



2019 Unsheltered Point in Time Homeless Count Planning Workbook

Objective of the 2019 PIT Count

The objectives of the 2019 Georgia Homeless Count are to:

- Collect data from January 28, 2019 through February 3, 2019, focusing on housing status on the night of Monday, January 23, 2019
- Get the most accurate count of all **literally homeless families and individuals** in the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Provide the CoC and HUD necessary data to determine funding distribution to end homelessness in Georgia.
- Assess the level of need for homeless populations in each county within our jurisdiction

This year, there are several key changes that are being made in the count:

1. **The emphasis** will be on comprehensive coverage of counties targeted by DCA based on the predictive model.
2. **The aim** is to cover counties with the **expectation that all the counts are well organized and exceptionally executed**. It is of the utmost importance that surveys on every unsheltered homeless individual or family are collected.
3. **Street outreach is a crucial component** to the count is encouraged whenever possible to ensure accuracy and coverage of the entire county.
4. **All PIT survey responses will be collected utilizing the Counting Us mobile app**, which will record data electronically on a mobile phone or tablet. There will be no paper surveys unless explicitly approved by DCA based on extenuating circumstances.

Target Population

The Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) consists of 152 predominantly rural counties. When we are talking about homelessness, it is easy to think about the person who sleeps on the street or in shelters, and who is often seen carrying all of his or her belongings. While this is our typical idea of homelessness, these individuals only represent a portion of this state's homeless population.



In the BoS CoC's many rural counties, the typical "homeless person or persons" may look very different from those experiencing homelessness in urban areas. In many of the state's rural and suburban communities, people experiencing homelessness may be in the following situations:

- **Sleeping in cars**
- **Camping or in encampments**
- **Living in abandoned buildings or farm/out buildings (sheds, barns, garages)**
- **Living in dilapidated or abandoned housing – housing that is in such bad condition that it is no longer fit for human habitation**

The situations listed above are considered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be literally homeless.

Others may be in temporary housing – living in motels, staying with friends or family, or even living in their own houses/apartments – but facing imminent eviction (within two weeks) and have nowhere to go.

Virtually every community in the state includes people in these situations, and although they are certainly experiencing housing difficulties, they are NOT homeless according to HUD's definition of homelessness. As such, they are NOT the target population for this count.

How Will this Project Work?

In order to capture information on the unsheltered homeless population, the Balance of State Continuum of Care utilizes both a street count and service-based methodology for the PIT count.

- **The night of the 2019 count is January 28, 2019.**
- PIT counts use surveys conducted by service providers and volunteers to determine where those experiencing homelessness were sleeping on the night of the count.
- **The target population** is individuals and families living in a place that is not meant for human habitation, such as living outside, in an abandoned structure, dilapidated housing, cars or other motor vehicles, or encampments.
- **The 2019 PIT Count Project** will use collect surveys electronically by using the Count Us App provided by the BoS CoC.

- **The actual survey collection happens from sundown on January 28, 2019 through February 3, 2019.** During this week-long period, **questions are focused on a single point-in-time.** The survey includes questions that will be used to determine the person's housing status (homeless or stably housed) on Monday night January 28th, 2019.
- The street count will involve volunteers going to places where people experiencing homelessness are located to administer surveys.
- This service-based methodology utilizes surveys collected at locations where individuals and families experiencing homelessness are seeking services, such as a day center, food bank, public library, or other service provider.
- A full physical count is not done in all 152 BoS CoC, counties as our communities do not have the capacity for this type of count. Data from counties that are counted is used in a predictive model to determine homelessness in those that were not counted.
- **DCA will provide the survey instrument,** training, technical assistance, data input and data analysis for participating counties. The survey instrument for the 2019 count will be the Counting Us app from Simtech Solutions.





PIT Count Coordinator to Do List

Below is a list of suggested things to do; this is a starting point for your community to work from.

- Develop a plan for your count according to what you feel is best for the resources available in your county.
- Contact local government and law enforcement officials regarding the count.
- Recruit service organizations to participate in the count
- Develop contact list of local participating organizations
- Identify service sites for data collection. This includes doing outreach in the community PRIOR to the count so that the most appropriate and relevant locations are surveyed. This will ensure that folks are not missed. You should be familiar with who is experiencing unsheltered homelessness in your community and where they are staying before going out to do the count.
- Download and register an account on the Counting. Us app (information available here: <http://pointintime.info/countingus-mobile-app/>). Review the materials and documentation for the app and become familiar with using it.
- Recruit and schedule volunteers for survey administration and privacy training
- Provide training to volunteers and staff of participating organizations in administering surveys and collecting sensitive and personal identifying information
- Monitor data collection during designated time period and address problems and issues as they arise
- Coordinate request for and administration of funding from DCA or other sources

Other Suggestions, Tips, and Information:

Volunteer Recruitment

- In the past, communities have found some of the following has helped with recruiting volunteers:
 - Advertise in the local **Newspaper** and/or local **Radio Station**.
 - Contact **Churches, Charities, Colleges, Police** and **Fire Departments**.
 - **Don't Forget** your area service providers, they often have information about locations of homeless individuals and families your agency has not yet seen.

The above suggestions will allow you to cover the most area and get an accurate count. Which in turn provides our continuum with greatest opportunity for funding, and create housing opportunities for those we serve.



Limited Funding Available for your PIT count

- This year funding will be awarded pending the approval of a proposed budget submitted to DCA. The maximum amount of money awarded is based on the population of the county covered. Count coordinators will receive contracting information from DCA.

Please note:

- Funding through DCA is reimbursable and will be paid upon submission of satisfactory documentation after the count.
- Funding amounts will be included on contracting materials, but generally ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,500 per county.

Also find additional sources of funding or resources:

- Make use of your connections (service clubs, churches, charities)
- Pursue corporate sponsorships
- Costco, Kroger, and Home Depot specifically strive to support their local community, so be sure to contact them for possible sponsorship or donation of materials needed (flashlights, clip boards, snacks, hygiene kits, etc.)
- The United Way in your area may be able to donate materials that you could give to survey respondents (care packages, hygiene kits, etc.)

Additional Information

If your community is providing incentives, now is the time for surveyors to give the participant this incentive to thank them for their participation. Your community may also have printed information about services available in the community. Remember that you are not responsible for assisting the participant in finding services, although, registry coordinators may provide them with any referral information they choose.



Completing the questions below will help you plan and allow DCA staff to provide better technical assistance.

What is the target population for surveying during the count? How much have you interacted with the population in your county before?

Does your community plan to count on the night of the county (January 28th), during the week after, or both on the night of the count and during the week?



Please provide a list of possible community partners who can assist you on this project.

How do you plan to identify service sites for data collection?



Do you or your community have experience with doing street outreach in the county that you are covering?

What approach will you take to ensure full county coverage?



If there are any areas that are specifically being excluded, please describe why.

How do you plan to recruit volunteers?

How many volunteers to you estimate that you will need?



Point in time Count Survey Training

Who to Survey

The survey is designed to be answered by individuals for whom maintaining housing is a problem.

- You do not have to determine if the person is homeless; the survey will allow us to categorize people's housing situations based on HUD's definitions.
- When surveying at service locations such as a food pantry, laundromat, or drop in center, **it's most likely that only a small portion, if any, are homeless** and an even smaller portion are veterans or chronically homeless.
- Please be sure that you are targeting areas in the community where those who are homeless may congregate.
- In order to ensure that people who are homeless are the focus of your survey efforts, you may use the question below as a screening question.

Have you experienced homelessness or trouble staying housed in the past few months?

Service providers and trained volunteers may also choose to go into the community to survey people where they live or congregate. **If your volunteers are surveying people in the community or doing outreach, make sure appropriate safety precautions are taken. Surveyors should**

- **Travel in pairs or teams**
- **Have ID Badges**
- **Bring a flashlight**
- **Take a cell phone for survey collection**
- **Make sure someone knows where they are going. It may be a good idea to notify police of what you are doing so that if something were to happen and you needed help, they would be aware of the situation and better prepared to assist.**
- **Not go into abandoned buildings or secluded areas if they are unfamiliar with the area**
- **Not approach anyone who does not seem comfortable with being approached.**

Survey Protocol



Confidentiality

Interviewers must agree to keep the information gathered confidential by signing a confidentiality agreement. The survey should be administered in as private a setting as possible. If possible, try not to ask the questions in a setting where the person's answers can be overheard by others. **If you are outside or in a waiting room area, you may wish to ask the person to move to a place close that apart from others.**

Beginning the Interview

Volunteers should introduce themselves. Explain that we would like to ask him/her some questions to find out their housing situation. Tell him/her that the information he/she shares will be kept confidential. Read or recite the opening paragraph located at the top of the Housing Status Survey:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer for the Georgia Point in Time Homeless Count. We are asking people experiencing housing difficulties about their experiences in order to help provide better programs and services to them. Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your services in any way. Your responses to questions will not be shared with anyone outside of our team, and your name will not be recorded. May I please have about 10 minutes of your time?

Potential Respondent Questions

How long will this take?

The survey usually takes between 5 and 10 minutes

How will the results be used?

The results will be used to help us understand housing problems in our state and better provide housing and services to those in need.

Who will see my information?

Your individual information will not be shared with anyone. The reason that we need your initials is to make sure your answers are only counted once.

Volunteers may want to ask the following question if you feel that people in the community may accidentally be surveyed more than one time over the course of the count week.

Has another volunteer or staff member already asked you questions about where you were staying?

If an individual respond's "yes", thank them for their time. If they respond "no" complete the survey. If they are unsure of the answer, ask them to complete the survey.

Refusals



If a potential respondent is reluctant to participate, remember to assure the person that his/her participation in the survey will be completely confidential and will help state and local officials understand the issues of people and veterans experiencing housing problems. **If the respondent is adamant about not wanting to participate, thank him/her for their time. If the respondent offers a reason for refusing, surveyors may respond to the reason or concern.**

Examples:

- **I am too busy.**
- *The survey should only take 5 minutes OR is there some other time that would be more convenient for you?*
- **I don't think I can answer your questions.**
- *There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your experiences.*
- **I don't like to give out information about myself.**
- *I understand. All of your answers will be kept confidential — your information will only be shared with service providers if you choose for us to do that.*

Administering the Survey

If the person is willing to participate, be sure surveyors let them know that they can refuse to answer any question. If surveyors are administering the survey at a service location, let them know that their participation in the survey (or their refusal to participate) will not affect the services that they receive.

If the person being interviewed does not understand the question, surveyors may read the answer choices to see if it helps him or her to understand and respond.

Some of these questions are of a sensitive nature. Please keep in mind that the survey participants have the right to decline to answer any question or skip questions. If someone seems reluctant to answer or uncomfortable with a question, surveyors may remind them that it is OK to ask to skip a question if it's not something they are comfortable sharing.

All surveys should be collected through the Counting Us app, which can be downloaded from either Google Play or the App Store, register an account, and use the project key "DEMO" to get started familiarizing with the app. DCA will provide a project key specific to the Balance of State CoC count, which will need to be entered by all surveyors before conducting live surveys. Questions in the live survey will vary slightly from the demo version.



Please note that paper surveys may only be collected with DCA's explicit permission. Any paper surveys will be the Count Coordinator's responsibility to enter into the app or on the app's website. More information about the survey and the app are available here: <http://pointintime.info/countingus-mobile-app/>.

General Interview Techniques for Surveyors

When administering the survey:

- Keep your tone and body language as neutral as possible
- There are no correct answers to the questions — be careful that your words, facial expressions or body language do not convey approval or disapproval to responses to the questions. Ask the questions as written.
- Affirm the respondent's participation by acknowledging answers ("I see, yes, uh huh, ok.") but do not reflect any judgment of the answers ("Really? That's terrible!" or "Good point!"). Probe for specific information as needed ("What do you mean exactly? Can you be more specific?").
- Personalize your questions from time to time. For example: "John, have you ever served in the US Armed Forces?"

Closing the Interview

Thank the respondents for their time. Ask them if they have any questions for you or any questions about the homeless count in general. If they have a question that you cannot answer, please provide them with the contact information for the county coordinator.

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