



POINT-IN-TIME COUNT *Toolkit*

USING THIS RESOURCE

The engagement and cooperation of all local stakeholders is a component of any successful Point-in-Time (PiT) Count. PiT Count Coordinators should begin building relationships with shelter/housing providers as soon as possible to ensure maximum buy-in and participation.

Email to Shelter/Housing Providers

To assist, we have created a sample email that can be used to introduce the PiT Count initiative. The email outlines what a PiT Count is; why the involvement of local stakeholders is crucial; and the general benefits of conducting a PiT Count. This email should be modified to fit the context of your count.

Frequently Asked Questions

It is likely that shelter/housing providers will have numerous questions about the process. To quickly address some of the most commonly asked questions, we have developed a FAQ that can be attached to the introductory email and/or included on your PiT Count website.

EMAIL TO SHELTER/HOUSING PROVIDERS

Subject line: Your Participation in the [Community Name] Point-in-Time Homeless Count

Dear [name of stakeholder],

I am emailing to ask for your participation in the [community name] Point-in-Time Count - a community-wide initiative to enumerate homelessness in [community name].

Briefly, a PiT count is a strategy to help determine the extent of homelessness in a community at a single point in time. Typically, a PiT count involves sending trained volunteers around the city and to emergency shelters on a given night to count and survey those experiencing homelessness.

Our PiT Count is part of a recently announced initiative launched by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS). In February 2016, communities across Canada will participate in a coordinated Point-in-Time Count. The HPS Coordinated Count will build a national picture of homelessness by counting the number of people experiencing absolute homelessness and surveying them to understand their demographics and service needs.

- A successful PiT Count will allow our community to:
- Identify the characteristics and needs of the local population
- Enhance our system planning and program development
- Measure our progress towards ending homelessness
- Increase public awareness about homelessness
- Enhance our ability to test the efficacy of programs and interventions aimed at ending homelessness

As a shelter/housing provider, you can assist in two ways:

Participation in the PiT Count

We would also like the opportunity to conduct the PiT Count survey with your clients who wish to participate. The PiT Count survey provides us with invaluable information about the demographics and service needs of those without shelter. At minimum, we need to know the number of people who stayed at your [insert type of facility] on the night of the count. Without this information, we cannot calculate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Your Input

I would like to invite your organization to collaborate with the PiT Count Committee, to ensure that our community PiT Count is accurate and successful. Your knowledge and expertise working with the local homeless population is invaluable. We are inviting all shelter/housing providers to sit on a sub-committee of our PiT Count Committee to inform the PiT Count methodology and implementation. Further, we encourage service staff to volunteer for the night of the count as Team Leaders.

I would like to arrange a time to meet with you between **[date]** and **[date]**. Please let me know when you're available.

For more information on PiT Counts, you can refer to [Point-in-Time Toolkit](#) developed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness or the [Guide to Point-in-Time Counts in Canada](#) for technical information on the count.

In the mean time, if you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Community Name] PiT Count Coordinator

FAQs FROM SHELTER/HOUSING PROVIDERS

What if we don't have the resources to count and survey our clients?

You may find that you do not have the staff time or resources to carry out the PiT Count internally. If this is the case, the PiT Count Coordinator can work with you to ensure that the necessary resources, such as trained volunteers, are available to survey your clients.

We ask that at minimum, service providers record the number of people staying in their shelters or facilities on the night of the PiT Count; this can be done through your shelter data. Without this information, we cannot determine the number of people experiencing homelessness during the count. Ideally, you will work with the PiT Count Coordinator to ensure that your clients are given the opportunity to complete a PiT Count survey. We seek to give as many individuals as possible the opportunity to share their experiences and provide feedback on their service needs.

How is the PiT Count going to ensure that highly vulnerable populations are not put at further risk?

As you are well aware, all homeless individuals experience a degree of vulnerability. However, there are some subpopulations that are commonly afflicted by a greater degree of vulnerability (e.g., homeless youth, victimized women, and Aboriginal Peoples). To account for this, PiT Count volunteers are trained to deliver the survey respectfully and safely.

The privacy and confidentiality of survey participants is our utmost priority. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and every effort will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of homeless individuals. Data obtained from the surveys are aggregated so the published results cannot be used to identify individuals.

If you would prefer having your staff administer the surveys to your clients, the PiT Count Coordinator can work with you to make the necessary arrangements.

Is the PiT Count going to measure everyone who is homeless?

A PiT Count captures the *minimum* number of people experiencing homelessness in a community on a particular day [or night]. With help from you and other local stakeholders the accuracy of our PiT Count will improve.

How are we going to measure the hidden homeless?

While the PiT Count survey can capture valuable information on the experiences of those who are couch-surfing, it cannot determine the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness. In our communication with the community, we are very clear that the PiT Count yields the *minimum* number of people experiencing homelessness; it is the priority of the PiT Count Coordinator and the Committee to ensure that the results of the PiT Count are not misconstrued.

Is a PiT Count a good use of resources?

As a service provider, you may be feeling some level of financial pressure due to a limited budget and/or high demand for your services. The PiT Count may seem like an additional use of finite resources, but there are several reasons why conducting a count is valuable for our community:

1. It allows us to measure progress towards ending homelessness.
2. PiT Counts encourage positive media coverage resulting in increased public awareness and understanding about homelessness.
3. A PiT Count can reveal new information about the characteristics and needs of the local homeless population. This information can then be used to better allocate resources and supplement effective programming.

4. Our count is part of a cross-Canada initiative. The results of our PiT Count will contribute to a better understanding of homelessness regionally, provincially/territorially and nationally.