MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

MOVING TO END AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

2023 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count Volunteer Manual

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Thank you for volunteering to participate in the 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. It takes community collaboration and hundreds of volunteers to conduct a meaningful Count. We couldn't do it without you!

The PIT Count will be January 24, 25, and 28, 2023 throughout Marion and Polk counties.

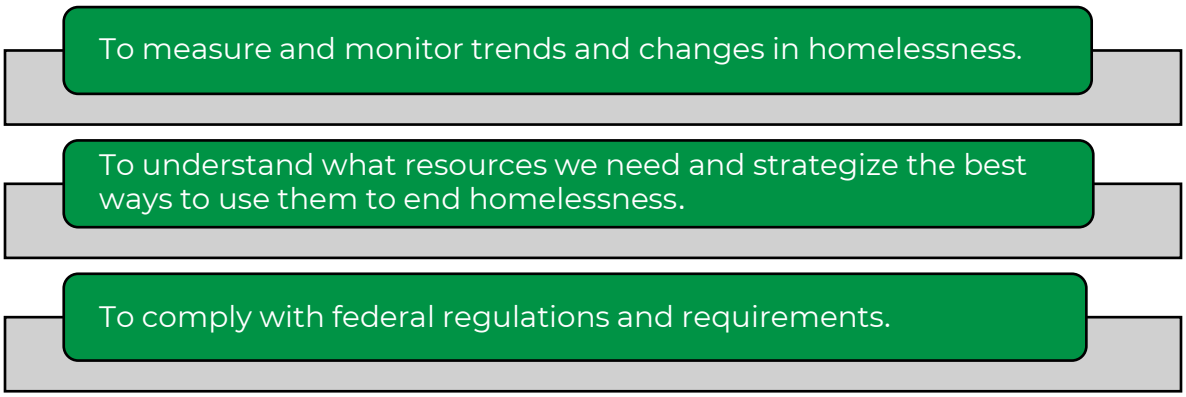
2023 POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT – GENERAL INFORMATION

The PIT Count provides a snapshot of homelessness in the community.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that this annual, nationwide census be conducted in the last ten days of January. Its purpose is to gather information on the total number and characteristics of individuals and households experiencing homelessness.

In the Marion/Polk region, the count is a collaborative effort between local service providers and volunteers in the community. The Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance, the local Continuum of Care (CoC) oversees the count each year.

WHY DO WE DO THE PIT COUNT?



WHY DOES THE PIT COUNT TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF JANUARY?

- Having the same timeframe for every community ensures consistency across the U.S.
- The same timeframe year after year ensures that trends are monitored appropriately.
- It is related to a night in winter because each CoC is likely maximizing its resources to serve people's needs. Thus, this timing can provide a more precise picture of who is unable to access emergency shelter or other crisis response assistance.

- It is at the end of the month to ensure that people who can only pay for temporary housing for part of the month are generally included in the count. For example, some people can afford to stay in a motel, but only for the first few weeks after receiving their public benefits payment at the beginning of the month.

HOW IS THE PIT COUNT CONDUCTED?

There are three parts to the PIT Count:

1. Sheltered Count: An annual PIT Count of people staying in emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or transitional housing.

2. Unsheltered Count: Surveying people residing in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings.

3. Youth Count: Focuses on unaccompanied youth ages 13-25 experiencing homelessness.

Volunteers play a vital role in the success of the unsheltered and youth counts. Volunteer teams (two people per team) go out into the community to engage with people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers conduct brief interviews and if available, offer hygiene items, food, and resource lists to participants.

COUNTING US APP

Surveys are done through a free mobile app that is available for use on smartphones, tablets, and computers. The Counting Us app tags the geographic location where the survey was conducted, allowing count administrators to monitor the progress of the count. Counting Us is available in the App Store on IOS devices or the Google Play Store on Android devices.

Getting Started with Counting Us is a brief video that demonstrates how to register for the app. Set-up key: MarionPolk2023.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Each volunteer is required to fill out the volunteer waiver form prior to participation. The waiver form can be found on the MWVHA website.

Volunteer training will be provided via Zoom, and a recording of the training session will be posted on the MWVHA website.

WHAT TO WEAR FOR THE PIT COUNT

The PIT Count is a rain or shine event. Plan accordingly for the weather on the day of your volunteer shift.

Outreach workers and volunteers will be working outside while conducting the Count and may at times need to walk on unpaved terrain and paths to locate individuals to be surveyed.

- Wear comfortable, weather appropriate clothing that you don't mind getting dirty. Professional dress is not advised.
- Wear warm and comfortable closed-toed shoes.
- Do not bring purses.

WHAT TO BRING FOR THE PIT COUNT

- Cell phone (fully charged), remote charger or backup battery.
- Some form of ID.
- Optional – a wagon or backpack to carry supplies for distribution.
- Eat before you come. Bring personal snacks and water as needed.
- Energy and compassion; a good set of eyes (visual observation is key).

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS AND GATHERING LOCATIONS

Each volunteer must register for a specific time slot and volunteer location. Volunteer registration is available through the MWVHA PIT Count website.

Report to your volunteer location at the time of your shift and check in with your key volunteer.

Each gathering location will have a key volunteer on site who is the point of contact for your area and is able to answer any questions you may have.

Volunteers will receive information about their assignments, get outreach supplies, contact information for your key volunteer, and any other materials available to take out into the community.

Key volunteers will assign areas for volunteers to do their outreach. It is

important that volunteers stick within their assigned areas and the assignment objectives given to them at check in to ensure that as many homeless households and individuals as possible are counted.

If you finish counting individuals in your assigned area before your shift is over, contact your key volunteer for further direction.

At the end of your shift, you will need to sign out. This can be done by contacting your key volunteer or by returning to the gathering location and signing out.

All outreach supplies should be returned to the gathering location so they can be handed out to another team.

See list of key volunteers and stationary PIT Count sites can be found on the PIT Count webpage.

CONDUCTING PIT INTERVIEWS

Remember that you are speaking to highly vulnerable people and asking some very sensitive questions. Always approach with respect for the person you're speaking with and respect for their dignity.

Everyone has the right to refuse to answer any or all of your questions.

Never to assume that you know anything about the person you are interviewing.

Getting an individual's consent to talk to them and record their information is important. If they do consent to speaking with you, be sure to ask every question on the survey.

Ask all questions unless the person has already given the answer to the question over the course of your conversation.

> For example, maybe they tell you they're a veteran before you ask, so you don't need to re-ask them later when you get to that question.

There may be some questions on the survey that feel a little awkward or uncomfortable to ask. It's okay and normal to feel that way, but it's important that you do ask all of the questions in the way they're phrased.

> The gender question is a good example. A lot of people might think they can identify someone's gender by looking at and talking to them,

so rather than asking "How do you identify your gender?" they might instead want to say "OK, and so I can see that you're male…." or "You're male, right?" to someone they think is a man.

There are a few reasons not to do that:

- First, there are people who don't identify as the gender they might most readily look like, and phrasing questions in a way that makes it seem like you think you know the answer is much more likely to lead to them saying "yep, that's right," rather than giving you the answer of how they identify.
- Second, there are many people who identify as something other than male or female or whose gender identity is different from what you might think it is when looking at them.
- By choosing to ask everyone, "How do you identify your gender?" you are doing a service to those who wish others knew to ask that question in a more open-ended way, rather than assuming or prescribing their identity. This same premise applies to all of the questions on the PIT count survey."

PIT COUNT SAFETY

1. You should ALWAYS be with at least one other person.
2. Keep an appropriate conversational distance from those you are interviewing. Always ask permission to approach someone's tent or camping area.
    a. "Hi, I'm [name[and am conducting the PIT Count survey today. I have some supplies to hand out. Is it okay if I approach your tent to talk with you more?"
3. Maintain awareness of the space around you – where other people are, ways to get in or out of the space you're in, etc.
4. Never, under any circumstances, enter someone's tent or structure.
5. Remain standing. It's okay to squat down to speak with someone who is sitting or lying on the ground, but always maintain your balance.
6. Stay in places that are lit, including alleyways. If you use a flashlight, do so respectfully (i.e., don't shine it in anyone's face).
7. Prioritize your own safety. If you don't feel safe approaching someone or going somewhere, don't go.
8. Do not transport anyone other than volunteers in your personal vehicle.
9. ALWAYS call 9-1-1- if you are or someone else is at risk of danger

PIT Count Dos

- DO get consent before asking PIT count survey questions
- DO remember that you may be entering into someone's personal or private space
- DO have a conversation with the people you interview
- DO respect people's time

PIT Count Don'ts

- DON'T take personal photos of or with the people you survey
- DON'T ask questions in a way that assumes you know the answer
- DON'T insert yourself into the person's story
- DON'T force people to answer questions they don't want to answer
- DON'T make promises you can't deliver

-----The End -----

MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT VOLUNTEER WAIVER FORM

This form describes the extent to which you are covered for liability or personal injury while serving as a volunteer for the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (MWVHA) PIT Count event held on January 24, 25, and 28, 2023. ***Please read the following carefully and sign below.***

Tort Liability
The conditions and limits of tort liability protection for volunteers are stated in the Oregon Tort Claims Act, ORS 30.260-300. You will be protected from civil liability for injuries or damage to the person or property of others, subject to the following general conditions:
1. You are working on a volunteer task that is approved as part of the MWVHA PIT Count; and
2. You perform your assigned tasks in good faith, and do not act in a manner that is reckless or with the intent to unlawfully inflict harm to others.

Motor Vehicle Liability
If you use a personally owned vehicle, you are required to have automobile liability insurance to provide your primary coverage for any accidents involving that vehicle for travel related to your volunteer duties for the MWVHA PIT Count.

Accidental Injury Coverage
The Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance has purchased a Volunteer Accident insurance policy that covers volunteers during the PIT Count, should an accidental injury occur. Benefits are available for injuries that result – directly and independently from all other causes – from a covered accident during the volunteer's scheduled PIT Count shift. This policy excludes activities where the volunteer is acting in a manner that is reckless, criminal, or where injury is self-inflicted. For further information about the Volunteer Accident insurance policy, contact Janet Carlson, jcarlson4560@gmail.com.

BY SIGNING BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND FURTHER AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

The ORS 190 Entity, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance has not undertaken any duty or responsibility for my safety. I agree to assume the full responsibility for all risk of bodily injury, death, disability, and property damage from participating in the MWVHA Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. I recognize that volunteer duties for this event include conducting face-to-face interviews in an outdoor setting with people who are experiencing homelessness within the geographic boundaries of Marion and Polk counties.

By my signature, I hereby state that I voluntarily agree to participate in the MWVHA PIT Count, understand the risks involved in participating in the MWVHA PIT Count, and willingly and voluntarily accept these risks.

By my signature, I hereby surrender any right to seek reimbursement from the ORS 190 Entity, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance and its directors, officers, volunteers, and other agents for liability incurred during my participation in the activity described above. I understand that benefits for any injuries I may incur are subject to the limitations and exclusions described in the Volunteer Accident insurance policy.

By my signature, I warrant that I am not relying on any oral representations, statements, or inducement apart from the statements made on this form.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understand, and consent to the terms of this waiver agreement.

Signature	Printed Name
Date	
ORS 190 Entity, MWVHA Signature	Printed Name
Date	