but also safe.

Veterans: Alyce is troubled that supported veterans usually end up in ragged mobile homes. In better units there are efforts to displace them. Pisgah Legal tells Alyce that mobile homes **are not covered by the Fair Housing Act**. Kristen said we **need to follow up** that claim, that is new. We've moved away from predatory landlords, but that's not all we need, for veterans or others.

Kristen is aware some regions sort out their Veteran providers as a subgroup within a Coordinated Entry process, in part because vet multi-county providers may have a tough time scheduling non-vet-related work. She talked about this with several vet providers. Responses vary.

Alyce covers nine counties, and is there at all relevant meetings. Aura Homes is making (slow) progress on their building but it will get done: she targets October 2023 to open. Getting women vets served through HUD-VASH or SSVF requires her extensive advocacy. She is very frustrated by ongoing service shortfalls for a Transylvania woman-vet situation, rent is underpaid, or paid late, with local housing authorities making fusses or worse, risking eviction. Kristen sees Thrive as also affected, as landlords that get negative experiences from public-support situations will not want to offer such leases. Thrive pays on time, somehow, it is imperative.

Ellis Pinder at NC Works has no updates. He affirms that if veterans concerns are on a local agenda, NC Works will be there.

Kristen said some larger vet providers are not on this call.

Trisha reported getting vet help at the Henderson Fair, to learn how to apply for an upgrade of a military discharge. Alyce said that can be a complex matter, it can take six months or a year to get approval or resolve this barrier to VA program eligibility.

Announcements: Alyce will have Girl Scout cookies to offer. Kristin Dunn sees a cookie consumption deficit!

Matt Gruebmeier Chatted that Henderson saw 330+ McKinney-Vento kids to serve this school year. That is a slight increase. Beth said Transylvania had 109. That is lower than past years, but by year end it was trending up – as were evictions. Transylvania also had 37 unaccompanied homeless youth [Henderson had 49].

Next regional Coalition meeting: Guided by Chat responses, Kristen set **Thursday, July 7th, at 9:30 AM** as the next meeting. That will allow the Region to see changes to funding process fairly promptly.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

00:09:21 Grace Rauch - BRH - she/her: Grace Rauch, Blue Ridge Health

00:10:04 Suzanne: Good morning everyone! Suzanne Porter, United Way of Rutherford County

00:10:45	John Thomson:	John Thomson, Project Manager for Pat Chamberlain, Executive Director of Out Of The Ashes, Forest City. We provide homeless shelter for men, women and children.
00:11:01	Kristin Dunn, Laurel Park :	Kristin Dunn, Thrive
00:11:53	Matt Gruebmeier:	Matt Gruebmeier, HCPS
00:12:02	Matt Gruebmeier:	I have to step away for a second.
00:17:00	Kristin Dunn, Laurel Park :	Congrats Beth!
00:17:16	Rachelle Dugan (she/her):	Congrats Beth!
00:19:48	Alyce:	Yeah Beth!
00:20:30	Rachelle Dugan (she/her):	Congratulations Michael, this is great for our community!
00:30:03	Jessica:	Jessica Joyner, Housing Specialist, Vaya Health
00:46:46	Kristin Dunn, Thrive:	Pisgah takes our cases for folks in mobile homes against their landlords for specific things
00:56:01	Matt Gruebmeier:	Working, but have a morning conflict.
00:56:05	Makala Perez (her/she); BRHS:	available
00:56:07	Emily Lowery:	I'll be here
00:56:07	Kat Black (she/her) Thrive:	I am pretty sure I WILL be around
00:56:14	Michaela Baynard:	Available
00:56:16	Kristin Dunn, Thrive:	I will be
00:56:21	Rachelle Dugan (she/her):	I will be available
00:56:22	Trisha Ecklund:	available
00:56:45	Chris Berg:	I'm available 7-7
00:56:52	John Thomson:	Thank you Kristen.
00:57:42	Matt Gruebmeier:	Maybe not for all four counties, but HCPS identified more than 330 MV-eligible students in SY 2021-2022
00:58:32	Michael Absher:	How many UY number, Matt?
00:58:39	Matt Gruebmeier:	49
00:58:52	Michael Absher:	thank you
00:59:36	Matt Gruebmeier:	OMG TY
00:59:43	Michael Absher:	haha