

Standards and Methods for Point-in-Time Counts of Homeless Persons and Annual Housing Inventory Updates

Office of Special Needs
Assistance Programs

Community Planning and Development
Department of Housing and Urban Development



Broadcast Overview

- Importance of gathering data on homeless persons and updating housing inventory information
- HUD requirements for conducting point-in-time counts, updating housing inventory charts, and reporting data in the CoC application
- An overview of methods for conducting point-in-time counts and updating housing inventory
- Technical assistance resources

Benefits of Accurate Data on Homelessness

Communities need accurate data to:

- Determine the size and scope of the homeless problem at the local level
- Plan services and programs appropriately to address local needs
- Measure progress in addressing homelessness
- Measure performance of individual programs and the system as a whole

Benefits of Accurate Data on Homelessness

HUD needs data to:

- Understand the extent and nature of homelessness throughout the country
- Provide Congress with information on services provided and gaps in services
- Report to Congress and OMB on performance
- Make funding decisions

Types of Information Requested by HUD

- Point-in-Time Counts – Biennial
 - One-night count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons; reported in the population and subpopulation charts of the CoC application
- Housing Inventory Charts – Annual
 - Inventory of beds for homeless persons, including seasonal and overflow beds
- HMIS Unduplicated Counts
 - Annual unduplicated data on persons served (unsheltered, sheltered, and housed), characteristics, service needs/use, and program effectiveness

Dispelling the Myth about HUD Uses of Data

- Old Myth: HUD does not use the data reported in the CoC application
- New Reality: HUD analyzes all data reported in the CoC application
 - Accuracy is important
 - PIT counts must be based on reliable methods, not “guesstimates”
 - Data will be verified prior to publication if numbers appear to be over or under reported

HUD Point -in-Time Count Requirements

- Purpose:
 - To understand the number and characteristics of people sleeping in shelters and on the street, or in other places not meant for human habitation
- Required Data
 - Unduplicated one-night count or estimate of sheltered and unsheltered adults, children, and youth
 - Subpopulation information

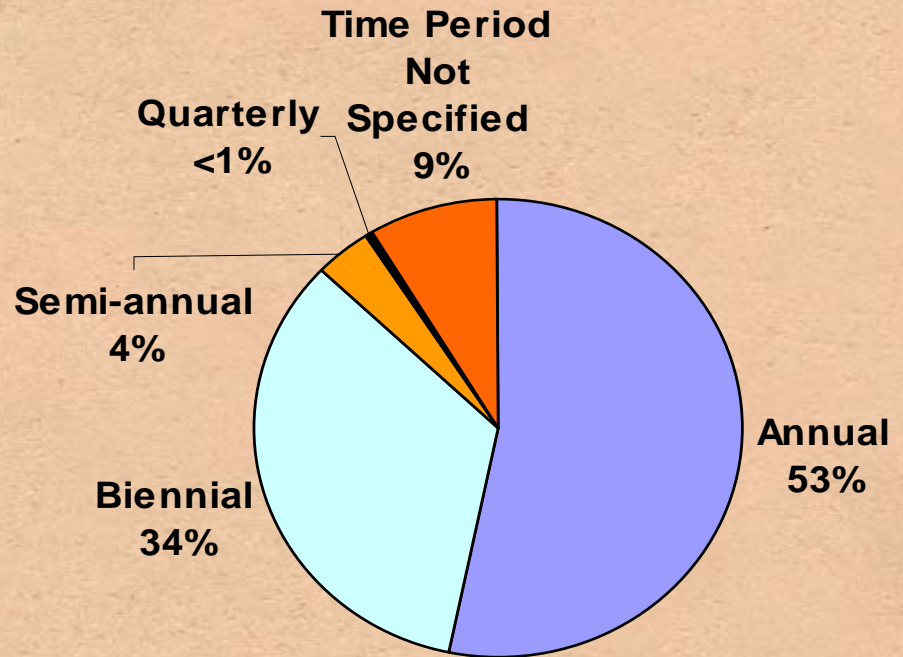
HUD Point -in-Time Count Requirements

- Conduct counts at least every other year; annual counts are encouraged
- One-night count must occur during last seven days in January
- Must collect information about chronic homelessness from all homeless people
- Must use statically acceptable methods

2005 Point-in-Time Counts

- From 2005 CoC applications, we know that:

- Over 50% of CoCs conducted or plan to conduct annual unsheltered counts (street or service-based)
- Almost 4% of CoCs conduct or plan to conduct unsheltered counts more frequently



Homeless Population/Subpopulations Chart

Part 1: Homeless Population	Sheltered		Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional		
Number of Families with Children (Family Households):				
1. Number of Persons in Families with Children:				
2. Number of Single Individuals and Persons in Households without Children:				
(Add Lines Numbered 1 & 2) Total Persons:				
Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered		Unsheltered	Total
a. Chronically Homeless (For sheltered, list persons in emergency shelter <i>only</i>)				
b. Severely Mentally Ill			*	
c. Chronic Substance Abuse			*	
d. Veterans			*	
e. Persons with HIV/AIDS			*	
f. Victims of Domestic Violence			*	
g. Unaccompanied Youth (Under 18)			*	

Information Reported from PIT Count

- The following PIT information is reported in Part 1 of the Population and Subpopulations Chart in the McKinney-Vento application (Exhibit 1, Chart K):
 - Counts of sheltered and unsheltered adults, children, and unaccompanied youth
 - Unsheltered homeless people reside in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street
 - Sheltered homeless people reside in emergency shelter or transitional housing (including hotel or motel vouchers for homeless people)
 - Counts of the number of individuals, number of families, and number of persons in families

Information from Sheltered PIT Count

- For HUD purposes, 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

Information from Sheltered PIT Count

- For HUD, do not report:
 - Formerly homeless persons living in permanent supportive housing (SHP, SRO, or S+C permanent housing)
 - 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, or criminal justice facilities

Information from Unsheltered PIT Count

- Report only the number of unsheltered people actually counted during the point-in-time count
- Can use statistical sampling and extrapolation to estimate unsheltered homeless population, but must use reliable methods
 - May need to consult an expert
- Do not use unscientific adjustment factors or multipliers

Part 2: the Subpopulations Chart

Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
a. Chronically Homeless (For sheltered, list persons in emergency shelter <i>only</i>)			
b. Severely Mentally Ill		*	
c. Chronic Substance Abuse		*	
d. Veterans		*	
e. Persons with HIV/AIDS		*	
f. Victims of Domestic Violence		*	
g. Unaccompanied Youth (Under 18)		*	

Subpopulation Information from PIT Count

- Required to report information on seven subpopulations for sheltered homeless persons
- Subpopulation information is optional for unsheltered homeless persons, except for chronically homeless
 - Definition of chronically homeless: An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more **OR** has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years
 - Sheltered chronically homeless people are those living in emergency shelter only (not those living in transitional housing)
- Subpopulation information is reported on adults only

Housing Inventory Chart

Emergency Shelter: Fundamental Components in CoC System – Housing Inventory Chart													
Provider Name	Facility Name	HMIS Part. Code	Number of Year-Round Beds in HMIS		Geo Code <input type="checkbox"/>	Target Pop		Year-Round			Total Year-Round Beds	Other Beds	
						A	B	Fam. Units	Fam. Beds	Indiv. Beds		Seasonal	Overflow & Voucher
Current Inventory			Ind.	Fam.									
SUBTOTALS:					SUBTOT. CURRENT INVENTORY:								
New Inventory in Place in 2005 (Feb. 1, 2005 – Jan. 31, 2006)			Ind.	Fam.									
SUBTOTALS:					SUBTOTAL NEW INVENTORY:								
Inventory Under Development		Anticipated Occupancy Date											
SUBTOTAL INVENTORY UNDER DEVELOPMENT:													
TOTALS:													
Unmet Need													
1. Total Year-Round Individual ES Beds:				4. Total Year-Round Family Beds:									
2. Year-Round Individual ES Beds in HMIS:				5. Year-Round Family ES Beds in HMIS:									
3. HMIS Coverage Individual ES Beds: Divide line 2 by line 1 and multiply by 100. Round to a whole number.				6. HMIS Coverage Family ES Beds: Divide line 5 by line 4 and multiply by 100. Round to a whole number.									
CoC-I													

Housing Inventory Chart

- Purpose:
 - To understand bed capacity of the shelter system at the local and national levels
- Required Data:
 - Annual bed and unit capacity:
 - Emergency shelter (include seasonal and overflow)
 - Transitional housing
 - Permanent supportive housing
 - Program level data
 - Target population served
 - Extent of HMIS data collection

Uses of Housing Inventory Data

- HUD will publish housing inventory data on its website along with CoC maps
- HUD aggregates total beds recorded in the Housing Inventory Chart for the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) and will report changes in bed inventory over time
- CoC-level data will be verified if over or under utilization is reported

Methods for Counting Homeless Persons

- A “count” = to collect information about
 - Enumeration data on the number of homeless persons
 - Descriptive information on those counted
 - Demographic
 - Service use
 - Needs
- Possible to only count, but preferable to interview, too

Methods for Counting Homeless Persons

- Probably need a 'menu' approach – a combination of:
 - Where
 - When
 - How

Counting Unsheltered Homeless Persons

- Unsheltered Counts (Street or public places counts)
 - Where to count unsheltered homeless people
 - Complete coverage
 - Canvassing an entire area, like a downtown
 - Known locations
 - Canvassing only those locations where homeless persons are known to live, sleep, and congregate
 - Non-shelter services (i.e. soup kitchens, healthcare centers)
 - Services that unsheltered homeless people typically use
 - A combination of these locations

Counting Unsheltered Homeless Persons (cont.)

- When to count unsheltered homeless people
 - Day/night designated for the count:
 - Last seven days in January
 - Timing of data collection
 - A 'blitz' count, 24 hours or less
 - Typically a few hours in early morning or very late evening
 - Street count + serviced-based
 - More than 24 hours (usually only at non-shelter locations)
 - The longer the time period, the greater the chance for duplicate counting
 - Information collected with interviews helps de-duplicate
 - Always ask about homelessness on the day or time period designated for the point-in-time count

Counting Unsheltered Homeless Persons (cont.)

- How to count unsheltered homeless people
 1. Simple count with observation
 - No interviews, enumerators record observations of people who appear to be homeless
 2. Count plus interviews
 3. Service-based count
 - Interviews at non-shelter service locations that unsheltered homeless people rely on to survive – soup kitchens or food bank, drop-in centers, healthcare centers, emergency rooms
- Probability sampling is a variation on a street count
 - Used by large cities and requires statistical expertise

Counting Unsheltered Homeless Persons (cont.)

- The best methods to use will vary by type of community
 - Urban / Suburban
 - Complete coverage of downtown and canvassing of other known locations; observation or interviews
 - Might combine with service-based
 - Suburban / Rural
 - Known locations
 - OR
 - Service-based
 - OR
 - Combination of both

Counting Sheltered Homeless Persons

- Sheltered Counts
 - Already know where and when, decide how
- Where to count sheltered homeless people
 - Emergency shelters and transitional housing programs
 - Emergency hotel/motel/apartment vouchers for homeless people
- When to count sheltered homeless people
 - Night or 24 hour period designated for the point-in-time count
 - Same time as unsheltered count

Counting Sheltered Homeless Persons (cont.)

- How to count sheltered homeless people
 - Homeless Management Information System
 - Extract client-level count and subpopulation data
 - Requires high provider coverage and excellent data quality
 - Provider report or survey
 - Count of people in program
 - Subpopulation information or estimate for entire population
 - Client-level survey using standardized instrument
 - Interview each client or a sample of clients
 - Program staff complete survey based on case records or knowledge of client

Methods for Collecting Housing Inventory

- Use HMIS
 - Requires bed management function
 - Can supplement with manual survey for non-participating providers
- Survey providers
 - During point-in-time population count
 - Have providers update the Housing Inventory Chart from the previous year
- Include instructions on how to count seasonal beds, overflow beds, family units, vouchers

Resources for Conducting Point-in-Time Counts

- Documents:

- A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People
 - *Revised* October 2006
- A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People
 - October 2006
- www.hmis.info
 - Enhancing HMIS Data Quality

- Technical Assistance:

- Call with questions: 1-877-789-2427 or e-mail PITcounts@abtassoc.com

Feedback on the Webcast

- We need your feedback to continue developing informative guidance on this topic
- Please go online to complete an anonymous feedback survey:

www.abtassociates.com/point-in-time/

- If you'd like a response from us, please include your contact information in the comments section