Fresno Youth PIT Count Information
December, 2022

Overview

This summary is intended to provide an overview of best practices to count youth experiencing homelessness during the 2023 Point in Time Count (PIT Count) or to conduct a Youth-Specific PIT Count within the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC). To appropriately allocate resources to address youth homelessness, the FMCoC needs to improve their data. Additionally, to apply for increased funding to address youth homelessness through the federal Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP) the CoC will need to demonstrate a high need in the community based on the number and needs of youth experiencing homelessness. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) funding application for homeless housing and services also has a section requesting narratives from the CoC as to how it is counting youth during the PIT Count and conducting youth outreach generally.

It can be difficult for CoC's to identify youth experiencing homelessness. Challenges include:

- The definition of "homeless youth" differs between state, local, and federal agencies;
- Agencies within CoCs might serve different segments of the youth population that do not correspond to federal definitions;
- Youth may also not think of themselves as homeless;
- Youth experiencing homelessness may be in different locations at different times than adults experiencing homelessness;
- Youth may not want to be found or may find places to sleep at night, while unsheltered PIT Counts are often conducted at night or very early in the morning;
- Whenever engaging with youth communities, mandated reporting needs to be addressed as a perceived barrier. For more information on mandated reporting in California, please review the California Department of Social Services trainings found here.

Leadership Team and Stakeholders

The CoC should designate a Youth PIT Count Coordinator and Leadership Team that should clearly communicate that finding and assisting youth experiencing homelessness is a priority for the community.

The Leadership Team should partner with community stakeholders that serve youth, including: schools, youth centers, drop-in centers, community centers, libraries, afterschool programs, youth employment programs, faith-based groups, child welfare workers, juvenile justice workers, and sex/human trafficking agencies.

- *See also:* Voices of Youth Count: Potential Leadership Team and Stakeholder Members

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The Role of Homeless Education Liaisons

The CoC should involve local homeless education liaisons in the PIT Count. Local liaisons and family and youth service providers are named specifically in HUD's PIT Count Methodology Guide as important partners given their experience in reaching and serving families and youth experiencing homelessness.

Important caveats from the Guide include:

- The data used by the schools to identify homeless youth should not be used for the PIT count because these surveys use a different federal definition for homelessness. Local agencies may, if they wish, include "couch surfing" or other criteria to reflect youth they picture as homeless. However, if this data is collected it must be separate from the demographics required by HUD.
- Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools may not disclose personally identifiable information about students without the prior written consent of a parent or eligible student.
- Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) schools may not require students to complete a survey that reveals certain types of personal information without the prior written consent of a parent or eligible student.

Per HUD's Housing and School Partnership on the Point-In-Time Count guidance document, to ensure compliance with the PPRA and FERPA guidelines, schools and local educational agencies can support CoC PIT Count efforts in the following ways:

- o Planning: get involved in PIT planning and provide help with selecting PIT Count locations, incentives, volunteer recruitment, suggesting other providers to assist.
- o Raising Awareness: post PIT Count information at schools (including a link to complete surveys online), inform potential youth and families about the count and the possible benefits of participation.
- o Volunteer: Local liaisons and other school personnel may wish to volunteer to administer PIT count surveys to families and youth experiencing homelessness, provided that survey administration is conducted off school premises and during non-work hours.

Best Practices Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Recruit former or currently homeless youth to assist with the Count:

- Consider compensating youth who have or have had experience with homelessness and housing instability to serve as "Guides" during the PIT Count;
- Consider compensating youth who have or have had experience with homelessness and housing instability to help plan the PIT Count, including participating in focus groups that identify locations where youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability are likely to be found during the count period.

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Identify and count in locations where youth experiencing homelessness congregate and consider holding "magnet events":

- Count in locations where youth experiencing homelessness gather and during youth-friendly hours;
- Be flexible as to the time of day the Count occurs and survey locations during multiple times of day during the Count;
- Include data collection in a variety of settings to ensure maximum reach to the range of youth covered by the Youth Count definition;
- Use social media to publicize "Come and Be Counted" magnet events (*see Voices of Youth Toolkit below for additional information on these events*) that provide services, food, and other incentives;

Accompany visual counts with surveys: because youth who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability are often not visually distinguishable from youth who are stably housed, it is important to conduct a survey in tandem with the visual count to gain a more accurate and complete understanding of the youth and their living situations.

Ensure PIT Count surveys and outreach materials are youth-specific:

- Get youth input to ensure outreach materials and survey questions are youth-inclusive;
- Thoughtfully consider youth-specific PIT survey questions, including considerations around the stigma of homelessness youth may feel and the location where questions are asked and who can hear the answers (youth guides and surveyors may help with this);
- Utilize HUD's Model PIT Count Surveys for Youth Experiencing Homelessness;
- Review the Voices of Youth Count Brief Survey as a sample (does not meet all of HUD's PIT Count survey requirements);
- Take precautions to ensure that participation in a survey is voluntary and that the safety and privacy of youth are protected.

Next Steps: Planning Meetings

- Determine whether there will be a Youth-Specific PIT Count or whether the team will just work to improve the youth count during the PIT Count;
- Establish the Youth PIT Count leadership team and discuss how to involve youth with lived experience both in the creation of a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and in the PIT Count;
- Discuss recruitment of youth guides (with stipends) for the PIT Count who could then potentially serve on the YAB if interested;
- Discuss logistical considerations:
    - o Define who will be counted (review HUD definition)
    - o Determine where to count and at what days/times
    - o Select the methods for counting (visual count, surveys)
    - o Finalize a youth-specific survey

Resources

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- HUD's PIT Count Planning Worksheet
- Voices of Youth Count: Conducting a Youth Count Toolkit
- HUD SNAPS: Building Your Youth Planning Team
- HUD's Promising Practices in Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness
- Urban Institute, Youth Count! Process Study

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