



**MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY
HOMELESS ALLIANCE**
MOVING TO END AND
PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

2025 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count Volunteer Manual

Website: <https://mwvhomelessalliance.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MWVHomelessAlliance>

Contents

2025 POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT – GENERAL INFORMATION 2

 WHY DO WE DO THE PIT COUNT? 2

 WHY DOES THE PIT COUNT TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF JANUARY? 2

 HOW IS THE PIT COUNT CONDUCTED? 3

 COUNTING US APP 3

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES 4

 WHAT TO WEAR FOR THE PIT COUNT 4

 WHAT TO BRING FOR THE PIT COUNT 4

 VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS AND GATHERING LOCATIONS 4

INVITING SURVEY PARTICIPATION 5

CONDUCTING PIT COUNT SURVEYS 7

RECORDING OBSERVATION TALLIES 8

PIT COUNT SAFETY 8

POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT CONDITIONS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE FORM 10

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the 2025 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 ask, "Where did you sleep on the night of Wednesday, January 22?" Data will be collected January 23-29, 2025 throughout Marion and Polk counties.

2025 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.

WHY DO WE DO THE PIT COUNT?

To measure and monitor trends and changes in homelessness.

To understand what resources we need and strategize the best ways to use them to end homelessness.

To comply with federal regulations and requirements.

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.

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

- 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 two 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.

Volunteers play a vital role in the success of the unsheltered count. Volunteer teams (two people per team) go out into the community to engage with people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers offer supplies provided by the Continuum of Care such as socks, food, hygiene items, resource lists, and gift cards. Volunteers also conduct brief interviews.

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. In an area with poor cell service, the app will save the surveys in draft mode to be uploaded when reception is available. 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: **MarionPolk2025**.



VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Sign up to volunteer in the Volunteer Portal: marion-polk.pointintime.info

Each volunteer is required to sign the [volunteer waiver form](#) prior to participation. The waiver form can be found at the end of this manual and in the Counting Us Volunteer Portal.

Volunteer training will be provided via Zoom, and attendance is required for all volunteers.

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.
- Carry personal items in a backpack or sling bag.

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

When you sign up to volunteer in the Volunteer Portal, you will provide information about your preferred location and your availability. Count

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

administrators will match volunteers with needs. You will receive an email assigning you to a specific date, time and location.

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

Each gathering location will have an area lead 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 area lead, and any other materials available to take out into the community.

Area leads 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 area lead for further direction.

At the end of your shift, you will need to sign out. This can be done by contacting your area lead 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.

INVITING SURVEY PARTICIPATION

When approaching a camp or an area where folks experiencing unsheltered homelessness are staying, announce yourself. Ask permission to approach someone's tent or camping area.

- For example: "Hello, my name is [Your Name]. I'm a volunteer giving out supplies and helping with a community survey. Is it okay if I approach your tent to talk with you?"

Offer people the supplies provided by the Continuum of Care for the PIT Count (do not offer other items such as cash or cigarettes). People who choose not to do the survey (it is voluntary) are welcome to supplies. Please consider the Point-In-Time Count more than just counting people; it is also an opportunity to give out needed supplies and to show the community cares.

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

Offer supplies and give people the opportunity to choose the items that they need and want.

- For example: “I have some socks and hand-warmers and granola bars [replace as needed with the supplies you brought]. Why don’t you choose two or three things that you can use.”

During the time you introduce yourself and give out supplies, pay attention to any signs that your being there and asking questions could put the person you are speaking to in danger (for example, if they are in a trafficking situation or an abusive relationship). Those indicators could include:

- A noticeably controlling partner (often older)
- Appearing fearful and/or avoiding eye contact
- Signs of physical trauma, such as scars, bruises, or brands
- “Self-care” inconsistent with financial means (hair, nails, lashes, etc.)

(For more info see: <https://hopeandsafety.org/>, <https://www.sablehouse.org/>, and <https://safetycompass.org/>)

If you observe these indicators and conclude your presence puts a person at risk, wish them well and move on. While it will be hard to leave someone in a difficult situation, your drawing unwanted attention to them could put them in harm’s way. Do not push forward with the survey in a situation where you could be compromising someone’s safety. Please make a note of the location and let your area lead know once it is safe to do so or when you check out for the day. The area lead will have the ability to send career outreach staff to the area at a later time to better assess the situation. .

Assuming it is safe for the conversation to continue, let the person know that you are doing a survey. Tell them why the survey matters and ask for their consent.

- For example: “We are doing a survey to help improve services for people experiencing homelessness. It will take a few minutes and your responses will be anonymous. May I ask you the survey questions?”

Remember that you are speaking to highly vulnerable people and asking some very sensitive questions. Always approach and interact with respect.

Events: Some PIT Count surveys will be conducted at events such as a Community Connect or a meal site or a day center. In these settings, you do not need to ask permission to approach their tent but do maintain an appropriate conversational distance. But the principles of offering supplies, asking consent, and showing respect remain crucial.

CONDUCTING PIT COUNT SURVEYS

Once someone has given consent to do the survey, you may begin asking the survey questions. Once you log in to Counting Us, you will want to choose the “Unsheltered Person Survey” option. Remember that all questions are optional. Please remind participants that they can skip a question especially if they seem hesitant to answer.

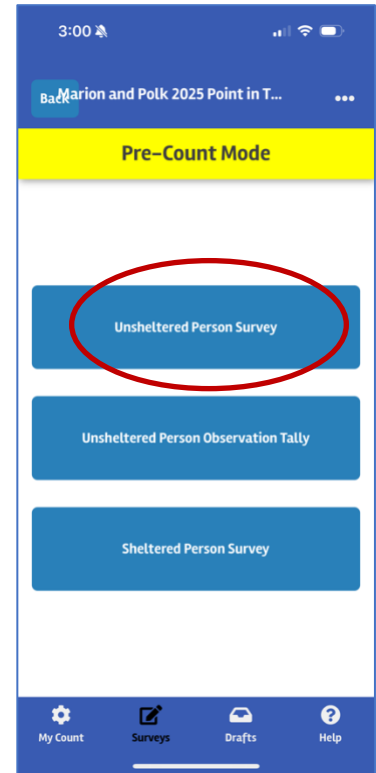
Never assume that you know anything about the person you are interviewing. Ask all questions unless the person has already given the answer to the question over the course of your conversation. For example, maybe they tell you they’re a veteran before you ask, so you don’t need to re-ask them later when 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.

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 asking everyone, “What is 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.

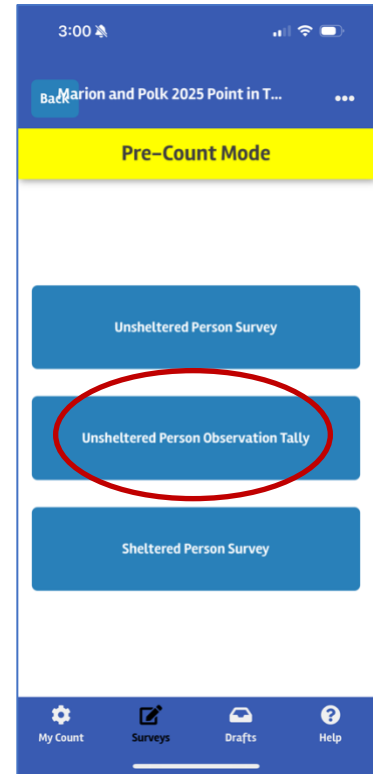


RECORDING OBSERVATION TALLIES

On occasion, surveyors may encounter a person experiencing unsheltered homelessness who is unwilling or unable (asleep, incapacitated, language barrier, etc.) to participate in the survey. In these situations, the surveyor should record an observation tally instead of completing the survey. This is done by selecting the second option after you've logged in to Counting Us called "Unsheltered Person Observation Tally."

Surveyors are asked to indicate why they are recording an observation tally instead of conducting a survey and then to record observable information.

One concern with observation tallies is duplicate entries. For example, if one surveyor records an observation on the first day and a different surveyor records an observation of the same person on the second day. In the notes section, please write in information that will help us identify duplicates. That might be a note about the color of their coat or a description of their dog. In order to decrease duplicate entries, observation tallies may be entered only in the first two days of the Count.



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.
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.

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

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 or in need of medical attention.

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

MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT CONDITIONS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE FORM

I wish to volunteer and offer my services to Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance and to ORS 190 Entity, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (collectively, “MWWHA”). I understand, acknowledge, and agree to the following:

1. I will not receive or expect any wages, salary, benefits, or other compensation from MWWHA for my volunteer services. I understand that I should not accept any gifts while performing my volunteer services.
2. I have the responsibility to refuse to perform any tasks that I feel might physically or mentally endanger/injure another or myself. I understand that my volunteer services can carry with them some inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid those risks. I assume the risks inherent in providing my volunteer services.
3. I understand that I need to review my personal insurance policies to determine if those policies will cover me in the event of an injury. I understand that it is my obligation to provide whatever medical insurance coverage I desire and that MWWHA does not provide workers' compensation or medical insurance coverage of any kind for my injury or illness incurred while providing volunteer services. If I am required to use a personally owned motor vehicle in the course of my volunteer services, I understand that it is my responsibility to provide insurance coverage for any accidents involving that vehicle and that MWWHA provides no insurance coverage for my personal vehicle.
4. I understand that if I am involved in any accident or exposed to a potential liability situation while performing volunteer service, I must inform the MWWHA executive director.
5. I understand that the volunteer services I am providing are limited to those tasks and activities that I am directed to perform by a MWWHA employee or contractor. I acknowledge that MWWHA reserves the right to remove me from my volunteer role at its sole discretion and at any time.
6. I release MWWHA from any and all claims, liability, costs, or other obligations incurred as a result of any activities I perform that are not the designated tasks of my volunteer assignment. I also release MWWHA from any claims, liability, or costs related to any injury I receive while performing the activities of my volunteer assignment.

Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

7. I understand that as a volunteer for the Point-in-Time Count it may be necessary for me to collect and handle confidential information. I acknowledge that I will keep all information confidential both during my volunteer term and after I end my volunteer duties. I understand that I am not to disclose to any person or entity other than MWVHA any identifying confidential information and/or records or to make any statement that could reasonably be considered to identify any individual involved in the Count.
8. I acknowledge that I am signing this agreement freely and voluntarily and intend by my signature to effect a complete and unconditional release of all liability to the greatest extent allowed by law.

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Date