

2024 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT SCHOOL-BASED DATA COLLECTION GUIDE

PURPOSE

This reference guide is designed to ensure our school-based partners engaged in the 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) are successful. We recognize schools are important partners for PIT counts.

This guide introduces the PIT, suggests approaches for conducting the PIT survey, and answers frequently asked questions.

Note: This guide does not replace the PIT Surveyor Instruction Guide (which is available on the [PIT webpage](#)). All school personnel administering the PIT should also read the Surveyor Instructions and be in contact with your Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinator or PIT Lead for local instructions and coordination (see contacts below).

WHAT IS THE POINT-IN TIME COUNT (PIT)?

The PIT is the annual count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in sheltered and unsheltered situations. It is federally mandated by HUD, the US Department of Housing & Urban Development, and happens nationwide during the last ten days of January.

The next PIT will be held on Wednesday, January 24th, 2024.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The PIT illuminates the impact we as a community are having on reducing and ending homelessness (like a census). While it isn't feasible, or reasonable, to count every single person experiencing homelessness every day, counting on the same set of days each year provides a snapshot for comparison over time. Here are some ways PIT data is used:

- At a national level by HUD and other agencies that fund Homeless Services initiatives
- At the state level to inform Minnesota's statewide plan to prevent and end homelessness
- By regions (each known as a Continuum of Care) and individual agencies to make plans for addressing homelessness
- By the media and by research groups

HOW DO SCHOOLS FIT IN?

Schools are important partners in the PIT count. School liaisons have crucial knowledge about how best to communicate with families experiencing homelessness. They can help identify families who are unsheltered or staying in a shelter on the night of the PIT count and administer the PIT survey to ensure those families are counted. With the help of schools, we can strive to count everyone experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT to gain an accurate representation of each community's homeless population. **While CoCs engage school districts in the way that makes sense locally, schools may best participate by helping to promote awareness of the count** and encouraging people who should be counted to contact local partners doing the count, rather than conducting the count themselves.

SCHOOL-BASED COUNT: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL LIAISONS

For the 2024 PIT count, Minnesota is narrowing its focus for school-based participation (this is the same guidance as in 2023). At a statewide level, we will only be collecting information on individuals and families who meet the HUD definition of "homeless", as explained in the section below.

We recognize that HUD's definition, and by extension the PIT count, do not capture the entirety of student homelessness. By asking school liaisons to focus only on this narrower category, we hope to streamline the process for liaisons. Local PIT planning teams may issue further guidance for counting a broader population. In that case, refer to your CoC Coordinator/PIT Lead for more information.

See below for guidance on developing a method for the PIT count and collecting data according to count standards.

WHO SHOULD BE COUNTED IN THE 2024 PIT:

The survey should be administered to all individuals and families who meet the HUD Unsheltered & Sheltered definitions below:

- **Unsheltered** – 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”
- **Sheltered** – Individuals and families “living in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (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)”. However, note that individuals and families in shelter are likely included in this count via the shelter.

Note: schools use a more expansive definition of “homeless” than the definitions (above) used for the PIT count. Only children and youth meeting HUD's unsheltered/sheltered definitions should be included in PIT count results reported to HUD.

Some regions may gather local data using a more expansive definition. Defer to your local PIT Lead for further instruction on who should be counted.

WHAT IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS APPLY TO SCHOOLS?

There are other ways that schools can participate if not conducting PIT surveys directly, including helping to promote awareness of the count and encouraging people who should be counted to contact other local partners doing the count. This [guidance](#) from the National Center on Homeless Education suggests this may best way to target energy and foster partnerships on PIT night.

HOW DO I OBTAIN WRITTEN CONSENT?

Where the signed, written consent of parents, guardians, or students who are no longer minors is required, this consent does not need to be obtained on the night of the count and can be obtained in advance. For example, liaisons could incorporate appropriate release language in consent forms that parents or guardians sign throughout the school year, so that on the night of the count, it is permissible to gather and share information about any students with an active, signed consent. Active consent usually has an expiration date no longer than one year.

For the 2024 PIT, as in past years, we are asking school liaisons to obtain appropriate consent using a signed consent form. TransACT includes an [Authorization to Request and Release Information](#) form that you can use for these purposes, which is accessible through your school district's TransACT account. Please include “Minnesota Point in Time Count - Institute for Community Alliances & Homeless Services Agencies” as an authorized entity.

I authorize all the agencies marked below to release and request information regarding myself and my children.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> [Redacted] | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Shelters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colleges or Universities | <input type="checkbox"/> TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Housing Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Public Assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith Based Agencies | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals, Clinics and Other Medical Treatment Centers |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Minnesota Point in Time Count - Institute for Community Alliances & Homeless Services Agencies</u> | |

HOW DO I COUNT?

Follow these steps to count all individuals and families meeting either the sheltered or unsheltered definition of homeless, above.
 Note: work in partnership with your local PIT lead to determine how these steps will look in your CoC.

1. **Review Materials and Local School District Policies:** Read the [PIT Surveyor Instructions, located on the PIT webpage](#). Also confirm whether any local school district policies impact your participation in the PIT count.
 - a. If there are local school district policies that may impact your participation in the PIT count, please let the CoC Coordinator of your region know in advance. See CoC Contact Information section for list of CoC Coordinators.
2. **Obtain information** from your local CoC Coordinator/PIT Lead on whether you will be using the paper PIT survey or entering data directly into PIT LIVE online. Local data entry deadlines also vary, so defer to your CoC Coordinator/PIT Lead.
3. **Confirm or Obtain Appropriate Consent:** To ensure compliance with Federal requirements, make sure that you have active, written consent to share information from a parent or guardian, or from the student themselves if they are 18 or older. You can use the **Authorization to Request and Release Information** form to obtain consent. **It may be helpful to do so well before the night of the count, if possible. Consent forms typically have an expiration date one year after the date they are signed. Once you have proper consent, you can administer the survey anytime up to seven calendar days after January 24, 2024.**
4. **Contact:** Within 7 calendar days of January 24, 2024, reach out to the portion of your caseload for whom you have appropriate consent. If you were not able to obtain consent prior to the night of the PIT, make sure you have the release form signed before proceeding to administer the survey. **Remember: you have until February 1st to obtain consent and administer the survey.**

Unless you hear otherwise from local planning teams, focus your efforts on those families and youth who you believe were staying in Unsheltered/Sheltered on the night of January 24th. School-based partners can look to their McKinney Vento-identified student list, or transportation list, to identify students who may be experiencing homelessness.

5. **Initial Inquiry:** Ask families and youth “Where did you/will you sleep on Wednesday night (January 24th, 2024)?”

Where did you/will you sleep on Wednesday night (January 24th, 2024)?

<p>UNSHELTERED:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned building/house without utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge/overpass/railroad <input type="checkbox"/> Bus/light rail/train <input type="checkbox"/> Doorway/skyway <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private property (storage, barn, fish house) <input type="checkbox"/> Street or sidewalk <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle (car, truck, van, camper) <input type="checkbox"/> Woods/caves/open space <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant/laundromat <input type="checkbox"/> Up all night walking <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Unsheltered)	<p>SHELTERED:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter (shelter name _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Motel/hotel (voucher stay agency providing _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing (agency providing _____) <p>Doubled-Up:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Couch-hopping/Temporarily staying with family or friends <p>Other:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital, jail, or treatment program* <small>*If Hospital, jail or treatment program is selected, end the survey. All other responses should continue the survey.</small>
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If individual is staying or stayed in an Unsheltered/Sheltered situation on PIT night, they need to be surveyed to be included in the count. **Request Participation:** Introduce the survey and ask if they are willing to participate in a brief survey.

6. **Administer Survey:** You may obtain consent and administer the survey within 7 days of January 24th, 2024 for respondents to be counted in the 2024 count. You can complete the PIT Survey on paper or through the online form termed PIT LIVE. Be sure to review the PIT Surveyor Instructions prior to administering the survey.

The survey **cannot be emailed directly to the respondent** to complete. However, the survey can be administered either over the phone or in person. If you obtain consent from an individual but are unable to administer the survey, you may also answer questions on their behalf using information you have access to in your database. If you choose this option, skip questions where you don’t know the answers.

COC CONTACT INFORMATION

The table below lists Continuum of Care Coordinator contact information. Your CoC Coordinator may also direct your message to local PIT leads. Don’t know your CoC? Check out [a map of the CoC regions in Minnesota](#).

CoC	PIT Contacts	Email Address
Hennepin	Laura DeRosier (CoC Coordinator)	laura.derosier@hennepin.us
	Erin Wixsten	Erin.Wixsten@hennepin.us
	Lindsay Anderson	Lindsay.Anderson02@hennepin.us
	Lauren Schwerzler	lauren.schwerzler@hennepin.us
Ramsey	Leigh Ann Ahmad (CoC Coordinator)	leigh.ahmad@co.ramsey.mn.us
	Alyssa Keil	alyssa.keil@co.ramsey.mn.us
Southeast	Jennifer Prins (CoC Coordinator)	Jennifer.prins@rivervalleyescoc.org
SMAC (Suburban Metro Area)	Laquita Love-Limo (CoC Coordinator)	laquita@mesh-mn.org
	George Borrell (Anoka)	george.borrell@co.anoka.mn.us
	Steven Thronson (Dakota)	steve.thronson@co.dakota.mn.us
	Peter Goldstein (Scott)	pgoldstein@co.scott.mn.us

	Jenny Mason (Washington)	jenny.mason@co.washington.mn.us
	Jen Romero (Carver)	jromero@co.carver.mn.us
	Jennifer Crotteau (Anoka)	Jennifer.Crotteau@co.anoka.mn.us
Northeast	Patty Beech-Dzuik (CoC Coordinator)	pattybeechconsulting@gmail.com
	Cara Oakland (CoC Coordinator)	clundquist@live.com
Central	Tim Poland (CoC Coordinator)	tpoland@cmhp.net
	Lori Irwin	lori.irwin@co.sherburne.mn.us
St. Louis	Courtney Cochran (CoC Coordinator)	CochranC@StLouisCountyMN.gov
	Tawney Summers	summerst@stlouiscountymn.gov
West Central	Carla Solem (CoC Coordinator)	h2hcoordinator@gmail.com
Northwest	Barbara Johnson (CoC Coordinator)	barbaraj@nwmf.org
Southwest	Jenn Lamb	jennl@swmhp.org
	Abby Guilford	swmn.coordinator@swmhp.org

FAQS

QUESTION	ANSWER
Is administering surveys on PIT night the only way I can participate?	No. There are other ways that schools can participate, including helping to promote awareness of the count and encouraging people who should be counted to contact other local partners doing the count. This guidance from the National Center on Homeless Education suggests this may best way to target energy and foster partnerships on PIT night.
Where can I find more information about the PIT count?	Refer to the PIT Surveyor Instructions on the PIT webpage before administering the survey and for guidance on specific sections and questions. ICA’s Point-in-Time webpage, https://hmismn.org/point-in-time-count/ , has more detailed information on data collection, the data review process, and submitting data to HUD.
What does “homeless” mean?	Only people meeting the HUD definition of “homeless” outlined in <i>Who Should Be Counted in the 2024 PIT</i> , above, should be part of the count. Note that this does not include individuals or families who are “couch-hopping” or temporarily staying with family or friends. Some CoCs may gather local information about this population – ask your local PIT Lead.
Some of the PIT survey questions are invasive. Do we need to ask the families every question?	We understand that reaching out to families and asking questions about sensitive subject matter is invasive and should be handled with discretion. In 2024, we have improved survey language and instruction that is more trauma-informed. Respondents can refuse to answer any question they choose, and you may move on with the survey.

<p>What does “who stayed with you” mean?</p>	<p>This question, “who stayed with you last night”, refers only to family members/persons who were ALSO experiencing homelessness. In the event the household is doubled up or couch-hopping, the question does NOT include anyone who lives at the house permanently. For example, if mom and son are staying with grandma, grandma should not be counted in the survey.</p>
<p>What if a respondent wants to stop taking the survey partway through?</p>	<p>Respondents may skip any question they choose or stop taking the survey at any time. Submit the survey with whatever information you were able to collect. If respondent gave consent for their information to be shared, you may also complete the survey with information available in your database.</p>
<p>Can I send the PIT LIVE link to families on my caseload through email?</p>	<p>No. The survey must be administered by a trained surveyor, and respondents should not complete the survey independently. We recommend providing context to the family about what the PIT is and how the data is used. You can reach out to your existing caseload via email to ask for participation, then conduct the survey by phone or in person. If you are unable conduct the survey but the family does consent for their information to be shared, you can complete the survey with any information (demographics, family composition, etc.), that you have in your database. See HUD guidance here: https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/3124/can-i-use-a-phone-or-web-based-survey/</p>
<p>There is a response option, “Hotel/motel (voucher stay)” for the question about where a family stayed on PIT night. What type of hotel/motel stays are included?</p>	<p>According to HUD, only hotel/motel stays paid for by “charitable organizations, or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals” should be counted.</p>

Please refer to your CoC Coordinator or local PIT Lead for local deadlines, methodology, and instructions. If you have additional questions, please reach out to the ICA PIT team at mnpit@icalliances.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Please visit the HUD Exchange website for more information about the HUD HMIS Data Standards:

- <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/pit-hic/#pit-count-methodology-guide-and-other-hic-and-pit-count-guides-and-tools>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3824/hmis-data-dictionary/>

For data collection forms, recorded trainings, and more, please visit the MN HMIS website:

- <https://hmismn.org/point-in-time-count/>