

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  
**May 4, 2023, 9:30 AM** The Haven hosting/Thrive account

**Persons on the call:** Regional lead: Emily Lowery.

**Emily Lowery** (The Haven of Transylvania County); **Rachelle Dugan, Tracey Gruver and Josh Shelton** (Thrive); **Grace Rauch and Makala Perez** (Blue Ridge Health); **K Searcy; Trina Rushing** (Henderson County Library); **Alyce Knaflich** (Aura Home Women Vets); **Sarah Lancaster; Michael Absher and Kim Fletcher** (Only Hope WNC); **Ellis Pinder** (NC Works Veterans Services); **Jessica Ownbey** (Henderson County Schools); **Jenny Simmons** (NCCEH); **Morgan Abendroth** (Safelight); **Robert Caldwell** (DCDEE); **Chris Berg**. See also the **appended Chat**.

**Emily Lowery** facilitated. Michael Absher acted as co-host.

**Minutes** of our April 6 online meeting were delayed to the end of this meeting, then approved by common consent, as no corrections or comments were offered by those present.

The Racial Equity item was postponed.

No meetings of the Balance of State Steering Committee have occurred since our April 6<sup>th</sup> regional meeting.

Michael Absher said the **CYHAC** group (child and youth homelessness) is waiting on the survey – Beth Branagan has been away at two conferences.

Rachelle Dugan said the **Coordinated Entry** regional committee met April 17<sup>th</sup>. The Balance of State PIT count from January found 1393 homeless persons, an increase of 616 from the previous year count of 777.

Coordinated Entry meetings for May: For general population, May 15 at 9 AM; for veterans, May 17 at 9 AM.

An evaluation of street **outreach programs** will take place from May 15 through 26<sup>th</sup>.

Emily asked Rachelle to type up material on the new assessment tool for CE. It is not yet in general release, but Rachelle said it will reduce the VI-SPDAT asking of 30 + questions to approximately 12 – 15 questions.

**Resource Fairs:** Trina Rushing confirmed the Henderson County fair will be tomorrow morning, at the Salvation Army. Agencies will come set up at 8 AM, for the clients expected by 8:30 until noon or after, serving both breakfast and lunch. About 20 organizations will be there. We're pleased to offer donated sub sandwiches and wraps thanks to Aura Homes.

NCCEH plans to better incorporate CE information in HMIS records. A **new assessment tool** is being readied for pilot usage this July and August. A training phase will follow in September and October. General use is expected to ramp up from November to January 2024. Updates will continue, likely through all these stages.

Jenny Simmons expressed hope that going to the new tool will cut average assessment times, perhaps to a 12-15 minute range for each new interview.

Alyce Knaflich said the **Lived Expertise Advisory Council** is busy, setting out the Client Bill of Rights, and worked on both scorecards, covering new and renewal applications.

This past Tuesday the LEAC was featured at the **Bringing It Home Conference**. Stories and remarks were offered by Rachelle Dugan, together with Alyce, Jeffrey, Melissa and Jamie. Alyce was pleased to convert

a ‘consumer advisory council’ into LEAC. Rachelle proposed a future where helping agencies have staff and volunteers who have lived background in these problems.

The Client Bill of Rights (authored by LEAC participants) is being integrated into the Scorecard project selection process. This was part of an ‘Our Future’ offering at the Conference by Rachelle and Jamie. The hope is that for all agencies – where staff and volunteers engage with homeless clients – these connections will lead to homeless people getting better involved and assisting in their own recovery/rehousing, by getting an understanding of the tools and choices available.

Rachelle said there would be training on better connection to clients, on May 25<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM, with help from NCCEH staff. The Bill of Rights applies to any involved providers, whether they are funded by NCCEH programs or otherwise.

Emily was pleased to see great Region 2 participation in the Conference, seeing work of high quality, and clearly related to her own job. She needs to step out of ‘boss’ perspective, and rethink what are the impacts having no home or stability creates, and how communication works there. This year’s sessions felt particularly relevant.

Emily was also pleased to participate in a group meditation and mindfulness exercise at the conference. Doing that helps you see a common task and commitment as a source of ‘collective effervescence’. This session also showed how a meditation poem, as a breathing exercise, helps refocus; it’s a form of self-compassion.

Emily and Trina went to a Conference capacity-building exercise: She would like each county to look at the Systems Map there of our work; then each county (etc.) could look for gaps in the system. This work could guide, by showing how all this looks to a homeless person.

Emily also reviewed the Fair Housing Act at the Conference, with emphasis on figuring out “reasonable accommodation”, what it might be and who can apply for these. Some of these items may be requested in writing.

Rachelle appreciated the visioning on Tuesday, and the chance to bring out her lived-experience view. The wellness and mindfulness aspects also fit in well.

Brian Alexander facilitated a workshop on how to advance our rehousing efforts – where can we look for funding? How can we better retain employees? Mental-health days may help; or, enabling meditation during a lunch break; also enabling paid time off...

Rachelle also enjoyed a financial literacy and obstacles session, with many there from Charlotte or from Wake County, where a living wage might be \$23 per hour. She was reminded that not everyone holds that householders are the final arbiter of their lives. There was discussion of SOAR (there is no office for that help here, though in Buncombe there is a routine to attempt to qualify people for SSI or SSDI).

**Veterans:** Alyce said a planned in-person veterans’ state/BoS meeting was canceled (shifted to virtual). A priority is improving communication between agencies, as in deciding who-helps-who. She’s seen handoffs such as Thrive → VA → ABCCM, but with people or issues getting dropped. The issues are concerning in other regions too, such as Durham and Fayetteville VA housing programs, there is little or no participation in the East, including in establishing lead people or doing project reviews.

A state-level vets virtual meeting will be on May 8 between 1 and 3. That’s to coordinate policy, but it is hard across diverse programs – SSVF (support services for veteran families); grant-per-diem (all under ABCCM here); with the VA Salisbury hospital being the sole facility in the Balance of State territory. ABCCM and the VA were not on this part of the call.

Aura Homes is working on the Hendersonville group home project with electric done and plumbing getting there. There’s an open house, May 21, 1 to 4.

**Unsheltered Access Coordinator** (successor in duties to the Point-in-time Count leads): Trisha Ecklund has agreed to continue filling this role. Michael nominated Trisha, Alyce seconded; there were no other nominations. Those on the call approved Trisha as regional UA coordinator.

**Rutherford County:** Rachelle reported for Amber Story, that “Rutherford County community partners” plan another Resource Fair, cohosted by Washburn outreach, on August 5<sup>th</sup>. They want to recruit haircutters, provide clothing, health screenings, and school supplies.

A medical services bus on Thursdays (10 to 4) at the Grant town parking lot, accepts patients both with and without insurance-they have some grant funding.

**Racial Equity:** Tracey Gruver said this group met to look at the new tool or pilot replacement for VI-SPDAT assessment. She was not on the assessments committee, but will pay attention as the new process is piloted this year.

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

- With respect, Chris Berg

## Chat :

09:39:47 From Sarah Lancaster : Thanks!  
09:42:10 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) : <https://www.healthcouncilrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Community-Resource-Guide.pdf>  
09:42:49 From Sarah Lancaster : Rachelle Ellis with Vaya's Housing Team will be in attendance- go by and see her. She is super excited to be a part of it! Thanks Alyce and all for all that you do!  
09:42:53 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) : That is a link for the updated Rutherford County Resource Guide if anyone has clients that would find it useful! Tons of resources in there  
09:45:36 From Sarah Lancaster : Yes!  
09:45:55 From Alyce Knafllich : : May 25th <https://www.ncceh.org/events/1614/>  
09:56:40 From Kim Fletcher : does anyone know the link to the recordings?  
09:58:31 From Sarah Lancaster : Pisgah Legal not in Hendersonville/  
09:58:32 From Sarah Lancaster : ?  
09:58:46 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) : Their officer is apparently in Buncombe  
10:00:35 From Michael Absher to Emily Lowery(Direct Message) : Don't we have to reappoint or appoint Trisha to that one position? By vote from that email we got  
10:00:51 From Emily Lowery : [https://whova.com/portal/webapp/biheh\\_202305/](https://whova.com/portal/webapp/biheh_202305/) I am not sure if you can access the recording through here or not, but this is where you could find them...the recordings to the Bringing it Home.  
10:01:53 From Emily Lowery to Michael Absher(Direct Message) : Yes! Thank you for that reminder!  
10:02:17 From Rachelle Dugan (she/her) : <https://www.ncceh.org/soar/contactinfo/>  
Here is the SOAR list from NCCEH's website  
10:03:37 From Kim Fletcher : Thank you!  
10:07:39 From Tracey Gruver | Thrive (she/her) to Emily Lowery(Direct Message) : Did you want me to give a report from the Racial Equity Subcommittee Meeting?  
10:08:36 From Emily Lowery to Tracey Gruver | Thrive (she/her) (Direct Message) : Yes!  
10:11:31 From Jenny Simmons, (she/her), NCCEH : Thank you!