

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  
**March 3, 2022, 9:30 AM** Kristen Martin at Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Kristin Dunn, Nickie Kilgore, Kayla Asquith, Tracey Gruver, Josh Shelton and Rachelle Dugan (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Makala Perez, Danita Simpson, and Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Captain Sherrie Stokes (Salvation Army); Trina Rushing (Henderson Library); Amber Story (Partners Behavioral Health M); Jessica Ownbey and Matt Gruebmeier (Henderson Schools); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Catherine Beaver (Henderson Dept. of Social Services); Michael Absher (Only Hope WNC); Jennifer Drum (NC Works-Veterans, Polk & Rutherford); Cheriden Lewis (Veterans Services of the Carolinas); Beth Branagan (Transylvania Schools); Belem Solano (IAM, Hendersonville); Jessica Joyner (Vaya Health/Housing Support, Transylvania) Teena Willis (Partners Health); Chris Berg. See also the **appended Chat**; but one or more messages may be incomplete.

**Kristen Martin** facilitated. Please see the agenda for a ground rules statement.

**Minutes** of February 3 online meeting were approved by common consent.

**BoS Steering Committee March meeting** (Kristen): Kristen share-screened some slides from the NCCEH BoS Dashboard. Examples of the inflow/outflow information BoS has recorded: Overall, 6210 cases, 3348 are new to the system, 2597 have departed from the system; Chronic Homeless, 85 recorded move-ins, 152 exited to Permanent Housing (PH), 39 new chronic-homeless recorded. [July 2021 to Jan. 2022; see <https://www.ncceh.org/media/files/files/560ad21e/march-2022-sc-slides-final.pdf> ]

These numbers are rising despite our work, we are constrained by funding, and how long it takes to help households. Our thrust is to increase diversions from homeless status, and to increase eviction prevention. Locally, we are participating in pilot program work to connect hospital discharges (via the NC360 data system) to refer to HMIS when appropriate. Also, we will work with the Day 1 Family Fund, from the Bezos Foundation. This is a much smaller fund source than HUD or NC State funds, but is much less rule-bound.

Coordinated Entry (CE) Grant [a CoC grant report]: As Thrive is a recipient, we became able via Memos of Understanding to access the current Emergency Housing Vouchers, by referrals to the housing authorities getting these Vouchers. We hope this is a positive path.

Some CE grant work is for [Back@Home](#) case intakes, that were recorded via the 2-1-1 system. These often missed some HMIS data (such as SSNs), so now there is data cleanup to do to transfer these cases to CE.

We also have CE cases (from shelters or agencies using paper forms) where VI-SPDAT isn't available. We need full assessment records in HMIS for CE. We have a 90% success rate when there is a VI-SPDAT, that a client will access all available help through the CE process, being tracked by-name, offered resources etc. One of our equity aims is to assure all assessments are alike across the range of clients. But we especially need to better confront the growing numbers of homeless. [13:34]

**Competitions:** We are still not contracted under the 2021 competitive funds, though the awards have been announced. But also at this time, we have a webinar immediately following this meeting to prep possible applications for 2022 cycle funds. This is a crowded schedule.

Kristen asked if domestic violence providers were on the call (apparently not).

**[Back@Home](#) outreach:** Trisha Ecklund said the Blue Ridge Health program is back on its planned spending path. The budget will support purchase of two more vehicles, allowing one per county. They have worked out a rebudgeting to purchase hotel vouchers, which would be also available in each county. They have stocked lots of supplies, which are being pre-positioned around the region to cut overall travel.

**PIT-HIC count processing:** Trisha said some confusion in 'last living situation' updates occurred, as submitted data was sometimes based on Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> entries, but could have updated on Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> or later if recontacts were made, and PIT processing did not allow for these differences. Nichole will be making adjustments to resolve a number of discrepancies and improve our reported numbers.

Kristen asked that Outreach organize a **regional committee** to handle supplies, requests for supplies and good known sources. Trisha agreed. Sherrie Stokes supported this, and Danita Simpson and Shakela (?) should join in. Another Henderson contact (name uncertain) doing outreach will be asked also. Getting schools staff to name a participant would also help, they have made many referrals to Blue Ridge lately. The idea would be to track who is offering assistance, to start identifying gaps and duplications, items already heavily stocked, etc. This Outreach group should talk about how to connect and schedule the effort.

**Resource Fairs:** Trina Rushing said Henderson now hopes to stage a fair for Friday May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Salvation Army. Setup would be 8 to 8:30 AM. Clients would come between 9 and 12, with finish up by 1 PM. Trina will be asking for agency participants, and volunteers to help.

Kristen recommended asking for food donations from McDonalds' Teresa Edwards...Trina can't (as a County employee) but the group will work on that.

Presenters/tablers could include Blue Ridge Community College (their costs have come down), the Free Clinic, the HOPE Coalition, or basically any organizations that serve our targeted populations. Many of these have helped at past fairs.

Transylvania has not met on a resource fair setup, but Emily Lowery will initiate.

Kennet Melgar was going to check Polk and Rutherford prospects, but we have no report.

**Back@Home housing:** Kristin Dunn said they have done about 80 intakes. The original spend deadline was June, but Thrive has requested it go through September. Support money is flowing, about \$41,000 in January, and \$35,000 in February. They asked for reallocation of up to \$70,000 but there is no response yet. Property availability is a BIG barrier. Please advocate with any agents or property owners, and get word of possible openings quickly to Thrive! Placements are now very time compressed, often same-day inspections, rentup and move-in. It's demanding but worth it.

**BoS Racial Equity:** Kennett is at a farm vaccine clinic, but left a report. The subcommittee needs activism, not to continue to emphasize BoS teaching. An equity and prioritization work group will be figuring out how to replace the VI-SPDAT tool. The NCCEH equity dialog leader left, and they plan to rehire. They hope to offer dialog sessions in April, June and October, with three-voice panels leading. Some goals are set: Simplify the acronyms and terms; produce an annual Racial Equity Assessment; review anti-discrimination policies, and the Balance of State scorecards; undertake Fair Housing education and persuasion for landlords; stressing landlord accountability for safe housing; and grassroots advocacy for affordable housing with the State. There is also a state Historical Commission effort to record impact of the pandemic on Black North Carolinians.

**Children and Youth Homeless Advisory Council, CYHAC:** Beth Branagan said the next meeting is Friday, March 18, 9 AM but withdrew the date when told that was Henderson schools' spring break. It will be rescheduled on Zoom and announced to this list. A speaker from Family Preservation Services (Briana Travell?) will speak about 'first onset psychosis'. Matt Gruebmeier welcomed covering this topic. Trisha recommended Blue Ridge Health nurses and counselors make connections with CYHAC.

**BoS Lived Expertise Council:** Alyce Knafllich said they will meet March 11 at 11:30. There also to be a staff focus group tomorrow on this, with Kristen and Alyce. Many regions say it is difficult to recruit suitable and available people. That is not the case here. They are asked to set up a forum for the Bringing It Home

conference in May, but Alyce missed the last Council meeting. Rachele Dugan attended but said specifics have not been settled for that forum or offering. Jeffrey Rawlings and a core group will help settle that.

Kristen said that NCCEH, and its new executive director, are involving providers and lived-expertise contributors in strategic planning; this is all in confidence so there will not be updates.

Alyce added the Bringing It Home conference registration link in Chat. Kristen said (about this conference registration) there are demographic questions, but they can be left blank. She preferred to bulk-register her agency staff, and was able to do so without inserting much as “demographic” information.

**Coordinated Entry** housing prioritization continues. Kristen said unhappily our current by-name list is bigger, at 397 households, with 500 people listed. We have so little housing on offer. Please round up landlords and property agents and managers and point them toward Thrive! Our job is to get homeless people housed. We respond to agent interest as flexibly as we can. One request was no criminal history and no substance abuse; that is tough, but we try to make suitable matches.

Alyce asked how rent cost caps work. She is seeing such rapid rent increases in Buncombe; is there flexibility in leases to meet these asking prices? Kristen said fair-market-rents may be waived, the backup test of ‘rent reasonableness’ means showing comparability to other rents in an area. The issue there is what happens when [Back@Home](#) terminates, is the newly-housed family then pretty clearly to be forced back on the street? We must aim to set up stable-housing situations. Trisha hopes that better intake information will help those assessments – that perspective aids our morale.

**Jessica Joyner** introduced herself as new housing support person at Vaya Health. She covers Transylvania, Henderson and Polk, along with Laurie. They can **pay deposits** for rent or utilities, one time only, not recurrent bills, up to \$500. This is not limited to people already served by Vaya. Kristen asked Jessica to please tell us how to make this assistance available, if possible by joining case-conferencing on relevant coordinated-entry clients. Jessica said she will put her email in Chat, and will send Kristen specific info needed like account #'s, landlord acceptance, etc. This doesn't help in eviction prevention – the aim is to pay initial deposits to enter housing, or to start utility service. One other helpful use is to pay if a utility provider demands a deposit to restart a cut-off service.

**Veterans:** Cheriden Lewis went over the SSVF shallow-subsidy program. Recipient vets must be enrolled in SSVF (Support Services for Veteran Families). Referrals are made through NC Serves (info posted in Chat), to the SSVF Housing Program (either to get into a home or to stabilize a current home). The caseworker then evaluates whether a two-year rent subsidy program will help the veteran to become self-sufficient during that time. This can help offset rent increases. Alyce asked if this works with HUD-VASH. Cheriden said it is a separate program, for up to 50% rent support for two years.

**Aura Homes:** Alyce celebrated a vet facing eviction due to rent increase, then hospitalized and now in rehab, got assisted through HUD-VASH to pay her rent so she will have a home to go to. Aura Homes is here to connect veterans to services they need. They also continue renovation work on the property off Asheville Highway, to ultimately house up to 12 women vets and (hopefully, if approved) their children and pets also. Everyone please sign up for the virtual Bringing It Home!

Jennifer Drum had no report, but asks for Rutherford and Polk vets needing resume help or having work-related needs to please contact her and she will assist them.

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

- With respect, Chris Berg

## **Chat messages:**

From Tracey Gruver (she/her/hers) to Everyone 09:29 AM

Tracey Gruver, Thrive

From Josh Shelton to Everyone 09:29 AM	Josh Shelton - Thrive
From Nickie kilgore to Everyone 09:29 AM	Nickie Kilgore-Thrive
From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:29 AM	Kristen Martin Thrive
From Michael Absher to Everyone 09:29 AM	Michael Absher - Only Hope Wnc
From Trina Rushing to Everyone 09:29 AM	Trina Rushing, Hend Co Public Library
From Makala to Everyone 09:29 AM	Makala Perez, BRH and Danita Simpson, BRH
From Emily Lowery to Everyone 09:29 AM	Emily Lowery, The Haven
From Kristin Dunn, Thrive to Everyone 09:30 AM	Kristin Dunn, Thrive
From Amber Story (her/she) to Everyone 09:31 AM	Amber Story- Partners
From Rachelle Dugan (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:31 AM	Rachelle Dugan, Thrive
From Jessica Ownbey to Everyone 09:31 AM	Jessica Ownbey - HCPS
From belem to Everyone 09:31 AM	Belem Solano, IAM
From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone 09:31 AM	Hi, Friends. Makala!
From Kayla Aisquith to Everyone 09:31 AM	Kayla Aisquith-Thrive
From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone 09:31 AM	Matt Gruebmeier, HCPS
From Jennifer Drum to Everyone 09:31 AM Rutherford/Polk counties	Jennifer Drum-NCWorks Veteran Career Services serving
From Alyce to Everyone 09:32 AM	Aura Home Women Vets-Alyce Knaflich
From The Salvation Army to Everyone 09:33 AM	Captain Sherrie Stokes, The Salvation Army
From 6424 to Everyone 09:34 AM	Jessica Joyner, Housing Support Specialist with Vaya covering Transylvania
From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone 09:41 AM Register at: <a href="https://www.ncceh.org/events/1543/">https://www.ncceh.org/events/1543/</a>	New CoC Applicant webinar scheduled for March 3 •
From The Salvation Army to Everyone 09:48 AM	Yes absolutely my volume has been turned off by admin
From Jessica Ownbey to Everyone 09:51 AM	Thanks for all your help with HCPS families!
From Intake to Everyone 09:52 AM	IAM does as well hygiene and clothing
From Michael Absher to Everyone 09:53 AM	agree, it would help
From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 10:01 AM	never mind 😊

From Alyce to Everyone 10:09 AM      Registration now open [nchousing.org/bringing-it-home-2022](https://nchousing.org/bringing-it-home-2022) May 10 - 11

From Chariden Lewis- Veterans Services of the Carolinas to Everyone 10:22 AM    NCServes Phone number (Easiest contact if your organization is not on the Unite Us platform) call 855-962-8387 or email [VSC@abccm.org](mailto:VSC@abccm.org). It's generally best to have the veteran call, or to call with them. Email me if you have any questions! [Chariden.Lewis@abccm.org](mailto:Chariden.Lewis@abccm.org)

From Catherine Beaver to Everyone 10:23 AM      Catherine Beaver - HC DSS

From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone 10:23 AM      Trisha Ecklund Blue Ridge Health

From bbranaga to Everyone 10:23 AM      Beth Branagan, Transylvania County Schools