

COC February 2024 Minutes

02/06/2024

Members Present:

Alistar "Al" Blair | Community Member
Erika Chiruck | McNabb Center
Allie Cohn | Creating Homes Initiative/Ridgeview Behavioral Health
Sharon Davis | The Lighthouse Community Life Center
Rev. Jon Faraone | Shelter My Sheep - HMMC
Karen Ferguson | TVCH
Sarah Gulley | TN Valley Housing Services
Brandon Harris | TVCH
Tiffany Higgenbotham | US Dept of Veteran Affairs
Nikki Lynn | TVCH
Courtney Niemann | Helping Mamas
Andy O'Quinn | TORCH
Deborah Parker | VOA-SSVF Knoxville
Sage Pearson | LGBTQ+ Advocate YWCA Knoxville & Tennessee Valley
Taylor Pierce | MATS
Tonya Polidoro | MATS
Melina Politte | Haven House
Sabrina Seamon | Clinch Powell
Anne Singleton | Cherokee Health System
Bruce Spangler | A Place to Stay
Kimberly Terry | TVCH
Blair Trout | Salvation Army Sevier & Cocke Counties
Bill Wiener | Community Member

Reminder: Change your Zoom name to include your first and last name, pronouns (if you would like), and your organization. Mute your audio.

Call to Order: Tonya Polidoro – Governing Council Chair

Called the meeting to order 10:03 a.m.

Welcome: Tonya Polidoro – Governing Council Chair

I wanted to welcome everybody and I hope you guys are having a good morning. I hope everybody's PIT count went well.

Partner Spotlight

YWCA Knoxville & Tennessee Valley – Sage Evelynn Pearson

LGBTQ+ Advocate

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I know it was to be Katie who was going to be talking to you about our housing program. It is not my expertise; I do not know all the ins and outs and the magic that Katie is able to work.

We offer a victim assistance housing program that allows us to relocate individuals facing domestic violence. The biggest part of this is they need to be actively fleeing abuse to be able to qualify for our housing program. The purpose of this is to empower the clients to achieve financial security and connect them to other resources like our victim advocates. If I have a client that is in need of relocation, I would get the client in touch with Katie. Katie would put the client on a waiting list. Usually, the turnover is a month to three months.

The goal is to get them somewhere permanently but depending on their financial literacy which we are working with them on as well, we can help prevent the recidivism of going back to their abuser or relying on other people that are not going to be a good situation for them moving forward.

We do the down payment, first and second month's rent, and then ½ of the next three months rent.

What I focus on primarily is serving the LGBTQ+ community in Knox and Anderson Counties. But I kind of go where the need is. I am happy to work with Appalachian Outreach which do wonderful work outside of where I typically work. We are focusing on building up our Knox and Anderson County support groups. It is virtual so anyone can attend. It is focusing on building each other up and sharing those resiliency skills with each other while getting a little input from a lesson plan that goes along with us to help. Sometimes we do not give each other the best advice and I can step in and be like, "ok, but have we thought about this way and then kind of refer to our curriculum to guide them through that process.

Along with that, the core is our advocacy. Working through orders of protection and helping those that may need them get the legal representation that they deserve and the outcome that is beneficial. That is not a guarantee, but we are able to do everything in our power to help them make sure that they get everything taken care of.

Primarily what I serve as right now is a general advocate for the community. I work very closely with the South Press Charity Trans People Are Magic as well as Knox Pride to help further the causes for the needs of underserved and unhoused youth in our area that are within our community to make sure that they are getting food, some form of shelter, and clothing to help them stay warm.

We support a ladies night event, which is a safe space for all women, not just queer women to go out and be in a place that is considered dry. South Press is a coffee shop, not a bar. Maybe they cannot get away from their partner easily, so they have to stop into the coffee shop on a workday. There they can talk to me, and we can figure out something.

I am working on trying to get a shelter open specifically for the LGBTQ community. That is very much in the ground level planning stages. If anyone else has further information about how to do that, I would greatly appreciate that.

If you have any need for general advocacy, legal advocacy, or just underserved advocacy, I am happy to help. I am trying to move my program into legal representation to help with name changes, gender marker changes, all those kinds of things as well, and seeking out medical

resources that are safe for the queer community. If you have anyone that falls under that, I am happy to help them out.

Individual Agency News/Updates/Agency Successes:

Courtney Niemann | Helping Mamas

We will be moving into a bigger building on April 1, 2024. We are still going to be out here in the West Knox County area. We are doubling the space and are super excited about it.

Sharon Davis | The Lighthouse Community Life Center

I just wanted to let you know after this meeting we are going to be finalizing our count from our PIT. And also, we are trying to work on a Emergency Homeless Service Center here in Monroe County. We are just all trying to come together and see what resources we can pull together to try to get this open.

Andy O'Quinn | TORCH

We did a white flag shelter during the snowstorm, and it went pretty well. It's only the second year that we have done it. It's been kind of hard to get these things off the ground in Anderson County, but we pulled it off. We went for a full week during the snowstorm.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

I know Katelyn worked really hard to keep everybody updated on all the counties that had warming shelters popping up. That was great for all of us. What challenges do you think that you faced during that week Andy?

Andy O'Quinn | TORCH

Transporting people was the biggest difficulty we had with all the ice. The biggest success that we had was coordinating volunteers. We had enough volunteers within almost a walkable area to come in and volunteer for us. One of the big challenges we always have is trying to get the word out to clients to let them know what is going on, but we have to be careful about how much we publish, because not everybody in the community is really supportive of certain things like this. In this case, we did get a ton of support. The unitarian Church allowed us to use their space, they set up a volunteer sheet, and it was the best response in terms of volunteers I have ever seen.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

We had transportation issues in the beginning. Then we had a church come through with a church bus, so that helped us greatly. Volunteers was one of our successes as well.

Sarah Gulley | TN Valley Housing Services

We opened one of our community rooms for MATS to come in and do their day center, and I just wanted to commend your staff and volunteers. You all did a great job and left the place wonderful. It was so cool to be a part of and we appreciate you guys.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

It is all about partnership. This is what our CoC is about as well. We all need to partner together and try to help our homeless neighbors. Even talking about our challenges is really helpful because four heads are better than two.

Taylor Pierce | MATS

Don't forget about our 5k

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

We have a 5k coming up in April. Morristown had a tragic fire to one of our historic buildings. So lets hope that is cleared up by April.

HUD CoC Program Funding Announcements**Allie Cohn | Creating Homes Initiative/Ridgeview Behavioral Health**

Congratulations to A Place to Stay for being awarded a HUD FY23 CoC Program New Project Grant! There will be Permanent Supportive Housing now in Blount County.

Congratulations to TVCH for being awarded HUD FY23 CoC Program Renewal Grants! And of course, HMIS, Coordinated Entry, and their Planning Grant.

That is wonderful that funding is coming into our community, and it won't be long and fiscal year 2024 grant process will be beginning. Anybody from A Place to Stay want to tell a little bit about that project?

Bruce Spangler | A Place to Stay

We are putting together a program for 11 to 12 families in Blount County. This is a great opportunity not only for A Place to Stay as it continues to grow, but most importantly for those that we serve. Thank everyone who helped make that happen. Allie, thank you for your support and your encouragement and your insights as well as the committee.

Melina Politte | Haven House

Will you be taking adults, families, singles?

Bruce Spangler | A Place to Stay

It will be both. The funding allows for different size families.

Melina Politte | Haven House

In Blount County we really don't have a whole lot of homelessness options. Family Promise just takes families. So, it is great to have another option. Congratulations.

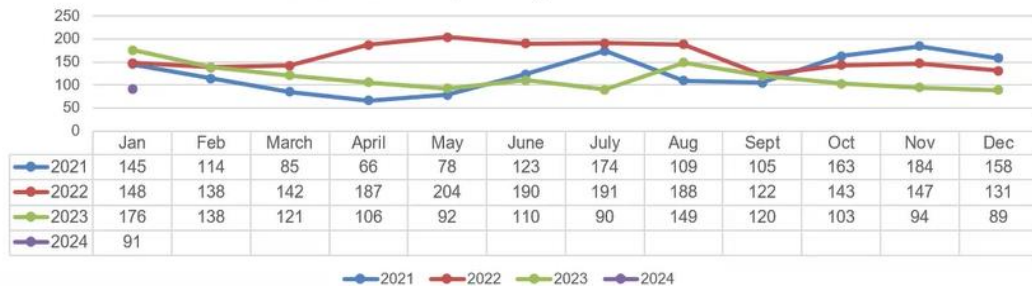
CoC Data Reports & Updates**Kimberly Terry – Administrative & Data Support Coordinator TVCH**

Before I go into this, I do want to thank everybody in the CoC that took training, helped in the PIT, and all the volunteers. We had a much more successful PIT this year than last year. We had a lot more community involvement. We also took that as an incentive to find and reintroduce ourselves to communities that does not have a lot of resources.

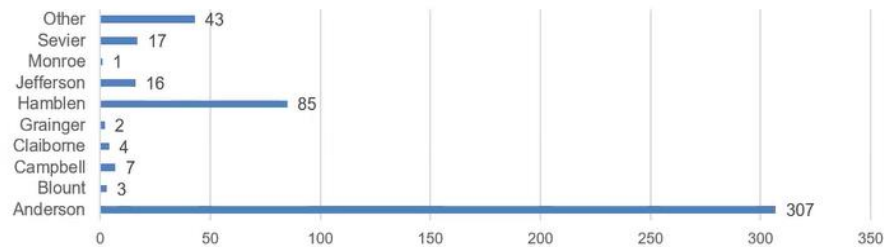
CoC Data Reports



Total CE Participation by Month and Year



Number of Active Program Participants by County



CoC Data Reports



Total number of unduplicated individuals that are actively enrolled: **357**

Percentage of Veterans: 2.24%
Percentage of Domestic Violence Victims: 15.97%
Percentage of Disable Inviduals: 42.02%
Percentage of Chronically Homeless: 11.76%

Percentage of the Total Number of Active Programs for the Month by Program Type



Sharon Davis | The Lighthouse Community Life Center

On one slide it showed Monroe having a number of one, and we really don't know what you are trying to share with us.

Nikki Lynn – Director of Data Management TVCH

It is the number of active program participants by county. These are the numbers coming out of HMIS. Based on the assessment information that we have for individuals enrolled in programs, only one of them is in Monroe County right now. We like to say HMIS is only as good as the information that is put in. The more folks we have participating in our HMIS database, the more robust and more accurate our data across our region is.

Rev. Jon Faraone | Shelter My Sheep - HMMC

Our ministry Shelter My Sheep Ministry is housing two families and two individuals right now in our micro houses. How would that qualify for something like this, or does it qualify?

Nikki Lynn – Director of Data Management TVCH

Yes, it would. That is a conversation that we can have after the CoC meeting in regards to getting you all enrolled into putting information into HMIS.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

This is why it is so important that if you represent one of these 12 counties or multiple counties, it is so important for you to have access to HMIS and report into HMIS so that we can represent accurately in our region what we are actually doing. If anybody needs to have information about how you can input those you are serving into HMIS, please reach out to Nikki, she will get you set up.

HMIS Information - Nikki Lynn nlynn@tvceh.org

Nikki Lynn – Director of Data Management TVCH

If you are a member of the CoC and you are not getting CoC funding, but you want to participate in HMIS, per our bylaws and user agreement MOU with the CoC, we can provide four licenses per year per agency for free. Also, Kimberly and I are available for training. We are happy to be as flexible as we need to get folks at your agency prepared and ready to use HMIS, so don't hesitate.

CoC Updates

Allie Cohn | Creating Homes Initiative/Ridgeview Behavioral Health

You can see the link below for you to sign up to access the Google Calendar. There will not longer be invites going out.

CoC Updates



TVCoC will not be sending invites on Google Calendar for large-scale meetings in 2024.

For your convenience, please visit <https://tvchomeless.org/continuum-of-care/>, scroll down to the section with the calendar, and click the blue "+" in the bottom right corner of the calendar to add TVCoC events to your calendar!

Meetings & Events

CoC meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month.

See the calendar to the right for a calendar of meetings, committee meetings, and events.



You should have received yesterday a CoC Resource Email. If you did not, check your SPAM box first, then please see below. A great resource email went out listing things that are going on, what Tennessee Valley is doing, and different events in different counties represented by the Coalition.

CoC Updates



CoC Resource Email

Not currently receiving the CoC Resource Email?

Interested in receiving CoC Updates?

Send an email to info@tvceh.org to be added to the Tennessee Valley CoC Listserv!



CoC Committee Updates:

HMIS & Data Management – Andy O’Quinn andy.oquinn@oakridgetorch.org

Coordinated Entry Committee – Tiffany Higginbotham tiffany.higginbotham@va.gov

A subcommittee met, and we are going through the policies for coordinated entry. We are looking at updating the prioritization methods that we are using for coordinated entry. We are going to be discussing that at the next committee meeting which will be on Tuesday February 13, 2024, at 10:00 am. If you are interested in being on that committee let me know. I’ll be sending out an email invite soon for the existing people on the committee, but if anyone would like to join or join to discuss the prioritization method you are welcome to.

PIT/HIC Committee – Nikki Lynn nlynn@tvceh.org

The PIT/HIC went really well. Thank all of you for all your help. We got to touch all the counties this year, which has not always been the case. We will be sending out a survey probably next week in regards to follow up to see what went well and what we can update/change for next year. The data is due to us by next Wednesday so that we can clean it up, get prep work done, make sure everything is accurate, send it back to you so that we can vote on it as a CoC to submit it to HUD.

Homeless Awareness & Advocacy Committee – Katelyn McGuire kmcguire@tvceh.org

Next meeting 2/9/2024 at 2:00 pm

Discussion/Questions

Sage Pearson | LGBTQ+ Advocate YWCA Knoxville & Tennessee Valley

Could I make a motion that we as a collective, work towards creating some “Stay Warm” kits to distribute to our unhoused community members as a back up if they are unable to get into a shelter during winter storms? Kits would include things like hand warmers and thermal blankets. I know Coleman does charitable donations of cheap or free surplus tents we could utilize for this also.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

Sage, I don't think that it needs a motion, approval, or vote. That is certainly something I feel that collaboration is super important in that alone. I know here in Hamblen County when we need things like that, all it takes is a Facebook post and our community is gracious to jump on that. If you are in a community where your community members are not as responsive, I think it is important as a CoC for our members to group together and say “Hey, you know, I can tackle this and that”. I think that would be really important and you bring up a really good idea.

Sage Pearson | LGBTQ+ Advocate YWCA Knoxville & Tennessee Valley

I know Knox Pride has a resource of hand warmers and thermal blankets. They just haven't been able to get any other further resources to create a full kit. If it was alright with everyone, I was going to invite John B Camp of Knox Pride to join these meetings starting next month.

Tonya Polidoro | MATS

Yes, that is fine. These meetings are open to anyone. The more the merrier. I want to thank everybody for a great meeting. Good participation. We really appreciate each and every one of you, and we couldn't do what we do without the collaboration with one another. If you ever need any service, please reach out to Tennessee Valley. They are kind of the hub for all of the CoC. We appreciate everything they do as well. Our HMIS committee, all our data management committees, data entry, all of those we appreciate everything you do. The work that you are doing is really vital.

Closing: Tonya Polidoro – Governing Council Chair

Tonya closed the meeting at 10:46 am

Dates for the upcoming COC meeting

March 5 2024

April 2 2024 – In person

May 7 2024

June 4 2024

July 7 2024 – In person

August 6 2024

September 3 2024

October 1 – In person

November 5 2024