



Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County – MI 506
Continuum of Care Membership Meeting Agenda
December 18, 2025 □ 9:30-11:00 am
West Michigan Works! -- 215 Straight Ave NW

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of October 23, 2025 Minutes*
3. Steering Council Vote
4. CoC Program Competition
 - a. Questions
5. Federal Updates
 - a. Advocacy Opportunities
6. Year in Review
7. Community Celebrations
8. Community Partner Announcements and Updates
9. Adjournment

**indicates potential action item*



CoC MEMBER MEETING MEETING MINUTES

October 23, 2025

9:30-11:00am

Facilitator:			
Meeting Attendees:	<p>Shelby Sichta, Brianne Jurs, Sam Westhouse, Katie VanEck, Mark Contreras, Monique Carter, Ryan VerWys, Bill Weld-Wallis, Colene Johnson, Annette Vandenberg, Olivia Lohmann, Katherine Besaw, Angela Ricones, Dave Gantz, Brian Van Haren, Luann Van Haren, Tarvis Cutts, Zenaida Jimenez, Tenisa Frye, Tanya Coffman, Ray King, Lindsey Reames, Charles Archie, Carolyn Allen, Lisa Otterbrige, Leslie Redmon, Chris Palusky, Walter Jones, Tammy Vincent, Amy from HELP Pregnancy Aid, B Shultz, Kayla Schmitz, Emma from The Other Way, Maranda Vanzegren, Frieda Campos, Thelma Ensink, Mary Copeland, Casey Gordon, Sabrina Slenk, Marty Berher, Molly Perez</p> <p>Staff: Courtney Myers-Keaton, Alyssa Anten, Robyn Van Dyke</p>		
Time Convened:	9:35 AM	Time Adjourned:	11:05 AM

Approval of Agenda		10/23/2025	
Motion by:		Support from:	
Discussion			
Amendments			
Conclusion			
Approval of Minutes		8/28/2025	
Motion by:	Ryan VerWys	Support from:	Kathy Besaw
Discussion			
Amendments			
Conclusion	All in favor, motion passes		
Mobile Healthcare Outreach		Catherine's Health Center	
Discussion			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark Contreras and Tanya Coffman from Catherine's Health Center presented on their mobile healthcare outreach 			
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Benefits		MDHHS	
Discussion			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colene Johnson from MDHHS presented on benefits and mentioned PDFs with resources. She also shared information about offering diaper assistance if you've worked with them before. 			
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share Colene's documents 		Robyn Van Dyke	Week of 10/27
Community Spotlight		Covenant House	
Discussion			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carolyn Allen from Covenant House presented as the community spotlight - Mentioned a candlelight vigil on November 7 at 7:00pm 			



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9:30-11:00am

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
- Share information about the vigil	Robyn Van Dyke	Week of 10/27
Federal Updates		Courtney Myers-Keaton
Discussion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Courtney disclosed that there are a lot of changes with funding. There's uncertainty about there being a NOFO and program competition. - New restrictions on funding would mean we would have to put the 7 million where it isn't needed. - The shutdown is adding pressure and explained that a delay in funding will cause an increase in evictions. - She called for advocacy as voices matter more than ever. There is a need for HUD to reverse their decision as it would cut 50% to permanent supportive housing. 		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Adjournment		
Discussion		

Steering Council Nominees

Chris Palusky

CEO

Mel Trotter Ministries

Chris Palusky is a seasoned nonprofit leader and humanitarian professional whose career spans over two decades of work with vulnerable communities globally and in the U.S. After starting his career at World Relief, he served in senior humanitarian and emergency-response positions with agencies including World Vision, where he oversaw responses to crises around the world from Afghanistan to Ukraine and while living in DC testified before the U.S. Congress on disaster relief efforts.

In 2018, Palusky became President and CEO of Bethany Christian Services, leading one of the largest faith-based child-welfare organizations worldwide. Most recently, in 2024 he was named CEO of Mel Trotter Ministries in Grand Rapids where he now manages more than 270 staff, over 1,000 volunteers, and a \$20 million annual budget, directing efforts to shelter over 550 individuals every day and run support services for those facing homelessness in West Michigan. He also oversees Mel Trotter's eight thrift stores and Mel Trotter's work force development arm, Next Step of West Michigan which teaches people how to build homes from the ground up.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *100 in 100 Planning, joint Warming Center with Degage and other congregations, Chamber CEO Roundtable, HSA Investment & Sustainability Task Force, Partners in Ministry Finance Committee*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Chronically Homeless Individual, Family with Children, Unaccompanied Youth*
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Christina White

Clinic Manager - Pine Rest StreetReach and Community Based Services

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services

Christie White is enthusiastic to bring a specific perspective to this committee, envisioning community needs through the lens of someone struggling with mental health conditions, trauma, and substance abuse concerns.

She received her Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan in 2006 and has been a practicing social worker in the state of Michigan ever since. She has worked at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Service for the past 12 years, mostly overseeing Pine Rests publicly (Medicaid/CMH) funded programs. She has worked closely with individuals experiencing homelessness throughout the years, both as a service provider and in the role of Clinic Manager. Christie served briefly as a Steering member in 2023, has been attending

Steering meetings throughout 2024-2025, and has been on the planning committee for the 100 in 100 initiative. Christie has worked in various communities across Michigan over the last 20 years, specializing in overseeing clinical services to those experiencing chronic mental health and substance use concerns. In her current role as Clinical Manager for the StreetReach program, she oversees the grants received from our various funders including the SAMHSA PATH grant. Together these grant funded teams provide community-based outreach to people experiencing homelessness. Christie has a passion for working with individuals experiencing homelessness, serious mental health illness, and/or substance use disorders. Her passion is driven by first-hand life experiences as she deeply understands the effects that these circumstances have on the individual, families, and our communities.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *Kent County Opiate Fatality Review, Kent County Opiate Response TaskForce, Steering Committee (2023), and 100 in 100 Planning*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Substance Use Disorder, Seriously Mentally Ill*
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Fallon Lee

Senior Director of Crisis Intervention Services and Project HEAL
YWCA West Central Michigan

Fallon Lee is a committed advocate for housing stability and family well-being, with more than a decade of experience supporting individuals navigating barriers like homelessness and housing insecurity. Her background spans direct care, case management, mental health practice, and leading transitional, permanent and rapid rehousing programs. Fallon brings a grounded, client-centered perspective shaped by years of frontline work and partnering with families facing the most complex barriers.

At the committee table, Fallon shows up as a collaborator who values transparency, dignity, and practical solutions that center the voices of those most impacted. She is known for asking thoughtful questions, elevating gaps in systems, and ensuring decisions translate into real-world support for families. Fallon believes in trauma-informed, empowerment-based approaches and aims to contribute a perspective that is rooted in experience, compassion, and a commitment to equity and stable housing for all. She would be a great asset to your committee with a distinctive perspective.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *DV Action Network High Lethality, DV High Risk Team for City of Grand Rapids, Aquinas College CCRT, Calvin College CCRT*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Victim or Survivors of Domestic Violence (dating violence, sexual assault, & stalking), Family with Children*
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Lauren VanKeulen
CEO

AYA Youth Collective

Lauren Gamelin VanKeulen, LMSW, is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of AYA Youth Collective, a Grand Rapids–based organization dedicated to ending youth homelessness through housing-first, trauma-informed, and youth-centered services. With more than 15 years of experience in social work and nonprofit leadership, Lauren has guided AYA’s growth into an organization serving over 1,000 young people annually through supportive housing, the drop-in center, and community-based wraparound support.

Lauren is recognized statewide for her collaborative, equity-driven approach to systems change. She currently serves by gubernatorial appointment on both the Michigan Board of Social Work and the Michigan Interagency Council on Homelessness, where she advances youth-focused policy and cross-sector coordination.

Known for centering youth voices and building strong community partnerships, Lauren brings deep expertise in program design, federal grants management, and strategic leadership to efforts aimed at creating a more just and responsive homelessness response system.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and YAB*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Formerly Homeless Individual, Unaccompanied Youth*
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Lindsey Reames

CEO

Grand Rapids Housing Commission

Ms. Reames is currently serving as the Executive Director at the Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The GRHC has a diverse affordable housing portfolio that includes over 4300 units, including 1000 owned and managed units and various Housing Choice Voucher programs that serve low-income, veterans, foster youth, homeless and disabled program participants. Prior to 2021, Ms. Reames worked at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for over 30 years serving in a number of leadership positions, most notably, the Deputy to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Field Operations where her primary responsibility included leading the Recovery and Prevention team overseeing receivership and troubled PHAs. In this capacity she has served as the HUD Recovery Administrator/Receiver and Board Chair on behalf of the HUD Secretary at many agencies across the country. Ms. Reames was assigned as the principal advisor to the HUD Secretary and served on the Federal Interagency Unified Coordinating Group tasked with designing and implementing a cross-agency response for addressing the water crisis in Flint. She is an accomplished and results driven leader with the ability to think strategically, effectuate change, build teams, partner, problem solve, manage resources, influence and build consensus.

Lindsey has been engaged in the Coalition initiatives since joining the GRHC and currently serves on the Executive Committee, the Steering Council, and the Finance Committee. She is also actively engaged and a contributor to the success of the 100 in 100 initiative.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *Executive Committee, Nominating Committee*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Chronically Homeless Individual, Seriously Mentally Ill*
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Megan Dunn

CEO

Covenant House Michigan - Grand Rapids

In her role as CEO of Covenant House Michigan, Meagan Dunn brings a perspective shaped by both statewide impact and deep local partnership—especially in Grand Rapids, where the organization has operated for seven years. Leading an organization that serves young people experiencing homelessness, she understands the need for coordinated, compassionate, and sustainable systems and believes that ending homelessness requires strong alignment across the safety net. Meagan is committed to strengthening partnerships that expand access to housing and support services, helping people in Grand Rapids move toward long-term stability.

As a nonprofit leader and the first Black woman to serve as CEO of Covenant House Michigan, Meagan is dedicated to helping organizations grow with intention, equity, and impact. With leadership experience across Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo, she contributes thoughtful strategic insight, a deep understanding of human services, and an unwavering belief in the power of community. Her goal is to help create a stronger ecosystem for all who call Grand Rapids home

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *We Exist: State of Youth Homelessness Summit,*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Victim or Survivors of Domestic Violence (dating violence, sexual assault, & stalking), Youth Emergency Shelter*
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Thelma Ensink

Executive Director

Dégagé Ministries

Thelma Ensink serves as the Executive Director for Dégagé Ministries. In 2024, she led the launch of Heartside Landings, a transitional housing project for individuals with severe mental illness and substance use disorder. Also, in 2024, she co-led the launch of the Housing Stabilization Case Management program for the 100 in 100 project. She currently serves as the program manager for the launch of the Community and Service Center at Westminster, a collective project between the City of Grand Rapids, three nonprofits and eight churches. She is passionate about cross sector and cross organizational collaboration and solving problems at a systems level. She has served on the Coc Steering Council since 2025. She received her bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from Calvin University and her master's degree in

Educational Leadership from Grand Valley State University. She has served on several boards including Safe Haven Ministries and the Hearside Business Association.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *100 in 100 Planning, Built for Zero, Steering Committee*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Family with Children*
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Vera Beech

Executive Director

Community Rebuilders

Vera Beech serves as the Executive Director of Community Rebuilders, where she leads innovative, evidence-informed housing programs and community partnerships focused on ending homelessness. She brings more than 20 years of leadership experience administering federal housing and service programs, including HUD Continuum of Care, VA Veteran initiatives, and employment and stabilization programs. With extensive experience in service system design, federal program implementation, and cross-sector collaboration, Vera brings a deep understanding of Coordinated Entry, housing models, and community-level outcomes. She has participated in numerous local and national workgroups dedicated to improving access to housing, health, and income. Vera is committed to collaborative governance, data-informed decision-making, and supporting the CoC's efforts to advance effective, person-centered approaches for the community.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *Coordinated Entry, other relevant organizations to the Coalition*
 - **Represented Population(s):** *Chronically Homeless Individual, Veteran*
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Walter Jones

Program Manager/ Supportive Serve Coordinator

Flat River Outreach Ministries

Walter Jones has worked in the Greater Grand Rapids area most of his life. Jones has worked in the space of service coordinator for Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids. He has volunteered for organizations such as Guiding Light Mission, Gods Kitchen and Mel Trotter. Jones continues to work to address Homelessness as the Program Manager at FROM, where they are developing our Main Street Housing project. MSH will be real affordable housing reaching those that cannot reach housing in the typical manner. In his role, he works with residents to maintain their housing through goal setting and future focus directing.

- **Committee/WG Involvement:** *N/A*

- **Represented Population(s):** *Victim or Survivors of Domestic Violence (dating violence, sexual assault, & stalking), Seriously Mentally Ill*
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