

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
September 1, 2022, 9:30 AM Thrive hosting

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

Kristen Martin, Tracey Gruver, Nickie Kilgore, Kristin Dunn, Rachelle Dugan and Josh Shelton (Thrive); Emily Lowery (The Haven of Transylvania County); Grace Rauch, Kennet Melgar, Makala Perez, Haley Simmons, Michaela Baynerd and Trisha Ecklund (Blue Ridge Health); Ellis Pinder and Jennifer Drum (NC Works Veterans Services); Beth Branagan (NC Homeless Education Program); Micky Robinson (Isaac Homes Youth Services); Alyce Knafllich (Aura Homes); Amber Story (Partners Behavioral Health); Michael Absher and Kim Fletcher (Only Hope WNC); Rachel Ingram (Hendersonville Connections Center); Jessica Joyner (Vaya Health/Housing Support, Transylvania); Paige Stack (Safelight); Matt Gruebmeier and Jessica Ownbey (Henderson County Schools); Chris Berg. See also the **appended Chat**.

Kristen Martin facilitated. She went over our ground rules statement; please see our Agenda.

Minutes of August 4 online meeting were approved by common consent.

BoS Steering Committee has not met since our August call.

Three homeless **funding competitions** are under way: Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grant, and (3-year) Continuum targeted to rural and unsheltered persons. The submission dates for applications have passed, and the applications are undergoing review and scoring. See <https://www.ncceh.org/files/12465/> for program details, links and schedule, also in NCCEH emails.

Alyce Knafllich said that the Project Review subcommittee ESG scoring and ranking is done, and CoC ranking is set for tomorrow. This year ESG went much faster than in the past.

Coordinated Entry (CE): Kristen said the group has **revised its CE operating plan** over several months. It now will align with BoS in pruning individuals or household groups from the active By-Name list after 90 days of no recorded contact with an entry point, front-door provider or shelter, including being able to take calls on a known phone number. That's a shift from previous practice, to attempt contact every six months. The CE process is based on HMIS records, which makes entrants eligible for state or HUD housing assistance. It includes priority ranking, and is subject to grievance procedures.

These changes, which region 2 CE participants have approved, will appear in the annual CE plan. This will smooth the system and it should become more effective. Front-door intakes are at Thrive, Blue Ridge Health, and The Haven; regular contact is kept with Salvation Army in Hendersonville, Safelight, SAFE, and by Rachelle working with shelters.

As these changes are ongoing, CE is not posting an updated count today. Beginning late this month Rachelle will be contacting lower-priority listed clients, to case-manage their issues despite our lack of enough housing to offer leases. Thrive will add a case manager mid-month to aid this.

Outreach: We welcome Henderson law-enforcement and zoning officers now cooperating in dealing with unauthorized camps. They give the coalition two weeks to relocate camp occupants before camps are broken up. Kristen was pleased that Hendersonville City Manager Connett is speaking up for this practice.

Alyce spoke appreciatively of a vet (whose ABCCM hotel help was expiring) that Trisha was able to find a rentable place for.

Back@Home program is now closing. Rachelle is paying a handful of partial September rents, and will send letters congratulating recipients on their gains in stability. Kristen spoke of a new contract that will help 14 cases (half individuals, half family/household), though these take effort that will mean one placement per week.

Racial Equity: Kennet said the group is scrutinizing the annual data since 2019 that feeds into CoC scoring, including PIT demographics. It looks like African-American and Native American populations are impacted. They are considering whether there are better ways to check data and feed it into assessments. They also plan a Racial Equity dialog on Oct. 18th on ‘Housing Solutions: Building toward a better future.’

They will review Coordinated Entry for issues beyond the VI-SPDAT concerns, including a look at provider staff roles – by race/ethnicity. Trisha confirmed they still plan work on the assessment tool.

Alyce said **languages** (especially Spanish, but also Ukranian) matter for equity. Kristen said this is an **advocacy need**, that the competition resources do not pay for translations. She had need of an American Sign Language interpreter. That is pricey as a monthly contract. She appreciates the language help from Blue Ridge Health. Kristen is in contact with Dogwood Health Trust on these matters.

CYHAC, Children and Youth Homeless Action Coalition: Beth said they meet Sept. 16th at 9 AM by Zoom, when Michael Absher will update on Only Hope WNC activities.

The **Community Engagement project Kickoff** will be October 13, 8:30 AM to noon at Blue Ridge Community College. Beth will send out invitations, with RSVP. Please send her names of people involved in support for young children, especially in Polk or Rutherford. The point is to better integrate homeless support with improving childrens’ lives. Kristin Dunn recently learned that Smart Start was able to work with the mom of a 3-month old to get emergency child care for a few weeks, that meets a real need.

Lived Experience: The next meeting is September 9th at noon. Rachelle said they’ve gotten examples from other CoCs of bills-of-rights. An objective is to place people who’ve been homeless onto boards or other places where their views can matter. Alyce will rejoin them now that she will be ‘retired’ and available once again.

Veterans, Advocacy needs: Alyce said VA supported organizations usually run out of funds in August/September, prior to their fiscal refresh on October 1. That strains Aura Homes’ work each year. A related problem is staff turnover at HUD-VASH and ABCCM. These positions are filled by fresh-from-school social workers who tend to move on in a few months. This lack of institutional consistency means that support services are scanty, despite VA’s ‘SSVF’ support program, simply because the **case managers don’t know** the local resources,. NCCEH is not now set up to work on this, they do not have a Veterans committee, so there is no clear path to a solution.

Kristen has also spoken with NCCEH staff about this. She **asked us** to think about a public letter, an involvement/advocacy effort, maybe aiming for **Veterans Day**, and will put that on our October meeting agenda.

Amber said that Alyce cannot retire (!) Alyce sidestepped and spoke of the letter Suzanne Porter wrote to cover our ‘special regional meeting’ about ESG funding on August 19. That reflected a nearly hollow regional ESG review procedure, set by NCCEH to reduce conflicts of interest to a minimum. Alyce proposed that regional involvement be moved to early in the competition process, as a strategic discussion of possible conflicts such as this round’s 40% minimum funding for housing across multiple programs with different sponsors.

Hendersonville Cooperation Center: Rachel Ingram said that zoning clearance is being sought to obtain a special use permit to create a day center serving homeless people. The details are not complete and an announcement will be coming. Rachel said the facility might help with meeting language-translation needs.

The next regular meeting will be **Thursday, Oct. 6, at 9:30 AM** on Zoom.

- With respect, Chris Berg

Chat messages:

09:32:20 From Michael Absher to Everyone: Michael Absher, Only Hope Wnc

09:32:20 From Jennifer Drum to Everyone: Jennifer Drum-Veteran Services NCWorks for Polk & Rutherford County

09:32:40 From paige to Everyone: Paige Stack Safelight

09:32:41 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: Beth Branagan, NC Homeless Education Program

09:33:17 From Michaela Baynard & Haley Simons to Everyone: Michaela Baynard and Haley Simons with Blue Ridge Health

09:37:46 From Emily Lowery to Everyone: Emily Lowery, The Haven

09:37:49 From Ellis Pinder to Everyone: Ellis Pinder-NCWorks (Veterans Services) for Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania and Madison Counties.

09:38:54 From Micky Robinson to Everyone: Micky Robinson, Isaac Homes Youth Services

09:46:20 From Kim Fletcher Only Hope WNC to Everyone: Kim Fletcher

09:46:27 From Kim Fletcher Only Hope WNC to Everyone: Only Hope WNC

09:48:51 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: Matt Gruebmeier, Director Student Services, HCPS

09:49:27 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: brb

10:05:50 From Kristin Dunn (she/her); Thrive to Everyone: Thank you Beth!

10:05:51 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: Doesn't Polk public schools run a universal pre-K program?

10:07:05 From Michaela Baynard & Haley Simons to Everyone: The Carver Center in Rutherford may be a good point of contact. They run our pre-k programs.

10:08:57 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: @Matt Gruebmeier- Yes. I have talked with Toni Haley and she is forwarding the info to those folks. Thanks!

10:10:39 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: Good deal, Beth - and congrats on all of your good news!

10:11:42 From Beth Branagan to Everyone: Thanks Matt!

10:18:37 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: No, but thank you for facilitating, Kristen!

10:27:35 From Amber Story (her/she) to Everyone: And we are thankful for that Kristen!

10:30:13 From Matt Gruebmeier to Everyone: got to go, thanks, everyone!