

Point-in-Time Count Training

10:00am - 11:30am
January 16, 2026



Before We Get Started



- Training will be posted to the NE CoC PIT page.
- Cameras are optional - no expectations.
- Mute your mic!
- Feel free to raise your hand or put questions in the chat throughout the presentation.
 - I may not see questions in the chat right away but will address them when I can.
- If you're experienced with the PIT, please jump in and share best practices and tips!

Opening & Introductions

Training Agenda:

About the PIT

- What is it?
- Who's involved?
- Why do we do it?
- Who do we count?
 - Unsheltered & Doubled Up
 - Sheltered
- Housing Inventory Count

PIT Count Process & Timeline

Survey Training

- Overview of the PIT Survey & Tips

PIT Tools & Resources

Q&A



About the Point-in-Time Count



What is the PIT Count?

Annual count of people who are experiencing homelessness during a designated one-night period.

Required by HUD (the US Department of Housing and Urban Development)

- Under the Coc Program Interim Rule: CoCs must plan and conduct, at least biennially, a PIT count of homeless persons within the geographic area (578.7)
- PIT Count must be carried out on one night in the last 10 calendar days in January.

Large-scale community-wide effort to identify folks experiencing homelessness that may not otherwise be counted, namely those that are unsheltered, or living on the street or in a place not meant for habitation (such as a car or abandoned building).

In the NE CoC (and some other MN CoCs), we also count those that are doubled up (which means they are “couch hopping” or temporarily staying with family or friends).

Who's Involved?

Institute for Community Alliances (ICA) - MN HMIS System Administrator

- Provides resources
- Develops tools to collect data
- Guides the statewide process
- Supports CoCs to ensure we have a smooth process.

NE MN CoC

- Coordinates the regional PIT process
- Provides tools, training, and guidance
- Oversees PIT data quality process
- Submits PIT and Housing Inventory Count (HIC) data
- Shares PIT and HIC report summaries for local and regional planning

Local PIT Leads

- Coordinate local planning
- Determine local PIT approach
- Ensure surveys and aggregate data are submitted
- Act as main point of contact for the local PIT



Who's Involved?



Homeless Program Staff

- Complete surveys with unsheltered or doubled up households, including:
 - Clients on the Coordinated Entry list (complete survey during weekly follow-up)
 - Households accessing assistance during PIT week
 - Other households experiencing homelessness in the community (as capacity allows)
- Enter client data in HMIS for Emergency Shelter and Transition projects that participate in HMIS
- Complete surveys or submit aggregate data for clients staying in Emergency Shelter and/or Transitional Housing projects that are not in HMIS (i.e. Domestic Violence projects).
- Participate in local PIT planning meetings
- Promote the PIT within the local community

Community Partners & Volunteers

- Identify areas where unsheltered individuals may be staying
- Encourage unsheltered or doubled up households to contact a local homeless program and complete surveys during PIT week
- Conduct surveys with unsheltered or doubled up households if interested and able, including:
 - At local events (like a community meal or resource event)
 - In locations where unsheltered or doubled up households may be (e.g. mental health drop-in centers)
- Provide basic items that might be helpful during PIT week (e.g., hats, gloves, hand warmers, snacks, water)



Why We Count

Funding

Eligibility to apply for and receive CoC homeless assistance funds from HUD

Used to demonstrate needs related to homelessness when applying for other federal or state funds.

Needs & Trends

Identifies trends of homelessness in the region

Identifies characteristics of those experiencing homelessness

Helps us plan for how to best use our resources to address homelessness AND bring in new resources

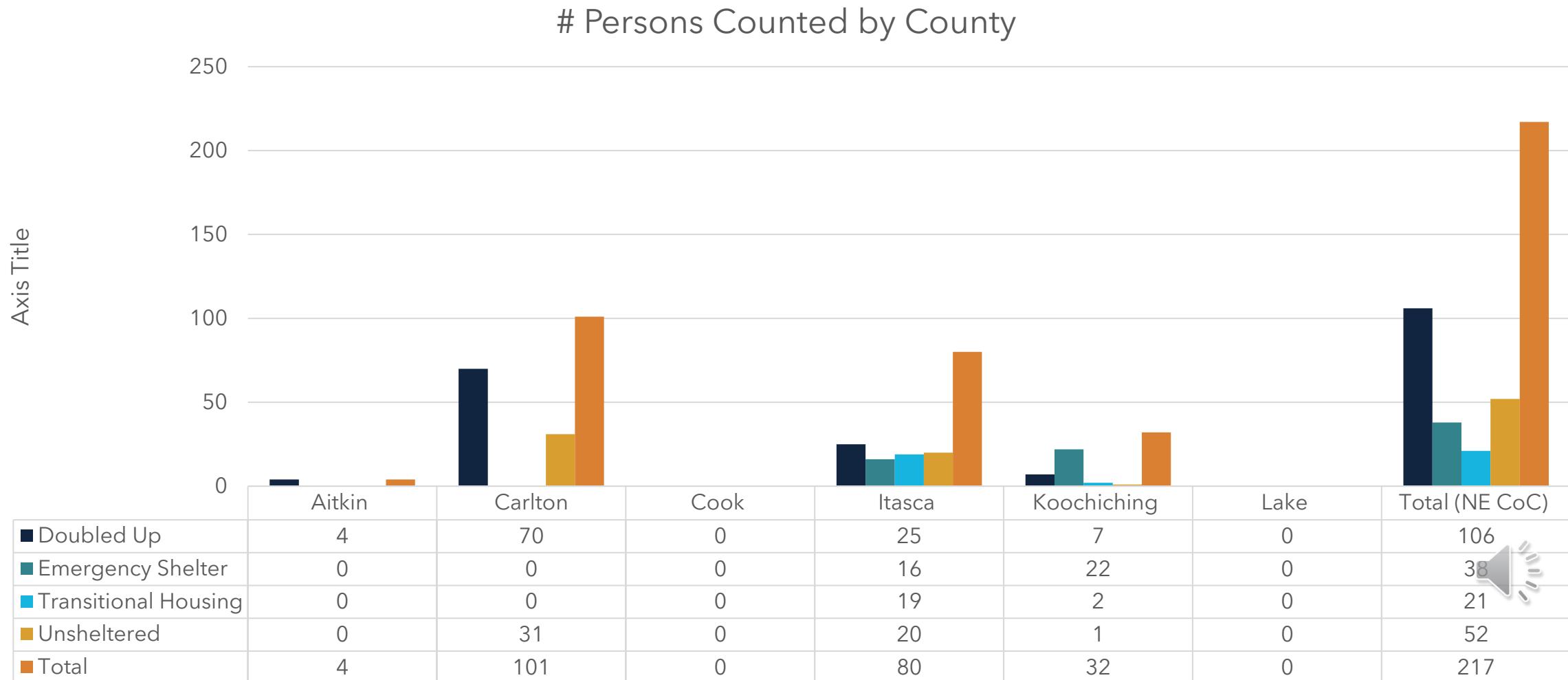
Awareness

Raise community awareness

Raise political awareness



Who Did We Count Last Year?



Who Gets Counted

WHO GETS COUNTED	WHO <u>DOES NOT</u> GET COUNTED
<p>Individuals & families staying in these locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency shelters, including hotel or motel units and campground spaces paid for with an emergency shelter voucher.• Transitional housing designated for people experiencing homelessness.• Unsheltered situations, including places not meant for human habitation• Doubled Up Situations, including those temporarily staying with family or friends due to economic hardship or housing loss.	<p>Individuals & families staying in these locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transitional housing that does not require someone to be homeless such as those designated for people exiting treatment.• Hotel/Motel paid for using own funds.• Tenant-based housing provided by the Housing Choice Voucher program or Project-based public housing.• Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Rehousing programs (if currently housed).• Medical facilities, such as hospitals, psychiatric facilities, and nursing homes, where persons are admitted for care.• Jails, prisons or juvenile detention facilities.• Foster care homes or foster care group homes.• Chemical dependency facilities, such as substance use treatment facilities and detox centers.



Unsheltered & Doubled Up Counts

- People who are **unsheltered** or **doubled up** are counted using the **PIT survey**.
- Surveys are offered to people experiencing homelessness that are living in doubled up situations and *places not meant for human habitation*, such as:
 - ❖ Outdoors
 - ❖ Abandoned buildings/houses
 - ❖ Car or other vehicle
 - ❖ Tent
 - ❖ RV or fish house without utilities
 - ❖ Trailer, barn, shed or garage
- Sometimes, volunteers may complete an **observation form** for someone who is unsheltered who they are unable to survey (i.e. person declines to participate or is sleeping, they cannot safely do the survey).
- *Observation forms are for unsheltered people only. More on that later!*



Sheltered PIT Count



HUD defines **sheltered homeless** persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied youth who are staying in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs designated for people experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence.

Sheltered count is a count of individuals in **Emergency Shelter** or **Transitional Housing** on the night of the PIT Count.

Includes data from agencies that participate in HMIS as well as data from non-HMIS projects (such as domestic violence projects).

HMIS projects enter client data in HMIS as usual (all HMIS ES & TH data is pulled into the PIT Count by ICA)

- Focus on making sure client information is entered for January 28, 2026 - even if you are backlogged with client data to enter. PIT night is a priority!
- Do all data entry by February 13th ❤️ (Ideally by February 6th).

Non-HMIS projects should complete paper surveys for clients staying in their program on PIT night.



- If you have a shelter or transitional housing program where people must be homeless or fleeing DV to stay there, email Cara (clundquist@live.com) for instructions.

Sheltered PIT Count: Helpful Reminders

Clearly indicate which project people are staying in on your survey - Be sure to identify the specific shelter or transitional housing project that an individual is staying in. If an individual completing the PIT survey reports staying in an emergency shelter (ES) or transitional housing (TH) program, please follow up to identify the specific shelter or housing program.

- If the household was staying in a hotel/motel that was paid for by a program, identify the name of the program on the survey. Provide a contact for the program who can respond to follow-up questions if needed.
- HUD requires us to report all ES and TH program beds when we submit the PIT and HIC (Housing Inventory Count). If we don't know the ES or TH program where the household stayed, we cannot include them in the count.

Group homes, adult foster care, LTH HS, and Board & Lodge settings are not considered transitional housing. These are permanent housing settings.

Providers should not submit Non-HMIS PIT data (complete surveys or enter aggregate data) for clients who are also entered in HMIS.

- Example: Your shelter has 5 beds that are entered in HMIS. You also provide hotel/motel vouchers that are not entered into HMIS because it's not required by your funder. You would complete surveys for your hotel vouchers and you would enter data for your shelter beds in HMIS *business as usual*.



Housing Inventory Count

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is an inventory of programs within a CoC that provide beds and units dedicated to serve people experiencing homelessness.

HIC inventory is for the same night as the PIT Count (January 28, 2026).

The HIC includes all housing projects (regardless of funding source) where:

- The primary intent of the project is to serve homeless persons
- The project verifies homeless status as part of its eligibility determination
- The actual project clients are predominantly homeless (or, for permanent housing, were homeless at entry)

All emergency shelter and transitional housing projects that are included on the HIC will also report numbers for the sheltered PIT Count.

- The number of sheltered people counted in the PIT must equal the total number of sheltered people (in ES & TH projects) on the HIC.

People included in the sheltered PIT Count must be staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing project that is eligible to be included in the HIC.



Notes for Rapid Rehousing Projects

Rapid rehousing projects provide permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.

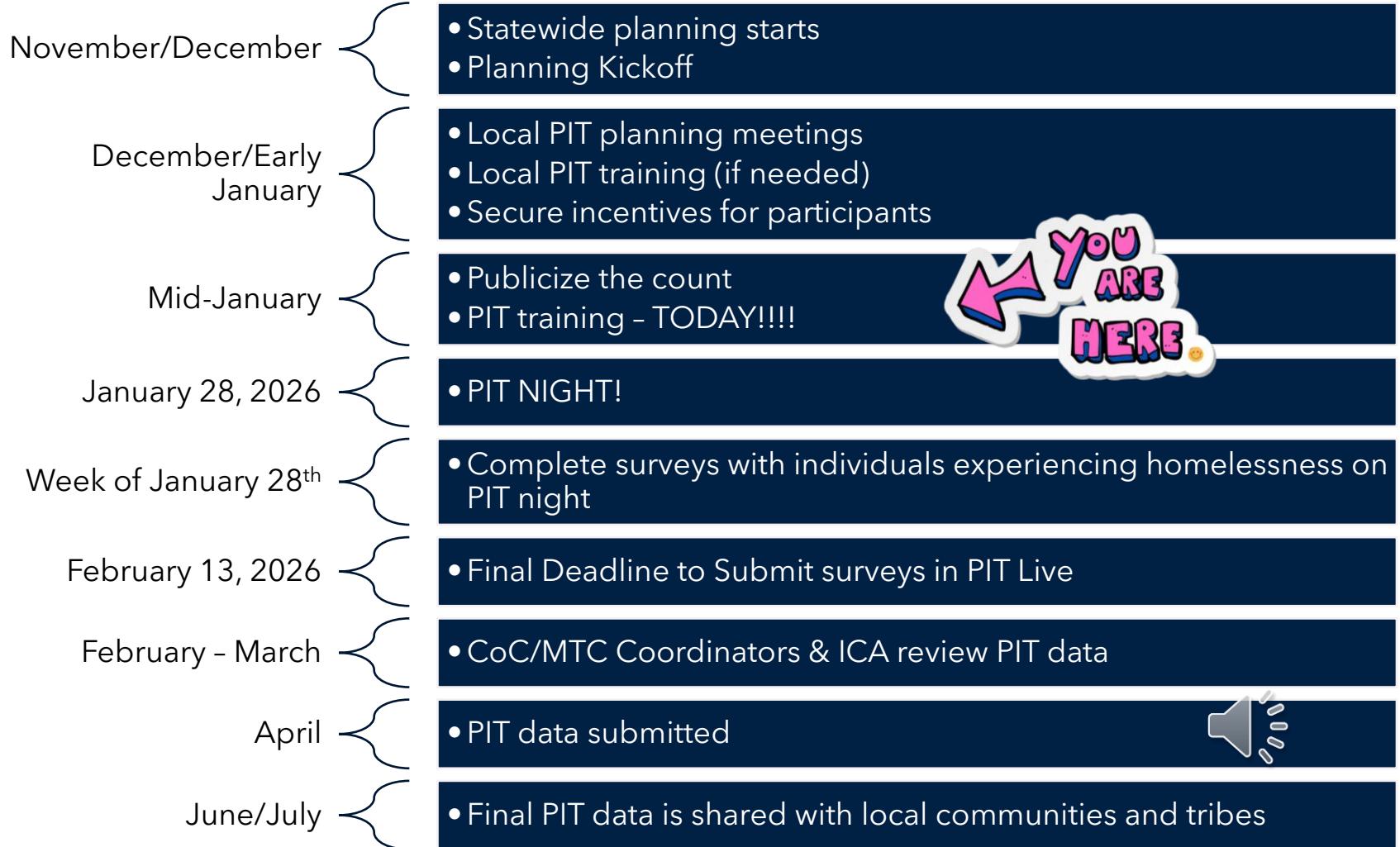
If a household is enrolled in your project and working with a case manager to locate housing, you can do a PIT survey with them based on where they were staying on January 28th.

If a household is housed in your project, they aren't counted in the PIT Count.

- BUT we do need their information to be updated in HMIS for the Housing Inventory Count.



PIT Process



Conducting the Survey



Point-in-Time Count Survey

- Approximately 18 questions
- Takes about 10 minutes to complete
- Volunteers complete the surveys with individuals
- Information collected includes:
 - First letter of first/last names (to help deduplicate surveys)
 - County/City/Tribe where they slept on PIT night
 - Living situation
 - Age
 - Race & Ethnicity
 - Housing History
 - Veteran Status
 - Domestic Violence Survivor Status
 - Health Information (i.e. does the individual have a chronic health condition or disability)
 - Household Information

2026 MN Point-in-Time Count – January 28, 2026

Institute for Community Action

SURVEYOR INFORMATION		
Surveyor name:	Email:	
Continuum of Care:	Survey Date:	Survey Time:
School district: [School-based surveys only]		
<p>[Surveyor Narrative] Hello, my name is [Name] and I am a volunteer for [Name of CoC/agency/county]. We are surveying people experiencing homelessness to help improve programs and services. This survey asks questions about you and others in your household. It asks about where you stay now and some of your life experiences. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will only be used anonymously.</p>		
Can I have about 10 minutes of your time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No [END THE SURVEY. Complete the observation form if able.]	
Did another volunteer already ask you where you are staying tonight/where you stayed last night?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes [END THE SURVEY] <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Where did you/will you sleep on Wednesday night (January 28th, 2026)?		
UNSHeltered:	SHELTERED: Include name of agency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned building/house without utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge/overpass/railroad <input type="checkbox"/> Bus/light rail/train <input type="checkbox"/> Doorway/skyway <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private property (storage, barn, fish house) <input type="checkbox"/> Street or sidewalk <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle (car, truck, van, camper) <input type="checkbox"/> Woods/caves/open space <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant/laundromat <input type="checkbox"/> Up all night walking <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Unsheltered)	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter - _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Motel/hotel with voucher - _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing - _____	
<p>[If you are certain the program named is already recorded in HMIS, you may end the survey. If you're not sure or you know it is not, then continue]</p>		
Doubled-Up:	Other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Couch-hopping/Temporarily staying with family or friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital, jail, or treatment program [IF SELECTED, END SURVEY]	
In which county did you stay on Wednesday night (January 28 th , 2026)?		
In which city did you stay on Wednesday night (January 28 th , 2026)?		
If applicable, on which reservation did you stay on Wednesday night (January 28 th , 2026)?		
Demographics		
What is the first initial of your first name? And last name?	First: _____ Last: _____	How old are you?
<p>[If age 24 or younger, then ask:] Are you the parent or legal guardian of a child in your household who was with you on Wednesday night?</p>		
<p>[If 18+] Did you serve in the United States Armed Forces, which includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard?</p>		
<p>If yes, have you joined the Homeless Veterans Registry?</p>		

Required Surveyor Questions

Complete the top questions for **EVERY SURVEY** you conduct. This routes responses to the correct region and ensures they are not counted more than once.

You will find this box in the top of each survey. This is the **FIRST THING** to complete. You can complete the first part of the box in advance of PIT night:

SURVEYOR INFORMATION						
1	Surveyor name:	2	Email:			
3	Continuum of Care:	4	Survey Date:	5	Survey Time:	
6	School district: [School-based surveys only]					

1. Name of person conducting survey
2. Email address of person conducting survey
3. If you are unsure what Continuum of Care (CoC) you are in, ask your CoC Coordinator, PIT Lead, or trainer.
4. Survey Date: The date you are actually filling out this survey (may not be the same as the actual PIT night date)
5. Survey Time: The time you are starting the survey (suggested formatting: 0345pm)
6. ONLY applies to school liaisons.



WHAT TO SAY & WHAT TO READ

- Here are examples of the survey's layout. We use plain text, bolded text, and shading to indicate what surveyors should say aloud, what are instructions for the surveyor, and what are response options.
- Questions and text written like this should be asked aloud:

Can I have about 10 minutes of your time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No [END THE SURVEY. Complete the observation form if able.]
Did another volunteer already ask you where you are staying tonight/where you stayed last night?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes [END THE SURVEY] <input type="checkbox"/> No

[bolded, bracketed language like this is guidance directed at the surveyor and should not be read aloud]:

[If age 24 or younger, then ask:] Are you the parent or legal guardian of a child in your household who was with you on Wednesday night?

[If 18+] Did you serve in the United States Armed Forces, which includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard?

Gray shaded boxes contain responses to be completed:

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No [END THE SURVEY. Complete the observation form if able.]
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes [END THE SURVEY] <input type="checkbox"/> No



Survey Tips



- Remember that you are speaking to *highly vulnerable* people and asking some very sensitive questions. **Always lead with respect for the person you're speaking with and respect for their dignity.**
- Everyone has the **right to refuse** to answer any or all of your questions.
- **Ask all questions**, unless the person has already given the answer to the question over the course of your conversation.
- **Always ask questions as they are written**; do not ask questions in a way that shows you think you already know the answer.



How to conduct the interview

1

Step 1: Approach & Introduction

- Approach the person and introduce yourself
- Explain why you are there
- Ask if the person has about 10 minutes to answer some questions
- Keep in mind:
 - Individuals sleeping outside may be dealing with active addiction, mental health concerns, and significant trauma histories. Do not sneak up on or startle people. Never shine flashlights in people's faces.
 - Maintain eye contact (if possible) and an open stance with your hands visible. Use a tone of voice that's approachable. Speak slowly, be polite, and don't shout.



Hello, my name is [Name], and I'm a volunteer with [agency or county]. We're talking with people today to learn more about who's experiencing unstable housing in our community and where people are staying.



The survey asks some basic questions about you and your living situation. Participating is completely voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. Can I have about 10 minutes of your time?

HOW TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Step 3: Conduct the interview using the survey form

- Go through each question in the survey form.
 - Remember: people have the right not to answer all questions!
- Add any notes that may be helpful
 - Example: If a person says that they have their own apartment, but they're sitting on a bench outside of a 24-hour gas station at 2:00 am with what appear to be all of their belongings, write down that you think there may be a discrepancy in what they are saying vs. where they will sleep that night. Use your best judgment to determine if you will include this survey in the PIT Count.



ADVICE FOR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Where did you/will you sleep on Wednesday night (January 28th, 2026)?

If respondent stayed multiple places, record the location where respondent spent most of the night. In some cases, it may be unclear whether the respondent is homeless or "couch-hopping" (staying at the house of a friend or family member). If the respondent answers this question ambiguously, i.e. "I'm staying with my friend", follow up to determine if the friend is also homeless or if both are staying at the friend's permanent residence.

How many adults/young adults/children are in your household and staying with you tonight?

Allow respondents to identify who they consider their family/household. A family/household is defined as people who live together now or most of the time. This is a total count of all individuals staying together.

If family/household includes only young adults or children, ask:

How many are the parent or legal guardian of a child in the household? As stated, this question only applies to households in which NO ADULT AGED 25 OR OLDER is present.  These youth-only households are the only ones that should answer this question.

ADVICE FOR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- **Housing History:**
 - These questions refer to the time the respondent has been homeless - like in a shelter or staying outside.
 - Here, and everywhere else in the survey, "homeless" means living in a shelter, on the streets, or any place not meant for human habitation - such as a house with no utilities, an abandoned building, etc.
 - This is used to determine chronic homelessness, which has a specific definition.
- **Sensitive Questions (trauma experience and health history):**
 - Read the script given and allow respondent to choose if they would like to read the questions/answers silently.
 - Do not assume respondent is/is not able to read the survey.
 - When reading aloud each option, give respondent a moment to respond to each.



HOW TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Step 4: Closing the interview

- Several questions direct surveyors to END SURVEY upon receiving a specific response.
 - Whenever you see this direction, skip to the end of the main survey, and read the script.
- Thank the person for their time.
- Refer them to any services or resources they may have asked about or may need. Offer everyone a resource sheet / contact card.
- Provide any food, basic needs, or hygiene items that you have on hand.
- **Note:** If the survey ends before you complete all questions, you **can** still submit a partial survey.
 - Do not complete an observation form instead.



HOW TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Step 5: Recording what you heard and observed

- Walk away from the person interviewed to a safe place
- Take a few minutes after your conversation to double check that you've completed the whole survey form
- Include any additional notes or details
 - Make sure if the person stayed in a hotel/motel that you include a note about which program paid for the voucher.
 - Make sure everything you have written is readable



Completing the Observation Form

- Collects information about **unsheltered** individuals.
- Complete this if:
 - You are unable to obtain consent to do a full survey.
 - You are unable to enter a site or safely access the individual.
 - You do not wish to disturb someone sleeping outside, in a car or abandoned building.
- Include as much detail as possible that helps to make the person identifiable and to provide clues on their housing status.
- Notes on household makeup: Only collect demographic information if you know the person and can conclusively answer those questions. If you do not know the person, do not make any guesses as to their race/ethnicity.
- There is space to record approximate age, if you do not know the person(s). You may not know a specific age, but you could indicate if you're certain they are a minor (under 18) or an adult.



2026 Point-in-Time Count Unsheltered Observation Tool

Use the form below if you are unable to collect identifying information, cannot enter a site, or do not wish to disturb someone sleeping outside, in a car or abandoned building.
DO NOT COMPLETE THIS IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE PIT SURVEY

IMPORTANT - Exclude people:

- In uniforms (i.e., security guards, police officers, building maintenance workers)
- Engaged in illegal activities (i.e., drug dealing or sex work)
- Conducting commercial transactions (i.e., delivery workers)
- Who are obviously not homeless (i.e., bar patrons)

SURVEYOR INFORMATION		
Surveyor name:	Email:	
Continuum of Care:	Survey Date:	Survey Time:
County:	City:	
OBSERVATION		
Number of people observed in household:		
Age of each person (approximate or "minor/adult" if fine):		
<p>Is this person/family homeless?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Definitely <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>		
<p>Type of location:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned building <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge/overpass/railroad <input type="checkbox"/> Bus/light rail/train <input type="checkbox"/> Doorway/skyway <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private property (storage, barn, fish house) <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant/laundromat <input type="checkbox"/> Street or sidewalk <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle (car, van, camper) <input type="checkbox"/> Woods/cave/open space <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>		
<p>If possible, please include: clothing and other physical characteristics like tattoos, scars, braces, casts, etc. This is used to de-duplicate responses.</p>		
<p>Do you know any demographic information about this person/family??</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No – I have never met this person/family. [STOP SURVEY, DO NOT FILL OUT ANY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes – I know this person/family. [CONTINUE TO DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION – NEXT PAGE.]</p>		

Submitting Surveys



Surveys should be submitted by **February 13, 2026**



You can enter surveys directly in the **PIT Live tool** or send them to Cara.

Follow any instructions from local PIT Leads about where to send surveys.



If you email your surveys or enter them in PIT Live, please keep the paper version on file until at least May 1, 2026. There may be follow-up questions during the data quality process.



PIT Live

- An Online Form used for data collection for the 2026 Point-in-Time Count in Minnesota.
- [PIT LIVE Tool](#)
- Before entering data, please read the Surveyor Instruction Guide.
- To successfully complete this survey, we recommend using the companion paper version and noting household ID if interviewing families/households

2026 PIT Live

Surveyor: This page asks for survey details. The information gathered here is used to ensure household members are counted together and that the survey displays the correct questions. You do not need to ask the client/household anything for this page.

Surveyor's Name *

Surveyor's Email *

Continuum of Care *

+ Add

Survey Date *

Select the date on which you interviewed this client/household for the PIT count. This may be on or after the PIT date.

 MM/DD/YYYY

Survey Time *

Include both hour and minute of the time you started PIT count interview/survey. This will be used to group household members together.

Recommended format: 0854pm

School District

If survey is being completed in a school setting, select the school district submitting the survey.

+ Add

Survey Type *

Interview (spoke to client/household)

Observation (unable to speak to client/household)



Next →

Other Helpful Information

Preparing for a successful PIT Count.



Your Safety

- **You should ALWAYS be with at least one other person.**
- Keep an appropriate conversational **distance** from those you are interviewing.
- **Maintain awareness** of the space around you - where other people are, ways to get in or out of the space you're in, etc.
- **Remain standing.** It's okay to squat down to speak with someone who is sitting or lying on the ground, but always maintain your balance.
- If going out in the community, **stay in places that are lit**, including alleyways. If you use a flashlight, do so respectfully (i.e., don't shine it in anyone's face).
- **Prioritize your own safety.** If you don't feel safe approaching someone or going somewhere, don't go.
- **Do not transport anyone** other than volunteers in your personal vehicle. **Follow agency policies.**
- Keep information on hand about who to **contact in your area in case of an emergency.**



Safety of Those you Interview

- Health & safety concerns (especially if it's cold outside)
 - Notice if:
 - They have layers under and on them to keep them warm enough
 - They're dry (hypothermia concerns)
 - You can see the rise and fall of their breathing
 - Be prepared to share information about available shelter and mental health resources
- ALWAYS call 9-1-1- if you are or someone else is at risk of danger



Tribal PIT Guidance

- HUD PIT Guidelines state that CoCs must receive permission from Tribal Council to count on Tribal land (Tribal data sovereignty)
- The NE CoC cannot count anyone on Tribal lands. We do not have permission from Tribes in our region for the 2026 PIT Count.
- Volunteers can complete surveys with Tribal members if they come to a survey location off reservation.
- The MN Tribal Collaborative is doing their own PIT Count in 2026. Their survey results will not be shared with the CoC.



Practice! Practice! Practice!



Take time between now and the PIT Count to practice completing the survey.



Ask a coworker, family member, or friend to conduct the survey with you and ask for feedback.



Write notes/helpful tips for yourself to help prepare for completing the surveys in person.



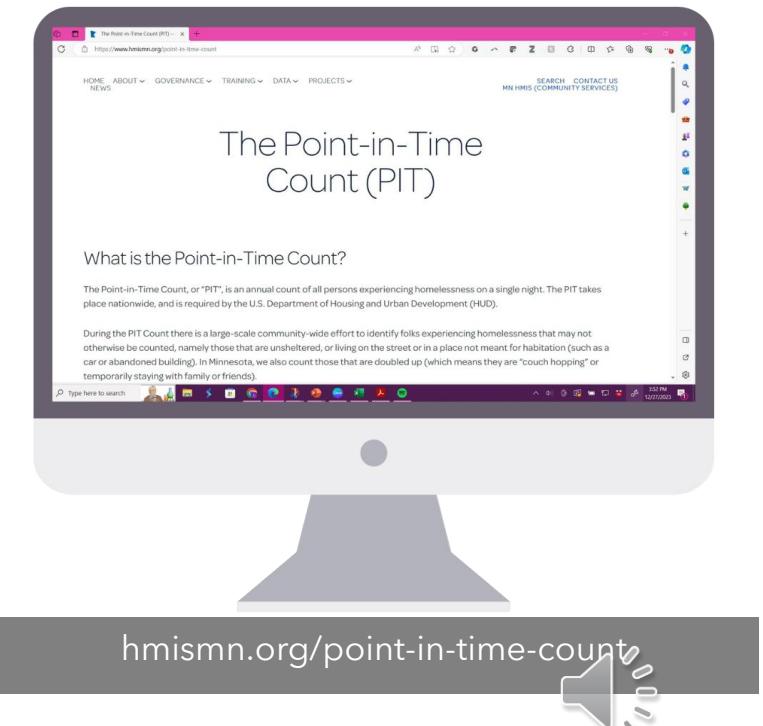
Reach out to your PIT Lead or another experienced PIT surveyor for advice.



PIT Tools & Resources

ICA has these great tools on their PIT webpage!

- PIT Survey & Observation Form
- Surveyor Guide & One Page Survey Guide
- PIT LIVE Data Entry (for anyone entering surveys in PIT Live)
- Project-Level Reporting Materials (for non-HMIS ES/TH projects to submit client information)



**Questions?
Tips to Share?**





REACH OUT!

Cara Oakland
NE CoC Co-Coordinator



clundquist@live.com



218-525-4957

