

Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) of Stark County

Homeless Services Collaborative

2025 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 \$3.7 million dollars each year from the Continuum of Care Grant Program to serve people who are experiencing homelessness.

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 and electronic format.

Everyone will be asked where they stayed on January 26, 2025.

Strategies:

- **Service-Based Count:** Local agencies who serve people experiencing homelessness will conduct the Housing Survey at their worksites for up to seven (7) days following the Night of the Count, from Monday, January 27, 2025, through Sunday, February 2, 2025. Trained 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 Monday, January 27, 2025, from 5:00 am – 7:00 am to cover known locations (where people experiencing homelessness are known to congregate or sleep overnight). The Volunteer Teams will count and survey people experiencing homelessness 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 one team 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. Persons experiencing homelessness will be offered assistance with connecting to needed service providers and will be provided with "Blessing Bags" containing items such as hygiene products, hats, gloves, water, granola bars, fruit cups, Band-Aids, ChapSticks, etc. (donated by Stark Mental Health and Addiction Recovery {Stark County's Behavioral Health Board}, HCCSC, Faith Family Church, New Vision United Church, Family Empowerment Ministries and St. Thomas Aquinas High School & Middle School).

- **Youth Count:** Previous strategies attempted during the PIT Count to locate youth have provided limited results. Therefore, the Youth Count will incorporate a new approach for 2025 based on feedback from prior years' counts and the 2024 PIT youth focus groups. The PIT Committee is working with Goodwill Industries of Greater Cleveland and East Central Ohio which runs monthly transitional age youth group sessions with youth that were part of last year's focus groups. Youth who attend this group will be encouraged to participate as volunteers for the 2025 Count and will focus on engaging with any transitional age youth identified during the count. The 2025 PIT Count will also build upon previous efforts to partner with local schools to conduct the youth count. Homeless youth have often established trusting relationships with school staff who work with them daily and those are the people they are most likely to be honest with concerning their housing situation. The Stark County Vulnerable Student Population Coordinator is working with the local school districts (17 in Stark) and their care teams and/or homeless liaisons to identify any unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness prior to the count. Those staff will be trained in how to complete PIT surveys and during the week of the count will complete a survey with those youth experiencing homelessness. This strategy is gaining more buy-in from local school districts than previous methods attempted. This more targeted approach will also be more efficient and effective.

Survey: Questions on the survey determine if the individual is experiencing homelessness (including chronic homelessness) or is 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, and homeless navigation specialists will reach out to all households prioritized for housing to determine their location on the night of the count.

Volunteer Training: Volunteer training will again be mandatory for the 2025 PIT count. Virtual and in-person training will be offered during the month of January 2025. Volunteers will select one training session to attend. Training sessions will be offered at various dates/times to provide more options for volunteers. 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 Volunteer Agreement must be completed to ensure volunteers are aware of confidentiality expectations and to eliminate any claims of liability in the event of any 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 26, 2025

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.

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

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

[Notice CPD-23-11: HIC and PIT Count Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs - HUD Exchange](#)

HUD's PIT Count Methodology Guide

[Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count - HUD Exchange](#)