

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
September 2, 2021, 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, Rachelle Dugan and Nickie Kilgore (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Suzanne Misur-Porter (United Way of Rutherford County); Kristen Goossens (Safelight); Makala Perez, Danita Simpson, Trisha Ecklund, and Kennett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Jennifer Drum (NC Works, Rutherford-Polk); Adam Jahnke (Charles George VA outreach); Catherine Beaver (Henderson Dept. of Social Services); Jason Schulz (Affordable Homeownership Fdn.); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Brenda Ploss (NC Works Veterans Careers); Chris Berg; Amanda Van Duyne; Jessica Rice; Beth Branagan (Transylvania County Schools); Sarah Kowalak (Henderson United Way); Trina Rushing (Henderson Library) . *See also the **appended Chat**.*

Kristen Martin facilitated. Please see the agenda ground rules statement. She said Covid resurgence is forcing reimposition of protocols, and causing staff and client disruptions and quarantines.

Minutes of August 5 meeting: Kristen asked for any corrections. **Chris Berg** regretted leaving *names in italics* from a work draft in the attender list. These did not attend the call, please strike them. With this correction noted, the August minutes were approved by common consent.

Our region and agencies are undergoing a **COVID surge**. Kristen has word of ‘home’ test kits available to shelter and homeless service providers. She is ordering some. If anyone wants to place an order she will send that link to requesters (in Chat or by contacting her). She does not plan to offer the link to the 200+ overall mailing list.

Kristen had no BoS Steering Committee updates, as they have not met since our August 5 call. She noted two areas of ongoing Balance of State Work:

1. The Continuum of Care funding competition – these notices are available from BoS; the next process deadline is September 10. See <https://www.ncceh.org/bos/currentcocapplication/>
2. The ESG (Emergency Solutions Grant) process is complete at the regional level, our funding committee met and provided its determinations to NCCEH. **Alyce Knaflich** reported that the BoS funding committee she sits on, has also met and submitted its work, which will soon go to the Steering Committee for approval and publication. Alyce advises that all three proposals from our region are to be approved for funding, but at reduced levels related to the 60:40 use requirement [“40% must be for housing stabilization”].

Back@Home program at Blue Ridge Health: **Trisha Ecklund** said the effort to expand the served geography continues, a case conference team has met, they are testing use of HMIS and data entry training continues. The process is working well; The Haven is contributing. **Kennett Melgar** said they will continue to meet with agencies across the four counties to enable assistance to get out.

Kristin Dunn and Kristen Martin reported on Thrive’s **Back@Home** program. Currently they serve unsheltered people or those in emergency shelters. There are about 5 ½ case workers on the program, drawing from SmartSheets generated by 2-1-1 call applications, and from the Coordinated Entry by-name list. There unfortunately are two sets of rules for ‘rolling off’ clients from assistance-priority. An inability to contact a client for over 30 days drops their priority if the intake was by 2-1-1. If there is no client contact (for a by-name list client) for six months, priority is lost for them. Some clients appear in both places. It is a confusing situation. Please keep Thrive alerted to any phone # or how-to-contact changes for clients you work with. Thrive must keep its efforts to place people moving along.

Racial Equity: Kennett was aware of a RE meeting held but was unable to attend. Kristen said that subcommittee will report to BoS Steering soon, and that information will be available to us.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: Beth Branagan spoke of the difficult school start-up we are experiencing. The Coalition will meet virtually September 17 at 9 AM: Arlette Lambert will speak. Arlette is a legislative and policy specialist with DCBCE. Beth has not set up Zoom invitations yet, but will do that soon. Please contact her if you want to join that call.

Coordinated Entry update: Kristen said that the group (including Danita Simpson and Kristen Goossens) plus the Thrive Back@Home group are able to keep our homeless numbers essentially flat, at about 440 individuals in ~350 households. If the resources become more limited, those counts will be increasing. Thrive is doing most assessments by phone; Blue Ridge Health is also doing assessments.

Suzanne Porter described a new short-term resource **targeted to the severely-mentally-ill**, or SMI, leaving programs, on the street, couch-surfing etc. See detail in Chat, at 9:48 and 9:53. The grant was budgeted to help 70 to become housed, and 45 have been placed to date. **This program is open (can make payments) only till September 30.** Up to \$1200 rent may be paid, per signed contracts. 'Rent assistance follows the clients.' Peer support is a part of the program. Please contact Philip Cooper (828-318-5234 or changeagentcooper84@gmail.com). Community health workers are urged to email Suzanne (s.porter@uwrinc.org, office 828-286-3929) if you know of a good distribution point for word about this – hotels, motels, apartment complexes? It is available in seven counties, including all of the Southern Mountains region.

Suzanne also spoke of a **Narcan** distribution effort.

Alyce said the new BoS **Consumer Advocacy Council** is forming and hopes to seat six homeless/formerly homeless/'persons with lived expertise' to offer their voice and understanding. \$15/hr is offered, estimating 5 hours a month. Let Alyce know any names of those who might serve.

COVID guidance or procedure changes: Brenda Ploss said NC Works is requiring workers to be vaccinated or tested weekly, effective Sept. 8.

Trisha spoke about work to overcome barriers to get folks help at the Hendersonville Rescue Mission. She said Blue Ridge Health has no FEMA shelters to offer at this point, so they have to work to get supplies to infected persons on the street.

Kristen Goossens said Safelight requires masks; they had a positive case last week (contained; they are able to quarantine), tests are available, they do not require a negative test.

Emily Lowery said The Haven is testing entrants prior to admissions, and are **requiring encouraging and making available** vaccinations. They had their first positive case two weeks ago – it was contained.

See also Chat (9:57) for **Catherine Beaver's** notes about Henderson DSS.

Veteran Updates: Alyce (Aura Homes) is working with some new Veterans' housing programs, there is information on Youtube. Aura is serving several more women vets now; one vet was declined placement at Transformation Village. **Jessica Rice** asked for details by secure message, she will research the situation.

Jessica said also that Veterans Services of the Carolinas is working with a Shallow-subsidy program; when a vet's income is less than 50% of AMI at intake they can be helped with 35 to 50% rent assistance payments. This program does not require income reassessments every 90 days. The program's case workers handle 30-40 cases, so have some case-management capability.

Adam Jahnke of VA is hampered by distant clients, but will meet with vets at their locations on an as-needed basis. He's concerned that CARES Act support ends Sept. 30 – its programs need national renewal. That

support is very effective in dealing with back-rent-due eviction situations. Alyce asked if VA will support stand-down days in the coming months. There will not be a stand-down in Buncombe. The Smoky Mountain team in Macon County (Joelle) is posting about one on a Facebook support-services page.

Brenda Ploss said there are upcoming 9-11 remembrances, some supporters will be offering bennies to veterans. **Jennifer Drum** and Brenda suggest checking www.ncworks.gov for alerts about offices that could be closed. Current work is mostly by phone, but they will schedule in-person as needed.

Michael Absher said Only Hope WNC has a grant to turn their basic-needs closet to a mobile unit – a trailer is to come in December. They also have a tiny-homes project in view – Tamara Peacock Architects is creating some schematics, and funders are saying to move this along.

The next regional Coalition meeting will be October 7, at 9:30 AM, via Zoom.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

From Rachelle Dugan (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: 09:30 AM

Rachelle Dugan, Thrive

From Makala Perez to Everyone: 09:30 AM

Makala perez, blue ridge health services

From Emily Lowery to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Emily Lowery, The Haven of Transylvania County

From Jason Schulz, Affordable Homeownership Foundation to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Jason Schulz, Affordable Homeownership Foundation

From bbranaga to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Beth Branagan Transylvania County Schools

From Trina Rushing to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Trina Rushing, Public Library

From Makala Perez to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Danita Simpson, blue ridge health services

From Jessica Rice to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Jessica Rice ABCCM Veterans Services of the Carolinas

From jennifer.drum to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Jennifer Drum-NCWorks Veteran Services for Rutherford and Polk counties

From nickie kilgore to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Nickie Kilgore thrive

From Brenda Ploss to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Brenda.Ploss@NCCommerce.com - NCWorks Veterans Career Advisor (Hend/ Trans/ Bunc/Mad) 919-710-3748

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health

From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Kristin Dunn, Thrive

From Sarah Kowalak to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Sarah Kowalak, United Way of Henderson County

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Alyce Knaflich Aura Home

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone: 09:33 AM

Catherine Beaver, HC DSS

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:35 AM

Please send link for COVID testing

From Suzanne to Everyone: 09:48 AM

co-occurring disorders in Polk, Rutherford, Burke, McDowell, Henderson, Transylvania or Buncombe Counties. This is aimed at individuals leaving residential treatment, incarceration, shelters, or if they're couch surfing/on the street. Philip Cooper is our coordinator. Housing agencies must sign contract stipulating that if the client leaves or is evicted prior to end of the rental period we've paid for the remaining pro-rated amount of money must be returned to DHHS. We have until September 30th to use the funds. Not placement for families.. for individuals. Must have that diagnosis of SMI or Co-occurring but they don't have to be currently connected to a treatment provider. We will follow up with them with visits from a peer support specialist to address other needs/help connect to resources. Philip Cooper 828-318-5234 or changeagentcooper84@gmail.com

For 18 and older.

s.porter@uwrcinc.org

From Suzanne to Everyone: 09:53 AM

I'm with United Way of Rutherford County our office number is 828-286-3929

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:55 AM

HomelessVets@va.gov www.va.gov/HousingResources <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqCrGHAweZs>

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone: 09:33 AM

Catherine Beaver, HC DSS

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:35 AM

Please send link for COVID testing

From Suzanne to Everyone: 09:53 AM

We have a grant to pay up to \$1200 rent in transitional housing/sober living/halfway house/recovery residence for clients with SMI or co-occurring disorders in Polk, Rutherford, Burke, McDowell, Henderson, Transylvania or Buncombe Counties. This is aimed at individuals leaving residential treatment, incarceration, shelters, or if they're couch surfing/on the street. Philip Cooper is our coordinator. Housing agencies must sign contract stipulating that if the client leaves or is evicted prior to end of the rental period we've paid for the remaining pro-rated amount of money must be returned to DHHS. We have until September 30th to use the funds. Not placement for families.. for individuals. Must have that diagnosis of SMI or Co-occurring but they don't have to be currently connected to a treatment provider. We will follow up with them with visits from a peer support specialist to address other needs/help connect to resources. Philip Cooper 828-318-5234 or changeagentcooper84@gmail.com

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s.porter@uwrcinc.org I'm with United Way of Rutherford County our office number is 828-286-3929

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:55 AM

HomelessVets@va.gov www.va.gov/HousingResources <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqCrGHAweZs>

From Brenda Ploss to Everyone: 09:55 AM

All State Employees must be COVID tested weekly if not vaccinated.

From Alyce to Everyone: 09:55 AM

Alyce 828-771-6979 aurahome.alyce@gmail.com

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone: 09:57 AM

Henderson County DSS is encouraging the use of masks within our building. Adult Protective Services and Guardianship clients are still being seen FTF with masks. Special Assistance and case management clients are only being seen face to face FTF quarterly with monthly phone call check ins. Our adult home specialists are still going into the facilities if there are no COVID cases. ALL Social Workers wears masks when meeting with clients.

From Brenda Ploss to Everyone: 10:01 AM

Thank you Alyce

From Alyce to Everyone: 10:10 AM

Happy Labor Day!