

# Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) of Stark County

## Homeless Services Collaborative

### 2020 Annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count

#### Methodology

#### Summary

**Background:** Local agencies and organizations conduct a count to determine the extent of homelessness in our community. This information is used to submit the Continuum of Care grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Stark County receives approximately three million dollars each year from the Continuum of Care Grant Program to serve people who are homeless.

#### Unsheltered Count

**Approach:** To get the best count, Stark County will conduct a Housing Survey. The Housing Survey will include all HUD required PIT data points. The survey will be in paper format and electronic format.

#### Everyone will be asked where they stayed on January 28, 2020.

#### Strategies:

- **Service-Based Count:** Local agencies who serve the homeless will conduct the Housing Survey at their worksites for up to seven (7) days following the Night of the Count, from Wednesday, January 29, 2020 through Tuesday, February 4, 2020. Volunteers will also be assigned to assist at some sites such as libraries, hot meal sites, food pantries and bus stations during this same time frame to survey individuals/families who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Street Count:** Teams of volunteers, led by ICAN Housing's PATH outreach staff and other experienced PIT volunteers will go out onto the streets on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 from 5:00 am – 7:00 am to cover known locations (where homeless people are known to congregate or sleep overnight). The Volunteer Teams will count and survey homeless people on the street. Known locations in Stark County are typically found in the cities of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance, which are jurisdictions referenced in local Consolidated Plans. At least four teams will also address areas of the county, outside of these cities which will include, at a minimum, Canal Fulton, East Canton and Lake / Hartville areas. Information regarding known locations was shared by the Homeless Navigation (Hotline) Coordinated Entry System, local homeless providers, and local street outreach staff. Police Departments, City/Village/Township Offices, zoning inspectors, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), in both the cities and other, more rural, areas of the county are also being contacted to determine level of needed outreach

in all areas of the county. Persons experiencing homelessness will be offered assistance with connecting to needed service providers and will be provided with “Blessing Bags” (donated by StarkMHAR, OhioCAN and Lifecare) with items such as hygiene products, blankets, hats, gloves, water, granola bars, etc.

- **Youth Count:** The Youth Count will incorporate a Street Count approach for 2020. After seeking input from youth during various focus groups held across the County during the last quarter of 2019, and upon review of results from the Youth Count over the past three years, it was determined that the strategy had to be changed from a “come to us” approach to a “we’ll come to you” approach. Locations in Canton, Massillon and Alliance have been identified as sites where youth (under 25 year olds, including unaccompanied minors) may frequent and include places such as parks, intersections and near schools. These locations will be where small teams of volunteers will go out during the three days following the Night of the Count. Teams will go out on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 from 2 – 4pm and also on Thursday, January 30 and Friday, January 31 from 5- 7am and 2 – 4pm. Incentives, such as refreshments and Blessing Bags, will be given to youth as surveys are completed.

**Survey:** Questions on the survey determine if the individual is homeless (including chronically homeless) or at risk of becoming homeless; ask for identifiers to prevent duplicate counts; and request information to indicate veteran status, family composition, and disabling conditions. There will also be an electronic survey available for volunteers to complete with those being surveyed. Individuals can also fill out the survey by contacting the Homeless Navigation (Hotline) at 330-452-4363.

**Volunteer Training:** Volunteer training will again be mandatory for the 2020 PIT count. Four live trainings will be offered during the month of January 2020 of which one will be held in Massillon and one in Alliance. Volunteers will select one training to attend. Training will be offered at a variety of settings and at various times to provide more options to volunteers. An on-line training will also be offered as an alternative to the live training. Training will equip volunteers with knowledge, experience and confidence regarding conducting the Housing Surveys, how to approach people and safety measures (particularly for the Street Count). A quiz must be completed to certify training has been completed and a Volunteer Agreement must be signed to ensure volunteers are aware of confidentiality expectations and to eliminate any claims of liability in the event of an emergency situation.

### **Sheltered Count**

**Approach:** Stark County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will provide data for the sheltered count. Additionally, social service, faith-based and other organizations within Stark County will be contacted to obtain information about any individuals or families housed by these entities in local hotels or motels on January 28, 2020. Finally, efforts will further include a one-night additional overflow shelter for the night of the count at Refuge of Hope for any men or women in need of shelter.

### **De-Duplication Techniques:**

HMIS software is programmed to eliminate duplication by comparison of multiple data points (first name, middle initial, last name, social security number, project entry date, date of birth,

etc.), HMIS staff also conduct manual checks of result sets to ensure accuracy. Information obtained from organizations not participating in HMIS is examined using the same criteria, ensuring that each individual only appears once in the final PIT count.

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The methodology was developed with input from the Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) of Stark County PIT Count Main Committee, PIT Street Count and Youth Count Subcommittees, the Homeless Services Collaborative and via outreach to law enforcement and youth focus groups and in compliance with:

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** Notice CPD-17-08: 2018 HIC and PIT Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs
- **HUD's PIT Count Methodology Guide 2014 (latest version).**