

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
April 1, 2021, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

Persons on the call: Regional co-leads: Kristen Martin and Emily Lowery. Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Kristen Martin, Stephanie Gilliam, Josh Shelton and Nickie Kilgore (Thrive); Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Brenda Ploss (NC Works); Adam Jahnke (VA-LCSWA Outreach-HCHV program); Matthew Gruebmeier and Jessica Ownbey (Henderson County Schools); Beth Branagan and Shelly Miller (Transylvania Schools); Chris Berg; Kristen Goossens; Teena Willis and Bre Griffin (Partners Health Mgmt); Vicki Huntley; Traci Corn; Kim Berry; Jennifer Kerr; Amanda VanDuyne; Sarah Kowalak (Henderson United Way); Micky Robinson (Isaac Homes for Youth); Robert Caldwell (DCDEE). See also the appended Chat.

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

Minutes of March 4 meeting: Kristen M 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 for April will be next Tuesday. See March 4 minutes for March BoS call notes.

HMIS coverage initiative: **Emily Lowery** said NCCEH has clarified that it wants to add information only about *shelters* that dedicate beds set aside solely for the homeless, period. For our area these are limited to The Haven and the Hendersonville Rescue Mission. The Haven already participates in HMIS.

Racial Equity: **Stephanie Gilliam** spoke about a Coordinated Entry discussion she was on with Ashley at NCCEH, who emphasized three concerns: 1. Who has access to Coordinated Entry? Would access be more equitable if we 'advertised' or offered 'CE 101', and if so who to and how? 2. Is the SPDAT a valid tool? There appear to be problems with it, and its Org-Code sponsor had put up a tentative version 3, but it has been taken down for unclear reasons. HMIS does not use v. 3. Is there a need to create an alternative (that would be demanding) or find one? 3. How does work for accuracy in HMIS affect equity concerns?

The characterization of a 'surge population' may be problematic.

Adam Jahnke said there are related discussions going on in the attempt to merge the VA's HOMES data for homeless-vets work with HMIS. The concern is to avoid an intake process that could stigmatize any racial group, such as SPDAT seeming to assume substance-abuse for persons interviewed. Kristen M hoped that this situation would **not** lead to a need to reevaluate the by-name list, which would be very time consuming. Our intakes all take place at 2-1-1, Blue Ridge Health Outreach Team, The Haven or at Thrive.

Back@Home at Thrive: Kristen M said they continue to process and place people in units, with some facility now that Josh and Stephanie can work on this program. Thrive is seeking a Housing Case Manager, please see <https://thrive4health.org/about-us/working-at-thrive/> . A clarification is still needed- there are prevention funds, targeted to 'at risk of homelessness but not eviction'--that seems

to be couch-hopping, unstably housed people, but it's not clear. She plans to announce this when it clears up by sending out guidance in writing. It will cover about \$100K of assistance.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: **Beth Branagan** reported a good March presentation by Allie Ann Anderson of Schoolhouse Connection (<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/>), on the assistance for children and housing in the American Rescue Plan. This presentation was quite similar to a recorded webinar on their website. The next CHYAC meeting is May 21st, at 9 AM, on Zoom; please contact Beth for a link if you want to join. Please also let Beth know if you have topics or questions or resources you'd like covered there.

Vaccines and eligibility: **Trisha Ecklund** said NC 'homeless service organizations' and those they serve are eligible for vaccination, including unsheltered, sheltered, congregate-stay, or staff. **Michael Absher** asked about volunteers, could they get appointments. Trisha said they could, especially if their work is 'public facing'. BRCHS is mostly using Johnson & Johnson, as one-shot is simpler for unstable-housed or unsheltered, but if anyone requests Moderna or Pfizer they can be set up also. The vaccinators have had two events at the Seventh Ave center, which went well. Other events can be set up, email tecklund@brchs.com. They have a new person, Michaela, who's completed HMIS training and starts work Monday. Coordination is getting better, so more vaccinations are happening with sheltered people.

Cell phones: Blue Ridge Health is out of stock, but Kristen said Thrive is working on a 'group grant request' for phones and solar chargers. A proposed source has phones under \$100 for 1500 min and 1500 texts, which sounds reasonable. She's planning to include the region's outreach workers. If other supplies seem needed and appropriate for a number of those we serve, let's include them
They have vouchers available for hotel space for people (not COVID diagnosed and needing shelter). Emily said she has been in touch with Grayhound, and a similar arrangement is available for overnight if travelling people have a home to go to, and The Haven can also help in getting the bus tickets.

Veterans: **Adam** said he was getting out more and meeting some of those at this call. VA is reducing the qualifications required for VASH under the new legislation. The new support is especially targeted to the chronic cases and those with clinical needs.

Brenda Ploss will forward information to Kristen M for distribution to the Coalition.

Teena Willis announced a Foothills Stand-Down will be offered April 16 at the Elks Lodge in Hickory, from 9 to 2. Due to COVID the usual 20-30 providers will be reduced to four or five, and no transportation help is available, with all veterans welcome, especially homeless vets. Also, the DHHS division supporting deaf and hard of hearing is offering clear masks in 5-packs, sent out without charge to all agencies; Teena will get details to Kristen to send around.

COVID Response: Michael said he just got a shipment of 8,000 disposable (will disintegrate) 3-ply masks from Ford Motors. They strap on without strings. He will get some of these to Thrive, but is offering to others also.

Trisha said FEMA is offering to reimburse COVID-19 funeral costs, for pandemic losses, apparently since the beginning of 2020, and to go through this year. It could help family finances for some. Kristen said a Pisgah Legal board member Kathleen Blanchard, is associated with a funeral home, and they have connecting lists that could helpfully get word out.

Trisha added that anyone can take their vaccination card to Krispy Kreme and get a free donut through this year! She also wanted to lift up Nickie at Thrive for helping meet a medical need. Kristen said Carrington Cosby got lured away by a former employer – so Thrive is looking for an operations director. The opening is posted on Thrive’s website. They need someone yesterday!

Kristen will send out information on the resources mentioned today when she gets them in.

The next regional meeting is set for May 6th , 9:30 AM, by Zoom.

- Chris Berg

Chat Messages

- 00:13:13 Traci Corn: Traci Corn - Henderson County DSS
- 00:13:16 Emily Lowery: Emily Lowery, The Haven
- 00:13:19 Micky Robinson: Micky Robinson, Isaac Homes Youth Shelter
- 00:13:21 Adam Jahnke: Adam Jahnke, Asheville VA, Homeless Program
- 00:13:23 rccaldwell1: Robert Caldwell - DCDEE
- 00:13:32 Michael Absher: Michael Absher, Only Hope Wnc, Inc
- 00:13:45 Jennifer Kerr: Jennifer Kerr, Affordable Homeownership Foundation
- 00:14:07 Kim Berry: Kim Berry, School Nurse Supervisor, HCDPH
- 00:14:08 Jessica Ownbey: Jessica Ownbey, Henderson County Public Schools
- 00:14:23 Josh Shelton: Josh Shelton- Thrive
- 00:15:14 Bre Griffin: Bre Griffin, Partners Health Mgmt
- 00:19:42 Teena Willis: Would you enter all entry points for the second question
- 00:20:09 Beth Branagan: Transylvania: yes I think the CE document would be super helpful!
- 00:21:08 Jennifer Kerr: I think it would be good to email it to us
- 00:23:18 Trisha Ecklund: sorry I'm late! Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health
- 00:37:06 Beth Branagan: Transylvania: School House Connection website: schoolhouseconnection.org
- 00:40:23 Trisha Ecklund: tecklund@brchs.com