GUIDE TO POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS IN CANADA

of the

Homelessness Partnering Strategy

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PDF
Cat. No.: Em12-9/2015E-PDF
ISBN: 978-0-660-03147-7

ESDC
Cat. No. : SSD-150-07-15E

About this Guide

This guide was developed by the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada. It is intended to provide guidelines to communities who wish to align with Homelessness Partnering Strategy Coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) count. It includes the standards for participation, the Core Screening and Survey questions that will be common across communities, as well as guidelines for implementing a PiT Count.

The guidelines in this document were developed through a review of PiT Count practices used across Canada and internationally, and with input from communities, including the HPS PiT Count Working Group. It builds on the existing work on PiT counts by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) as well as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the United States.

The Guide is divided into five sections:

The Annexes include example Survey Templates, including a tally sheets and survey forms (Annex A), as well as guidance on using the PiT Count Module for shelter data (Annex B).

Acknowledgements

In addition, ESDC would like to thank William Snow, Marcy Thompson and their colleagues at HUD for sharing their experiences coordinating PiT Counts and representatives from Continuums of Care in Arlington County, VA; New York City, NY; Hennepin County, MN; Anchorage, AK; Quincy, MA; and from the Balance of State for Georgia in the United States who spoke to us about their experience implementing PiT Counts.

HPS Guide to Point-in-Time Counts

Table of Contents

1: Overview of the HPS PiT Count Approach

Communities of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) are invited to participate in the first Point-in-Time (PiT) homeless count coordinated in the first 60 days of 2016. This guide explains the HPS PiT Count approach, including information on the methodology, the survey, and guidelines for communities to participate in the count. Participating communities should review this guide and resources available at the website for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Why do a coordinated PiT Count in Canada?

Several communities in Canada have been conducting periodic PiT Counts for more than a decade. These communities have taken different approaches to conducting their counts. Differences include the time of year the count is conducted, the time of day the count happens, the people that are included as "homeless", and the questions that are asked in the survey. There are also a lot of similarities across counts. For example, all counts include people sleeping in shelters and on the streets. All counts ask for basic demographic information (albeit using different wording in their questions).

If communities across Canada were to use similar methods and similar questions in a PiT count that is conducted around the same time of year, a national picture of homelessness could emerge. The best estimates of homelessness in Canada currently rely on the results of the National Shelter Study (Segaert, 2012), which was based on emergency shelter use statistics from communities in most provinces and territories. One limitation of this method is that it does not include homelessness outside of the shelter system over the course of the year. In the 2013 State of Homelessness in Canada Report, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness sought to address this using the results from eight PiT counts to estimate the size of the unsheltered population.

Coordination is possible. Metro Vancouver has been coordinating PiT counts across its 21 municipalities every 3 years. Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness piloted a coordinated PiT Count in 2014. Notably, many of these communities adjusted their methods or timeframes in order to align. Having a greater number of communities conducting the count in the same way at the same time would contribute to a broader picture of homelessness across Canada. This can be a benchmark against which progress in reducing homelessness can be measured. With the increased implementation of Housing First programs and of community plans to reduce or end homelessness, there is a need to create a national picture. It is for this reason that HPS communities have been invited to participate in a first count coordinated across Canada in 2016.

What is the purpose of a PiT Count?

A PiT Count of homelessness has two primary purposes:

1. **A count of people experiencing absolute homelessness**: It is intended to identify how many people in a community experience homelessness in shelters and on the streets at a given time. Conducted over several years, PiT Counts can be used by the community to track progress in reducing homelessness.

2. **A survey of the homeless population**: Through an accompanying survey, the Count gives the community information on the demographics and service needs of their homeless population. This information can be used to target community resources to where they are most needed.

A PiT Count is *not* intended to:

1. Be a measure of everyone who experiences homelessness in a community over time. By focusing on a single day, the count will not include some people who cycle in and out of homelessness. What it will do, is provide an estimate of how many of these people are homeless at a given time.

2. Be a count of hidden homelessness (e.g., people who are "couch-surfing"). The focus of the count is instead on those who are absolutely homeless (e.g., sleeping in shelters or on the street) on the day of the count. Some communities nevertheless conduct the survey with the hidden homeless population in order to provide some information on their service needs.

What is the HPS PiT Count Approach?

The Core Count defines what is common across all individual community PiT counts. It includes the core populations to be included in the count and the core questions to be included in each community's survey.

Core Population
The Core HPS PiT Count approach includes people who are experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

Unsheltered homelessness includes people who are sleeping in places unfit for human habitation, including the following locations: streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.

Sheltered homelessness includes people sleeping in the following locations: emergency shelters (general and specific to men, women, youth, etc.), extreme weather shelters, Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, and transitional housing. It may include people who receive hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds. It does not include people in Housing First programs or in social or subsidized housing.

Core Screening and Survey Questions
The core Unsheltered and Sheltered question sets are included in Appendix A. The Core Questions of the survey include the screening questions that determine whether the respondent is included in the homeless count, and standard survey questions. Screening questions are intended to correctly identify people as homeless. They need to be open enough that they include people who are experiencing absolute homelessness during the count, but restrictive enough to exclude people who are not truly experiencing homelessness (e.g., visitors to the city). Survey questions are intended to provide more information about the population and their needs (e.g., age, gender, Aboriginal status, Veteran status, service needs, etc.). In addition to the Core Questions, you may wish to add questions that are relevant to your local information needs. Please see Section 4 for more information on the surveys.

Standards for Participation in the Coordinated Count

Recognizing the need to balance methodological rigour and community flexibility, the HPS PiT Count Approach includes Core Standards for the methodology that will be consistent across communities, while allowing flexibility for the approach to be tailored to each community's local context. The approach also includes recommended standards, based on effective practices used by communities in Canada. Communities are encouraged to adopt these standards.

Core Standards

Core Standard 1: The Coordinated Count is to be conducted within the first sixty days of the year.

Core Standard 2: The methodology and survey used by the community includes the Core Screening and Survey Questions, and the Core populations described in this guide.

Core Standard 3: The local implementation of the PiT Count is based on consultations with the local HPS Community Advisory Board and Aboriginal Community Advisory Board, where applicable. The final methodology is approved by the community's HPS Community Entity and Aboriginal Community Entity, where applicable.

Core Standard 4: The results of the Core Count are reported to the HPS via the software provided. This information will contribute to the understanding of homelessness across Canada, and will not be used to report on findings from individual communities.

Core Standard 5: Sheltered Counts are based on the number of individuals staying in emergency shelters, extreme weather shelters, Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, and transitional housing on one night of the year (which may span two calendar days). Where applicable, it may also include families or individuals who received hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds.

Core Standard 6: Sheltered Counts (i.e., the number of people sleeping in each shelter) are based on data collected by shelter data systems, where available, such as the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). Sheltered Survey responses may be informed by data systems, reviewed with the client to ensure that the information is accurate and current. Large communities may use a sampling approach for the Shelter Survey (e.g., a representative sample of the shelters or shelter residents) provided that they explain their sampling strategy.

Core Standard 7: Unsheltered Counts are based on a street survey conducted within a 24-hour period. This survey can cover the entire community, a sampling of neighbourhoods, or it can use a mixed approach (see Section 4 in this guide). The survey can include streets, alleys, parks and other public locations, transit stations, abandoned buildings, vehicles, ravines, and other outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness are known to sleep.

Core Standard 8: The Community Entity (CE) is responsible for the quality of data collected. Efforts should be made to ensure that each person is counted only once (i.e., to limit double-counting) through the survey itself and through de-duplication of the data (see Section 5). The CE is also responsible for ensuring that staff and volunteers receive the proper training, including the count standards, survey procedures, data management and privacy, and personal safety.

Recommended Standard 1: The local community PiT count approach (e.g., additional survey questions or populations, areas to be surveyed, etc.) should be based on consultations with all sectors involved in homelessness, including the HPS Community Advisory Board (CAB) and Aboriginal CAB, the municipality, shelters and other homelessness service providers, Aboriginal service providers, local police and emergency services, and transit authorities, among others. Cooperation with these sectors will contribute to the successful implementation of the count.

Recommended Standard 2: If possible, the local PiT count should include data from local public systems—including correctional facilities, juvenile detention centres, hospitals, detox centres—for people who have no fixed address and no discharge plan that includes housing. This number, however, should *not* be included with the Core Count data submitted to the HPS.

Recommended Standard 3: The PiT Count coordinator should work closely with the Community Coordinator for the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), as well as any local shelter data coordinator, where applicable.

Recommended Standard 4: The results of the Count should be shared with the community, with particular attention to count partners, those who work in the sector and those who experience homelessness. The results should also be shared with the Province or Territory.

Recommended Standard 5: The sheltered and unsheltered count should be conducted within the same timeframe overnight in order to limit double-counting. Conducting the unsheltered count overnight also reduces the number of people in outdoor locations who are not experiencing homelessness, making the screening process easier.

PiT Count Implementation Timeline

A PiT Count is not built in one day. Months of work are typically required before and after the count. A detailed timeline is presented in Section 2. This work can be divided into four phases:

1. **Planning (4+ months before the count).** This time is used to identify a coordinator and engage the local community. A local PiT Count committee can be formed to support the coordinator and take on various responsibilities (e.g., data analysis, volunteer recruitment, communication plan). The coordinator then works with these partners to begin developing the local survey questions and identifying a search strategy. Develop a communications plan for engaging the media, and the broader community for support and recruitment.

2. **Preparation (1 – 4 months before the count).** The areas to be surveyed and any additional survey questions should be finalized in this phase. A plan is developed for the day of the count (e.g., a headquarters is identified, a list of resources needed is prepared). Volunteer recruitment begins.

3. **Implementation (less than 1 month before the count).** This is the time for last-minute preparation for the count. Any supplies needed are obtained, and volunteers are trained and assigned to teams.

- Day of the Count -

4. **Post-Count (1+ days after the count).** The surveys should be entered as soon as possible and compiled with other data (where available). Data analysis can then proceed (if you are using the HPS PiT Count software, certain reports can be generated automatically). The results should be communicated to the volunteers, the general community, and the homeless population themselves. The local PiT Count Committee should meet again to review the experience with the count (you may wish to survey volunteers and staff for their perspective) and to begin to plan for the next count.

2: The Implementation Timeline

Developing a PiT Count Plan and Timeline

The amount of time, effort and resources a community needs to implement its count will depend on its size, geography, and the methods chosen, yet there are common steps to be taken.

Planning (4+ Months before the Count)

Form a Local PiT Count Committee: Forming a local committee to support the implementation of the PiT Count will serve to build community support for the count. The count will also benefit from the expertise and experience of the committee members. Membership should be drawn from the local HPS Community Entity (CE) and Community Advisory Board (CAB), as well as the Aboriginal CE and CAB, where applicable. Membership should include the Municipality, Police and other emergency responders who interact with the homeless population, as well as other stakeholders closely involved in supporting people experiencing homelessness. The inclusion of the local HIFIS Community Coordinator would help to facilitate access to shelter data. Membership should also include someone with lived experience of homelessness. A key element for the success of the count will be to encourage the homeless population to take part. Subcommittees may be formed to consider specific aspects of the count (e.g., recruiting volunteers, developing the local survey and methodology, and the communication strategy).

Identify a PiT Count Coordinator: Depending on the size of the community and complexity of the count, this may be a dedicated resource. Ideally, this person will be closely connected with the local homelessness-services sector and have a background coordinating community projects. Many communities identify a Municipal employee to act as the coordinator.

Reach out to the Community: Develop a communication strategy for the count to engage the media and the broader community. Communicate the intention to participate in the count early. Building community awareness of the count will be key to recruiting volunteers, both for the day of the count and to support the planning and preparation phases. Local businesses may be interested in supporting the count through funding or donations (e.g., items for survey respondents, food for volunteers, etc.).

Preparation (1 – 4 Months before the Count)

Identify Search Method: Based on the size, geography and resources of the community, different approaches can be taken to defining the search areas in the community. This is particularly important for the Unsheltered component of the PiT Count. The approaches are described in Section 3.

Finalize Survey: Communities may add to the Core questions in the unsheltered and sheltered surveys. The local PiT Count Committee, a sub-committee or the Coordinator should consult local homelessness stakeholders (e.g., homelessness service providers, community organizations that provide support, Veterans supports groups) to determine what questions could be added. It will be important to balance the community's need for information, with the need to keep the survey short (less than 15 minutes, if possible). Each question should have a specific purpose related to planning or resource allocation.

Recruit Volunteers: The count cannot succeed without volunteers. Early communication will be important. In addition to those who already work in the field, local leaders and community groups may be interested in participating (e.g., local politicians, student groups, religious communities, Business Improvement Associations, unions, etc.). Volunteers will likely be needed for survey teams, but may also be useful for soliciting sponsorships, coordination on the day of the count, and data entry after the count.

Prepare a Plan for the Day of the count: Identify a central headquarters for coordinating the count. Larger communities may want regional hubs. Determine what your survey teams will look like. Identify what resources you will need (e.g., gear for survey teams, incentives for participation). Develop a plan for organizing and inputting incoming surveys.

Implementation (Less than 1 Month before the Count)

Train Volunteers: Each volunteer must receive training on how to approach people, how to ask the screening and survey questions, how to fill the survey form, and how to request assistance, if required. Volunteers should receive training close to the day of the count to reduce the likelihood that the volunteers who show up for the training will be absent for the count, or that volunteers will show up on the day of the count, only. See Section 3 for more information on volunteer training.

Final Preparation: Purchase supplies and prepare kits for survey teams. Prepare search maps for the survey teams (city planning departments may be able to help to develop these). Because of the timing of the count, those identified through the unsheltered portion of the count may be in need of emergency services or shelter. An outreach team (or teams) should be formed to quickly address these needs on the day of the count.

Day of the count

Post-Count (1+ days after the count)

Enter Count Data and Survey Responses: A volunteer team can enter the survey data. The HPS-provided software may be used to enter the data and produce some basic reports. Other options include spreadsheet or database software, or statistical packages for advanced analyses. Ensure that the responses are kept confidential in order to respect the privacy of the respondents.

Analyze Results and Submit to HPS: The HPS PiT Module (see Annex B - forthcoming) is provided to offer a secure method to upload the results to the HPS. The local PiT Count Committee can be consulted to determine what analyses should be done.

Communicate with the Community: To maintain community engagement on the count and support for future counts, a communication strategy is essential. Be prepared for significant media attention around the count. A specific strategy to communicate with the homeless population, themselves, is strongly encouraged. This may increase their willingness to engage in future PiT counts. If possible, communicate the preliminary results quickly.

Prepare for the Next Count: The local count committee should consider the lessons learned from the count and what could be improved for the next count (e.g., questions, logistics, search areas). A survey or focus group of volunteers and staff from the count is encouraged to get a range of perspectives.

3: Developing your Local Approach

The Core HPS PiT Count Methodology is intended to standardize the basic elements of the count across communities. This approach leaves room for you to adapt the approach to your local needs. This work will be led by your PiT Count Coordinator with support from a PiT Count Committee. This section describes key elements of the count that are necessary for PiT Count implementation.

Involving Community Partners

A successful count is dependent on the involvement of the community, preferably in the form of a local PiT Count Committee. In most communities, the coordinator will not be able to do all of the planning and preparation on her or his own. The Committee would help the coordinator by taking on certain responsibilities, and would help to build support within the community for the count. Subcommittees can be formed to focus on certain aspects of the count, such as volunteer recruitment, local survey questions, and seeking support from the community.

It is essential to have the homeless service organizations in the community on board, particularly those that provide frontline services, such as **outreach** and **shelter**, because their expertise and familiarity with the homeless population will be necessary for the count. These organizations should include those that focus on particular vulnerable populations, including those that provide services to **youth**, **Aboriginal people**, and **Veterans,** where available.

Local **municipalities** that fall in the community may be able to provide administrative and logistical support for the count. They may have maps available and can help define the search areas. They can also serve to connect the coordinator with **municipal services** and **emergency responders**, such as police, social workers, and paramedics, many of whom are likely in close contact with the homeless population. In addition, **local libraries, municipal parks,** and the **transit authority** may be contacted to help identify locations, such as bus shelters or transit stations that may serve as sleeping locations.

Local community leaders can help to promote the count with the broader community. **Local politicians** (federal, provincial, municipal), **celebrities**, and other **community leaders** can raise the profile of the count, which can serve to support volunteer recruitment and build awareness of homelessness issues more broadly. Getting community leaders on board may also build support for addressing homelessness issues in your region that are identified by the count.

If the community has a **shelter data coordinator**, such as a **HIFIS Data Coordinator or Community Coordinator**, this person or organization should be involved in the Committee to facilitate access to shelter data.

Local **universities** and **colleges** may be able to provide support with the technical aspects of the count, including defining the search areas (particularly if a sampling approach is used) and analyzing the data. Students may be interested in volunteering on survey teams, and for post-count data entry and cleaning.

Local **businesses or business associations** (e.g., Business Improvement Associations) may be interested in supporting the count through funding, supplies for volunteers (e.g., clip boards, paper, food) or for

the homeless population (e.g., socks, blankets, restaurant or grocery store gift cards), and for providing volunteers.

You should also consider including **people with lived experience** of homelessness on the committee. They can help to validate any local questions added to the survey, help to identify locations for survey teams, and solicit others to volunteer on the day of the count.

Engaging Volunteers

Volunteer recruitment should begin in the months before the count (see Section 2). Volunteers may be found from the networks of those on the local PiT Count Committee, as well as the general population. Most communities will include a solicitation of volunteers when the count is announced.

Many communities use an online forum or service for volunteers to sign up (e.g., VolunteerSpot, Survey Monkey), often for a particular role or shift. Volunteers may want to be on a survey team together, but you should ensure that each team has at least one person with professional knowledge of the homeless population.

After the count, it is important to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers and to communicate the outcomes of the count. Volunteers that see the difference that they have made will be willing to volunteer again on your future counts.

Some smaller communities have conducted counts using outreach and shelter staff, only. This approach is feasible only where sufficient staff resources are available, and where the homeless population is relatively small and stable. The advantage of this approach is that the staff are already familiar with working with the homeless population, and may know the majority by name. One disadvantage of this approach is that it reduces the community engagement potential of the count. Volunteers may have never met or spoken with someone experiencing homelessness before. Volunteering is an opportunity to reduce barriers within communities, and for the volunteers to see the need in the community for themselves.

Forming Survey Teams and Training

Survey Teams are assigned to sheltered and unsheltered locations during the count. Each team should consist of 2 to 3 people, including at least one person who has experience working with the homeless population. This could be an outreach worker, shelter staff, public health worker, or social worker, among others. People from local community partners or the general public may be solicited to volunteer on the survey teams. In areas with significant minority language populations, teams should have one member who is fluent in that language, if at all possible.

If police or other volunteers from professions with uniforms want to volunteer to be on survey teams, you may wish to ask them to come in plain-clothes on the day of the count. A uniform may be intimidating for some among the homeless population.

Training should be done close to the date of the count so that the information is fresh in the mind of the volunteers. Also, if it is done too far in advance, you may lose a significant number of volunteers because of unexpected commitments. If possible, provide options for training close to the day of the count; this makes volunteers more likely to remember the information they are given, and improves attendance on the day of the count.

Training should include simulations to familiarize volunteers with the forms and the procedures. Training materials are included in the PiT Count Implementation Toolkit developed by the COH with the support of the HPS.

The following topics should be covered by the training:

- **The purpose of the Count**: Why it is happening and what are the expected benefits for the community and for the respondents.

- **The Approach**: How to approach someone to participate in the survey. An explanation of the honoraria/incentives. How to ask the survey questions in a respectful manner.

- **The Survey**: How to screen for homelessness. What each question is asking for. The importance of collecting reliable data.

- **Logistics and Safety**: What materials will be provided to survey teams. What to wear and bring on the day of the count. Who to contact in the case of an emergency.

Defining the Scope of the Count

The Sheltered Count

The Sheltered component of the PiT Count should include emergency shelters (including those for specific populations, such as women, men, youth, Aboriginal people), transitional housing (or short-term supportive housing), and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters. Where applicable, it can also include families and individuals provided with hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of a shelter bed.

Where possible, data available for these facilities can help to determine the Sheltered Count. In some cases, data management systems may be sufficient to answer the survey questions as well. HIFIS, for example, can collect information relevant to the Core Survey Questions. If HIFIS is the data collection tool at the shelter, the majority of the Core Questions can be automatically filled for you. The partially filled form can then be printed in order to confirm the responses with the shelter residents. This step is mandatory to ensure that the responses are accurate and current.

HIFIS is available for free, with free training from the HPS. Guidance on using HIFIS for the sheltered count is provided in **Annex B** (forthcoming)**.**

In the largest communities, if insufficient resources are available to survey each shelter resident, you may consider a sampling approach. This may entail taking a representative sample of shelter facilities or a random sample of clients. For example, the survey could be conducted with those who book-in on the day of the count. This approach would require expertise in statistical sampling.

The Unsheltered Count

The Unsheltered component of the PiT Count should include any outdoor or public locations that are not meant for human habitation. These can include streets, alleys, parks, ravines, under bridges, bus shelters, abandoned buildings and parked cars. It is important that the scope be as thorough as possible in order not to exclude any part of the homeless population.

In geographically small or densely populated areas, it may be possible to take a **Full Coverage** approach, where these locations are surveyed throughout the entire community. This is the ideal, but is also resource-intensive as it will require a large number of volunteers and coordinators. For most communities, an alternative approach is needed.

The most common approach is a **Known-Locations** search, where teams canvass areas known to be frequented by people experiencing homelessness (e.g., parks, ravines, camp sites). This approach is particularly useful for rural areas and sparsely populated urban and suburban areas. The locations can be identified by service providers and emergency responders. Since rural areas can be large and sparsely populated, some communities also conduct a pre-count search to identify potential camp sites.

In very large communities that have areas with a lower population density, communities may wish to consider a **Sampling** approach for these areas, whereby a random sample of areas is searched. These areas can be census tracts. The count from the sampled areas would be extrapolated to the areas not sampled. Use of this approach requires expertise in statistical sampling.

In communities with a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas, a mix of approaches is appropriate. For example, Toronto does a full coverage survey of the downtown core and surveys a statistical sample of suburban areas. Community geography, size, and resources will affect whether Full Coverage, Sampling, Known-Locations or a combination of both approaches is most appropriate.

Many communities include people who are observed to be clearly homeless in their enumeration. Observations may be used for individuals who do not participate in the survey, but who show clear signs of being homeless on the night of the count. For example, if they are sleeping in an unsheltered location and they have their belongings with them. Note that the first option should be to ask the screening questions, if at all possible. The screening questions provide more reliable data and give an opportunity to the respondent to participate in the survey.

Some communities supplement their count with an estimate of the number of "missed" people. One method is to use "decoys" on the day of the count. These are volunteers who are situated outside in search areas of the city during the count. For each decoy that does not encounter a search team, a number of missed people is estimated and added to the number counted. This approach should be taken with caution. It is very difficult to confirm that the estimate of missed people reliably corresponds to actual people experiencing homelessness on the day of the count.

Building on the Core Populations: Public Systems

The Sheltered component of the HPS Core Approach includes shelters and transitional housing (i.e., short-term supportive housing). Some communities also include people who are in "public systems", such as hospitals, detox centres, and corrections facilities, among others, who will be discharged into homelessness in the short term. Your community may wish to count these people for local planning purposes. This type of homelessness was not included in the core approach since it would require every

participating community to secure access to data from each institution. These institutions are governed by various jurisdictions at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The burden of requiring this of communities was considered too onerous for the first PiT Count.

Populations Outside of the Scope of the Count

1. People who are staying in housing that they rent or own, including those that are in permanent supportive housing or Housing First programs. The PiT count, in part, is meant to measure success in reducing homelessness through these Housing First and supportive housing programs, so including them among the numbers would hide this progress.

2. People that are staying with friends or family. These people can be considered part of the "hidden homeless", rather than "absolute homeless". A PiT count is not an effective tool to measure hidden homelessness, because they are unlikely to be in the count locations. You may consider conducting the survey with those experiencing hidden homelessness to better understand their needs. However, if your community is interested in estimating the size of the hidden homeless population, an alternative approach is recommended (e.g., a period-prevalence study, a phone survey, etc.).

Observed Homelessness

Not everyone encountered will be interested in answering screening questions. Others may be unable to respond to the questions (e.g., unable to wake, language barriers). Some of these individuals may still be experiencing homelessness. To enumerate those that are apparently homeless but who are not participating in the survey, your community can consider tracking observed homelessness.

The criteria for including someone as observed homeless should be clearly identified. For example, individuals may be considered homeless if they bedded down in an unsheltered location and they have many belongings with them (e.g., backpacks, garbage bags, shopping cart, sleeping bag, bedrolls, etc.).

Observations should only be used as a last resort, since the data they provide are less reliable than those based on self-report. In addition, asking the screening questions provides the opportunity to the respondent to be screened into the survey, receive the honorarium/token, and receive information about services. If observations are used, the proportion of your count that is based on observations homelessness should be clearly indicated in your reporting.

Data Management

As you are planning your count, you will need to prepare for data entry, storage, and analysis. Each of these will influence the questions you add to your local survey, the recruitment of community partners and volunteers, and the resources needed. In particular, it is important to be able to ensure the privacy of the survey respondents. Survey forms will need to be locked in a secure location and the raw data, once entered, should be shared only as necessary, and without compromising the confidentiality of the respondents.

Support for this element of the count may be provided by the municipality, where sufficient resources are available, or by a third party (e.g., local university or college). The organization should have rules and

systems in-place for meeting the above requirements for data storage, and the capacity to conduct the analyses.

See for more information.

4: The Surveys

The Script and Consent

Survey teams should be provided with a script to follow for each encounter. The script is designed to be as brief as possible, while being clear about the purpose of the survey and how the results will be used. In order to meet basic ethical standards, it is important that the respondent understands how the information provided will be used. The script also informs the person that the information they provide will be kept confidential and not reported at an individual level.

The Core Questions

The Core Screening and Survey Questions are below, and can be found in the recommended Survey Templates in Annex A. The Sheltered and Unsheltered survey forms are almost identical with the key difference being the screening criteria. For the Unsheltered Count, only individuals who will be unsheltered on the night of the count should be screened into the survey. In contrast, for the Sheltered Count, individuals staying at the shelter may be screened in, as well as those who are present at the shelter without a bed, and are planning to sleep in an unsheltered location. Communities who add to the Core Populations (e.g., by including hidden homelessness or people in public systems) may adjust the screening filters accordingly.

The Core Questions include items intended to identify whether the respondent is homeless for the purpose of the PIT Count, to provide some demographic information about the homeless population and to highlight potential service needs. They can also be used to identify potential supports for the respondent. For example, Veterans may be eligible for supports through the Veterans Affairs Canada, or may be connected with Veteran support groups. See the list below for the screening and survey questions with an explanation for each.

Core Screening Questions
Screening 1   **Have you answered this survey with a person with this [identification e.g., button]?**   **a.** YES **b.** NO
All search teams should have an identifying item or piece of clothing. Over the course of the count, the same individual may be approached by two survey teams. This question is intended to reduce double-counting.
Screening 2   **Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?**   **a.** YES **c.** DON'T KNOW   **b.** NO **d.** DECLINE TO ANSWER
Alone, this question will not screen out an individual, but may be used as context for the following question. In addition, for those that are screened in, you may want to have follow-up questions to determine why they are not accessing their residence that night.

Screening 3

Where are you staying tonight?

a. DECLINE TO ANSWER
b. OWN APARTMENT/HOUSE
c. SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE (FRIEND OR FAMILY)
d. MOTEL/HOTEL
e. HOSPITAL, JAIL, PRISON, REMAND CENTRE
f. EMERGENCY SHELTER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER
g. TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

h. PUBLIC SPACE (E.G., SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER)
i. VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK)
j. MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK
k. ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING
l. OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY)_____
m. RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]

This question includes a list of sheltered and unsheltered locations. It will be the primary tool for determining whether a respondent is considered homeless. The screening procedure is described in Annex A. In the case of a daytime unsheltered count, the question would be, "Where did you stay last night?"

Core Survey Questions

Survey Question 1

What family members are with you?

a. NONE
b. PARTNER
c. DEPENDENT CHILD [list age and gender]

d. PARENT/GUARDIAN
e. OTHER _____
f. DECLINE TO ANSWER

This question is asked first so that family data is captured together. Each survey form must have a unique serial number. The number for each *adult* family member surveyed would be included on the forms for each other adult family member. The age and gender of each dependent child that is with the respondent during the count is noted on the form. Families have distinct service needs. This will allow you to identify the number of homeless families in your community and track progress in reducing family homelessness.

Survey Question 2

How old are you/What year were you born?

a. AGE (in years): _____
   YEAR BORN: _____

b. DON'T KNOW
c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

Respondents may answer with their age or year of birth. It provides basic information on the age of the homeless population. Youth, adults, and seniors each have needs for different services and approaches.

Survey Question 3

What gender do you identify with? [Do not read list]

a. MALE
b. FEMALE
c. OTHER RESPONSE _____

d. DON'T KNOW
e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

As with age, it this question provides basic demographic information on the homeless population. Note that survey teams should not read the list to the respondent. Also, "other" responses must be specified.

Survey Question 4

Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? (This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indian, Native, with or without Status). If yes, specify.

a. YES --->

b. NO
c. DON'T KNOW
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

i. FIRST NATIONS: OFF RESERVE
ii. FIRST NATIONS: ON RESERVE
iii. INUIT
iv. METIS
v. NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY
vi. UNKNOWN

Survey teams can provide examples that suit the local context, being as inclusive as possible. Aboriginal people are often over-represented among people experiencing homelessness. This question can provide more context on this population and track progress in addressing their needs.

Survey Question 5

Have you ever had any service in the Canadian military or the RCMP?
[prompt: Military includes the Canadian Army, Navy and Air Force]

a. YES, MILITARY
b. YES, RCMP
c. NO

d. DON'T KNOW
e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

This question was recently integrated into HIFIS, providing more information about shelter use among Veterans. PiT Counts provide more context for their experience of unsheltered homelessness. In addition, former members of the Canadian military and of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) may be eligible for support through Veterans Affairs Canada as well as Veterans support groups.

Survey Question 6a

Did you move to [the community] in the past year?

a. YES
b. NO

c. DON'T KNOW
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

Some communities experience high rates of migration among the homeless population. Recent arrivals may not know where to go to access services in the community. The inclusion of this question can provide your community an indication of the number of recent arrivals and their needs.

Survey Question 6b

Are you a recent immigrant or refugee in Canada within the past 5 years?

a. YES
b. NO

c. DON'T KNOW
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

Most newcomers (immigrants and refugees) will have received support with resettlement in Canada. High numbers of newcomers may signal an issue that can be addressed upstream in order to prevent homelessness.

Survey Question 7

When did you become homeless most recently?

a. DATE _____
   (Best estimate)   (YYYY-MM-DD)

b. DON'T KNOW
c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

How many times have you been homeless over the past 3 years?

a. NUMBER OF TIMES_____
   (Best estimate)

b. DON'T KNOW
c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

These questions provide an indication of potential chronic or episodic homelessness. Housing First interventions prioritize services for these vulnerable groups. Including this question in the PiT Count will help you to track your community's progress in reducing chronic and episodic homelessness and can help to reach people who may be eligible for Housing First programs.

Survey Question 8

Where do you get your money from? [prompt: give examples from list]

a. EMPLOYMENT
b. INFORMAL/SELF-EMPLOYMENT (E.G., BOTTLE RETURNS, PANHANDLING)
c. EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
d. WELFARE/INCOME ASSISTANCE
e. DISABILITY BENEFIT
f. SENIORS BENEFITS (E.G., CPP/OAS/GIS)
g. CHILD AND FAMILY TAX BENEFITS
h. MONEY FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS
i. OTHER _____
j. NO INCOME
k. DECLINE TO ANSWER

This is an open question with categories provided, including those related to employment, informal sources (e.g., bottle returns), tax benefits, and family and friends. This question can be used to identify which supports are being accessed and which are not. For example, it could indicate whether homeless seniors are accessing Old Age Security or the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Survey Question 9

Do you have a need for services related to: [Read Categories. Select All That Apply]

a. CHRONIC/ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITION
b. PHYSICAL DISABILITY
c. LEARNING DISABILITY
d. ADDICTION or SUBSTANCE USE
e. MENTAL ILLNESS
f. BRAIN INJURY
g. FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)
h. PREGNANT (IF FEMALE)

The list includes mental and physical health issues, disabilities, pregnancy, and other concerns. It is intended to provide information on the services needed by the homeless population in your community.

Survey Question 10

Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the last 12 months? [Prompt: give local examples]

a. YES
b. NO
c. DON'T KNOW
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

Many communities have comprehensive shelter use data, but little information on the homeless population that does not use shelters. This question can provide information on the size and needs of this population.

Families and Children

The family question asks the respondent to report the age and gender of each dependent child that is with him or her during the count. Other family members (partners, parents, grandparents, etc.) should also be linked. Each survey form (see Annex A) should have a unique Survey Number that can serve as an anonymous identifier for the respondent. In the case of families, each member should have her or his number indicated on the forms for their family members next to their relationship (i.e., partner, parent, other). This serves to keep the information on the family together and can provide information about family size.

Building on the Core Questions

The Core Questions of the HPS Approach provide some demographic information on the homeless population, but you may want to consider additional questions for your local count. Take caution in selecting questions, though, since the length of the survey should normally be kept to 15 minutes or less (with some exceptions).

What questions should you add? Many communities include a question regarding **sexual orientation**, as research has shown that youth, in particular, may become homeless as a result of family conflict related to their sexual orientation. You may also wish to consider questions that further explore the information provided by the Core Questions. For example, respondents who have recently arrived in the community may be asked **what community they moved from**.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, in consultation with several communities, has developed a set of questions that can be added to the HPS Core Questions. These questions are not required as part of the HPS Approach, but you can review them to see whether they meet your community's information needs. They can be found here.

Implementing the Sheltered Survey

Preparation: In most communities, shelter clients make up the majority of the PiT Count. Shelters should be approached early to support their inclusion in the count. Each shelter should identify a key contact who will be present the night of the count. If you will be using Shelter Systems data, you will want to develop a data provision agreement with the shelter if one is not already in place.

Some shelters may be reluctant to have survey teams stationed in their facility. Depending on the size and resources of the shelter, they may be able to conduct the count with shelter staff (who should receive the same training as the volunteers). In particular, this may be true of domestic violence shelters.

Other shelters may be unwilling to share the raw data of their clients. In these cases, seek as much information as they are willing to share, and at least, the number of clients for that night can be included in the count. In the largest communities, it may be possible to use data from similar shelters to estimate the characteristics of clients in shelters with missing data.

The Number: To the extent possible, your count (or enumeration) of people in a shelter facility should be informed by systems data. If you are unable to use systems data or the HIFIS PiT Module, it is recommended that you use the Sheltered Tally Sheet and Survey in Annex A.

The Survey Approach: In facilities using HIFIS, it may be possible to use the information from existing shelter data to inform responses to much of the survey, while using an abbreviated survey process to confirm the existing data and to fill in any missing information. Surveyors (shelter staff or volunteers) may choose to conduct a full survey of the shelter, or to take a sample based on the number of people who check in on the night of the count.

Consent: Surveyors must obtain consent from the person to proceed with the questionnaire (see Annex A for a script). It is important that consent be obtained to ensure that the respondent is aware that confidentiality will be maintained and will understand how their responses will be used.

Screening: There are three screening questions. The first is meant to reduce the likelihood of surveying someone twice. The second is meant to provide context regarding the respondent's access to housing. The third question is meant as a check to include only those experiencing absolute homelessness. The great majority of responses should be that the individuals will be sleeping in the surveyed location, and would be screened in. If there are any individuals present at the shelter without a bed for that night, and who are planning to sleep in an unsheltered location, they would also be screened in. Their responses should be included among the Unsheltered data. All others would be screened out.

The Questionnaire: There are **10** Core Survey Questions for the Sheltered Survey. Each question should be asked as it is written in order to encourage consistency in the interpretation of the question.

Honorarium: The honorarium may be seen as a means to engage the person, as a thank you for participating in the questionnaire, or both. Depending on this viewpoint, the honorarium may be given after the person has been identified as homeless, after they have completed the questionnaire, or it may be split in two, with one at each point. The honoraria may include small items (e.g., socks, toiletries, snacks) and gift cards (e.g., for a coffee shop or grocery store). These can be purchased or donations may be solicited leading up to the count.

Services: If it is not done already by the shelter or housing staff, you may wish to use the PiT count as an opportunity to provide information on available services. Some communities offer respondents a list of available services in the community. Depending on survey answers, respondents may be eligible for various supports. For example, people who are chronically homeless may be eligible for Housing First supports, seniors may be eligible for support through Old Age Security or the Canada Pension Plan, and Veterans may be eligible for supports through Veterans Affairs Canada. Shelter staff may follow-up with respondents to take the next steps to explore eligibility.

Implementing the Unsheltered Survey

Preparation: The locations to be surveyed will be identified by the coordinator and local committee where applicable. Route maps should be prepared for each survey team.

The Number: Each surveyor should be provided a tally sheet in addition to the survey forms (see Annex A for examples). The tally sheet provides a record of those who do not participate in the count. If your community is recording observed homeless for people who do not participate in the survey but are observed to be likely homeless, these can be recorded on the sheet in addition to observed demographic data.

The Survey Approach: Survey Teams should approach everyone they encounter to ask the screening questions. In some communities, it has been noted that people are reluctant to participate in a "homelessness survey", so it is labeled a "housing needs survey" in the recommended script, while still being clear that the purpose is to better understand homelessness.

Consent: As with the Sheltered Count, surveyors must obtain consent from the person to proceed with the questionnaire. The script can be found with the questionnaire in [Annex A](#). Consent must be obtained to ensure that the respondent is aware that confidentiality will be maintained and understands how his or her responses will be used.

Screening: The screening questions are the same as those used for the Sheltered count. The first is meant to reduce the likelihood of surveying someone twice. The second is meant to provide context regarding the respondent's access to housing. The third question is meant as a check to screen out anyone who will not be staying in an Unsheltered location. This includes those that will be sleeping in a shelter, as their information would be included in the Sheltered count. The third question also provides information to the community on the unsheltered locations where people are sleeping.

The Questionnaire: There are **10** Core Survey Questions for the Unsheltered Survey. Each question should be asked as it is written in order to encourage consistency in the interpretation of the question.

Honorarium: The honorarium may be seen as a means to engage the person, as a thank you for participating in the questionnaire, or both. Depending on this viewpoint, the honorarium may be given after the person has been identified as homeless, after they have completed the questionnaire, or it may be split in two, with one at each point. The honoraria may include small items (e.g., socks, toiletries, snacks) and gift cards (e.g., for a coffee shop or grocery store). These can be purchased or donations may be solicited leading up to the count.

Services: If possible, you should offer to find shelter for the person for that night. You may also wish to use the PiT count as an opportunity to provide information on available services. Some communities offer respondents a list of available services in the community. Depending on survey answers, respondents may be eligible for various supports. For example, people who are chronically homeless may be eligible for Housing First supports, seniors may be eligible for support through Old Age Security or the Canada Pension Plan, and Veterans may be eligible for supports through Veterans Affairs Canada. Staff may routinely explore these options, so it is advisable to work closely with them when conducting the survey to ensure that there is no overlap in efforts.

5: After the PiT Count

The amount of work needed after the actual PiT count should not be underestimated. Depending on the size of the community and number of completed surveys, data entry, cleaning, and analysis can take weeks after the count. You will also need a communication strategy in place that can be initiated after the count. The work of the local PiT Count Committee will continue after the day of the count as you review what went well, what can be improved, and what can be explored in future counts.

The Next Day

Collect surveys: Completed surveys should be collected from shelters and survey teams on the night of the count or the following morning, at the latest. Collecting the surveys quickly reduces the likelihood that the forms will be lost or damaged.

Acknowledge contributions: A PiT count cannot happen without the contributions of a range of project partners. These include members of the local PiT Count Committee, local shelters, volunteers, donors, and any local organizations who were consulted. A short thank you message can be shared with them immediately after the count acknowledging their investment of time and/or money to the success of the count. This encourages their ongoing engagement on the issue of homelessness, and increases the chances that they will support future counts.

Data Management and Analysis

The PiT Count module of the HIFIS software will be provided to communities to facilitate data entry, analysis, and reporting. Each survey response is entered into the software and data is stored for the Core Questions and any additional questions added by your community. The software facilitates data cleaning by highlighting potential double entries or unrealistic birthdates. Once data are entered, they can also be exported as a spreadsheet. The software can automatically generate a basic PiT Count report based on the Core Questions, and can be customized to generate other reports to account for additional questions. The software can also be used to securely transmit the results to the HPS.

Support on installation and its use will be available through the HIFIS Support Desk.

Storage and Privacy

PiT Count responses should be anonymous. Surveys do not ask for names or other personal identifiers. Even without identifiers, however, survey responses can sometimes be used to identify specific individuals. To mitigate this risk, the data should be stored on a secure computer or server, with limited access. If possible, the file should be password-protected. Individual results or raw data should never be presented or reported. Volunteers and researchers who work with the data should be asked to sign confidentiality agreements.

The physical survey forms should also be stored in a secure location (e.g., a locked cabinet). You may wish to keep the forms between PiT Counts in case the entered data needs to be verified. Once they are no longer needed, forms should be shredded or otherwise destroyed.

If your community is collecting names through its PiT Count (e.g., to create a registry of people experiencing homelessness), please ensure that the data submitted to the HPS is anonymized, such that no individual person is identifiable. Note that the HPS-provided software anonymizes data automatically.

Data Cleaning

Once the surveys have been brought to a central location, data entry should begin as soon as possible. You may wish to develop an agreement with a local university or college to do the data entry. In return for access to the data, a University or College may be willing to provide support with data entry, cleaning and analysis.

In order to reduce the likelihood of errors during the survey entry process, it is recommended that each survey be entered into two separate databases, and then responses compared to identify any inconsistencies. The physical survey form can then be consulted to verify the response in the event of any discrepancies.

A contact from each survey team should be available during this process to provide clarity if there is any ambiguity in the written responses. Reasons for this can include:
- unclear writing or checkmarks;
- multiple checks for questions requiring one answer;
- missing responses; and
- answers that are likely miswritten (e.g., a birthday in 1901, a 16-year-old Veteran).

Surveys that are incomplete can still be included if a sufficient number of questions are answered. You should have enough information to identify whether the respondent already participated in the survey (i.e., to assist with de-duplication). There is no standard number of responses for inclusion, since some answers are more informative than others (e.g., two people are less likely to be the same age, than they are to be the same gender). To facilitate the process, you may want to consult a statistical expert to set a working standard. Surveys that do not meet this standard should not be included in the final number for your community.

After the data has been entered, it should be reviewed to identify suspect entries (e.g., a 16-year-old Veteran) and to de-duplicate the data (i.e., identify people who have answered the survey twice). The HPS-provided software will automatically highlight some potential issues. Regardless, you will need to manually review the data for errors. For example, when two entries have answers that are the same across many demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, Veteran status, Aboriginal identify, etc.) they may be double-entries. Note that when you have a large number of respondents, there is a greater chance to find two individuals with similar demographics, so the standard for de-duplication should be higher.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Before analyzing the data, it is important to remember that a PiT count should not be considered representative of all people who experience homelessness in your community. Because it is done only over a single day, it is more likely to include people who experience long-term, chronic homelessness than those that experience only single episodes of homelessness. As mentioned before, it is a snapshot of people who are experiencing absolute homelessness on the day of the count.

The HPS-provided software can generate a number of reports based on the Core Questions. This will give you basic demographic information on the respondents. They include reports on age and gender, Veterans, and Aboriginal status, among others. The software can also be customized to generate other reports that include your local questions.

If this is your community's first count, analyses will be fairly straightforward, looking at relationships among the variables. Once you have completed two or more counts, you will be able to track changes over time. For these analyses, use of a statistical package is recommended (e.g., SPSS, SAS, Stata). If you do not have the necessary capacity to conduct the analyses in-house, you may wish to hire a contractor or develop a partnership with a university or college.

Submitting Results to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy

Communities receiving support for participating in the HPS-coordinated PiT Count have been asked to submit their results to the HPS. The HPS-provided software is equipped with a function to securely report the results to the HPS once the data have been entered and cleaned.

The data will not be shared with third parties and the results from individual communities will never be reported. Instead, your community's data will contribute to a cross-Canada picture of homelessness. It will deepen our understanding of the population affected by homelessness, and the supports that may be needed to help them find secure housing.

Communicating the Results

Once the count has happened, there may be a lot of anticipation among the community, and the project partners in particular, to see the results. Depending on the size of the data set, it may take weeks to enter, clean and analyze it. In some communities, a preliminary report is made with a few details, which is later followed by a full report.

Communicating with the general community. The first results should be released as soon as possible and can include the size of the homeless population and some demographic results that can be generated by the HPS-provided software. The community, after having invested the time and money in the count, will be anticipating the results. Be prepared for significant media attention around the count, particularly if it is your community's first count. Communicating early helps keep them engaged and interested in finding solutions. This can be done through a media release or announcement, website update, and/or social media release. You can also consider hosting an open community meeting to talk about the results.

Communicating with people who are experiencing homelessness. Many people experiencing homelessness will have taken the time to answer the survey. While they may have received a small remuneration for their time, it is important to acknowledge their contribution and to convey how the PiT count will help them. Unfortunately, some may still be experiencing homelessness during future counts and the more they see the value of the count, the more likely they will be to participate again. You may wish to work with shelters and other front-line services to determine the best communication strategy.

Planning for the Next Count

The local PiT Count Committee should meet again after the count to review what went well and what can be improved in future counts. You should consider conducting an anonymous survey with PiT Count partners and volunteers. Feedback from volunteers, in particular, will provide information on how the count worked on the ground. How were the surveys implemented? Did survey teams use the standard wording of the questions? Did the locations or the sampling approach miss significant populations? Was the homeless population motivated to participate in the survey, or did they avoid the survey teams? The responses to these and other questions will help your PiT Count Committee to refine your PiT count implementation for future counts.

If possible, keep the Committee engaged between counts. In some communities that hold annual counts, planning for the next count begins as soon as the last count has ended. The Committee may wish to meet as milestones are hit (e.g., preliminary report released, final analyses done, post-count review completed, etc.).

Where to find more information?

Resources are available from communities that have conducted counts and from organizations internationally that support PiT Counts. Note that not all of the information in these resources will necessarily align with the HPS PiT Count approach, but you may wish to consult these resources to help you with your local implementation:

- **PiT Count Online Forum**: Under development by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness to host tools and useful information to help implement the PiT Count. The forum will also enable communities to share information and resources.
  [*Website Forthcoming*]

- **The Homeless Hub webinar on PiT Counts**
  http://www.homelesshub.ca/events/homeless-hub-webinar-using-point-time-counts-measure-progress-towards-ending-homelessness

- **Canadian PiT Count Reports**: Several communities have been conducting periodic PiT Counts in Canada. These reports are a useful reference for examples of local implementation of PiT counts and how the results are analyzed and reported back to the community. Note that you may need to copy these links into your browser.

  Greater Vancouver (March 2014):
  http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/homelessness/HomelessnessPublications/2014MVHomelessCountJuly31-14Results.pdf
  Kamloops and Merritt (Oct. 2012):
  www.kamloopshap.ca/images/HC2012-Nov02-2012-1.pdf
  Alberta 7 Cities (Oct. 2014):
  http://www.7cities.ca/#!7-cities-pit-count/c6rt
  Edmonton (Oct. 2014):
  www.homewardtrust.ca/images/files/2015-02-05-14-10Homeless%20Count%202014-Final%20Report_Feb5-15.pdf
  Calgary (Jan. 2014):
  calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Winter-2014-PIT-Count-Report.pdf
  Lethbridge (Oct. 2013):
  www.bringinglethbridgehome.ca/sites/default/files/Bringing%20Lethbridge%20Home%20-%20Homeless%20Census%20Report%202013.pdf
  Red Deer (Oct. 2014):
  www.reddeer.ca/media/reddeerca/about-red-deer/social-well-being-and-community-initiatives/housing-and-homelessness/2014-Red-Deer-Point-in-Time-Homeless-Count-Full-Report.pdf
  Toronto (April 2013):
  www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-61365.pdf

- **Webinars from US communities:** topics include unsheltered count methodology, improving the inclusion of youth, and volunteer training.
  http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/webinar-recordings-prepare-for-the-2015-point-in-time-count

ANNEX A: Tally Sheets & Survey Forms

In this Annex, you will find templates for recommended sheltered and unsheltered tally sheets and survey forms. Use of these forms is not mandatory, but they are examples that provide the data necessary to respond to the Core Screening and Survey Questions. Instructions on completing these forms are below. Each surveyor would be given a tally sheet and a package of survey forms.

Tally Sheet

At the top of the sheet, the surveyor would indicate their search area/location, the time of their shift, their name and a contact number. If there are any discrepancies with the entries, or missing data, surveyor may be contacted to provide clarity.

The tally sheets include a script for the surveyor to follow, asking for the individual's consent to participate. They also include the Core Screening Questions. By including the screening procedure on the tally, surveyors would not need to begin a survey form for people who will be screened out.

For those who are screened in, the surveyor would start a survey by noting the responses to the last two questions. For those who are *not* screened in, the surveyor would record them on the tally sheet.

The Unsheltered tally sheet captures the following information:
- where the individual was encountered;
- the reason they were not surveyed (whether they declined, already responded, were screened out, or were observed only); and
- whether they are included among observed homelessness (clearly homeless, but declined or are unable to respond to the screening questions), as well as observed gender and age, and the indications of homelessness.

The Sheltered tally sheet captures the following information:
- the reason the person was not surveyed (whether they declined, already responded, or were tallied only); and
- observed gender and age.

Survey Forms

As with the tally sheet, the survey forms ask the surveyors to indicate their name, contact number, in addition to the location and time the survey was completed. Each form has a Survey Number provided through a "Mail Merge" function in Microsoft Word (instructions forthcoming). This number provides an anonymous unique identifier and can be used to, for example, link family data.

The first two questions of the survey are the last two screening questions. Surveyors should note the responses to these questions before going through the remaining questions (Qs 1-12), which are the Core Survey Questions. Questions should be asked exactly as they are written, but prompts or explanations may be given when the respondent is unsure. The form includes suggested prompts (e.g., defining Canadian Military). Any local questions can be added to the survey, but it is recommended that they use similar formatting.

Location: _____ Time: _____ to _____

Interviewer: _____ Contact phone #: _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a volunteer for the **[community name] housing needs survey**. We are conducting a survey to provide better programs and services to people experiencing homelessness. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

- **Participation is voluntary** and **your name will not be recorded**.
- You can choose to **skip any question** or to **stop the interview at any time**.
- Results will contribute to the understanding of homelessness across Canada, and will help with research to improve services.

A. **Have you answered this survey with a person with this [identifier]?**
   [YES: Thank and tally] [NO: Go to B]

B. **Are you willing to participate in the survey?**
   [YES: Go to C] [NO: Thank and tally]

- Thank you for agreeing to participate. Please note that you will receive **[item]** for completing the survey.

C. **Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?**
   [YES/NO: Go to D]

D. **Where are you staying tonight? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**

a. *DECLINE TO ANSWER*	h. PUBLIC SPACE (E.G., SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER)
b. *OWN APARTMENT/HOUSE*	i. VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK)
c. *SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE (FRIEND OR FAMILY)*	
d. *MOTEL/HOTEL*	j. MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK
e. *HOSPITAL, JAIL, PRISON, REMAND CENTRE*	k. ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING
f. *EMERGENCY SHELTER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER*	l. OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION
g. *TRANSITIONAL HOUSING*	m. RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]
THANK AND TALLY BELOW	**BEGIN SURVEY AND NOTE RESPONSES TO C & D**

Instructions: For those that are ***not*** surveyed, please fill in the sheet below indicating the reason. For those who DECLINE or are OBSERVED only, but who are clearly homeless, please also indicate their gender, approximate age, and the reason you believe they are homeless (e.g., asleep outside with belongings).

#	Location (e.g., building, park, nearest intersection)	Reason not Surveyed				*Observed Homelessness			
		Declined*	Already Responded	Screened Out	Observed*	Observed Homeless	Observed Gender	Approx. Age	Indicators of Homelessness
1									
2									
3									
4									

Canada

| 5 | | | | | | | | | | |

…

Unsheltered Survey	**Survey Number: 0000**

Location: _____ **Time:** _____ AM/PM

Interviewer: _____ **Contact #:** _____

<table>
<tr><td align="center">NOTE ANSWERS FROM SCREENING QUESTIONS</td></tr>
</table>

C. Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?

a. YES	c. DON'T KNOW
b. NO	d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

D. Where are you staying tonight? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]

h. PUBLIC SPACE (E.G., SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER)	k. ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING
	l. OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY)_____
i. VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK)	m. RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]
j. MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK	

<table>
<tr><td align="center">BEGIN SURVEY</td></tr>
</table>

1. What family members are with you today? [INDICATE SURVEY NUMBERS FOR ADULTS]

a. NONE	d. OTHER ADULT _____
b. PARTNER _____	e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

c. DEPENDENT CHILD(REN) [INDICATE AGE FOR EACH MALE AND FEMALE CHILD]

	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age
MALE										
FEMALE										

2. How old are you? Or What year were you born?

a. AGE (in years) _____	b. DON'T KNOW
YEAR BORN _____	c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

3. What gender do you identify with? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]

a. MALE	
b. FEMALE	d. DON'T KNOW
c. OTHER RESPONSE_____	e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

4. Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indian, Native, with or without status.

a. YES →	**If YES,**
	i. FIRST NATIONS: OFF-RESERVE
	ii. FIRST NATIONS: ON-RESERVE
b. NO	iii. INUIT
c. DON'T KNOW	iv. MÉTIS
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER	v. NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY
	vi. UNKNOWN

5. Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Military or RCMP?
[Military includes Canadian Navy, Army, or Air Force]

a. YES, MILITARY	d. DON'T KNOW
b. YES, RCMP	e. DECLINE TO ANSWER
c. NO	

6. Did you move to [*community name*] in the past year?

a. YES	c. DON'T KNOW
b. NO	d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

7. Are you a recent immigrant or refugee in Canada within the past 5 years?

a. YES	c. DON'T KNOW
b. NO	d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

8. When did you become homeless most recently? [Current episode of homelessness]

a. DATE _____	b. DON'T KNOW
(best estimate) (YYYY-MM-DD)	c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

9. How many times have you been homeless in the past 3 years? [In and out of homelessness]

a. NUMBER OF TIMES _____	b. DON'T KNOW
(best estimate)	c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

10. Where do you get your money from? [MAY PROVIDE EXAMPLES. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

a. EMPLOYMENT	f. SENIORS BENEFITS (E.G., CPP/OAS/GIS)
b. INFORMAL/SELF-EMPLOYMENT (E.G., BOTTLE RETURNS, PANHANDLING)	g. CHILD AND FAMILY TAX BENEFITS
c. EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	h. MONEY FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS
d. WELFARE/INCOME ASSISTANCE	i. OTHER _____
e. DISABILITY BENEFIT	j. NO INCOME
	k. DECLINE TO ANSWER

11. Do you have a need for services related to… [READ CATEGORIES. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

a. CHRONIC/ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITION	e. MENTAL ILLNESS
b. PHYSICAL DISABILITY	f. BRAIN INJURY
c. LEARNING DISABILITY	g. FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)
d. ADDICTION or SUBSTANCE USE	h. PREGNANCY (IF RESPONDENT IS FEMALE)

12. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year? [PROVIDE LOCAL EXAMPLES]

a. YES	c. DON'T KNOW
b. NO	d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

SHELTERED SURVEY

Facility Name: _____ **Time:** _____ **to** _____

Interviewer: _____ **Contact phone #:** _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a volunteer for the **[*community name*] housing needs survey**. We are conducting a survey to provide better programs and services to people experiencing homelessness. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

- **Participation is voluntary** and **your name will not be recorded**.
- You can choose to **skip any question** or to **stop the interview at any time**.
- Results will contribute to the understanding of homelessness across Canada, and will help with research to improve services.

A. **Have you answered this survey with a person with this [*identifier*]?**
   [YES: Thank and tally below] [NO: Go to B]

B. **Are you willing to participate in the survey?**
   [YES: Go to C] [NO: Thank and tally below]

- Thank you for agreeing to participate. Please note that you will receive [*item*] for completing the survey.

C. **Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?**
   [YES/NO: Go to D]

D. **Where are you staying tonight? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**

a. *DECLINE TO ANSWER* b. *OWN APARTMENT/HOUSE* c. *SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE (FRIEND OR FAMILY)* d. *MOTEL/HOTEL* e. *HOSPITAL, JAIL, PRISON, REMAND CENTRE*	f. EMERGENCY SHELTER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER g. TRANSITIONAL HOUSING h. PUBLIC SPACE (E.G., SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER) i. VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK) j. MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK k. ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING l. OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY)_____ m. RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]
THANK AND TALLY BELOW	**BEGIN SURVEY AND NOTE RESPONSES TO C & D**

Instructions: For those that are *not* **surveyed**, please fill the sheet below indicating the reason, as well as their GENDER (**M**ale, **F**emale, **O**ther) and AGE (in years).

#	Reason not Surveyed			Demographics	
	Declined	**Already Responded**	**Tallied Only**	**Gender** (M/F/O)	**Age**
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

…

Sheltered Survey	Survey Number: 2000

Location: _____ **Time:** _____ AM/PM
Interviewer: _____ **Contact #:** _____

NOTE ANSWERS FROM SCREENING QUESTIONS

C. Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?

a. YES	c. DON'T KNOW
b. NO	d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

D. Where are you staying tonight? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]

f. EMERGENCY SHELTER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER	i. VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK)
g. TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	j. MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK
h. PUBLIC SPACE (E.G., SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER)	k. ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING
	l. OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY)_____
	m. RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]

BEGIN SURVEY

1. What family members are with you today? [INDICATE SURVEY NUMBERS FOR ADULTS]

a. NONE	d. OTHER ADULT _____
b. PARTNER _____	e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

c. CHILD(REN)/DEPENDENT(S) [INDICATE AGE FOR EACH MALE AND FEMALE CHILD]

	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age
MALE										
FEMALE										

2. How old are you? Or What year were you born?

a. AGE (in years) _____	b. DON'T KNOW
YEAR BORN _____	c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

3. What gender do you identify with? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]

a. MALE	
b. FEMALE	d. DON'T KNOW
c. OTHER RESPONSE_____	e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

4. Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indian, Native, with or without status.

a. YES -------------------->	**If YES,**
	i. FIRST NATIONS: OFF-RESERVE
	ii. FIRST NATIONS: ON-RESERVE
b. NO	iii. INUIT
c. DON'T KNOW	iv. MÉTIS
d. DECLINE TO ANSWER	v. NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY
	vi. UNKNOWN

5. Have you ever had any service in the Canadian Military or RCMP?
   [Military includes Canadian Navy, Army, or Air Force]

a. YES, MILITARY b. YES, RCMP c. NO	d. DON'T KNOW e. DECLINE TO ANSWER

6. Did you move to [*community name*] in the past year?

a. YES b. NO	c. DON'T KNOW d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

7. Are you a recent immigrant or refugee in Canada within the past 5 years?

a. YES b. NO	c. DON'T KNOW d. DECLINE TO ANSWER

8. When did you become homeless most recently? [current episode of homelessness]

a. DATE _____ (best estimate) (YYYY-MM-DD)	b. DON'T KNOW c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

9. How many times have you been homeless in the past 3 years? [in and out of homelessness]

a. NUMBER OF TIMES _____ (best estimate)	b. DON'T KNOW c. DECLINE TO ANSWER

10. Where do you get your money from? [MAY PROVIDE EXAMPLES. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

a. EMPLOYMENT b. INFORMAL/SELF-EMPLOYMENT (E.G., BOTTLE RETURNS, PANHANDLING) c. EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE d. WELFARE/INCOME ASSISTANCE e. DISABILITY BENEFIT	f. SENIORS BENEFITS (E.G., CPP/OAS/GIS) g. CHILD AND FAMILY TAX BENEFITS h. MONEY FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS i. OTHER _____ j. NO INCOME k. DECLINE TO ANSWER

11. Do you have a need for services related to… [READ CATEGORIES. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

a. CHRONIC/ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITION b. PHYSICAL DISABILITY c. LEARNING DISABILITY d. ADDICTION or SUBSTANCE USE	e. MENTAL ILLNESS f. BRAIN INJURY g. FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD) h. PREGNANCY (IF RESPONDENT IS FEMALE)

12. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year?

a. YES b. NO	c. DON'T KNOW d. DECLINE TO ANSWER