



Strategies for a Successful Point in Time Count

Successful Point in Time Counts employ many different strategies, depending on what is right for your community, including larger-scale efforts like Project Homeless Connect events. One thing all successful PIT counts have in common is early planning and partnerships. In planning your PIT Count you will want to consider whether or not to do an event, how to engage volunteers, how to train and support your volunteers, and whether or not to use giveaways. Below you will find information on these topics and others.

Places to Count Unsheltered Homeless People

- Parks
- Alleys
- Downtown streets
- Under overpasses and bridges
- Waterfront areas
- Parking lots
- Libraries and Post Offices
- Highway rest stops
- Busy intersections where people hold signs asking for donations
- Food banks
- On busses and at transit centers
- Campgrounds
- Encampments, shantytowns, and tent cities
- Emergency rooms if the persons are not being admitted or seeking overnight care
- All towns within the county
- Abandoned buildings
- Areas outlying cities
- Large retail stores and malls
- Gas stations and mini marts
- 24-hour commercial establishments (i.e. Laundromats, convenience stores, coffee shops)
- Baseball dugouts

Tip: Talk with current or formerly homeless people to identify other places to count. Also talk with current or formerly homeless youth about places to count homeless youth in your community.

Social Service Organizations to Partner with and Provide with PIT Surveys

- Homeless housing providers
- Coordinated entry providers
- Food banks
- Hot meal programs
- Community action agencies
- DSHS CSO office
- Outreach workers
- 211 operators
- Mental health agencies
- Chemical dependency organizations
- Domestic violence providers
- Housing authority
- WIC office
- Employment agencies
- Cultural centers
- Tribes
- Agencies that serve youth
- Re-entry and parole programs
- Therapeutic justice programs (i.e. drug court, family treatment court)

Other Agencies to Partner with and Provide with PIT Surveys

- Libraries
- Churches and other faith-based organizations
- Schools, including community colleges
- Hospitals
- Other health care agencies
- Public transportation
- Veteran organizations
- Local law enforcement, including Washington State Patrol
- Jails
- Code enforcement
- Day labor sites
- Agencies that canvass the town (Post Office, FedEx, cable installers, public utilities, etc.)
- Department Natural Resources for public lands
- Stores and restaurants who host a meal or coffee for the homeless
- YMCA / YWCA

Items to Offer Survey Recipients for their Participation (this is not required, but is usually helpful)

- Food packs
- Hygiene packs
- Bus passes
- Laundry tokens
- Meal gift cards
- Winter coats
- Hats
- Gloves
- Scarves
- Socks
- Tents
- Sleeping bags
- Blankets
- Backpacks
- Portable heaters
- Tarps
- Batteries
- Coupons from retailers
- Winter warmup kits, such as these that have been recommended by PIT Coordinators:
 - <http://www.propacusa.com/winter-warmup-kit.html>

Best Practices with Volunteers

- Try to recruit currently or formerly homeless individuals. They often have the most knowledge about the best places to count.
- Train the volunteers 1-2 weeks before the PIT so the information is still fresh
- Assign volunteers to specific areas
 - Do this ahead of time so they can look over their areas before the Count
- Put volunteers into teams of two or more
 - When possible, put a volunteer on each team with previous PIT experience or previous experience serving people who are homeless
- Have volunteers role play the survey process
- Show volunteers videotapes of how to effectively administer the survey
 - Here are videos from Snohomish County you can use (note that they modified the survey slightly): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5c0Ca8hLZfDrI78DYHQVrQ>

Places to Post Notices to Solicit Volunteers

- Newspaper
- Agency newsletters
- Flyers put up around town
- Agency website
- Social media
- Other social service organizations
- College campuses
- Television
- Radio
- Emails to other local agencies
- Churches and faith-based coalitions
- Local homeless coalition or task force
- Ask current volunteers to recruit their friends and co-workers

Keys to Holding a Successful Project Homeless Connect Event¹

- Publicize the event well, using things like flyers, social media, and correspondence with organizations that serve the homeless
- Host it at a central location
- Encourage public transportation to run for free on that day
- Talk to other PIT coordinators who have organized Project Homeless Connect events (Commerce can provide you this contact information)

Tip: Be sure to only complete PIT surveys for people who are homeless, but provide the survey incentives to all guests.

Services to Offer at a Project Homeless Connect Event

- Sit down meal
- Clothes
- Hygiene supplies
- Water
- Sleeping bags
- Employment services
- Homeless and affordable housing applications

¹ Project Homeless Connect events offer a variety of services to homeless people at a central location to help them both with their immediate needs and the services that will help them move forward.

- DSHS mobile CSO
- Health care enrollment center
- Social security enrollment center
- Community college information
- Domestic violence services
- Chemical dependency services
- Department of licensing services
- Veteran affairs services
- Homeless school liaison
- Child care services
- Showers and a place to change
- Clothes washing services (mobile washer dryer) and/or laundry tokens
- Flu shots
- Basic health care services (health screenings, blood pressure and cholesterol checks)
- Acupuncture
- Pet services
- Family photos
- Haircuts
- Lice kits
- Foot massages
- Dental hygiene (dental vans)
- Eyeglasses (Lions Club)
- Local service clubs (Rotary, Soroptimist)

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it permissible to enter identifying information in HMIS for a client who is a victim of domestic violence but is no longer in danger?

- If the client consents then it is acceptable to enter their identifying information in HMIS. If not, enter the client record in HMIS as “consent refused.”

If a client surveyed during the PIT did not sign the consent form but is in HMIS with identifying information, can I assume they gave consent previously and therefore update their record?

- No. If the client does not sign the form then enter the record as “consent refused.”

Is it true that only unaccompanied minors under 18 **who are legally emancipated** can sign the form?

- Yes. If a person under 18 is not legally emancipated then they cannot sign the form and their record must be entered in HMIS as “consent refused.”

Is self-identification acceptable for the disabilities section of the PIT form, or do I need some kind of corroborating information?

- Corroborating information is not required for the Point in Time Count.

Once I enter the PIT surveys into HMIS, how long do I need to hold onto the completed surveys?

- If the household signed the form to consent to identifying information going into HMIS then the form must be retained as documentation of that consent. If the household did not provide consent, then the forms can be discarded once that year's PIT Count numbers are finalized.

Can Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) funds and local homeless document recording fee funds (RCW 36.22.179), also known as "2163", be used for Point in Time Count related expenses?

- Yes, you can use both fund sources for Point in Time Count related expenses.

Do I include people in the Unsheltered Count that live in RV/trailers that lack basic amenities?

- Yes, if the unit lacks any of the following amenities then the household should be included in the Unsheltered Count: ability to cook hot food, drinking water, restroom, heat, or ability to bathe.

When I survey people on the day of the Point in Time Count, January 28th, 2016, do I ask people where they stayed last night or where they plan on staying tonight?

- Since some people do not know with certainty where they will stay the coming night, it is best to ask them where they stayed the night before.

Can I count people on a day other than the officially designated day of January 28th?

- If there is a compelling reason (i.e. a food bank is closed on the 28th but open on the 30th) you can count people on a different day, but refer back to the 28th when asking about the place they stayed and also ask them if they have already filled out the form so that you avoid duplication.

What do I do if I encounter a homeless person who does not want to fill out the survey?

- If you are mostly sure that the person is living in a place not meant for human habitation, then fill out an unsheltered survey form with the gender and an estimated year of birth. Mark 'Refused' for all the other fields.

The school district gave me a number of children who were homeless at any point throughout the year. Can I include this data in the Count?

- You cannot include this data in the PIT Count because there is no way to ensure these people were not already counted. Moreover, this data covers the entire academic year and does not tell us who was homeless on the night of the PIT Count. The information does tell us something about homelessness in your community, however, and it can be used in conjunction with PIT data when talking to community stakeholders about homelessness and its trends.

Other Point in Time Count Resources

- Department of Commerce Point in Time Count Website
 - <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Programs/housing/Homeless/Pages/Annual-Point-In-Time-Count.aspx>
- HUD Point in Time Count Resources
 - <https://www.hudexchange.info/hdx/guides/pit-hic/>
- HUD Point in Time Count Methodology Guide
 - <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4036/point-in-time-count-methodology-guide/>
- Urban Institute's Report on Counting Homeless Youth
 - <http://www.urban.org/publications/412876.html>
- 2015 Washington State Point in Time Count Results
 - http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Documents/PIT_2015_Rollup_Summary.pdf

Point in Time Count Coordinators' Contact Information by County

Adams Patrice Dial; patriced@co.adams.wa.us; 509-488-4074
Asotin Robanna Brosten; rbrosten@qbhs.org; 509-758-3341
Benton, Franklin Melinda Diaz; melinda.rodrigue@co.benton.wa.us; 509-737-3903
Chelan, Douglas Sandra Van Osten; svanosten@wenatcheewa.gov; 509-888-3250
Clallam Kevin Harkins; kevin.j.harkins@gmail.com; 360-452-7224x303
Clark Dale Whitley; dwhitley@councilforthehomeless.org; 360-993-9571
Columbia, Garfield Elizabeth Guerra; elizabethg@bmacww.org; 509-529-4980
Cowlitz Melissa Taylor; mtaylor@cwco.org; 360-577-3041
Ferry Cruze Thompson; cthompson@ruralresources.org; 509-685-6056
Grant Steffanie Bonwell; sbonwell@hagc.net; 509-762-5541 x126
Grays Harbor Cassie Lentz; clentz@co.grays-harbor.wa.us; 360-500-4049
Island Joanne Pelant; j.pelant@co.island.wa.us; 360-678-7962
Jefferson Kathy Morgan; kmorgan@olycap.org; 360-985-2571 x6362
King Alison Eisinger; Alison@homelessinfo.org; 206-357-3148
Kitsap Terry Schroeder; tshroeder@kcr.org; 360-473-2028
Kittitas John Raymond; jraymond@hopesource.us; 509-925-1448
Klickitat, Skamania Lori Call; lori@wgap.ws; 509-773-6834
Lewis Ruth Gutierrez; rgutierrez@lewiscsp.org; 360-736-5140
Lincoln Staci Landt; staci@frcoflincolncounty.org; 509-725-4358
Mason Tammey Newton; tnewton@co.mason.wa.us; 360-427-9670 x293
Okanogan Lael Duncan; laeld@occac.com; 509-422-4041
Pacific Katie Lindstrom; koien@co.pacific.wa.us; 360-642-9300 x2648
Pend Oreille Lea' Porter; lea@pofcn.org; 509-447-2274
Pierce Valerie Pettit; vpettit@co.pierce.wa.us; 253-798-7658
San Juan Melanie Rollins; melanier@sanjuanco.com; 360-378-4474
Skagit Melissa Self; melissas@communityactionskagit.org; 360-588-5727
Skamania Lori Call; lori@wgap.ws; 509-773-6834
Snohomish Robin Hood; robin.hood@co.snohomish.wa.us; 425-388-7266
Spokane City David Lewis; dglewis@spokanecity.org; 509-625-6051
Spokane County Kate Kennedy; kkennedy@spokanecounty.org; 509; 477-4516
Stevens Cruze Thompson; cthompson@ruralresources.org; 509-685-6056
Thurston Aaron Rodriguez; aaron@acrbc.com; 360-529-6036
Wahkiakum Carole Glowacki; glowackic@co.wahkiakum.wa.us; 360-795-8630
Walla Walla Susan Kralman; skralman@co.walla-walla.wa.us; 509-524-2950
Whatcom Barbara Johnson-Vinna; bjohnso@co.whatcom.wa.us; 360-778-6046
Whitman Jeff Tietjan; jefft@cacwhitman.com; 509-334-9147
Yakima Avery Zoglman; avery.zoglman@co.yakima.wa.us; 509-574-1529