

Nashville-Davidson County Continuum of Care
HOMELESSNESS PLANNING COUNCIL

2024 Nominees

Candidate Profiles

*Submitted to the Continuum of Care
Nominating Committee for Review*



Andrea Hancock

Regional Overdose Prevention Specialist

STARS Nashville

Brief Biography

Andrea Hancock's life is a testament to profound transformation and resilience. Her early years were marked by academic excellence and a generally happy childhood, yet interspersed with significant traumas including the loss of family members, unhealthy relationships, substance abuse, homelessness and crime. These adversities challenged her deeply, but in 2006, she experienced a powerful release from drugs and alcohol through her faith, reclaiming her role as a mother and a productive member of society.

Andrea is the founder of A Woman's Journey, Healing, Empowerment and Restoration (H.E.R) Christian Growth Housing Ministry, and Nana's Circle, a community supporting aging caregivers. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Tennessee State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work. Andrea is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor (LADAC II), Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS), and Certified Anger Management Specialist (CAMS I).

Her dedication to community service has been widely recognized. She was honored at Natalie Grant's "Dare to Be" event for feeding the unhoused young adults in Downtown Nashville and featured in Good Grit magazine for her work with at-risk youth. In 2023, she received the Humana Hometown Heroes Award from MDHA's Resident Association. She currently serves with Champions in Christ which is a non-profit that feeds the unhoused in collaboration with her church.

Andrea's journey from trauma to triumph makes her an inspiring figure for individuals overcoming obstacles. She continues to grow as a woman of faith, advocating healing strategies for others while embracing self-love and forgiveness. Andrea is committed to being an inspiration, spending quality time with her family, and maintaining unshakeable faith as she navigates her ongoing journey.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council because I am deeply committed to helping those who are experiencing homelessness, a challenge I have personally overcome. My journey from trauma and addiction to recovery and empowerment has equipped me with unique insights and a profound empathy for individuals facing similar struggles. Serving on the council would allow me to contribute my expertise, advocate for transformative policies, and collaborate with others to create lasting solutions for homelessness in our community.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

Please see bio.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

African American, Female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I don't believe it will be a conflict by me being a part of this council.



Christina O'Saile
Regional Property Manager
Freeman Webb Company

Brief Biography

I am Nashville native, a mother of two and recently became a grandmother. I started my career in property management in 2001. By 2005, I had found my way to the affordable housing industry. The affordable housing industry has allowed me to follow my passion of helping others to provide safe housing. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my granddaughter, kayaking, and experiencing all that our beautiful city has to offer. I believe in respect, honesty, hard work, and integrity.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I have a passion for helping others, especially Nashville's unsheltered.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

As a young mother, I experienced homelessness with my children. That experience fueled my passion to help others experiencing such hardships. My career in affordable housing has blessed me to work closely with some of the agencies that help Nashville's unsheltered. Such as Safe Haven, The Office of Homeless Services, Step up, Kirby Davis and many others.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Caucasian Female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

No conflicts.



Cintoria Franklin

Inspiration Coach & Domestic Violence Advocate

Pass the Beauty

Brief Biography

Cintoria Franklin, a dedicated mother at heart, is the visionary founder of Pass the Beauty Inc., an organization passionately committed to supporting families affected by violence and bullying. With a deep-rooted belief in the power of healing and transformation, Cintoria has become a staunch advocate for mental health awareness and promotes the concept of dating without violence, striving to create safer, more respectful communities. Her journey extends beyond social advocacy; Cintoria is an accomplished Inspiration Coach, guiding individuals to find strength and purpose in their personal and professional lives. Her insights and motivational skills have been crystallized in her role as a Published Author, where she shares empowering narratives and practical wisdom to inspire change and resilience.

As an Entrepreneur, Cintoria has skillfully blended her passion for helping others with innovative business strategies, creating impactful initiatives and programs that address critical societal issues. Her entrepreneurial spirit is fueled by a desire to make a tangible difference in people's lives, especially those grappling with the effects of violence and mental health challenges. Embracing the digital era, Cintoria has also made her mark as a TikTok Influencer. With her engaging content and charismatic presence, she reaches a broad audience, spreading messages of hope, empowerment, and unity. Her social media platform serves as a beacon for those seeking inspiration, support, and community. Above all, Cintoria is known for her unwavering commitment to bringing people together. She excels in creating support networks and connecting individuals with the resources and solutions they need. Her efforts have provided immediate assistance and fostered a sense of belonging and strength among those she serves. Cintoria Franklin is more than a title or a role; she is a force of positivity and change, touching lives and inspiring a journey toward healing, empowerment, and collective betterment.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

A compelling reason for me to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council is my dedication as an advocate for domestic violence. I would love to have a voice on the significance of homelessness. Many people face significant challenges in securing housing and often struggle with housing stability due to mental health issues. My personal experience with homelessness, combined with my advocacy work, equips me with unique insights and empathy. I would love to contribute my voice to empower those affected by homelessness.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

My experience in working to address homelessness and support individuals experiencing it has been challenging. One major issue is the insufficient availability of housing to adequately support families. This shortage has been a significant obstacle in my efforts to assist those in need. Despite these challenges, I am dedicated to improving my advocacy skills and identifying more resources. I understand the complexities involved and am committed to finding effective solutions to better support and empower families facing homelessness.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

African American

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I don't presently know any.



David Langgle-Martin

Chief Housing Officer

Park Center

Brief Biography

David's background is in clinical social work at the intersection of mental health, substance use, and homelessness. After nearly a decade of work in hospitals and outpatient clinics, David joined the Park Center team in 2016 and now leads supportive housing initiatives as Chief Housing Officer. Under David's leadership, Park Center implemented Nashville's first high-fidelity housing first model and built a mission-oriented property management department, which is a member of the Low Barrier Housing Collective. David launched Park Center's affordable housing development arm, resulting in 50 new supportive housing units designed for people with a history of long-term homelessness. Park Center's Permanent Supportive Housing program serves 180 members at 21 properties owned or leased by Park Center, as well as 7 owned by Urban Housing Solutions. David's areas of expertise include affordable housing development, property management in supportive housing, and Housing First supportive services. Specializations include psychiatric rehabilitation, peer recovery support and inclusion, trauma-informed service and housing design, and program performance and outcomes improvement. David has provided consulting services for several CoC member organizations and serves as a member of state and local supportive housing coalitions, Chair of the Shelter Plus Care Advisory Council, and board member and committee Chair for The Village at Glencliff.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I envision Nashville becoming a national leader in solving homelessness at the system level by adopting and improving upon best practices, developing clear benchmarks and metrics, and embracing and modeling transparency and accountability. There are many opportunities for Nashville to achieve quick wins and build long-term sustainable improvement processes by adopting and replicating effective strategies, and I would like to offer my energy and experience in support of those efforts.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I have worked at all levels of the homeless crisis response system including direct service (TH, RRH, and PSH), program leadership, organizational leadership, community leadership, and training/technical assistance. I value building genuine and mutual relationships with program participants, developing a deep understanding of program principles and practices, and focusing on continuous quality improvement. In July 2023, Housing First model developer Dr. Sam Tsemberis wrote of the program I led, "Most impressive in Park Center's practice of HF is their profound understanding of the role played by the support services both in terms of service intensity and quality of services. Park Center is an exemplar to the Nashville community on how to operate Housing First programs...This organization can serve as a training site for other agencies in Nashville wishing to learn how to operate a high fidelity Housing First program."

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White non-hispanic male.

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I work for Park Center and serve on the Board of Directors for The Village at Glencliff



Demerrius La-Shawn Whitsell

Founder & Director

Destiny Theatre Experience

Brief Biography

Shawn Whitsell is a playwright, actor, producer, director, and the founder of the Destiny Theatre Experience. Through his work as a theatre artist, Shawn tackles issues such as homelessness, domestic violence, sexual assault, mass incarceration, and social justice. Shawn spent two years as the Criminal Justice Task Force co-chair of Nashville Organized For Action and Hope (NOAH) and previously served on the boards of Preston Taylor Ministries, Street Theatre Company, and Nashville New Leaders Council. Shawn has served for four years on the Community Review Board (formerly Community Oversight Board) and is a current board member of Rooftop, which combats homelessness by providing rent and mortgage assistance to residents of Davidson County. In 2014, Shawn began community service efforts to provide survival supplies for those experiencing street homelessness and has extended the work to his church where it continues today. Shawn works with nonprofit Southern Word, teaching creative writing to youth and adults at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital, school/colleges, community centers, libraries, group homes, prisons, and corporate spaces. With Southern Word, Shawn also developed and facilitates "Remixing Community," a creative diversity, equity, and inclusion workshop based in storytelling. In all he does, she believes in extending love, grace, compassion, and justice.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

Since I was a kid, I've been invested in supporting people struggling with homelessness. Housing is need, but I also believe it is a right. I want to do all I can to help end homelessness in the city of Nashville and beyond.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I've given food and supplies to people experiencing homelessness through volunteer work with entities such as the Little Pantry That Could and other organizations. I even organized my own efforts to raise and distribute food and supplies during the winter months, which I've done for 10 years with the support of generous friends and associates. I've raised money for individuals in the community, through social media, and helped people avoid eviction or find housing. I also serve on the board of Rooftop, an organization that provides rent and mortgage assistance. I buy the Contributor newspaper whenever I encounter someone selling it because I know the money helps them gain or maintain housing stability. Lastly, I treat individuals dealing with homelessness with dignity, compassion, and respect.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Black/African American/Male

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I'm not sure if this is a conflict of interest, but I serve on the board of Rooftop, as I've previously mentioned.



Drew Freeman

Chief Executive Officer

Safe Haven Family Shelter

Brief Biography

I have been the CEO at Safe Haven for the past year after spending 35 years working at different YMCAs across the country. I have extensive background in strategic planning and problem solving, community building, and fostering positive partnerships. I am also a champion for diversity, inclusion, and equity in the Middle Tennessee area.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I seek to bring new energy and I believe my newly formed lens on this problem can provide a different perspective. I enjoy working collaboratively with other leaders to find the best possible outcomes for the efforts of the Council. Serving as the CEO of the premier family rehousing agency provides insight into the most vulnerable population in our community and leads me to want to help at a community level. I am a big picture thinker and dedicated finding solutions and opportunities.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I started my work with those that are experiencing homelessness during my time as the ED of the Franklin YMCA. I met with local shelters, like Bridges, and we work together to provide memberships and programs to their clients at no charge to the client. I started my time at Safe Haven as a Shelter Advocate working 8p-8a and more at the shelter. During this time, I gain much insight into the experience of homelessness through conversations with our families and case managers. Walking this part of their journey with them is what motivated me to become a case manager, and ultimately what led me to become CEO to have more of influence over systems and practices that are intermingled with their experience. Joining the HPC is yet another way I can positively influence the experience of those that are unhoused or even better, prevent them from losing their housing in the first place.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Black

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

CEO of Safe Haven, former Executive Director of YMCA



D'Yuanna Allen-Robb

Assistant Bureau Director of Population Health

Metro Public Health Department

Brief Biography

Ms. D'Yuanna Allen-Robb leads local and national strategic program and policy initiatives to ensure the replication of culturally relevant program models to improve the health status of women. She currently serves as the Assistant Bureau Director of Population Health at the Metro Public Health Department where she is honored to lead a network of 133 problem solvers and critical thinkers committed to health equity and justice for Davidson County residents. Through our collective work, we make the "invisible" visible by use of strategic storytelling, resource allocation, as well as scaling and sustaining prevention and intervention models that work! The portfolio of programs and services in my direct purview include home-visiting services for birthing people and children, health promotion support for residents living with chronic medical conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, medical and ancillary support for residents living with HIV/AIDS, and mental and physical health support for adolescents and young adults. Seventeen (17) years of service as a public health practitioner has informed my perspective that healthcare and housing are human rights and as such, are social justice issues that impact us all.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

It is the human rights perspective that informs my service on the Continuum of Care Homeless Planning Council. I am concluding an initial term of service on the Metro Homeless Planning Council (2021-2024). In this capacity, I listen to the needs and concerns of residents with the lived experience of homelessness as well as the voices of housing providers and work with Continuum of Care members and others to identify actionable solutions. I also serve on the Continuum of Care Performance and Evaluation Committee (2022-2024) and am member of the United Way Family Collective. I regularly advocate locally and nationally and leverage relationships that foster housing collaboration within the healthcare and public health sectors. I am excited to be of service in a second term if duly elected by the Continuum of Care members, and I look forward to continuing to grow housing strategies to make homelessness brief, rare and non-recurring for all Nashvillians.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

My collective experience to address homelessness and support for people experiencing homelessness has focused on a 2-generation housing approach with families. Since 2015, I have advocated for public health resources to house families receiving home-visiting services. Since joining the Homelessness Planning Council, my approach has become more expansive, including leveraging public health resources for residents experiencing chronic homelessness. My latest venture to enact sustainable action focuses on training and deploying Community Health Workers as peer specialists to support recently rehoused residents. The purpose of deploying peer specialists to reduce and eliminate returns to homelessness.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

African American, Cisgender female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

No current or potential conflicts at this time.



Harold Witherspoon III

Development Director

The Salvation Army

Brief Biography

I am a native of Northwest Indiana by way of Memphis, TN. I have lived in Middle Tennessee (Nashville, Mt. Juliet, Lebanon) a total of 22 years and I have been an executive leader in non-profit organizations for over 31 years. I am a graduate of LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis, TN.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

The last 8 years I have been a part of The Salvation Army's response to reducing homelessness. I have learned a lot and have a lot to share when it comes to developing a working relationship between government, non-profits, and Investors in the work. It is a balance that must be reached to have a successful homelessness reduction plan.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I have worked the past eight years with The Salvation Army as we increased our capacity to serve more people and helped strengthen our relationship with OHS. My primary focus has been identifying and securing private funding to do the work. I am also involved with the overall leadership of The Salvation Army in Nashville and key partnerships that we develop to reduce homelessness.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No.

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Black, Male

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

None that I can identify at this time.



Jordyn Alexander Gualdani

Community Outreach Specialist & Case Manager

You Matter Counseling Services

Brief Biography

Jordyn has worked within behavioral health for over a decade. His experience includes community outreach, advocacy, crisis intervention, safety and goal planning, case management, and others. Jordyn is most passionate about dismantling barriers that prevent people from accessing resources and making various forms of assistance as accessible as possible. Jordyn is always thinking about who he is not seeing- it's not that they don't exist, it's that the services are inaccessible. Being an active member in the community is something he truly enjoys.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

My hope is that by serving on this council, I will be able to bring a necessary point of view. As a homeless young adult, I experienced all too common situations that our greater community prefers to ignore. After that came bouts of homelessness while being disabled and trying to live in a car. The most frustrating thing is feeling like no one truly listens. People only help if they can profit or exploit you. Even then you need to fit into a box of what people believe a person "worth helping" looks, behaves, sounds like. This needs to change.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

While I work as a Case Manager and Community Outreach Specialist, I also coordinate and help with a handful of outreach efforts. Community education on Substance Use Disorders and testing, wound care efforts, assembling testing kits and wound care kits with instructions, meal deliveries, hygiene kits, connecting people to resources, and fixing mobility aids. My goal is to always keep my assistance person-centered. There's no "one size fits all", but there are commonalities. Help should never be conditional. We all need support sometimes and there's no shame in that.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Latino, Transman

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

No potential conflicts. I work with agencies that share the same goals and values. Currently, I am one of three leads in Tennessee for Khalsa Aid and work As a Case Manager and Community Outreach Specialist with You Matter Counseling Services.



Joy Flores

VP of Ministries

Nashville Rescue Mission

Brief Biography

Taking a holistic nontoxic approach to addressing systems of oppression, Joy has a deep passion to see these forms of modern-day slavery reversed. With over 22 years of ministry experience, Joy has cultivated her desire to see every man, woman, and child not only treated with respect and dignity, but also to tangibly reflect the love of Jesus Christ to a world filled with so much brokenness and pain. Joy Flores currently serves as Vice President of Ministries at Nashville Rescue Mission. She received her Master's & Bachelor's degrees from Azusa Pacific University. She has been married to Augie, the most hardworking dedicated man on planet earth, for the past 18 years & they have 4 energetic kids. Joy loves Steelers Football, strong coffee, storytelling, laughing, deep friendships & all things competitive.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

After moving to Nashville last summer after spending 18 years on Skid Row in Los Angeles, I believe I have a wealth of transferable knowledge regarding homelessness in our city. I also believe Nashville Rescue Mission plays a large part in solving our current struggles with homelessness and would be honored to use my voice in this way.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I have worked marginalized communities my entire adult life. These demographics have mainly been with at risk youth, teens in foster care, those incarcerated or who have been sex trafficked. I was a Pastor for 4 years and developed our restorative justice ministries at a large multi ethnic church in Los Angeles. Homelessness was at the center of this strategy. I also worked at Union Rescue Mission as VP of Programs for 4 years in a similar role as I have now at NRM, although Union Rescue is the largest mission in the country.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

N/A



Maria Aboubaker

Associate Director of Empowerment Services

Nashville CARES

Brief Biography

Maria Aboubaker is a License Master of Social Work (LMSW) currently working as an Associate Director of Empowerment Services with Nashville Cares. She has worked there for over two years. She oversees the empowerment of clients through housing, life skills and employment services. In her professional experience she has worked with the homeless, substance abuse, mental and physical disabilities and foster children's populations.

She has a passion for the homeless population that stems from her personal experiences. These personal experiences have led her to give back to the community through encouragement and empowerment to those most vulnerable and underserved. Her focus is to empower this community with skills needed to be successful and productive members of society.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

The shortage of low-income housing for those within the Nashville, Davidson County area is at an all-time high. The added disadvantage of barriers such as prior evictions, felonies and lack of rental history leaves many Nashville residents without safe affordable housing. I would like to use this platform as an opportunity to not only give those underserved individuals a chance to obtain housing but also to take advantage of economic, social, and emotional dividends that they would otherwise be unable to access.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

As the Associate Empowerment Director at Nashville CARES, I have worked directly and indirectly with the homeless population working on getting them placed in housing, increasing their income and achieving and maintaining optimum health.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Black

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I currently work at Nashville CARES and we do receive funds from ESG.



Meredith MacLeod Jaulin

Executive Director & Co-Founder

Shower the People

Brief Biography

I am the executive director and co-founder of Shower the People, an innovative organization based in Nashville dedicated to providing mobile shower services to individuals experiencing homelessness. Under my leadership, Shower the People has become a crucial resource in the community, offering not only essential hygiene facilities but also fostering dignity and respect among the unhoused population.

In addition to my role at Shower the People, I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) with a specialized focus on the treatment of trauma. My extensive experience in mental health and social services equips me with a compassionate and informed approach, allowing me to address the complex needs of my clients with empathy and expertise.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I want to serve on the HPC to help Nashville improve the way we provide services to our unhoused neighbors.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I have 13 years of experience serving the unhoused population, starting in 2011 as a crisis counselor at a youth shelter in Charlotte, NC before moving to Nashville to pursue my Master's degree.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

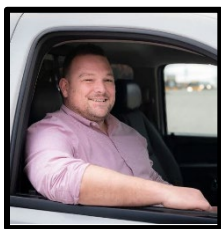
No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White, Non-Hispanic Female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

Needlink Nashville and Shower the People are the only organizations I've worked for in TN.



Michael Randolph

Director of Co-Response Services

Mental Health Cooperative

Brief Biography

Michael Randolph, LPC-MHSP, is the Director of Co-Response Services at Mental Health Cooperative. Over the past 15 years Michael has worked as a Crisis Counselor, Crisis Supervisor and the Crisis/Law Enforcement Liaison, in which he pioneered partnerships with Metro Nashville Police Department's specialized teams such as the SWAT Crisis Negotiators, Gang Unit, Missing Persons, Patrol, and Special Investigations Division by being trained by, providing training for, and co-responding with these teams. These partnerships lead to the development of Partners in Care co-response program. Further partnering with city emergency services Michael oversees the development of the REACH program in which clinicians respond with Paramedics with NFD to nonviolent emergency calls for service. Michael continues to provide innovative ideas and leadership for helping individuals when they need it most.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

In my career walking with individuals in a mental health crisis on their darkest days I have heard countless stories from people of what led them to their crisis. There are so many driving forces leading to a crisis. Some in a person's locust of control, and others not. The unhoused population has unique challenges and barriers to receiving care while in crisis. There are many complexities in helping an unhoused individual in crisis. From Mental health needs and substance abuse treatment needs to basic needs such as food, water, and housing. I believe with my experiencing in identifying gaps in the system and developing programs to fill those gaps I will bring a valuable perspective to the planning counsel.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

In my career I have vast experience helping the unhoused during a time of mental health crisis either as a counselor or supervising a crisis program. We define crisis as thoughts of hurting yourself or others, delusions, or hallucinations. I have experience meeting people where they are at either park, camp, or walk-in center to try to help them. Walking people through our complex mental health system and explaining the options available to them and helping them make an informed decision for the best care for the individual in crisis. I have helped develop training for MNPd and NFD for better understanding the unhoused population and how to communicate in a trauma informed way and hopefully have better outcomes when interacting with unhoused individuals. While designing Partners In Care and the REACH program special attention was made for unhoused individuals in crisis, how we should respond, and what resources to connect with them to best help those situations and resolve them safely.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White male

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I work at Mental Health Cooperative and also serve on the Board of Directors for NAMI Davidson County.



Michelle Southard

Community and Population Health Program Manager

Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Brief Biography

I currently serve as a Community and Population Health Program Manager at Vanderbilt University Medical Center's (VUMC) Office of Health Equity. In this role, I lead and support multiple initiatives to prevent and address health inequities among historically marginalized, minoritized, and socially disadvantaged populations.

Through the comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment process, I collaborate with VUMC's community hospitals in Coffee and Wilson counties, local health departments and health councils, community organizations, and community members to identify gaps and develop coordinated, multi-sector strategies to bridge those gaps. This work has deepened my knowledge in analyzing systemic barriers and facilitating cross-sector solutions.

I began my 14-year journey at VUMC as a mental health specialist in the Adult Emergency Department, caring for patients experiencing mental health crises and facilitating their transitions to appropriate levels of care.

I then transitioned into the role of Homeless Housing Navigator with VUMC's Homeless Health Services program led by Dr. Sheryl Fleisch. Over six years in this role, I achieved permanent housing for 77 individuals. To our knowledge, I was the first homeless housing navigator within a U.S. academic medical center. My responsibilities included building partnerships to coordinate services, analyzing data to guide research, and presenting findings to leadership.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I would have been honored if I had been nominated three years ago before transitioning into my current Office of Health Equity role, but I wouldn't have been ready. I needed to take a step back from direct care and see the issues from a macro level. In my current position as a program manager, I have cultivated critical skills in community needs assessment, data analysis, and multi-sector collaboration that are essential for evaluating systemic issues and developing sustainable solutions.

Drawing from my own lived experience with homelessness as a child, I understand the profound human impact it can have. My background in program management, navigating housing and community resources, and advancing healthcare equity provides me with unique insights into the personal struggles of homelessness and the need for a person-centered approach.

I am excited to bring to the council my experience transitioning individuals into permanent housing and an equity-centered approach to driving meaningful progress. Leveraging my skills in needs assessment, data analysis, and cross-sector coordination, I aim to develop innovative strategies that address policies and systems perpetuating disparities to create equitable paths to housing for all.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

My experience working to address homelessness spans over a decade at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC). Early in my career, I served as a mental health specialist in the Adult Emergency Department, where I witnessed firsthand the cyclical relationship between housing instability and health outcomes.

Motivated to confront this issue, I transitioned into a Homeless Housing Navigator role within Vanderbilt's Homeless Health Services program under Dr. Sheryl Fleisch's leadership. While in this role, our team focused on educating the VUMC community to drive a deeper understanding of the complex challenges surrounding homelessness and its link to health outcomes.

Michelle Southard Continued

From 2019-2023, I was an active member of the Standards of Care Committee with the Davidson County Continuum of Care, contributing to establishing best practices for organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness. I have also participated in the annual Davidson County Point-in-Time (PIT) count for the past 8 consecutive years, taking a leadership role in managing a team for 3 of those years.

Alongside my current responsibilities, I have continued advocating for equitable housing as a core driver of health. I support and consult on VUMC internal initiatives, such as a Street Medicine pilot within the Adult Emergency Department.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

white, non-Latina, female

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

No known conflicts.



Molly Meinbresse

Associate Director of National Health Service Corps
Educational Programs

Association of Clinicians for the Underserved

Brief Biography

Molly Meinbresse was born and raised in Nashville, TN. She currently serves at the Associate Director of National Health Service Corps Educational Programs at the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU). She has provided training and technical assistance to clinicians in the community health center field for over 10 years. Prior to joining ACU, she supported health centers through research and clinical education activities at the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. In addition to her work with health centers at the national level, she spent several years providing and supervising direct services to individuals experiencing homelessness and other low-income and underinsured populations. She has extensive knowledge of the housing barriers and social determinants of health that marginalized populations face and expertise in building community partnerships to improve access to needed services.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

While I do not work in homeless services anymore, I am still very concerned and passionate about getting people off the streets and into housing. As homelessness is a very traumatizing experience, related to many physical and behavioral health issues as well as legal issues, I would like to support the ways in Nashville prevents and end homelessness. This means creating safe and affordable housing in Nashville (prioritizing Housing First models); collecting accurate data about the Nashville homeless population and needs to request funding/aid, maintaining funding and access to rental assistance (like Section 8), reducing barriers to housing, supporting community efforts to increase access to quality education and employment for all Nashvillians, and providing services and resources to unhoused individuals until they obtain housing. This also means addressing the structural, organizational, and individual ways that people experiencing homelessness are intentionally and unintentionally discriminated against and prevented from obtaining housing and accessing needed resources. I hope that my experiences in direct service, community collaborations, training, educational content development, and research regarding homelessness can support the Homelessness Planning Council in its efforts to address and eliminate homelessness in Nashville.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

Most recently, I worked with Park Center for 5 years providing and supervising homeless outreach services. In this job I became very familiar with and provided the following services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Nashville: housing navigation (including using the Coordinated Entry System and obtaining all the necessary forms of identification and paperwork to apply for Section 8), disability application assistance through the SOAR program, and connecting clients to medical care, behavioral health care, and social services. I understand the conditions that can lead to individuals becoming homeless and staying homeless, and worked very hard to help my clients reduce barriers and make steps towards housing, employment, gaining income, and good health. I also understand the disparities and structural challenges that individuals experiencing homelessness face and advocated for my clients when possible to address those challenges and access the resources they needed. While working at Park Center I chaired the CoC Data Committee and led Point in Time Count teams. Before working at Park Center, I worked for the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. I worked with individuals experiencing homelessness, service providers at Health Care for the Homeless projects, researchers, and policymakers across the county to develop educational materials and research projects on evidence-based and promising practices regarding the care of individuals experiencing homelessness. During this time, I helped start the Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) at the Neighborhood Health HCH project in Nashville and led a national study of violence victimization among people

Molly Meinbresse Continued

experiencing homelessness. The Neighborhood Health CAB was one of the sites that participated in the study and the results are published in the journal Violence and Victims - <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24672998/>. Over the last 15 years, I have volunteered at emergency cold-weather shelters and have participated in night-time, cold weather canvassing on the streets and in camps.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White non-Hispanic/Latinx, cisgender woman

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

Previously worked at Park Center providing homeless outreach services



Patrick Frogge

Attorney, Executive Director

Tennessee District Public Defenders Conference

Brief Biography

Attorney, Executive Director, Tennessee District Public Defenders Conference (2016 - present) Instructor, Nashville School of Law (2018 - present) previously partner, Bell, Tennent & Frogge, (2007- 2016) Assistant Public Defender in Davidson County Public Defenders Office (2001-2005) Judicial Law Clerk (1999-2001), JD, Fordham Law (1999), BS Political Science, TSU, (1995), Staff Member, Room in the Inn, (1995-1996), Volunteer, Room in the Inn (1992 - present). Married to Amy Frogge since 2002, two children Anna (19) Jack (17) and multiple rescue pets.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

To help if I am able. My career has been focused on helping indigent clients, usually navigating legal issues. I may have a unique perspective that could be helpful.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

Before law school I was a staff member at Room in the Inn, but I went to law school to become a Public Defender so I could have more impact. As a younger lawyer, I represented thousands of unhoused individuals, Now, as Tennessee's Chief Public Defender, my focus is on bringing resources to the same population. I have grown my agency with that in mind, and I have created a statewide Social Worker Program to bring wraparound services to the indigent accused.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White male

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

As noted above, I previously worked for Room in the Inn, as did my wife. Currently, my daughter is on staff there.



Rev. RJ Robles

Executive Director

Worker's Dignity (Dignidad Obrera)

Brief Biography

Rev. RJ Robles is now the Executive Director of Worker's Dignity (Dignidad Obrera). They hold a Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt University and have worked as a trauma informed case manager and outreach worker for over a decade in both the nonprofit and healthcare sectors. One of RJ's most notable work was the launching of the Trans Buddy Program, a transgender healthcare peer to peer support program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He currently serves on the board of Nashville's LaunchPad and Trans Aid Nashville. As an ordained Christian minister, Rev. RJ actively serves the Social Justice Ministry of New Covenant Christian Church, in North Nashville. In their spare time, RJ enjoys spending time with their partner, reading, and writing poetry.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

I'd like to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council as an individual with lived experience and also having been a healthcare professional for several years in my professional career. I know what it's like as a person to have survived homelessness. I also bring a multitude of voices into the room whom need advocating, especially those in the margins of the margins. As someone who embodies intersectional social identities, I may contribute to the council from those standpoints. Additionally, as a loyal public servant and community organizer, I am committed to the wellbeing of unhoused individuals in Nashville and in TN as a whole. I carry multiple talents and wish to contribute these to this council in continued service.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I have worked tirelessly as a case manager and street outreach professional. Having volunteered with Open Table Nashville and LaunchPad towards the beginnings of the start of those organizations locally, to visiting different encampment sites in town and providing bus passes, water, hygiene products, etc. while also connecting people to HMIS through Metro's Office of Homeless Services. I have worked at Park Center where I learned the ins and outs of homeless outreach. I have also in my own personal time supported unhoused individuals selling the Contributor around town, passing out Where to Turn to in Nashville booklets, and always being available to my community when called for in moments of crisis. I have specifically financially supported transgender, undocumented, unhoused individuals in need of much more support than what this current state and city is offering these marginalized individuals.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

Yes

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

I am an Afro- Puerto Rican, transgender male/masculine person living in the U.S. southern diaspora.

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I currently serve the board of LaunchPad Nashville.



Stephanie Cooper

Assistant Director of the Office of Wellness and Employment

TN Dept of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

Brief Biography

I spent 8 years working in community mental health in Nashville, TN, 5 of these years were spent exclusively with individuals experiencing homelessness as well as a behavioral health disorder. I worked with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families working with HMIS, outreach, as well as Coordinated Entry. I then started the Keys to Recovery program, a SAMHSA GBHI grant, working with individuals with substance use disorders and experience issues with housing. During these years I was on the Veteran Committee and served as the Vice Chair of the HMIS Committee while working to move Davidson County in the direction of an open system, allowing for HMIS data sharing. I took over as Chair of the HMIS committee and left this position when I joined the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. I have been a member of the PEC since December 2021. I currently am the Assistant Director of the Office of Wellness and Employment for the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Why do you want to serve on the Homelessness Planning Council?

Though I do not work directly with individuals experiencing homelessness anymore, I continue to advocate for this community. I joined the PEC to continue to work with this community and work to make a more effective system that moves individuals through quickly but also prioritizing their choice. I want to continue to reduce barriers and make sure everyone has access to the resources they need.

Tell us about your experience working to address homelessness and/or support people experiencing homelessness.

I worked with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, served on the Veterans Committee, was Vice Chair/Chair of the HMIS committee where we worked towards an open HMIS system to allow for data sharing, served as the agency representative for Centerstone (as the voting member) for all General CoC meetings. have served on the PEC since December 2021, and participated in the annual Point in Time count for three years. In my current role I advocate for supported employment programs as well as self-management/wellness workshops being integrated into programs working with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Do you have lived experience of homelessness (past or present)?

No

Please share how you identify related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

White female, non-Hispanic

Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest (relationships, service on agency boards, previous employers, etc.)

I previously worked for Centerstone, left in November 2021. They were never a CoC funded agency but was a member of the CoC.