



PIT Planning Considerations: Updates for Unsheltered Methodology



Count Timing and Volunteer Shift Recommendations

- **To help ensure that the surveys you submit are people who are unhoused:**
 - You should plan to only do the count early in the morning or late at night.
- **To help prevent deduplication:**
 - You should only visit each hot spot location once.
 - You should attempt to hit all of your count locations at the same time.



Locations/Structure

- Communities need to identify and confirm areas where unhoused neighbors are residing leading up to the count **(this is even more crucial this year)**.
- PIT Leads need to specifically assign each volunteer to hot spot location(s) and provide them a map on the day of the count.
 - PIT Leads need to establish a process for volunteers to check in if they want to count at an unassigned hot spot location.



Approval Process

- Each PIT Lead will need to complete a survey verifying their planning methods for the count by **1/11/21 at 11:59 pm**.
 - The survey will be sent out to PIT Leads **no later than 12/16/20**.



Training/Preparation

- Every volunteer is still expected to watch the full volunteer training and mobile app training.
 - Any additional required trainings will be sent out by **1/8/21**.



Volunteer Recruitment

- **Only** recruit the number of volunteers required to go to all hot spots.
 - Teams should be made up of coworkers/ household members as much as possible (this lowers exposure risk between volunteers)
- **Do not recruit volunteers that fall into a "high risk group"**.
 - Age 65+ and/or those with chronic health conditions.



If your community gathered donated items

- **Consider giving them to individuals who still interact with unhoused neighbors as part of their role.**
 - Outreach workers, law enforcement, case managers.
- **Donate the items to service locations frequented by unhoused neighbors.**
 - Libraries, soup kitchens, shelters, non-profit organizations.

Observation Survey FAQ's

Q: Why can't we have the observation survey and the unsheltered survey?

In an effort to promote safety and consistency across our full geography, we had to apply one methodology across all participant communities. After weighing the options, the CoC board voted to play it safe and only allow for observation surveys. This is the only method we had to ensure that volunteers and our unhoused neighbors had the lowest exposure risk (while still gathering a headcount).

Q: Why are the observation surveys shorter than normal?

HUD has recommended that each CoC keep their surveys as short as possible and is allowing each area to only conduct a headcount. Being mindful of this guidance and recognizing that there are data quality issues with observing demographic data (gender, race, ethnicity), we have chosen to remove all demographic questions from the survey.

Q: Can I still interview the person if I feel comfortable?

The goal of this methodology shift is to limit the time each person could be exposed to COVID-19. The health of volunteers and those experiencing homelessness is more important than gathering this data. If someone engages you in conversation, please be polite and acknowledge them; however, keep the interaction short and do not try to conduct a full survey.

Q: What do I do if I come across an encampment but I don't see anyone?

You can only conduct surveys on individuals and families that you have laid eyes on. If you come across a location where you believe people are sleeping and cannot see them, move on.

- **DO NOT WAKE PEOPLE UP.**
- **DO NOT COMPLETE SURVEYS UNLESS YOU HAVE SEEN SOMEONE WHO APPEARS TO BE UNHOUSED.**

Q: Why are there fewer flexibilities with count times?

Since there are data quality concerns with observation surveys already, our goal is to try and limit duplication of surveys as much as possible. This is why we are only allowing the count to occur over the course of one day. **Additionally, we are recommending that counties only conduct the count late at night or early in the morning because it is unlikely someone would be outdoors unless they are experiencing homelessness.**

Observation Survey Cheat Sheet

1) What you need:

- A charged phone or device that you will use for the Count
- Download the "Counting Us" app from either Google Play or the App Store.
- **Register an account** and log in. If it asks for a set up key, type in **TX2021**
- Tap "Get Started!" to get to the screen which displays the list of surveys. Follow the guidance below once you get to your designated count area and identify or engage a person whom you believe is homeless.

2) Where to count:

- Utilize the hot spot map provided to you by your PIT Lead. You should only be counting in areas you are assigned.
 - If you believe there are additional hotspots that are not accounted for, contact your PIT Lead to determine next steps (prior to conducting surveys).

Unsheltered Locations	
• Abandoned Building	• Woods
• Bus, train station, airport	• Outdoor encampment
• Park	• Other place not meant for human habitation
• Street/sidewalk	
• Under bridge/ overpass	

3) If you are approached by an unhoused neighbor, explain what the PIT count is:

- The annual survey is conducted with the goal of helping provide better programs & services to people experiencing homelessness. The information gathered helps demonstrate a need for these programs which in turn helps the region get resources to address these needs.
- We are only conducting a headcount and not collecting any personally identifying information.

4) Conduct the Individual or Household Observation Survey:

- You will first pick the activity that you are doing by selecting the survey that you are completing.
- Identify your location on the next screen. Typically the map will pull up your exact location but if it does not you can drag and swipe the map to the proper location. You can also select "Enter Address" and enter in the nearest street of the interaction. This function is especially helpful when entering in surveys that were collected on paper into the app later.
- The observation survey will only include enough information to conduct a headcount and ensure that the same person is not counted multiple times. Please fill out the survey in its entirety, to the best of your ability.
- Utilize the notes section for the following purposes:
 - To identify specific characteristics which could be used for outreach after the count
 - To provide additional useful information that is not already collected in the survey tool
 - To provide information to assist in ensuring the same person isn't counted multiple times
- Complete the survey and tap "Submit Survey".
 - If you do not have cell service, you can save the survey by tapping "Save Draft." The information collected can be submitted when you are back in an area with cell coverage or internet access by opening the "Survey Drafts" tab, opening the surveys that have yet to be submitted, scrolling to the bottom of each survey, and submitting each of them.
 - Please note that if you have multiple surveys in "Save Draft," each one will need to be submitted individually. **Do NOT leave any surveys saved on your device once the count is completed.**