

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 4, 2022, 9:30 AM Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Tracey Gruver, Kristin Dunn, Rachelle Dugan and Josh Shelton (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Tina Murray, Makala Perez and Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Suzanne Porter (Rutherford United Way); Beth Branagan (NC Homeless Education Program); Sarah Kowalak (United Way of Henderson County); Catherine Beaver (Henderson County DSS); Alyce Knaflich (Aura Homes); Amber Story (Partners Behavioral Health); Patrika Lathan (Eden of Abundance); Michael Absher and Kim Fletcher (Only Hope WNC); Jessica Joyner (Vaya Health/Housing Support, Transylvania); Haley Simmons/Michaela Baynerd; Chris Berg. See also the **appended Chat**.

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

Minutes of July 7 online meeting were approved by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee meeting August 2 covered **three grant competitions** getting under way:

- Continuum of Care **FY 22 annual grant:** Prior awards have covered Thrive's Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing programs (PSH, RRH). New applications are welcome, but timing will be very tight this year. New submitters must file an Intent To Apply by August 10, 6 PM, and a complete Application by August 12th at 6 PM, to NCCEH.org. Some supplemental info is due 8/19, see emails that Kristen has been sending the e-list. Alyce Knaflich serves on the Project Review committee, which will use the approved scorecard to rate applications between August 22-30, will meet to rank proposals on Sept. 2, and their recommendations go to Steering Committee for approval on Sept. 6. Appeals are allowed, and will be decided per a follow-up schedule. A Domestic Violence (DV) 'bonus' may be awarded for projects addressing DV situations.
- Continuum of Care **Rural and Unsheltered Triennial** grant: This new offering is \$14M for the Balance of State's 79 counties, and \$10+M for 55 Rural counties in BoS. This is targeted to highest-need situations, especially unsheltered people. BoS Steering, consulting with its Lived Expertise subgroup and its Funding and Performance subgroup, has prepared and approved an outline plan to cover these aims in its awards. Some work aspects will be **centralized** across BoS, covering Financial Administration and Unit Recruitment (finding and paying for housing units). There will be an **applying agency** for this, an oversight agency, accepting draws and receiving HUD funds to go to vendors. This agency would cover a 25% matching-funds requirement (~\$6+M). Service providers remain **regional**, and would be contractors with the centralized outfit (which will oversee compliance and best practices). The Financial Assistance Coordinator role is also a contractor, that would pay monthly rents, deposits, utilities and other eligible expenses, coordinating with the regional servers while maintaining steady relations with cooperative landlords. This entity could assign units to a regional server, to ID and place into housing case-managed homeless persons/households from the regional by-name list, plus pay for the server's case-managing staffer. Identifying who to serve remains a **local** function. This plan means that **applicants for the new grant are applying to serve in all 79 counties**.
- **ESG 2023 annual grants:** Webinars have been scheduled (some are completed, see recordings at <https://www.ncceh.org/bos/esg/>), application instructions have been distributed to the e-list. Applications must go to NCCEH by Aug. 12th, 6 PM. Project Review committee will score these from Aug. 15-19, and a selection meeting will be Aug. 24th. There will be a **Region 2 review** meeting on Aug. 19th at 1 PM. Kristen has sent out a Zoom invitation to that, and it is in today's agenda. Suzanne Porter of Rutherford United Way will facilitate that meeting. Suzanne will have an Excel spreadsheet on any

applications from our region. Kristen will start the meeting but stay only to confirm whether applicants have participated in Coordinated Entry regional meetings and activities-- as Thrive expects to be an applicant, their staff will not join the call discussion. Suzanne will compile the regional meeting comments onto the Excel doc and return it to NCCEH. Once regions have reported, NCCEH will complete its reviews and rank projects for the state ESG office. Time will be reserved for appeals by applicants before the Oct. 3 submission to state ESG. Kristen and Emily urged **ALL non-applicants to participate in our regional call on the 19th**! Alyce said that part of the job will be to insure the '40-60' stipulation is met: At least 40% of funds go to housing, no more than 60% to services. Kristen said that there is an abundance of interested inquirers (and presumably appliers), and pretty limited funds, so our region should meet that stipulation without it mostly dictating our choice(s).

Coordinated Entry (CE) update: Rachelle Dugan at Thrive is winding up duties for the [Back@Home](#) grant, and is moving into CE tasks. Her homeless prevention and diversion duties will still apply, including her remaining lead on a NCCEH diversion grant. She has started updating status for those on our by-name list. That duty will expand, and she will become the go-to for by-name inquiries. List numbers have changed very little this month – that is better than the previous period, when we saw net cases rise. Rachelle will start case managing a few simpler situations (like missing ID) for listed people, and supporting other CE cases as her prior duties wrap up.

Possible changes to our routine agenda: As [Back@Home](#) closes, let's reflect. Our meeting has long focused on the programs, objectives and funds that pushed this Coalition to form, and have shaped it. Projects we saw start here or be processed here, and whose funds we somehow helped put in place, are those we report on. Things change, and these programs are no longer the only homelessness efforts in our area. Kristen asked us to consider if or how newer work not organized or funded in our processes should still be noticed, or affect, our meetings or discussions.

Beth Branagan said that broader outlook reminded her of prior single-county coalition work, where meetings were local networking opportunities, to get an understanding of each program/agency's activities, their aims, resources or possible directions. She supports learning more of these matters from our current call participants. Chris said we (as onetime advocates) ought to try to figure out gaps in the system, who is not getting properly served, that is a useful role.

Kristen said we could refocus somewhat, by asking funded projects to think about a routine report to submit, to attach these to our agenda. That alleviates their need to explain on the calls. This isn't urgent, but if it's worth a look, send Kristen an email, or [Chat](#), or speak up.

[Back@Home](#) Outreach: Trisha Ecklund said the grant was closed June 30 with all funds expended. That leaves a stock of about 450 hotel vouchers, not tied to particular people, that can be used as needed for any homeless in our CE system. To help screen inquiries, Trisha will send Kristen a hotel voucher eligibility checklist, to go out to our e-list. The usual rule is it's for people that can't access a shelter bed, but exceptions for good cause might work also. Most stays are three to five days. Kristin Dunn appreciated this arrangement.

[Back@Home](#) Housing: Ms. Dunn said the Thrive program was extended thru September. By next month they will be down to 1-2 cases or small amounts of rent support. Ms. Martin said HUD reports Thrive 'currently in Rapid Re-housing'...this CoC project was awarded last year, but no contract has been seen yet. Their state rep is currently tied up with monitoring duties and the competitions, so they are behind on contracts. It might be sent at the end of this week. These curious documents contain a pre-determined start date, but we don't know what it will be, it could be already past (meaning an immediate start of fund use is possible) or it could be as far off as next January (which would force Thrive to pause services). Kristen will immediately announce this start date when she finds out.

Racial Equity (RE) (per NCCEH subgroup minutes): An RE Assessment was discussed. Andrea presented related data: “who is actually served”, Point in Time data, Exit data (by race), Length of Time Homeless. They discussed possible concerns: Why do white people self-report more days homeless than black people? Why do BIPOC people return to homelessness more frequently than others? This material should be available as a document in early August.

Tracey Gruver attended and said they focused on the data, which had unclear aspects. The group did not make any recommendations or propose plans. Regional equity data may also be developed in the future.

Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: Beth said CYHAC bimonthly meetings resume Sept. 16th, so third Fridays, routinely.

The Early Childhood Homelessness project plans a kickoff event in September. They’ll invite elected officials, funders, homeless service providers, child care providers. They hope the event will be in person, and focusing on what the community wants for all children, including those without homes. Stories about children in homeless situations will be offered, indirectly. Homeless families will not attend, this is to assemble potential responders to their family dilemmas. Beth especially seeks any community activists to attend, please see her email ([Chat](#)). Community initiatives for early childhood, such as Get Set Transylvania, would be excellent participants. The event may cover three hours to ½ day. Anyone knowing of relevant community assessments covering children, such as by health departments, please bring to CYHAC, that’s a Partners For Impact request. CYHAC still needs Rutherford and Polk contacts, please forward these to Beth.

Kristin Dunn suggested engaging Chambers of Commerce Workforce Development teams. She noted the record of Graham Fields at Advent Health. Ms. Dunn has felt isolated in these (demanding) meetings, but sees the need to bring up barriers issues there, please invite them from each county. Ms. Martin noted the variety of ‘back-to-school-fests’ announced this year, contact organizers of those actions.

Michael Absher announced a Housing Assistance **grant to Only Hope WNC** from Healthy Transitions. It covers direct support, short term housing (hotels, motels, but also some help to couch-surfers), rent assistance, deposits and possible utility bill coverage, and related fees such as to get ID. There is a form for intake, Kristen will send it to the e-list. This covers ages 16 to 25. See [Chat](#). Only Hope is asked to attend regional CE meetings. They will create HMIS info when they get a login, but privacy issues will mean these will not be open to most users. They are negotiating particular access for Thrive. Thrive has created a ‘privacy list’ for such entries, so that needs can be discussed at CE meetings without general disclosure of personal information for DV clients. That protection would apply to these youthful clients. Kim Fletcher was introduced as Michael’s alternate at Only Hope.

Lived Expertise Advisory Council: Alyce said they meet at noon August 12. They’ve worked on the special CoC funding NOFO concepts, which were approved, but work remains to flesh out the mechanics. The new competition scorecards have several items about hiring of persons with a homeless stint in their background, involving them extensively in developing projects, decision making, committee work, etc. These people will know whether a proposal could work for them. Nonprofits, such as Alyce’s, are here to solve a problem, not to generate an ongoing work situation. Alyce feels “this is becoming a homeless industry.” That is not the point. Is what we do really helping? Or just employing people? The NOFO overpowered other discussions such as a client Bill of Rights, but they pledge to readdress that.

Veterans: Alyce has looked at SSVF funding docs for fiscal 2023, starting Oct. 1. It appears that ABCCM is not scheduled to use that program in Transylvania, Polk, or Rutherford counties. They are (to date) the go-to for veterans’ family services, so that’s interesting! These documents say this program is to help veterans with a dependent with them. That’s curious, as ABCCM houses a lot of single folks. Alyce is exploring to see if Aura Homes could take on such work, but they do not yet have capacity. Any caseworker looking to help vet families in these three counties should contact HUD-VASH, to find out where/how support will be available.

Kristen replied that our CE refers a new veteran intake to a broad list of program providers, while noting the vet’s gender. Emily said The Haven refers them through NC SERVES, and directly as seems appropriate;

some vets prefer not to work with VA, and others do not disclose vet status. Alyce recommends HUD-VASH as a starting point, they readily re-refer to other programs. Kristen said our CE had migrated away from that path given the frequent turnover of staff at VA, to sending out to a broad list of agencies. Now that Amanda is back, CE will looking at re-establishing a protocol.

Alyce reiterated that ABCCM has commitments in 21 counties, covering four Continuums of Care. That is a lot, but one commitment is to be at meetings like this one, and participating actively in our work. They should make way for other providers where they can't perform. She said United Way appreciates calls-back on vet case referrals, which other providers seem not to do regularly. Emily and Kristen thanked Alyce for her continuing assistance and commitment.

Next regional Coalition meetings:

For non-ESG applicants, a special Zoom meeting at **1 PM, Friday August 19**, with a short agenda.

The next regular meeting will be **Thursday, Sept. 1, at 9:30 AM** on Zoom.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

09:30:24 From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: Kristen Martin, Thrive

09:30:26 From Makala Perez (she/her); BRHS to Everyone: Makala Perez, Blue Ridge Health

09:30:29 From Jessica Joyner, Housing Specialist- Vaya Health to Everyone: Jessica Joyner, Vaya Health

09:30:31 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: Beth Branagan, NC Homeless Education Program

09:30:38 From Catherine Beaver to Everyone: Catherine Beaver - Henderson County DSS

09:30:45 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) to Everyone: Rachelle Dugan - Thrive

09:31:14 From Tracey Gruver (she/her), Thrive to Everyone: Tracey Gruver, Thrive

09:31:50 From Michael Absher to Everyone: Michael Absher - Only Hope Wnc

09:32:38 From Emily Lowery to Everyone: Emily Lowery, The Haven of Transylvania County

09:33:05 From Suzanne to Everyone: Suzanne Porter, United Way of Rutherford County

09:33:26 From Kim Fletcher Only Hope WNC to Everyone: Kim Fletcher- Only Hope WNC

09:33:59 From EOA to Everyone: Patrika Lathan, Eden Of Abundance

09:34:13 From Kristin Dunn (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: Kristin Dunn, Thrive

09:39:12 From tmurray to Everyone: Tina Murray BSN, RN, CCM Outreach Specialist with BRCHS

09:49:04 From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: sorry having tech issues 🙄

10:04:47 From Trisha Ecklund to Everyone: okay 🙄 will do

10:17:32 From Kristin Dunn (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: In Henderson County they call it the Education and Workforce Development Committee at the Chamber of Commerce and I know it definitely affects youth whose parents want to be working but lack supports

10:18:22 From Michael Absher to Everyone: This is to be used for any housing assistance for the Grant from Healthy Transitions (Youth Villages/Family Preservation Services) and Only Hope Wnc Partnership, Ages 16-25, We have an online referral form - <https://forms.gle/AnUgHAExhmTVZFoz5>

10:18:47 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: Beth Branagan- any ideas for the early childhood homelessness project- email bbranagan@serve.org

10:18:54 From Michael Absher to Everyone: <https://forms.gle/C3zJsyDnfneXw1Cy8>

10:21:07 From Jessica Joyner, Housing Specialist- Vaya Health to Everyone: what are the ages for the project?

10:21:35 From Kristen Martin (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: 16-25

10:28:03 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: Event at Transformation Village last week- "These little piggies are homeless" (video): <https://vimeo.com/735521412>

10:33:28 From Suzanne to Everyone: Thank you for everything you do, Alyce. I love your big heart.