Proposed Methodology for the 2024 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count (PIT)

Prepared for the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care Leadership Council (NNCLC)

by the Washoe County Human Services Agency, Division of Housing and Homeless Services (HHS)

Approved on December 5, 2023

The Basics

The Homelessness Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a nationwide process developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to capture a snapshot of homelessness across communities. The PIT count helps establish the dimensions of the problem of homelessness in our communities and helps decision-makers and program administrators by providing key insights into the barriers to housing our sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations face over time.

With reliable data, we can get a better understanding of the unique needs of our community, as well as measure the effectiveness of our efforts toward ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

The PIT count occurs over a single night, sometime during the last 10 days of January, per HUD. For an exhaustive explanation of the PIT process and HUD's guidance for administering it, refer to the [Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide](#).

Proposed PIT Count Methodologies for 2024

Per HUD's guidance, the Washoe County Human Services Agency, Division of Housing and Homeless Services (HHS) has prepared the following PIT count methodology for 2024 and seeks formal approval of this plan from the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care Leadership Council (NNCLC).

HHS's proposed methodologies for the 2024 PIT count are consistent with the approaches taken in previous years which have been successful. There are two primary populations that the Northern Nevada Continuum of Care (CoC) is tasked with assessing during the PIT count, and both require different methodologies based on their compositions. Those populations are (1) sheltered homeless, and (2) unsheltered homeless.

Sheltered Homelessness Methodology

Consistent with HUD's guidance, HHS suggests leveraging a combination of the census and project-level survey approaches laid out by HUD in their PIT methodology guide. The census approach means we will rely on our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to report on the total number of homeless people in shelter on the night of the PIT count for all providers currently in the system.

However, since there are still some local housing providers not currently active in HMIS, we will also continue to disseminate project-level census surveys to those providers in

order to capture the total number of sheltered homeless people served by their projects on the night of the PIT count, and their characteristics via random sampling.

Unsheltered Homelessness Methodology

HHS suggests utilizing a combined "complete coverage" and "known locations" approaches to the "Night of the Count" for our unsheltered population, often referred to as the "street count." This combined approach counts people who are unsheltered on the Night of the Count by canvassing the major metropolitan areas (via the complete coverage approach) of the Northern Nevada CoC region. This includes the Cities of Reno and Sparks and immediate surrounding areas, in addition to other towns further away such as Gerlach and Wadsworth (known locations approach), but excluding areas believed to be unhabitable which includes much of the northern desert region of Washoe County. We will rely on our partners with the Washoe County Sheriff's Office to survey the remote areas of our region ahead of and on the night of the PIT count. Anyone identified in those areas will be counted via the observation method by our Sheriff Officer partners stationed in those regions. This combined approach is consistent with HUD's guidance and the PIT methodology used in recent years.

HHS further suggests surveying all those willing who are counted during the unsheltered/ "street count," in order to systematically assess the characteristics of both of these populations via the mobile application, Counting Us. Based on the Northern Nevada CoC 2023 PIT Count, we expect to encounter approximately 330 people during the unsheltered count this year.[1] By conducting a thorough survey analysis, we can be confident that the results we get on the Night of the Count reliably represent the unique characteristics and needs of our unsheltered population more so than a sample could provide; and is consistent with HUD's guidance.

The Street Count will consist of multiple teams assigned to a specific geographic zone in the region and will be comprised of both local homeless street outreach workers and law enforcement partners. Homeless street outreach workers will be responsible for administering the survey to those experiencing homelessness while law enforcement partners will be present to ensure the safety of all involved. Law enforcement officers will not administer to the survey directly.

In preparation for the Street Count, we will rely on our local homeless street outreach partners and members of the Northern Nevada Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) to inform our mapping efforts which include determining zone boundaries, identifying coverage strategies for densely populated areas, and keeping up to date on the size and locations of encampments leading up to the Night of the PIT.

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[1] PIT 2023 (washoecounty.gov)

Motel Count Methodology

HHS additionally suggests conducting the supplemental Motel Count in addition to the Northern Nevada CoC Street Count activities. Washoe County has conducted the Motel Count to track the usage of weekly hotels and motels by people experiencing homelessness in the area for several years. While HUD's definition for what it considers 'sheltered homelessness' in a hotel or motel setting is restricted to stays that are "paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs[2]," we recognize that many in our community experiencing homelessness utilize other means of payment for their hotel and motel stays.

Consistent with how the Motel Count has run historically, a Motel Count Lead will be identified to oversee the distribution of paper and/or electronic surveys to be distributed to known weekly hotels and motels throughout Washoe County. The Motel Count will occur on the same morning as the Street Count, beginning later in the morning, typically 9 a.m. Motel Counters will meet to be briefed on their assignments, and will be provided survey packets prepared for the weekly hotels and motels they were assigned. Motel Counters will return any completed Motel Count surveys to the HHS office and note any locations where they were not able to make contact with hotel or motel management. In those cases, surveys will be left with the hotel or motel office with a request to complete them by a certain time. The Motel Count Lead has historically picked up completed surveys from participating hotels and motels in the weeks after the Street Count, but other methods such as providing a return stamped envelope could suffice as well. The Motel Count Lead then records the responses of all respondents and provides a disaggregated data set to the HHS team by the beginning of March.

Data Quality and Deduplication Plan

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HHS staff will analyze the data quality of housing provider programs included in HMIS to ensure that participating provider data is complete and accurate. This will include assessing missing data rates, overlapping enrollments, and project entry and exit dates. For any characteristics not 100% reported by providers (such as veteran status), HHS will deploy a non-random sample and extrapolation approach for data available for at least 80% of clients in HMIS.

Street counters for the unsheltered street count will be trained on HUD's PIT standards which includes the specifics about who should be counted, and who shouldn't. Our PIT count will occur over a single "night"/ early morning so everyone counted during the Street Count will have been unsheltered on the Night of the Count. Last, we'll be able to

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[2] CoC and ESG Homeless Eligibility - Category 1: Literally Homeless - HUD Exchange

further control for possible counting duplication through our complete coverage approach for the street count. This approach assigns enumerators to a specific region of the CoC territory that will not be covered by any other enumerator group.