

WI Balance of State CoC Point-In-Time Manual

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Overview of the Point-in-Time Count

Purpose of this Manual

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Methodology manual includes the policies and procedures for the Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care semi-annual Point-in-Time count. The purpose of the manual is to explain what the PIT is, why it is required, how to prepare for the count, what process should be used while counting, what documentation and data is required to be submitted and who is responsible for each step of the process.

What is the PIT Count?¹

A PIT count is a statistically reliable, unduplicated count of people experiencing homelessness during a designated one-night period. The four HUD-recognized Continuum of Care (CoCs) conduct this count on one particular night twice per year and encompass their entire designated geographic area. This count includes persons that are experiencing homeless and are living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, safe havens for the homeless, domestic violence shelters, or persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living on the streets or any other place not meant for human habitation. A PIT count is intended to capture a minimum amount of information on the homeless population to create a “snapshot” of what homelessness looks like in a neighborhood, city, or state.

Purpose of the PIT Count?

The data collected through the PIT count process is reported annually to Congress as part of the **Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR)**. The AHAR is used by Congress, HUD, other federal departments, and the general public to understand the nature and extent of homelessness. HUD’s PIT count data is an important measure of local and national progress related to preventing and ending homelessness. PIT data is also shared with the Wisconsin Department of Administration: Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources (DEHCR) and utilized to develop the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) for the WI Balance of State Continuum of Care (WIBOSCO).

¹ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

PIT count data and CoC efforts to produce an accurate count play a critical role in the annual CoC program Competition. HUD requires CoCs to submit PIT count data and information on the methodology used to generate the sheltered and unsheltered counts. HUD uses this information to ensure that the data is valid and reliable and then evaluates the progress a CoC is making on reducing homelessness as well as within specific subpopulations. Collecting valid and reliable data and making progress on reducing homelessness are scoring factors in HUD's CoC program Competition.

In addition to the federal requirements, the PIT Count also has an important part in local education and planning around the issue of homelessness in each community. The most important reason to collect information on the number and characteristics of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness is for program and system planning. To be responsible to the needs of people experiencing homelessness in a community, the continua need to understand how many individuals and families are being served by their homeless services system, as well as how many are unsheltered and still need access to services. Current and accurate data on the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in the community are useful for policy and planning decisions and enable the local continua and the CoC to adjust the types of services available according to need, resulting in more efficient use of limited resources. Having reliable local data on homelessness can also play a critical role in raising public awareness of the challenges facing people who are homeless and bolster efforts to garner additional public and private support.

Data collected on sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homeless can help individual service providers, the local continua, and the WIBOSCOC:

- Justify requests for additional resources;
- Raise public awareness of homelessness in the community;
- Plan future services geared toward meeting the needs of unsheltered people;
- Allocate resources across jurisdictions, service providers, or programs for different subgroups of persons experiencing homelessness;
- Analyze trends and measure performance toward preventing and ending homelessness; and
- Comply with reporting requirements from the WIBOSCOC, WI DEHCR, HUD, other funds, and local stakeholders.

Legal Requirements

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorized HUD to require CoCs to conduct PIT counts. Section 427(b)(3) states:

“Homeless Counts. – The Secretary shall not require that communities conduct an actual count of homeless persons other than those described in paragraphs (1) through (4) of section 103(a) of this Act.”

This statutory language established HUD’s authority to require PIT counts but limits the count to persons who are defined as living on the streets or in shelters (which is what section 103(a) paragraphs 1 through 4 define).

In the CoC Program interim rule HUD further clarified the requirement for conducting PIT counts. In the definition section HUD defines the PIT count as “count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons carried out on one night in the last 10 calendar days of January or at such other time as required by HUD” (24 CFR 578.3). HUD outlined CoC planning requirements in 24 CFR 578.7(c)(2):

“(2) Planning for and conducting, at least biennially, a point-in-time count of homeless persons within the geographic area that meets the following requirements:

- i. Homeless persons who are living in a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans must be counted as unsheltered homeless persons.
- ii. Persons living in emergency shelters and transitional housing projects must be counted as sheltered homeless persons.
- iii. Other requirements established by HUD by Notice.”

The Con Plan jurisdictions, which are States, local governments, or territories that receive Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME investment Partnerships (HOME), and/or Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) formula funding, are required to conduct a homeless needs assessment, per Section 105(b) of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act:

“A housing strategy submitted under this section shall be in a form that the Secretary determines to be appropriate for the assistance the jurisdiction may be provided and shall...

(2) Describe the nature and extent of homelessness, including rural homelessness within the jurisdiction, providing an estimate of the special needs of various categories of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including tabular representation of such information, and a description of the jurisdiction’s strategy for:

- (A) Helping low-income families avoid becoming homeless;

(B) Addressing the emergency shelter and transitional housing needs of homeless persons (including a brief inventory of facilities and services that meet such needs within that jurisdiction); and

(C) Helping homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing and independent living.”

Further, Con Plan jurisdictions are required to report on their compliance with the state and housing strategy, including actions taken as a result of the homeless need assessment, per section 108(a) of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act:

“Each participating jurisdiction shall annually review and report, in a form acceptable to the Secretary, on the progress it has made in carrying out its housing strategy, which report shall include an evaluation of the jurisdiction’s progress in meeting its goal established in section 12705(b)(15) of this title, and information on the number and types of households served, including the number of very low-income, low-income, and moderate-income persons served and the racial and ethnic status of persons served that will be assisted with funds made available.”

The homeless needs assessment requirements for local governments, including the requirement to use PIT count data, are stated in 24 CFR 91.205(c)(1):

“The plan must describe, in a form prescribed by HUD, the nature and extent of unsheltered and sheltered homelessness, including rural homelessness, within the jurisdiction. At a minimum, the recipient must use data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and data from the Point-in-Time (PIT) count conducted in accordance with HUD standards.

- (i) The description must include, for each category of homeless persons specified by HUD (including chronically homeless individuals and families, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth), the number of persons experiencing homelessness on a given night, the number of persons who experience homelessness each year, the number of persons who lose their housing and become homeless each year, the number of persons who exit homelessness each year, the number of days that persons experience homelessness, and other measures specified by HUD.
- (ii) The plan also must contain a brief narrative description of the nature and extent of homelessness by racial and ethnic group, to the extent information is available.”

Similarly, in 24 CFR 91.305(c)(1), States are required to submit a homeless needs assessment as part of their Con Plan process:

“The plan must describe, in a form prescribed by HUD, the nature and extent of homelessness, including rural homelessness, within the state.”

The description is identical to the requirements listed above 24 CFR 91.205(c)(1)(i) and (ii).

To fulfill the legal requirements stated above, further improve the quality and accuracy of PIT counts, ensure consistent PIT count practices across CoCs, and assist CoCs in selecting an appropriate count approach, HUD developed the following fourteen PIT count standards that CoCs must meet.²

HUD Standard No. 1: CoCs are responsible for planning and conducting, at least biennially, a PIT count of homeless persons within the geographic area that meets HUD’s requirements.

HUD Standard No. 2: The sheltered and unsheltered PIT counts must be conducted during the last 10 days in January and represent all homeless persons who were sheltered and unsheltered on a single night during that period.

HUD Standard No. 3: The final PIT count methodology must be approved by the CoC in accordance with the CoC’s governance charter.

HUD Standard No. 4: All CoCs should consult and collaborate with all Con Plan jurisdictions in the geographical boundary of the CoC, including those that do not have ESG funding, to assist the jurisdictions in submitting PIT count data that is relevant to completing their Con Plans.

HUD Standard No. 5: CoCs must provide PIT count data to the entity(ies) responsible for the Con Plan jurisdiction(s) associated with the CoC.

HUD Standard No. 6: CoCs must account for and report on all sheltered homeless people residing in the CoC through a census (complete coverage) or one or more sampling and extrapolation methods that are consistent with HUD standards and guidance. HUD will evaluate the nature and basis for estimation and extrapolation of CoC’s sheltered count in the annual CoC Program Competition.

HUD Standard No. 7: CoCs must be able to verify that the sheltered homeless people identified in the count are sheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

² PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

HUD Standard No. 8: CoCs should use client data already collected and entered in HMIS as the primary data source for the sheltered PIT count for emergency shelter, Safe Haven, and transitional housing projects that participate in HMIS.

HUD Standard No. 9: CoCs must account for and report on all unsheltered homeless people residing in the CoC's geography through a census (complete coverage) or one or more sampling and extrapolation methods that are consistent with HUD standards and guidance. HUD will evaluate the nature and basis for estimation and extrapolation of CoCs' unsheltered count in the annual CoC Program Competition.

HUD Standard No. 10: CoCs may exclude geographic areas where the CoC has determined that there are no unsheltered homeless people, including areas that are uninhabitable (e.g. deserts). CoCs must document the criteria and decision-making process used to identify and exclude specific geographic areas.

HUD Standard No. 11: CoCs must be able to verify that the unsheltered homeless people identified in the count are unsheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

HUD Standard No. 12: CoCs must ensure that during the PIT count homeless persons are only counted once. It is critical that the counting methods be coordinated to ensure that there is no double-counting. Therefore, CoCs must also collect sufficient information to be able to reliably deduplicate the PIT count (i.e. ensure that the same homeless persons was not counted more than once).

HUD Standard No. 13: Surveys of people for the sheltered or unsheltered count must be administered in a manner that protects participant privacy and safety, as well as the safety of the person completing the survey.

HUD Standard No. 14: CoCs are required to ensure that people conducting the PIT count, including project staff and community volunteers, are appropriate trained about count standards, data collection procedures, and protocols for privacy, security, and personal safety.

Who Is Responsible for the PIT Count?

The CoC is responsible for conducting the PIT, though with the large geography the CoC relies on each local homeless coalition to plan, implement and gather data/fix data issues for the PIT. The PIT should be a coalition-wide endeavor. To cover all of the territory that is required, program staff may not be enough, so having volunteers is necessary. Any agency who receives CoC or ESG funding is required to participate in the count and in the data review process that happens after the count itself. A coalition will choose who the PIT Lead will be, and they will be

the ones to take the lead in organizing the count, training and recruiting volunteers, be the point person after the count and review data of all coalition partners on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). They will work with WI Balance of State (BOS) staff and the HMIS Lead to ensure that the PIT was implemented successfully and the data are correct.

CoC Responsibilities

- Provide guidance and training on what the PIT count is, changes that HUD has made, how to collect data, the role of the PIT Lead and anything else that is pertinent to the PIT process.
- Provide updated resources to implement the PIT count and collect data. This includes:
 - Updated Surveys
 - Non-HMIS chart
 - HIC link
 - Deduplication chart
 - Post-PIT Survey
 - Unsheltered Letter Template
 - Submission of Locations Template
- Collect, review and collate the data from all of the WIBOSCO coalitions to share with HUD through the HDX and for the CoC and local coalitions to use locally.

HMIS Lead Responsibilities

- Update the HMIS reports as needed based on data standards changes.
- Run the reports for BOS staff to review.
- Assist local coalitions in making corrections to their data errors.

PIT Lead Responsibilities

- Lead the effort to organize the PIT, find volunteers, train volunteers and gather outreach materials for the overnight count.
- Provide education and work with community partners to expand the services-based count locations.
- Collect data from partner agencies.
- Be responsive to data corrections and ensure that all data is corrected by the deadlines established by the CoC.

Who gets counted?

There are two parts to the PIT count that occur on the night designated for the count: (1) Sheltered Count and the (2) Unsheltered Count.

For the **Sheltered** PIT count, the CoC must verify and include all individuals and families defined in 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule. This definition states:

“An individual or family 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.”

This includes persons residing in:

- emergency shelters
- transitional housing projects
- Safe Havens for the Homeless
- Domestic Violence Shelters
- Any hotel or motel voucher arrangement paid by a public or private agency because the person or family is homeless

NOTE: Rapid re-housing (RRH) is considered permanent housing. However, enrollment in RRH does not mean a household is permanently housed. Homeless households currently residing on the street, in an emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or transitional housing project, but who are also enrolled in a RRH program and awaiting placement should be counted based on where they resided on the night of the count.

For example:

- A person residing in an emergency shelter and enrolled in RRH must be counted in the PIT count for emergency shelter.
- A person staying in a place not meant for human habitation and enrolled in RRH must be counted in the PIT count for unsheltered.
- A person residing in an apartment assisted through RRH must not be counted in the PIT count.

NOTE: Unaccompanied youth that meet the criteria for sheltered as described above and who are NOT in foster care, wards of the state, or otherwise under government custody or supervision as of the night designated for the count should be included.

Persons enrolled in the TH project of a joint TH/RRH grant should be counted as sheltered and experiencing homelessness if they are enrolled in the project and do not yet have a housing move-in date. These people are included as sheltered and homeless and are counted in the PIT.

If Veterans are receiving temporary assistance through the VA's SSVF Emergency Housing Assistance resources on the night of the count, they also are included in the sheltered count.

For additional project types to include in the HIC and PIT, please refer to Appendix A.

HUD Standard No. 7: CoCs must be able to verify that the sheltered homeless people identified in the count are sheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

For the **Unsheltered** PIT count, the CoC must verify and include all individuals and families defined in 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule. This definition states:

"An individual or family 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."

This includes persons commonly found in the following circumstances:

- On the street
- In their vehicle
- In a tent, shanty, storage unit, or abandoned building
- In parks, campgrounds, or in the woods
- Any other place not meant for human habitation

HUD Standard No. 11: CoCs must be able to verify that the unsheltered homeless people identified in the count are unsheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

Who doesn't get counted?

The PIT count is designed to count a very specific population. As stated in the [Legal Requirements](#) section of this manual, section 427(b)(3) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act only allows HUD to require CoCs to count persons as defined in HUD Standard 7 and 11. Those definitions are listed in [Who Gets Counted](#) section of this manual. This means

that people who might otherwise be included in HUD's broader homeless definition (i.e. Category 2), are not included in the count because the law does not allow it.

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

- Persons counted in any location not listed on the Balance of State CoC's Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) – e.g. staying in projects with beds or units not dedicated for persons who are homeless.
- Persons residing in permanent housing (PH) programs, including persons housed using HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, Shelter Plus Care programs, or any other subsidized or unsubsidized permanent housing unit.
- Persons residing in Other Permanent Housing (OPH) programs, including persons in Grant and Per Diem (GPD) and Transition in Place (TIP) projects the night of the count.
- Persons temporarily staying with friends or family (i.e. doubled up or couch surfing). This includes youth defined as homeless by another Federal definition.
- Persons residing in housing they rent or own, including persons residing in rental housing with assistance from Section 8 housing choice voucher, Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), another subsidy program, or from a RRH project on the night of the count.
- Persons residing in an institution, including but not limited to: foster care, hospital or nursing home beds, mental health facilities, chemical dependency facilities, or criminal justice facilities (including juvenile detention, jail, or prison).

Counting People in Ambiguous Sleeping Locations

When people are displaced from housing, they use whatever sleeping arrangements that are available to them. In some instances, people are obviously unsheltered or housed and the person does not meet the definition of homelessness. In other situations, the housing status of people is ambiguous. HUD provides the following guidelines to assist in determining whether someone's sleeping situation should be included in the PIT count.

- Tents
 - Persons sleeping in tents are considered unsheltered if the tent is for an individual or single household
 - Persons sleeping in communally large tents are considered sheltered if it is located on a campus maintained by a government or other entity and provided barracks style sleeping accommodations for multiple individuals where toilets, showers, and communal food preparation or food services are provided.
- Vehicles

- Households sleeping in cars, trucks, boats and vans are counted as unsheltered. This includes people sleeping in their vehicles in safe parking programs, in designated areas, or on a campus that provides toilets, showers, and communal food preparation or food services.
- Recreational Vehicles (RVs) including camper vans, are ordinarily used as sleeping accommodations, so not all people residing in RVs qualify as homeless. However, people experiencing homelessness that live in RVs must be counted as:
 - Sheltered if the RV
 - Is located in a mobile home park or campus that advertises itself as providing temporary stays and
 - The RV is regularly connected to water, sewer and utilities or a septic system, well and generator or the park or campus provide toilets, showers, and communal food preparation or food services.
 - Unsheltered if the RV does not meet the criteria above.
- Tiny homes and sheds: Tiny homes are ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations, so not all persons living in tiny homes qualify as homeless. Sheds, including huts, storage sheds, and community cabins are not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations, but under certain circumstances persons living in sheds do not qualify as homeless. However, persons experiencing homelessness living in tiny homes and sheds are to be counted as follows:
 - HUD considers persons living in these units unsheltered if the unit does not contain a toilet, shower, kitchen, sleeping and living space, or has those but is not connected to water, sewer and utilities, or septic systems, well and generator, unless it is located on a campus maintained by a government or other entity and provided barracks style sleeping accommodations for multiple individuals where toilets, showers, and communal food preparation or food services are provided.
 - Residents of these types of units are to be counted as sheltered:
 - If the unit contains a toilet, shower, kitchen, sleeping and living space and is connected to sewer, water, and utilities or a septic system, well and generator; or
 - Even if the unit does not contain a toilet, shower, kitchen, sleeping and living space and is connected to sewer, water, and utilities or a septic system, well and generator, if it is located on a campus maintained by an organization, such as a governmental entity, nonprofit, or religious organization, where at least toilets, showers, and communal food preparation or food service areas are provided.
 - Special Considerations

- If the unit is located on a campus, the campus must have enough toilets and showers per capita for the resident population within a reasonable distance from the units to count the residents as sheltered.
- In very cold or very hot climates where regular seasonal patterns fall between 32 degrees or above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the unit must have heat or air conditioning to be counted as sheltered, but climate control need not be available in moderate climates.
- Counting People in Structures that are Hard to Assess such as unsafe, abandoned buildings, RVs, tents or other locations, PIT Leads cannot estimate the numbers of people that they think may be experiencing homelessness in these situations.

When is the PIT Count?

To have an entire State of Wisconsin count of sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness, on a designated night, the Balance of State CoC works with the Dane, Milwaukee, and Racine CoC's to conduct the PIT count on the same date – the 4th Wednesday in January and July.

To reduce opportunities for duplication, the PIT count must be conducted during the same period.

The term “night” signifies a single period of time from sunset to sunrise – spanning two actual calendar dates. The “night of the count” begins at sunset on the date of the count and ends at sunrise on the following day. The approved timeline for the overnight counts is 11 pm – 6 am.

Even though the overnight count starts at 11 pm on the fourth Wednesday of January and July and goes until the following Thursday at 6 AM, at 6:01 AM, the Services Based count period starts and information can still be collected on those experiencing unsheltered homelessness on the night of the PIT.

The services-based count can be done up to seven days after the overnight count and is conducted by homeless service providers as well as community partner organizations where those experiencing homelessness may go to utilize services. Examples of these types of organizations are day centers, food sites, emergency rooms, job centers, library staff, and anywhere else people may go. The staff at these organizations should be educated by the PIT Lead to ask those who may be experiencing homelessness if they were homeless the night of the PIT count. If the person says they were, the staff would do the PIT survey with that person and submit it to the PIT Lead in that coalition. Those data would then be added to the coalitions unsheltered data.

HUD Standard No. 2: The sheltered and unsheltered PIT counts must be conducted during the last 10 days in January and represent all homeless persons who were sheltered and unsheltered on a single night during that period.

Where is the PIT Count Conducted?

The methodology that CoCs select to conduct its sheltered and unsheltered count is influenced by the CoC's geographic and demographic characteristic. HUD requires CoCs to collect reliable data on the total number and characteristics of all people (sheltered and unsheltered) residing in the CoC's geographic area who are homeless on a single night and report this data to HUD. In order to meet the needs of types of CoCs across the United States, HUD allows each to select the appropriate approach to counting based on the resources, geography, and overall capacity. Approaches recognized by HUD include census, sampling (random and non-random), and extrapolation.³

HUD Standard No. 9 states that CoCs must account for and report on all unsheltered homeless people residing in the CoC's geography through a census (complete coverage) or on or more sampling and extrapolation methods that are consistent with HUD standards and guidance. HUD will evaluate the nature and basis for estimation and extrapolation of CoC's unsheltered count in the annual CoC Program Competition.

The WIBOSCOC uses a **census count approach** for the sheltered and unsheltered PIT count. A census count is an enumeration of all people experiencing homelessness in the CoC. This counting approach provides a direct and complete count of all people and their characteristics, does not require any estimates, and can be used as a benchmark for future PIT counts. A census count should incorporate the entire CoCs' geography and is HUD's preferred method of counting.

A. Sheltered homeless count methodology.

HUD has outlined three standards for conducting a count of people who are homeless and in shelter (emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or transitional housing projects) on the night of the count. These standards are referenced throughout this manual in further detail.

HUD Standard No. 6: CoCs must account for and report on all sheltered homeless people residing in the CoC through a census (complete coverage) or one or more sampling and extrapolation methods that are

³ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

consistent with HUD standards and guidance. HUD will evaluate the nature and basis for estimation and extrapolation of CoC's sheltered count in the annual CoC Program Competition.

HUD Standard No. 7: CoCs must be able to verify that the sheltered homeless people identified in the count are sheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

HUD Standard No. 8: CoCs should use client data already collected and entered in HMIS as the primary data source for the sheltered PIT count for emergency shelter, Safe Haven, and transitional housing projects that participate in HMIS.

The WIBOSCOC uses the **census count approach** for the sheltered PIT count.

- For projects that participate in HMIS and have entered the data requirements into the system, the data collection is already completed, and the necessary information can be extracted from HMIS.
- For projects that do not participate in HMIS, a provider-level survey must be conducted. See Planning for and Executing the PIT section in this guide for more information,

The PIT count and Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) are integrally related and completed at the same time. The sum of persons reported in emergency shelter, Safe Haven, and transitional housing projects in the PIT count fields of the HIC must match the sum total of sheltered persons reported in the PIT count.

B. Unsheltered homeless count methodology

HUD has outlined three standards for conducting a count of people who are homeless and unsheltered on the night of the count. These standards are referenced throughout this manual in further detail.

HUD Standard No. 9: CoCs must account for and report on all unsheltered homeless people residing in the CoC's geography through a census (complete coverage) or one or more sampling and extrapolation methods that are consistent with HUD standards and guidance. HUD will evaluate the nature and basis for estimation and extrapolation of CoCs' unsheltered count in the annual CoC Program Competition.

HUD Standard No. 10: CoCs may exclude geographic areas where the CoC has determined that there are no unsheltered homeless people, including areas that are uninhabitable (e.g. deserts). CoCs must document the criteria and decision-making process used to identify and exclude specific geographic areas.

HUD Standard No. 11: CoCs must be able to verify that the unsheltered homeless people identified in the count are unsheltered on the night designated for the count, as defined as 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

The WIBOSCOC uses two methods for the unsheltered PIT count:

- (1) the night of the count approach; and
- (2) the post-night service-based count.

On the night of the count approach, CoCs conduct their counts through either a complete coverage or a known locations approach or a combination of these approaches.⁴

(1) Complete coverage count

Using this approach, the entire CoC geographic area is canvassed. Communities may structure the count by assigning different neighborhoods or streets to each team, creating a grid-like search.

(2) Known locations count

This approach identifies known locations where people are experiencing unsheltered homelessness within the CoC and sends PIT volunteers and staff to those specific locations. When using this approach, CoCs should attempt to canvass all known locations within their geography where people who are unsheltered are believed to be staying, unless doing so is not feasible or safe. If there are areas like lakes, marshes, dense forest, or other areas where there would not be anyone sleeping outside, the coalition can indicate that when they report the locations they went to during the overnight count. Other than the areas above, the coalition must cover the rest of their geography.

If there are areas that have been included in the PIT count for several counts in a row and no one has ever been found sleeping unsheltered, an argument from the coalition can be made to no longer search in those places, but there might be new places in that area that can be searched or making the Post PIT count more robust may be some ways to ensure that no one is being missed in the count.

In the post-count service-based count, the CoC must ensure that the persons counted are limited to persons who were unsheltered on the night chosen for the PIT count per Standard No. 2 and that the CoC can properly deduplicate their data per Standard No. 12.

⁴ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

What Information must be collected during PIT?

For those staying on the streets, emergency shelter, safe havens or transitional housing projects, a count of households and total people is required along with demographic information. HUD typically releases a notice that identifies the requirement for data collection. This data often includes:

- Household information
- Age
- Race and ethnicity
- Sex
- Special population – chronic homeless, domestic violence, veterans, HIV/AIDS

For those in housing projects (PSH, RRH, or OPH), just a count of households and total people is needed.

There may be people who are encountered by those doing the overnight PIT count that will not engage enough to fill out the PIT survey. In those cases, there is an observation only form that should be filled out by the person doing the PIT count. The observation only form will be included in the Deduplication Chart (which will be discussed in more detail in [After the PIT](#) section of this guide) but the data will NOT be included in the overall PIT data. There is no way to verify homelessness for those who are not engaged and fill out a survey. Demographic information is not verifiable either, and it is not appropriate to guess a person's race, gender, ethnicity, or other personal identity.

Volunteers and staff doing the PIT count should be trained and comfortable with trying to engage with those they find who may be experiencing homelessness. More on this in the section on Planning for the PIT.

HUD Standard No. 8: CoCs should use client data already collected and entered in HMIS as the primary data source for the sheltered PIT count for emergency shelter, Safe Haven, and transitional housing projects that participate in HMIS.

HUD Standard No. 13: Surveys of people for the sheltered or unsheltered count must be administered in a manner that protects participant privacy and safety, as well as the safety of the person completing the survey.

Planning for and Executing the PIT

While there are several items listed above as the PIT Lead’s responsibility, there is no way one person can coordinate, plan and implement the PIT. It truly is a community effort. The PIT Lead’s role is to coordinate the committees and/or subcommittees that will plan the PIT for the coalition. It is imperative that coalitions begin planning for the PIT early and that the planning is organized and structured. It is essential to go beyond the homeless services providers who are required to participate in implementing a comprehensive and efficient PIT count. This section will outline some key steps and activities involved in the planning of a successful PIT⁵.

Develop PIT Count Plan

The CoCs must develop a PIT Count Plan. Because of the large geography of the WIBOSCO, each coalition is required to create a PIT count plan following the methodology of the WIBOSCO.

Committee and Subcommittee

Each Local Coalition will identify their PIT Lead who will receive all communications from the CoC regarding any changes in data standards or HUD’s requirements. The PIT Leads work within their coalitions to create a workgroup that includes representative from the Con Plan jurisdictions, community members, homeless service project staff, street outreach workers, law enforcement, and people who have experienced homelessness. Some things the committee should focus on:

- Recruiting volunteers and providers in the PIT count process
- Training for volunteers
- Ensuring all geography is covered by staff and volunteers
- Identifying known locations where those experiencing homelessness congregate or sleep
- Strengthening partnerships with partner organization for the services-based count
- Organizing a community connect event if applicable
- Organizing the volunteer teams the night of the PIT
- Gathering outreach materials and other equipment needed the night of the PIT
- Debriefing with the team after the PIT and confirming count locations

⁵ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

HUD Standard No. 1: Coc's are responsible for planning and conducting, at least biennially, a PIT count of homeless persons within the geographic area that meets HUD's requirements.

HUD Standard No. 3: The final PIT count methodology must be approved by the CoC in accordance with the CoC's governance structure.

Intent and Scope

While the PIT count purpose is to gather data on the size and characteristics of the population of those experiencing homelessness, the WIBOSCOC also uses the PIT count as an opportunity to do extensive outreach, engagement, screening and triage.⁶ One goal of the PIT is to ensure that those who need to be connected to Coordinated Entry are connected.

It can also be used to engage with the public in a meaningful way. Publicizing the PIT and inviting key stakeholders such as the mayor and other community leaders, State representatives and other political leaders can bring education, experience and advocacy to leaders who may not otherwise know about homelessness as an issue.

The WIBOSCOC has determined all of the above to be important parts of the PIT count and local coalitions should also be incorporating these activities into the PIT count.

Methodology

The WIBOSCOC has determined to use a consensus methodology for the unsheltered street count. All coalitions must adhere to this methodology. There are two methods allowed within the Consensus methodology and those include:

- (1) Complete coverage count
- (2) Known locations count

Local coalitions may use a combination of these approaches, but each coalition must document what locations they went to and what locations they did not. There must be an appropriate reason why an area would not be covered for the count. For example, it is a body of water, a marsh or dense forest.

More information about the consensus methodology and the complete coverage and known location approach can be found in the [Where is the PIT count conducted?](#) section.

⁶ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

HUD Standard No. 1: CoC's are responsible for planning and conducting, at least biennially, a PIT count of homeless persons within the geographic area that meets HUD's requirements.

HUD Standard No. 3: The final PIT count methodology must be approved by the CoC in accordance with the CoC's governance structure.

Data Quality Plan

The CoC must have a plan to ensure that deduplication is achieved, and data quality is excellent. The WIBOSCOC takes a two-tiered approach. At the coalition level, the volunteers and staff who did the surveys with those they found unsheltered should verify the person is homeless during the conversation. The PIT Lead should review and screen the unsheltered surveys to ensure the same person was not interviewed twice. This includes the surveys that are received during the services-based count. Data entered into HMIS and the Non-HMIS chart should be reviewed and errors such as data incompleteness, household issues, numbers not matching should be fixed to ensure that data quality is the highest it can be.

The second tier is BOS staff collating and verifying data with the help of the PIT Lead and the HMIS Lead. BOS staff compile HMIS, Non-HMIS and unsheltered survey data and ensure that all the numbers match, that the data are deduplicated, that all demographic information is complete and that all final PIT data for each coalition is accurate and matches what is reported on the HIC. That data is then reviewed by the CoC Executive Director to ensure that the data is complete, and everything matches and is accurate.

HUD Standards No. 12: CoCs must ensure that during the PIT count homeless persons are only counted once. It is critical that the counting methods be coordinated to ensure that there is no double-counting. Therefore, CoCs must also collect sufficient information to be able to reliably deduplicate the PIT count (i.e. ensure that the same homeless person was not counted more than once.)

After Hours Plan and Coordinated Entry

Along with getting a deduplicated count of those sheltered and unsheltered for the purpose of reporting to HUD, the other main reason for the PIT count is to connect people to services. The PIT is considered an outreach event so there needs to be an effort to engage those folks who are found unsheltered during the PIT. It is not only to collect information to verify their

homelessness and demographic information, but also to connect the household to shelter and coordinated entry. A household who is experiencing homelessness will not be able to access CoC funded housing projects if they are not connected to Coordinated Entry, so it is important to get those who are interested in these types of housing are connected.

Each local coalition should have an After-Hours plan for all the counties they cover. If it makes more sense for each county within a coalition to have its own After-Hours plan, that is fine, but there should be a plan for those who are found unsheltered on any night of the year. This plan should include how people are connected to shelter (which can include motel vouchers or a bed at a brick-and-mortar shelter) and coordinated entry. On the night of the PIT, the After-Hours plan should be up to date and used for its intent.

One of the pieces of information the WIBOSCO collects after the PIT is a letter describing what happened on the night of the PIT for those folks who were found and maintained unsheltered homelessness. Each coalition must describe how the After-Hours Plan was used to offer the households who were unsheltered shelter and connection to coordinated entry. The After Hours Plan is required to be reviewed by the coalition annually and submitted to the WI BoS staff for review.

Locations

Prior to the actual count, the HIC should be reviewed to ensure that all projects that should be included are on the HIC. This includes any Emergency shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, as well as housing projects. Any new projects should be identified and added to the HIC prior to the data deadlines and any projects that are no longer operating should be removed from the HIC to ensure that the HIC is a complete inventory. Please refer to the [WI BOS HIC Guide](#) for more information about the HIC and how to add or remove projects.

For the unsheltered count, preparations should begin by identifying geographic areas where the count will be conducted. Using a map, locations should be determined and the area divided into sections for volunteers to canvass.⁷ If there are areas that will not be included, it should be noted why they will not be included. There should also be an effort to ensure that the locations to be counted are truly where people will be found. It is encouraged to speak with those with lived experience about where people might be so that the locations counted are where people really are.

⁷ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Survey

The CoC has created and maintains the PIT surveys used for those who are unsheltered and engaged in the PIT count. The CoC has decided what information is to be gathered based on HUD requirements and local needs. The surveys will be updated and posted on the website prior to the January and July PIT. This will include questions about demographic information and their homeless experience.

The CoC also provides an Observation Only Survey to be used under limited circumstances. Observation Only surveys are not included as part of the official data count for the PIT because they are not reliable in verifying that a person is experiencing homelessness. However, if a volunteer or staff person engages with a person they suspect to be homeless and the person confirms that they are experiencing homelessness, but refuses to complete the Unsheltered Survey, the volunteer or staff person may collect identifiable information from that person on the Observation Only form. The volunteer or staff person will need to include adequate information and an appropriate description to ensure that this data is deduplicated and that this person is only counted one-time during the PIT. The Observation Only form is not to be used in lieu of contacting a person during the PIT.

Incentives and Equipment

One of the ways to encourage engagement during the PIT count with those experiencing homelessness is to provide incentives such as bus passes, gift cards, toiletries, backpacks, blankets, socks, bug spray, sunscreen, sunglasses, hand warmers, food, and other items that are seasonal or useful for people experiencing homelessness. To be clear, CoC funds may not be able to pay for these items, so flexible funding, donations or fundraising may be required to offer these items. Collecting these items is something that should be part of the planning process. Some communities hold donation drives or reach out to volunteer groups, faith based and nonprofit organizations, and businesses for donations. This can also help increase community awareness about homelessness. Giving out incentives provides those experiencing unsheltered homelessness with necessities of daily living and also can help to deduplicate those who have already been counted, so it is an important part of PIT planning to ensure you have items to hand out to those you engage during the PIT count.

Along with incentives for those found unsheltered the night of the PIT, there is also equipment that is needed for the volunteers. Making sure that all volunteers have what they need to successfully do the count will go a long way in encouraging them to return for the next PIT count. Providing equipment like writing utensils, clip boards, cell phones, maps of the area, number of contact person, instructions, resources sheet, copies of the surveys, flashlights,

reflective vests, vouchers for motels or information for how to connect to shelter, the incentive bags for outreach, technology if using something besides paper surveys and anything else that is needed to make sure the volunteers are successful and comfortable during the PIT count.

Publicize

The media can be an effective outreach tool to support the PIT count. Not only can the media be used to recruit volunteers for the night of the count but can also be used to bring attention to the issue of homelessness in the community after the PIT count is done. There are three phases when bringing the media in that can be beneficial: planning for the count, conducting the count and announcing the results of the count.⁸ It would be a good idea to designate one person to engage with the media. This person can work with the media to:

- **Draw attention to local homelessness issues.** Publicizing current local data on homelessness can garner additional funding and resources to support the count and local programming to help those experiencing homelessness. Take the opportunity to educate volunteers about homeless data and plans in the coalition and CoC.
- **Recruit Volunteers.** Volunteer recruitment should begin a month or two ahead of time. To recruit volunteers, there should be a brief description of the different roles for volunteers and the dates of any training or when their assistance is needed.
- **Increase participation among the unsheltered population.** Informing and educating those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness about the unsheltered count will help to prevent widespread avoidance of the people conducting the PIT count.
- **Report count results.** After all the data has been tabulated, unduplicated, and verified, the CoC membership and the local communities through the media should review the data and interpret the count totals.⁹

One good way to create a consistent message is to write a press release. The release can focus on local data or Balance of State-wide results. Addressing trends in data and providing contextual information to explain those trends will be helpful. Make sure no matter what kind of media is used that you articulate the uses and limitations of the count data. The PIT count data alone might not answer the 'why' questions, but they will usually provide good answers to 'where' and 'who' questions. Personalize data, provide anecdotes-but do not violate the confidentiality and privacy of those experiencing homelessness.¹⁰

⁸ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

⁹ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

¹⁰ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Working with Partner Organizations

Engaging partner organizations usually brings additional expertise or resources to the count. Each Con Plan jurisdiction located within the geographic boundary should be identified and the CoC PIT count data must be provided to each entity responsible for a Con Plan within the geography. HUD expects representatives from Con Plan jurisdictions to collaborate with CoCs to plan and complete the PIT count.¹¹

HUD Standard No. 4: All CoCs should consult and collaborate with all Con Plan jurisdictions in the geographical boundary of the CoC, including those that do not have ESG funding, to assist the jurisdictions in submitting PIT count data that is relevant to completing their Con Plans.

HUD Standard No. 5: CoCs must provide PIT count data to the entity(ies) responsible for the Con Plan jurisdiction(s) associated with the CoC.

Just as it takes time to recruit and train volunteers, it takes time to reach out to partner organizations to ask them to participate and educate them on what you need. The PIT Planning committee should focus on involving a diverse and balanced representation of partners who have the capacity and time to organize and implement an effective PIT count. There are several roles that partner organizations can play regarding the PIT. Additionally, some agencies based upon their funding may be required to participate in the PIT. Local PIT Leads should be aware of which agencies within their coalition are required to participate and actively reach out to them and include them in the planning process and overnight street count. Local PIT Leads cannot turn away volunteers asking to meet agency or funder requirements to participate in the overnight PIT count.

- They can send volunteers from their organizations to count for the overnight count
- They can help to identify locations where the counters should canvass
- They can give donations to help with the incentives/equipment
- They may be an organization that needs to report data, so assisting in data collection, analysis and reporting
- They can participate in the services-based count
- They can help to leverage participation of reluctant providers
- They can help provide Non-HMIS data

Regardless of what kind of assistance is being asked for, an explanation about what the PIT is, its importance and why their assistance is essential should be outlined. Training will be needed for

¹¹ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

each of these roles, and it is the PIT Leads responsibility to ensure that training is complete and that each partner's task is clearly defined.

Organizations such as the following could be included as partners:

- **Homeless Service providers**
- **Community service providers** such as food and clothing banks, soup kitchens, day shelters or drop-in centers, community centers, halfway house, community action agencies, detox programs, 211 operators, mental health providers and mainstream social service agencies.
- **Homeless coalitions and advocacy groups**
- **Homeless and formerly homeless individuals**
- **Outreach Teams** such as Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH), Health Care for the Homeless, Health Care for the Homeless Veterans (HCHV), ESG funded Outreach, Veterans Recovery and Outreach Program (VORP), Human Services or Law Enforcement Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) and other local homeless outreach programs and teams.
- **Federal Partners** such as HUD, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Departments of Education, the Departments of Health and Human Services.
- **Local Government partners** such as county and city governments, especially those that must complete Con Plans
- **Faith-based community partners**
- **Health service providers** such as Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals
- **Law Enforcement** such as local sheriff, police, and correctional departments
- **Philanthropic foundations**
- **McKinney-Vento school liaisons**
- **Local colleges or universities**
- **Public housing agencies**
- **Public libraries**
- **Local business and chambers of commerce** such as those where people who are homeless might go for food, amenities or respite.
- **Community volunteer and civic groups**¹²

Something the CoC and each coalition must carefully consider is how extensively they should involve law enforcement officers in the PIT count, especially if they will be in uniform and driving official vehicles. There is a fine line between providing safety and protection for those who are counting and the potential suspicion and fear a law enforcement presence might elicit among

¹² PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

people who are homeless, especially among people with criminal records, who could be engaged in illegal activities, those who have had negative experiences with police or specific populations who historically and systemically have had oppressive and violent contact with the police. This might be especially true in remote locations or during the middle of the night. If CoC's and coalitions involve local law enforcement, they must clarify that law enforcement involvement is intended to assist with the count and not for law enforcement actions apart from this support (e.g., serving warrants). Also, the participation of police officers could deter the participation of homeless youth in the count, as homeless youth might be involved in illicit activities, fleeing abuse, or trying to avoid being placed in foster care and thus might fear and avoid any interaction with law enforcement.

Thus, while law enforcement is often a critical partner in PIT count efforts and in the broader effort to end homelessness, CoCs and coalitions must evaluate their local circumstances to determine how best to involve law enforcement in their counts.¹³

Services-Based Count

The services-based count gives CoCs an opportunity to collect information from those who were experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT but were not found the night of the PIT. The timeframe for services-based count is 7 days after the overnight PIT count. Information can be collected up to seven days after the PIT count and the services-based count starts at 6:01 AM on Thursday morning right after the overnight PIT count has ended.

The key to having a successful services-based count is to engage with multiple partners in the community, really any partners who might work with or encounter those who are experiencing homelessness. This can include partners such as workforce development/Job Centers, food sites, emergency rooms and hospitals, 24 hour sites such as convenience stores, restaurants and laundromats, libraries, health and human services, economic support, day centers, and any other organizations where they work with or interact with those experiencing homelessness.

The role these organizations will play is if they see someone who they think might be experiencing homelessness, they will ask them if they are and if yes, then they will ask if the person was homeless the night of the PIT. If that is a yes, then the staff/employee will do the PIT survey with them to collect demographic information as well as information about where they were staying to add to the locations of the overnight count, if the person has not already filled out a survey.

¹³ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Those surveys will be sent to the PIT Lead by a WI BOS decided deadline. The PIT Lead's role is to ensure that the survey is filled out completely, that it is not a duplicate, that the person has not already been counted and then they would include that in the unsheltered numbers of their data.

The PIT Lead will need to organize training for the partners participating in the services-based count ahead of time, so that they know exactly what they need to do and who they need to do the survey with. As will be discussed further down, observation only forms will not be counted in the final data, so the services-based count is a way to get information from those who did not want to engage the night of the PIT. There is also nothing stopping an organization from going back in the morning or later in the day after the overnight count to the spot they found someone who was not interested in engaging in the overnight hours. The person may feel more like filling out a survey at 7AM versus 2AM. Since the services-based count starts at 6:01AM, directly after the overnight PIT count happens, data can absolutely be collected within those 7 days after the overnight count and an agency is fully within the approved PIT methodology.

Community Connect Events

Several coalitions offer a Community Connect Event to enhance the services-based count. These are large events with many resources, providers, and incentives to bring the community together, specifically those experiencing homelessness, to help get them connected to resources and to collect data for the PIT. The most successful events have multiple providers who can offer services right there on the spot. For example, haircuts, footcare, blood pressure screening, showers, backpack or food giveaways, and any other services people may need access to.

Making it a fun event by having food and drinks, games, music and entertainment, prizes, face painting, and drawings also helps the event to be successful. It should be something that draws people to the event. Events of this size require a lot of planning and usually span further than just homeless service providers. Having committees to work on this event such as volunteers, food, marketing, fundraising/donations, and services/resources. Planning should start months in advance and to be able to use the data for the IPT, it would need to be within that seven-day window after the overnight count.

Working with Reluctant Providers

There may be homeless service providers who are not required by their funding source to participate in the PIT but may have an important part to play in terms of data that the PIT Lead must include or access to those experiencing homelessness. They may not believe they have the

staff or resources to give to a count or they may not understand the importance of the PIT count or the importance of their involvement with it.

Even though an organization may not be required to participate in the actual overnight count, the CoC is still required to include data about all emergency shelter, transitional housing and housing projects. It is critical to get full participation of all homeless service providers.

Below are some tips for gaining the participation of homeless providers who are reluctant to participate:

- Use the relationships with those who already participate such as faith-based organizations, elected officials, and other community service providers to help convince them of the importance of their involvement.
- Meet in person to educate about what the PIT is and the purpose. It is more than an event to count people. It is an outreach event to try and connect people with resources. With Coordinated Entry being a requirement for participation in CoC funded housing projects, it becomes vitally important that people are connected to Coordinated Entry so they may receive housing services.
- Listen to their specific concerns and address them when you can. If they have ideas about the PIT, try to integrate their ideas when it makes sense.
- Offer volunteer resources to assist them in conducting interviews and collecting data.
- Provide technical assistance from the PIT Lead for the data collection part. Make sure they fully understand what is expected and walk them through the process.
- Discuss the value of data collection for understanding local needs and securing needed resources and offer data and information gleaned from the count in return for their participation. PIT data is useful for many purposes and is used in local presentations, local applications for funding sources, justification of activities relating to homeless services and a way to humanize the issue of homelessness in a community where NIMBYism is strong.
- Impress upon them the importance of getting a true picture of what homelessness looks like within the community and the role their clients play.
- Offer support in any way possible.¹⁴

Volunteers and Training

Volunteers are necessary to ensure the PIT count is implemented effectively. Since the methodology the WI BOS uses is the complete coverage and known location count, the

¹⁴ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

geography is large enough that one or two agencies who are required to participate in the PIT in a coalition are not likely to be able to cover the entire area within the hours of the count. Along with being able to cover a larger geographic area, having volunteers also helps to conduct a count that is supported by the community, not just those organizations already committed to ending homelessness. Due to the large area covered during the PIT count, the more volunteers that participate, the greater the area that can be searched. Local PIT Leads must not turn away any potential volunteer and should work to ensure that anyone who wishes to participate is allowed the opportunity to do so. Local PIT Leads cannot turn away volunteers from organizations required to participate in the PIT Count. Search groups can be expanded, or certain areas could be searched multiple times to ensure that each area has been covered thoroughly.

Recruiting volunteers will take time and should be included in the planning process. Below are some key steps to recruiting and training volunteers:

- Designate a subcommittee or individuals to recruit and manage volunteers
- Determine volunteer roles
- Set volunteer training dates
- Recruit volunteers
- Train volunteers:
 - What is PIT and purpose
 - The PIT methodology
 - What are the expectations for a volunteers
 - How to engage with people in the middle of the night (see section on safety tips)
 - How to fill out the survey
 - Any changes that have occurred such as changes to PIT methodology or changes to the form due to HMIS data standards changes
- Solicit donations to support volunteers on the day of the count
- Debrief after the count
- Gather feedback from volunteers to improve future counts¹⁵

Where to Find Volunteers

Finding volunteers can be challenging so below is a non-exhaustive list of where to start with trying to find volunteers:

- Members of the local homeless coalition

¹⁵ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

- Participants in homeless programs or those with lived experience
- Youth Action Board Members such as those with lived experience of homelessness and youth age 17 and under
- College or University students looking for field work experience or service hours
- Staff of meal sites, shelters or other services
- Representatives from Con Plan jurisdictions
- Elected officials
- Other state, city, or county workers in agencies that might have some experience or interest in homelessness, such as human services, health or housing agencies.
- Federal partners with local homeless services in the CoC's area (for example, Dept. of Children and Families, Runaway and Homeless Youth providers, Dept. of health and Human services, Dept. of Public Instruction)
- Community service volunteer organizations, churches, and other religious organizations
- Neighborhood and business associations¹⁶

In some instances, youth under the age of 18 may wish to participate in the overnight street count. This should be a local coalition discussion and decision. Policies can include requiring parental or guardian involvement as a volunteer, getting permission from a parent or legal guardian, signing releases of information and confidentiality agreements, and outlining expectations during the count.

Recruiting

When recruiting volunteers, a description of the time involved, the duration of training, any risks, and the safety measures that are in place should be included. Recruiting methods can include:

- Posting notices and fliers at government or nonprofit agencies, public locations, and local businesses
- Mailing or emailing invitations to key individuals and agencies
- Creating a ready to customize friend-to-friend volunteer recruitment email
- Enlisting student support from local universities and colleges
- Posting announcements in CoC and member websites and other social media sites
- Organizing a phone bank to recruit previous volunteers
- Contacting coalition members or agency heads and asking them to recruit among their memberships or employees
- Posting on www.serve.gov and other websites that link volunteers to services opportunities

¹⁶ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

- Running a press release through the newspaper or social media to recruit volunteers from the general public¹⁷
- Create a marketing committee and create materials
 - Save the Date flyers
 - Set up a community Calendar
 - Use social media¹⁸
- Create a google link for easy volunteer registration
- Create a Facebook event¹⁹
- Have incentives for those who volunteer like t-shirts, gift cards, swag, etc.
- Use AmeriCorps members²⁰

Training

Training for those participating in the overnight count is key for safety and to make sure everyone understands the expectation. The WI BOS uses a train the trainer approach, where the PIT Leads are responsible for training their local volunteers. The WI BOS provides resources to the PIT Leads that can be used to help train volunteers. Depending on how each PIT Lead chooses to do it, there may be one training event or multiple training sessions. Recorded trainings sent ahead of time can also be used as well as in-person training.

It is helpful to have formal training materials, and they should emphasize who should be counted, who should not be counted, the importance of consistency, the challenges created when volunteers use their own judgement rather than adhering to protocol, and key safety issues and protocols.

Training topics can include:

- Overview of the purpose and benefits of accurate data
- Overview of previous results
- What the PIT is and its purpose
- Terminology and definitions
- Counting methods
- When to count and period of data collection
- When to count
- Who to count

¹⁷ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

¹⁸ Couleecap PowerPoint presentation 1/9/2022

¹⁹ Lakeshorecap PowerPoint presentation 1/9/2022

²⁰ NCCAP PowerPoint presentation 1/9/2022

- Role playing and practice
- Count team configurations and points of contact
- Volunteer responsibilities (including returning forms, match, assembly and distribution of any incentives)
- Confidentiality
- Overview of the survey instrument and screening questions
- Suggestions for how to safely and respectfully approach people who are unsheltered
- How to accurately complete PIT count forms
- Outreach to specific subpopulations (youth, veterans, chronically homeless)
- How to help people connect to emergency shelter or coordinated entry
- How to remain safe and what to do in case of trouble
- What to wear
- What to bring
- How to report back to the coalition²¹
- Narcan training

Every volunteer must receive a confidentiality form that they sign stating they will not share any identifying information with anyone but the PIT Lead. This is key to making sure that people's privacy is safeguarded.

Below are best practices for training:

- During training sessions, provide food and drinks for the volunteers.
- Have law enforcement or street outreach providers come to speak to the volunteers about safety practices.
- Offer multiple training sessions at various times, recorded or virtual, and/or right before the PIT to ensure that all volunteers can attend the training and have time to ask questions.
- Get feedback from volunteers about the training and incorporate that into the next PIT Volunteer training.
- When deciding the teams, put new volunteers with more experienced volunteers.

How to ensure return volunteers

Having a solid base of volunteers from PIT to PIT is important for things to run smoothly and past volunteer's recruitment of friends and family is a good way to attract more volunteers. Here are some best practices to ensure that people continue to volunteer for the PIT:

²¹ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

- Have time to debrief, even if this is just a message to the whole group about the experience at the end of the night (if anyone was found, if there were any eventful occurrences, etc.)
- After the event, send out a thank you email or even better, a handwritten note, to each volunteer thanking them and reiterating the importance of their participation.
- Share the results with them! Let them be the first to know how many people were found unsheltered and invite them to the meetings where the sheltered and unsheltered data of the PIT is discussed.
- A post thank you event could be arranged with food and drink to talk about the experience and express gratitude.
- Any other creative ways to show volunteers that their involvement mattered

For agencies that provide services across two or more coalitions, that agency must provide volunteers and/or support to any coalition PIT count they are providing services. For example, if an agency in the Kenosha Homeless Coalition provides services within the Ozaukee Homeless Coalition, then the agency within Kenosha must connect with the PIT Lead in the Ozaukee Coalition to assist in coordination of PIT activities. PIT Leads will then use the Post-PIT Questionnaire to identify who from the agency participated in the PIT activities.

Should required agencies be unable to provide volunteers or staff to all coalitions within their service area to participate in the overnight street count, they may request an exemption. This exemption will be submitted to the PIT Lead of the local coalition. The PIT Lead may authorize an exemption in consultation with the WIBOSCO PIT Lead staff person(s).

The BOS staff will verify participation for each agency using the Post PIT survey. If an agency does not participate in the overnight street count or in PIT planning, that agency will be issued a non-compliance letter. This non-compliance can impact CoC competition scoring.

Safety Guidelines

One of the biggest concerns for new and experienced volunteers alike is safety. While there is a discomfort of trying to engage with people who are sleeping unsheltered in the middle of the night, this is the whole point of the overnight count-to get verified data of those experiencing homelessness and to connect them with services. Outreach teams and law enforcement can be great partners when training on safety when working with those experiencing homelessness. In areas where there are encampments or large communities of people who are unsheltered, it is best practice to send experienced volunteer/staff or outreach/law enforcement. Many times,

outreach and law enforcement staff already have a relationship with the people staying there and can engage with them more easily.

Here are some safety tips to think about when implementing the overnight count:

- Send people in teams of at least 2, with more being better. No one should ever go out by themselves.
- Use Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT), Outreach workers, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Law Enforcement and any other people who have developed a relationship with those who are unsheltered in the community.
- Always pair a new volunteer with an experienced volunteer
- Volunteers should announce themselves and not knock on windows of cars or doors of storage units. They should speak clearly and loudly and explain who they are and why they are there.
- Be sincere and express gratitude for their time. Always ask for permission to do the survey instead of just jumping into questions.
- Body language should appear relaxed.
- Closed toe shoes
- Adequate flashlights, lanterns, or other lighting
- Maintain appropriate distance, do not enter their private space or touch people.
- Do not cross your arms.
- Try to be at eye level when conducting the survey.
- If people do not answer or ask to be left alone, honor their request. You can still leave information and a bag of items with them.
- Do not come across as judgmental or frightened.
- Do not give money or offer rides.
- Do not promise housing or services.
- Carry an ID and cell phone but leave all other valuables behind.²²
- Establish code words to signal threats to safety to teammates unbeknownst to others.
- The home base team should always know where each team is and there should be a designated person to contact.
- It could be a good idea to have T-shirts, vests, or some way to identify as volunteers of the PIT count.
- All volunteers should have the numbers for crisis response teams and behavioral health.
- Training on trauma informed de-escalation should be given to all volunteers.
- Volunteers should not have weapons or mace with them.

²² Lakeshorecap PowerPoint presentation 1/9/2022

- The WI BoS has recorded a training available to all staff and volunteers with practical approaches to waking up and talking to those experiencing homelessness. The link to the recording is located in the appendix of this manual.
- Some people may not be suited to volunteer for this event. The overnight PIT count requires that volunteers attempt to engage with people experiencing homelessness in the overnight hours. If they are not comfortable doing so, then they should not be volunteering in that role. There may be other roles for them, for example, they could be involved in the planning process or organizing the debriefing session.
- It is not advised to wake up anyone who appears to be homeless by touching or nudging that individual. However, from a comfortable distance, volunteers may be able to make sufficient noise to awaken that individual. If a volunteer is unable to awaken that individual, and observation only form can be completed, but that data will not be used in the official count. Agencies or staff may choose to attempt to follow up with that person at a subsequent time to collect the required information on the survey.
- Any other resources on trauma informed de-escalation tips are helpful to send to volunteers ahead of time so they can acquaint themselves with these techniques should they come across a difficult situation. If there are areas that are known to be more difficult, the experts in the field such as experienced homeless service providers, outreach workers, or law enforcement should be assigned to those areas.

Weather

While the overnight street count is required to be conducted during a 7-hour period, weather may impact the safety of volunteers and staff to complete a full and thorough count. In situations where the weather is hazardous, including tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and heavy snowfall, the street count may be modified, but not cancelled. Local coalition PIT organizers can delay the start time of the count, shorten shifts or end shifts early, or change the geographic locations where the count is to be completed. PIT volunteers and staff must be mindful that those experiencing homelessness are living in these elements and that the provision of services or resources is vital to ensure that those that are literally homeless are connected to the programs needed to become stably housed.

Strategies for sub-populations

Special strategies must be employed by CoCs to address the unique data collection needs of unsheltered youth, veterans and persons experiencing chronic homelessness. Below are some proposed strategies CoCs can use to improve the collection and engagement of information for these subpopulations.

Youth

Youth who are not in the situations of literal street homelessness on the night designated for the count should not be included in the unsheltered PIT count data submitted to HUD. Youth who are in ES and TH projects will be reported with the rest of the HMIS and non-HMIS data. However, youth who are homeless by another federal definition, including youth who are be doubled-up or couch surfing, on the night designated for the count, may still be counted for CoC planning purposes, just not reported to HUD as part of the unsheltered PIT count. CoCs should ensure the PIT count methodology is capable of distinguishing the specific living situation and age categories (under age 18 and ages 18 to 24) of youth encountered during the count.

CoCs have encountered numerous challenges with identifying and counting unsheltered homeless youth.

- The definition of "homeless youth" differs between state, local, and federal agencies. Agencies in CoCs might serve different segments of the youth population that do not correspond to federal definitions. The people planning the CoCs' counts must decide how to appropriately capture the full range of youth (through age 24), which has profound implications for where the PIT Volunteers look for youth.
- Homeless youth might congregate in various areas and at various times of day than older persons experiencing homelessness. Most homeless youth do not use homeless service agencies designed for adults, such as shelters and food lines, for fear of trouble or abuse by adult homeless persons. As a result, methods used to reach and count homeless adults are less likely to accurately capture unsheltered youth.
- Many youth who are on their own do not want to be found. Unsheltered youth might hide from providers and police during the count or might be reluctant to identify themselves as homeless and unsheltered. They are often fleeing abuse, have a fear of being placed in foster care or the juvenile justice system, or might be avoiding or unaware of available services. In addition, shelters are frequently required by law to turn youth over to police or social service agencies, especially if they are under age 18. CoCs that count unaccompanied children and youth under the age of 18 should consult with local justice, child welfare, and other social services officials to develop a protocol for interviewing these children and youth and connecting them to appropriate services in the community. CoCs should consider whether questions asked of youth should be stated differently than questions asked of homeless adults.
- Many youth in situations that would qualify as "homeless" under federal definitions do not think of themselves as homeless and, therefore, even if contacted during a PIT count, would not respond in a way that would result in them being included in the count. Among these are youth who "couch-surf" among family or friends when and if they can, but who periodically spend the night in unsheltered locations or "crash-pads" in

abandoned buildings, cars, or other out-of-the-way places. Youth who are in unsheltered locations on the night of the count should be included in CoCs' PIT counts.

The circumstances outlined above suggest that CoCs might consider using census counting strategies or special sampling, particularly if using a survey with questions unique to homeless youth, to reach and include youth who are homeless on the night of the PIT count. In spite of the challenges with collecting accurate youth PIT count data, current PIT count strategies represent an opportunity to gather baseline data on the numbers of homeless youth in a community. In addition to using the PIT count to enumerate youth, many communities use the unsheltered count as an opportunity to mobilize and obtain data on homeless youth characteristics and needs that, while not reported to HUD, can provide CoCs and their partners with rich information to inform and improve its youth services.

As CoCs determine the appropriate unsheltered count methodology they should consider how that strategy will impact the unsheltered youth enumeration. For example, if a CoC chooses to count known locations for a night of the count approach, it should consider whether those known locations include places where homeless youth congregate. To ensure that all homeless youth are included in their PIT count, CoCs should develop specific strategies to effectively address the limitations with counting homeless youth, including:

- **Collaborate with local school district homeless liaisons.** Schools can be important partners for PIT counts. Local school districts should be contacted to help conduct outreach and increase awareness about the count. School liaisons have crucial insights about how best to access and communicate with homeless youth, and can be important resources for spreading information about events and organizations associated with the CoCs' PIT counts. CoCs should also collaborate with the local school district homeless liaisons to help identify all homeless children who are unsheltered or staying in a shelter on the night designated for the count are included in the PIT count. Since schools use a more expansive homeless definition than HUD's definition used for the PIT count, it is important to confirm that only children and youth meeting the HUD definition are included in the PIT count results reported to HUD.
- **Recruit currently or formerly homeless youth to assist with the count.** For the unsheltered count, communities that have successful strategies for conducting counts of unsheltered youth often enlist homeless or formerly homeless teenagers and young adults to assist with the count. Before the count, these youth can assist in identifying where unaccompanied youth might be staying or congregating. They can also provide input on survey design, provide assistance to outreach efforts on the night of the count, and engage homeless children and youth in the PIT count process.
- **Engage organizations serving homeless youth.** Identify and engage all stakeholders that might encounter or serve unaccompanied, homeless youth age 24 or under to participate in local PIT count planning meetings. Key providers include:

- Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs
- Youth shelters
- Youth drop-in centers
- Street outreach teams
- Youth focused transitional housing programs
- Faith-based organizations and youth groups
- Local churches that serve hot meals
- Health clinics-youth-based and adult including mobile health outreach
- Local middle schools, high schools, and alternative education programs
- Youth employment programs
- Food banks
- LGBT service providers
- Libraries
- Recreations centers
- **Identify locations where homeless youth congregate.** Get input from youth and youth providers to identify locations, or “hot spots,” which might include:
 - Abandoned buildings
 - High traffic urban areas (i.e. nightclubs, tattoo parlors, record stores, arcades)
 - Piza places, soda shops, cafes near high schools
 - Parks
 - Malls
 - Fast food restaurants
 - LGBT friendly gathering spots (school support groups, bookstores, coffee shops identified by LGBT service providers and youth)
 - Encampments inside and outside of urban areas.
- **Hold magnet events.** Develop special events located at easily accessible and non-threatening locations that include activities, food, or other appropriate incentives that might draw in youth who do not typically use shelters and services and are difficult to locate on the streets.
- **Use social media to raise awareness and outreach.** Data from studies indicates that even youth living on the street use social media. Social media can be used to spread the word about the count, including information about location and incentives, which could lead to a larger number of youth participating in the count.
- **Identify a lead homeless youth PIT count coordinator to facilitate data collection, engage other youth providers, and coordinate collection of data from locations where homeless youth congregate.**
- **Provide services, food, and incentives to youth being counted.** The incentive could be advertised as part of the general mobilization effort to attract youth to participate in the count. Observations and anecdotal evidence from Youth Count! partners suggest that the incentives work for many youth. Examples of incentives include two-way public transportation tickets, a credit card with \$10 credit, a backpack filled with hygiene items

and information about services, a \$5 restaurant card, bag lunches, and/or providing food, movies, and games, and a warm, dry place to spend time with friends for the night.

- **Survey locations multiple times throughout the day of the count.** Youth might not be visible on the street during school hours. Consider assessing count routes prior to the count to ensure that teams are in the right places at the right times. A location that is crowded in the morning might be empty only a few hours later. A CoC may choose to extend the hours of the count into the evening hours to reach youth during the time between when drop-in programs close for the day and when they retire for the night. CoCs choosing to do this must take the steps necessary to ensure people are not double counted. CoCs surveying an area multiple times throughout the day must use an interview that allows for deduplication.

CoCs must be creative and develop strategies to ensure that the unsheltered counts cover or systematically sample locations where unaccompanied homeless youth congregate. CoCs' efforts to overcome the challenges with counting youth, will likely result in promising practices that will improve the accuracy of the homeless youth data locally and nationally in future counts.

Because youth are often highly transient and might be difficult to find on the night designated for the count, communities who desire a broader understanding of homeless youth might consider other ways to supplement their PIT count data. Some of the promising practices communities have used to gain a better understanding of their homeless youth population include more frequent PIT counts, conducting counts focused on youth that occur over longer periods than the CoCs' normal counting period, and implementing survey questions that identify homeless youth that meet other (non-HUD) definitions of homelessness for community planning purposes. Information on creative strategies and implementation of many of the recommendations cited above for improving how CoCs count unsheltered youth can be found in the Urban Institute's report, **Counting Homeless Youth: Promising Practices from the YouthCount! Initiative**.²³ A copy of this report is included in the Appendices.

Veterans

Conducting a PIT count of homeless veterans is challenging because a person's veteran status is not visibly discernible, and identification will likely require enumerator interviews. Locating, counting, and interviewing unsheltered homeless veterans during the PIT count is a major challenge. Besides the logistical challenges involved in locating veterans, it is important to understand how to engage them and ask survey questions in the most effective way to successfully collect the required information. Because the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has housing and service programs targeting homeless veterans, it is critical that local VA staff are engaged and participate in both the sheltered and unsheltered PIT count. However,

²³ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

CoCs should be mindful that some veterans might not be eligible for VA services, so it is important that other partners, in addition to the VA, participate to identify and locate homeless veterans. Ultimately, combining CoC and VA knowledge and resources will result in a more thorough and accurate count. Below are some suggestions about specific ways local CoCs and VA can collaborate:

- Engage the local VA Medical Center, VA Vet Centers, or VA department staff that have experience screening and interviewing veterans to determine eligibility for VA homeless services, as well as those who provide services to homeless veterans or work on homeless issues to help plan and implement the count. Knowledgeable, experienced staff can help:
 - **Locate unsheltered veterans.** VA Medical Centers and VA Vet Centers have homeless coordinators and outreach workers who regularly interact with veterans, including homeless veterans. These staff are knowledgeable about the locations where unsheltered homeless veterans live, sleep, and congregate and can identify the places that must be included in the unsheltered count. These individuals can also help make sure the roster of housing programs for homeless veterans is complete for the sheltered count and identify any other VA-funded service centers that should be involved, such as Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), VA Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs), VA Vet Centers, and Women Veteran Programs.
 - **Provide guidance on count and survey instruments.** VA staff can offer technical guidance to improve data accuracy.
 - **Assist during the count.** Veteran homeless coordinators and outreach workers can form special teams to canvass encampments and other remote areas that might not have been included in previous counts. Their relationships with clients could also help homeless veterans feel more comfortable providing information.
 - **Work with service providers, homeless and mainstream, who target veterans specifically.** These might include agencies that call themselves “veteran centers” but are not part of the VA. Lists of chartered and non-chartered agencies serving homeless and other veterans can be found nationally at the National Resource Directory for Veterans (www.nrd.org) and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (www.nchv.org). In addition, every state has a Department of Veteran Affairs or equivalent office that might be able to provide a list of relevant service agencies by location.
 - **Reach out to local Veteran Service Organizations (e.g., American Legion, Disabled American Veterans)** for their cooperation with the count. Especially in rural areas where there might not be many homeless service providers, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) provide assistance to homeless veterans and their families. Some VSOs have funds that are set aside to assist these families with motel vouchers and utility payments.
 - **Recruit homeless or formerly homeless veterans to be enumerators for the unsheltered count.** Homeless veterans can be an indispensable resource while planning and conducting a PIT count. Before the count, they can assist in identifying locations where unsheltered homeless veterans might be living. They can also participate in the

count itself, as they might be able to gain the trust of homeless veterans more easily than other staff or volunteers and have more success completing surveys²⁴.

Chronic Homeless

Accurate estimates of the number of chronically homeless persons and the proportion they represent of the overall homeless population are difficult to determine. The determination of chronic homelessness among the unsheltered homeless population requires responses to several questions that must be administered in a survey format. CoCs that use a night of the count method without sampling or interviewing have no way to determine whether the person being counted is chronically homeless. Many CoCs conduct their unsheltered counts late at night to better distinguish between individuals living on the street and those staying in shelter. Interviews might not be conducted, since individuals likely are sleeping at the time of the count, and volunteers are often instructed not to wake people out of respect. As a result, improved sampling techniques and clear instruction on what questions should be asked to determine chronic homeless status are required.

CoCs must use an approved counting methodology with valid sampling techniques as described within this guide. CoCs should refer to the most recent HUD regulations to review and confirm the definition of chronic homelessness. In order to determine chronic homeless status, CoCs must ask questions of all adults in households interviewed that provide answers to the above listed qualifications. Refer to the sample survey instruments available online on the **HUD Exchange HIC and PIT Guidance** page for example questions to determine chronic homeless status.²⁵

After the PIT Count

Collection of Surveys

It is important that CoCs appropriately handle the PIT count surveys, whether collected via paper or electronically. This is the point during data collection when the survey information is most vulnerable. Completed paper surveys are often transported from each interviewer to one particular drop-off or central collection point. If the surveys completed by an interviewer are lost, that entire person's work is wasted and any personal identification information is at risk for potentially causing harm to the interviewed persons. For survey information collected

²⁴ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

²⁵ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

electronically via a mobile application or other electronic means, it is important that the data is collected and stored using proper privacy protocols.

Below are some steps for collecting completed paper surveys and electronic survey data.

- Use the safest practical methods of getting the completed paper surveys from each interviewer to the drop-off or central collection point.
- If practicable, it is a good idea for each interviewer to hand-deliver their completed work back to a central drop-off location.
- For PIT counts extending over a larger area (such as Balance of State or statewide CoCs), developing a clear process for mailing and ensuring safe delivery of the completed surveys to a central location is important.
- If CoCs are collecting electronic survey data via a mobile application or other electronic format, they should ensure that the data is properly encrypted and stored securely.
- CoCs should consider limiting access to the electronic survey data to a few key people.

It is a good idea to track and record survey arrival at the central data collection point, ensuring that all expected forms are accounted for. It is helpful to number all of the surveys before distribution to enumerators, so receipt of all surveys can be tracked.²⁶

HUD Standard No. 14: CoCs are required to ensure that people conducting the PIT count, including project staff and community volunteers, are appropriately trained about count standards, data collection procedures, and protocols for privacy, security, and personal safety.

Survey review

Once the PIT count is complete and all data are assembled at a central location, CoCs should focus on preparing all survey data collected for data entry and analysis. Completed survey forms should be reviewed before data entry. The survey review process may be conducted by BOS staff, a team of volunteers, or by an outside vendor or research team. The purpose of reviewing survey forms is to clean the surveys to ensure that:

- It will be clear to whomever does the data entry which marks are actually answers and which are extraneous notes that someone might have made during the survey.
- Responses that make no sense have been eliminated.
- Correct interpretations have been made about such anomalies as transposed numbers and illegible responses.

The review process could include these safeguards:

²⁶ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

- Checking to see if the criteria for identifying a person experiencing homelessness are met. Surveys completed by those who are in housing situations that do not meet the homeless criteria can be removed and not included for data entry or clearly coded to ensure that the individuals counted are not included in data reported to HUD.
- Placing a unique numeric identification number on each survey.
- Placing an agency identification number on each survey to correlate the survey with participating projects.
- Placing the geocode (of the project or of the location where an unsheltered homeless person was counted) on each survey to correlate the survey with a particular Con Plan jurisdiction.
- Destroying surveys that were not completed or are unreadable.
- Checking to make sure that all standard items at the beginning or end of the survey are completed. This might include the name of the project where the data was collected, the date and time of the interview, or the name or initials of the interviewer.
- Checking that every question eliciting one answer only has one answer.
- Checking to see if questions that should have been skipped were skipped, and crossing out those answers that should have been skipped²⁷.

HUD Standard No. 13: Surveys of people for the sheltered or unsheltered count must be administered on a manner that protects participant privacy and safety, as well as the safety of the persons completing the survey.

Data Entry and Cleaning

The next step of the process is to collate, clean and deduplicate all the data from PIT survey, HMIS and those agencies who serve those experiencing homeless but do not enter data into HMIS. If there is not enough data to deduplicate, the data will be removed from the data. The WI BOS created a [WI BOS Point In Time Data Guide](#) that goes into much more detail about how to collect and clean the data but below is an overview of the way the WI BOS collected PIT data.

HUD Standard No. 12: CoCs must ensure that during the PIT count homeless persons are only counted once. It is critical that the counting methods be coordinated to ensure that there is no double counting. Therefore, CoCs must collect sufficient information to be able to deduplicate the PIT count (i.e. ensure that the same homeless person was not counted more than once.)

²⁷ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Housing Inventory Chart (HIC)

The HIC is an active inventory of all the beds available for those experiencing homelessness. It includes emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, other permanent housing and Rapid Rehousing projects. Any project that has an eligibility of homelessness should be included on the HIC, regardless of funding source or if they enter data into HMIS. In the WI BOS, the HIC is divided into 21 coalition tabs, so each coalition has their own tab with their own local projects. The HIC is sent monthly as a google sheet link.

The HIC is used for many things, which are gone into more detail in the [WI BOS HIC Guide](#) and the accompanying training, but it is a key part of the data collection process for the PIT. The fourth Wednesday of every month, the PIT columns should be completed for each project listed on the HIC, but it is especially important that in July and January, those columns are completed.

The HIC gives information about the household type and number served. Because every project regardless of funding or whether they enter into HMIS is on the HIC, it is the starting place for data review for the PIT. The numbers that are entered on the HIC must match the numbers in the HMIS reports and the non-HMIS reports.

It is the PIT Lead's responsibility to ensure that all data is entered into the HIC for every project that served people the night of the PIT count. The PIT Lead will need to connect with staff from the other organizations to get this data, unless there is an agreement on file with ICA (the HMIS Lead) that allows the PIT Lead to pull reports on behalf of another organization.

HMIS

For the projects that enter data into HMIS, the process is relatively simple. Staff should ensure that the data entered into HMIS for the night of the PIT is accurate and complete. If PIT Leads do not have access to run the HMIS reports for other organizations, they will have to reach out to get those data from their partners, but they do not need to collect demographic information from the agency, because it is listed in the HMIS report that will be sent to the WI BOS staff that is reviewing the data. The PIT Lead's job is to ensure that their agency's data is entered and accurate and that there are numbers of households and total people entered onto the HIC for every other project that served someone the night of the PIT.

There are two reports that relate to the PIT. The first one pulls all the information needed for emergency shelter, safe haven, and transitional housing projects. The second report includes all the information needed for permanent supporting housing, other permanent housing, and rapid rehousing projects. The reports include household type, number served, demographic

information and subpopulation data in the report. The WI BOS gives three data review deadlines. The PIT Lead needs to look at the HMIS reports for their organization and ensure the data looks accurate and is error free. Then they must make sure all the other projects have household numbers and are served on the HIC. ICA staff run the reports and send them to the WI BOS staff who review them for accuracy and completeness. Basically, the numbers from the HMIS report must match what the HIC says or there will be errors sent to the PIT Lead to fix. While the PIT Lead may not be responsible for the other agency's data, they are responsible for ensuring they are communicating any issues with data to the partner organization and helping them fix errors if they do not understand how.

Non-HMIS

For those organizations who do not enter data into HMIS, they still have to report the same level of household type, total served and demographic information as those who do enter data in HMIS. The PIT Lead will need to obtain their information from those organizations separately from the HMIS process.

Domestic Violence Service Providers (DVSP) are statutorily prohibited from entering data into the same HMIS that regular homeless service providers do, so all DVSP will use the non-HMIS chart. There may be other organizations who are not required by their funding source and choose not to enter data into HMIS and PIT Leads will need to gather this information from them as well. The PIT Lead needs to be familiar with the projects on their HIC and know who does and does not enter data into HMIS, because they will need to give those organizations who do not enter data into HMIS time to collect it via some other way.

The non-HMIS chart is a spreadsheet that gathers all the same information as the HMIS reports. It is recommended that PIT Leads download the non-HMIS chart for their coalition and send each partner their own spreadsheet. Once they get them all back, they will add all the information together and enter it as one number in the non-HMIS chart.

The non-HMIS chart is divided into families (meaning households with at least one child under the age of 18), singles (households with no children under the age of 18) and children only (households made up of only people under the age of 18 with no parents or guardians who are over the age of 18). The families and singles tab is divided further into tables for subpopulations of veterans and parenting youth/youth.

This spreadsheet is also a google link that is sent to the PIT Leads. PIT Leads will enter that information under the ES (emergency shelter) or TH (transitional housing) column. The WI BOS staff will then look at the HIC, add up all the project data that is not entered into HMIS and

check to make sure it matches what is on the Non-HMIS chart. If there are issues, they are sent to the PIT Lead to work with the agencies to fix.

Deduplication Chart

The deduplication chart is where the PIT survey data is entered. Once the PIT Lead has collected and screened the surveys, they enter this data into the deduplication chart. It asks for the same information as the HMIS reports and the non-HMIS chart. Then, that information is added together and added to the non-HMIS chart under the UN (unsheltered) column.

This is also a google link and the WI BOS staff adds up how many unsheltered families and singles were found and remained unsheltered and compares it to the non-HMIS UN (unsheltered) column. These need to match. If someone is found in the overnight count but is connected with emergency shelter, they would not be included on the deduplication chart, because their information would be captured in the HMIS reports or non-HMIS chart.

Observation Only Forms

For those who are unsheltered, but refuse to complete a survey, an observation only form can be completed. Because homelessness and demographic information cannot be verified, the observation only forms should be included in the deduplication chart, under the Observation Only Form Section, but those surveys will not be included in the final PIT data.

According to the HUD PIT Methodology, a response should be excluded if the respondent did not complete enough of the survey form to be meaningful. For example, if the only item answered on the survey was the person's gender, then the respondent did not answer enough questions to assist with deduplication or to determine homeless status, and therefore this survey should be excluded from the analysis.²⁸

Every effort should be made to gather data and verify homelessness for that person. There are several ways to do this. First, volunteers can go back to the place the person was staying overnight, at a later time on Thursday after the count when the person may be awake and more willing to engage. Since the services-based count starts at 6:01AM on Thursday morning after the PIT, it is totally appropriate for agency staff to go around 7 or 8 in the morning to try and connect again.

²⁸ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Second, making the service-based count more robust will help to capture data from people who were homeless, but the PIT Teams did not find. If you have a variety of service providers, business, and community partners who are asking the question of “were you homeless the last Wednesday night” and doing the survey with people, there is a better chance that even if someone is missed during the actual overnight count, their information will be captured and resources given.

Post PIT Survey

The Post PIT Survey is an opportunity for the PIT Lead to describe who participated in the count, the planning of the count and describe what the planning process entailed, what happened during the count and what training may be needed for PIT volunteers. It is both a summary of the Point-in-Time count and a record of volunteers. The CoC provides a questionnaire to PIT Leads to collect this information. It is reviewed by the CoC to ensure participation from required agencies and to evaluate if the geographic area was covered. It is also used to evaluate the planning and execution of the PIT to ensure that the Count was a community-wide effort to locate as many unsheltered people as possible and feasible.

For many agencies, participation in the PIT is required, and through the Post PIT survey, WI BOS staff verify participation. Local PIT Leads need to be sure to include names and agencies of participants required to participate in the Count. Should a required agency not meet participation requirements after reviewing the Post PIT Survey, the CoC will follow up with the PIT Lead and verify participation. If participation cannot be confirmed, the CoC will submit a letter to the agency and include the PIT Lead, the WI BoS coalition support person, and the Coalition Chair. Failure to participate in a PIT Count may result in a Finding during Monitoring.

The post PIT Survey also gives information to staff for the CoC Competitive application and gives feedback on where more training and education is needed.

Locations

Each coalition must provide a list of the locations they covered during the overnight PIT count. This is to ensure that the complete coverage happened and if an area was not covered, an explanation would need to be included. For example, if there is a marsh or lake, that would indicate that the count was not done in that area.

Should agencies wish to request permanent exemption for searching specific areas where unsheltered persons would not feasibly be located, the PIT Lead should submit a letter to the CoC outlining the area to be excluded and the rationale for not conducting the PIT in that

location. It is the expectation that the PIT Lead and community partners will coordinate the search to locations where those experiencing homelessness are located but should not limit their search to those locations only. The PIT Lead should be working with partners to continue to identify locations and update the search to get an accurate count of those experiencing homelessness in their communities.

Unsheltered Letter

Each local coalition must send a letter to the WI BOS regarding those who were found and stayed unsheltered. The letter must indicate for each person how they were offered services and how they were connected to Coordinated Entry. The letter should also indicate how the After-Hours Plan for each county/coalition was used. If there were 4 people found and remained unsheltered, there should be a narrative about 4 people and how the PIT volunteers tried to connect them to shelter and coordinated Entry.

Match

All PIT Leads are required to collect match from volunteers and staff who conduct the count. Local Coalition PIT Leads are then required to submit eligible Match to the CoC PIT Lead using the designated process as identified by the Lead Agency.

The CoC provides an *electronic* document to the PIT Leads that is used to collect the name and contact information of the volunteer, the type of activity or item that was submitted as match, the value of that activity or item, verification that PIT Match is not being used as Match to another project, that the donation of time or materials was not paid for out of CoC funds, and must also contain a signature by the person who provided the match. This electronic form is then used to record eligible match collected during the Count and is submitted to the CoC. Agencies should maintain supporting documentation verifying the submission of the match to the CoC.

The total PIT Match is used by the CoC to support the CoC Planning Grant obligation.

PIT time or materials are not an eligible source of match for CoC-funded housing programs including TH/RRH, RRH or PSH.

PIT match may be used to support Supportive Services Only (SSO) Coordinated Entry (CE) grants via letter submitted to the CoC PIT Lead that identifies that Coordinated Entry work was completed and occurred during the night of the PIT or associated with the PIT Count.

Homeless Data Exchange (HDX)

CoCs are required to submit their HIC and PIT count data via HUD's Homelessness Data Exchange (HDX) in the spring of each year as part of the annual CoC Program Competition. The HDX has several data validations built in to prevent erroneous data entry. CoCs should correct any validation errors detected by HDX and strive to improve their data clean-up in the future to avoid recurrence of those errors. HUD releases annual guidance documents before the submission deadline that outlines each year's data collection and submission requirements. CoCs should carefully review these guidance documents to ensure that they are aware of any updated data collection or data entry procedures before entering their HIC and PIT count data into the HDX.

Upon submission in HDX, HUD conducts a quality analysis of the PIT count data. HUD is often looking for large changes or inconsistencies within the data. HUD encourages CoCs to document in the "Notes" section of the HDX any anomalies in their data. When HUD has completed its review the data is compiled and reported as part of the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. HUD considers the data it publishes as the final approved HUD data and will use that data for all official use, including the annual CoC Program Competition.

Sharing the Results

Con Plan jurisdictions should be active participants during the PIT count process. After the count is conducted and the data has been cleaned, CoCs should provide Con Plan jurisdictions the data needed to complete their Con Plans.

As community partners, CoCs should invite Con Plan jurisdictions to participate in a discussion of the PIT count results. A good practice is to highlight trends that are unique to particular Con Plan jurisdictions and to discuss potential gaps in housing and services targeted to homeless individuals and families. This kind of analysis is a valuable tool to inform Con Plan jurisdictions' homeless needs assessments and their decision-making process for allocating and coordinating limited community resources.

PIT count data is a valuable resource. HUD strongly encourages communities to carefully analyze PIT count results and make changes to its homeless response system accordingly. PIT count data can be used directly to assist homeless people identified during the count. The unsheltered count data can be used to enhance outreach efforts, including improving the geographic coverage of outreach and addressing changes in the demographics of people living on the streets. PIT count data could also be used to ascertain whether clients found on the street are being sought out for housing opportunities, such as a public housing agency waitlist or a

local Vulnerability Index registry. Lastly, the PIT count data could be used to convene a meeting to discuss assisting special populations identified during the count that might not currently be connected to services, such as veterans or youth.

CoCs should also use their PIT count data as a means of educating the public. Through PIT count data, CoCs can understand where homeless people congregate, the extent of homelessness, and the characteristics of people who are homeless. CoCs that use the PIT count for outreach are often able to document success stories. Sharing of these success stories, with the consent of the people involved, through local newspapers, social media, and other media outlets can dispel misconceptions about people who experience homelessness and engender support for the cause of preventing and ending homelessness in the CoC.²⁹

HUD Standard No. 4: All CoCs should consult and collaborate with all Con Plan Jurisdictions in the geographical boundary of the CoC including those that do not have ESG funding, to assist the jurisdiction in submitting PIT count data that is relevant to completing their Con Plans.

HUD Standard No. 5: CoCs must provide PIT count data to the entity(ies) responsible for the Con Plan jurisdiction(s) associated with the CoC.

²⁹ PIT Count Methodology Guide, September 2014

Appendix

Outreach and Safety Resources

[Counting People in Structures](#)

[How to Safely and appropriately Engage Someone Experiencing Homelessness](#)

HUD Resources

[HUD PIT Count Methodology](#)

[PIT Count Planning Worksheet](#)

[Tips for Including People with Lived Experience](#)

Youth

[Counting Homeless Youth Report](#)

[USICH Framework for Ending Youth Homelessness](#)

APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF PROJECTS TO INCLUDE IN THE HIC AND PIT COUNT

HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?
	Emergency shelters for persons experiencing homelessness	<p>Include all emergency shelters funded by HUD ESG and/or other federal, state and local public and private sources, including domestic violence shelters.</p> <p>If ESG funded, in the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: ESG- Emergency Shelter Warming Centers (depending on set up/design and purpose) <i>*Ask HMIS staff and/or CoC staff</i></p>	Yes	Yes
	Emergency shelters for youth experiencing homelessness	<p>Include all emergency shelters for youth experiencing homelessness funded by federal, state, and local public and private sources</p>	Yes	Yes

Emergency Shelter	Hotel/motel vouchers	Include only vouchers paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals	Yes	Yes
	VA-funded Contract Residential Services (CRS - a consolidation of the former HCHV Community Contract Emergency Housing and Community Contract Residential Treatment Programs)	Include all VA-funded CRS (the consolidation of HCHV/EH and HCHV/RT) projects In the "Additional Federal Funding Sources" field, must identify project in HIC as VA: CRS Contract Residential Services	Yes	Yes
	VA-funded Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) project	Include VA-funded SSVF EHA inventory	Yes	Yes
HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?
	HHS-funded Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Basic Center Programs (BCP)	In the "Additional Federal Funding Sources" field, must identify project in HIC as HHS: RHY – BCP	Yes	Yes
	HUD-funded transitional housing projects	Include all transitional housing projects funded by	Yes	Yes

		<p>HUD, including YHDP-funded projects</p> <p>If CoC funded, in the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: CoC- Transitional Housing</p> <p>For YHDP-funded projects, HUD: YHDP – Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP)</p>		
	Transitional housing projects with HUD Joint TH/RRH funding	<p>Include all HUD CoC funded rapid re-housing projects that are funded by the Joint TH/RRH funding</p> <p>In the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: CoC – Joint Component TH/RRH</p>	Yes	Yes
	Other transitional housing projects for persons experiencing homelessness	<p>Include all transitional housing projects for persons experiencing homelessness funded by other federal, state, and local public and private sources</p>	Yes	Yes
HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?

Transitional Housing	<p>HHS-funded RHY transitional housing projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional Living Programs (TLP) • Maternity Group Homes for Pregnant and Parenting Youth (MGH) • Support System for Rural Homeless Youth (Demo TLP) 	<p>In the “Additional Federal Funding Sources” field, must identify project in HIC as HHS: RHY TLP or RHY MGH</p>	Yes	Yes
	<p>Other transitional housing projects for youth experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>Include all transitional housing projects for youth experiencing homelessness funded by federal, state, and local public and private sources</p>	Yes	Yes
	<p>VA-funded transitional housing projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA Grant and Per Diem – Bridge Housing 	<p>Include VA-funded GPD, except low demand and transition in place projects, and CWT/TR projects</p> <p>In the “Additional Federal Funding Sources” field,</p>	Yes	Yes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA Grant and Per Diem – Service Intensive Transitional Housing • VA Grant and Per Diem – Hospital to Housing • VA Grant and Per Diem – Clinical Treatment 	<p>must identify project in HIC as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA: GPD Bridge • VA: GPD Service Intensive • VA: GPD Hospital to Housing 		
HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?
Safe Haven	HUD-funded Safe Haven programs	<p>Include all HUD CoC Program</p> <p>In the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: CoC-Safe Haven</p>	Yes	Yes
	<p>VA-funded Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) VA Low Demand Safe Haven Program</p> <p>VA Grant and Per Diem – Low Demand</p>	<p>Include all VA-funded HCHV/SH projects and VA GPD- low demand projects</p> <p>In the “Additional Federal Funding Sources” field, must identify project in HIC as VA: GPD – Low Demand or VA: Community Contract Safe Haven Program</p>	Yes	Yes

	<p>RRH HUD-funded rapid re-housing projects</p>	<p>Include all HUD CoC and ESG-funded rapid re-housing projects, including YHDP-funded projects</p> <p>In the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: ESG-Rapid Re-Housing or CoC-Rapid Re-Housing</p> <p>For YHDP-funded projects, HUD: YHDP – Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP)</p>	Yes	No
Rapid Rehousing	<p>RRH Rapid re-housing projects with HUD Joint TH/RRH funding</p>	<p>Include all HUD CoC funded rapid re-housing projects that are funded by the Joint TH/RRH funding</p> <p>In the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: CoC – Joint Component TH/RRH</p>	Yes	No
HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?
	<p>RRH Other rapid re-housing projects for</p>	<p>Include all rapid re-housing projects for persons experiencing homelessness funded by other federal,</p>	Yes	No

	persons experiencing homelessness	state and local public and private sources		
	<u>RRH</u> VA-funded Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) projects	In the “Additional Federal Funding Sources” field, must identify project in HIC as VA: SSVF	Yes	No
Permanent Supportive Housing	<u>PSH</u> Permanent supportive housing projects for persons experiencing homelessness	<p>Include all permanent supportive housing projects funded by HUD, including YHDP-funded projects, and/or other federal, state and local public and private sources</p> <p>For scattered site projects, include total number of units available for occupancy or total number of vouchers available for use in the CoC on night designated for the count</p> <p>If HUD funded, in the “HUD McKinney-Vento Funded” field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: CoC-</p> <p>Permanent Supportive Housing, CoC-Supportive Services Only, or HUD: YHDP – Youth Homeless</p>	Yes	No

		Demonstration Program (YHDP),		
	<u>PSH</u> HUD-funded Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing	Include all HUD-funded projects utilizing VASH vouchers In the "Additional Federal Funding Sources" field, must identify project in HIC as HUD: HUD/VASH	Yes	No
HIC Project Type	Projects to Include	Instructions	Include PIT data on the HIC?	Include PIT data in PIT sheltered count?

Other Permanent Housing (OPH)	Other permanent housing projects, excluding PSH and RRH, for persons experiencing homelessness	Include any PH project that is designated for persons experiencing homelessness that provides housing and services or housing only, but for which disability is not required for entry, includes SRO projects.	Yes	No
	Permanent housing projects funded by Public and Indian Housing (PIH), including the Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV)	Include any HUD PIH-funded projects, including EHV programs		
	VA-funded other permanent housing projects, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA Grant and Per Diem Transition in Place 	Include VA-funded GPD TIP projects In the "Additional Federal Funding Sources" field, must identify project in HIC as VA: GPD TIP	Yes	No