

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
August 5, 2021, 9:30 AM Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Betsy Logan, Interfaith Assistance Ministry; Kristen Goossens (Safelight); Maria Pyatt (Vaya Health/Housing Development); Makala Perez, Trisha Ecklund, Kennett Melgar and Danita Simpson (Blue Ridge Health); Sherrie [Stokes (Salvation Army, Hendersonville)]; Jennifer Drum (NC Works, Rutherford-Polk); Adam Jahnke (Charles George VA outreach); Catherine Beaver; Chariden Lewis (Veterans Services of the Carolinas/NC Serves/ABCCM); Jason Schulz (Affordable Homeownership Fdn.); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Bre Griffin, (Partners Health Management); Matthew Gruebmeier (Henderson County Schools); Brenda Ploss (NC Works Veterans Careers); Chris Berg;

*Teena Willis Trina Rushing (Henderson Library); Amanda Gregg; Sarah Lancaster (Vaya Health); Sonya Hall; Claire Kolberg (Pisgah Legal Health Adv.); Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); Kim Berry (Henderson Dept. Public Health-school nurse supervisor); . See also the **appended Chat**.*

Kristen Martin facilitated. She noted our rule for speaking. See also the agenda ground rules statement. She said Covid resurgence is forcing reimposition of protocols, and causing staff and client disruptions and quarantines.

Minutes of July 1 meeting: Kristen asked for any corrections. **Alyce Knaflich** asked for clarification [in Veterans] about Transformation Village, she connects with ABCCM rather than the project. **Chariden Lewis** can't speak for Angela [Vaughn], but has been doing case management at Transformation Village and said they have five beds available for grant-per-diem housing of women veterans. With this revision/supplement noted, the July minutes were approved by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee updates: Kristen summarized the July and August meetings together, as most topics carried over in both meetings:

NCCEH has established a Consumer **Advisory Council**, to be part of the Steering Committee. Our Alyce K. (of Aura Homes for Women Vets, and our project review committee) will be a co-chair. Alyce aims to change the Council name, as no one is a 'consumer' in our work. **Emily Lowery** asked if that Council has open seats. Alyce said the Coordinated Entry (CE) leads around the state will suggest (from by-name lists) people who might have capability and interest to serve there and add a perspective that's familiar with CE but 'from the bottom end'. Regional CE's are to provide any required tech or (e.g.) library access to a Council volunteer, to enable their service.

NC ESG funding competition: Potential applicants here would compete for \$118,276 (regional 'fair share'), of which 40% must be for Housing stabilization (\$47,311), and up to \$70,966 could be for emergency services. NCCEH staff will write regional applications. Local applicants need to complete Project applications, due August 13 at 5 PM. A related state ESG office webinar has occurred – others are scheduled but *after the NCCEH deadline*. Please direct questions to NC ESG office or NCCEH. [see <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging-and-adult-services/nc-emergency-solutions-grant/nc-emergency-solutions-grant-grantee-information/aging-and-adult-services-grant-opportunities>] After the 13th, Kristen will get info

on our region's project applications, to forward to Suzanne Porter of Rutherford United Way, our ESG funding lead. Suzanne will host a review meeting on August 18, 2 PM. Anyone may attend. Applicants will outline their proposals and take questions, then log off. Remaining attendees will discuss priorities, affecting project types, or projects, that should be up-voted; or, the group could recommend equal treatment of all submissions. Suzanne will then submit results to NCCEH (both regional co-lead's agencies [Thrive and The Haven] are applying, so they cannot be in the review processing). Blue Ridge Health also will apply, and no others as far as Kristen knows. Anyone on this call considering an application needs to get regional leads to verify this, so please let Kristen and Emily know of plans very soon.

CoC funding competition: Leadership expects a NOFA – notice of funding availability – to come out very soon; that hasn't yet happened. In past cycles Thrive's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) has used these CoC funds. Others may apply competitively, by contacting the NCCEH office and submitting their Intent to Apply form within two weeks of NOFA publication.

Racial Equity (RE) subcommittee: **Kennett Melgar** recently agreed to represent our region, replacing Stephanie, who resigned to go work on a Masters. Others on RE reported to Steering Committee on their priority work areas (to help clarify the subject, to expand support to current projects, and create space for future projects consistent with its strategic priorities). They are working on a tool to muster internal staff support to find ways to measure progress. Current work areas are: CoC policies and governance; data-focused projects; education and legislative advocacy. This fall they will host another dialog series, with two webinars; planning for that is underway; the specifics will be forthcoming. They continue review of the VI-SPDAT and Back@Home prioritization tools. They note that VI-SPDAT *presumes* some of interviewees' information. An example is SPDAT seeks information on how drug use affects an interviewee's housing situation, while Back@Home centers on housing details – being a lessee recently, etc.

Coordinated Entry (on the Steering Committee call, and then in this region): CE connects people in need to emergency shelter, to services, to achieving permanent housing; and it strengthens an area's infrastructure for homeless aid.

This framing led to our naming **Trisha Ecklund** (Blue Ridge Health) as our regional PIT/annual count lead, a new position. She is to focus on getting unsheltered people access to CE resources.

The emergency housing vouchers were then discussed. In our region they have been awarded only to Isothermal Housing Authority, for use in Rutherford or Polk. Our regional CE works with Tammy [Phillips] (tphillips@regionc.org) to use these.

These (few) vouchers are to go first to the literally homeless; or to those at imminent risk of homelessness; or those fleeing/trying to flee domestic violence/dating-sexual assault/human trafficking; or (for recently homeless families) to prevent their again becoming homeless, or at high risk of housing instability. BoS also sets as priority, households ready to 'move on' from intensive-assistance slots to long-term assisted housing, so that case-managed Rapid Re-Housing or Permanent Supportive Housing residents can exit those supports (and then access vouchers) when appropriate. These situations are managed by a referral process including CE. The next priority are households with longest stints of unsheltered homelessness, but not documented as chronic-homeless or including disabled persons. These would be candidates for Permanent Supportive Housing if the needs could be proved. The third priority is those on the CE by-name list, that need long-term rental assistance; but most of these also need case management, which isn't attached to emergency vouchers, so they could be at added risk of failure.

There's no update on whether surplus vouchers could be transferred to more needy areas.

The 'move on' process aligns with what our CE already does with RRH or PSH households that no longer need services but still have financial need that can be addressed with a housing voucher. Kennett asked

what these vouchers cover. Kristen said they are identical to other Section 8 housing vouchers, paying area FMR [Fair Market Rents], but also tacitly relying on such units being available. So, to enable more 'move on' capability, our RRH and PSH placements are routinely made to units that could meet Section 8 inspection requirements.

Kristen asked that anyone involved with CE and present on this call, that knows of a Polk or Rutherford household on the by-name list that could be OK if supported with a voucher (and no case management), please bring them up in our CE meetings.

Back@Home (Blue Ridge Health outreach): Trisha said Kennett has been hiring outreach workers in Transylvania/Polk/Rutherford counties, getting them HMIS licenses and training. He attends street outreach-case conferencing team meetings here to help streamline across the counties. There is also an ESG-CV waiver out, which could allow coverage of other expenses, or possible cash incentives for homeless people to get vaccines. Referrals are coming in steadily. A tri-fold brochure is ready as rough copies, that Trisha will distribute showing the program design and contact information.

Anyone with known locations of encampments, or places to make contact, please get in touch with the BRCHS outreach team.

On Monday 8/9 'Walk In My Shoes' will be offered as a Healthcare for Homeless day event, on Seventh Avenue (Hendersonville). They have bought shoes to meet medical needs in a few cases, and have gone on to pick up some random sizes to have available. Its at 10 AM.

Back@Home (Thrive): Kristen pinch-hit for Kristin Dunn, to report Thrive is hiring an additional case manager, to add case load for this program, and to connect with landlords. Landlords are being quite particular in accepting and housing our applicants. One applicant called ten minutes late, which got her declined as of doubtful character. Please refer landlords to Thrive as you are able, Thrive will work with them as long as they treat program participants well. This program also funds a very limited level of homelessness prevention. A small subgrant for 'Families First' diversion has also been used, provided by Jeff Bezos; that is being directed to folks the ESG and CoC priorities will never reach. Trisha said that complements an installation in an Amazon HQ building of an invisible house-the-homeless space, operated by Amazon workers.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: Michael Absher said they will next meet on September 17, using Zoom.

Coordinated Entry (CE) list update: Our regional (by-name) need is currently 381 households, comprised of 441 people.

HOPE program: Sarah Kowalak reminded us via Kristen that landlords can now apply to get their tenants assisted. See Chat.

Alyce attended a Housing Coalition announcement on that, saying that caps on assistance for rent and utilities have been raised 30%. A new program phone #: 888-927-5467. A new URL: www.hope.nc.gov ; that goes directly to applications, while www.rebuild.nc.gov goes to the program website. The Housing Coalition also has outreach kits for agencies to use in publicizing this aid for back rent: <https://nchousing.org/>. This does NOT apply in Buncombe County, where assistance must come through the county, or via Pisgah Legal. There's an impact: of 8 evictions there this week, 4 were non-payment only situations. All our region *can* access the HOPE program.

Michael said eleven NC counties are separate from the HOPE program. He has seen many submitted referrals in Buncombe. If landlords ask, he'd say it takes 17 days to get the payment, on average. Michael is also

a property manager. He has noted 23 tenants where he manages get accepted. Anyone struggling with rent should apply, it can pay up to 9 months, ahead, and 3 behind.

Alyce said many landlords do not know of this. **They need to be told.** If a landlord gives the tenant name and contact info to the HOPE program, they will contact tenants. There is \$192 million in NC in the program, and they get 2000-3000 applications daily.

Coordinated Entry subcommittee: This regional body does the case conferencing to move by-name listed people back into housing. Members are those who are direct-access points, and those who are housing providers.

We now have an approved pilot-project, **Built For Zero**, for how that subcommittee works. See Chat for related websites. Thanks to Trisha for pursuing this. Until the end of last month this path was not approved, as not State-wide. But Trisha wore them down! And now we have a pilot model.

Trisha said Community Solutions developed this, and won a national McArthur Award for the work, and \$100 million for funding it. It shows homelessness is solvable, the data and metrics are there to show this. The endpoint is 'functional zero' where the community can house more people than are homeless. That is, a homeless person who enters the end-homelessness system will be re-housed within 30 days. It is an all-hands-on-deck requirement, demanding widespread community buy-in. It brings all needs and all resources available to this case conferencing for each case. We are excited! Getting the accurate data will take significant work.

Kristen said these demands create a need to re-engage partners into working roles in this Coalition. We have a huge list of people who have been in contact or have been involved, but who no longer attend. We have continued to place people in housing, but the cases keep popping up, especially during COVID.

We need our veteran-serving partners, who in the last 6 months have been very inconsistent, to re-connect with the Coalition veterans committee. That would insure we have adequate representation to best serve the veteran cases in our CE list, as well as those served by Veteran-specific providers.

Kristen called out Cat: saying that when Trina Hill led this Coalition Henderson DSS was very involved with this work. DSS is a great CE Access Point, and needs to again become a source for the information needed to get many people housed.

Kristen Goossens of Safelight: We need more participation from our shelters. You are a direct entry point for homelessness. You may be able to divert some people from that outcome. We do not discuss individuals and their needs on this call, as we have to protect privacy.

Thrive, and all of us here, do not have enough Federal and State resources to solve homelessness. It will take more actors from our communities being involved: those having housing opportunities, or different services, are needed to make noticeable change in our by-name list. Trisha replied that we do not expect for 381 units to somehow pop up. We do want all parties to offer what they can toward fixing this. Blue Ridge Health has no housing, but has gotten some people housed. The bottlenecks we notice, need to be addressed. If a problem can be re-conceived as a system barrier rather than an individual's issue, it helps us see other ways to overcome it. The pooling of all our resources together will enable much more disclosure of ways forward. If you agree that the clear goal is to end homelessness, you definitely need to attend meetings.

See Chat for Catherine and others adding their support to this effort.

Veteran updates: Adam Jahnke said VA is seeing increasing Federal funding, from CARES Act and other sources. They hope a Sept. 30th cutoff will instead be extended. In many cases they've been able to pay back rents and arrears with little documentation or set limits. The growing housing shortage in many areas means that if providers can stabilize a vet in-place, that is the greatest, most likely opportunity. Anyone aware of vets at risk of homelessness, please refer them to the VA.

Cheriden Lewis is new in her role. She is aware of new SSVF policy and ABCCM organizational policies, allowing much larger back-rent and emergency-housing payments. The moratorium(s) have also had an

effect to curtail active vacancies, so it has been harder to get new Veteran cases housed, when availability is so limited, as per Adam.

Alyce is assisting several women vets to hold their places. She will refer one to HUD-VASH (to Adam) after this call. Per VA numbers, there are supposedly 86,575 women vets in NC. Supposedly, 14% are homeless. That means 12, 120 vets unhoused, women, in NC. Transformation Village has ten G-P-D beds; Aura hopes to add 12 beds – more than doubling. If five beds are open now, where is the outreach to the women? Alyce knows two that will be evicted at the end of moratorium if they don't get help, she's working with Pisgah Legal on these. She sees the positives for veterans for now. She is seeing additional grants to meet other needs, like car payments and repairs, home repairs, insurance. VA programs do not touch these. We need to use NC Serves-Western more thoroughly. There are different organizations that help meet these non-VA funded needs. Let's get fuller use of all these.

Brenda Ploss provided the Veterans job list to Emily and Kristen, and some info in Chat. The upcoming 18-hour Job Fair at the WNC Ag Center currently has 73 employers coming. It will cover the whole region. Over half of Brenda's current case load have one, or sometimes two, jobs. So, many are going for better, 'dream', jobs. And many employers will do on-job training. Tell your vet contacts to reach out to employers! Don't cling to unemployment benefits. The opportunities are out there.

Kristen will add the volunteering signers [in Chat] to the Coordinated Entry resource list.

The next regional Coalition meeting will be September 2, at 9:30 AM, via Zoom.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: 09:43 AM sorry - stepping away for a second

From Brenda.Ploss@NCCommerce.com to Everyone: 10:00 AM

I have sent the NCWorks Veterans Services and Job List for 8/2021 + upcoming \$18/Hour + Job Fair --> to Kristen & Emily to forward to all SMHC members. If questions, please email me. 50% of Veterans being served are working 1, if not 2, jobs. Great news. Please reach out to veterans and let them know I am here to support them with employment and training. I work out of the Blue Ridge Community College Campuses @ NCWorks in Hend and Trans Co's. Stay safe and Be well y'all!

From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: 10:05 AM <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/hope-program>

HOPE 888-927-5467 hope.nc.gov

From Brenda.Ploss@NCCommerce.com to Everyone: 10:13 AM Kudos Trisha

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: 10:13 AM builtforzero.org <https://joinbuiltforzero.org>

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone: 10:15 AM I am happy to join and help.

From Jason Schulz, Affordable Homeownership Foundation to Everyone: 10:17 AM Please add me. Glad to help

From Chariden Lewis to Everyone: 10:17 AM I would also like to be added, please! thank you.