

HOME MONTANA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTANA CONTINUUM OF CARE COALITION

April 2024



Annual Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 22: 12pm – Holiday Inn, Downtown Missoula

For the first time since 2019 the general meeting of the membership will take place in-person following the conclusion of the Montana Housing Partnership Conference in Missoula, Montana.

The meeting will include a presentation on CoC performance this past year and will provide updates on governance revision, statewide CES Evaluation, and updates from Pathways, the HMIS Lead for Montana. There will also be time for CoC members to network and enjoy light refreshments.

CoC members are encouraged to attend the conference and take advantage of the many opportunities to learn more on a variety of issues related to affordable housing in Montana. For more information or to register, go to:

<https://bit.ly/2024MHPConference>

Training Opportunity

Working with Adult Survivors of Trauma

The Coalition is excited to bring Lori Beyer, Director of Trauma Training and Education at Community Connections in Washington, D.C. to Helena on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, for an All-Day workshop. Lori is a nationally recognized trainer who specializes in providing workshops, trainings, and ongoing supervision and consultation to agencies and clinicians on issues related to trauma-specific and trauma-informed service provision. Space is limited - To register, please contact david@mtcoc.org

President's Message

Jim McGrath

As spring arrives in Montana, we at the Montana Continuum of Care Coalition are looking forward to a dynamic year ahead.

We are excited that HUD awarded us increased funding and three new projects in the annual Continuum of Care Competition. We got everything we applied for and then some. In my experience that is nearly an impossible achievement. It is unprecedented. It's a real coup for Montana and our homeless neighbors. This will enable us to serve more homeless and at-risk Montanans in additional communities. We are committed as a C of C to reach more communities and more Montanans in the coming years.

This year we hope to reinvigorate our governance and broaden our membership in order to strengthen our positive impact. (*continues on page 2*)



Project Profile

Dawson Promise, Glendive MT

In the shadow of Makoshika State Park in Glendive, Montana you'll find Dawson Community College, home of Dawson Promise, a unique program that is part of Montana's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Dawson Promise is a program aimed at helping youth aging out of the foster care system, unaccompanied youth, or youth experiencing homelessness obtain a two-year education without debt. Through Dawson Promise, students are provided opportunities that may have previously seemed out of reach.

Dawson Promise works in partnership with each student to ensure they have the resources and support they need to reach their educational goals, while also developing additional life skills to set them up for sustainable success. Each participant is provided with year-round on-campus housing, access to food and various wrap-around services including one-on-one mentoring, academic tutoring, resume writing and more. Through a partnership with

One Health School-Based Health Care, all program participants have access to primary care and behavioral health services on campus.

Dawson Promise is the only program of its kind in Montana with participants from Lambert to Victor, and Lame Deer to Kalispell. Since its inception, Dawson Promise has had a total of eight college graduates. Four students have continued their education at a 4-year institution, and four have entered the workforce in the areas of welding, criminal justice, and graphic design.

Each year, the program provides an opportunity for approximately 14 individuals to begin their post-secondary education free from financial burden.

For more information, contact Daneen Peterson at: 406-377-306 or dpeterson@dawson.edu



President's Message

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This first ever newsletter updates you on that accomplishment and others: YHDP youth grant activities; a highlight of one of them, Dawson Promise; program updates about HMIS and System Performance measurements; and more. And announces that for the first time since 2019, the CoC will be meeting in-person in May! I hope to see many of you here in Missoula to discuss our future, celebrate our accomplishments and reacquaint ourselves. It is my great honor to serve the MT C of C and thank each of you for your important work.

~ Jim McGrath, President Montana Continuum of Care Board of Directors

Continuum of Care Updates

Continuum of Care brings Home over \$5 million in Grants to Address Homelessness in Montana

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition was awarded \$5,501,085 in funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for projects throughout the state to address homelessness. “We are very excited to get funding for three new projects in Great Falls, Helena and Bozeman,” said David O’Leary, executive director of the Continuum of Care, “as well as renewing all our current projects in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Hamilton, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, Browning, and Glendive.” Jim McGrath, president of the MT CoC board stated, “We got everything we applied for and then some,” and that “In my experience that is nearly an impossible achievement. It is unprecedented. It’s a real coup for Montana and our homeless neighbors.”

Partnership with the Training Institute

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition is partnering with the Training Institute at People Incorporated to bring a web-based curriculum in best practices to Montana. Sessions will be open to all housing and service providers in the State of Montana and attendees will receive certificates upon successful completion of each session. Sessions dates are:

July 11: Principles of Housing First & Harm Reduction, 1-3pm

August 8: Motivational Interviewing, 1-3pm

September 12: De-escalation, 1-3pm

Registration details will be sent via e-mail to all CoC members and will be posted to the Coalition’s website at www.mtcoc.org and course information can be found at www.traininginstitute.org

Participant Story

In May 2023 Dawson Promise participant Angelo was close to leaving college to help his girlfriend Erin in Billings, who suddenly found herself on the verge of homelessness. Wanting to support Angelo in his effort to help Erin, Dawson Promise program advisor Daneen Peterson worked with Angelo and Erin on a “a clever, outside-the-box solution.” That solution was Dawson Promise. Though Erin hadn’t completed high school graduation requirements, she was able to enroll at DCC under the Admissions acceptance category called Ability to Benefit (ATB) which allows students without a high school diploma or equivalency to receive postsecondary education and training while working toward HiSET completion. While ATB is rarely used as students cannot receive federal financial aid, Dawson Promise was able to cover Erin’s room and board and college tuition for 10 weeks while she completed HiSET requirements.

Peterson says, “On December 14, Erin finished her first two college courses and the next day, she completed her HiSET! She’s enrolled as a full-time student at DCC this spring semester and working toward her Associate of Arts degree, with the goal of attending Architecture School in the future. Erin will have the opportunity to walk DCC’s commencement ceremony this May with other DCC Career and Adult Education Center graduates.”

Visit the Dawson Community College website at: <https://www.dawson.edu/>



The Montana Department of Commerce announced nearly \$5 million of grant funding has been allocated to 10 non-profit organizations to support homeless shelters with new construction, capital improvements and shelter space acquisition for Montanans who are experiencing homelessness. The funding is through Commerce’s Emergency Shelter Facility Grant (ESFG) Program. The ESFG is one-time funding opportunity authorized by HB5 in the 2023 Legislative Session.

HMIS Updates

Chris Sage, Pathways MISI

2023 Systems Performance Measures

2023 System Performance Measure outcomes saw a decline from 2022. Measure 1 (Length of Time Homeless) demonstrated the starkest contrast increasing from an average of 93 (bed nights) in 2022 to an average of 160 in 2023; a more than 72% increase.

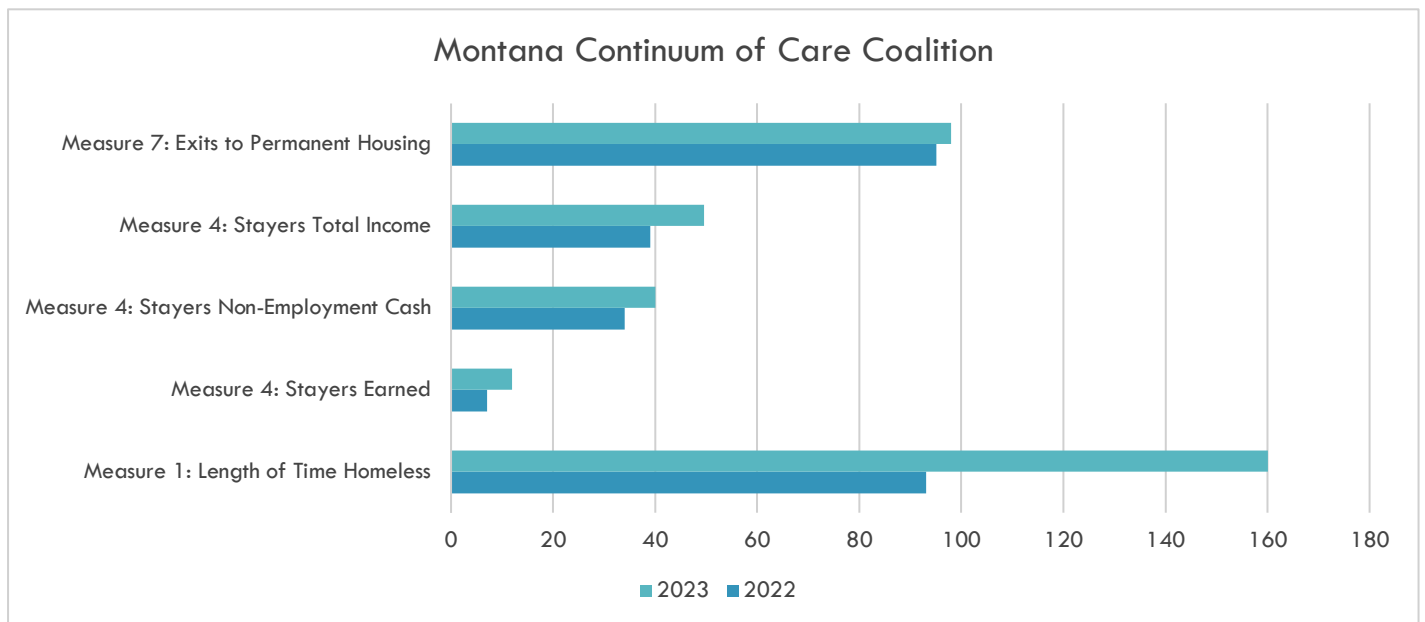
The CoC did see improvement in some other areas. Measure 4 (Employment and Income Growth) for CoC funded projects increased in 4 out of 6 categories. The percentage of participants who stayed (stayers) in projects during the report period with increased earned income increased from 7% in 2022 to 12% in 2023. Stayers also increased non employment cash income from a rate of 34% in 2022 to just under 40% in 2023.

The most significant improvement was for the percentage of stayers who increased total income: 39% of stayers increased total income in 2022 compared to 49.6% in 2023. Lastly, Measure 7 (Exits to Permanent Housing) increased from 95% in 2022 to 98% in 2023.

HMIS User Survey

As part of the Statewide CES Evaluation the Coalition will be sending out a survey to all HMIS users in Montana. The survey is expected to be released in early May. The Coalition is seeking user feedback on HMIS performance and overall user experience.

The survey will assist the Coalition in understanding the challenges and successes you experience as HMIS stakeholders and set priorities for the upcoming year.



Why Measure System Performance?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act shifted the focus of measuring the effectiveness of homeless services from evaluating programs operating independently within in a community, to evaluating them as a broad, coordinated system of homeless response. This means that Continua of Care must regularly measure their progress in meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness throughout the continuum and report this progress annually to HUD.

YHDP Updates

Youth Action Board Receives Grant

The Montana Youth Action Board received a \$7500 grant from the Headwaters Foundation to support their work in 2024. This is the second year the Headwaters Foundation has supported the work of the YAB. The funds support YAB members by providing for opportunities in leadership development and providing stipends as compensation for their time.

YHDP Roundtables

YHDP Roundtables have resumed following a brief hiatus in late 2023. The roundtables serve as an opportunity for YHDP grantees to network and problem-solve, as well as receive regular updates from the Coalition. YHDP Roundtables take place via Zoom on the second Tuesday of each month at 11am. For more information or to receive a calendar invite with Zoom link, you can contact david@mtcoc.org or ashlie@mtcoc.org

YHDP Grants and the 2024 NOFO

As the release date of the FY2024 NOFO draws near it is important to know that YHDP grants will once again be non-competitive and will automatically renew for FY2024. YHDP grantees will still be required to complete an e-snaps Renewal Project application.

Change of HUD Contact for YHDP

As Montana's YHDP grants begin the transition to being included in the CoC's portfolio of grants, grantees will now need to contact Chris Davis, the CoC's HUD representative in Denver for questions relating to their grant agreements, APRs, and other compliance issues. Chris can be contacted at christopher.m.davis@hud.gov



Youth Action Board

The Montana Youth Action Board is seeking new members and is especially interested in recruiting members from rural, frontier and tribal communities. If you know of a youth or young adult who has experienced housing instability or homelessness and may be interested, they can reach out to ashlie@mtcoc.org for more information.

Board Profile

Carilla French, Executive Director HRDC 4

Being a part of the CoC has been very educational, being able to learn from the many other voices that make up the board. Homelessness has a huge impact on Montana, and it has been a gratifying and humbling experience to be a part of the CoC board. I became a grandmother on Christmas Day, and I love spending time with my grandson Gabriel, my two dogs Archie & Buddy, and my family spread across the Western US. I also have a “not so secret” addiction to reality TV and singing karaoke.

Carilla has been a member of the Montana Continuum of Care Coalition Board of Directors since June of 2016 and will be stepping down in June of 2024. The CoC would like to thank her for her many years of dedication and service and wishes her all the best in the years ahead.

HRDC4 located in Havre, Montana representing Hill, Blaine and Liberty Counties including Rocky Boys and Fort Belknap.



Across Montana

Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness Announces Statewide Conference on Homelessness in Montana

The Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness announced the first-ever **Montana Shelter Summit**. The event will follow the ESG Roundtable on May 23rd from 12:00 - 5:30pm at the Missoula Public Library.

The Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness is hosting this event with the help of the Montana Continuum of Care Coalition. This will be an opportunity to share best practices, discuss challenges, identify service gaps, and build community. This will also be a chance for MCSH partners to inform what policies should be prioritized for the 2025 Legislative Session.

MCSH is still seeking event sponsors to help cover conference costs, including for grants to help cover travel/hotel costs for whom those costs are a barrier. If you or someone you know might be interested in becoming a summit sponsor you can contact Sam Forstag at sam@centralhousestrategies.com

If you would like to attend or would like more details on how to access a stipend, information is available by completing the Montana Shelter Summit Survey here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd00RDa_pFjQqvxBRacTV4DnjBNclFFli4NmiDgvtlzeYFVsQ/viewform

HUD Happenings

On Saturday, March 9 President Biden signed into law a bill providing funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2024. Included was an increase of \$418 million for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (including Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants, and other miscellaneous programs). This marks the second year in a row with increases of over \$400 million.