

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

PIT Count Workgroup Meeting

November 22, 2022

Minutes

Workgroup Members In attendance:

Commissioner Danielle Bethell (co-chair), Councilor Shannon Corr (co-chair), Brent DeMoe, Matt Herbert, Sara Webb

Guests: Betty Jordan, Carol McKiel, Christopher Lopez, Dominique Schoessler, Gretchen Bennett, Jayne Downing, Jennifer Fullerton, Jeremy Gordon, Kari Wilhite, Kelly Walther, Nayeli, Roberto, Ryan Pollard, Sara Quick, Sarah Smith, Tricia Frizzell

Staff Consultant: Lisa Trauernicht

1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Danielle Bethell called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm.

After brief introductions, Commissioner Bethell noted that she is interested in having accurate data in order to support all.

2. Lisa Trauernicht presented a PIT Count overview and timeline with discussion on volunteer recruitment, the Counting Us app that is used to conduct the PIT Count survey, volunteer training, and supplies and financial donations that have been requested to support the Count.

- The PIT Count will include surveying homeless individuals that are sheltered, unsheltered, and youth.
- PIT Count will be January 24, 25, and 28, 2023 throughout Marion and Polk counties.

3. Commissioner Bethell opened a discussion about what was missed in past PIT Counts and what should recur in the 2023 Count.

- Brent recommended getting county departments involved in the Count. Make the PIT Count survey part of the work that the county does as the different departments work with clients the week of the Count.
- Betty commented that more experienced outreach volunteers are needed.
- Brent commented that urban and rural areas are very different and that the Counting Us app does not provide a robust survey. The app stops the survey if questions are answered a certain way. Even if HUD doesn't

want the information, it can still be useful to our region and the survey should continue.

- Suggestion - ask supplemental questions if the survey is terminated by the app.
 - There was some discussion about the possibility of using a different tool.
 - Tricia commented that HOME used a survey link last year and it was good.
 - Supplemental questions are needed for the data to be useful. The Department of Education and HUD's definitions of homelessness are not the same, so the HUD questions do not capture all of the homeless. The alliance would have to partner with a McKinney Vento liaison to get accurate youth data.
 - Gretchen commented that it is important to coordinate where volunteers go in order to prevent duplication in counting.
 - Something that should recur is providing resource lists for volunteers to hand out to people they survey.
 - Matt commented that if the additional information is important to the community, customized questions should be considered. Church at the Park uses Cognito Forms for surveys. The software is more powerful and can be customized. Matt suggested keeping Counting Us for the PIT Count because of the geo-location service provided through the app.
 - There was some discussion about customizing survey questions.
4. Polk County is holding a community resource event January 24 in Dallas. There will be 40 social service providers, including medical and dental services. Volunteers will conduct the PIT Count survey with everyone in attendance. The county will provide van service to pick people up and take them to the event.
 5. There is a Spanish version of the survey. Consider recruiting Spanish-speaking volunteers to conduct the survey. Surveys in Spanish must be translated by survey-takers to put into the app.
 6. Commissioner Bethell mentioned that the next meeting will be the first week of December.
 8. Meeting adjourned.

FOLLOW UP EMAILS

From Matt Herbert, Church at the Park

Something that was discussed at the meeting was possibly adding "Count Vehicles and Makeshift Shelters." In section 2.5, it says, "This Agreement includes the option to modify the observation tally to Count Vehicles and Makeshift Shelters that appear to be serving as temporary living situations." However, the observation tally survey has created some issues in the past. The observation tally is used to mark where someone may or may not be staying if you don't have the opportunity to talk to them. For example, if someone refused to take the unsheltered survey, or you see an empty tent, you could opt to complete the observation tally and basically guess their information without talking to the person.

Below are some issues we found in the past when using the observation tally.

1. Those entered into the observation tally survey are not counted in the total number of unsheltered surveys. (Not good for HUD funding).
2. It is very easy for someone to duplicate an observation tally of someone because there is no way to see if that person has already been entered. Multiple volunteers may see the same tent or structure and that person may be counted more than one time.
3. There is no way to check for duplicates in using the observation tally. Volunteers would be guessing different demographics for people they see, so the system would not identify that there was "matching information" that needs to be reviewed to check for duplicates.
4. Volunteers were accidentally selecting the wrong survey to use and were choosing the observation tally when they should have been using the unsheltered survey. Yikes!
5. In the past, it was seen by volunteers as more "convenient" to do the observation tally because you don't actually have to go and talk to that person. This is obviously not good for our data.

I recommend we remove the observation tally completely. We would still be able to see data on how many people are living in vehicles by using the unsheltered survey. We could provide all the training in the world, but we still have to account for human error. If we eliminate this survey, we will prevent people from using the wrong survey and we would likely have better data!

From Jayne Downing, Center for Hope and Safety

If possible, Jayne would appreciate if this question is added to the PIT survey.

“Have you experienced domestic or sexual violence in the past?”

DRAFT