

Point-In-Time Procedure Cheat Sheet

Thank you for assisting with the point-in-time count! Please read this and the attached safety guides for the basics in completing the point-in-time.

Who we are counting

- The only people who are counted as a part of the point-in-time are sheltered and unsheltered homeless people who meet category 1 of HUD's homeless definition:
 - **Sheltered homeless:** Individuals and families "living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels *paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs*) for low-income individuals" on the night designated for the count.
 - **Unsheltered homeless:** Individuals and families "with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground"
- The following are examples of people **who do not meet the criteria to be counted:**
 - Those who have their own dwelling (houses, apartments, etc)
 - Those in section 8 or other subsidized permanent housing program
 - Those who are "couch surfing", meaning that they are staying with family or friends
 - Those who are staying in hotels *at their own expense*

If you are enumerating at an organization's community meals, you may encounter people in all of the above situations. Unsheltered people should be given the **Unsheltered Questionnaire**. Those staying in a shelter should be given the **sheltered questionnaire**.

After introducing yourself, you should begin with the question, "Do you have a place to sleep tonight?" to determine which questionnaire to administer. If the client says, "Yes," ask them where that is.

How to Do the Count

- Please read, and familiarize yourself with, the attached "Outreach Safety Tips". Though you are not conducting the PIT count in an unsheltered setting, the advice on how to treat clients, present yourself, dress, and be aware of surroundings is equally applicable.
- We suggest the following script to introduce the count:
"Hello! I'm [name] volunteering for the HUD homeless point-in-time count. It's a census of all people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January, which happens to be tonight. I would like to ask you a few questions and these questions are being asked to everyone in order get a sense of what people in our community are experiencing, how frequently, and how best to respond. Your responses will inform the development of future programs.

You can choose not to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. Your answers will be confidential and will not change any of the services that you were going to receive here. Do you have any questions?"

- Be yourself, be authentic.

Specific points of note relating to the survey

- Clients do not have to answer any question that they are not comfortable with, including identifying information. Leave blank any information that the client does not share.
- Be respectful – many of these questions are personal or sensitive in nature
- Emphasize that we are asking everyone the same questions, that they are confidential, and that they are optional. Emphasize that they do not impact whether a client receives a meal, shelter, or other services that they were going to receive.
- If clients refuse their age, ask if it is possible to get the age range that they belong to. Explain that it's for statistical purposes (different programs are for people of different age ranges). If they still decline, respect that.
- **Important information regarding the HIV question.** HUD requires that we inquire about HIV status. However, in New York State, there are additional regulations pertaining to HIV confidentiality. It is very important that one's HIV status, regardless of whether it is negative or positive, be unknown to others. It is not illegal to inquire about HIV status; however once that status is known, it must be treated as confidential information. *Do not ask this question if anyone may overhear it.* You may point to it, and allow them to point to an answer. If they decline, respect that. Due to this question, you may not allow the completed questionnaires to be visible to others and they should be secured in a locked cabinet until they are returned to HAWNY.
- In the unsheltered question, if you ask "So why aren't you living in a shelter?" see what they say and check the most appropriate box.
- **If a client appears disturbed by any questions, ask them if they are uncomfortable and if they want to stop.** We do these surveys to better serve clients in the future, but that should not be at the expense of their current well-being
- Several of the questions are sensitive, where a client may feel they are being accused of something. These include questions about substance use, mental health concerns, HIV, and sexual identity. Be sure to note that we are asking everyone these questions, that the client isn't being singled out, and we are doing this for future program development.
- When you are done, thank them for their time and ask if they have any questions.
- If clients suggest they need additional assistance, give them the tri-fold card with services

We will be reporting aggregate numbers to HUD, and using the specific contents to develop program. For instance, the violence questions are being asked as the Western New York Coalition for the Homeless is trying to develop a homeless outreach team with the police. LGBTQ questions are being used to determine the need for LGBTQ-specific programming. We're also trying to assess the prevalence of traumatic experiences to better shape programming in our area to be trauma-informed (instead of asking, "What's wrong with you?" asking "What happened to you?" and designing help accordingly). You don't need to tell clients this upfront, but it is information that you may share if they ask.