About the Point-In-Time Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in the last 10 days in January. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires its Continuum of Care (CoC) grantees[1] to conduct an annual count of sheltered homeless persons. CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years).[2] Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally by service providers and trained volunteers. While many CoCs complete their count of unsheltered persons on the night designated for the count, given the additional challenges associated with counting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, some CoCs conduct their unsheltered count over the seven days following the night of the count.[3] This "post-night" approach may be particularly useful for counting unsheltered families and youth with young children.

The Importance of the 2017 PIT Count of Homeless Families with Young Children

In its *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) established the goal of preventing and ending family homelessness in 2020. As part of its family and youth focused work, USICH's Interagency Working Group to End Youth Homelessness is looking at the best way to use multiple data sources, including HUD's PIT count data and data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) Program, to better understand family homelessness and the resources needed to end it. The Working Group agreed to establish the January 2017 count as the baseline PIT count year for helping to measure progress in preventing and ending youth homelessness. The Working Group is working to develop family homelessness baseline counts. It will be critical that communities conduct a comprehensive and effective count of youth (including pregnant and parenting youth) and families experiencing homelessness.

Early Childhood – CoC PIT Count Collaboration

In its *Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide*, HUD encourages CoCs to involve a variety of community partners to help plan and execute the count; local homeless education liaisons (local liaisons) are named specifically as important partners given their experience in reaching and serving children and youth experiencing homelessness. Early childhood providers, especially Head Start programs who are serving young children and families experiencing homelessness can support the CoC PIT count efforts, thereby ensuring that families with young children are more likely to be included in this important count.

- **Planning:** ECE involvement in PIT count planning can provide valuable insights into and help with
    - selecting child/family-friendly count sites and creating a welcoming environment there,
    - selecting child/family-friendly incentives[4] for count participation,
    - recruiting volunteers, and
    - suggesting other local service providers to assist with the count.

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[1] Continuums of Care are local or regional planning bodies that coordinate housing and services for homeless individuals, families, and youth. Visit https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/ for more information.

[2] While only required by HUD during odd years, many CoCs conduct an unsheltered count every year.

[3] CoCs using this approach must ensure that the persons counted are limited to people who were unsheltered on the night chosen for the PIT count and that the CoCs can properly deduplicate their data.

[4] Many CoCs provide incentives to homeless people who participate in the PIT count. Incentives may include transit passes, meal gift cards, toiletries, backpacks, blankets, and items of clothing.

Early childhood providers and family support staff may wish to volunteer to administer PIT count surveys during non-work hours.

Getting Started

The first step in PIT count collaboration is to connect with your housing or education partner. To locate the CoC in your area, visit https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/. To locate the local liaison(s) in your area, visit your State homeless education webpage. Contact should be made early to ensure sufficient time for effective planning and implementation.

Beyond the PIT Count

The PIT count is one of a few key sources of data on homeless families with young children. Other sources include Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50 State Profile, America's Youngest Outcasts, EHCY Program data, LEA level homeless student enrollment data, Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) data, and American Community Survey (ACS) data. Each data source provides unique insights into youth and family homelessness; as such, the most accurate and complete picture of homelessness can only be developed when considering all of these sources. CoCs, early childhood programs and schools are encouraged to work together.

On October 31, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Education (ED) issued a joint **Policy Statement on Meeting the Needs of Families with Young Children Experiencing and At Risk of Homelessness**. In the policy statement, we provide research and recommendations on ways in which early childhood and housing providers at the local and, in some cases, State levels can intentionally collaborate to provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments for pregnant women and families with young children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. See the Policy Statement for examples of collaborations around the country and recommended strategies and activities.

For More Information

Find your CoC in your community: *https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/*

Contacts for CoCs, local school liaisons, and RHY providers in one place: **https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5176/crosswalk-of-key-federally-funded-child-and-youth-homeless-contacts/**

For resources on Expanding Early Care and Education for Homeless Children: ***http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/interagency-projects/ece-services-for-homeless-children***

For more information on planning an effective PIT count,
- download HUD's *Point-in-Time Count Planning Worksheet*.
- download *HUD Point-in-Time Count Collaboration in North Carolina*.