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Point In Time Count Policy Effective

The Stark County Continuum of Care completes the Point In Time Count annually in accordance with HUD guidelines. This is a “snapshot” count of how many homeless people there are at a given time within a community. The Homeless Services Collaborative (HSC) is the entity responsible for organizing and completing the count. The HSC has a standing committee for this activity.

PIT Committee

The committee begins meeting in October to organize the event. Volunteers are solicited to chair and participate on the committee. If possible, committee members should represent agencies with a variety of missions and clientele.

HUD Guidance

HUD has a variety of publications that give guidance about how to complete the homeless count. They also publish guidance each year to highlight any changes in the requirements.

Methodology

In recent years, the Stark County CoC has elected to use the Service-Based Approach instead of completing a street count. This approach uses a survey to collect data on unsheltered homeless people when they use non-shelter services such as soup kitchens, outreach programs, etc. This group of homeless includes those living in “hidden” places such as abandoned buildings, cars, etc., that may be missed during a street count. All service providers who may encounter the homeless need to participate. This increases the coverage area for the count. Personal identifiers are included in the survey to eliminate duplicate counting.

Planning areas

The following are the areas that require discussion and planning by the committee:

Evaluate last year’s PIT Count - It is a good practice to begin the planning by reviewing notes from the previous year to determine what activities were successful and what did not work well.

Review the survey form – The HMIS Coordinator develops the form to include HUD’s mandatory data. Additional items may be added at the discretion of the committee. The questions determine if the individual is homeless, including chronically homeless and collects personal identifiers to prevent duplicate counts. Information is also collected regarding veteran status, family composition demographics to identify children and transitional youth and other characteristics

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related to homelessness such as disabling conditions. In 2013, the committee developed an online survey as well.

Select the day for the count – HUD mandates that the count must be conducted during the last 10 days of January. Within that window, the local community can set the day of the count. Traditionally, our community has set the night of the count on a Sunday night with surveys beginning on a Monday.

Review changes from HUD for that year – Each year HUD publishes a document that describes changes in the PIT requirements. It is important to incorporate these changes in the process.

Counting those on the street – HUD guidance allows for communities to physically count those who are on the street on the designated day. Our community has elected not to do a street count in the past few years. HUD guidance describes the pros and cons of this approach.

Contacting agencies and getting participation - It is important to have as many service agencies as possible participating in the count. It is also important to have a cross section of agencies from the mental health system, the courts and justice system, faith based agencies, Department of Jobs and Family Services, school systems, etc.

Covering meal sites, etc. – A lot of the homeless participate in the hot meal programs. Due to the large number of participants, it is helpful to have additional volunteers, especially at the beginning of the week, to assist the agencies that sponsor the meal programs in conducting the surveys.

Publicity – A press release should be issued prior to the count to increase community awareness. Radio public service announcements or news reports are also helpful. Posters can be displayed at participating agencies and on the SARTA buses.

Reporting

The HMIS Coordinator gathers all of the surveys and tabulates the data. Personal identifiers are used to make sure no one is counted twice. The Continuum of Care is also required to submit a sheltered count (Housing Inventory Count – HIC). All information must be submitted to HUD in the prescribed format by the required date. The Continuum of Care of Stark County will also compile and issue a report to the community.