

Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) of Stark County Homeless Services Collaborative

2023 Annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count

Methodology

Summary

Background: Local agencies and organizations conduct a count to determine the extent of homelessness in our community. This information is used to submit the Continuum of Care grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Stark County receives approximately three million dollars each year from the Continuum of Care Grant Program to serve people who are experiencing homelessness.

Unsheltered Count

Approach: To get the best count, Stark County will conduct a Housing Survey. The Housing Survey will include all HUD required PIT data points. The survey will be in paper and electronic format.

Everyone will be asked where they stayed on January 22, 2023.

Strategies:

- **Service-Based Count:** Local agencies who serve people experiencing homelessness will conduct the Housing Survey at their worksites for up to seven (7) days following the Night of the Count, from Monday, January 23, 2023, through Sunday, January 29, 2023. Volunteers will also be assigned to assist at some sites such as libraries, hot meal sites, food pantries and bus stations during this same time frame to survey individuals/families who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Street Count:** Teams of volunteers, led by ICAN Housing's PATH outreach staff and other experienced PIT volunteers will go out onto the streets on Monday, January 23, 2023 from 5:00 am – 7:00 am to cover known locations (where people experiencing homelessness are known to congregate or sleep overnight). The Volunteer Teams will count and survey people experiencing homelessness on the street. Known locations in Stark County are typically found in the cities of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance, which are jurisdictions referenced in local Consolidated Plans. At least one team will also address areas of the county, outside of these cities which will include, at a minimum, Canal Fulton, East Canton and Lake / Hartville areas. Information regarding known locations was shared by the Homeless Navigation (Hotline) Coordinated Entry System, local homeless providers, and local street outreach staff. Persons experiencing homelessness will be offered assistance with connecting to needed service providers and will be provided with "Blessing Bags" (donated by StarkMHAR {Stark County's Behavioral Health Board},

Faith Family Church and Lifecare) with items such as hygiene products, hats, gloves, water, granola bars, etc.

- **Youth Count:** The Youth Count will incorporate a new approach for 2023 by implementing a pilot strategy. The PIT Committee is selecting to target one Alternative Canton City School (“Choices”), which includes non-traditional students within the Transitional Age Youth (18 – 24-year-old) category. Previous strategies attempted during the PIT Count to locate youth have proven unfruitful. Therefore, the PIT Committee is proposing a new pilot strategy which has gained support from Canton City Schools Administrators. Canton City School – Choices has agreed to allow a few select trained volunteers to conduct the count at their school. Surveys will be administered by the volunteers. Parents/Guardians will have the option to decline their students’ participation if they choose to. Surveys will be conducted with students on site. In addition to completing a survey, any youth identifying as homeless will be guided to the Homeless Liaison or School Community Worker for further assistance. PIT Count Blessing Bags will be provided to the School Community Worker to distribute discretely to those students. A Youth-Specific Resource Guide was also developed by staff at Goodwill and the PIT Committee. This Resource Guide will be provided to all youth seeking assistance.

Survey: Questions on the survey determine if the individual is experiencing homelessness (including chronically homelessness) or is at risk of becoming homeless; ask for identifiers to prevent duplicate counts; and request information to indicate veteran status, family composition, and disabling conditions. There will also be an electronic survey available for volunteers to complete with those being surveyed. Individuals can also fill out the survey by contacting the Homeless Navigation (Hotline) at 330-452-4363.

Volunteer Training: Volunteer training will again be mandatory for the 2023 PIT count. Three virtual trainings will be offered during the month of January 2023. Volunteers will select one training to attend. Training will be offered virtually and at various dates/times to provide more options to volunteers. Training will equip volunteers with knowledge, experience and confidence regarding conducting the Housing Surveys, how to approach people and safety measures (particularly for the Street Count). A Volunteer Agreement must be signed to ensure volunteers are aware of confidentiality expectations and to eliminate any claims of liability in the event of an emergency situation.

Sheltered Count

Approach: Stark County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will provide data for the sheltered count. Additionally, social service, faith-based and other organizations within Stark County will be contacted to obtain information about any individuals or families housed by these entities in local hotels or motels on January 22, 2023.

De-Duplication Techniques:

HMIS software is programmed to eliminate duplication by comparison of multiple data points (first name, middle initial, last name, social security number, project entry date, date of birth, etc.), HMIS staff also conduct manual checks of result sets to ensure accuracy. Information obtained from organizations not participating in HMIS is examined using the same criteria, ensuring that each individual only appears once in the final PIT count.

The methodology was developed with input from the Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) of Stark County PIT Count Committee, the Homeless Services Collaborative and via outreach to law enforcement and Canton City Schools staff and in compliance with:

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** [Notice CPD-17-08: 2018 HIC and PIT Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs](#)
- **HUD's PIT Count Methodology Guide 2014 (latest version).**