

Point-IN-Time Count Basics

What is the Point-IN-Time Count? The Point-IN-Time (PIT) Count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people who are experiencing homelessness on a single night in a given community. Counts are carried out by staff and volunteers who conduct surveys who allow people experiencing homelessness to express their specific housing status and needs.

When does the PIT Count happen? HUD requires that official PIT counts occur annually, more specifically during the last 10 days of January. Local communities may elect to hold smaller counts at different times in the year or for specific populations.

Who conducts a PIT Count? The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all Continua of Care (CoC) throughout the United States to conduct a PIT Count.

The Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care (IN BoS CoC) is responsible for the PIT Count in 91 of the 92 counties in Indiana. Indianapolis/Marion County is a separate CoC and conducts its own PIT Count. The IN BoS CoC partners with IHEDA, who serves as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. IHEDA coordinates the annual PIT Count with local service providers and volunteers throughout the IN BoS CoC Network. It is important that organizations and partners in an area work together to complete the count. It is vital that every county is engaged in the PIT Count so that IN BoS CoC establishes the most accurate PIT count it can. PIT Coordinators across the state are working to include more counties in the count, so new partners are always helpful to improve results.

Why is it important to conduct a PIT Count? In order to reduce and eventually eliminate homelessness, communities need to understand how many people need housing. A headcount provides an easy-to-understand data point that helps communities determine an actionable plan.

- The year-over-year PIT Count can also help communities assess their own success and know if housing programs and other forms of support were working to reduce and eliminate homelessness. This helps the general public be aware of the scope of need among those experiencing homelessness.
- These counts help agencies at the local level plan for real needs. Reaching out to people who are experiencing homelessness can be difficult because they move frequently and do not always feel comfortable using community resources available to them. Physically counting people in shelters and through street-level surveying is a vital way to understand the scope of work a community needs to house each individual.
- Point-IN-Time counts demonstrate real needs to funding entities like HUD and other agencies because they make funding decisions based on that data. For example, during the annual CoC Consolidated Application¹, this information is used by HUD to determine how much funding the IN BoS CoC needs to address homelessness in Indiana.
- Publishing data from a PIT count raises awareness among community partners who can participate in real solutions around reducing and ending homelessness.
- The PIT Count also serves as a key outreach opportunity to provide resources to individuals experiencing homelessness, especially given the cold weather at the time of the count.

¹ The CoC Consolidated Application is annual funding application that is submitted as a single application with project-level priority listing for CoC funding during the CoC Program Competition.



How are PIT Counts Conducted? PIT Counts are conducted in January, the data is submitted to HUD in May, and the results are published in July or August. The IN BoS CoC Performance and Outcomes Committee works with IHCD staff to plan the count over many months and determines the methodology on conducting the Count, including who is included in the count, how agencies participate, and how to engage and prepare the community the Count. The committee's plan is then accepted by the IN BoS CoC Board before continuing with the project.

- **Documenting sheltered people** primarily involves pulling data from individual shelters on a single night. This data is pulled from HMIS as well as through volunteers conducting a survey with clients.
- **Documenting unsheltered people** requires street-level contact from a group of trained volunteers who can treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect and who can explain the project quickly and concisely. This count requires volunteers to canvass the streets and known camps and other congregating places in a community.

What about youth homelessness? Beginning with the 2024 PIT Count, the IN BoS CoC is making an effort to count youth and young adults who do not fully meet the definition of homelessness as set by HUD. If an individual does not sleep in a place not meant for human habitation, an Emergency Shelter, a Transitional Housing site, or a Safe Haven **and** is between the ages of 14 and 24, volunteers will ask supplemental questions about their experience with housing instability. This information will be collated separately from the PIT Count in order to maintain the integrity of the required PIT Count methodology. In 2025, more partners are involved to help expand the Youth Survey to more youth facing housing instability.

What other data is collected? The PIT Count is not the only data on individuals experiencing homelessness being collected by IHCD and reported to HUD. There are three other reports that provide insight into the status of homelessness in the Indiana Balance of State:

- Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) - produced from a CoC's HMIS, provides HUD and the IN BoS CoC with critical information about how people experiencing homelessness navigate the homelessness response system of care over the annual reporting year.²
- Housing Inventory Count (HIC) – the IN BoS CoC is also required to conduct an annual Housing Inventory Count (HIC), documenting the residential resources in communities throughout the COC dedicated to assisting people experiencing homelessness.³
- System Performance Measure (SPM) – A provision of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that communities measure their performance as a coordinated system, in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types.⁴ HUD has not yet released guidance regarding this year's SPM Report.

For more information, please visit the [HMIS Data Portal](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/lisa/) or contact IHCD at HMIS@ihcda.in.gov.

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA)*, <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/lisa/>

³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Housing Inventory Count Reports*, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-housing-inventory-count-reports/>

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *System Performance Measures*, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/system-performance-measures/#guidance>