

CONTINUUM OF CARE MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

February 18, 2026 9:00am

BY PAITON BECKNER

Our mission: Teaming up to make homelessness rare, non-recurring, and short-lived.

Roll Call – Please sign in the chat for attendance.

Motion to approve minutes - No prior meeting minutes available due to staff illness; approval postponed to next month.

Old Business

- 1,234 Total **Households**; 3,369 **Individuals** (Literally Homeless, At Risk, DV, Vet)
- 349 **Households** Literally Homeless; 647 **Individuals**
- 10 **Households** Fleeing Domestic Violence; 23 **Individuals**
- 875 **Households** At Risk; 2,699 **Individuals**
- **Veterans: according to Vet BNL: 10 Households 18 Individuals total**
- Referrals sent to providers in January: 86 (including Housing referrals, ELC, Griffin Lofts and Jersey Commons)
- 193 Total CE Assessments taken last month. (January)
- 87 Total CE Assessments taken to date so far for this month (February)

New Business

- **PIT Count 2025 Recap**
 - Preliminary results (2025 vs. 2026)
 - **Unsheltered:** Decreased 25% (230 -> 173)
 - **Sheltered:** Increased 5% (574 -> 601)
 - **Total PIT count:** Decreased 3.7% (804 -> 774)
 - Data is still preliminary
 - Increase in sheltered individuals may be due to cold weather
 - Some encampments were cleared prior to the count, possibly affecting numbers
 - 219 surveys completed; 169 valid (invalid surveys due to duplication, incomplete data, or sheltered status already recorded elsewhere)
 - Encouragement not to worry about invalid/incomplete surveys – challenges in the field are expected.
- **PIT Participation**
 - **Volunteers:**
 - 120 signed up; 104 participated
 - 11 teams + 2 stationary pantry locations

- **Agency participation:**
 - 26 of 40 agencies contributed volunteers
 - 11 agencies did not participate (may be ineligible to apply for funding next year)
 - Agencies must provide at least one volunteer for the PIT count to remain eligible for future funding.
- **Donations & Support:**
 - Gift cards, hygiene items, snacks, backpacks
 - Large water donation (Coca-Cola)
 - Private donors contributed supplies (including dental hygiene items)
- **Volunteer Feedback**
 - Overall rating: 2.8/3
 - 100% felt prepared and would volunteer again
 - 93.5% felt safe
 - 90% felt team sizes were appropriate
- Appreciation expressed for volunteers working in cold conditions
- PIT count event logistics included new pantry-based outreach approach; was successful and will likely continue
- **Next PIT count scheduled for January 28th, 2027**
- Planning committee begins **August 2026**
- **Volunteer Celebration Luncheon April 2nd 12:00-2:00 – RSVP March 19th**
- **2026 CoC Membership Application**
 - Membership applications are due; failure to submit may result in removal from meetings
- **HMIS Lic. – Deadline: February 20th, 2026**
 - Agencies must report staff departures within 24 hours for security compliance
- **Cold Weather Shelter Summary**
 - Multiple organizations opened cold weather shelters (e.g., churches, community centers)
 - Additional locations opened but were not initially reported
 - 250 coats and supplies distributed through coordinated community effort.
- **Outreach Team / Citrus Connection / LDDA**
 - Increased homelessness concerns in downtown Lakeland (Munn park area)
 - **New partnerships formed with:**
 - Local businesses (via LDDA)
 - Transit authority (Citrus Connection)
 - Outreach teams and volunteers
 - **Results (30 days):**

- 8 unsheltered individuals engaged
 - 3 coordinated entries completed
 - 1 person referred to services
- **Strategy moving forward**
 - Expand coordinated outreach model across cities
 - Standardize outreach approach:
 - Build relationships
 - Meet basic needs
 - Conduct assessments
 - Connect to services
 - Transition to housing
- **Transportation assistance**
 - Bus passes available through multiple channels
 - Coalition: short-term daily passes
 - Other programs: longer-term/monthly passes (with documentation)
 - Transportation access remains a key barrier for clients
- **HUD Funding**
 - 100% renewal of existing HUD funding submitted (due to strong performance)
 - Future funding (2026 – 2027) expected changes:
 - Only 30% can go to permanent supportive housing (currently 88%)
 - Must show 25% reduction in homelessness
 - Final rules pending court decisions
- **STATE Funding**
 - County met required 50% spending threshold, preserving funding eligibility
 - Some agencies struggling with spending may impact overall performance
 - Increased scrutiny on invoicing and documentation:
 - HMIS service entries must match billing (“roll-up” reports)
 - No lump-sum entries – must itemize services by client/date
 - Errors can result in financial penalties to the coalition
 - Reimbursements may be delayed until states funds are received
- **Key Takeaways**
 - Strong emphasis on compliance, participation, and accountability
 - Outreach efforts are expanding and showing early success
 - Funding environment is becoming more restrictive and competitive
 - Collaboration across agencies is critical moving forward
- **Operational updates**
 - The coalition is currently undergoing an external audit, adding to ongoing workload and oversight requirements.
 - Continued emphasis on keeping agencies aligned and compliant

- **Open Floor - Next meeting: 3/18/26 (Zoom)**
 - **Advocacy & Community engagement**
 - Members encouraged to connect with Jennifer Kennedy, who holds office hours monthly at the Lakeland public library
 - Goal: advocate for local homelessness needs and increase state-level awareness
 - Coalition will share a one-page advocacy document to ensure consistent messaging
 - **Partnerships & Outreach expansion**
 - Efforts underway to build relationships with:
 - HOAs and civic groups
 - Community organizations for donations and education
 - Continued focus on community-wide collaboration and awareness
 - **Events & Announcements**
 - Child Welfare Provider Fair:
 - Date: May 29, 2026
 - Location: Bartow Civic Center
 - Audience: Child welfare, behavioral health, justice, and service providers
 - Includes vendor booths, networking, and community resources
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 - **Staffing & Leadership Changes**
 - Tracy announced departure after 22 years to join Sunshine Health as Director of Foster Care Operations; will continue working statewide with community-based care agencies
 - John announced onboarding of a new outreach peer mentor, Christopher Bell (veteran w/community experience) who will support outreach and engagement efforts
- **Case Conferencing: Stay tuned after the meeting**

Motion from the Floor Adjournment: Bridget Engleman

Attendance: Bridget Engleman, HCPC; Cathy Golden, HCPC; Katrina Panzica, HCPC; Corina Hathaway, ACTS; Giffe Gill, ACTS; Hayward Davis, ACTS; Maureen McIntire, Baycare; Jennifer Cooper, BOCC; Marybeth Moore, BOCC; Jaunyce Priester, BOCC; Jose Chavarria, Carrfour; P.J. Brooks, CASL; Martha Murphy, Catholic Charities; Svjetlana Nolan, Catholic Charities; Jason Saffels, Central FL Behavioral; Mike Smith, City of Lakeland; Nancy Hurley, City of Winterhaven; Mike Carrano, COSMO; Jessica Henderson, HCPC; Nessie Braun, HCPC; Bren Sanders, HCPC; Wayne Harwell, Heartland for Children; Chris Dyer, Heartland for Children; Tracy Grey, Heartland for Children; Nicole Redmond, Lake Wales Care Center; Jareem Smith, Lakeland Downtown Development; Joseph Vazquez, Lighthouse Ministries; Jennifer Olivas, MCSC; Jes Shapiro, Peace River; Donna Evanecky, Polk County Sheriff; Andrea Anderson, Polk for Recovery; Rebecca Green, Salvation Army; Charity McGough, SVDP; John Quirk, SVDP; Mark Luba, Tri-County; Stephen Powers, Tri-County; Kera Beard, VOA; Michelle Czelusniak, Wilson

House; Cheryl Meade, Women's Resource Center; Terri Cram, ACTS