TEXAS HOMELESS NETWORK

2017
Point-In-Time
Coordinator Manual

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Introduction

This Coordinator's Manual provides guidance on how to plan and implement the count and detailed information about how to train volunteers and service providers about how to use the various point-In-time (PIT) forms that have been developed for TX BoS CoC providers. The PIT Coordinator for each coalition/community is responsible for knowing the information in this manual.

Every year, local agencies and organizations conduct a count to determine the extent of homelessness in each community. This information is utilized in the submission of a Continuum of Care (CoC) grant through the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD requires providers who participate in CoC Homeless Assistance Programs to complete a point-in-time (PIT) count of the people who are homeless in their community. Aside from eligibility to compete for HUD homeless funding, an accurate count offers several benefits including:

- Monitoring trends of homelessness in our local area,
- Supporting local efforts by identifying unmet needs and characteristics of the homeless,
- Assisting in development of new programs and services or re-distribution of programs and services
- Raising community awareness of homelessness
- Raising political awareness of homelessness

HUD requires all CoCs to complete an annual count of sheltered homeless during the last ten days in January. CoCs are required to conduct a PIT count of homeless persons at least biennially (TX BoS CoC conducts this portion of the count on a yearly basis).

The count has several components. To meet HUD requirements, local homeless coalitions and communities will count people who are sheltered (living in emergency shelters or transitional housing) and also provide information about the characteristics of homeless persons in shelters such as whether they have a mental illness, substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, or whether they are victims of domestic violence or veterans. The coalitions will also count people who are unsheltered and will review where individuals and families are known to stay when they are homeless on the street, for example: local parks, libraries, truck stops, 24-hour stores & restaurants, abandoned buildings and streets. HUD acknowledges that the street count will not totally reflect the exact amount of homeless in communities, but hopes to approximate the number of homeless through this outreach.

Homeless persons identified by the unsheltered count may be offered transportation to a shelter, food or a food voucher, water, blanket, and a list of available resources in the community. This outreach is being offered to build trust in hopes that the homeless will reach out for help. The purpose is to inform homeless persons of the community resources in the area and to help meet their immediate basic needs.

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and the PIT are integrally related to each other. The HIC and PIT should be conducted on the same night during the last ten days in January. Thus, the total number of persons counted on the HIC in emergency shelter (ES) and transitional housing (TH) combined (i.e., sheltered homeless persons) should equal the total number of sheltered homeless persons included in the PIT Count (ES + TH).

The Texas Balance of State CoC has determined that the annual Point-In-Time Count will be held on Thursday, January 26th, 2017.

Changes to This Year's PIT Requirements

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has made the following changes to the 2017 PIT Count.

1. Additional gender option of "Don't identify as male, female, or transgender"
2. CoCs must report persons experiencing chronic homelessness by household type
    a. Persons in households with at least one adult and one child
    b. Persons in households with no children
    c. Persons in households with only children
3. When reporting on any chronically homeless household – if one member of the household qualifies as chronically homeless, then all person in the household should be counted as chronically homeless

Challenges and Limitations

A successful PIT Count requires buy-in, a level of cooperation and commitment in the community, and communication from start to finish. Often PIT Counts must confront the myths and misperceptions about homelessness in addition to completing the count.

Simply knowing where to look for the unsheltered homeless can become an overwhelming task. The geographic areas to be covered can sometimes be prohibitive. Communities may need to narrow the scope of the area (e.g., known locations, hot-spots, etc.) due to time, location, and volunteer counter restraints. PIT Count Committees should reach out early to formerly homeless persons, homeless outreach providers, police departments, fire departments, food pantries, soup kitchens, and others who may know where unsheltered homeless persons are staying.

Inconsistencies in implementing HUD's Homeless Definition while counting homeless can jeopardize the accuracy of the data collected. Training is extremely important and may be the only way to ensure reliable data. All PIT Count staff and volunteers need to understand the importance of the data being collected and use consistent definitions of homelessness and precariously housed.

Another potential challenge is the time of the year of the count and the extreme weather conditions that can occur.

Still another provider challenge is the concern about not being able to find and calculate the number of homeless persons. While a PIT Count provides a snapshot of the number of homeless persons on that day, it may not reflect the true picture of homelessness. Many unsheltered homeless do not wish to be found, let alone be interviewed. Given that homeless persons may utilize more than one homeless or mainstream resource, communities must use caution to prevent duplicative counts.

Who is Considered Homeless?

For the purpose of the TX BoS Point-In-Time Count, we can only report the number of people who are homeless per HUD's definition.

For the sheltered homeless count, include all individuals or families who meet the criteria described in Paragraph 1.ii of the Homeless Definition Final Rule. This includes:

- Individuals and families "living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, Safe Haven, domestic violence shelter, youth shelters, transitional housing, and hotels/motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state or local government programs for low-income individuals" on January 26th, 2017.

For the unsheltered homeless count, CoCs should include:

- Individuals or families who meet the criteria described in Paragraph 1.i of the Homeless Definition Final Rule. This includes individuals and families "with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground" on January 26th, 2017.

This means that we **cannot** report on people who are:

- Doubled-up
- Living in substandard housing
- Living in a hotel/motel paid with own funds
- Living in Permanent Supportive Housing programs
- Using VASH vouchers
- Living in own place with Homelessness Prevention funds
- Living in own place with Rapid Re-housing funds
- Any location that would not be listed on the HIC

Programs Included in the PIT Count

Program Type	Program Name
Emergency Shelter	***Emergency shelter for homeless persons*** – including all emergency shelters funded by HUD ESG and/or other federal, state and local public and private sources, including domestic violence shelters.
	***Emergency shelters for homeless* youth** – includes all emergency shelters for homeless youth funded by federal, state, and local public and private sources
	Hotel/Motel Vouchers - Include only vouchers paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals
	VA-funded Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Projects - Include all VA-funded HCHV/EH
	HHS-funded Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs - Basic Center Programs
Transitional Housing	***Transitional housing programs*** – including those funded by HUD CoC and other federal, state, and local public and private sources – including those renewing in this year's CoC competition and those that are not renewing in this year's CoC competition
	HHS funded: RHY Transitional Living Program (TLP) and Maternity Group Home Program (MGH)
Unsheltered Homeless Persons	***Persons commonly found in the following circumstances:*** • Streets • Automobiles • Tents • Parks/campgrounds • Abandoned buildings • Other places not meant for human habitation

Definitions

Adults with HIV/AIDS
This subpopulation category of the PIT includes adults who have been diagnosed with AIDS and/or have tested positive for HIV.

Chronic Substance Abuse
This subpopulation category of the PIT includes adults with a substance abuse problem (alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or both). Adults with a substance use disorder must also meet the qualifications identified in the term for “disability” (e.g., “is expected to be long-continuing or indefinite duration”).

Chronically Homeless Person
A person who:

- Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
- Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least 12 months; and
- Has a disability.
- **Note:** For purposes of PIT reporting: When a household with one or more members includes an adult or minor head of household who qualifies as chronically homeless, then all members of that household should be counted as a chronically homeless person in the applicable household type table. For example, if one adult in a two adult household is identified as chronically homeless, both adults should be counted as a chronically homeless person in the households without children category of the PIT count.

Disabling Condition
An individual with one or more of the following conditions:

- A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that:
  - (1) Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;
  - (2) Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and
  - (3) Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.
- A developmental disability, as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002); or
- The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

Parenting Youth
A youth who identifies as the parent or legal guardian of one or more children who are present with or sleeping in the same place as that youth parent, where there is no person over age 24 in the household.

Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
This subpopulation category of the PIT includes persons with mental health problems that are expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impairs the person’s ability to live independently.

Unaccompanied Youth
Unaccompanied youth are persons under age 25 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as his/her child(ren). Unaccompanied youth are single youth, youth couples, and groups of youth presenting together as a household.

Veteran
This subpopulation category of the PIT includes persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Victims of Domestic Violence
This subpopulation category of the PIT includes adults who have been victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Victim Service Provider
A private nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to provide services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This term includes rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, domestic violence transitional housing programs, and other programs.

Youth
Persons under age 25. HUD collects and reports youth data based on persons under 18 and persons between ages 18 and 24.

General Point-In-Time Count Planning Tips

- Point-In-Time Count Methodology
  - A PIT count is dependent on consistent, accurate use of methods across the whole CoC.
  - It will be critical to secure a unique identifier to un-duplicate data at the local level.
  - Determine counting methods that make the most sense for your community based on experience, geography, volunteer/staff capacity, previous PIT Counts, and etc.
  - For the purpose of the TX BoS CoC Point-In-Time Count, we ask that no community utilize extrapolation.
- Secure Local Government Support
  - Obtain a resolution from local county and city government supporting the local Point-In-Time Count, e.g., this could be a declaration from the mayor and/or county commissioners announcing publicly that this the local homeless point-in-time count day
  - Secure participation from law enforcement and fire departments
  - Acquire an all-inclusive list of homeless providers (non-profit, faith-based, government, volunteer, etc.)
- Use the Media
  - Before the Count
    - To recruit volunteers
    - To inform people about the count
    - To draw attention to the issue
    - Send pre-count press release (see sample)
  - After the Count
    - To disseminate results of the count
    - Educate community about homelessness
    - Send post-count press release (see sample)

- Involve People who are Homeless or were Previously Homeless in the Count
    - Help identify known locations or hot spots
    - Assist with the street count
    - Test the questions
- Use Incentives
    - For participants
    - For volunteers
- Use Count as a Form of Outreach
    - Provide information and referral while acting as a resource to those in need of assistance
    - Answer questions and address concerns of the public and people experiencing homelessness

Sheltered Count

Overview

Regardless of funding source, **all** providers of shelter, vouchers, or funds for shelters (including motel/hotel rooms), and/or transitional housing need to provide unduplicated information about the individuals and families they house on January 26th, 2017. HMIS participating agencies that accurately and completely enter data on their participants will be able to supply data through their Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). Agencies that are not currently participating in HMIS will need to supply cumulative data to THN either through their local coalition or individually (if no local coalition exists).

For HUD and TX BoS CoC PIT, count and report:

- People residing in emergency shelter and transitional housing
- Include:
    - Domestic violence shelters
    - Residential programs for runaway/homeless youth
    - Hotel, motel, or apartment vouchers paid for by a public or private agency because the individual or family is homeless
    - Veterans Affairs' programs: HCHV/EH; HCHV/RT

For HUD and TX BoS CoC PIT, **do not** count or report:

- Formerly homeless persons living in permanent supportive housing (including VASH)
- Individuals living in doubled-up situations
- Children or youth who are temporarily residing in institutions due to a parent’s homelessness or abandonment (i.e., emergency foster care, treatment facilities)
- Adults living in mental health, chemical dependency, and criminal justice facilities
- Persons receiving homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing assistance
- Persons in jail or hospitals

Steps for Coordinators

Provider Coordination

- Develop or review a list of all agencies and entities that provide shelter and transitional housing in your community – ensure that this is an all-inclusive list (include non-profit, faith-based, government, volunteer, etc.).
- As early as possible, inform all providers of the date of the count, deadlines, and strategies.

Data Collection

- Deliver data collection forms to all providers by January 9th.
- Reiterate that identifying information from all sheltered and unsheltered people is critical for un-duplicating the data. Utilization of a Unique Identifier is essential to ensuring a PIT Count that is as reliable as possible. ***No individual data will be reported – no individual data will be identifiable.*** All reports will be based on aggregated data.
- If domestic violence shelters/transitional housing providers refuse to provide individual level data with the Unique Identifier on the people that they are sheltering, ask them to provide aggregate information about the total number as well as the number that fit in each sub-population category.
- All shelters and transitional housing providers should return their surveys (if not using HMIS) once data entry is complete, to the PIT Coordinator February 10th. This will give the PIT Coordinator time to review and ensure the accuracy of the data prior to submitting it to THN on February 17th. If data is not turned in by the due date, it will not be included in any reports pertaining to the Texas Balance of State CoC.
- Remember to collect information from all agencies, organizations, government entities, and faith-based groups that provide vouchers for motel/hotel rooms in lieu of shelter.
- Coordinators should utilize the Unique Identifier to determine if any person(s) have been counted more than once and eliminate the duplicative data. This may involve contacting interviewers to clarify information obtained.

Training for the Sheltered Count – Providers

- If program staff will be collecting data for the sheltered count, they may need training.
    - Keep it brief – less than an hour
    - Try to offer more than one session
    - Consider providing training as part of your local coalition meeting
    - Even if you conduct a training, include detailed instructions distributed to providers
    - Always provide contact information for a person that can answer questions regarding the forms

HMIS

- Ask the THN Help Desk to identify the agencies that **reliably** use HMIS. Work with those agencies that need to improve their HMIS data quality so that they will be ready to produce PIT Count data from HMIS by the end of January.
- Remind providers using HMIS to update their data so that records for all residents on January 26th are complete and reliable.
- Ask providers not using HMIS to be prepared to report their data soon after the date of the count. Supply providers with the data collection forms that they will need to complete. Determine date/time to complete training for non-participating HMIS agencies to review and ensure understanding of the data collection forms.

Helpful Hints for Sheltered Counts

- For large emergency shelters, winter shelters, rescue missions or other providers that may have difficulties completing the numerous forms, enlist assistance from other CoC members to provide volunteers to assist in completing the forms on the January 26th.
    - Be sure to meet with providers ahead of time. They need to know what to expect and should be trained in using the forms. This is especially important for providers

who pay for motel/hotel vouchers. Work closely with them ahead of time to decide who should complete forms/do interviews since the agency paying may not have any case management information about the individual. This also holds true for any new agency/organization that may be providing data for the first time or have new staff/volunteers that are not familiar with the process.

- Two to three days prior to the count, contact all homeless providers to remind them about the count. Assess if there are any last minute questions regarding the data collection forms. Remind providers to only submit data on people who are residents on January 26th.

<u>Conducting Unsheltered Count</u>

Overview

A count of people who are homeless but not in a shelter or transitional housing program is referred to as an unsheltered count. The unsheltered count requires identification of homeless people that are living on the street, in abandoned buildings, in their vehicles, chicken coops, tents, shanties, parks, woods, transportation stations, or other places not meant for human habitation on January 26th.

There are two ways to conduct an unsheltered count:

- Night of Count (used for high population areas where people are more likely to be found)
- Service-based (conducted post count for less populous areas)

The unsheltered count strategy that a local coalition chooses for its area depends on demographics, geography, and resources. In more populous areas, where there are more visible homeless or known locations where homeless people congregate, volunteers may be able to more successfully find, and count people in the streets during the count.

In contrast, many rural areas have successfully utilized a *service count* to secure information on unsheltered homeless. In a service count, agencies that provide services that people who are homeless tend to seek (food pantry, soup kitchen, day shelters, drop-in agencies, provider organizations, etc.), survey people over more than a single day in the week following the night of the count. Coalitions may conduct a service-based count from between 1 and 7 days, but it must **<u>not</u>** exceed 7 days (2/2/17) after the designated count night.

If a coalition decides to utilize a service count strategy as all or part of their count, it **<u>must</u>** collect the Unique Identifier information on everyone surveyed to ensure individuals were not also counted in the shelter count or by observation during a street/unsheltered count. A coalition can supplement a service count by surveying people living in places not meant for human habitation – once again, the Unique Identifier information is extremely critical to ensuring that an un-duplicated count is completed.

Night of the Count Method

There are two options to implement a night of the count methodology:

1. Complete coverage (block-by-block) – canvassing every block of a large area, like a downtown or entire city
2. Known locations – canvassing only those locations where unsheltered people are known to live, sleep, and congregate

Steps for Coordinators for Night of the Count Counts

- Identify locations:

    - Consult with outreach workers, people who are or have been homeless, shelter or services staff, police, fire department, school systems, businesses, community development organizations, faith-based groups, housing inspectors, parks and recreation staff, etc.
        - Regardless of the accuracy of your records or number of volunteers, nobody knows more about where to find and how to approach homeless people than homeless or formerly homeless persons themselves. Ask homeless or formerly homeless persons to volunteer as guides. Enlist homeless persons staying in shelters to aide in the count.
    - Review where individuals and families experiencing homelessness were located during the last count
    - Develop a list of places/locations to visit
        - Areas to consider: streets, parks, campgrounds, storage facilities, used car lots, 24-hour establishments (e.g., stores, gas stations, Laundromats, fast food/restaurants/taverns) and their parking lots, rest stops, abandoned buildings, farm buildings, rental storage containers, caves, vehicles, and other similar places
    - Finalize strategy for street/public places count with focus on:
        - Safety
        - Number and experience of enumerators
        - Distance between locations
    - Avoid duplication of effort
- Train everyone participating in the street count.
    - Ground rules
    - Recording information/use of forms
    - What to do in an emergency
- Send out notifications to
    - Local businesses
    - Law enforcement – city, county, state
    - Media – paper, television, radio
    - Service providers – homeless, social service, and other (faith, civic, educational)
    - People experiencing homelessness
    - General community
- Provide written guidelines, maps, and directions.
- Assign survey administrators in pairs or teams by experience – select a team leader who has previous experience working with this population and is familiar with the area.
- Develop communication strategies (cell phones, central number, radios/walkie talkies).
- Provide or make sure enumerators are equipped with pencils, clipboards, forms, flashlights, identification, and incentives for people they encounter, if possible (socks, blankets, food).
- Keep notes of where enumerators did and did not observe people to use for count planning in the future.
- Provide coffee, snacks, and food for returning enumerators, if possible.
- Collect all forms as soon as teams return and immediately review for any problems.
- The coalition’s data is due to THN by February 17th.

Tips for Training Night of the Count Volunteers

- Training can take place days in advance of count so that leaders can better plan for geographic coverage.
- Provide a general overview of what you will be presenting, for example:
    - Overview and goals of the count

- Description of strategy
    - How to use the survey tool
    - Observation guidelines
    - Safety guidelines
    - Returning completed forms
- Distribute a one or two-page summary of the enumeration guidelines to volunteers.
- During the training, present and review the protocol for every public place location, such as parks, alleys, parking ramps, and abandoned buildings.
- Provide survey tool.
- Allow ample time for volunteers to ask questions and raise concerns.
- All participants must know the ground rules, how to record information on the data collection forms, where to report results, what to do in case of trouble, and other procedures for the count.
- Make sure all volunteers understand what is expected on the night of the count, including:
    - What time they need to be there
    - Who they will be working with (if known)
    - What time they will be done.
- Provide a list of necessary and recommended items including flashlights, identification, pencils, forms, cell phones, or other communication.
- Provide an emergency number.

Service-based Count Methods

The foundation of a successful service-based count is the quality and number of **RETURNED SURVEYS**! Surveys need to be accurately completed for every homeless individual and family unit. It is essential that every homeless person be engaged to participate in the data collection survey. Share with each homeless person that his/her participation will help increase the awareness of homelessness in Texas and the nation and help providers advocate for increased funding for programs and services for the homeless.

Steps for Coordinators of Service-based Counts

- Identify agencies where unsheltered homeless individuals receive assistance in your area. Consider the following:
    - Community Mental Health Centers
    - Community Health Clinic/Free Clinics
    - Hospital Emergency Rooms
    - Parks and Recreation/Park Service
    - Drop-In Centers
    - One-Stop Employment Centers
    - Food Pantries
    - Soup Kitchens & Meal Sites
    - Community Service Agencies
    - Law Enforcement
    - Probation and Parole
    - Faith-Based Organizations
    - Clothing Shelters
    - Consumer-Run Organizations
    - Day Shelters
    - Fire Departments
    - Veterans – related agencies
    - School Systems
    - Domestic Violence – related agencies

- Ensure that all participating providers understand:
    - Overall goal of the count and how the information will be used
    - Date and time period for which they are counting
    - Whom to survey (anyone that is considered homeless, per HUD’s definition)
    - When they should be collecting surveys

    - What information they need to collect
- Assign someone to periodically check in with all of the participating providers to make sure they are collecting the data collection forms.
- If possible, provide incentives to homeless individuals who are willing to complete surveys.
- Provide training to all providers who will complete or distribute and collect forms.
- Get supervisor support for line workers completing forms.
- Once data entry is complete, all providers should return the surveys to the PIT Coordinator by February 10th. This will give you time to review and ensure the accuracy of the data prior to sending that data to THN (2/17/17).

Helpful Hints for Training Service Providers and Service-based Count Volunteers

- Training is needed for <u>everyone</u> who is participating in an unsheltered count
- Provide a general overview of what you will be presenting, for example:
    - Overview and goals of the count
        - Background of the count
        - Why it is important
    - Data collection forms – explanation of each question
    - Client confidentiality
    - Who to survey/count
    - Preparation for the survey/count – general tips on interviewing
    - Safety awareness, precautions, and procedures
    - The survey/count
    - Submitting data collection forms
    - Question & answer
- Present a one-page handout with the most important points.
- Supply copies of forms/instructions.
- Ask each provider to discuss how he or she plans to collect surveys at their agency.
- Allow ample time for questions and answers.
- Repeat, repeat, and repeat the procedures.
    - When to start collecting the surveys.
    - Who will be administering surveys – staff or volunteers.
    - When to stop collecting the surveys.
    - When completed surveys need to be submitted to you (February 10th).
- Make sure providers understand that you will be checking with them to ensure they understand the survey and whom they should contact if they have questions.
- If a service provider is unable to attend the training, you can do a one-on-one training at the agency later. However, make sure you review the survey and procedures in detail.
- Provide each provider with copies of the forms that they will need.
- Logistics for the night or day of the count
    - Where to go, who will be in charge, what time to arrive, etc.

<u>Community Involvement</u>

A critical component to any effective count is community involvement. The greater the involvement and understanding of key community members the greater likelihood of a successful and accurate count. Community involvement also leads to other successes in addressing homelessness in communities beyond the Point-In-Time Count, primarily by providing assets and resources essential to ending homelessness.

Key Activities

- Face to face meetings
- Regular e-mail and mail campaigns
- Follow-up phone calls

Potential Community Partners

- Formerly homeless persons
- Sheriff, police departments, highway patrol
- Hospital emergency rooms/urgent care clinics
- Probation and parole
- Faith-based organizations
- Veterans services
- Campgrounds
- School homeless liaisons
- Department of Job and Family Services
- Juvenile courts
- 24-hour businesses – box stores, retail stores, restaurants/fast food/tavern, laundromats
- Media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television stations

Important Items to Consider

- Contact local law enforcement office to obtain their involvement, particularly for ride-alongs on the night of the Point-In-Time Count. Inform law enforcement that volunteers will be completing the count.
- Contact fire department to obtain insight on possible locations of homeless persons residing in abandoned buildings.
- Contact schools, veterans services providers, etc. prior to the count and follow-up afterwards to obtain numbers.

Forming Your Point-In-Time Count Committee

In order to have a successful Point-In-Time Count, each community/continuum should form a Point-In-Time Count Committee. A Coordinator that oversees the Committee's work should lead the Point-In-Time Count. In general, the coordinator should recruit members, keep members informed, maintain a focus on the overview of the Count, keep the work of the committee moving, and make sure that everyone is happily taking responsibility for their role.

Why Create a Point-In-Time Count Committee

- To plan the count
- To identify key action tasks in counting the homeless
- To monitor the planning and implementation process
- To ensure accountability in the process
- To maintain consistent Point-In-Time Count standards

Basic Methodology

- PIT Count Chair sends invitation letter to local community stakeholders (judges, majors, trustees, commissioners, law enforcement agencies, schools, local businesses, faith-based organizations, hospitals, media outlets, volunteers, etc.). The letter should explain the importance of the count to the broader community and include local homelessness data
- PIT Count Chair calls for meetings that include committed stakeholders

- PIT Count Chair prepares meeting agenda
- PIT Count Chair identifies PIT Count key activities and requests volunteers to complete specific roles/responsibilities. The Chair may assign roles/responsibilities if no volunteers
- PIT Count Chair maintains attendance lists, sign-in sheets, minutes

Sample Point-In-Time Count Committee Meeting Agenda Items

- Call meeting to order
- Welcome and introduction of attendees
- Approval of previous minutes
- Overview of the Point-In-Time Count, count methodology, and why count the homeless
- Determine Point-In-Time Count plan, outcomes, objectives, and timeline
- Establish contingency plans
- Request volunteers for various roles and responsibilities; assign roles and responsibilities
- Set date for subsequent meetings
- For the good of the order/other topics
- Adjourn meeting

Other Possible Point-In-Time Count Committee Lead Roles

- Publicity Chair
- Volunteer Recruitment Chair
- Mapping and Trends Chair
- Donations Chair
- Count Team Leaders

Point-In-Time Count Role Descriptions and Responsibilities

<u>Point-In-Time Count Chair/Coordinator</u>

- Invite community stakeholders to participate in the count and draw attention to the issues of homelessness.
- Call and conduct meetings that include committee stakeholders.
- Prepare meeting agenda.
- Monitor/coordinate status of actions/issues, ensure completion of tasks, and is the lead contact regarding the Point-In-Time Count.
- With assistance of committee members, design handouts, fliers, work/project plans, and identifies location/venue for meetings.
- Provide support to other Point-In-Time Count sub-committee chairs/leads regarding their committee issues/needs.
- Monitor that sub-committees are completing their designated tasks. Provide support and encouragement to committee members to complete tasks. Provide assistance to chairs/leads to ensure that tasks are completed. Encourage sub-committee chairs to obtain representation from homeless sub-populations on the committees.
- Delegate tasks as needed to sub-committee chairs/leads.
- Maintain an attendance list and records minutes of the meetings.
- Report to full Continuum of Care the updates, changes, and concerns regarding the Point-In-Time Count.
- Participate in THN’s Point-In-Time Count webinars. Report to THN the data requested from the local count.
- Complete other necessary tasks as required to ensure that homeless count is completed.

Publicity Chair

- Call and conduct Publicity sub-committee meetings.
- Report to Point-In-Time Count Committee updates, changes and concerns regarding the publicity of the homeless count.
- Monitor/coordinate status of actions/issues, ensures completion of tasks, and is lead contact regarding publicity issues for homeless count.
- Provide support to publicity sub-committee members. Delegate tasks to all members to ensure participation and buy-in of publicity issues for count. Ensure that tasks are completed.
- Encourage participation of homeless sub-populations for publicity committee.
- Assist with final decision making of publicity related issues for count. Refer to Point-In-Time Count Chair any issues/concerns.
- Work with committee to create and release homeless count volunteer recruitment press release – work with Volunteer Recruitment sub-committee.
- Work with committee to create and release Point-In-Time Count homeless press release.
- Work with committee to create, reproduce, and distribute homeless count flyer.
- Work with committee to create, reproduce, and distribute homeless count self-report flyer.
- Work with committee to create, reproduce, distribute, and provide Point-In-Time Count Committee Chair the community resource guide for the Count.
- Work with committee to contact media outlets for the count
- Work with committee to devise a list of agencies/entities that have web sites that would be willing to publicize the count – volunteer recruitment, homeless information and results of the count.
- Work with committee to invite media to press conference. Devise plan to present information. Decide on speakers for the press conference.
- Work with committee to complete press release for the results to media that did not attend the press conference.
- Complete thank you letters to volunteers, participants, and donors.
- Complete other necessary tasks as required to ensure that publicity of count is completed.

Volunteer Recruitment Chair

- Call and conduct Volunteer sub-committee meetings.
- Report to Point-In-Time Count Committee updates, changes, and concerns regarding volunteer recruitment for the count.
- Monitor/coordinate status of actions/issues, ensures completion of tasks, and is lead contact regarding volunteer recruitment issues for homeless count.
- Provide support to volunteer recruitment committee members. Delegate tasks to all members to ensure participation and buy in of volunteer recruitment issues for count. Ensure that tasks are completed.
- Encourage participation of homeless sub-populations for volunteer recruitment committee.
- Assist with final decision making of volunteer recruitment related issues for count. Refer to Point-in-Time Count Committee Chair any issues/concerns.
- Work with committee to create and release homeless count volunteer recruitment press release – work with Publicity Committee.
- Review discuss, and develop release of responsibility, statement of confidentiality form and job description for volunteers
- Review, discuss, and develop volunteer training. Set training agenda, content, handouts, and location. Decide upon presenters.
- Ensure that all volunteer training materials are available for date of training.

- Work with committee to develop list of potential volunteers for count (homeless, previously homeless, local university, faith-based organizations, homeless service providers, behavioral health providers, civic organizations, etc.).
- Complete other necessary tasks as required to ensure that volunteer recruitment is completed.

Mapping and Trends Chair

- Call and conduct Mapping and Trends sub-committee meetings.
- Report to Point-In-Time Count Committee updates, changes, and concerns regarding the mapping and trends of the homeless count.
- Monitor/coordinate status of actions/issues, ensures completion of tasks and is lead contact regarding mapping and trends issues for homeless count.
- Provide support to mapping and trends sub-committee members. Delegate tasks to all members to ensure participation and buy-in of mapping and trend issues for count. Ensure that tasks are completed.
- Encourage participation of sub-populations for mapping and trends committee.
- Assist with final decision making of mapping and trend related issues for count. Refer to Point-In-Time Count Chair any issues/concerns.
- Work with committee to scout designated areas for the count.
- Work with the committee to contact county for foreclosure and Sheriff's sale information – scout those areas for possible homeless staying in those houses.
- Develop map for designated areas that volunteers will search for homeless the night of the count.
- Develop database information for sites where homeless have been found or remnants of sites for future counts.
- Complete other necessary tasks as required to ensure that mapping and trends are completed.

Donation Chair

- Call and conduct the Donation sub-committee meetings.
- Report to Point-In-Time Count Committee updates, changes, and concerns regarding the donations to the homeless count.
- Monitor/coordinate status of actions/issues, ensures completion of tasks, and is lead contact regarding donation issues for homeless count.
- Provide support to Donation committee members. Delegate tasks to all members to ensure participation and buy in of donations for count. Ensure tasks are completed.
- Encourage participation of homeless sub-populations for donation committee.
- Assist with final decision making of donations related issues for count. Refer to Point-In-Time Count Chair any issues/concerns.
- Review, discuss, and develop strategy as to what items should be given to homeless during the count (blankets, food, food vouchers, flashlight, water, etc.).
- Work with committee to secure donations of items and location to store items prior to the count.
- Work with committee to prepare the donations for the count.
- Work with committee to donate leftover items to provider agencies after the count.
- Complete other necessary tasks as required to ensure that donations are completed.

Point-In-Time Count Team Leader

- Act as spokesperson for the team. Review Point-In-Time Count volunteer roles. Answer any questions/concerns that volunteers have prior to beginning count. Refer other issues to Volunteer Recruitment Chair or Point-In-Time Count Chair.

- Able to drive, and has a clean Texas driving record.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Brings map and is familiar with the assigned locations.
- Carries mobile phone to communicate with PIT Count Chair or designee.
- Contact Point-In-Time Count Chair if shelter is needed/wanted.
- Contact 911 for injuries/incidents. Contact Point-In-Time Count Chair for injuries/incidents.
- Provide donations to homeless.
- Be able to walk one or two miles unassisted.
- After count, discuss any suggestions, changes, and concerns with Point-In-Time Count Chair.
- Provide Mapping and Trends Chair with all street count forms at end of count. Return other supplies to Point-In-Time Count Committee.
- Comply with Texas mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect if household with child is found and refuses to go to shelter.

<u>Point-In-Time Count Volunteer</u>

- Search for unsheltered homeless within designated location.
- Meet with team leader prior to beginning of count to obtain final instructions – review data collection form prior to the count and become familiar with the questions. Ask team leader for clarifications as needed.
- Provide donations to homeless.
- Carry mobile phone to communicate with PIT Count Team Leader, PIT Count Chair or designee.
- Do not place yourself or team members at risk. If a volunteer feels threatened, they should avoid the situation and contact 911.
- Offer referral to shelter and supportive services to homeless.
- Maintain visual contact with team members to ensure safety. Do not conduct the count alone.
- Be able to walk one or two miles unassisted.
- Agree to and sign confidentiality agreement with coordinating agency.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- After count, discuss any suggestions, changes, and concerns with team leader.

<u>Point-In-Time Count Support Volunteer</u>

- Assist with pre-packing of count volunteer supplies and donation bags.
- Call shelters the day before the count to remind of information needed.
- Call shelters the day of count to obtain any information needed.
- May be any age (those under 18 years old will need their parent’s permission).

Suggested Timeline

September:

- Begin to assess HMIS data quality

October:

- Finalize data collection approach for sheltered and unsheltered counts (HMIS only, HMIS + client/provider surveys, client/provider surveys only)

October - November:

- If using HMIS, begin/continue data cleanup
- If using client-level surveys, decide whether or not to sample and, if so, develop a sampling/extrapolation strategy
- Develop or revise client and provider surveys
- Instruments
- Interviewing procedures
- Determine process to deal with duplication
- Decide who will conduct each piece of the count (CoC staff, providers, or volunteers)
- Update the list of emergency and transitional housing programs

November - December:

- Reach out to providers
- Develop written guidelines for volunteers/staff
- Recruit volunteers
- Finalize count materials
- Identify locations to count
- Organize donations for incentives
    - Socks, coats, hats, gloves, scarves
    - Blankets, pillows
    - Food – pull-top cans, gift cards
    - Flash light, whistle, can opener
    - Hygiene items – toilet paper, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb/brush
    - Gift cards
- Unsheltered Service-Based Count
    - Identify non-shelter service providers that typically serve homeless people
        - Soup kitchens, emergency food programs
        - Street outreach programs
        - Drop-in shelters, day shelters
        - Health care centers, emergency rooms
        - Outpatient mental health, substance abuse treatment facilities
    - If not interviewing at every location, be sure your sample of non-shelter programs is representative
- Unsheltered Count
    - Identify "known locations" where homeless people are typically found
    - Decide how PIT Count volunteers should deal with difficult locations
    - Divide locations into study areas for different teams of volunteers
    - Solicit input from stakeholders
        - Outreach workers, currently/formerly homeless persons, homeless program providers, police, and community or neighborhood groups
- Sheltered Count

    - Emergency shelters
    - Transitional housing programs
    - Permanent supportive housing programs (<u>for the Housing Inventory Count only</u>)
- Plan for logistics on the night of the count – develop communications strategies – cell phones, central number, radios/walkie talkies for the night of the count

December:
- Conduct training sessions for providers and volunteers
    - Review volunteer training materials
    - Review data collection forms
    - Discuss what to do in an emergency

First Week of January:
- Deliver count materials to providers
- Shelter-based count materials
- Service-based count materials
- Prepare map of the area – directions to various locations, highlight area to be covered by each team individually

Second Week of January:
- Prepare packets of materials for the unsheltered count
    - Include: map of the area, sufficient copies of surveys or observation sheets, emergency contact information, releases, identification badges, instructions, etc.
- Remind providers about HMIS data collection procedures, if applicable
- Prepare a back-up plan, if volunteers do not show–up or the count is postponed
- Collect incentive items from donors

Week of the Count:
- Final HMIS data quality checks
- Remind providers and volunteers about the count
- Pack incentive items in backpacks, gym bags, etc.
- Assign volunteers/staff in pairs or teams by experience – select a team leader who has previous experience working with this population and is familiar with the area

January 26th, 2017:
- Make sure that providers have received all necessary materials (surveys, instructions, pens, clipboards, flashlights, identification, incentives, etc.) before the count
- If volunteers or Continuum of Care staff are assisting, ensure they know where to go and when to arrive
- Assign sites appropriately – to teams with enough people and experience
- Provide coffee, snacks and food for returning counters (if possible)
- Collect all forms as soon as teams return and immediately review for any problems
- Keep notes of where volunteers/staff did and did not observe people to use for future counts
- Track all hours of volunteers (separate forms will be provided by THN)

After the count:
- Collect and review the survey or observation sheets – contact volunteers to clarify information soon after the count to ensure the count is still fresh in their mind
- Run HMIS report

- Evaluate the PIT Count process
    - How did the planning group function
    - What changes should be made for next year
    - Does planning timeline need to be adjusted
    - What changes to count procedures should be made for next year
    - What revisions to the surveys/observations forms should be made for next year

Enhancing Point-In-Time Count Data Quality

The Point-In-Time Count Chair plays a critical role in ensuring that all Point-In-Time Count data is complete and accurate. Because you are familiar with the programs in your area, you may be able to catch mistakes that would otherwise affect data quality. Below is some guidance for how you can help ensure accurate count data for your local Continuum of Care and THN's report on homelessness across the state.

- Following the count, check to make sure that all applicable forms are submitted.
    - Did each emergency shelter program in your inventory submit:
        - Bed count data for the Housing Inventory Count
        - Point-In-Time Count/People count data for the Housing Inventory Count and Point-In-Time Count
        - Ensure that everyone in the program was entered into HMIS
    - Did each domestic violence shelter program in your inventory submit:
        - Bed count data for the Housing Inventory Count
        - Point-In-Time Count/People count data for the Housing Inventory Count and Point-In-Time Count
    - Did each transitional housing program in your inventory submit:
        - Bed count data for the Housing Inventory Count
        - Point-In-Time Count/People count data for the Housing Inventory Count and Point-In-Time Count
        - Ensure that everyone in the program was entered into HMIS
- Prior to submitting information to THN, review all of your data for completeness and accuracy. For example:
    - Do not use acronyms, write out the entire organization and program name
    - Ensure that the number of persons counted for the Point-In-Time Count matches the number of persons included in the Housing Inventory Count
    - For agencies entering data into HMIS, make sure that the number of persons counted for the Point-In-Time Count matches what was in HMIS and what is being included on the Housing Inventory Count
    - Ensure that the agency name and program name matches the name used on the last Housing Inventory Count
    - For the Housing Inventory Count, ensure that programs correctly identified
        - If they receive HUD funds
        - If they participate in HMIS
        - If they serve families, did they include both beds and units
        - If they have beds designated for the chronically homeless, did they indicate as such
    - For the Point-In-Time Count/People Count data
        - Ensure that the agency name and program name matches the name used on the last Housing Inventory Count
            - If the agency name or program name has changed in the past year – please indicate that

        - Ensure that programs report data in the correct table (i.e., single adult/cohabitating adults, family/household with children, or both)
        - Ensure that the total number of people reported in each category match the total number of people reported
        - Assess whether there is at least one child reported for each family/household with children
        - Determine if the people count data makes sense given the bed capacity (e.g., if there are only 10 beds, there cannot be 20 people)
        - Determine whether the number of households makes sense (e.g., there should not be more households then there are number of people)
    - Ensure that you do not submit any duplicated data:
        - Do not count persons from your county that are staying in another county's shelter, transitional housing program or in a place not meant for human habitation. The county where the person is currently staying should count that person.
        - Ensure only one person is submitting the online data for the Point-In-Time Count and the Excel Spreadsheet of the Housing Inventory Count
        - Ensure that, when you prepare to enter data into Survey Monkey for the Point-In-Time Count, you have the time to complete the task – you cannot go back into the Survey Monkey to finish where you left off; you would have to start over from the beginning if you must return to the tool
    - Keep copies of all the data that you submit to THN
        - You may be asked questions about that data after THN reviews it

Additional Information for Coordinators

For more information concerning this Coordinator's Manual, the Texas Balance of State CoCs Point-In-Time Count, the HIC please contact:

Texas Homeless Network

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