

HOME MONTANA

NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTANA CONTINUUM OF CARE COALITION

Fall 2024



HUD Releases FY2024 NOFO

Over \$3.5 Billion to Help People Experiencing Homelessness

On Wednesday, July 31 HUD announced the largest-ever single-year investment in communities' homelessness response systems; providing more than \$3.5 billion in competitive funding to homeless services organizations across the country for supportive services and housing programs for people experiencing homelessness.

And for the first time, HUD is issuing a 2-year *Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*. Communities will now only be required to submit one application for both FY2024 and FY2025 funding. This change will dramatically simplify the application process for the Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, and project applicants.

This year, Montana will be eligible for up to \$5.5 million in funding with \$600,000 available for new projects. The coalition is hoping to repeat last year's success. In 2023, Montana secured \$338,147 for three new projects: Baatz Block Apartments in Great Falls, Housing First Village in Bozeman, and the YWCA in Helena.

The submission deadline is 8:00 PM EDT on October 30, 2024. For more information, go to www.mtcoc.org

HUD Releases First Ever CoC Builds NOFO

On Monday, July 22 HUD released the first-ever *CoC Builds NOFO* to add new units of permanent supportive housing (PSH) for individuals and families experiencing homelessness through new construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation. A total of \$175,000,000 is available to CoCs nationally, with \$65,000,000 available for CoCs that are located in states with populations of fewer than 2.5 million people. Montana is well situated to secure this much needed funding to address the unmet need for permanent supportive housing in our communities. For more information, go to www.mtcoc.org



President's Message

Jim McGrath

Hope all of you are well and not suffering too much from smoke and fire.

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition is heading into our busiest season. We are hoping to build upon last year's great success in the annual HUD CoC funding competition (called the NOFO). We have received a number of excellent new project applications and hope to put forward a highly competitive application again. Thanks in advance for all the help you all will provide to this huge collective effort to address homelessness in Montana.

Also, a one-time special NOFO is currently open for capital funds to develop new permanent supportive housing. Montana would be in a good position to be awarded some of these funds, so we are hoping to see an applicant for that NOFO. (continues on page 2)

Project Profile

Action Inc., Butte MT

Action Inc. is celebrating 59 years of service to Southwestern Montana and its continued commitment to developing pathways out of poverty. As one of ten Community Action Agencies in Montana, Action Inc. serves six counties including Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Granite, Madison, Powell, and Silver Bow. The agency provides an array of services to promote equity and ensure Montanans have access to basic necessities including safe, affordable housing, food, education, training, home heating, and support services.

Action Inc. began working on solutions to homelessness in the early 1990's when one of the largest open pit copper mines in the country located in Butte ceased operations and left behind a devastated economy and environment. A Supportive Housing Demonstration grant through HUD in 1992 helped create a transitional housing program called Homeward Bound that, for over 20 years, helped hundreds of unhoused citizens rebuild and move onto permanent housing.

The agency transitioned to a Housing First Rapid Rehousing Model in 2014 and with a strong local Continuum of Care, has worked to build a system of care in Butte that includes coordinated outreach, low-barrier emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. Action Inc. serves as the lead for Coordinated Entry and manages HMIS for the local system.

In partnership with the Housing Authority of Butte, Butte Silver Bow County, and the Montana Department of Commerce, the agency is helping to bring online a four-unit Permanent Supportive Housing project to serve as a pilot for housing frequent system utilizers. With a team of eight case managers, the agency will provide tenancy supports to dwellers to demonstrate how permanent supports can help people with high vulnerability be successfully, permanently housed.



President's Message

(continued from page 1)

The board is happy to welcome our new board members, Esther Wilson (District 6), Kari Bolter (District 7), and April Seat (District 11), and look forward to their new perspectives and fresh energy!

This newsletter details the other exciting activities of the MT CoC.

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

Continuum of Care Updates

2024 Annual Meeting a Success

On Wednesday, May 22 the general membership met in person for the first time since 2019 on the last day of the Montana Housing Partnership Conference in Missoula.

Tanisha Travis with TJTS Consulting LLC kicked-off the meeting with presentation on the importance and value of partnering with lived experts in cultivating meaningful and genuine collaboration in working to address the systemic barriers experienced by our unhoused neighbors. Pathways MISI, the CoC's HMIS Lead followed with a brief presentation on Montana's Systems Performance Measures. Systems Performance Measures are the means that the CoC uses to assess our efforts to prevent and end homelessness. David O'Leary, executive director of the coalition wrapped-up the meeting with a presentation on the accomplishments of the past year and plans for the year ahead.

Members also approved some updates to the CoC's bylaws. See *Page 6* for more information.

HMIS User Survey

In April, as part of the evaluation of Montana's Coordinated Entry System, the CoC conducted an HMIS User Survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect information on general HMIS user experience, type of use, availability and scope of HMIS training, availability and ease of evaluation and reporting functionality, and to collect feedback on the CoC's HMIS Lead, Pathways MISI.

A total of 114 responses were received. While user sentiment was mixed, there was a positive trend with 41 percent responding that they were satisfied with the current system, and 7 percent responding that they were very satisfied. Primary pain points identified by respondents were the clunkiness of the user interface, issues with data entry, management, access and integration with other systems, and the lack of sufficient training and support. Pathways MISI received high marks on the timeliness of user support, and the accessibility and helpfulness of staff.

A full report with recommended systems improvements will be included in the final Coordinated Entry System Evaluation expected later this year.

Update on Partnership with the Training Institute

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition's partnership with the Training Institute at People Incorporated to bring a web-based curriculum in best practices to Montana is in full swing. Response to the first two sessions was overwhelming, with registration for both reaching capacity. Sessions are open to all housing and service providers in the State of Montana and attendees will receive certificates upon successful completion of each session. Upcoming session topics and dates are:

October 2: Principles of Housing First/Harm Reduction, 1-3pm

Registration details will be sent via e-mail to all CoC members and stakeholders. Course information can be found at www.traininginstitute.org



This spring, over 80 shelter leaders, staff, and guests came together in Missoula for the state's first Shelter Summit. Attendees learned about the coalition, shared data and common experiences, and discussed new policy priorities for the 2025 legislative session. Now the work begins to raise awareness, build support, and work with lawmakers across Montana to draft bills ahead of the session. Learn more and get involved at www.solvehomelessnessmt.org

Working with Adult Survivors of Trauma

Lori Beyer, LICSW

Helena, MT – April 17, 2024

Lori Beyer, Director of Trauma Training and Education at Community Connections in Washington, D.C. was in Helena on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, for the All-Day workshop “Working with Adult Survivors of Trauma: Key Concepts in Understanding Trauma Dynamics.” 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.

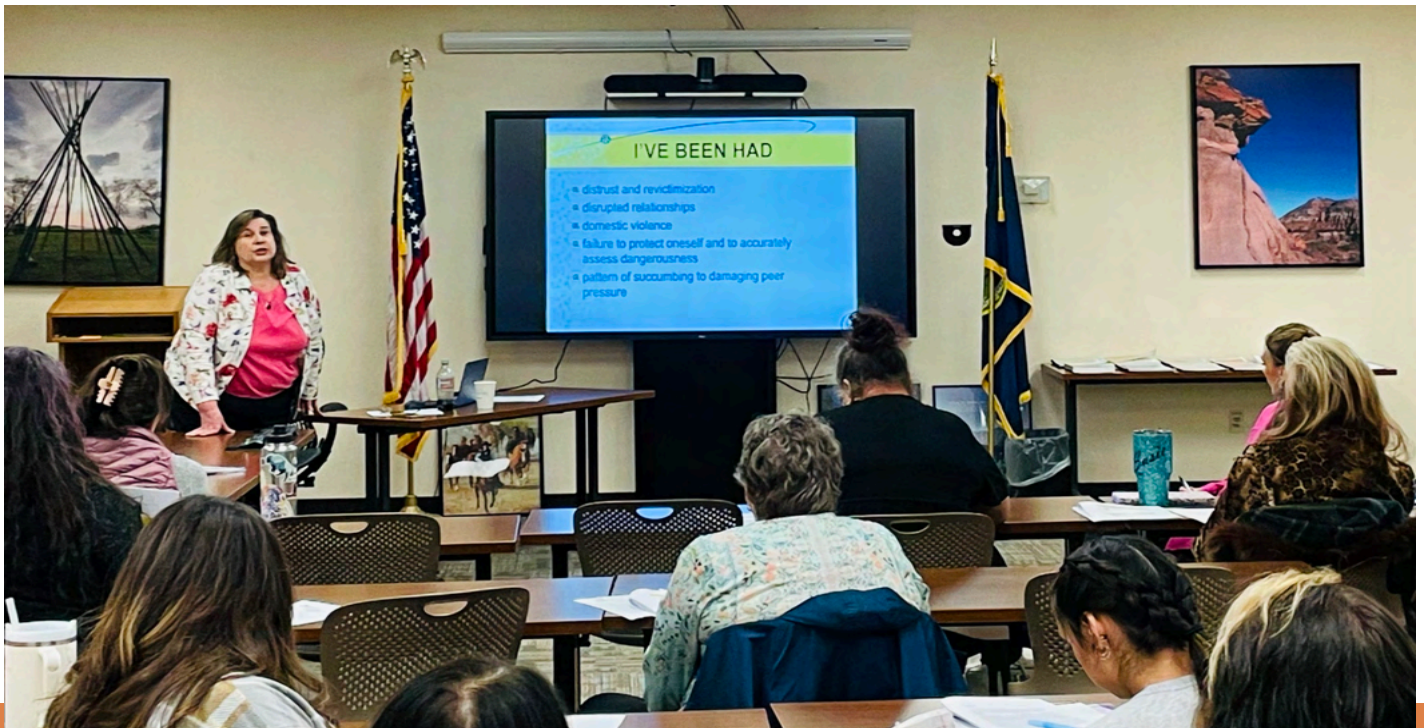
The day began with attendees viewing selections from the film *Antwone Fisher*. Using elements from the film, Lori led attendees in exploring the various types of traumatic events, understanding the core elements of trauma, recognizing trauma survivors, and methods to better manage difficult behaviors brought on by trauma.

Attendees broke into small groups in the afternoon. Using various vignettes, the groups used the concepts learned in the morning to identify traumatic events, trauma responses, and explore ways to effectively work to help those with similar traumatic experiences.

Lori then led the group in identifying ways to identify the symptoms and effects of traumatic abuse, and how to adapt ways in which to work with survivors of trauma. The day wrapped up with an overview of the “Dos and Don’ts” of working with trauma survivors.

Attendees traveled from communities across Montana for this event, including Butte, Great Falls, Havre, Helena and Missoula. The coalition is working with Lori to provide this training in a virtual format for Spring of 2025.

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition would like to thank the Montana Department of Commerce, and Montana Housing for generously providing the space for this event.



Sad, Mad, Bad, I've Been Had

Lori Beyer, LICSW of Community Connections in Washington, D.C. leads attendees in a discussion on recognizing trauma survivors.

YHDP Updates

Youth Action Board Fellowship

In 2023, Youth Action Board (YAB) members Chloe and Brandon suggested restructuring the YAB to a 2-year fellowship model. Chloe and Brandon led the coalition's development of this program focused on providing a unique professional development opportunity for young people who are passionate about making Montana safer for at-risk youth and young adults.

Through the fellowship, members will gain valuable and practical knowledge, skills, and professional connections while actively improving how Montana addresses the needs of at-risk youth and young adults. After an intensive onboarding process, each cohort will partake in activities related to Legislative Advocacy, Grantee relationship-building, and independent and group projects. The YAB will kick off the first cohort in August!

For more information, email keegan@flahertyconsult.com

YHDP Flex Fund Established

The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) is an essential resource in assisting our vulnerable youth across Montana. Still, funding can be restrictive in helping youth access housing and remain housed. As a result, the continuum secured funding from the Otto Bremer Trust Community Response Fund at the Montana Community Foundation to establish a Flex Fund for program participants that will assist in meeting basic needs not allowable under federal and state funding resources.

Flex Funds will be distributed through YHDP Programs statewide. To be eligible, clients must be youth and young adults (16-24) enrolled in HMIS, and actively receiving case management. For more information, email david@mtcoc.org



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 keegan@flahertyconsult.com for more information.

Board Profile

Gary Owen, District 5

Gary Owen has worked in the nonprofit field for over 30 years and has served as President of United Way of Cascade County since December 2000.

He became involved with the local Great Falls Continuum of Care in 2016 and joined the Montana Continuum of Care Board of Directors in 2019. In addition to his work on homelessness, Gary and the United Way work on community-level initiatives focused on youth success, health, and financial stability.

Gary was a founding board member and past board chair for the Montana Nonprofit Association and has served on numerous local and state boards and committees over the years. In his free time, Gary is an avid fly fisherman, hunter, downhill skier, and more recently pickleball player.

District 5 includes Cascade, Choteau, Glacier, Pondera, Teton, and Toole counties, and the communities of Great Falls, Conrad, Cut Bank, Shelby and Vaughn..



Across Montana

Missoula Celebrates Trinity!

Opened in 2023, Trinity provides 202 income restricted rental homes and permanent supportive housing at Blue heron Place, Maple Street Flats, and Westside Place. These homes are accessible for a wide range of people with varying income levels and offer 1, 2, 3, and even some 4-bedroom units (did we mention they are pet friendly!). For more information, visit <https://www.missoulahousing.org/affordable-housing/trinity>

Odds and Ends

Membership Approves Interim Updates to the Bylaws

On Wednesday, May 22 the voting members of the CoC approved several interim updates to the bylaws. While updating the bylaws is part of the governance work currently underway, there were some updates that took precedent and as such, were put to the members for approval at the Annual Meeting. These updates were focused on providing the board with flexibility to improve board operations, such as allowing the board to vote via email and allowing each member to have a designated alternate with voting privileges to serve in their absence. For more information or for a copy of the bylaws, contact david@mtcoc.org

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council, a collaborative initiative of individuals with lived experience of homelessness, partners with the Montana Continuum of Care to enhance the homeless response system. Seeking 6-8 members, the Council will focus on CoC Board representation, system performance evaluation, NOFO planning and review, Coordinated Entry planning, Point in Time Count planning, and equity and inclusion efforts. Together, they'll create innovative solutions to improve housing and service connections in Montana. For more information or if you are interested in getting involved contact Tanesha Travis at tstjconsulting@outlook.com