

MAY 3, 2015

HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY

NANAIMO COMMUNITY ENTITY: UNITED WAY OF NANAIMO

MS. SIGNY MADDEN, CHAIR

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENT THE NANAIMO COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD IN WINNIPEG ON MAY 1 FOR THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HPS POINT-IN TIME COUNT.

I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT THIS OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITIES WHO WISH TO ALIGN WITH THE HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY COORDINATED POINT-IN-TIME COUNT IN JANUARY, 2016, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE NANAIMO COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

DAVID LABERGE

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE / NANAIMO CAB

# **OVERVIEW OF THE HPS POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

## **PURPOSE OF THE PiT COUNT**

The Count has two primary purposes

- To identify how many people experience homelessness in shelters and on the street at a given time. PiT counts are intended to track community progress in reducing homelessness.
- To survey the demographics and service needs of the homeless population. This information can be used to target community resources where they are most needed.

The count is **not** intended to:

- Measure everyone who experiences homelessness in the community over time. It is recognized the focus on a single day will not include many people who cycle in and out of homelessness.
- Be a count of hidden homeless (i.e. people who are couch surfing). Communities have the option of attempting to count these numbers, but they aren't included in HPS counts.

## **WHY A COORDINATED PiT COUNT IN CANADA**

Communities across Canada conduct counts, taking different approaches (time of year, time of day, who is counted). 61 selected communities across Canada will conduct a count at the same time of year using standardized procedures to create a national picture of homelessness.

## **WHEN WILL THE PiT COUNT OCCUR**

The PiT count will take place in January/February 2016. There is considerable feedback from communities that this timeline is too short to properly organize, that a winter count will be more difficult, and may not produce the same results at a summer count. HPS acknowledges these challenges but has decided to move forward with this timeline.

## **WHAT IS THE HPS PiT COUNT APPROACH**

The core HPS PiT approach includes people who are experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

## UNSHELTERED

- Includes people sleeping in places unfit for human habitation including streets, parks, abandoned buildings, vehicles and other outdoor locations.

## SHELTERED

- Includes people sleeping in; emergency shelters, extreme weather shelters, VAW shelters, and transitional housing. This may include people who receive motel vouchers in lieu of shelter beds.
- It **does not** include people in Housing First programs, in social or subsidized housing, visitors/students/campers with access to permanent housing, people staying with family or friends, or people in public systems (corrections or health). (Note: local communities can count these individuals for local statistics, but they will not be included in HPS counts).

## **CORE SCREENING AND SURVEY QUESTIONS**

HPS has developed a standardized survey of core questions which are intended to correctly identify people as meeting the homeless criteria and to provide more information about the population and their service needs.

Communities have the option of adding questions that are relevant to their local information needs.

HPS has developed this standardized methodology for consistency across communities, while allowing for flexibility to be tailored to each community's local context.

## **CORE STANDARDS**

- (1) The count will be conducted in January/February 2016
- (2) The methodology must use the core screening and survey questions to identify the Core populations.
- (3) Local HPS CAB and Aboriginal CAB must be consulted and approved by the Community Entity.
- (4) The results of the Core Count are to be reported to HPS by HIFIS software
- (5) Sheltered counts are based on the number of individuals in emergency and transitional shelters (which may span two calendar days).
- (6) Sheltered counts should be based on data collected by shelter data systems (HIFIS) with surveys conducted at the shelter facilities.
- (7) Unsheltered counts are based on a street survey conducted within a 24-hour period.
- (8) The community entity is responsible for the quality of data collected. The CE is responsible for providing proper training for staff and volunteers, survey procedures, data management, privacy and personal safety matters.

## RECOMMENDED STANDARDS

- (1) The PiT count should be coordinated in consultation with all sectors involved in homelessness including CAB, Aboriginal CAB, the municipality, police, emergency services, service providers, shelter providers, transit authorities and others.
- (2) PiT counts should include data from local public systems (correctional facilities, hospitals, detox centres) for people with no fixed address and no discharge plan that includes housing. This number, however, will not be included in the Core Count data submitted to HPS.
- (3) The PiT Count coordinator should work closely with the local HIFIS coordinator and other shelter service providers.
- (4) The results of the Count should be shared with the community (particularly count partners).
- (5) The sheltered and unsheltered counts should be conducted simultaneously to limit double counting.

## TIMELINE

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|----------------------|--|
| (1) PLANNING -       | 4+ Months before the count<br><b>Form a local PiT Count Committee</b><br>Identify Count, data, and volunteer coordinators<br>Engage the local community<br>Develop local survey questions<br>Identify a search strategy<br>Communication plan                |
| (2) PREPARATION -    | 1-4 Months before the count<br><b>Identify a search method</b><br><b>Finalize survey questions</b><br>Plan is developed for day of the count<br>A headquarters is identified<br>List of resources needed is prepared<br><b>Volunteer recruitment</b> begins. |
| (3) IMPLEMENTATION - | < 1 month before the count<br>Last minute preparations<br>Supplies are obtained<br><b>Volunteers are trained and assigned to teams</b>   |
| (4) POST-COUNT -     | 1+ days after the count<br><b>Survey data is entered and compiled</b> with other data.<br>Results are communicated to volunteers and general community<br>PiT committee reviews the experience<br>Begin planning for the next count                          |

## DEVELOPING A LOCAL APPROACH

A successful count is dependent on involvement of the community organized in the form of a local PiT Count Committee. It will not be possible to have a single coordinator undertake the planning and preparation.

All **homeless service organizations** in the community should be on board, particularly those with frontline outreach and shelter expertise. Consideration should be made for particular vulnerable populations including those that provide services to youth, Aboriginals, seniors and Veterans.

The **municipality** should provide administrative and logistical support for the count. (i.e. mapping, policing, transit, parks workers who know where to find homeless populations.)

If the community has a **shelter data coordinator** (i.e. a HIFIS community coordinator), this person or organization should be on the committee to facilitate access to shelter data.

The **university** may be able to provide support with technical aspects of the count and analyzing the data. Students may be good candidates for count volunteers and post-count data entry and cleaning.

**Local business** might support the PiT count by funding supplies or snacks for the volunteers, or incentive items for the homeless population (i.e. socks, blankets, gift cards).

**People with lived experience** of homelessness should be on the committee to validate any questions added to the survey, to help identify locations, and to solicit other volunteers for the count day.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer recruitment should commence months before the count. It is recommended that volunteers be drawn from networks within the local PiT count committee as well as the general population.

Experiential volunteers will bring an added element of comfort and security to the count. Each team should have at least one person with professional knowledge of the homeless population.

It is important to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers, and to communicate the outcomes of the count.

It is recommended to plan for more volunteers than are needed, as high numbers of no-shows can be anticipated, particularly if weather conditions are poor on the night of the count.

## **FORMING SURVEY TEAMS AND TRAINING**

Survey teams should consist of 2-3 people, preferably with experiential individuals on each team.

Training should be done close to the date of the count to improve attendance and to keep information fresh and recent.

Training should cover logistics and safety. Training materials will be made available through COH supported by HPS and should include;

- The purpose of the count; why it is happening and expected benefits;
- How to use the survey to screen for homelessness and how to collect reliable data;
- How to approach someone to participate in the survey in a respectful manner and how to use honoraria/incentives;
- What to wear and bring on the day of the count, and who to contact in the case of an emergency.

## **THE SURVEYS**

Survey teams should be provided with a script to follow for each encounter which is designed to be brief as possible while being clear about the purpose and how the results will be used. The respondents should be made aware of how the information will be used, and that it will be kept confidential and not reported at an individual level.

## **SCREENING QUESTIONS**

- (1) Have you answered this survey with a person with this (identification button)?
- (2) Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?
- (3) Where are you staying tonight?

## **CORE SURVEY QUESTIONS**

- (1) What family members are with you?
- (2) How old are you / what year were you born?
- (3) What gender do you identify with?
- (4) Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry?
- (5) Did you move to Nanaimo in the past year?
- (6) Are you a recent immigrant or refugee in Canada within the past 5 years?
- (7) Have you ever had any service in the Canadian military or RCMP?

- (8) When did you become homeless most recently? How many times have you been homeless over the past 3 years?
- (9) Where do you get your money from?
- (10) Do you have a need for services related to: (list of mental and physical health issues, disabilities, pregnancy and other concerns)?
- (11) Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past 12 months? (unsheltered survey only)

## **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

Each survey form should have a serial number that can serve as an anonymous identifier for the respondent. In the case of families, each member should have his number indicated on the forms for their family members next to their relationship (partner, dependent child, etc) This serves to keep the information on the family together and can provide information about family size.

It is recommended that survey information from children under the age of 16 be limited to age and gender.

## **BUILDING ON CORE QUESTIONS**

The community may wish to consider additional questions to include in the count. The survey should not exceed 20 questions. Some examples of commonly added questions are inquiries about which community they moved on from, or sexual orientation (i.e. to determine if they became homeless as a result of family conflict).

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has developed a set of questions that can be added to the HPS Core Questions. They are not required as part of the HPS approach.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE SHELTERED SURVEY**

APPROACH – the survey may be administered upon intake or from existing shelter data.

CONSENT – consent will be required to proceed with the questionnaire to ensure that the respondent is aware that confidentiality is maintained and to understand how their responses will be used.

QUESTIONNAIRE- there are 9 core sheltered survey questions.

HONORARIUM – may be used to engage the person, or thanking them for participating.

OTHER SERVICES - the survey answers can be used to offer other relevant services that are available.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE UNSHELTERED SURVEY**

APPROACH – survey teams should approach everyone they encounter to ask screening questions. There is often a reluctance to participate in a homeless survey, so the script is labeled as a “housing survey”.

SCREENING- there are three screening questions to reduce double-counting, to exclude anyone who has access to housing, and exclude anyone who will be staying in a shelter or with family or friends.

CONSENT – same as the sheltered survey.

QUESTIONNAIRE – there are 10 core unsheltered survey questions.

HONORARIUM - same as sheltered survey.

OTHER SERVICES – same as the sheltered survey.

## **AFTER THE PiT COUNT**

The completed surveys should be collected from shelters and survey teams on the night of the count or the following morning.

The contributions of the local count committee, local shelters, volunteers, donors, and consulting organizations should be acknowledged. The results of the survey should be shared with everyone.

HPS has developed software to facilitate data entry, analysis and report. Alternatively, MS Excel worksheets can be utilized to import data from a spreadsheet. The software will securely transmit the results to HPS. The software can be customized to generate other reports that include any local questions.

PiT count responses should be anonymous, but nonetheless there is an expectation that data will be stored on a secure computer or server with limited access. Volunteers and researchers who work with the data should be asked to sign confidentiality agreements.

Physical survey forms should be securely stored and destroyed after entered data has been verified.

A contact from each survey team should be identified to verify ambiguity in any written responses.

Surveys that are incomplete can still be included if a sufficient number of questions are answered.

Cross checks should be undertaken to determine if it appears likely that the same person has completed a survey more than once.

It is important to remember that the PiT count will not be representative of all people who experience homelessness in Nanaimo because it is done only over a single day.

## COMMUNICATING THE RESULTS

Recognize that the community and the project partners in particular will want to see the results. By keeping the community involved, there may be new opportunities for engagement, public interest and finding new solutions.

Media releases and social media announcements are encouraged. It is also suggested that an open community meeting to talk about the results may be useful.

Any opportunity to report the results and to demonstrate the value of the count to the respondents is important.

## PLANNING THE NEXT COUNT

The PiT Committee should meet after the count to review what went well and what can be improved in future counts. An anonymous survey with PiT Count Partners and volunteers is encouraged as this feedback will provide information on how the count worked on the ground.

## FUNDING

HPS will contact the community entity in May 2015 to solicit applications for funding. The submissions from CE's will require;

- Letter of acknowledgement
- Budget proposal
- Letter of support

Funding will be based on a tiered system based on population and allocation.

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>Range</b>
I	> 2 million	> \$ 7 million	\$70-85,000
II	> 300,000	>\$700,000	\$45-60,000
III	>100,000	>\$400,000	\$25-35,000
IV	<100,000	>\$120,000	\$15-25,000
V	<40,000	<\$120,000	\$10-15,000

### ESTIMATED PiT Count Workload

<b>PiT Count Coordinator</b>	<b>Assistant Coordinator</b>	<b>Data Management</b>
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#### **Tier III**

.5 FTE for 3 months

1 FTE for 1 month

1 FTE for 1 month

1 FTE for 1 month

#### **Tier IV**

.5 FTE for 2 months

1 FTE for 1 month

1 FTE for 1 month

1 FTE for 1 month

### Items for Survey Participants

Tier III - 500 Survey participants

Tier IV – 250 Survey participants

### Project Costs

- Pick-up and delivery costs for materials to shelters, safe houses, transition houses.
- Project supplies – clipboards, pens, name tags, flashlights, buttons, and first aid kits.
- Advertising and recruitment – cost of advertising and recruiting volunteers
- Volunteer training – renting space, equipment rental and other meeting expenses.
- Printing costs for survey and training materials
- Regional training session travel for HPS regional training session.
- Administrative costs not directly related to project deliverables and outcomes.

### Additional Funding

Additional funding will be made available to communities that choose to include an increased Aboriginal focus.

## **MAGNET EVENTS**

Some communities recommended a strategy of hosting community meals or culturally relevant events (i.e. Aboriginal) to attract / invite homeless individuals to a common location where survey activities could occur, alleviating the hardship and uncertainty of outdoor, night time counts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT, the Nanaimo Community Advisory Board convenes to receive this overview of the Coordinated Point-in-Time Count to consider;

1. Participation in the PiT Count in January, 2016.
2. Select a PiT Count steering / organizing committee consisting of;
  - i. Coordinator
  - ii. Volunteer Manager
  - iii. Data Manager
  - iv. Community Liaison
  - v. Aboriginal Manager
  - vi. Shelter / HIFIS Data Coordinator
3. Assisting the CE with an application for HPS funding including additional funding for an increased Aboriginal focus.
4. Development of optional survey questions pertaining to matters such as;
  - a. Employment
  - b. Accessibility
  - c. System Interactions
  - d. Education
  - e. Service Use
  - f. Service barriers
  - g. Reason for Homelessness
  - h. Rehousing Information
  - i. Sexual Orientation
5. Inclusion / partnership with other service systems not included in the core PiT Count including;
  - a. Corrections
  - b. Health
6. Partnership with Vancouver Island University for assistance with volunteer recruitment, ethics review of survey questions & data cleaning / analysis.
7. Utilization of the resources of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the best practices of other municipalities to build community capacity to conduct PiT counts on a regular basis.
8. Liaison with other British Columbia municipalities participating in the Coordinated PiT Count.