

River Valleys & Southwest Minnesota  
Continuum of Care & Continuum of Care

# Better Together Conference

November 8, 2018 | Mankato, MN

## Welcome!

The Better Together Conference is a new place for you to network and learn about best practices to improve services and partnerships that make a real impact on homelessness in southern Minnesota. You are here with over 150 regional partners to inspire and support each other to take on local needs, try innovative models, forge new collaborations, engage in systemic changes, and share successes. We have big goals, and we're better together!

## Thank you!

This conference lives up to its name because of all the people and agencies who worked together to make it happen. The River Valleys CoC and the Southwest Minnesota CoC would like to thank:

**Financial Supporters:** HUD Continuum of Care and Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for supporting staff planning and coordination time; Southwest Initiative Foundation for scholarships and other event costs; and Wow! Zone owners and staff for sharing their space and time with us for the event.

**CoC Collaborative Applicants:** Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership and Three Rivers Community Action for managing the event's finances, insurance, reporting and other requirements.

**Conference Planning Committee:** Irasema Hernandez, Kelsey Wichman, Liz Young, Sheila Alba, and Tammy Moses for contributing their best ideas and best efforts to plan, organize, and manage the event. CoC staff on the planning committee -- Justin Vorbach, Katherine Cross, and Jennifer Prins – appreciate you!

**Presenters:** Over 30 knowledgeable and committed people – including many from right here in southern Minnesota! – for sharing your experience, knowledge, and enthusiasm with participants.

**Participants:** You (yes, YOU!) for investing yourself in today's event, and for your ongoing work to prevent and end homelessness in southern Minnesota. We hope that the Better Together Conference is an opportunity for you to work more closely with others to amplify your work for the community changes we all want.





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## Conference Guidelines

### Respect:

The Better Together Conference is a place for learning and collaboration. Please arrive on time to your sessions and contribute to the session outcomes. Please silence cell phones and mute laptop/tablet keyboards. Avoid private conversations during the sessions. Make space for everyone by listening with an open mind, letting everyone participate, and attacking problems (not people). After the sessions, please be sure to also pick up your materials and other belongings and put trash in the proper receptacles. Please abide by any signage and instructions of event staff and Wow!Zone staff.

### Recordings:

To promote open discussion and to protect privacy of all participant questions and comments, we do not allow conference training sessions to be recorded.

### Materials:

Materials for conference breakout sessions will be available on the conference webpage at <https://www.threeriverscap.org/continuum-of-care/training>. Please note that these materials are incomplete without the accompanying oral comments by the presenters. These are informational and educational in nature and represent the speakers' own views.

### Continuing Education:

Three Rivers Community Action/ River Valleys Continuum of Care has been approved as Continuing Education Provider by the Minnesota Board of Social Work (CEP #1087). Total hours offered: 5.00 hours

Continuing education credit is awarded and verified on a session-by-session basis with full attendance required for each session attended. Conference attendees who wish to receive continuing education credit MUST check in at the continuing education desk to receive continuing education materials for completion. If you have questions regarding continuing education, the program, speaker bios, or learning objectives, please contact Jennifer Prins at [jprins@threeriverscap.org](mailto:jprins@threeriverscap.org).

# Schedule at a Glance

**8:30 – 8:55 Registration (main entry)**

**9:00 – 10:15 Morning Breakout Session #1**

Room A	Room B	Room C	Room D	Room E
Poverty in the Classroom	Planning for Safety in Coordinated Entry	Developing and Maximizing Relationships with Landlords	Introduction to Continuum of Care (CoC)	Ethics and Boundaries

**10:15 – 10:30 Break**

**10:30 – 11:45 Morning Breakout Session #2**

Room A	Room B	Room C	Room D	Room E
Introduction to Coordinated Entry	Housing Authority Preferences	Am I doing what's mine? Guidance for self-care	Legal Protections and Options to Secure Safe and Stable Housing	A Housing Providers Approach to Tenant Selection and Housing Stability Services

**12:00 – 1:15 Lunch and Keynote Address (main dining area)**

**1:30 – 2:45 Afternoon Breakout Session #1**

Room A	Room B	Room C	Room D	Room E
Considerations for Effective Emergency Shelter and Voucher Services	Coordinated Entry Through the Lens of HMIS Data	Harm Reduction: Meeting People Where They Are, and Sticking With Them	Best Practices for HUD CoC Grantees	Just Ask: A Survivor and Provider's Perspective on Effectively Offering Services to Victims of Exploitation and Trafficking

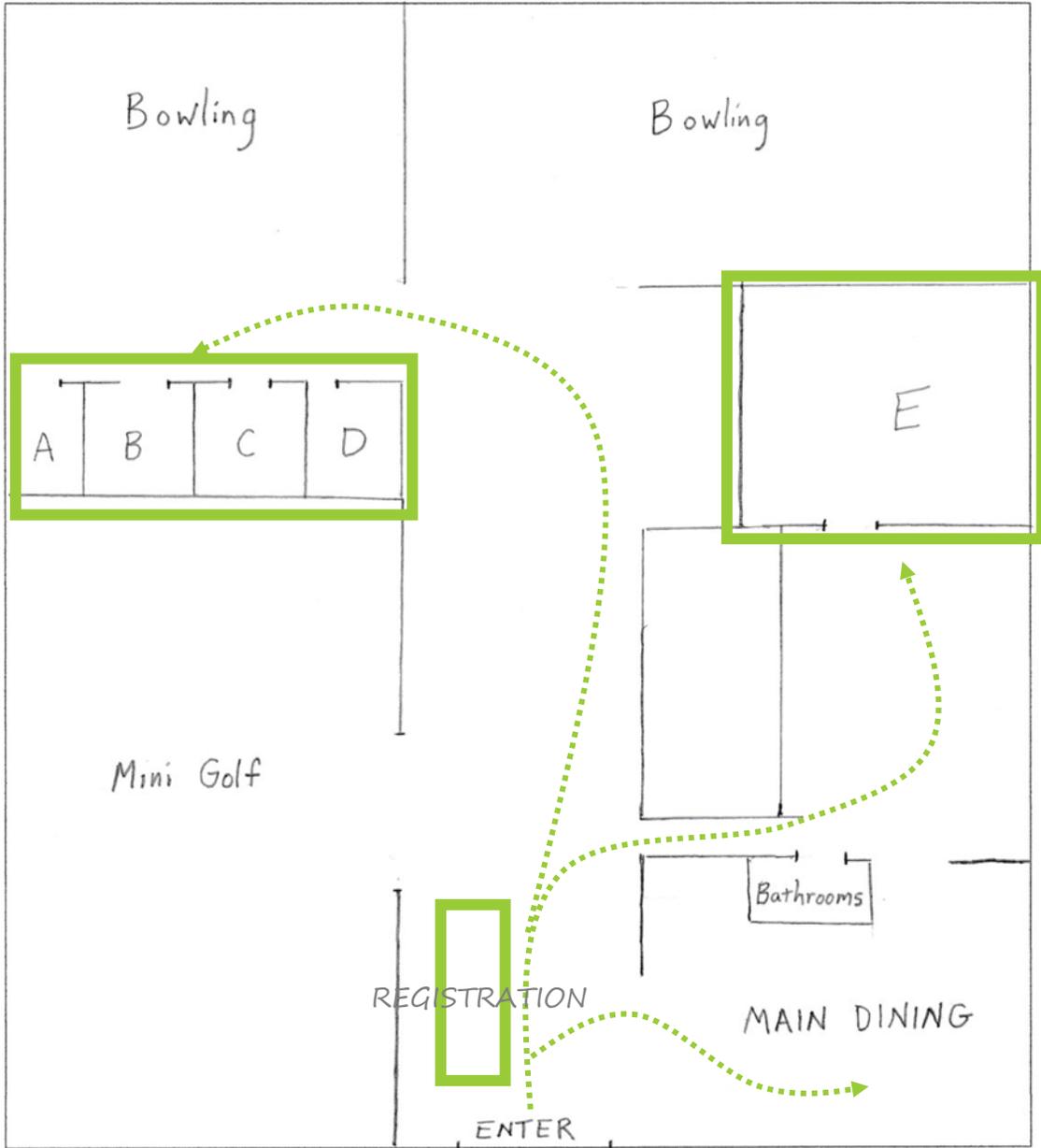
**2:45 – 3:00 Break**

**3:00 – 4:15 Afternoon Breakout Session #2**

Room A	Room B	Room C	Room D	Room E
Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Folks	Utilizing SOAR to Advance Minnesota's Mission to Prevent and End Homelessness	Advocating to End Homelessness	Workforce Development: Increasing Access to Income and Jobs	Felony Unfriendly: Overcome Criminal, Credit & Rental History Barriers in a Housing Search

**4:15 - ? Post conference fun: Stay for conversation, food, and games at Wow! Zone**

# Wow!Zone Map



## Keynote Address

12:30pm- 1:15pm

### “Are We Really Ending Homelessness?” with Jennifer Lemaile Ho

#### *About the Presenter*

Jennifer served in the Administration of President Barack Obama from February 2010 through January 2017, first as Deputy Director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), then as senior advisor on housing and health to two Secretaries of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At USICH, she helped shepherd the creation of Opening Doors, the first comprehensive federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. At HUD, she managed a partnership with HHS that encompassed homelessness, disability, aging and children, improving alignment between HUD and HHS programs, including extensive work with the Center for Medicaid.



Now back home in Minnesota, Jennifer began consulting in July 2017. Her clients include the Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, A Way Home America, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority.

## Breakout Session Descriptions

### 9:00 – 10:15am Morning Breakout Session #1

#### Poverty in the Classroom

##### *Room A*

This session covers the basics of McKinney-Vento rights for families within the school setting and how poverty has impacted students in the classroom setting. Participants will gain a better understanding of the school district's role in working with families experiencing homelessness, and to provide information on the impacts of homelessness in the classroom. (Level: Introductory)

- Melissa Brandt, Transitions and Fostering Connections Coordinator, Rochester Public Schools

#### Planning for Safety in Coordinated Entry

##### *Room B*

This presentation will cover best practices in working with individuals and systems in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault populations. Objectives of the presentation will include increasing the safety of victims and resources when serving victimized populations. (Level: Intermediate)

- Kara Hoel, Director of Housing, Women's Shelter and Support Center
- Laura Ek, Shelter Advocate, Committee Against Domestic Abuse

## Developing and Maximizing Relationships with Landlords

### *Room C*

Solid relationships between housing programs and landlords are the key to linking participants to housing. These relationships encourage them to take a chance on a participant who has high barriers or prevent a landlord from terminating a participant's lease early. The workshop will help attendees to better understand the motivation of landlords and adapt person centered skills to working in the private rental assistance market. The presenters will facilitate a discussion about ideal relationships with landlords and strategies to improve these relationships to maximize opportunities to work together. The conversation will center on cultivating a network of landlords and improving relationships to have a strong partnership. The session will also involve role plays to practice responding to push back from landlords when renting to participants. (Level: Introductory)

- Warren Duncan, Programs Director, Hearth Connection
- Keith Nance, Housing Programs Team Lead, Mental Health Resources

## Introduction to Continuum of Care (CoC)

### *Room D*

For nearly 25 years, HUD has deployed the Continuum of Care model to encourage communities to address the problems of housing for people experiencing homelessness in a more coordinated, comprehensive, and strategic fashion. Today in Minnesota, CoC committees play many roles in assessing needs, educating community partners, planning and funding projects, and supporting region- and community-wide efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Attend this session to understand more about what CoCs do (and why) so you and your community can get the most out of your CoC involvement. (Level: Introductory)

- Jennifer Prins, CoC Coordinator, River Valleys Continuum of Care
- Justin Vorbach, CoC Coordinator, Southwest Minnesota Continuum of Care

## Ethics and Boundaries

### *Room E*

This presentation will cover ethical and boundary issues in practice. It will provide practical information that can be applied to resolve ethical and boundary issues. (Level: Intermediate)

- Laura Strunk, Associate Professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Kimberly Zammitt, Associate Professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato

## **10:30 – 11:45am Morning Breakout Session #2**

## Introduction to Coordinated Entry

### *Room A*

This presentation will cover the history of coordinated entry and process in southwest and southeast Minnesota. Information about coordinated entry access, assessment, and referral will be shared. Participants will gain a deeper knowledge of the philosophy behind coordinated entry and how it is being implemented in southwest and southeast CoC's. (Level: Introductory)

- Justin Vorbach, CoC Coordinator, Southwest Minnesota Continuum of Care
- Katherine Cross, Coordinated Entry Specialist, River Valleys Continuum of Care

## Housing Authority Preferences

### Room B

HUD allows Housing Authorities to establish preferences based on their own community needs. This presentation will look at using preferences to address gaps in services, partner with other community services, and service the full spectrum of need in the community. (Level: Introductory)

- Nancy Bokelmann, Housing and Community Development Manager, Mankato/Blue Earth County EDA
- Michelle Merxbauer, Housing Manager, Olmsted County Housing & Redevelopment Authority

## Am I doing what's mine? Guidance for self-care

### Room C

This presentation invites participants to explore the ways in which they take care of themselves and the messages that they believe about this. Using the wisdom of mental wellness and yoga, we will discuss ways to protect what we have been given and care for it, so that we can share our gifts. Taking excellent care of others and with our work requires that we take excellent care of ourselves. This workshop will give us time and space to identify how we do this and where it can take us. (Level: Introductory)

- Anne Marie Vorbach, Clinical Psychologist, Avera Marshall

## Legal Protections and Options to Secure Safe and Stable Housing

### Room D

This session discusses two types of legal protections that affect renters: protections for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking, and protections for people with past eviction or criminal records. The session includes an overview of the Safe at Home Program, protections both under VAWA and Minnesota State law, and OFP/HRO options, as well as how that can result in a person being excluded from a home. It also focuses on the expungement processes for eviction and criminal records, what is needed to get an expungement, and how it can help someone secure housing. (Level: Intermediate)

- Nicole Mourgos, Staff Attorney, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services
- Meghan Maes, Staff Attorney, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

## A Housing Providers Approach to Tenant Selection and Housing Stability Services

### Room E

CommonBond Communities' mission is to build stable homes, strong futures, and vibrant communities. We aspire that once a resident moves into our communities, they will move out only when they're moving up. Our eviction prevention program is a critical resource for ensuring the resident stability and success we believe in. We created our eviction prevention program because maintaining decent and affordable housing has a demonstrable impact on family stability, the life outcomes of children, and community well-being. In this session, we dive into best practices in promoting housing stability and preventing housed residents from experiencing negative exits. Included in the session will be tips on partnering with property managers, and key data that can articulate impact of your eviction prevention program. In addition to our eviction prevention work, we will highlight our recent work to review of our tenant selection policies with the goal of reducing barriers to housing. (Level: Intermediate)

- Jessie Hendel, Vice President, Advantage Services, CommonBond Communities
- Annie McCabe, Supportive Housing Regional Manager, CommonBond Communities

## 1:30 – 2:45pm Afternoon Breakout Session #1

### Considerations for Effective Emergency Shelter and Voucher Services

#### Room A

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) recognizes agencies providing emergency shelter services are under constant pressure to meet the objectives of many stakeholders, while maintaining the safety of staff and participants. Accommodating these pressures often manifests in strict parameters for eligibility, behavioral expectations for participants, and rigid internal protocols. This presentation will look at specific examples and offer some specific tools and ideas on how to address these challenges, and also offer a space for providers to share their ideas and experiences. The session will also address the pressures from an aging demographic, in particular, older women who have experienced domestic violence (a targeted population identified in the state's Heading Home Together Plan. (Level: Intermediate)

- Katelyn Warburton, Homeless Program Administrator, Office of Economic Opportunity, DHS
- Isaac Wengerd, Homeless Program Administrator, Office of Economic Opportunity, DHS

### Coordinated Entry through the Lens of HMIS Data

#### Room B

How can you use HMIS data to understand Coordinated Entry in your region? This session will focus on showcasing Coordinated Entry HMIS data to begin telling the story of Coordinated Entry in southern Minnesota. We will detail how to use the HMIS Coordinated Entry Monitoring Report to inform resource planning and identify potential gaps in your community. We will also be taking a look at and breaking down the features of the newly re-designed Priority List reports for the SE and SW CoCs. We encourage individuals involved in Coordinated Entry, as well as all those interested in learning about the state of Coordinated Entry through a HMIS data lens to participate in this session. (Level: Introductory)

- Carrie Erickson, Regional System Administrator, Institute for Community Alliances
- Swathi Mummini, HMIS Data Analyst, Institute for Community Alliances

### Harm Reduction: Meeting People Where They Are, and Sticking With Them

#### Room C

Introduction to the basic elements of Harm Reduction service delivery; including the elements of harm reduction service delivery and stages of change. Participants will walk away with an increased understanding between their work in serving clients and their personal experiences/beliefs regarding substance use. (Level: Introductory)

- Kelby Grovender, Executive Director, Hearth Connection

### Best Practices for HUD CoC Grantees

#### Room D

Join Minneapolis HUD staff as they provide technical assistance on topics such as homeless and disability eligibility and documentation, rent calculation, rent reasonableness, Annual Progress Reports, rent reasonableness and much more. There will also be time allotted for additional questions and answers. (Level: Intermediate)

- Dawn Horgan, CPD Representative, HUD
- Rachel Ganz, CPD Representative, HUD

## Just Ask: A Survivor and Provider's Perspective on Effectively Offering Services to Victims of Exploitation and Trafficking

### Room E

Participants will have a unique opportunity to hear a joint presentation by a survivor of sex trafficking and a service provider on how to most effectively offer services to victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Participants will learn about the prevalence of sexual exploitation and trafficking in Southeastern, MN based on the latest data from the Minnesota Department of Health. Participants will learn about the resources available to both service providers and victims through Minnesota's Safe Harbor Program and through the Southeastern and Southwestern Regional Offices. Participants will be provided with guidance on how to screen their clients for trafficking and exploitation through actual tools. (Level: Intermediate)

- Laura Sutherland, J.D., Olmsted County Victim Services: Safe Harbor
- Lindsay Arf, Speaker and Consultant: Survivor of Sex Trafficking

## 3:00 – 4:15pm Afternoon Breakout Session #2

### Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Folks

#### Room A

This workshop will distinguish sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as the foundation of understanding gender and sexuality. Homelessness data will be shared and best practices for serving this population respectfully will be discussed. Resources will be provided for further advocacy. (Level: Introductory)

- Alex Nelson, Training Unit Supervisor, Minnesota Department of Human Services - Child Safety and Permanency Division

### Utilizing SOAR to Advance Minnesota's Mission to Prevent and End Homelessness

#### Room B

3:00pm- 4:15pm

Organizations serving people experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to play a key role linking eligible adults to Social Security disability benefits. We will introduce critical components of SOAR and discuss the benefits of the SOAR program. Next we will have an agency describe how they implement the SOAR program and how state, federal, and community partnerships play a role in the effectiveness of this program. This session will highlight the important role SOAR plays in supporting Minnesota's mission to prevent and end homelessness. (Level: Intermediate)

- Melissa Cummins, Independent Living Program Manager, Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL)
- Erin Menne, Minnesota SOAR State Co-Lead and Social Security Advocacy Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Human Services

### Advocating to End Homelessness

#### Room C

3:00pm- 4:15pm

This presentation will go over how to effectively advocate for affordable housing and ending homelessness. We will focus on statewide solutions while incorporating what you can do on a local level. Participants will leave with a sense of confidence on how to advocate to end homelessness. (Level: Introductory)

- Fatima Moore, Director of Public Policy, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
- Matt Traynor, Director of Organizing, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless



## Workforce Development: Increasing Access to Income and Jobs

### *Room D*

3:00pm- 4:15pm

Increasing access to jobs and income can greatly impact both immediate and long-term housing stability. This session will discuss Workforce Development programs to secure employment or community resources.

Presenters will also share knowledge of Workforce Development needs for the region. (Level: Introductory)

- Jody Schaber, Career Planner, Workforce Development, Inc.

## Felony Unfriendly: Overcome Criminal, Credit & Rental History Barriers in a Housing Search

### *Room E*

Criminal, credit, and rental history barriers make it hard for renters to find housing. It is common for people with these barriers to lose \$100 or more, just on application fees! They are also often homeless, or in substandard housing. In the absence of “felony friendly” landlords, renters must take a new approach. This training maps out a process to follow that saves renters (and their case managers) time and money. It also helps them find a place to live faster! (Level: Intermediate)

- Josh Dye, Marketing & Outreach Manager, HousingLink

## Better Together Conference Presenters

### *Alex Nelson, Minnesota Department of Human Services*

Alex Jackson Nelson, MSW, LGSW, (he/him) identifies as transgender and has over twenty years of experience working in and for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ (LGBTQ+) community. He provided direct services to youth experiencing homelessness and later was the Executive Director of a non-profit LGBT youth center. He has co-founded organizations focused on providing services to transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, he worked as a therapist with LGBTQ+ youth, and has provided consulting and training to thousands of service providers around the country. He currently works at the MN Department of Human Services in the Child Safety and Permanency Division as the Training Unit Supervisor.

### *Anne Marie Vorbach, Avera Marshall*

Dr. Vorbach is a clinical psychologist working in the outpatient clinic at Avera Marshall. She works with a broad variety of patients of all ages. Her experience includes working in a variety of settings - community mental health, school based counseling, emergency response team, eating disorder specialty clinic, geriatric psychology in nursing homes, and a managed care company. She also teaches yoga and has over 500 hours of training in that specialty area. She is passionate about helping people to find powerful ways to take care of themselves and live in line with their values.

### *Annie McCabe, CommonBond Communities*

Annie is Supportive Housing Regional Manager with CommonBond Communities. This position is responsible for overseeing the operation of fiscally sound, well-maintained, and socially healthy supportive housing communities and providing leadership and guidance to property manager and services staff. Prior to this position, Annie was Supportive Housing Coordinator (Scattered Sites) providing direct support services to residents who met the definition of long-term homelessness and were housed in five different properties. The goal was to support residents in maintaining housing and achieving independence. Annie holds a B.S. in Family Social Science from the University of Minnesota and a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy from Argosy University. During her spare time, she spends time with her two Bassett Hounds, her husband, and Netflix.

### *Carrie Erickson, Institute for Community Alliances*

Carrie Erickson is a System Administrator for the Minnesota HMIS project at the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA), and is the regional liaison to both the Southeast and Southwest CoCs. She brings a decade of experience working in direct service with young adults in both the educational and housing assistance settings, and is excited to utilize her background and knowledge in the field of education in her position as System Administrator. Before joining ICA, Carrie worked at Lutheran Social Service of MN and its StreetWorks Collaborative, supporting the work of street outreach workers around the Metro area. She also helped to develop the Coordinated Entry systems in both the Ramsey and SMAC CoCs, and served as Priority List Manager for Youth in those regions as well. Carrie enjoys working at ICA because it allows her to continue making a career out of helping people achieve their goals, and supporting social justice agencies in their efforts to make the world a better place. Carrie holds a BA in History from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and an MA in Education from Hamline University.

### *Dawn Horgan, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Dawn Horgan brings over 25 years' experience as a manager and service provider working with singles and families experiencing homelessness. Until joining the CPD team in January 2017, Dawn was a very active member on housing organizations and served as a resource on housing and homeless issues.

*Erin Menne, Minnesota Department of Human Services*

Erin Menne is the Minnesota SOAR State Co-Lead and Social Security Advocacy Coordinator at the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Erin supports providers through training and technical assistance. She is passionate about collaboration between State agencies and among service providers to create efficiencies that enhance the well-being of those we serve.

*Fatima Moore, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless*

Fatima Moore is the Director of Public Policy at MCH. Prior to coming to MCH, Fatima served as Local and Regional Policy Coordinator at Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD). While at MCCD, she helped inform and craft policies with local, state and federal policymakers on affordable housing and economic development issues. Social justice is her personal and professional passion, and she sees community building as one of the ways she contributes to society. Fatima found her passion for connecting communities with policies that positively impacts them while participating in the Capitol Pathways Internship program, a program that connects students of color with professionals and lawmakers at the Minnesota Legislature. As a first-generation immigrant, she has learned to navigate many systems and believes deeply in a community. Fatima is well in tuned to the collaboration, support, empowerment, and advocacy that needs to happen in order to achieve good policy. She brings a social work and policy background to MCH and has a clear grasp of the systems perspective. Fatima lives with her partner, two daughters and a dog on the East Side of Saint Paul. During her down time, Fatima teaches fitness classes, enjoys spending time with her family, neighbors, and friends and sneaking away for a good read.

*Isaac Wengerd, Office of Economic Opportunity, DHS*

Isaac Wengerd, has worked for 16 years with Homeless Programs, Community Action Agencies and Food Shelves through the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). In addition to his time at OEO, he has worked as a research assistant for Professor Jodi Sandfort at the Humphrey School's Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center, a Head Start operations coordinator, and a Research Associate for NASCSP, the national organization for state Community Services Block Grant and Weatherization directors. Mr. Wengerd has presented on a variety of topics at state and national conferences, including grants management and monitoring, board governance, data privacy, results-oriented management, technology in human services and strategies for lowering barriers to emergency shelter. Wengerd received his Master's in Public Affairs degree from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in May 2011.

*Jennifer Prins, River Valleys Continuum of Care*

Jennifer Prins is the Coordinator of the River Valleys Continuum of Care and the Planning Director at Three Rivers Community Action. As Continuum of Care Coordinator, Jennifer works with organizations and communities across 20 counties of southeastern and south central Minnesota to end homelessness through coordinated and responsive housing and services programs. Jennifer has 17 years of experience in community development, planning, and organizing to create safe, healthy, and affordable places to live for all people. She is an AmeriCorps\*VISTA alumna, with a BA in Community Development and Spanish from Calvin College and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Jennifer is also a board member of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

*Jessie Hendel, CommonBond Communities*

Jessie Hendel, is the Vice President of Advantage Services for CommonBond Communities. Jessie provides leadership for service delivery across CommonBond's portfolio of affordable housing, which includes programs supporting resident stability and independence, education and advancement, health and wellness, and community building and engagement. Jessie functions within internal and external teams to ensure delivery of seamless services for residents and to ensure that positive relationships are maintained resulting in the



optimum outcomes for residents, CommonBond, and the community. Jessie is also a board member of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

*Jody Schaber, Workforce Development, Inc.*

Jody Schaber is a career planner for Workforce Development Inc. for the past 25 years in which he has administered numerous job training programs for Southeast Minnesota. Jody is an active participant with the local Workforce Development Board and the Rochester Chamber of Commerce in serving the needs of Southeast Minnesota. He also works with his WDI team on numerous community focused directions. Examples would be Youth and Homeless Advocate. He is a graduate from Winona State University with a Bachelor of Social Science and is pursuing his Master's in Organizational Leadership.

*Josh Dye, HousingLink*

Josh Dye has a Bachelor's Degree in Housing and a Master's Degree in Public & Nonprofit Administration. He is the Marketing & Outreach Manager at HousingLink and is the President and Founder of the Convene Training + Resilience Community.

*Justin Vorbach, SW MN Continuum of Care Coordinator*

Justin Vorbach has a BA in History from the University of Washington. He has worked in a shelter, done street outreach, and supervised a permanent supportive housing program. He is currently the SW MN Continuum of Care Coordinator.

*Kara Hoel, Women's Shelter and Support Center*

Kara is the Director of Housing at Women's Shelter and Support Center in Rochester MN. Following receiving a Bachelor's in social work, Kara began working at the shelter as a Transitional Housing Advocate in 2014. In her current role, Kara provides direct service to those enrolled in transitional housing, works with clients in emergency shelter to access stable housing, and manages housing, and Intern programs.

*Katelyn Warburton, Office of Economic Opportunity, DHS*

Katelyn Warburton is the newest member of the housing team in the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Previously, Katelyn worked with non-profit agencies in various rolls—direct service, program coordinator, and research/evaluation specialist. She has worked with a variety of populations including adolescent sexual offenders, adults with developmental disabilities, and most recently with young people experiencing homelessness. Katelyn received her Master's in Organizational Leadership and Policy Development from the University of Minnesota.

*Katherine Cross, River Valleys Continuum of Care*

Katherine is the Coordinated Entry Specialist with the River Valleys Continuum of Care in southeast Minnesota. In her role as the Coordinated Entry Specialist, Katherine works with providers within a 20 county area to strengthen the system response to homelessness and coordinated entry implementation. Prior to her work in coordinated entry, she worked in Family Advocacy at Three Rivers Community Action, providing financial assistance and support to those experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness.

*Keith Nance, Mental Health Resources*

Keith Nance is the Housing Programs Team Lead for Mental Health Resources (MHR) and supervises 11 different programs working with families and individuals experiencing chronic and long-term homelessness. Mental Health Resources Supportive Housing combines affordable housing with services to help people with low incomes to live stable, independent lives in the community. Before MHR, Keith worked at Avivo (formerly Resource Inc.) for 16 years serving as a Senior Housing Specialist effectively housing over 1000 homeless individuals with a 97% retention rate. Keith has over 20 years of experience serving people with multiple



barriers secure permanent housing. He has established effective partnerships and collaborations with property management companies and social service agencies throughout the 7-county Metro. He continues to serve on various committees with County constituents and the Department of Human Services to find ways to effectively serve individuals with multiple barriers to permanent housing. Keith is now instrumental in helping to establish new programs that address tenancy support and households experiencing stability issues or difficulties in obtaining a desired choice in their housing.

*Kelby Grovender, Executive Director, Hearth Connection*

Kelby Grovender joined Hearth Connection in August 2010. He has worked with people experiencing homelessness for 28 years both in the Twin Cities and Los Angeles, and has served on the boards of several homeless advocacy groups. Previously he spent 12 years with the American Indian Community Development Corporation where he developed Anishinabe Wakiagun, a culturally unique supportive housing program targeting chronically intoxicated, long term homeless American Indians. He has made numerous presentations about harm reduction strategies in the United States and Canada and has done consulting and training in the areas of harm reduction, supportive housing and housing first.

*Kimberly Zammitt, PhD, LICSW, Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Kimberly has 17 years of clinical social work practice experience in the fields of community behavioral health, child and adolescent behavioral health, and geriatric behavioral health. She maintains a local practice and teaches in the MSW program at MSU, M.

*Laura Ek, Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA Inc.)*

Laura is the housing advocate at the Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA Inc.). She started at CADA in 2013 as a shelter advocate where she answered crisis calls and provided direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence. In February, 2018, Laura started her role as the housing advocate. In this capacity, Laura helps women in shelter find long-term, stable housing. She also teaches a group for shelter residents about financial empowerment. When Laura is not advocating for victims/survivors, she enjoys nature walks, exploring and believes self-care is important for the mind and body.

*Laura Strunk, PsyD, LICSW, NCSP, Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Laura has 23 years of clinical social work practice experience in the fields of child welfare, children's mental health, child protection, and school social work. She currently works in two different school districts and teaches in the BSSW program at MSU, M.

*Laura Sutherland, Olmsted County Victim Services: Safe Harbor*

Laura Sutherland, J.D. is the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator for Southeastern Minnesota. She received her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School. Laura has trained over 10,000 service providers in Southeastern, MN and has provided prevention education on exploitation to thousands of students across Southeastern MN. Her Safe Harbor office is located in Olmsted County Victim Services and they have provided direct services to over 300 victims of exploitation and trafficking; she coordinates services for victims in twelve counties.

*Lindsay Arf, Speaker and consultant*

Lindsay Arf is a survivor of sex trafficking and active in the Minnesota anti-trafficking movement. She has trained law enforcement, probation officers, medical students and a wide variety of other professionals on the topic of trafficking and exploitation. In addition, she has provided media interviews and spoken in community forums. She is the proud mother of two children.

*Matt Traynor, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless*

Before joining the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless as our full-time director of organizing, Matt completed his degree in Youth and Family Ministry where he took a position as a Youth Director at a church in Red Wing. During his spare time, he was able to do some organizing around equity issues within the community and fell in love with organizing. From 2012 – 2017, Matt worked as the Community Organizer at CHUM in Duluth. After moving to Duluth Matt connected with others working to end homelessness and has been part of multiple successful organizing campaigns. In 2014 he received the Steve O’Neil Outstanding Organizer Award. Outside of organizing, Matt loves hanging with his family (especially his nephew), friends and spending time doing introverted things like reading, watching movies and going outside during the non-winter months.

*Meghan Maes, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services*

Meghan Maes is a supervising attorney in the South West region of Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services. She has substantial experience representing survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking and working with domestic abuse agencies and community partners. She is a co-author of the Civil Remedies for Survivors manual. When she is not practicing law she enjoys spending time with her husband and two boys Collin (5) and Liam (3).

*Melissa Brandt, Rochester Public Schools*

Ms. Brandt has been the Transitions Coordinator for Rochester Public Schools for the last seven years. She advocates for families and students experiencing homelessness throughout Olmsted County and the State of Minnesota.

*Melissa Cummins, Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL)*

Melissa Cummins is the Independent Living Program Manager at the Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL). She joined SEMCIL in 2009 in the Disability Linkage Line (now the Minnesota Disability Hub). She moved into the Independent Living (IL) department as an IL Coordinator in 2012, and thereafter into her current role. She supervises the Emerging Civic Leaders program, as well as the Social Security Benefits Advocacy, IL/VRS Collaboration, and CDCS Support Planning programs.

*Michele Merxbauer, Olmsted Co. Housing and Redevelopment Authority*

Michele (Mitch) Merxbauer joined the Olmsted County HRA in 2015 and currently serves as its Housing Program Manager. She directs the day-to-day operations for HUD-funded programs, state- and levy-funded rental assistance programs, and 235 units of housing throughout Olmsted County. Mitch has a long history of development in the City of Northfield, increasing the number and availability of affordable housing options through development and rehab, creating a three-phase neighborhood revitalization project, utilizing bonding authority to build two memory care centers and increasing economic development opportunities. Mitch has a 20 year history working with homeless populations, from shelters to prison populations to permanent supportive housing programs for people with AIDS. Mitch has been an active member of MN NAHRO for 10 years. Mitch has been active with the Continuum of Care since 2001, serving on the Executive Committee in Anoka County and as member in the River Valleys CoC since 2007. Currently, Mitch is an adjunct professor at Winona State University in the Social Work Department teaching policy and macro practice. Mitch received her undergrad degree in Social Work and History from Concordia College, Moorhead and her Masters Degree in Social Work/Policy Development and Public Administration from Augsburg College.

*Nancy Bokelmann, Mankato/Blue Earth County EDA*

Nancy has been working in Community Development and Housing for over 30 years. She has worked for the City of Faribault and administered housing programs for Rice and Steele Counties for 15 years. Nancy then transitioned to the City of Owatonna and administered housing and community Development programs for



Steele County for 14 years, and is currently working with the City of Mankato in Blue Earth County. Nancy has a Bachelor of Science in Education from MSU.

*Nicole Mourgos, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services*

Nicole Mourgos is a staff attorney with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS). Ms. Mourgos has been practicing law since January of 2015. Ms. Mourgos practices in the areas of housing law and government benefits law. Ms. Mourgos assists clients in eviction actions, getting repairs to rental housing, and defending terminations in subsidized housing programs. The goals are to prevent homelessness by keeping clients in current housing, helping families to secure housing, maintaining affordable housing in the community, improving housing habitability, and preventing illegal housing discrimination.

*Rachel Ganz, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Rachel Ganz joined the HUD team in January 2017. Her prior experience includes being a member of the Peace Corps in Nicaragua. She promoted community public health by working with local government and nonprofits to reduce HIV transmission and improve maternal child health outcomes.

*Swathi Mummini*

Swathi Mummini is a Data Analyst for the Minnesota HMIS project at the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA). She focuses on developing reports and analyzing HMIS data to support local and statewide planning, performance evaluation and management, and funding/policy decisions. Prior to joining ICA, Swathi developed HMIS data processes for FamilyAid Boston, an agency that provides prevention, shelter, and stabilization services for families in Boston, Massachusetts, and interned with Harlem United Community AIDS Center's Housing Policy department. She also served as an AmeriCorps New Sector Alliance Resident in Social Enterprise, focusing on outcomes measurement. Swathi holds a BA in Psychology and Certificate in Public Policy from Macaulay Honors College, City University of New York.

*Warren Duncan, Hearth Connection*

Warren Duncan is the Program Director at Hearth Connection. Hearth Connection is a Minnesota non-profit that functions as an Intermediary, bringing in funds around support services and rental assistance for large geographic regions across Minnesota. Warren has been with Hearth Connection in various roles, including as a Case Manager on one of the mobile teams working with single adults in the metro area, as a Regional Manager in Southern and Central Minnesota, and now as Program Director. Prior to working at Hearth Connection, Warren worked with youth in an emergency shelter, a meal program for those living on the streets, adult foster care programs and case management.