

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
May 6, 2021, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

Persons on the call: Regional co-leads: Kristen Martin [Emily Lowery not on this call].
Kristen Martin, Stephanie Gilliam, Josh Shelton and Nickie Kilgore (Thrive); Trisha Ecklund and Kenett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Brenda Ploss (NC Works); Alyce Knafllich (Aura Homes); Matthew Gruebmeier and Jessica Ownbey (Henderson County Schools); Chris Berg; Bre Griffin (Partners Health Mgmt); Teresa Adkins (The Haven, Transylvania); Sherrie Stokes (Salvation Army, Hendersonville); Trina Rushing (Henderson County Library); Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); Kate Rhodes; Robert Caldwell; Ed Treat (Pisgah Legal); Jennifer Drum (Vet Advisor, Rutherford-Polk); Monica Mathes; Shelly. See also the [appended Chat](#).

Kristen Martin facilitated. *She noted ground rules spelled out in the agenda.*

Minutes of April 1 meeting: Kristen asked for any corrections or comments on those minutes of the Coalition, as distributed. None were offered, so the distributed version was adopted by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee, summary for **April 6:** FY 2021 CoC fund competition: a GIW (Grant Inventory Worksheet) is expected in 1-2 weeks; and a NOFA (Notice of Fund Availability) during the summer. We are unsure whether the competition will go forward (last year's was canceled in favor of automatic renewals) – Thrive is still waiting for that mid-2020 renewal contract. So, there is backlog as well as COVID uncertainty. NCCEH requires any new project proposers to watch the new CoC webinar (see Chat) and file an Intent To Apply form by two weeks past NOFA publication.

A Funding and Performance subcommittee proposed new fund priorities (Alyce Knafllich participated). See May notes. Trisha will update us on vaccines.

A Coordinated Entry (CE) grant report (re SSO grantees) covered 9/1/2019 – 11/30/2020: Thrive received such funds for this region (as did six other regions, and an additional four more in 7/2020). These yielded 58% more CE access across BoS overall; CE screening and assessments were raised 54%; CE clients referred to Rapid Rehousing were up 118%. Covid-19 created challenges, but responders did initiate ESG-CV funded United Way-2-1-1 services. This situation led to the grant being only 76% spent; that under-use is not expected to recur. (Our region did spend 100% of its allocation). The typical risk of non-renewal of under-spent Federal grant funds is not expected to penalize NCCEH, given the full performance of several regions, and plans to cure problems elsewhere. Kristen and Alyce discussed whether further improvements might have been possible here with extra money. Kristen thought the shift to Blue Ridge doing outreach sort of compensated for any effects of under-funding at Thrive. The earlier funds were partly used to fund intakes, as well as improving coordination of the system. Now Blue Ridge Health outreach does over 90% of unsheltered contact work – that is a big data entry relief on the rest of the CE system including Thrive.

Steering Committee Summary for May 4: The PIT count lead responsibility is being extended. Formerly it took ~two months of organizing and doing the annual cold-weather one day count of homeless, and its reporting. The job is now to ensure year-round access to coordinated entry for unsheltered persons across the region. **Trisha Ecklund** is our PIT lead now. The PIT lead and the CE lead work together to ensure all area unsheltered persons get onto the Coordinated Entry list. These two will also facilitate the regional plan to connect unsheltered persons to the CE system through the by-name list. Kristen and Trisha are now reviewing our area CE plan to adjust to this change. The CE lead (Kristen) will report monthly on connections made of unsheltered to the by-name list. Both will ensure data collection for these occur. The PIT lead ensures providers

or stakeholders understand the process for making the connections; and that all involved understand the local plan. These are important changes that will make CE more workable.

Kristen sees these new tasks for Trisha and Blue Ridge as underlining our need to reconfigure funding at Thrive, that their Rapid Re-Housing costs be moved from ESG to CoC support. Blue Ridge's outreach is now only supported by [Back@Home](#) funding, which is temporary, and the need will outlast that money. Carrying that work ahead after [Back@Home](#) folds is most feasible if ESG funds are available.

Alyce said the election of PIT lead also now migrates to May 1. Kristen heard that and checked further; it is now OK to synchronize all officer elections, making us able to continue electing new (or continuing) officers each fall.

This region reported the new funding enabled more street outreach staffing, and furthered getting good relations with local law enforcement. Thus, when law enforcers are assigned to clear a camp, Trisha and Kristen are alerted first. That gets a chance for providers to help those soon to be displaced, and divert some from arrests or losses. Chris asked how effectively this is working, if more help is occurring. Trisha said they have been getting more contacts, good connections are welcomed by probation officers trying to ensure check-ins as required, to the new lieutenant – Wortheby? - downtown who calls us rather than issuing tickets or making arrests. Chief Myhand understands you can't "police out" of these situations, that the need is to connect to resources. So this seems headed in the right direction. Kristen added that Blue Ridge Health is based in all four Southern Mountains region counties, and the outreach initiative begun in Henderson by Trisha and Kenett will be extended elsewhere as Blue Ridge is adding staff.

Kristen reminded us that she forwarded an invitation/announcement of the upcoming NCEH "**Bringing It Home**" annual conference, a free online event this year. In the past it has been quite worthwhile, to aggregate attendees' experiences and learning. She hopes a number of us will join this year in hopes of yet more benefit; contact Kristen (kmartin@thrive4health.org) if you need a registration link.

Funding and Performance subcommittee reported on the efforts to extend HMIS adoption by shelters. Emily was unwell today, and Kristen reported for her that Hendersonville Rescue Mission was approached at length about this but they are not interested in joining HMIS. Funding and Performance also took up the CoC funding priorities for the upcoming 2021 round: A COVID-19 statement was added, to look at possible leniency on underspending as a negative for new funding. That would not matter for Thrive, an overspender. Teresa Adkins said in Chat that The Haven had also spent all its ESG funds. Our regional priorities remain as 2 for Rapid Rehousing, and 3 for Permanent Supportive Housing. (Priority 1 is currently assigned to areas with no housing assistance of one or both types.)

Vaccinations: Trisha said the rollout injections continue and have slowed somewhat. Most now are being given in clinics rather than at the larger events. Anyone knowing a person interested in vaccination, Blue Ridge will set up to do so, and will arrange transportation either by Blue Ridge Health or by Apple Country Transit; contact Trisha, tecklund@brchs.com. They have restarted offer of the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine, as evaluators find the risk of health damage from COVID-19 far outweighs the risk of unusual blood clots as a reported vaccination side effect. Trisha said Blue Ridge Health is also very interested in getting proper information out regarding vaccination, and they will set up Q and A sessions or other outreach.

Alyce noted the vaccination survey sent out recently to agencies can help our regional strategy. Please answer it!

Point In Time (PIT) Lead Transition/extension: Trisha and Kristen are meeting to develop a new/revised Coordinated Entry process, with Sherrie Stokes involved also, so that how we get people onto the by-name list is clear. They hope to introduce a related training to this group before long.

Blue Ridge Health [Back@Home](#) funding update: Trisha said a partially executed contract amendment – for the second round of funding – has been received, so they hope to have a full contract soon. This would add access to supplies and workforce and should enable the Henderson outreach routines now active, to begin

extending to the other three counties. Sherrie and she have talked about Polk. Trisha will connect to Suzanne Porter in Rutherford next week. Kristen said Thrive is having trouble with recontacting clients there.

Thrive [Back@Home](#) update: Thrive now has a fully executed contract with the deadlines and requirements spelled out. **Stephanie Gilliam** and **Josh Shelton** began calling more 'households' this week to develop intakes as needed. This round they emphasize reaching families, as the current list has a good number of individuals ready for placement, but still waiting for one-bedroom openings. Their operations director (to replace Carrington Cosby) is to start next month.

Racial Equity Subcommittee: Stephanie said they currently only work on prioritization, to attempt to make it equitable.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: **Michael Absher** said they will meet May 21st, 9 AM by Zoom – a link will be sent soon. It will feature Project CATCH, about their training on early childhood programs and resources. That's not fully confirmed, but there will be an alternate program if necessary. There will not be a July meeting, so the next CYHAC will be in September. Project CATCH is described in Chat.

Coordinated Entry: The list shows 321 households, with 406 individuals. The end of the eviction moratorium could soon impact that. **Brenda Ploss** noted to Kristen that Alabama has gone to court to terminate the moratorium. See Ed Treat's link in Chat: He believes that this decision does not directly affect NC, and our state also has a separate moratorium in place.

Hendersonville Connection Center project: Kristen posted a description of the effort and its current proposal in Chat. If/when realized it would significantly enable Coordinated Entry for Henderson. The project would have presence of several agencies, Thrive, the Free Clinic, Medicaid, and others. The Commissioners support the effort, and Hendersonville City is being approached today. Its focus is to meet gaps in serving our homeless, by offering hygiene, mail drops, peer support, recovery groups and much more. Any interested agency, or person, is invited to contact Kristen for ways to get involved. There's talk of a church-supported visiting food truck. They hope to get it underway by the end of the year. The work is laid out, but the final-funding commitments are needed. Kristen is really excited that it's coming together.

Presentation: Ed Treat of Pisgah Legal Services:

Ed is a new staff attorney at Pisgah Legal. He focuses on Expunctions, Driver license restorations and related employment issues. A caveat: He said that if the moratoria expire, all Pisgah effort will be on eviction work. For expunctions, what had been a small Buncombe-only effort at Pisgah, will now try to serve their full 11-county service area, with Ed as lead. He plans more outreach in our areas.

The NC Second Chance Act, passed in 2020, really widens who can access **expunction**: that is, applicants can move to have criminal records destroyed. A court order to all government agencies to do so can be issued. It can cover convictions, dismissals, and/or acquittals from a trial. That could allow job or housing applicants to state they have **not** been convicted, etc, of a crime.

There are exceptions. Applicants to work in law enforcement are not so protected. Immigration status is an unclear issue.

The new law enables NC to move (from very restrictive) to near the 'middle of the pack' for state access to expunctions. For example, 'dismissed' cases can be expunged regardless of an applicant's other legal issues. That sounds like an obvious right, but commercial background checkers often do not report enough detail to assure clearance of dismissals. The NC courts will at the end of 2021 start automatic expunction for new dismissals, but that does not clear prior records. **All persons** with recorded dismissals **should get expunctions**. Most **convictions** of offenses committed prior to age 18 will be eligible also. That population needs to know this! Other convictions of adults will also be eligible, but there are waiting periods imposed: Five or more years

for misdemeanors, ten or more years for felonies. There are exclusions: Crimes of violence are not eligible. Many drug cases will not be eligible. There are crossover exclusions, unfortunately, so that simple assault can void expunctions of e.g. unrelated shoplifting convictions. The NC legislature is still monitoring this, including interest among both parties, so there is hope for more adjustments. The Second Chance Act passed unanimously.

The process, though 'designed' to be accessible by a courthouse visit and filling out a form, is confusing. Attorney help will be needed. The law has defects. But there is empowerment of District Attorneys/Solicitors to petition for batch relief through expunction of many recorded criminal processes. Ed hopes to get back with us later to see if that is a local opportunity. Some DA's in less sympathetic jurisdictions are moving on this.

Ed believes that what's visible on expunction on the Internet can mislead, and could discourage affected people. He wants to reduce that. People need hope. There are alternate tools.

Drivers License restoration: This is likely to be a widely needed service also, or even more than expunction. Money is often an obstacle. Pisgah wants to offer advice on how to approach the DMV, Division of Motor Vehicles. Pisgah plans to approach DA's and courts for remissions of fines. There is a lot of DA discretion, and practice, in dropping cases. Traffic cases are a low priority for prosecutors. Ed is new to WNC, so people with contacts and concern – us – can be very helpful to his work. For example, the Mecklenburg DA wiped out 10,000 old speeding cases with one court motion. Those fines and fees disappeared.

The spate of reforms confirms a growing view that pursuing older fines and fees often serves to criminalize poverty. To legislators and courts, getting such penalties paid looks increasingly like wasted effort.

Positive actions are continuing. Buncombe is considering a proposal to drop ~2000 suspensions in one action.

Ed wants to promote a **Criminal Justice Debt Relief Fund**. Chapel Hill in [Orange County](#) set one up in 2019, a town line item, \$20,000. It's been obstructed by COVID but has still helped many. Local residents can apply for help with criminal debt imposed elsewhere in NC. The town's Police Department has social workers administer this fund. Approvals means checks go to the authority to whom funds are due. Ed has clients now whose lives would improve if such a resource is created. A Raleigh law school program has a similar fund from a private donation. There are varied ways to set up such a program. He would prefer larger scale operations – more efficient and sparing of attorney time.

Pisgah plans to inaugurate these services in June. There will be hoops. [Geography matters](#), but Pisgah covers our four counties. There is an income limit. Staffing is Ed plus volunteers, so a limited capacity. His hope is to build support here, from evidence of correctable needs. If that is clear, then funding and support should come more easily.

Ed's and Pisgah's contact info is in Chat. Inquiries from our counties may not be responded to properly till June 1. His direct number is a possible avenue to address immediate hardship.

Current stable living circumstances do not make anyone immune from possible future risks if a tolerant job or housing suddenly is no longer available. So knowledge of this remedy and its access is important to many.

The drug exception is a tough barrier. It mostly amounts to whether charging documents make someone look like a dealer as opposed to a user, with dealers made ineligible. Ed knows that is often not a good distinction to try to make. And there can be other routes worth a try to better those situations.

Ed asks us listeners, who may know someone with a path to advocate for mass-relief actions? He is happy to consider an informational session to a good audience, whether on Zoom, in a tent, or however.

Kristen is putting Pisgah literature in Chat on getting non-tax-filers access to COVID stimulus payments. These could matter greatly to e.g. low income single parent households. Some on the call may not be able to access these attachments in Chat, so Kristen will also forward them to our list by email.

Veterans: Brenda Ploss is forwarding a new list of job openings. She will have some office hours by mid May. Her contact info is in Chat.

Alyce said the VA has put out a Grant Per Diem/Capital cost program offer for 1-room, 1-private-bath units. It allows use of rehab or conversion buildings. For now it's restricted to Grant per Diem providers, but

that includes ABCCM and Homeward Bound. She also announced in Chat the National Alliance's Capital Hill Day, for anyone wanting to advocate for programs – which haven't yet been applied for in NC; and she linked in Chat to Rescue Plan relief information. We need Board people to advocate for bringing this funding to NC.

WCCA may get access to new housing vouchers soon. Kristen hopes they will discuss that in our next meeting.

Schools – McKinney-Vento unstably-housed children: **Matt Gruebmeier** said the Henderson School District has ID'd 280 school age children as eligible for service, and 15 non-school-age children also. That is not a sharp drop off in numbers reached, unlike in many public school districts. That speaks well of the effective Henderson team at work, Jessica Ownbey and others.

The next regional meeting is set for June 3rd, 9:30 AM, by Zoom.

- Chris Berg

Chat Messages

- 00:05:31 ed.treat: Ed Treat Pisgah legal services
- 00:05:37 Jessica Ownbey: Jessica Ownbey - HCPS
- 00:05:55 Matt Gruebmeier: Matt Gruebmeier, HCPS Student Services
- 00:06:22 Stephanie Gilliam (she, her): Stephanie Gilliam, Thrive
- 00:25:58 Teresa Adkins: I'm not sure what \$\$ you mean?
- 00:26:12 Teresa Adkins: yes, we spent it all! [The Haven ESG funds]
- 00:34:44 Alyce Knaflich: Rescue Plan Funding <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Final-Summary-of-Provisions-in-American-Rescue-Act.pdf>
- 00:36:55 Alyce Knaflich: National Alliance's Capitol Hill Day Wed. 6/16/21 <https://endhomelessness.org/capitol-hill-day-2021/>
- 00:38:11 Michael Absher: Project CATCH, Community Action Target Children who are Homeless, is a program of The Salvation Army that provides youth focused services to children experiencing homelessness. In 2019, we partnered with the Division of Child Development (DCDEE) on a statewide initiative to increase access to childcare for children experiencing homelessness. This 3-year project is designed to serve all 100 North Carolina counties and focuses on children from birth to twelve years old.
- 00:39:04 ed.treat: re the eviction moratorium: <https://wlos.com/news/local/federal-judge-overturns-cdcs-eviction-moratorium-but-ncs-freeze-remains-in-effect>
- 00:41:12 Alyce Knaflich: Aura Home interested [Hendersonville Connections Center]
- 00:42:23 Brenda Ploss: NCWorks interested (Veterans)
- 00:45:46 Kristen Martin (she/her/hers): Alyce and Brenda- will be in touch :)
- 01:01:45 ed.treat:
www.Pisgahlegal.org
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828 229 2257
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- 01:02:24 Trisha Ecklund: kristen I'm not seeing the links you put in for the documents.
- 01:02:40 Kate Rhodes: I downloaded!

- 01:07:27 Brenda Ploss: I will send NCWorks Veterans Services Information and Job List for May 2021 via Kristen.
- 01:12:00 ed.treat: thanks for having me
- 01:12:05 Brenda Ploss: Great Info All