2022

UNSHELTERED Point in Time Count Implementation Guide

FOR LOCAL COUNT LEADS AND VOLUNTEERS

River Valleys CoC
Together. Ending homelessness.

Point in Time (PIT) Count Basics

What is the Point in Time Count?

The Point-in-Time Count is a one-day, statistically reliable, unduplicated count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families across the United States.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that each Continuum of Care (CoC) region conduct a count at the end of January every year. Conducting a Point-in-Time Count is important for all communities. The count provides a snapshot of who is homeless on a given night. This information can be used to plan local homeless assistance systems, to tailor programs to meet existing needs, and to raise public awareness of homelessness.

At any one time, there are hundreds of individuals and families in shelter or living without shelter in the River Valleys CoC region. Only by knowing who, where, and how many people are experiencing homeless can we plan and identify the resources needed to best serve the most vulnerable, and ultimately move families and individuals into permanent housing.

Join us to make a difference in the lives of homeless men, women, and children throughout River Valleys CoC by taking part in the homeless census.

View data and reports from past and current River Valleys CoC PIT counts at http://www.threeriverscap.org/continuum- of-care/data-information-on-homelessness.

Why do we conduct a Point in Time Count?

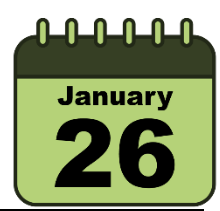
- **People**. Because there are over 1,600 households who experience homelessness annually in our region.
- **Knowledge.** The PIT Count provides agencies and community partners with important data on homelessness –critical for targeting services and applying for federal and state grants.
- **Compliance.** The PIT Count is mandated for all communities by HUD. The data is used to report to the U.S. Congress, measure progress on State Heading Home Plan goals, and support local planning decisions.
- **Funding.** Results of the count can lead to millions of dollars for local agencies working to end homelessness.
- **Action.** Awareness of the scope and the details of the problem provides the knowledge needed to act.
- **Results.** Ending homelessness benefits everyone.

What happens during the PIT Count?

- A count of unsheltered persons (on the street, in a vehicle, in a hand-built structure, etc.)
- A count of sheltered persons (in emergency shelters, using hotel/motel vouchers, in transitional housing)
- Changes in 2022:
    - Both sheltered and unsheltered locations are included. There is no waiver in 2022.
    - Improved reporting form for DV programs and other non-HMIS participating agencies.
    - New guidance for counts that occur within the borders of a Native nation.

Can it be more than a count?

Yes! We encourage local groups to use it as an outreach opportunity. Interaction during the PIT Count is a great starting point in developing relationships that help unsheltered persons find housing that meets their needs. Make sure volunteers have information about local emergency shelters, warming centers, and Coordinated Entry access points to share with people.



When is the Point in Time Count?

The official PIT Count date for this year is the night of January 26, 2022.

How is the Unsheltered PIT Count conducted?

Surveys may be conducted between the night of Wednesday, January 26 and 5pm on Wednesday, February 2. Communities in the River Valleys CoC region may conduct the count of individuals homeless on the night of January 26 in several ways:

- Street outreach-based count between sunset on January 26 and sunrise on January 27.
- Event-based count (Project Community Connect) on January 27 or 28.
- Service-based count Surveys of homeless clients coming into participating agencies between January 27 and February 2 that ask about the night of Wednesday, January 26.
- Coordinated Entry list outreach between January 27 and February 2. The survey should be conducted with households on the priority list if the household hasn't already been surveyed through other methods.

Who is involved in the Unsheltered PIT Count?

Local CoCs are required to conduct the PIT Count. Since a CoC is an informal and voluntary planning body, anyone interested in ending homelessness can be involved in the CoC or in the PIT Count. In Minnesota, the 10 CoC regions have partnered together with the State of Minnesota to do the PIT Count statewide with the same forms and processes. (This makes it easier for agencies that serve multiple CoC regions to do the count. It also provides valuable data on a statewide level.) Agencies involved in their local CoC help to implement the count in their communities.

Homeless Response Teams (HRTs) in each county in southeast and south central Minnesota are the point people for the PIT Count in their county. HRTs and other local partners are encouraged the think broadly about who can/should be involved in the PIT Count, inviting all who have contact with people experiencing homelessness or who have been homeless themselves. Your local contact list may include:

- Formerly homeless individuals
- County Human Services
- Mental Health Centers and crisis teams
- Police Department/Sherriff's Office
- HRA (agency that manages rental subsidies)
- Places of worship/ministerial or interfaith associations
- Food shelves and community meal programs
- Head Start/Pre-K and after-school programs
- School homeless liaisons, teachers, and social workers
- College/Technical school social workers
- Library workers
- Downtown business districts/beautification committees
- Hospital and clinic staff
- Managers and security staff at 24-hour restaurants/businesses or campgrounds
- Public transit drivers

Survey forms and materials

- Statewide forms, video training, and guides are available at https://www.hmismn.org/point-in-time-count.

Questions? Contact:

- **Your county-level Homeless Response Team lead.** If you do not know your lead, contact your local community action agency to find out who it is. Community action agencies are: Three Rivers Community Action, Semcac, and Minnesota Valley Action Council.
- **CoC Coordinator, Jennifer Prins.** Email: jennifer.prins@rivervalleyscoc.org

Street Outreach-Based Count Guidance

Key Components of an Outreach-Based Count

With a service-based count, communities use their usual service access points to survey all persons experiencing homelessness in the community during a multi-day survey period. During the survey period, surveyors are still asking about where the person stayed on the designated PIT Count night, Wednesday, January 26, 2022. (This is done in place of a street-based count where volunteers physically visit streets and other known locations where people experiencing homelessness are located.)

Best practices for service-based counts are to:

1) Use experienced volunteers and staff, and work in pairs or teams during the count,
2) Select key locations ahead of time and assign surveyors to each location. Document any locations added on the count night,
3) Follow all applicable public health guidance for your community to keep participants and surveyors safe, and
4) Connect survey participants to available homeless housing/services via Coordinated Entry.

Roles of the HRT and/or Community Lead

- Recruit service agencies to be survey sites
- Train surveyors and other volunteers (or ensure participation in CoC training)

Recruiting Partners

Partners for street outreach-based counts include agencies that have staff or volunteers out in the community overnight. The most likely partners are law enforcement, public transit, campus security, mall management/security, etc. Be sure to engage these partners as early as possible to provide training and build on-going partnerships If necessary, seek volunteers. Try to identify and secure participating outreach partners at least 15 days in advance.

Service locations for the count may include:

- Public transit
- Mall, business, or campus security
- Law enforcement
- Youth outreach programs
- Veteran outreach programs
- Other outreach programs
- Public health (for personal protective equipment and guidance)

Training Surveyors

As a local lead for your outreach-based count, you will be responsible for training surveyors for the overnight count. You may use whatever training time or method is most effective for you and your surveyors. Basic training components we recommend are:

- PIT Count Basics (what we're doing and why)
- Respecting and protecting the privacy of survey respondents
- Using the survey forms
- State health department and local health guidance for surveyor and participant safety
- Who to go to with questions during the count period

Other ideas and suggestions for your training:

- Review all documents in this HRT/Local Toolkit. A PowerPoint presentation and survey forms are available for your on-site training. Contact Jennifer with questions or specific training dates when materials are needed.
- If gathering survey volunteers is difficult, contact Jennifer about using the River Valleys CoC Zoom line for your training.

Collecting and Reporting Data

Outreach-based count surveyors can collect surveys until sunrise on the morning of January 27, 2022. Surveys may be conducted with homeless individuals either on paper or by using the online survey form, but all surveys are submitted electronically by the agency. Prior to the count period, leaders of outreach-based count locations should share copies of all survey forms and instructions or scripts for participating agencies to use during the event.

- If you use the online form, your information will be collected and reported immediately. You will need to ensure that computers with internet access are available for surveyors to conduct the surveys electronically. We also recommend that survey sites save the link(s) for the survey form(s) as favorites for easy access.
- If you choose to use paper forms for your local count, you and your local count leads are responsible for ensuring that 1) the information from the paper forms are submitted via the online survey link by Friday, February 4, and 2) respondent personal information on paper forms is secured and disposed of properly.

Using the Observation Tool: In some circumstances, a survey cannot be completed with someone experiencing homelessness. In an outreach-based count, this may occur when someone is sleeping or when someone refuses to complete the survey after having identified as experiencing homelessness. In these limited circumstances, an Observation Tool may be used to count each person and report some basic demographics. Use caution with the observation tool. Assumptions about gender, race, or age may not be accurate. And, not everyone sleeping in their car is experiencing homelessness. Discuss with your local team the circumstances in your community and how you will decide to report observations.

Connecting to Coordinated Entry

Access/Assessment Sites for Coordinated Entry (CE) and Non-Access/Assessment Sites will likely be part of an outreach-based count. The process for connecting to CE varies slightly depending on the agency's role with CE.

Access/Assessment Sites: When surveying someone for the count, surveyors should ask if respondents have been assessed for coordinated entry. A sample script is provided to guide this conversation. It may be helpful during the count period for sites to have access to HMIS to verify if people have been placed onto the priority list.

- If an individual **has been** assessed for coordinated entry, assessors (or surveyors) should ask if any information has changed, e.g., household size, where they are staying, or contact information. Update any changed information as needed in HMIS or if you do not have access to HMIS, email Katherine at Katherine.cross@rivervalleyscoc.org with the updates.
- If an individual **has not been** assessed for coordinated entry and they would like to be, proceed with the coordinated entry assessment (to be conducted by a trained assessor). We recommend that this assessment location be private but near the survey location so it is easy for participants to move to assessment.

Once the coordinated entry assessment has been complete, make sure to give the CE receipt to the assessed individual and if possible, make a copy to keep with the assessment. It is ideal if the assessment can be entered live while speaking with the individual. If not, keep assessment and ROIs in a secure location until assessment can be entered into HMIS.

Non-Access/Assessment Sites: When surveying someone for the count, surveyors should ask if respondents have been assessed for coordinated entry. If an individual **has been** assessed for coordinated entry, assessors (or surveyors) should ask if any information has changed, e.g., household size, where they are staying, or contact information. Send updates to Katherine at Katherine.cross@rivervalleyscoc.org. If an individual **has not been** assessed for coordinated entry and they would like to be, refer to attached Access Site list to reference the closest site where the individual could be assessed. Please immediately connect them via phone to the access site so they can make arrangements with the site to be assessed for coordinated entry.

Questions? Contact:

Your local Homeless Response Team lead.
CoC Coordinator, Jennifer Prins. Email: jennifer.prins@rivervalleyscoc.org

Service-Based Count Guidance

Key Components of a Service-Based Count

With a service-based count, communities use their usual service access points to survey all persons experiencing homelessness in the community during a multi-day survey period. During the survey period, surveyors are still asking about where the person stayed on the designated PIT Count night, Wednesday, January 26, 2022. (This may be done along with an outreach-based count or in place of it in areas where a street outreach-based count cannot reasonably cover the geographic area.)

Best practices for service-based counts are to:

1) Select key service locations ahead of time and identify surveyors for each location,
2) Follow all applicable public health guidance for your community to keep participants and surveyors safe,
3) Conduct broad outreach before the count night, especially for groups that are less likely to seek services,
4) Ensure that intake and service staff at all agencies ask all who enter where they stayed on the specific count night (not just "last night"),
5) Limit the survey period to a week or less, and
6) Connect survey participants to available homeless housing/services via Coordinated Entry.

Roles of the HRT and/or Community Lead

- Select your survey sites and period of data collection
- Recruit service agencies to be survey sites
- Train surveyors and other volunteers (or ensure participation in CoC training)

Recruiting Partners

Partners for service-based counts can be any agency in the community where persons experiencing homelessness may seek assistance or day-time respite. Consider the services most needed by people experiencing homelessness in your community and try to secure confirmation from those sites to conduct surveys. If necessary, seek volunteers. Try to identify and secure participating sites at least 15 days in advance so that sites can be advertised. Also consider how volunteer surveyors may be co- located at other agencies to increase coverage when staff aren't available to conduct the count. Service locations for the count may include:

- Dentists and mobile health clinics
- Workforce center or career counselors
- Culturally-specific programs/agencies
- Places of worship
- Head Start and school enrollment staff
- Food shelves and community meal programs
- Veteran programs
- Mental health and chemical health programs
- Public Housing Agency or HRA
- Public health agency

Training Surveyors

As a local lead for your event-based count, you will be responsible for training surveyors at the event. You may use whatever training time or method is most effective for you and your surveyors. Basic training includes:

- PIT Count Basics (what we're doing and why)
- Respecting and protecting the privacy of survey respondents
- Using the survey forms
- State health department and local health guidance for surveyor and participant safety
- Who to go to with questions during the count period

Other ideas and suggestions for your training:

- Review all documents in this HRT/Local Toolkit. A PowerPoint presentation and survey forms are available for your on-site training. Contact Jennifer with questions or specific training dates when materials are needed.
- If gathering survey volunteers is difficult, contact Jennifer about using the River Valleys CoC Zoom line for your training.

Collecting and Reporting Data

Service-based count locations can collect surveys until Wednesday, February 2 as long as surveys are asking about where people stayed on the night of Wednesday January 26, 2022. Surveys may be conducted with homeless individuals either on paper or by using the online survey form, but all surveys are submitted electronically by the agency. Prior to the count period, leaders of outreach-based count locations should share copies of all survey forms and instructions or scripts for participating agencies to use during the count.

- If you use the online form, your information will be collected and reported immediately. You will need to ensure that computers with internet access are available for surveyors to conduct the surveys electronically. We also recommend that survey sites save the link(s) for the survey form(s) as favorites for easy access.
- If you choose to use paper forms for your local count, you and your local count leads are responsible for ensuring that 1) the information from the paper forms are submitted via the online survey link by Friday, February 4, and 2) respondent personal information on paper forms is secured and disposed of properly.

Using the Observation Tool: In some circumstances, a survey cannot be completed with someone experiencing homelessness. In a service-based count, this may occur when someone refuses to complete the survey after having identified as experiencing homelessness. In these limited circumstances, an Observation Tool may be used to count each person and report some basic demographics. Use caution with the observation tool. Assumptions about gender, race, or age may not be accurate.

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Access/Assessment Sites: When surveying someone for the count, surveyors should ask if respondents have been assessed for coordinated entry. A sample script is provided to guide this conversation. It may be helpful during the count period for sites to have access to HMIS to verify if people have been placed onto the priority list.

- If an individual **has been** assessed for coordinated entry, assessors (or surveyors) should ask if any information has changed, e.g., household size, where they are staying, or contact information. Update any changed information as needed in HMIS or if you do not have access to HMIS, email Katherine at Katherine.cross@rivervalleyscoc.org with the updates.
- If an individual **has not been** assessed for coordinated entry and they would like to be, proceed with the coordinated entry assessment (to be conducted by a trained assessor). We recommend that this assessment location be private but near the survey location so it is easy for participants to move to assessment.

Once the coordinated entry assessment has been complete, make sure to give the CE receipt to the assessed individual and if possible, make a copy to keep with the assessment. It is ideal if the assessment can be entered live while speaking with the individual. If not, keep assessment and ROIs in a secure location until assessment can be entered into HMIS.

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Questions? Contact:

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CoC Coordinator, Jennifer Prins. Email: Email: jennifer.prins@rivervalleyscoc.org

Event-Based Count Guidance

Key Components of an Event-Based Count

With an event-based count, communities use a Project Community Connect or resource fair event to attract persons experiencing homelessness in the community to a specific location where PIT Count surveys are conducted. (This is a variation of a service-based count and instructions are essentially the same.)

Best practices for event-based counts are to:

1) Follow all applicable public health guidance for your community to keep participants and surveyors safe,
2) Conduct broad outreach before the count night, especially for groups that are less likely to seek services,
3) Ensure that the event site is neutral, accessible, and has access to public transportation (preferably free),
4) Provide a wide range of services and information for different populations, including youth,
5) Use a single entry/exit point to best identify persons experiencing homelessness and complete surveys,
6) Hold the event on the day following the night of the count (i.e. if the night of January 26 is the date of the count, schedule the event for the morning/day of January 27), and
7) Connect PIT Count survey participants to designated homeless housing/services via Coordinated Entry (and update Coordinated Entry information if available).

Roles of the HRT and/or Community Lead

- Select your event location and time
- Recruit partners and volunteers
- Train surveyors and other volunteers

Recruiting Partners

Partners for event-based counts can be approached as you would for a resource fair. Have a sign-up for the booths and survey/navigation volunteers at least 30 days in advance. Consider the services most needed by people experiencing homelessness in your community and bring those resources, organizations and businesses together for the event.

Partners may contribute products like gift cards, socks, hygiene packs, or printing services. They may also donate time and services such as haircuts, food service, intake/greeting, child care, interpretation, application assistance, and more. Partners may include:

- MNsure navigators
- Hair salons
- Public transit
- Dentists and mobile health clinics
- County license center or vital statistics office (for IDs and documentation)
- Workforce center or career counselors
- Culturally-specific programs/agencies
- Places of worship (volunteers, donations)
- College nursing/social work programs (volunteers)
- Head Start and school enrollment staff
- Food shelves
- Youth services and Veteran programs
- Domestic violence services
- Public Housing Agency or HRA
- Coordinated Entry Assessment site

Training Surveyors

As a local lead for your event-based count, you will be responsible for training surveyors at the event. You may use whatever training time or method is most effective for you and your surveyors. Basic training includes:

- PIT Count Basics (what we're doing and why)
- Respecting and protecting the privacy of survey respondents
- Using the survey forms
- State health department and local health guidance for surveyor and participant safety
- Who to go to with questions at the event

Continued >>

Other ideas and suggestions for your training:

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Connecting to Coordinated Entry

Access/Assessment Sites for Coordinated Entry (CE) and Non-Access/Assessment Sites will likely be part of am event- based count. For event-based count, we strongly recommend identifying one or two local Coordinated Assessment Sites to offer CE assessments and record updates on site during the event. If a local assessing agency cannot assist, please contact Katherine at Katherine.cross@rivervalleyscoc.org for assistance.

Access/Assessment Sites: When surveying someone for the count, surveyors should ask if respondents have been assessed for coordinated entry. A sample script is provided to guide this conversation. It may be helpful during the count period for sites to have access to HMIS to verify if people have been placed onto the priority list.

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