

Conducting an Unsheltered PIT Estimate During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Partnership for Effective Public Administration & Leadership Ethics

Background

- The annual Point-in-Time count is **rapidly** approaching
- As with all things, COVID-19 will impact if and how communities handle their PIT estimates – particularly concerning the unsheltered population
- COVID-19 may have changed:
 - Who is experiencing unsheltered homelessness
 - The services used by people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
 - The locations of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- HUD is offering LOTS of flexibility in how (and IF) counts are conducted



Purpose of this Report & Briefing

- Supplement to HUD Guidance
- Recommendations focused on:
 - Increasing the use of outreach teams
 - Reducing reliance on volunteers
 - Increasing the use of technology in training and surveying
 - Conducting a count over multiple nights
 - Reducing the overall burden through sampling
 - Service-based and HMIS approaches
 - **Conducting the count SAFELY**

Conducting an Unsheltered Point-in-Time Count During the COVID-19 Pandemic

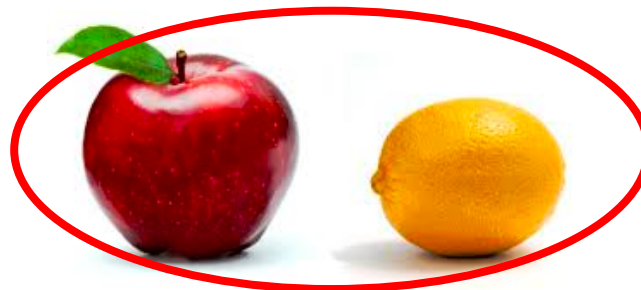
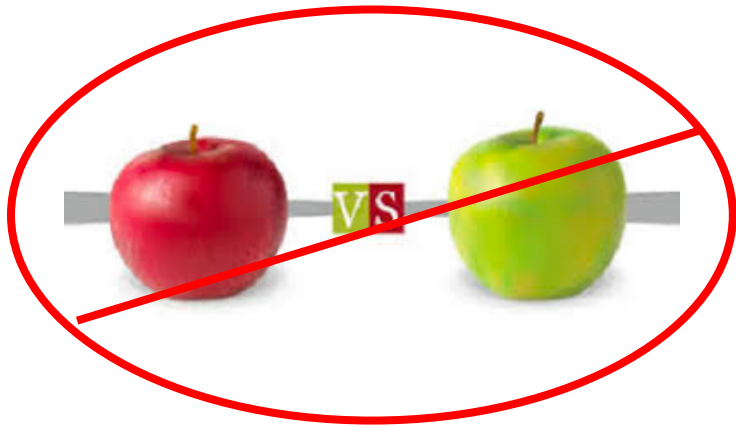
December 28, 2020 | Publications

Updated January 4, 2021



Important Points

- The only acceptable count is a safe count
- We are NOT telling communities to conduct their PIT this year
 - Safety, legal, and logistical concerns could render a count impossible
- Embrace the change – do not pretend that everything is the same



IF POSSIBLE, this is a year to revisit
PIT-infrastructure and methods



Outline

- Volunteer concerns and leveraging outreach teams
- Increasing PIT Efficiency
 - Observation-based counts
 - Use of abbreviated surveys
 - Expanding the PIT timeframe
 - Mobile app-based surveys
- Training Enumerators
- Sampling
- Service-Based Counts and Using HMIS
- Example



Leverage Professional Outreach Teams

- COVID-19 will limit public/volunteer engagement in the 2021 PIT
 - Public engagement may not be LEGAL
 - Stay-at-home orders persist and are likely to expand as cases climb
 - Volunteers are likely to be wary of participating
 - Many volunteers are part of high-risk populations
- Normal volunteer-based procedures are **unsafe**
 - Gathering is a danger
 - PPE shortages
 - Workarounds may not be practical



Leveraging Outreach Teams

- Already scheduled to work
- No unanticipated night-of shortages
- Already engaging SAFELY with people on street
- Have PPE



Improving Efficiency:

1) Observation-based counts

- Benefits:
 - Allow more efficient coverage
 - Limits interaction between enumerators & respondents
- Trade-offs:
 - Making assumptions based on appearance
 - Risk of duplication, though this can be mitigated
 - Cannot collect demographics per HUD guidelines



2) Abbreviated Surveys

- If you conduct surveys:
 - Ascertain housing status
 - De-duplicate

• **THAT's IT**

Point-in-Time Survey Tools

Date Published: December 2020

Description

In order to collect Point-in Time (PIT) count data according to HUD standards, CoCs need to use high quality survey instruments. HUD is providing CoCs with a set of model surveys that they can use for the 2018 PIT count. These surveys reflect the review of best local practices, and the input of leading survey and homeless methodology experts. Please see below the list of model surveys, as well as a list of guides and tools that CoCs can use for the 2018 PIT count.

In the past, HUD provided access to a free mobile PIT count application (app). This mobile PIT app is no longer available. However, HUD anticipates publishing the open source code to the app for communities that wish to use that in their discussions to determine whether to adopt mobile technology as part of their PIT counts. HUD also plans on publishing a summary of lessons learned from the PIT mobile app for communities to use. HUD has kept the webinar with the PIT survey tools and the mobile app overview available for communities to review.

Resource Links

- [HUD Point-in-Time Mobile App - Technical Training Overview](#) (HTML)
- [Model Interview-based Unsheltered Night of the Count PIT Survey](#) (PDF)
- [Model Service-based PIT Survey](#) (PDF)
- [Model Sheltered Night of Count PIT Survey](#) (PDF)
- [Observation-Based PIT Count Example Form for Use on the Night of the Count - Updated December 2020](#) (DOCX)
- [Observation-Based Unsheltered PIT Count Guidance and Example Form - Updated December 2020](#) (PDF)
- [PIT Count Youth Survey - Addendum](#) (PDF)



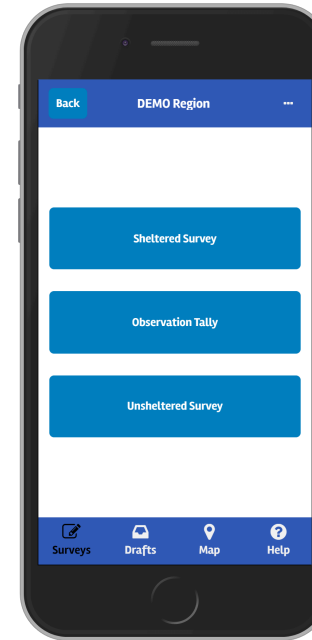
3) Expand the Timeframe

- Plan diligently
 - Cover distinct geographies on each night
 - Minimize the chance that people move between areas covered on different nights
 - E.g.: County to county, or urban vs. rural
- Plan for contingencies
 - More nights, backup staff, etc.
- De-duplication is harder
- Multiple “PIT” nights option for large CoC’s



4) Mobile-App Surveys

- **Eliminate the need for physical exchange of paper**
- Reduce time and cost of printing, sorting, distributing, and checking paper surveys
- Often come with built-in mapping features and flexibility
- Several vendors available



Mobile Tool Name	Free trial option	Multiple Plan options	Customizable Surveys	Count Management Tools	Separate Youth Survey	Trains Volunteers	Secure Data/Clean Up	Creates Reports
Akido Connect		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counting Us - Simtech Solutions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hyperion		X	X	X		X	X	X
Survey123			X	X			X	X



Training

- **NOT an option** —————→

- Another reason to rely on outreach teams
- Virtual trainings are possible
 - Look into web conferencing options NOW
 - Think about
 - Reinforce material with breakout rooms, quizzes, chats, etc.



Sampling

- Allows you to visit a selection of geographies and make inferences about your entire CoC
- Probability—samples allow for some certainty of findings (and knowledge of your uncertainty - ie, Margin of Error)
- NOT hard to implement
- Improve efficiency by limiting required coverage



Sampling, 2

- Divide your CoC into smaller regions or “subareas”
 - Common boundaries like census tracts are best
- Choose an approach
 - Simple random samples: Easy but imprecise
 - Stratified samples: categorize subareas based on homelessness levels
 - E.g. “High density” and “Low Density” subareas
- Determine your sample sizes
 - Focus on “High Density” areas
 - Sample enough “Low Density” areas so a single aberrant area does not throw off your estimate



Sampling, 3

- Calculate Results
 - Multiple your number counted in each “high density” or “low density” category by a weighting factor
 - *Weighting factor (w.f.)* =
$$\frac{\text{The total number of areas in that category}}{\text{The sampled number of areas in that category}}$$
 - E.g.: *Weighting factor (w.f.)* = $\frac{60}{20} = 3$
- *Category Estimate* = (Number counted = 15) \times w.f.
 - E.g.: *Category Estimate* = $15 \times 3 = 45$ people



Service-based counts

- Ascertain the housing status of people using social services
 - Requires surveying; NO observation
- May be generally preferable:
 - in rural settings where a street-count is inefficient
 - For estimating especially hard-to-count populations
- Deduplication especially important
 - People may use multiple service centers
- Can be combined with street-based counts



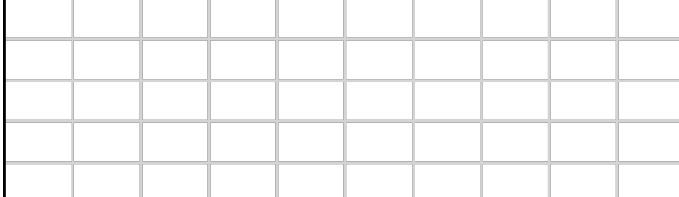
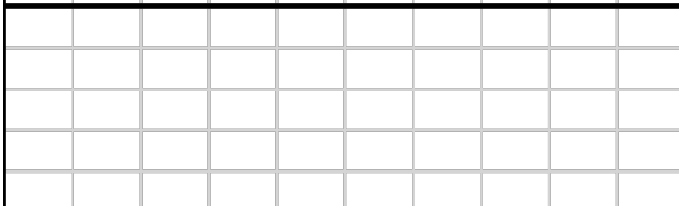
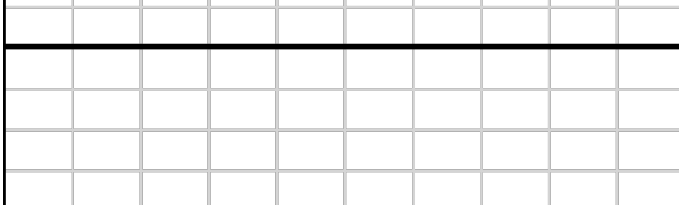
Administrative Data

- CoCs can submit PIT estimates based on HMIS or other data
- CoC's must demonstrate some correlation between past data and PIT counts to show reliability for this year



Example CoC: A Street-Count Sample

- Springfield, USA

	Downtown
	City Fringe
	Suburbs

- Divide areas into 200 subareas

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Downtown
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	City Fringe
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	Suburbs
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	
131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	
171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	
191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	



Sampling Approach: A Stratified Sample

- Level 1: Certainty Zones
 - (2, in red)
- Level 2: High Density Zones
 - (98, in green)
- Level 3: Low Density
 - (100, in blue)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Downtown
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	City Fringe
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	Suburbs
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	
131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	
171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	
191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	



Create & pull your sample

- Level 1: all Certainty zones
- Level 2: 30 (of 98) High Density zones
- Level 3: 32 (of 100) Low Density zones

1	2	3		5	6		8	9		Downtown
11						17		19		
			24		26					
	32								40	
41			44			47	48			City Fringe
		53		55						
61						67		69		
			74		76		78			
	82			85				89	90	Suburbs
91										
	102	103				107			110	
111		113		115		117			120	
				125	126		128	129		
									140	
141		143		145		147				
			154						160	
161		163			166				170	
								179		
	182	183				187				
191			194		196	197		199		



Assign areas to nights and teams

- January 23rd is PIT night
- Brief survey conducted over **four** nights
- Have access to **four** outreach teams
- Group similar areas together

Night	Team	Areas to Cover
1	A	1, 2, 3, 5
1	B	6, 8, 9, 11
1	C	17, 19, 24, 26, 32
1	D	40, 41, 44, 47, 48
2	A	53, 55, 61, 67
2	B	69, 74, 76, 78
2	C	82, 85, 89, 90
2	D	91, 102, 103, 107, 110
3	A	111, 113, 115
3	B	117, 120, 125
3	C	126, 128, 129, 140
3	D	141, 143, 145, 147
4	A	154, 160, 161
4	B	163, 166, 170, 179
4	C	182, 183, 187, 191
4	D	194, 196, 197, 199



Compiling Results

Counts

- Certainty areas: 41



Extrapolations

41 people

- High Density areas: 17



$$\text{Weighting factor (w.f.)} = \frac{98}{30} = 3.3$$

$$\text{H.D. Estimate} = 17 \times 3.3 = \mathbf{56.1 \text{ people}}$$

- Low Density areas: 2



$$\text{Weighting factor (w.f.)} = \frac{100}{32} = 3.125$$

$$\text{L.D. Estimate} = 2 \times 3.125 = \mathbf{6.25 \text{ people}}$$

$$\text{PIT Estimate} = 41 + 56.1 + 6.25 = \mathbf{103}$$



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<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/conducting-an-unsheltered-point-in-time-count-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Questions?

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