

FAQ for Victim Service Providers

Participating in the 2021 Point-in-Time and Housing Inventory Counts

Introduction

Annually, communities engage in Point-in-Time(PIT) and Housing Inventory Counts (HIC) to assess the severity of homelessness in their communities and their homeless service system's capacity to re-house individuals experiencing homelessness. With communities reeling from impacts and surges of COVID-19, the 2021 PIT and HIC will be critical datasets in understanding the ways in which homelessness occurs as well as the immediate resources communities need in serving homeless populations.

This document answers questions on why it is important for victim service providers (VSPs) and Continuums of Care (CoCs) to effectively work together to accurately, safely, and confidentially include survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the 2021 HIC and PIT count. Additional guidance on how VSPs and CoCs can effectively partner for these counts can be found on the [HUD Exchange](#).

What is the Point-in Time (PIT) Count?

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual census-like count of all persons experiencing homelessness within a geographic area. The goal of HUD's PIT count is to take a "snapshot" of a community's current state of homelessness, including details about various homeless populations (e.g., survivors of domestic or sexual violence, unaccompanied youth, chronically homeless persons, etc.). There are two parts to the PIT count: 1) a sheltered count (persons residing in an emergency shelter or transitional housing) and 2) an unsheltered count (persons residing outside or in a place not meant for human habitation). The PIT count is conducted on a single night during the last 10 days in January. Communities are required by HUD to collect this data every other year, but many communities coordinate a PIT count every year to capture trends and respond accordingly to people experiencing homelessness.

It is the responsibility of the local CoC to conduct the PIT count; however, CoCs partner with many service providers who may not be members of the local CoC, including VSPs, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders, to complete the count. PIT data collected during the count is used to measure homelessness at the local and national level, is published by HUD on the HUD Exchange, and is ultimately reported to Congress. The snapshot created by the PIT count helps the CoC, federal partners, and local communities understand the nature and extent of homelessness, and to make year-over year comparisons.

What is the Housing Inventory Count (HIC)?

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is an inventory of a communities' CoC project beds and units, dedicated to serving persons who are homeless at a specific point in time. The HIC helps communities understand the relationship between their homelessness response system, available bed and housing stock, and the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the community. The information collected is reflective of all emergency shelter or permanent housing stock for CoCs and will include information from service providers who may not be members of the local CoC, including VSPs,

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community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. Emergency shelter beds and permanent housing projects such as rapid re-housing are examples of the types of projects included in the HIC. In addition to these project types, the HIC count is also inclusive of other projects within the CoC that provide dedicated beds for persons who are homeless such as Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) funded transitional housing or permanent housing supported through use of Victim of Crime Act Funding (VOCA). Like the PIT count, it is the responsibility of the local CoC to conduct the HIC count. In order for CoCs to adequately capture the true housing stock availability or lack thereof for survivors, it is important that VSPs be open and willing to share information on available housing stock with their CoC. This information is not inclusive of any survivor level, personally identifying information.

Why is it important to engage victim service providers (VSPs) and survivors in the PIT count and HIC?

Participation in both the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and the Point-in-Time (PIT) count provides crucial information to decision makers and stakeholders on the housing needs and gaps faced by community members across the country. With domestic and sexual violence being leading causes of homelessness, VSP participation in these counts is a critical piece of understanding the scope of who is impacted by homelessness, how, and why. In understanding the full scope of the issue, federal, state, and local resources can be allocated for survivors in ways that are most efficient and representative of the true need.

How are PIT count and HIC data collected for VSPs and where does it go?

CoCs can collect PIT count data using a variety of methodologies to capture the most comprehensive scope of homelessness on one night in the community. For the sheltered count, CoCs utilize their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to pull information for individuals and families residing in homeless programs that participate in HMIS. However, given the confidentiality and safety needs of survivors receiving VAWA protected services at VSP organizations and HEARTH Act protections prohibiting survivor data from being entered into HMIS systems, VSPs participating in the PIT can submit aggregate data (de-identified) to the CoC by using its comparable database (CD) to pull de-identified, program participant information for the PIT count. To ensure that information is captured accurately and in a timely manner, VSPs should work with vendors to ensure their CD systems can pull the appropriate data points. **VSPs are only required to provide aggregate information** on the number of persons in their emergency shelter or transitional housing (TH) programs.

Survivors who are receiving housing assistance through rapid re-housing who have not yet identified a permanent housing location and remain in emergency shelter or TH should also be included in the PIT count. For example, a person residing in an emergency shelter and being assisted through RRH assistance to obtain housing must be counted in the sheltered PIT count for emergency shelter.¹ Survivors being served in the TH component of a joint component project would be included in PIT data as well. CoCs and

¹ <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Notice-CPD-18-08-2019-HIC-PIT-Data-Collection-Notice.pdf>

VSPs are encouraged to work together to decide which method of reporting works best and most importantly ensures the safety, confidentiality, and security of survivors.

For the HIC count, VSPs are exempt from providing address information but are encouraged to provide a zip code associated with the project. VSPs should work with and utilize CoC forms to report their HIC data. Precautions to maintain confidentiality should be exercised in the coordination of these efforts and particular consideration given in communities where providing project level zip code information could compromise survivor confidentiality if paired with other data.

Why should VSPs and CoCs work together for the PIT count?

While survivors have the autonomy to choose if they participate in the PIT count, VSPs receiving HUD funding are required to participate. HUD strongly encourages CoCs to work closely with VSPs, both receiving HUD funds and those who are not, to determine the best ways to safely and confidentially collect data on survivors within their communities. CoCs should intentionally include VSPs from the beginning of the PIT and HIC planning process. Many communities have successfully done this by developing diverse, multidiscipline human service planning committees. This approach has been beneficial in allowing VSPs to work with partners to train count volunteers and staff on best practice, trauma informed approaches when encountering survivors during unsheltered count activities, best practices in maintaining confidentiality, ensuring use of culturally and linguistically appropriate tools, and informing them on what resources can be shared with those who disclose they are survivors.

Survivors face complex barriers to both shelter and housing. Collecting data about their experiences in the PIT count allows CoCs and communities to better address the needs of survivors and to leverage additional resources to meet these unique needs. Including survivors in the count can enable communities to demonstrate the need for housing for survivors and their families, identify gaps in supports and services, enhance outreach and engagement strategies and support securing additional resources specific to households impacted by domestic violence and sexual violence.

Conclusion

VSPs are encouraged to work with their CoCs and share PIT aggregate data to help ensure adequate funding and resource allocation in meeting survivors housing needs in the future. Accounting for the housing experiences and needs of survivors is a critical piece in addressing root causes of homelessness and ultimately a contributing factor to efforts to end domestic violence and sexual violence. The openness and willingness of both VSPs and CoCs to work together for the 2021 PIT and HIC count aids communities in getting closer to this goal.

Additional resources:

- [Partnering with CoCs on the PIT Count: What Domestic Violence Providers Need to Know \(2018\)](#)
- [Engaging with Domestic Violence Survivors: What CoCs Need to Know \(2018\)](#)
- [Domestic Violence and Homelessness](#)

If you have additional questions about the PIT count or changes for this year's count, please submit them via the [Ask a Question](#) page on the [HUD Exchange](#).

Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium

The Consortium, launched in 2015, provides training, technical assistance, and resource development at the critical intersection of homelessness and domestic violence and sexual assault. Funded by a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Consortium supports a TA Team of four national organizations: Collaborative Solutions, the National Alliance for Safe Housing, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. The Consortium works collaboratively to improve policies and practices that strengthen efforts to build safe and supportive housing options for domestic and sexual violence survivors.

Questions? The Consortium TA Team is available to provide individualized technical assistance and training to communities interested in expanding the array of safe housing options for domestic and sexual violence survivors. We can also provide support to domestic and sexual violence advocates, homelessness and housing providers, and other allied partners interested in building stronger community collaborations.



Visit SafeHousingPartnerships.org to access a comprehensive collection of online resources and to request technical assistance and support.