Point-in-Time Count Basics

What is the Point in Time Count? A Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people who are experiencing homelessness on a single night in a given community. Counts are carried out by staff and volunteers who conduct surveys who allow people experiencing homelessness to express their specific housing status and needs.

When does the PIT Count happen? HUD requires that official PIT counts occur annually and specifies that they should happen on one day during the last 10 days of January. Local communities may elect to hold smaller counts at different times in the year or for specific populations.

Who conducts a PIT Count? The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all Continua of Care (COC) throughout the United States to conduct a PIT Count.

The Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care (IN BoS CoC) is responsible for the PIT Count in 91 of the 92 counties in Indiana. Indianapolis/Marion County is a separate COC and conducts its own PIT Count. The IN BoS CoC partners with IHCDA, who serves as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. IHCDA coordinates the annual PIT Count with local service providers and volunteers throughout the IN BoS CoC Network. It is important that organizations and partners in an area work together to complete the count. It is vital that every county is engaged in the PIT Count so that IN BoS CoC establishes the most accurate PIT count it can. Currently, about two-thirds of the state participates so new partners are always being identified to improve results.

Why is it important to conduct a PIT Count? In order to reduce and eventually eliminate homelessness, communities need to understand how many people need housing. A headcount provides an easy-to-understand data point that helps communities determine an actionable plan.
- The year-over-year PIT Count can also help communities assess their own success and know if housing programs and other forms of support were working to reduce and eliminate homelessness.
- These counts help agencies at the local level plan for real needs. Tracking people who are experiencing homelessness can be difficult because they move frequently and do not always feel comfortable using community resources available to them. Physically counting people in shelters and through street-level surveying is a vital way to understand the scope of work a community needs to house each individual.
- Point-in-Time counts demonstrate real needs to funding entities like HUD and other agencies because they make funding decisions based on that data. For example, during the annual COC Consolidated Application[1], this information is used by HUD to determine how much funding the IN BoS CoC needs to address homelessness in Indiana.
- Publishing data from a PIT count raises awareness among community partners who can participate in real solutions around reducing and ending homelessness.

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[1] The CoC Consolidated Application is annual funding application that is submitted as a single application with project-level priority listing for COC funding during the CoC Program Competition.

How are PIT Counts Conducted? PIT Counts are conducted in January, but the data is submitted and published a few months later, typically in April or May. The IN BoS CoC Performance and Outcomes Committee works with IHCDA staff to plan the count over many months and determines the methodology on conducting the Count, including who is included in the count, how agencies participate, and how to engage and prepare the community the Count. The committee's plan is then accepted by the IN BoS CoC Board before continuing with the project.

- **Documenting sheltered people** primarily involves pulling data from individual shelters on a single night. This data is pulled from HMIS as well as through volunteers conducting a survey with clients.
- **Documenting unsheltered people** requires street-level contact from a group of trained volunteers who can treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect and who can explain the project quickly and concisely. This count requires volunteers to canvass the streets and known camps and other congregating places in a community.

What's unique about the 2024 PIT Count? In 2024, the IN BoS CoC is making an effort to count youth and young adults who do not fully meet the definition of who is being counted for the annual PIT Count. If an individual does not sleep in an Emergency Shelter, a transitional housing site, or a safe haven **and** is between the ages of 14 and 24, volunteers will ask supplemental questions about their experience with housing instability. This information will be collated separately from the PIT Count in order to maintain the integrity of the required PIT Count methodology.

What other data is collected? The PIT Count is not the only data on individuals experiencing homelessness being collected by IHCDA and reported to HUD. There are three other reports that provide insight into the status of homelessness in the Indiana Balance of State:

- Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) - produced from a CoC's HMIS, provides HUD and the IN BoS CoC with critical information about how people experiencing homelessness use their homelessness response system of care over the annual reporting year.[2]
- Housing Inventory Count (HIC) – the IN BoS CoC is also required to conduct an annual Housing Inventory Count (HIC), documenting the residential resources in communities throughout the COC dedicated to assisting people experiencing homelessness.[3]
- System Performance Measure (SPM) – A provision of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that communities measure their performance as a coordinated system, in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types.[4] HUD has not yet released guidance regarding this year's SPM Reports.

For more information, please visit the [HMIS Data Portal](#) or contact IHCDA at HMIS@ihcda.in.gov.

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[2] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA),* https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/lsa/

[3] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Housing Inventory Count Reports,* https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-housing-inventory-count-reports/

[4] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *System Performance Measures,* https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/system-performance-measures/#guidance