Point-in-Time
Planning and Implementation
Guidelines

Webinar
June 25, 2014

Overview of the Point in Time Count

Description: A Point-In-Time, or PIT, count is a statistically reliable, unduplicated count of people experiencing homelessness during a designated one-night period. A PIT is intended to capture a minimum amount of information on the homeless population in order to create a "snapshot" of what homelessness looks like in a neighborhood, city, or state. The data collected through the Point-in-Time process is reported in the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) that is provided to the U.S. Congress. In Wisconsin, all HUD and ETH funded programs are required to conduct the count twice a year on the last Wednesday of January and July.

This count is intended to include persons that are homeless and are living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, domestic violence shelters, safe havens for the homeless or who are unsheltered living on the streets or any other place not mean for human habitation in the entire State of Wisconsin:

- Balance of State
- Milwaukee
- Racine
- Madison

Purpose: According to HUD, the most important reason for collecting information on the number and characteristics of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness is program and system planning.

In addition, the sheltered and unsheltered count data can be used for:

- Service Planning
- Demonstrating need for resources in the CoC application
- Raising public awareness
- Accurately measuring and identifying the needs of populations that are hardest to serve (chronically homeless)
- Measuring performance in eliminating homelessness, particularly chronic homelessness
- Justifying requests for additional funding
- Complying with reporting requirements

Training: This training is designed for people who do not have extensive experience with planning for and implementing a Point in Time Count in their community. The following topics will be highlighted:

1) Planning for the Sheltered Count
2) Planning Process for the Unsheltered Count
3) Who Should be Included in the PIT
4) Who Should Not be Included in the PIT
5) Reference Materials

(1) Planning for the Sheltered Count

Planning for the Sheltered Count for the PIT requires a bit of preparation in terms of communicating with all service providers listed on the Housing Inventory Chart. For Wisconsin Service Point Users it is important that data entry staff are provided WISP detail reports prior to the PIT data deadline so they have sufficient time to do any needed data cleanup. For Non-WISP agencies, it is important that the required data collection form and protocol is provided prior to the night of the count.

(2) Planning Process for the Unsheltered Count

Organization of a local Point in Time Count

Each community required to conduct a PIT count should have a PIT team or committee for planning and executing a PIT street count. Facilitate as many meetings as your community needs prior to the scheduled street count. Creating a PIT Work Plan is a useful tool to organize the planning process. A Work Plan typically includes tasks, the person(s) responsible, deadlines and progress on the tasks. Meetings to organize the PIT Event are typically focused on planning to:

A. Establish Methodology
B. Determine the number of shifts and times of the street count
C. Secure Support
D. Identify Locations
E. Circulate Public Announcements
F. Prepare for the Night of The Count
G. Volunteer Orientation/Training
H. The Actual Night of the Count

A: Establishing Methodology

The methodology used for the count depends on a variety of factors, including the size and characteristics of the community and the resources available for the count.

I. Three Basic Approaches to Collecting Data on Unsheltered Homeless People:
1) Simple Counts done in non-shelter locations
2) Counts with an interview component
3) Counts based on homeless people using non-shelter homeless services and mainstream social service agencies.

Recommended / Most Commonly Used Approaches

According to HUD, "it is advisable to perform a basic count and observation combined with an interview component for your first count."

The most commonly used method in Wisconsin includes the Public Places Count that uses the basic technique of a count and observation of homeless people living in public places that are not shelter or other service sites. This method includes:

- Identifying known locations where people living on the streets are known to sleep, planning for complete coverage or using a combination of both.
- Using an observation tool that captures the HUD required data and aides in un-duplicating the count
- Identifying areas of the community to be covered and assigning groups to specific areas that prevents surveyors from crossing each other's areas.

A Rural Perspective

The complete coverage of street/public places count method is best for those communities that have large numbers of "visible" homeless or known locations where homeless tend to congregate.   However, it can be modified for rural communities.

There are seven steps to implementing a Rural Street Count:
1. Identify Locations
2. Send out Notifications to prepare the community
3. Finalize strategy for street count/public places count
4. Prepare for the night of the count
5. Organize and provide training for everyone participating in the street count
6. Assign volunteers in pairs or teams. Select a team leader with experience
7. Prepare for the actual night of the count

B: Determining the number of shifts and times of street count

The July 2014 Point in Time Count is scheduled to occur night of Wednesday, July 30th from sundown until the morning of Thursday, July 31st at sunrise.

The set time a community conducts the count will vary, depending on what works best for that community, but must fall into the "night" of the count definition that begins at sunset on the date of the count and ends at sunrise on the following day.   While the sun will set at 8:15 pm on July 30, 2014, people living on the streets will be more likely to be settled in their sleeping location later in the evening.   According to HUD, "the best practice is to conduct the public places count of unsheltered homeless people on the same night as the count of people in shelters *and* when the shelters are closed (i.e. in the middle of the night). The goal is to minimize the risk of double counting homeless persons."

In order to be as consistent as possible in Wisconsin, CoCs are asked to conduct the count after 10:00 pm and are highly encouraged to count until at least 4:00 am. Once a community picks a time it is also recommended that same time frame be used in subsequent counts in order to compare data and identify any trends.

Examples of Statewide Counties "Set Count" Times for July 2014:

County	Set Time	Number of Shifts
Fox Valley	9:00 pm to 6:00 am	3
Green Bay	9:00 pm to 6:00 am	3
Janesville	11:30 pm to 4:00 am	1
Eau Claire	10:00 pm to 12:00 am	1
Kenosha	10:00 pm to 6:00 am	2

C: Securing Support/Collaboration

A fundamental component of the PIT Street Count is to obtain community support and engage in collaborating with other service providers. Engaging agencies and people outside of the homeless service arena in the PIT planning or counting process provides the opportunity for collaboration and raising public awareness about homelessness in communities. Creating an on-going list of community agencies and individual members of the community insures continuity in community support between scheduled PIT events. Several examples of collaboration:

- Local, county and city government
- Law enforcement
- Homeless School District Liaison

- Runaway and Homeless Youth (RYH) programs
- People who currently or formerly experienced homelessness
- Community members

D: Identify Locations

- Consult with outreach workers, people who are or have been homeless, shelter or   services staff, police, businesses, community development organizations, faith-based   groups, housing inspectors, parks and recreation staff, etc.
- Review where homeless individuals were found during the last count (known locations).
- Develop a list of places/locations to visit
- Organize areas to be covered

E: Circulate Public Announcements

There are many different ways to announce the Point in Time and recruit volunteers. Several examples of methods used in Wisconsin to announce and register volunteers for the count:

- Post registration or save the date PIT Flyers in the community at grocery stores, libraries, restaurants, gas stations, etc.

- Publish a Press Release or Article in your local Newspaper

- Use a free online registration site:

    - Eventbrite: www.eventbrite.com
    - Sign-up Genius: http://www.signupgenius.com

F: Prepare for the Night of the Count

- Develop written guidelines for the volunteers/staff;
- Make copies of releases and data collection forms;
- Create an information sheet/packet to hand out to people encountered   during the night of the count;
- Collect maps and create directions to the various locations;
- Develop a list and schedule of who will go where
- Develop communication strategies (cell phones, central number, radios/walkie talkies) for the night of the count;
- Collect pencils, clipboards, flashlights, identification badges to volunteers;
- Assemble care packages for people encountered the night of the count (e.g. socks, blankets, gift cards, food);
- Acquire beverages and food for the volunteers (typically through donations)
- For communities that have 211, make sure that they are aware of the Point in Time Count and are keeping track of individuals who call that are homeless. To ensure that the individual is not counted twice, make sure that they get the name and date of birth.

G. Volunteer Orientation/Training

It is important that one of your goals as a PIT Team/Committee is to make volunteers feel welcome, and understand the PIT purpose and process. The following is a list of topics to consider including in training:

- Introduction/Description of the PIT
- PIT Guidelines that include:
  - Ground rules
  - Safety practices
  - What to do in an emergency

- Volunteer Release and Confidentiality Form
- Observation Tool and Instructions
- Location/Site Form
- Information about the capacity of local shelters: where to transport or refer people in need of shelter.

H: The Night of the Count

- Provide or make sure volunteers/staff are equipped with pencils, clipboards, forms, flashlights, identification, incentives for people they encounter, care packages;
- Provide coffee, snacks, and food for returning volunteers/staff – if possible;
- Collect all forms as soon as the teams return and immediately review for any problems;
- De-brief volunteers as soon as possible after the completion of the count;
- Keep notes of where volunteers/staff did and did not observe people to use for count planning in the future.

(3) PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE PIT

Sheltered Count:

CoCs should include all individuals or families who meet the criteria described in paragraph <u>(1)(ii)</u> <u>of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 91.5 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule</u>.

> The definition includes individuals and families *"living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters), transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals"* on the night designated for the count. This also includes people residing in in Safe Haven projects.

REMINDER: Rapid Re-housing (RRH) is considered a permanent housing project. However, homeless households currently residing on the street, in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or Safe Haven, but are also enrolled in a RRH program and awaiting placement should be counted where they resided on the night of the count. RRH assisted households who are still unsheltered on the night of the count should be included as part of the unsheltered count.

Unsheltered Count:
CoCs should include all individuals or families who meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(i) of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 91.5 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule. This includes individuals and families *"with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground"* on the night designated for the count. CoCs will also need to collect more complete subpopulation information from unsheltered persons than what was collected in previous years.

(4) PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE PIT

Persons residing in the following settings on the night of the count are prohibited from being included in the sheltered or unsheltered PIT count:

A. Persons residing in PSH programs, including persons housed using HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers.
B. Persons residing in RRHD projects, funded in the FY2008 CoC Competition.
C. Persons counted in any location not listed on the HIC (e.g., staying in projects with beds/units not dedicated for persons who are homeless).
D. Persons temporarily staying with family or friends (i.e., "doubled-up" or "couch surfing").
E. Persons residing in housing they rent or own (i.e., permanent housing), including persons residing in rental housing with assistance from a RRH project on the night of the count.
F. Persons residing in institutions (e.g., jails, juvenile correction facilities, foster care, hospital beds, detox centers).

(5) REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Point-in-Time Manual, updated 1/13/14

A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People, Third Revision, January 2012
https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/counting_sheltered.pdf

A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, Second Revision, January 2008
https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/counting_unsheltered.pdf

You can access the 2012-2013 McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison Contact Information by District from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website at:
http://homeless.dpi.wi.gov/files/homeless/pdf/liaison-contacts.pdf

To view the current Wisconsin list of DHHS-Family & Youth Services Bureau list of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Grantees, go to page 19 of the following document.
https://onecpd.info/resources/documents/2013HICandPITGuidance_Youth.pdf

You can access the current list of Wisconsin Homeless and Runaway Youth Programs, Wisconsin Transitional Living Programs, and Second Chance Homes from the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS) website at: http://www.wahrs.org