

# Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Volunteer Training

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January 2025



# Who is this training for?



Community members that serve persons or families who may be experiencing unsheltered homelessness on or around the night of Wednesday January 29th, 2025



Persons with lived experience of homelessness who would like to assist in the Point in Time Count



*Other training materials will be available for volunteers that do not have experience supporting persons experiencing homelessness*

# PIT Count Volunteer Training Agenda



## PIT Count 101

What is the PIT Count?  
PIT + HIC  
Who are we surveying?



## PIT Count Survey

Content of the Survey  
Survey Question Walkthrough



## Before and After a Survey Interview

Tips for Surveying  
Letting Clients know what to expect  
Submitting responses to the CoC



## FAQ's and Next Steps

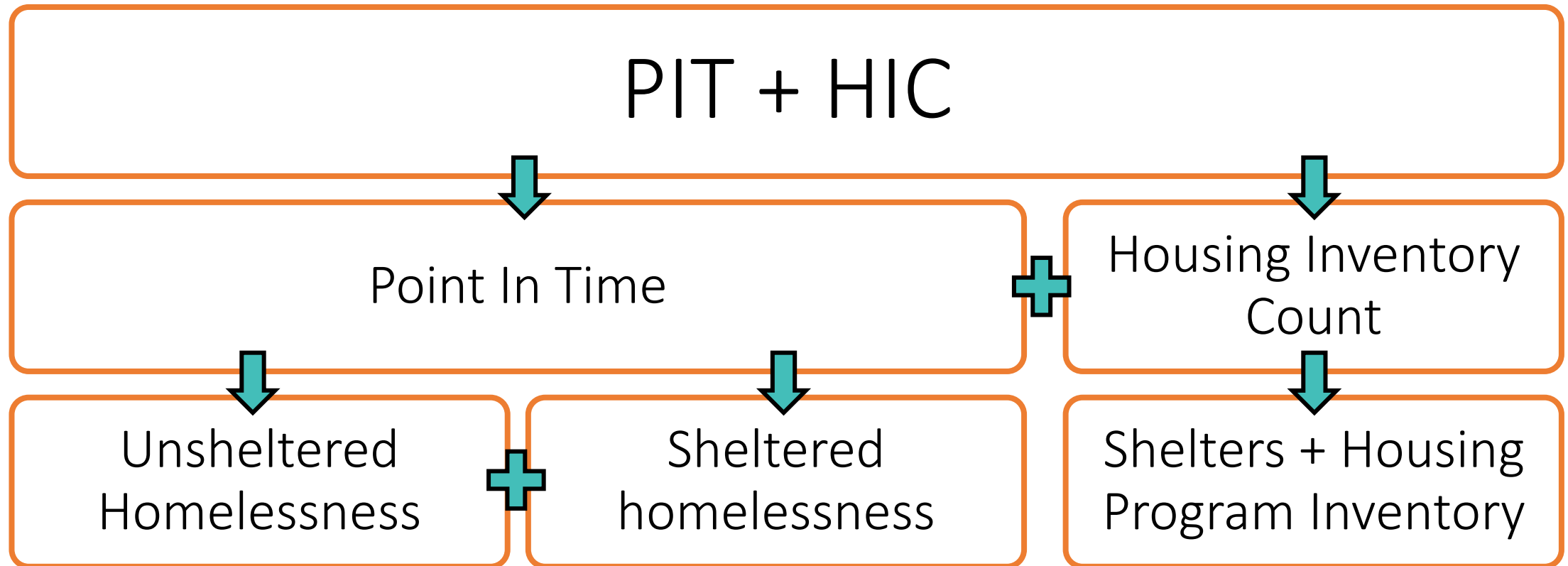
FAQ

# PIT Count 101:

## What is the Point-in-Time (PIT) count?

- A literal count of all the people experiencing homelessness in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties on a single night (i.e., at a **point in time**)
  - A “snapshot” of homelessness on one night in the three counties
  - While the PIT Count is centered on one night (January 29<sup>th</sup>), people can be surveyed up until February 5<sup>th</sup> (about where they slept on the 29<sup>th</sup>)
- HUD requires that the PIT count be conducted by every CoC nationwide in the last 10 days of January at least every other year

# PIT Count 101: PIT Count and Housing Inventory Count (HIC)



# PIT Count 101:

## PIT Count and Housing Inventory Count (HIC) (cont'd)

### Unsheltered Homelessness

- Purpose: census of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Includes: people who are sleeping in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for people
- Data source: PIT Count Surveys

### Sheltered Homelessness

- Purpose: census of persons experiencing homelessness staying at a shelter
- Includes: Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Safe Havens
- Data source: HMIS reports

### Housing Inventory

- Purpose: inventory of programs within the CoC
- Includes: Shelters and Housing Programs
- Data source: HMIS reports

The priority and focus of surveying is reaching **persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness**

# PIT Count 101:

## Who are we trying to survey – Unsheltered Homelessness

From HUD:

*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;*



Sleeping in cars/vehicles



Tents/camping/encampment



Abandoned buildings/structures



Bus/train stations



Parks/parking lots



Warming Centers

# PIT Count 101:

## Who are we trying to survey – Other situations

2nd priority for surveying is persons who were in one of the following situations the night of the count:

- Jail/Prison
- Couch surfing (doubled up, not on the lease)
- Residential treatment program/Rehab/Detox center
- Motel/Hotel, paid out of pocket (not funded by an organization)
- Hospital/Medical Institution/skilled nursing facility

While we cannot include these persons in the PIT Count Report, we do utilize this information in our community assessment locally.



## PIT Count 101:

### Who should not be surveyed?

- Persons who were at a shelter on the night of the count
  - This data should come from reports in our HMIS, Clarity
  - If a program operates hotel/motel vouchers, emergency shelter, safe havens, and/or transitional housing that is not in Clarity HMIS, they will need to plan to collect demographic information to report in aggregate
- Persons who were housed and not in "Other situations"
  - If the category isn't listed under "Other situations" the person should not be surveyed.

# How do we conduct an unsheltered PIT count?

- Service-based survey count -
  - **Providers** throughout the community survey clients for up to 7 days after the designated night
  - Brief **interviews** with people who might be experiencing homelessness, using a survey form
- Other outreach methods to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness
  - Surveying at community events frequented by persons who may be experiencing homelessness
  - If safe for the person experiencing homelessness and the surveyor, reaching out to people in encampments\*

\*Please let us know if you intend to do outreach to persons you do not work with, if you are not already a street outreach provider

# PIT Count Survey Questions

**Three County CoC Point-in-Time Count Data Collection Form | 2025**

Location of Survey: County:  Berkshire  Franklin  Hampshire

Interviewer/Org: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM

**Where did you sleep on Wednesday night, January 29th, 2025?**

<b>Unsheltered Locations:</b>	<b>Other Locations:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Street or sidewalk	<input type="checkbox"/> Jail/criminal justice institution
<input type="checkbox"/> Under bridge/overpass	<input type="checkbox"/> Couch surfing
<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment program/rehab/detox
<input type="checkbox"/> Woods/camp	<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/hotel, no voucher
<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> At home, in danger & unable to leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Building without heat and/or running water or condemned	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital/medical institution/skilled nursing facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Bus or train station	<b>Shelter Locations:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Warming Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter*
<input type="checkbox"/> Other location (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/Hotel funded by others*
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing*

**If yes to above \*Shelter notes:** What was the name of the shelter/transitional program/provider? - **Then STOP here.**  
 CHD  Construct  Craig's Doors  CSO  DIAL/SELF  Elisabeth Freeman Center  Genders  
 Louison House  MHA  ServiceNet  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What town did you stay in? \_\_\_\_\_

Did another surveyor already ask you these same questions about where you were staying on Wednesday night?  
 Yes - if yes, STOP here.  
 No

Is this the first time you have been homeless/ in this situation?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

**If YES:** About when did you become homeless? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ [mm/yy]

**If NO:** how many times have you been homeless during the last 3 years, since January 2022? (time in shelter or outside/unsheltered/in a vehicle, etc.)  
 2 - 3 times  
 4 or more times  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

How long have you been homeless **in total** during the last 3 years, since January 2022?  
 Less than 1 year  
 More than 1 year  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

Were you fleeing domestic violence when you became homeless this time?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

Have you served in the US Armed Forces on active military duty/reserve (aside from National Guard)?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

What is your age?  
 Under 18  
 18 - 24  
 25 - 34  
 35 - 44  
 45 - 54  
 55 - 64  
 65+  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer  
 Woman/Girl

Please return this form to Natalie Burtos: [nburtos@communityaction.us](mailto:nburtos@communityaction.us)  
 Mail: 393 Main St, Greenfield MA 01301 | Fax: 413-775-0018

**Three County CoC Point-in-Time Count Data Collection Form | 2025**

your gender identity? Check all that apply  
 Man/Boy  
 Non-binary  
 Transgender  
 Questioning  
 Culturally Specific Identity (e.g., Two Spirit)  
 Different Identity \_\_\_\_\_  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

ethnicity? Check all that apply  
 American Indian/Alaskan/Indigenous  
 Asian/Asian American  
 Black/African American/African  
 Hispanic/Latina/o  
 Middle Eastern or North African  
 Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander  
 White  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

**Are there any questions about your health. This information helps us understand what types of services people in our region who are homeless.**

Medical conditions that interfere with your daily life, now  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

Disability that interferes with your daily life, now  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

Physical disability that interferes with your daily life, now  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

Mental disability that interferes with your daily life, now  
 Yes  
 No  
 Not sure/prefer not to answer

**Thank you! We are collecting the following information only to ensure we only count you once. Individual is fleeing DV use a coded ID such as 'Anon Adult 1', 'Anon Adult 2', 'Anon Child 1', etc.]**

First name of your first name? \_\_\_\_\_

Last name of your last name? \_\_\_\_\_

When were you born? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ [mm/yy]

Are you currently:  
 Individual  
 Couple/family

Family, please provide other's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Under the age of 18 are in your household: \_\_\_\_\_

If anyone else is present in the household, please fill out a child PIT Survey form for each child.

Return this form to Natalie Burtos: [nburtos@communityaction.us](mailto:nburtos@communityaction.us)  
 Mail: 393 Main St, Greenfield MA 01301 | Fax: 413-775-0018

# Tips for surveying

- PIT Count Surveys are not designed to be completed alone by the person you are surveying – you should not be handing someone a survey form to complete on their own
- If the person you are surveying is unfamiliar with you (i.e. you do not have rapport with them) consider interviewing people as a team, with one volunteer conducting the interview, and the other volunteer recording responses. This allows for a better flow/engagement
- If you do have rapport with the person you are surveying, you will know best on how to reframe questions and other survey elements as needed to best complete the survey

# Tips for sensitive and personal questions

- Let the person you are surveying know about the purpose of the surveys and questions
  - Intended to inform homelessness providers and funders about who is experiencing homelessness
  - Also to inform us on some important needs of people experiencing homelessness, like whether they have a disability
- Many questions that are very personal will have the option to select “Not sure/Prefer not to answer” – be sure to let the person being surveyed about their options, including their ability to not to disclose responses to certain questions.

# PIT Count Survey

Information about who is conducting the survey, where, when

Brief description of where you conducted the survey, for example "at drop-in center"

This should represent which County you surveyed them in (not where they slept the night of the count)

## Three County CoC Point-in-Time Count Data Collection Form | 2025

Location of Survey:

County:  Berkshire  Franklin  Hampshire

Interviewer/Org:

Date:

Time:

AM / PM

Information that will help CoC staff identify who helped complete the survey.  
First and Last Name, and any abbreviated agency acronym.  
*If you are not affiliated with an organization, you can put any CoC committee you are volunteering through, etc.*

The date the survey was conducted, and the approximate time

# Cont'd - Note important questions and instructions

**Where did you sleep on Wednesday night, January 29th, 2025?**

<u>Unsheltered Locations:</u>	<u>Other Locations:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Street or sidewalk	<input type="checkbox"/> Jail/criminal justice institution
<input type="checkbox"/> Under bridge/overpass	<input type="checkbox"/> Couch surfing
<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment program/rehab/detox
<input type="checkbox"/> Woods/camp	<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/hotel, no voucher
<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> At home, in danger & unable to leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Building without heat and/or running water or condemned	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital/medical institution/skilled nursing facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Bus or train station	<u>Shelter Locations:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Warming Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter*
<input type="checkbox"/> Other location (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/Hotel funded by others*
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing*

★ **↳ If yes to above \*Shelter types: What was the name of the shelter/transitional program/provider? - Then, STOP here.**

CHD  Construct  Craig's Doors  CSO  DIAL/SELF  Elizabeth Freeman Center  Gandara

Louison House  MHA  ServiceNet  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

★ What town did you stay in? \_\_\_\_\_

★ Did another surveyor already ask you these same questions about where you were staying on Wednesday night?

Yes - If yes, STOP here.

No

If survey instructions tell you to STOP, do not continue to survey.

This is to reduce duplicate responses.

Shelters submit aggregate data in lieu of surveys.

# Cont'd – Questions about homelessness

Is this the first time you have been homeless/ in this situation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer
↳ If <b>YES</b> : <u>About</u> when did you become homeless?	____ ____ / ____ ____ [mm/yy]
↳ If <b>NO</b> : how many times have you been homeless during the last 3 years, since January 2022? (time in shelter or outside/unsheltered/in a vehicle, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 - 3 times <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more times <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer
How long have you been homeless <b>in total</b> during the last 3 years, since January 2022?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> More than 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer
Were you fleeing domestic violence when you became homeless this time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer



# Cont'd – Demographic Information

Veteran Status	Age Group	Gender Identity	Race and Ethnicity
<p>Have you served in the US Armed Forces on active military duty/reserve (aside from National Guard)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Under 18</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 18 - 24</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 34</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 35 - 44</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 45 - 54</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 55 - 64</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 65+</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer</p>	<p><i>Multiple Selection</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Woman/Girl</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Man/Boy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transgender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Questioning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Culturally Specific Identity (e.g., Two Spirit)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Different Identity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer</p>	<p><i>Multiple Selection</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaskan /Indigenous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American/African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latina/e/o</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern or North African</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure/prefer not to answer</p>

Those who participate in HMIS will note that the categories align with HMIS data elements and/or reporting features

# Cont'd – Disability and Health Questions

**I'd like to ask you a few questions about your health. This information helps us understand what types of services might be needed by people in our region who are homeless.**

Have mental health needs interfered with your daily life, now or in the past?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/prefer not to answer

Have drug or alcohol use interfered with your daily life, now or in the past?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/prefer not to answer

Are you HIV positive?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/prefer not to answer

Do you have any type of disability that interferes with your daily life? This could include disabilities from physical, mental, or emotional health needs.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/prefer not to answer

**Please note that these questions are collecting different information than what is on the Three County CoC Coordinated Entry Assessment!**

# Cont'd – Deduplication/Household status

**Help us to not double count you! We are collecting the following information only to ensure we only count you once.**

(PLEASE NOTE- If the individual is fleeing DV use a coded ID such as 'Anon Adult 1', 'Anon Adult 2', 'Anon Child 1', etc.)

What is the first letter of your first name? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the first 3 letters of your last name? \_\_\_\_\_

What month and year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ [mm/yy]

Household status:

Individual

Couple/Family

If part of a couple/family, please provide other's initials:

How many children under the age of 18 are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

If children under 18 are present in the household, please fill out a child PIT Survey form for each child.

Children under the age of 18 only need to be counted if they were with the head of household that you were surveying, on the designated night of January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

There is a **separate**, briefer PIT Count Survey specific to children with required questions.

# PIT Count Survey - Form for Children

- There is a briefer form available for children under the age of 18 that are accompanied by an adult
  - When an adult shares that a child was with them, this form should be used
  - If someone under the age of 18 was not with an adult (i.e., unaccompanied) then the adult form should be used

# Before and After an Interview

Suggested scripts and tasks before and after you complete a survey interview

# Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

## **Step 1: Approach and Introduce Yourself**

*Hi, my name is [name]. We're out here trying to talk to folks who might not have had access to housing or shelters on the night of Wednesday January 29th.*

*We are completing Point In Time Count surveys, which helps inform our community on how many people are experiencing homelessness and other needs they may have.*

*Did you or anyone you may know not have access to shelter or housing on the night of the 29th?*

# Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

## **Step 2: Explain what you are doing and get consent**

*This survey is anonymous – we do not record identifying information, like full names. The survey takes about 4-5 minutes to complete, and you may choose to not answer any questions you are uncomfortable with.*

*We have some items we are providing to people who participate in the survey, to show our appreciation for your time and response to the questions.*

*Are you open to completing the survey with me?*

# Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

## **Step 3: Conduct the interview using the survey form**

- Go through each question in the survey form.
  - Remember: people have the right not to answer all questions!
- Add any notes that may be helpful
  - Example: If a person says that they have their own apartment, but they're sitting on a bench outside of a 24-hour grocery store at 2:00 am with what appear to be all their belongings, write down that you think there may be a discrepancy in what they are saying vs. where they will sleep that night.



# Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

## **Step 4: Closing the interview**

- Thank the person for their time

## **Step 5: Recording what you heard and observed**

- Take a few minutes after your conversation to double check that you've completed the whole survey form
- Include any additional notes or details
- Make sure everything you have written is readable

# PIT Count Dos



DO get consent before asking PIT count survey questions



DO remember that you may be entering into someone's personal or private space



DO have a conversation with the people you interview



DO respect people's time

# PIT Count Don'ts



DON'T take photos of, or with, the people you survey



DON'T insert yourself into the person's story



DON'T force people to answer questions they don't want to answer



DON'T ask questions in a way that assumes you know the answer



DON'T make promises you can't deliver



DON'T wake someone who is asleep to interview them

# Submitting Completed Forms

## Paper Forms

- Forms completed on paper can be submitted all at once to the CoC
  - Scanned together, emailed to [nburtzos@communityaction.us](mailto:nburtzos@communityaction.us)
  - Faxed together, to 413-775-9018
  - Or by mail to the address listed at the bottom of the form
- Forms should be submitted between **2/6 to 2/14 at the latest**

## Electronic Forms

- Forms that are completed and submitted individually via JotForm for accessibility reasons or other preferences do not require any action
- We expect that electronic forms are submitted in real time, **by 2/5**

# What to bring during daytime outreach

## **The CoC can provide:**

- Paper survey forms
- Felt-tipped pens (allow you to write in the cold)
- Resource guides
- Items to hand out – the CoC will have Warming kits and small gift cards that volunteers can arrange to pick up or be dropped off prior to January 29th

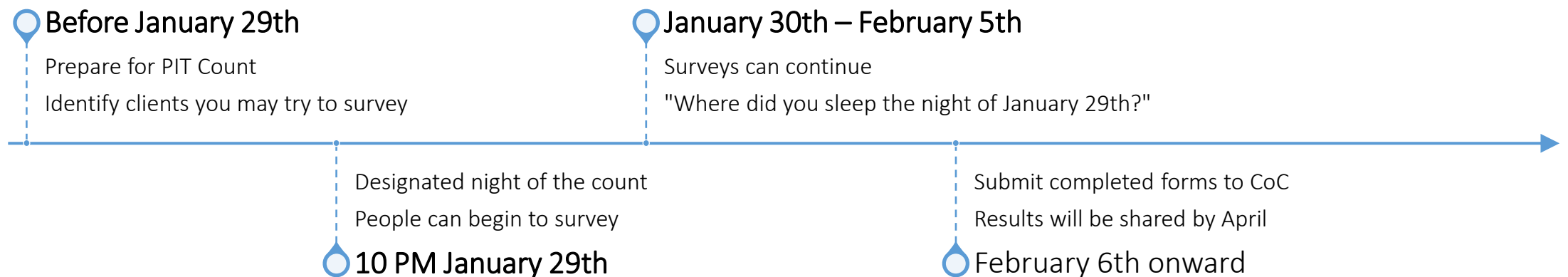
## **You should bring**

- Warm, dry clothing that is comfortable to move around in; layers (if it's cold)
- Appropriate shoes: warm, sturdy, comfortable for walking, waterproof if possible
- Small backpack to carry census items and clothing layers
- Cell phone (fully charged)
- Some form of ID

FAQ and Next Steps

# Can I survey someone before the night of Wednesday, January 29th?

- People cannot be surveyed until the nighttime hours of January 29th have begun
- Surveys can take place between 10:00 PM January 29th until February 5th
- You can instead let clients know ahead of time about the PIT Count, and that you may survey them after the night of January 29th



# Can we use an observation form instead of a survey?

- Because persons who are experiencing homelessness may be surveyed throughout the week following January 29th, we cannot utilize observation forms
- We do not have a way to deduplicate observation forms



# Can surveys be completed by phone?

- If you can collect the information by phone, including the information required for deduplication, then the survey data is acceptable
- However, in-person surveying is preferred and recommended

Information cannot be collected electronically, like via email, text, etc.

# What counts as unsheltered homelessness for sleeping in a vehicle?

- Staying in an RV can be considered an unsheltered place if they meet certain criteria:
  - the RV is in disrepair (e.g., holes, broken windows, flat tires, removed or broken siding);
  - the RV occupants do not have access to sewer, water, and electricity connections; and
  - the RV is parked in an unusual place, including non-RV designated lots, non-residential areas, or areas where RVs are not allowed to park, and the RV is clearly occupied

# Next Steps

Thank you for completing this training!

- Estimate how many surveys you think you will try to complete, and request materials (paper surveys, incentives, etc.) from CoC
- Make a plan for how you will survey people from January 30th – February 5th
- Encourage other providers and volunteers to participate!
- Ask questions that may not have been answered
- Submit completed surveys to CoC

# Thank you!

Do you have additional questions? Need help with something not covered in this training? You can reach Natalie Burtzos, the Three County CoC Compliance Manager

- [nburtzos@communityaction.us](mailto:nburtzos@communityaction.us)
- (413) 376-1184