

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 3, 2021, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

Persons on the call: Regional co-leads: Kristen Martin [Emily Lowery is away at The Haven's retreat]. Kristen Martin, Kristen Dunn, Nickie Kilgore, Tracey Gruver and Rachelle Dugan (Thrive); Trisha Ecklund, Makala Perez and Kenett Melgar (Blue Ridge Health); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Matthew Gruebmeier and Jessica Ownbey (Henderson County Schools); Chris Berg; Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); Jennifer Drum (NC Works, Rutherford-Polk); Cassie Ashworth (Free Clinic, Henderson-Polk); Allie Card (NCCEH); Beth Branagan (Transylvania Schools); Lauren Wilkie (Safelight); Micky Robinson (Isaac Homes); Kim Berry (Henderson Dept. Public Health-school nurse supervisor); Bre Griffin (Partners Health Mgmt) Noelle McKay (Community Fdn of Henderson County); Jason Schulz (Affordable Homeownership Fdn.); Deborah Osteen (Henderson County); Ashlynn McCoy (Housing Assistance Corp.); Claire Kolberg (Pisgah Legal); Lynette Oliver (Back on Track Ministry). Brenda Ploss (NC Works). See also the **appended Chat**.

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

Minutes of May 6 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 June call:

NCCEH, the balance-of-state administrator, has several new staff. They will coordinate a NC Capitol Hill Day June 16 (formed by NAEH), with contacts to Rep. Cawthorn or staff on housing and homeless issues. Kristen will send out more info to anyone wanting to be involved. They also are forming a Consumer Advisory Council, and seek persons for it with lived experience of homelessness to offer their advice to the Steering Committee. Names of good contacts would be welcome, please send these to Kristen, who will forward to CoC staff.

Emergency Housing Vouchers: WCCA was not awarded any in the recent round. Isothermal (Housing) will receive vouchers for Rutherford and Polk. This may be 'portable' assistance, and the Steering Committee has work groups setting up to explore how to assist persons outside the designated areas. This would need to integrate with Coordinate Entry. As our region is only partially served, we will seek to clarify this.

Bringing It Home virtual conference, June 8-9: This well-regarded annual NCCEH conference will be virtual, and free this year, on June 8-9 (see <https://nchousing.org/bringing-it-home-2021/>).

PIT-HIC (Point-in-time count and Housing inventory count) **regional leads** are being converted to a year-round job and processes. Trisha Ecklund has been working with outreach and had agreed last month to take this on. However, NCCEH wants the new lead confirmed by vote. Chris asked about a job description covering the changes, and agreed to look for that online. Our leadership team nominated Trisha to this position, Matt Gruebmeier second, approved by vote.

Expansion of HMIS Shelter coverage: Emily Lowery has not offered an update on this BoS 2021 effort.

COVID Vaccinations: Trisha said these are now largely offered in clinics rather than publicized large-scale offerings. Please notify her staff if anyone is located wanting vaccination that has difficulty accessing it; BRCHS will transport or otherwise assist them to get one. They will be at the Seventh Avenue clinic tomorrow to vaccinate. Cassie Ashworth said the Free Clinic will also be offering vaccinations. She will let us know dates when they are ready to give shots, in both Henderson and Polk, open to the general public. Trisha said BRCHS will transport people to Free Clinic for vaccinations as needed, just call her.

Outreach: Trisha said Blue Ridge Health outreach staffers Denita and Michaela continue work to track and assist unsheltered persons. Anyone spotting unsheltered people or a camp is asked to send Trisha details – see her info in Chat.

The Blue Ridge Health [Back@Home](#) program has gotten a renewal contract, and will be getting supplies, especially phones, for distribution. Kennet Melgar is connecting to workers in Polk and Rutherford to enable Coordinated Entry where possible, also to expand safety checks and transportation help for known homeless individuals in those areas. In Henderson, the zoning staff and law enforcement increasingly contact Trisha to help resolve homeless-related reports, a welcome development.

The Thrive [Back@Home](#) program will enable Rachelle Dugan to address homeless prevention cases. Due to state interpretive decisions these households will come from ‘doubled up’, unstably housed persons and children identified by the Henderson School District social work team, or by Michael at Only Hope WNC, or by Beth Branagan. Kristen Dunn (formerly of Camplify) is active will be the new operations director. Josh Shelton and Stephanie Gilliam focus on Rapid Re-Housing placements, drawing from the by-name list. This assistance keeps the by-name list roughly level, not increasing or declining in numbers.

Matt asked whether trash removal from camps could be considered a [Back@Home](#) activity, perhaps for client-landlord relationship work. Captain Stokes (Salvation Army) advocated a regular campsite trash service with Trisha, who hopes to get interested parties together to set up a plan for this activity. Michael Absher spoke about the 1-800-JUNK service, used in Asheville by school system requests.

Racial Equity: Kristen reported for Stephanie – the racial equity subcommittee sent email critiquing the VI-SPDAT scores, based on by-race distribution across SPDAT scoring categories. Equity activists are concerned that scoring patterns reflect assumptions built in to the SPDAT question format.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: Beth Branagan reported a May meeting with Shaquita Muldrow of Project Catch, who offered training on their work with homeless preschoolers – as a priority to connect into programs/resources, given the McKinney-Vento programming context. This looks like good training. CYHAC is being looked at as a model by other regions. They will not have a July meeting, but will be back September 17, with (perhaps) a look at the state’s DCDEE (Dept. of child development and early education?) and its programs, with Arlette Lambert, who covers legislation and policy.

Coordinated Entry (CE) is attaining roughly stable numbers on the by-name list. We aim to improve the chances for unsheltered to gain shelter access, largely by continuing work with Blue Ridge Health and the shelters. But those who may be exiting a homeless shelter often have no way for regular communication, so support becomes tricky. [Part of the CE Council work includes the PIT-HIC job description mentioned above.]

The PIT counts across the Balance of State seem to be improving in accuracy. For our region, the pre-COVID count of January 2020 found 132 unsheltered homeless. This compared well to the by-name list of 138 unsheltered persons for a comparable date. This suggests that our region is doing a fine job of getting accurate information for the by-name list! Similar comparisons of other BoS regions showed differences of 100 or more. Some regions reported zero as a PIT count, but we expect that likely means that no homeless outreach is conducted there.

No **veteran** updates were offered.

Agency updates of **pandemic** response:

Trisha Ecklund reported the FEMA isolation arrangements at local hotels have closed. The room providers have seen how these well managed situations do not cause risks to property or of harassment.

Despite closure, Trisha still has some hotel vouchers; if there is a need please contact her. She hopes the partnerships formed will outlast COVID-19.

Cassie Ashworth reported the **Free Clinic** has updated its COVID-19 pharmacy pickup routine to allow patients to come in and pick up medicines. They have reopened waiting rooms to accommodate up to six, are distributing masks and taking temperatures at the door, and are offering and using hand sanitizer.

Food distribution: Beth Branagan said **Transylvania Schools** will this summer have free breakfast and lunch for any children in the County, to age 18, breakfast is 7:30 to 8:15 and lunch is 11:30 to 1:30, Monday to Friday. Also, on Thursdays drive-through pickup of meal bundles is available from 10 to 2 PM, at all schools except Davidson River: These provide a week of breakfasts, lunches, milk. This info is also on a Transylvania Schools website (see Chat).

The next regional Coalition meeting will be July 1, at 9:30 AM, via Zoom. Kristen has seen a lot more participation happens when Zoom is used, so she would like to continue in this manner indefinitely; it cuts travel time, and eliminates rotation of hosting we might otherwise feel is requisite. This does not mean that work of any subgroups or particular efforts of the Coalition would be bound to this.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

From Micky Robinson to Everyone: 09:31 AM

Isaac Homes Youth Shelter, Micky Robinson

From nickie kilgore to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Nickie Kilgore Thrive

From Matt Gruebmeyer to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Matt Gruebmeyer, Henderson County Schools

From Lauren Wilkie to Everyone: 09:32 AM

lauren Wilkie safelight

From Allie Card - NCCEH to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Allie Card - NCCEH

From Kenett Melgar to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Kenett Melgar Blue Ridge Health

From Cassie Ashworth to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Cassie Ashworth, The Free Clinics

From Makala Perez to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Makala Perez - Blue Ridge Health Services

From Beth Branagan Transylvania to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Beth Branagan, Transylvania County Schools

From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Rachelle Dugan - Thrive

From Michael Absher to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Michael Absher, Only Hope Wnc

From Tracey Gruver she/her/hers to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Tracey Gruver - Thrive

From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Kristen Martin, Thrive

From claire to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Claire Kolberg, Pisgah Legal Services

From Jason Schulz to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Jason Schulz, Affordable Homeownership Foundation, Inc.

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: 09:32 AM

Trisha Ecklund- Blue Ridge Health

From Jennifer Drum to Everyone: 09:42 AM

Jennifer Drum-NCWorks Veteran Services for Rutherfordton/Polk

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: 09:45 AM

tecklund@brchs.com 828.696.8263 ext.1482

From lynette to Everyone: 09:46 AM

Lynette Oliver Back On Track Ministry 1900 Spartanburg hwy 595-9091

From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: 09:47 AM

@Kristen, I have a current request for help removing trash (in an effort to prevent eviction and homelessness). Could Rochelle help also with that?

From Michael Absher to Everyone: 10:03 AM

Henderson County food info - <https://www.hendersoncountypublicschoolsnc.org/blog/2021/05/26/summer-meals-2021/>

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From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: 10:03 AM

we have a similar summer feeding program, including two meals on the bus routes. More info here: <https://www.hendersoncountypublicschoolsnc.org/blog/2021/05/26/summer-meals-2021/>

From Beth Branagan Transylvania to Everyone: 10:03 AM

<https://www.tcsmeals.com/>

From Kristin Dunn to Everyone: 10:04 AM

kristin dunn, kdunn@thrive4health.org with Thrive

From Kim Berry to Everyone: 10:04 AM

Kim Berry, School Nurse Supervisor, HCDPH

From deborahosteen to Everyone: 10:04 AM

Debby Osteen/ DSS

From Jessica's iPhone to Everyone: 10:04 AM

Jessica Ownbey, HCPS

From Bre Griffin to Everyone: 10:04 AM

Bre Griffin, Partners Health Mgmt

From Ashlynn McCoy- HAC to Everyone: 10:04 AM

Ashlynn McCoy-Housing Assistance ashlynn@housing-assistance.com 828-692-4744 ext. 109

From deborahosteen to Everyone: 10:04 AM

osteend@hendersoncountync.gov

From Noelle McKay to Everyone: 10:06 AM

Noelle McKay - Community Foundation of Henderson County

Kristin Dunn 36:21

good plan!