

## **PIT Office Hours: Transcript December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

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**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Hello everyone and welcome to our 3rd session of PIT count office hours. My name is Tommy Joe, and I'm gonna share a few pieces of housekeeping and logistical information so we can go ahead and get started today. Um, so as I'm sure all of you want to know, this session is being recorded. And the recording along with the slide deck and all the materials, including the chat and the Q and A, will be made available and posted to the HUD Exchange in about two to three business days. Um, so go ahead and give us two to three business days to make those accessible, but I promise all of the materials will be made available to you. Um, information about upcoming PIT Count office hours. The remaining two sessions along with all those materials from the ones that we've already performed is available on the HUD Exchange with the link on your screen. We hope that you can all hear us now. Um, but the best way to make sure that you can hear us, and later on that you'll have the opportunity to verbally ask a question, is to join via phone. So to join via phone, you can call in at the number on your screen and use that access code. That number is also now in the chatbox. Um, again, phone audio provides a little bit better audio quality than computer audio. All participants are muted at this point in time, but we hope that you will ask a lot of questions, share comments and share experiences on what's going on in your community and your CoC. So, go ahead and use the chat feature. To access the chat feature, click on the button in the bottom right hand corner of your screen. It's highlighted on the screen now. In a red box it says chat and has a little chat bubble on it. If you click on that, it'll open a chat window on the right hand side of your screen, and you can type in your messages there. Again, as you ask questions and share comments, please make sure that the "To" line on your chatbox says "Everyone." That'll make sure that your message goes to all of our panelists today and all the other participants so they can see your questions or share your experience. As we get to the end of our session today, we'll have an opportunity for questions and answer. If you'd like to ask your question verbally, we'll have the opportunity to unmute you so you can ask that question verbally. But so that we know who to unmute, we just ask that you raise your hand. And to raise the hand, as highlighted on the screenshot on your screen now, you'll click on that little hand in the bottom right hand corner of your screen. When you click on that, it'll virtually raise your hand, and we'll know that you want to ask a question. If you don't have your question anymore, or you were called on and have had the opportunity to ask your question, go ahead and click it one more time, and that will lower your hand. We'll also give instructions at the time. It's star three for people on the phone to raise their hand so that we know to unmute a phone caller as well. With that, I'm going to introduce our panelists today. Uh, first and foremost, we have William Snow from HUD and the Office with Special Needs Assistance Programs, and from Abt Associates, we have Aubrey Sittler, Meghan Henry, and myself, Tommy Joe Bednar. With that, I'm going to go ahead and hand things over to William to get us started by reminding us about PIT count flexibilities. William.

**William Snow:** Okay, thanks Tommy Joe, looking forward to the conversation. I've enjoyed talking with many of you. I was looking through my emails and looks like I've talked to you about 100 so far, hearing what you're doing, hearing the challenges you're facing, as we look at what COVID is also doing to us. So, just really want to say thank you for all your work. We can tell that you're putting a lot of thought into

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this, and just excited to to be a part of this. Next slide please. So, just a quick reminder uh, what's required. The housing inventory count is required. The sheltered Point in Time count is required. The unsheltered count is required, but you can seek exceptions to some of the data collection requirements, or all of the unsheltered Point in Time count requirements. We've also posted some guidance on flexibilities and we've talked about it in these office hours and hopefully you have read the guys this. Next slide please. All right, so what are some of these flexibilities? first and foremost as we try to continually remind folk safety is first, uh, there are many communities that have shown that they can, in fact, do some form of count safely. We're excited for that if your community cannot, then you should not conduct an unsheltered Point in Time Count. We've, we've tried to message that very clearly. We want that known. Safety comes first, so we appreciate that message. To help with the safety, we've published some of these flexibilities to allow you some more leverage over your time and limited resources. So a good example is that first one of counting, using observation counts. Um, that's something that's certainly available to you. The observation counts, uh, can help you do, again, visual counts without having to interact with folks. That's great. Others are taking advantage of the short survey. Again, a much shorter timeline than what you would normally do in the Point in Time count. You'll ask literally a handful of questions, like name, again, who are you, where were you sleeping last night, or tonight, and, and that's it. So that short survey again lets you minimize contact and gives you an opportunity to hand out masks or other resources, depending on what you have, but we are encouraging short interactions with folks. We've allowed up to 14 days for your counts, beginning with the first night, or the night you designate as your Point in Time count night, to be clear. The 14 days is only really available if you're doing some form of short survey. If you're going to do an observation count, you need to look at your own, your own circumstances. So if you have relatively discrete regions within your CoC, then it may make sense to count in those discrete regions over multiple days, where you think there's not a lot of traffic between them among those experiencing homelessness. If, though, you have an area where people do travel a lot between areas, and there's no real defined regions, we encourage you to try to do it in one night if you're going to do the observation count. So just want to make clear what those flexibilities are. Shorter is probably better in that 14 day window. I'm seeing folks using the 14 day window tend to be pairing that with something else, maybe the alternative datasets that they're using, or other service-based type activities. So, if you're doing the surveys, it is ideal to do a little bit shorter than 14 days. But there are again circumstances where it makes total sense, uh, given staff capacity in, and your overall methodology. All right, we've already stressed sampling. Our last office hours, which was on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, talked about the sampling approach. We encourage you to go back to that. Look at ideas. We're still, we provided some guidance on it. We encourage you to read that. We're still working on the tool, but we will publish that for you so that you can have some help with kind of the underlying math on the extrapolation side. We definitely are open to more questions on that today as well. The sampling is an important piece. It will help you during this COVID experience for the 2021 unsheltered Point in Time count, but I actually think it'll help most of you beyond that as well. Sampling, uh, often is a part of the count in some shape or form, so it's good to kind of have that backing. Uh, and be prepared to know

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when, and how to use it. Uh, finally, we have said that we will accept CoCs using alternative datasets for their Point in Time count if they can demonstrate that those sets are comprehensive and if they, if they truly are comparable, right? We need to have some point of comparison. We're going to spend some time on that today. So I'm, I'm not going to, not going to go over much right now. Let's go in the next slide, please. All right, so what do you need to ask for an exception for? You need to send an email to me seeking an exception for these three things: one, if you are not going to collect all of the normal data elements for the unsheltered population, you need to send an exception request. So if you are collecting on household type, demographics, and subpopulations, those are all of them. If you're going to do that, you don't need to send a request to me. If you're going to do something less than that, it could be one thing less, you need to send an exception request. So a good example is maybe collecting on chronic status where there are multiple variables on length of time homeless, and disability. Maybe you don't want to cover that this year because it takes time. If you're going to collect everything else, but not the chronic status piece, you still need to send an exception request. Don't worry. Uh, granting those, we're granting requests liberally, but I want to be clear, anything less than the full set does require an exception request. Um, so, if there are questions on that, we'll hopefully deal with them today. That kind of gets into the short survey. For the most part when we're talking observation and short survey, we are talking about something less than the full dataset. So, for most of the content we're going to discuss today, you'll probably want to seek some form of an exception. You could also seek an exception to the date. So, let's say you don't want to count in the last 10 days, 10 days of January, you could do it later. The big thing to recognize is you're going to have to be prepared to submit the data by April 30<sup>th</sup>. So, if you want to count at the end of February, that's possible. Again, you know, best if you can collect your data and have it ready and submitted in HDX by the end of April, then go ahead and do that and or ask for that work for that exception. And I'll grant it. That's the main thing, though, is being able to submit that data. Um, the other piece is the alternate dataset. Again, we'll talk about that today. If you're going to use some alternative datasets, you do need to seek an exception and be prepared to kind of go back and forth with you on that because I generally have multiple questions with it. So just be prepared for that for. Broader things. If you're going to if you normally do a count where you have several hundred volunteers, and you're not doing that this year, you're going to rely namely on your own staff, you definitely don't need to seek an exception. Uh, for that, or if you normally do a census count, but this year, you're going to do a blitz or observation count, unless you're reducing the number of elements you're collecting. You don't need to send an exception request for that. So, there are a lot of things you can do, where you really don't need to ask for assistance, or exceptions. We're happy to answer questions, but again, I'm interested in reducing the amount of back and forth you have to do with us, just because you have limited time. We don't want to slow anything down. Next slide please. All right so what should you include in your exception request? You need to tell me what you're seeking, right? The why, I guess, is the starting point. So why are you taking an exception request? Document what's going on in your community. This does not need to be a long documentation. It does need to be more than a sentence though, right? Like, there needs to be some substance to it. I need to have grounds for good cause for an exception. So, talking

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about the surge in your community with COVID, talking about the impact of volunteers and capacity for your own staff, those are things that are very acceptable. So just make sure you take a minute and tell me what's going on. We do want to know again what you're seeking an exception to. Are you seeking an exception from doing any of the unsheltered Point in Time count? You'll need to state that. If you're doing some of the count, question three kind of lets you elaborate on what the "some" is. What things are you collecting? What things are you not collecting? And then the last one is, if you're not going to do a count, we do want you to document that you're somehow getting information about your unsheltered population. This doesn't have to be documented through numbers per se, for us. I just need to know that you are in touch with that community. Right, they, uh, they also are at risk. With all of the things going on with COVID many of them actually are tri-morbid, or over the age of 55. There are a lot of risks involved there. So we definitely want you to understand what's going on there. Be prepared to share that. A couple things I've noticed in the request that I've gotten that might help clarify things. I don't need anything on letterhead. It's fine for you to do it, uh, an email's fine as well. You don't need to formalize the letter for our purposes. You might for your own see purposes or for your own board. That's fine. I'm not, again, opposed to that. Just, it's, if you don't have to, from your perspective, I don't care as much. One thing I should clarify: I've often talked about with the exceptions, especially on some or all, about what you're collecting, it's really actually about what you're submitting to HUD. So there are many CoCs who are collecting more than what they want to submit, and that's maybe because they're doing it in only parts of the CoC, or, or they're just not confident in it. That's fine. So the frame of reference you should take is, what do you plan on submitting the HUD in April? If it's not going to be the full set of data, then ask for an exception. Uh, even if you're going to collect that data, if you collected, and you're confident in it, we won't stop you from submitting that to us. Right? You absolutely can do that. We just want to give you the kind of the runway there. If something doesn't work out, or if you're not confident, seek the exception. It gives you something to fall back on, and if you get more than you expected, there's nothing to stop you from, from sharing that. Next slide please. All right, with that, we're going to turn the time over to Aubrey.

**Aubrey Sittler:** Thanks, William. Hey, everybody. So, William has alluded to this a little bit throughout his intro to our topics of focus today. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about observations and surveys, and then William will come back and talk to you about alternative datasets. So, I see we've already got some questions about all of these things in the chat. Keep them coming. Hopefully, we'll answer some of your questions as we go. And then as always the last half of our call will be dedicated to open Q and A, where hopefully we'll get to all of your questions today. So, as William said, to reiterate what he said for 2021, HUD is allowing exceptions to conduct observation-only counts or very short surveys to help your CoC prioritize safety and minimize the time it takes to conduct to PIT count and to minimize the number of staff and volunteers you need for those activities. We get a lot of questions in the AAQ about the differences between observation-based counts and survey-based counts and how they can be used. So before I dive into talking about observations and the 2021 count, I first want to provide a quick reminder of the difference between observations and survey-based counts. Both observations and surveys are methods

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of data collection that you can use to support your PIT count. Whether you're doing random sampling, or whether you're conducting a full canvas of your CoC. if you are only using observations and not using surveys at all to conduct your in 2021 to PIT count, then that would be an observation-only count. And that will produce a headcount, because there's no verbal or physical interaction between people, those experiencing homelessness and those who are conducting the PIT count. Survey based counts rely on surveys that are conducted with people to determine whether they're experiencing homelessness. And survey based counts, include questions about demographic information and other things, the CoC wants to collect for local planning purposes. Because of all of these reasons, surveys can be conducted over a longer period of time in part because the respondents can be asked questions that will validate where they slept on the night designated for the count. Next slide please. So, for those of you who joined office hours last time, or if you have looked at the sampling guidance, you had seen this chart before. This is a reminder of the timing of different PIT count activities, those activities, being observations and surveys observations, have to happen on the night of the count. You cannot observe whether somebody experienced homelessness at a previous point in time just by looking at them. So, if your PIT count night is January 25<sup>th</sup>, and you're doing daytime counting activities on January 28<sup>th</sup>, you really should be using some kind of survey to validate where people were sleeping, because you really can't tell where somebody was two days ago just by looking at them, or three days ago, just by looking at them. Next slide, please. People often also ask us about what their observation forms should include. So, the actual, whether you're using a mobile app or a paper form, what should it have on it to help you with your PIT count? And there are two big categories of information that we recommend that your PIT count forms have, if you're using observations. So you want to be able to substantiate the person's housing status. That is whether or not they should be included in your PIT count. So, questions like, is the person sleeping when you observe them? If they're not sleeping, what makes you think they may be experiencing homelessness? You also want to include information. That will help you with de-duplication later. So, making sure that every person is only counted once and types of questions are kind of places where you can have volunteers or staff fill in information include categories like, what's the person's physical appearance? What's their exact location? So not just what street they're on, but if they're on a park bench, exactly where in the park were they sleeping or sitting at the time of, of them being observed? What was the exact time that you thought you saw them? And what belongings or clothing or companion animals or pets did they have with them? All of these things that will help you later to determine whether someone was recorded twice by two different people, either at the same place or in different places in your Continuum of Care. Next slide please. We also get a lot of questions about whether observation forms and tools can be used to collect demographic information. As William said, on our last office hours, over time, the consensus has really been landing on, no, you should not be assuming any demographic information about people just by looking at them. You really can't always tell someone's race, ethnicity, gender or age, just by looking at them, especially in winter months, when they're super bundled up. So, we recommend that if you are adding demographic information, it should really only be added by staff who actually know, and have interacted with the person before, and have had conversations to collect

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demographic information from them. And we'll get to a little bit more of that on the next slide, please. So one exciting thing we have to announce today is that there is a forthcoming update to the observation form, or the observation tool that has been posted on HUD Exchange. We realized the need to provide updates to make it clear that you're not expected to be inferring people's demographic information. So that's one of the changes from the old form to the new one. It should be posted sometime this week. And then there's also a little bit of background information that's going to be posted in PDF format that provides context for some of these changes and some of the assumptions about how observation forms can and should be used. And that will be posted on the PIT count survey tools page. It will also be linked on the 2021 PIT count tab that we have linked before. We can stick those in the chat in a second as well. Next slide please. So one of the common questions that we get about observations is, what types of questions do you recommend adding to aid in de-duplication? And we just covered some of those just now, but it's things that you can observe that will help you later to determine whether the same person was counted. I would say it's probably a best practice to make sure that whoever's in your CoC who's responsible for de-duplicating survey data, sit at the table with you, when you're coming up with those questions, if they're gonna be responsible for making the call of whether two forms represent the same person that would be helpful for them to inform what they'll be looking for. And it's also helpful to make sure that your volunteer training or your staff training on using the forms conveys to people why certain levels and depth of information are important to make sure that they're documenting as much data as possible. And then, people also ask if there are strategies for avoiding duplication in observation based counts. I think, making sure that there are explicit areas where volunteers are and are not going. You don't necessarily want seven volunteers, groups of volunteers going through the same exact area. That's probably going to add to your risk of duplication and then, of course, making sure your forms account for specific types of information. Then I'm going to turn it to Tommy Joe for the next slide.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you so much Aubrey. Thank you for heading off those initial common questions. We've also had a few people ask if the observation, if they should extrapolate demographic information for observation-only on unsheltered count, and if they're going to submit the demographic data, if conducting an observation-only PIT unsheltered count. William, would you mind...

**Aubrey Sitrler:** William, you might want to take that one?

**William Snow:** Yeah, sorry I was looking at the chat there. So yeah. Let's look at this demographic question. So, with observation-only, I'm going to kind of go back for a second, to what you said. It's not a good idea to collect data on demographics based purely on observation as a starting point. So, if you don't already have data to use as a sample to extrapolate up, it's going to be pretty hard to submit demographic data. So generally, for the purposes of the counts you're doing here, I would not recommend providing demographic data if you're doing observation only counts. Can you do it? Yes. The best way to do it, and this is what happens in non-COVID circumstances, is a sample, is collected from



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the unsheltered population that generally involves a survey, right? Like asking people how they identify. Again we're encouraging you to avoid that if possible. Unless you're confident you can do it really safely. But generally, most folks would, I think, be challenged to be able to get that kind of sample to be able to use as your extrapolation device. So, so, in general, the short answer is, we don't encourage it if you're doing observation only. You don't encourage you to try to do the demographics. You just have limited information for your starting point. Aubrey, would you add more to that? I think that's what we said on the AAQ and elsewhere, but I just want to confirm.

**Aubrey Sittler:** Yeah, I think that's right. I think, you know, in years where you're expected to submit the full slate of demographic information, the response ends up being a little, a little different. But if you have an exception not to submit demographic information, then an observation-only count would be really well suited to, to provide just a headcount for you.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you both so much. William, I have one more question for you in this section. What are some ways that communities are doing headcounts that have gone about accurately counting people if they're in tents, and you can only see the tents, but not the people that are visible? And so you're not even sure it's one person, if it's an occupied tent? That sort of thing.

**William Snow:** So, it's challenging in non-COVID times. I feel like we've made some stride. It's going to be extra challenging now. So here's what we don't want to happen, and this is kind of what was done historically. Uh, count tents, say well, I think this number of people are in each tent, and go forward. Uh, I think there's more recent work that's been done in the last year or two that has shown that that's often not very accurate. There's a lot of tents or other structures or cars where either people are not actually homeless. Or the tent's actually abandoned, or the average, uh, household size in the tent is variable enough that it doesn't make sense to apply the type of multiplier you're talking about. So if you're going to count tents, unfortunately, this is one of those times when I would say, yeah, you're probably going to have to do some kind of sample. If nothing else, you really got to know, are the people homeless, and how many people are in it? Then if you get enough information, right? So you need to have a good enough sample of tents, or cars, or whatever, other structures that you're thinking of here, to be able to confidently say X percent answer that they are homeless. So if you have 100, you could have as many as 50 of the 100 say, especially in cars, now they're not homeless, you're gonna have to be able to just count 50% of your structures at that point, so that you don't over, over on your count. You also need a sense for, again, what's the average household size, at least in that sample, so you can extrapolate up. If it's one person everywhere you've gone, that's obviously easy, but it generally is not quite that easy. So those are just some factors. I'd say, you need to find some way, this is where you should use your street outreach teams to do soft engagement. Again, if they're in cars, it's knocking on the window, and ask them to keep their windows rolled up, but ask one or two basic questions. Again, who are you? What's your homeless status? And then the other street outreach type engagement you would normally do

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anyways. So I wish it would be more simple. Again on data from the past doesn't give me a lot of confidence in just counting structures. So I would not recommend that this year either.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful, thank you so much, William. I know we're going to have some more questions come in on observations, and I encourage everyone to keep adding those questions to the chat so that we can get to them towards the end, when we open up for open Q and A, but I want to go ahead and turn back to Aubrey again to talk a little bit more about surveys.

**Aubrey Sittler:** Thank you, Tommy Joe, you can go ahead and go to the next slide. So, William mentioned earlier today that if you're doing surveys for your PIT count, HUD is strongly encouraging brief surveys. So really prioritizing again, the safety of volunteer staff, and of course, people experiencing homelessness. This slide shows the excerpts from the guidance document for conducting the 2021 on unsheltered PIT count, which we can stick the link to in the chat, but I'm going to read it out loud so we're all on the same page here. "*Brief Survey Counts:* CoCs could choose to conduct a short survey with people in places not meant for human habitation to determine if a person was experiencing homelessness on the night designated for the unsheltered PIT count. For example, if a CoC chooses to use January 25 as its PIT count date, it could conduct this very short survey at any hour of the day over several days. To maximize safety, HUD does not recommend adding questions beyond those a CoC would need to de-duplicate and confirm that someone was experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. This survey could be limited to a person's name and housing status on the date of the count." So, again, this is assuming that you are not conducting a PIT count survey to collect all of the demographic information that you normally would have to submit to HUD with every single person you are interviewing. The next slide please. HUD is highly recommending that you limit questions asked to be a survey to those that will allow you to understand the person's housing status on the night designated for the count, uh, de-duplicate all unsheltered PIT count data, and collect whatever required data elements you have that are of course informed by your exceptions that are approved by HUD. Next slide please. This is our same graphic as before. That outlines what time are what your timing is for, for conducting surveys. The nice thing about surveys is that they can be conducted at any time. They can be conducted on the night of the count, so, while people are kind of out where they would be sleeping, as well as in service based locations, or in street based locations for however long your PIT activity is. Up to 14 days are scheduled to last because they allow you to ask people questions about where they actually slept on the night of your PIT count. Next slide please. We get a lot of questions about examples of what kinds of survey questions you might possibly include in a brief survey. Again, this assumes that you are not collecting all of the demographic information. You're also not making assumptions about that same demographic information by observation for the reasons that I talked about earlier. The examples that we have come up with of what you might include on a brief survey include things like, what is your name? And if the person does not want to provide their name, you could ask for their initials. Again, this will help you with de-duplication later. It's intended to help you with de-duplication later. You could ask what their date of



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birth is. And if they don't want to provide their date of birth, if they don't know their exact date of birth, you could ask, how old are you? Or what year were you born in? Again, to help as you de-duplicate later. You also want to ask, especially if this is a daytime count or a count multiple days after the night of the PIT count, where did you sleep on the night designated for the PIT count? So, for example, on January 21<sup>st</sup>, or last Thursday night, whatever the most reasonable phrasing is for that. And finally, you would probably also want to include some space for observations about the person's physical appearance or other identifiers if you're also going to be de-duplicating this information with observation. So, if you're using brief surveys in service-based locations, in addition to observations, on the night of the count, you want to make sure that whoever's responsible for you de-duplicating that information later. We'll have comparable things to compare. So, if you're not providing any observations on the survey, that would be really hard to de-duplicate if all you have are observations from the night of the count. Next slide, please. I'm going to turn it back to Tommy Joe for this one.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much, Aubrey. William, we have a question that kind of hits at the intersection of surveys and methodologies. Could you talk a little bit about if a CoC can use both short surveys and observations to conduct an sheltered account?

**William Snow:** Yeah, so it's, that adds a layer of complication. The short answer is yes. But you have to be prepared to, um, to be somewhat rigid in how you do it. So I would expect this kind of thing in a Balance of State, where there are more or less 15 or 20 separate regions that are kind of doing their own counts as it is. What you'll need to do is put, especially if you're sampling. Right? So all of your survey groups, you would need to create a strata so that you know what data when you're extrapolating is tied to the survey. And then if you're doing observations, you need to have a separate strata. So, the strata concept is this idea that, you know, for the, for the areas that you're not collecting data in, you need to know, am I using an observation to account for those areas, for data from observations from other areas, or am I using data from short surveys? You can't blend those two together. You're actually going to have to decide up front. Right? I'm doing county X. Y, Z. I'm going to count and do an observation count, and X and Y and Z look a lot like X. So, I'm going to extrapolate from the first one from, to account for Y, and Z. Um, through county A, though, is collecting the short survey you're not going to somehow mix A and X's data to account for. Why the, you're not going to be able to mix the survey and observation data in any way. So that's, or any way, when it comes to extrapolating the data, what you'll end up doing is, once you've developed kind of this idea of which CoCs are associated with the short surveys, as in, where will I actually do the surveys? And then what's the, what parts of the CoC should I use the data from the surveys to extrapolate from? And then develop that other side on the observation. After you've done all the work, then you can do the aggregating the results of the two. Hopefully you can see from my explanation, I'm terrible at explaining it, but it's also complicated. Right? There's a lot going on there, and if you're not sure, and you want to be able to do it, again, the very first part is for you to sit down. Look at your geography, figure out how it's divided. And then say, where am I collecting which types of these

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datasets? And where am I not selecting any data? In those areas where you're not collecting any data, you got to say, do they look more like the folks that, um, where I'm doing surveys, or more like the folks where I'm doing observations? And you'll probably create different groups accordingly. You might have a couple different strata because of that. So, again, hopefully, I don't confuse you too much in that, but you can do it. It's just complicated. It takes more work up front to figure out which communities are similar to each other.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you so much William. But you don't get off the hook, you're going to have to lead us into the next, equally nuanced set of topics on using alternative datasets.

**William Snow:** Okay, Tommy Joe never lets me off the hook, though. I just have to prepare for that. Let's go to the next slide. A lot of great questions about using other datasets. Um, so far we've approved some. I have a few more in my inbox right now requesting it. Uh, we love that you're thinking through other datasets. I want to say up front., there's a lot of data collection you do during the year. A whole lot of it, the PIT count is one piece. The piece that obviously makes the PIT count very unique is the unsheltered component. We have found that, you know, even with all that kind of back and forth emails I've had with folks, there are not a lot of CoCs where they can honestly say, I have a fairly comprehensive dataset on those experiencing unsheltered. That being said, I have seen a few CoCs who can say that, and they've shown, and we've approved them to move forward using those datasets, sometimes with a little bit of supplement action by the street outreach team, but primarily using those datasets so they could be a couple of things. It could be your HMIS street outreach data coupled with Coordinated Entry data. Many communities are looking at their by-name lists. Again, you just have to make sure your by-name list represents all of unsheltered, not, not strictly veteran or chronic or population-based. It's gotta be everyone. So those are your main data sources. It's those three core ones, right? HMIS, by-name lists, and Coordinated Entry. And again, they're rarely done on their own. With what I've seen, they're often, uh, using a combination of one or two, and creating this other dataset that has the amalgamation of the two and that's what's being used to, um, to create the count data that's going to get submitted. Let's go to the next slide please. So, if you're going to want to do that, you have to make sure, again, not only is the dataset comprehensive, in terms of who is in it. It's got to be comprehensive in terms of timing. So, if this is something that's updated annually, obviously, that's not a very good dataset. Uh, I haven't seen anybody ask about that. Most, uh, are collecting regularly. They're usually updating their datasets every other week, sometimes as much as a month. If it's more than that, I'm going to be concerned, right? You're gonna have to have a pretty up-to-date dataset if you're going to use that for your Point in Time count. So I expect it to be fairly recent, relative to the date of your Point in Time count. So that's just something to consider there. Most of those datasets, they're, they have long windows. And so, you, you tend to, again, let's say you're looking at a by-name list for the purposes of Built for Zero, or whatnot. You can have a 90 day look-back period. I'm gonna ask you to run the data, looking at a date. Pick the date you're going to use for your PIT count. It will include people who you already have in your window. I'd ask

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that you shorten the window from a 90 day window to a 30 day window in there, just to make sure we're not capturing a broader audience that shouldn't be included, unless, you know, folks who maybe would fall out of that who are homeless. You can find that through street outreach, which is reaching out to them, or some other way. Let's talk about this comparison work, though. So let's go to the next slide, please. Um, when folks ask me, my immediate response is, show me the money, right? Like, I want to know that your dataset is comprehensive, and the best way to do it is for you to verify through an existing, uh, run of the data. So, for me, the most comparable set of data that I can think of is your last unsheltered Point in Time count. Right? I know that that should be comprehensive. At least your CoC claimed it was last year, or relatively comprehensive. So, I'm going to ask you to take this dataset that you have, run that dataset based on the Point in Time count in 2020. In 2019, if you didn't do a 2020 count. Again, that's going to make me a little nervous. But if you did a count 2020, you're going to run that dataset on that same night. You're going to look at the numbers. You're going to compare those numbers to what you actually submitted in your unsheltered Point in Time count. I'm looking for some number that's within 2 to 5%. It's got to be pretty darn close. So, what those numbers are, if it's different, either up or down, you just need to be prepared to speak to that. And I'm probably going to push you to do a little more than just use that dataset. I just need to be able to have confidence. It may mean that your Point in Time count in the past was poor, right? We've seen some of the data is much larger. Well, that might mean that you need to change what you're doing to account for those pockets where you don't have people. You might need to be doing extrapolation. More other things. That stuff you can do in the future. Obviously you're not going to be able to go back to the past counts. We don't ask you to do that, but if you have a count that's much larger in this other dataset. You're going to have to explain what's going on there. If it's under, that's also concerning, and you just need to be prepared to say why, and what are you going to do to fix that? For instance, there have been a couple where they've asked and we've said, well, let's do, can you have your street outreach folks do a little more during this 14 day period, To reach out to areas where you're either uncertain, uh, about who's there, or just to be more comprehensive, just to check even areas where you are pretty confident, you know, what's going on? Have them go out. It's part of the normal street outreach activities, but ask some of the basic, where-were-you-on-the-night-of-type questions and enough to de-duplicate so you can compare who you pick up in that effort to what's already in your existing dataset? That will often get you all the way there. Uh, so we just want to make sure you have that on your radar. Some people have asked, well, what data do I need to compare against, right? To, in my data said, I have everything. Right? I have demographics. I have subpop, I've got it all. Well, the short answer is, it depends on what you're submitting to HUD? And if you're going to submit the full unsheltered Point in Time count data to HUD, then you should compare the full Point in Time count data in 2020 that you already submitted to HUD to what you're pulling in your dataset. So be prepared to run the demographics. If that's what you're going to submit. If you're only going to do a headcount, on the headcount, all right, that's fine as well. Just consider what layer you're submitting to HUD? You're going to have to run that kind of analysis here and, and show the comparability. Next slide.

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**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Well, William, I know you already started to talk about the common questions that we had here, but can you just talk one more time. What that acceptable amount of differences between an alternative unsheltered data source and last year's on unsheltered PIT count? I know you said 2 to 5%. How much leeway is there in that range?

**William Snow:** Yeah, 2 to 5% is gonna result in me asking a lot fewer questions in a follow up. If you have a different range, I'm just going to asking more questions, and probably ask you to do more work. Not just now. But on you're, during the period, you're counting. So that's kind of what that comes down to. There are some periods where I'm not confident based on what you submitted, and I'm just going to tell you "no." That hasn't been very common yet. So, you probably shouldn't expect that that's going to be the answer. I'm going to try to work with you to think through the best ways to do this. But there will be times where the answer might be "no" for you. So, just be prepared for that.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** And can you talk just a little bit about if there are, if the total number is within an acceptable range, but demographics are broadly different?

**William Snow:** Yeah, that's a great point. So, if you find you run, you're going to submit demographics to HUD. So you compare it and you find, well, my total headcount is about right from 2020. It looks about right but my demographics look way different, I would encourage you at that point to just change what you're going to submit to HUD. Seek an exception. So, not only use an alternative dataset, but to also submit a headcount only, or just the total number unsheltered people, or whatever looks comparable, right? If you find that the household types look pretty similar, uh, you might submit that much, but if you're finding that there's enough of a difference, um, that it's not looking the same, then just don't do that level of data. And this is actually great for you to know, because what it's saying is, in that alternative datasets, the demographics you're collecting, for example, you might be showing that people seeking services or that are somehow engage your street outreach provider, they're not the same as the people who are counted, who are not engaging in services. We know this to be true actually, but it's nice when you, as a community, actually have that data can say oh, this is interesting. We probably need to look into what's going on. You might find that this is a racial equity issue, you're serving more people from a certain race or ethnicity, and you need to adjust that. That's something that obviously you need to take up well, outside of the realm of the PIT count. But that's the type of thing that you can learn through this activity, and we're grateful for that. It's great. It's more work. But again, that's the time for you to say, I'll deal with that after the Point in Time count. I'm going to seek an exception, based, so I won't submit demographic data. That might be problematic. I'll just submit a headcount. So hopefully that's helpful.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you so much William. We're going to move into a couple of broader common questions before we move towards our resources. And William, we're going to hit you with a timeless question here. Is there a deadline for requesting an on unsheltered PIT count exemption? And if a CoC

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needs to update their exemption request, um, when do you, can they do that, and when do they need to do that by?

**William Snow:** Yeah, great question. Um, I've seen several of questions alluding to this in the chat, so we'll answer right now. There is not a formal deadline set for when you have to submit exceptions. There are a couple of reasons for that. One, it takes time for you to do that. I don't want to set an arbitrary, what if I said December 15<sup>th</sup>, right? Some of you, your boards won't even meet before December 15<sup>th</sup>, so it's not even possible. But we wanted to be cognizant that it's this time to get decisions made, and arbitrary deadlines doesn't help anybody. It's kind of an implied deadline. Right? Last 10 days of January will come, and if you've sought an exception, great. Uh, you'll get it if you did this, I'm going to just assume you're doing a full count and be prepared to receive that data from you, but there's also this other reality that COVID is changing all the time. So, maybe you saw an exception and went through a plan and everything's great. And your count night is January 25<sup>th</sup>, and your governor says, we're surging, our IC beds are at nearly zero, nobody can leave, right? Stay at home order is issued on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Uh, but you've already sought an exception, or you haven't sought an exception, because you weren't worried about that at that point. You can still seek an exception. Uh, we're going to honor that. Again, safety is first. I promise you, we care about that. I will respond as quickly as I can to those kinds of requests, but we're not going to make you go out if it's prohibited by your state, or if it's just too unsafe to do it. If you received an exception, and you're still going to do something, that falls in the realm of an exception. So, let's say you asked to do a modified survey, but you're still going to collect, maybe demographics, household types, and we accepted that. But later on you to say, well, I think we can only actually get a total headcount. We really can't get the other stuff. Yeah. You'll need to seek an exception. Or you'll need to come back and modify it. I'll easily modify it. It's not that's not going to be an issue. If you're going to collect more. Right? You got an exception. You're only doing a headcount, but now you want to do more than that. Don't, don't send me more emails. I don't want you to spend the time doing that. Just submit the more data. Right? Basically it isn't going to prohibit you by your exception request. It's gonna be available and open so that people who submit everything can do so, and then there will be kind of a modified version to allow you if you only do the headcount. You'll be able to do that as well. So, but again, I don't want anyone wasting their time sending emails that, you have plenty to do. The last thing you need is more, more things on your plate. So if you're going to do more, go right ahead and do it and we're excited to see it.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you so much William. On that very important note of safety, can you also, uh, talk about purchasing PPE, and if that's an eligible expense for the unsheltered PIT count?

**William Snow:** Yeah, we strongly encourage you to do that for you, and for people you're visiting with. So you can use your CoC planning dollars pretty liberally for the Point in Time count, including for PPE. You can use street outreach dollars to buy PPE for both people who are being counted, and if it's your street

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outreach or volunteers who are participating in the count, you can do that. They would need to be doing more than observation. If you're, you're to use the street outreach dollars for staff, or, for volunteers, they actually need to be engaged, and they need to be doing some kind of street outreach activity. So that, there is a caveat to that. The other way to pay for that is, I believe you can use your ESG-CV admin dollars also to pay for PPE for your volunteers and for your staff. Pretty much, the only way to pay for it for the people you're counting is through the street outreach line item for the CoC. And the way to pay for it for the people doing the count, you have a couple options, right? The admin account, and the ESG-CV street outreach, as long as people are engaged in street outreach activities. Observation-only, it's not going to work in that case, or again, the CoC planning dollars.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much, William. So I wanted to go ahead and share a few pieces of information and resources with everyone before we get into our open questions for today. We have a number of resources on this slide here. We will be posting some of them into the chat. And of course, the links will be available on the follow up materials. Um, but as reference multiple times. We had the conducting the 2021 unsheltered PIT count guidance that outlines the flexibility and many things that we've been talking about today. There's the, how do you do sampling within a CoC to conduct to the unsheltered PIT count, and this is something that helps walk through using sampling for the unsheltered PIT count. As Aubrey mentioned earlier, we will soon have an updated example PIT count observation form that will be posted and made available as soon as possible. Something that's been available for a little while now, the HMIS project setup and inventory changes during infectious diseases. This is especially important for setting up non-congregate shelter or additional capacity. And, as William has said, the 2021 HIC and PIT count Notice is not yet released and will largely be in line with everything that we've been sharing for. You please don't wait on that coming out. As normal the resources that we've had up for a while, and that can prove very useful to you during your sheltered and unsheltered PIT count. On the main landing page, the methodology guide, the office hours recordings from previous years, and from this year's again, that's the recording the chat, the Q and A, the slides all of the materials and the PIT count survey tools. I do want to remind everyone that, while this is our third session, we will have two more in January. While that's getting much closer to the date, we want to provide that information answer questions as we're approaching everyone's PIT count dates and those will be on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and both of those sessions will be at 3 PM Eastern. In addition to all your questions about today's contents and about these sheltered, the sheltered and unsheltered PIT counts, if you have the opportunity, you have ideas, you have pressing questions about what we should focus on in those two upcoming PIT count office hour sessions, please feel free to go ahead and add those comments or suggestions to the chat in addition to your questions for today. As we head into our open Q and A, I want to remind everyone that you do have the opportunity to answer to ask your question verbally. To ask the question verbally, please go ahead and raise your hand virtually. You can click on the little raise hand icon in the bottom right hand corner of your screen. It's highlighted on this screenshot. For those of you who are only joining us via phone or your primary audio is on phone, you can hit star three to do that.



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With that being said, we don't have anyone who's raised their hand at this point. So we're gonna go ahead and head into some questions that have been asked in our chat box today. And I want to throw a question open to William or Aubrey. Can surveys be conducted remotely, such as over the phone for individuals who are requesting assistance seeking housing supports and assistance, or do they have to be conducted only in person?

**William Snow:** So, I'm going to take a crack at that, and Aubrey, feel free to add on. Uh, the short answer is, it depends what you're talking about. Phone or web surveys can mean any number of things, so I can't categorically say, yes or no. However, these are the larger categories to think about. If you're posting a general survey where the public can access, and anyone can respond or a phone number where anyone can respond. That's not your general Coordinated Entry line. It's just hey call in to this and tell us you're homeless. Uh, no, the short answer is no. However, there are places you're already engaging where people are identifying themselves as homeless in search of services. For instance, Coordinated Entry. People are not calling in because they're responding to a PIT count invitation. They're calling because they want homeless services. So, for those who meet the definition of the, of the sheltered or unsheltered homeless definition, yeah, count those folks that you identify through that effort as homeless. That's great. Uh, again, you, there's one caveat there even. It depends on the nature of the rest of your counts. If you're doing an observation count, that doesn't really work, actually, because there's no way to de-duplicate them from the rest of your observation count. You don't know if they've been observed, even if you were to ask them if they wouldn't know, right? Because you're people doing the observation. They don't. They don't stand there necessarily and say, by the way I'm observing you, you and you. Uh, so if anyone else, you just tell them you've been observed, right? Like, that's not how it works, but if they received the survey, uh, then you can de-duplicate that data and that would work. Uh, another example would be, if you have a known list, let's say an active list, a by-name list. And you have street outreach workers who are willing to call folks and say, hey, we're updating our records once. Yeah. You're doing, by the way, can you answer a few questions about, yes, right? Were you homeless on the night of? You probably already have a lot of the other information you would otherwise need. You just need to know, were they homeless on the night of the count? Sure, that actually is acceptable again. If you pair that with a larger effort that's tied to survey, it doesn't work in that observation case. Right? You can't call some people and do the rest observation in that instance. So those are the main ones I can think of where you could use a phone survey, a, or some sort of web-based survey. Obviously, you can use applications right? You can use a mobile PIT count app. But that's something that yours, your team would be using as part of their counting effort. It's not really something available to the public. It's just the means of collecting the data. So I should clarify that as well. Aubrey, would you add anything else to that about the survey, using a phone or an online tool?

**Aubrey Sittler:** Yeah, I mean, I think that was a really good overview. I put into the chat a link to, there is an FAQ on this topic, about when phone or web based surveys are approved and appropriate. I think the

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only other thing I would reiterate is that if you're using some kind of web based survey, it's important to make sure that it couldn't possibly be posted somewhere publicly or forwarded on to other people who it wasn't targeted to, in part because it's really hard to de-duplicate. And also in part, because it's really hard to know who that it would be getting to and whether or not, they're filling it out with the right information that you, as somebody trained to conduct a PIT count, would be looking for.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you both very much. Again, if you'd like to ask a question verbally, please feel free to click on the raise hand button, or star 3 if you're on the phone. Um. William, I know you mentioned a little bit ago that things will be available in the HDX, but we've had quite a lot of people ask in the chat about how things are going to work in the HDX, if they're only submitting partial information on demographics, or previously required under the PIT count, if they're just submitting an observation-only, sure, you know, count number. Can you just talk a little bit about the HDX and submitting things that will look different from previous years?

**William Snow:** Yeah, I'll touch on this, and this is probably good for Aubrey or maybe even Meghan to jump in. Uh, the short answer is, we haven't finalized the HDX. That's good and bad, right? Like, that's good because we have all sorts of flexibility. That's bad because you want to know exactly how it's gonna work. And I can't tell you that the, the larger framework work where we are working under is this idea we want to accommodate whatever level of data collection you do. However, there has been confusion around, like, what if I'm only collecting in some counties and not the others. We'll never accommodate that. What you submit needs to be submitted for your entire unsheltered population. So, if you collected demographics, you can't submit demographics for one county and not another, what you can do is decide I'm going to submit demographics, or I'm not going to submit demographics. So I want to be really clear about that, right? What I, what I believe will happen is, we'll just remove some of the current validations on the existing unsheltered piece of HDX, which allows you to submit the full demographics. And if we remove some of the validations, you could get away with not submitting the demographics or not submitting the population status. That doesn't work if you're just submitting one number for the unsheltered Point in Time counts. So we will likely add a field. Will probably be something like, did you conduct a headcount only? And then you'll get an opportunity to say, how many that were counted in the headcount? Again that's not finalized, but I'm pretty sure that's how that's going to work. So if you collect, as long as you're submitting on your entire population, you're going to have a couple of different options. Aubrey or Meghan, is there anything else that you think we should flag right now, with kind of the HDX technical side?

**Meghan Henry:** I would say that's spot on. I think as long as you are following the guidance and the exceptions that William is granting, then the HDX will be sort of adjusted to meet those changes. So you won't have issues reporting these data. But again, the shelter data, the HIC data, nothing's really changed

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there. So, so those will say the same, but the unsheltered count will, will remove a lot of the sort of hard stops that prevent submitting. If there are limited demographics or a chronic status or things like that.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you both very much. Um, we do have our first person who wants to ask a question verbally. So Steve [name]. Your hand is raised. You are now unmuted to ask your question.

**Steve:** Hi. Two things quickly. There's a lot of information in the chat, and I'm wondering if there's a way for me to download the chat to my computer. And by extension is there a way for us to get the slide show? And the other thing I want, I don't know. Do you want to answer that question now?

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Yes, Steve, I'll go ahead and that's going to be one of the few that I will directly answer. Um, so, to download the chat, you can click on the Webex screen. You can click "File," "Save As," "Save" or "Save As," and you'll have the opportunity to download the chat. We will also be posting accessible versions of the chat the Q and A, all the slides and the recordings, and that'll be available in about two to three business days on the HUD Exchange, and we'll put a link in the chat in just a second, on what page on the HUD Exchange you can find those. And you're on unmute to ask the rest of your question.

**Steve:** Yes, please, so where's the Webex page that you referred to?

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** So, it's "File" "Save As," and I'll send you a message to help.

**Steve:** Okay. The other big question I have is, I've, I've been involved with PIT counts for a few years, and we're always told we have to do all of the work within a single 24 hour period. Today on the on this web cast, I've heard talk of a survey, surveys ahead of time, checking with people on the night of. Could you please help me to understand better, how I can recollect data, um, it's going to help expedite the count?

**William Snow:** So I might need a little more clarity on that last part but let me provide some clarification on kind of how you started. There are actually quite a few flexibilities in how you do your Point in Time count. I'll point you to a survey, whether in these times, or in non-COVID times, you actually can do that throughout the seven days. So, we actually don't require you to do all of the effort in one night. If you're using the survey, most CoCs still do that. It's a resource management principle of volunteer management principle. It's hard otherwise to do that. But that is an option counts or a service to not be done prior to the night of the count. We simply don't, that's not a valid method. Right? You can't ask people prospectively where they will be sleeping. We don't take that as, as useful here. We actually need to where people were sleeping. So you would ask people after the count is conducted where they were. So, those are things that again, they don't, they're not limited to the COVID context. That actually is always a flexible. We

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provide a little more flexibility here but, uh, but those things are available, but I'm not sure that I really got it, your question. Maybe you can restate, uh, what you need clarity on?

**Steve:** Okay, so when you're ready. Okay so, I just wanted to be sure that I understand the limits of this thing. There was a thing about, um, when the question was asked about call, people calling in. Or I somehow got the idea that if there was a, the data is collected ahead of time, say through the Coordinated Entry, or some other means. I wasn't sure if other means were possible. That if a person was, if you talked to somebody on the night of the count on the phone, that we could use the data that we collected about them through other means. What are the limits on, what are the means that are possible or acceptable? And that's the gist of it. I'm trying to find ways to avoid the super concentrated 24 hours you got to catch everybody. We never can. It takes days and days and days, weeks months to actually capture everybody that we run into. So trying to find ways to finesse the data collection, if I could just confirm where that person is on the night of.

**William Snow:** Yep, so a couple of ways that that question makes perfect sense. A couple ways to think about. We already talked about the alternative dataset piece. So, that's something we did talk about more. If that wasn't clear, but, one piece to recognize there, when I was saying, you may have collected data in other places that you can use. The key there is recognizing you're still tied to that, to the Point in Time count night. So here's an example. Let's say you decide your Point in Time count night is January 22<sup>nd</sup>. And you're going to use that night and you're using an alternative dataset, maybe you were approved to do that or, alternatively, maybe you're doing a short survey and you have your group going out, doing the short survey over three nights. So you start on with this, or let's say the 23<sup>rd</sup>. They're, they're asking, where people were homeless, they go at 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>. And all three of those nights they are going to ask, where were you sleeping on January 23<sup>rd</sup>? Even if you're on January 25<sup>th</sup>, you're still going to hearken back to that first date. But at the same time, your normal activities are going on. Coordinated Entry is still collecting data, because people are still being assessed. Your street outreach teams are likely still going out. You can use the data collected in those observations and those efforts. And, and as long as you're able to de-duplicate those records from the records collected through your survey, you can use the data collected there. So that you can kind of give a larger count, so to speak. Right? So, what you would do in that case, if that's the intent. If you're doing that as part of Coordinated Entry, for instance, I would say, you need to add an additional question that clarifies where were these people sleeping on the night designated as your count. That way, if they're coming in on January 29<sup>th</sup>, and saying we need a homeless assistance, if you can ask them, where were they on January 23<sup>rd</sup>? If, in fact, they were homeless, you could use that information that you have de-duplicated with who was already counted, and either add them to the group if they weren't already counted or if they were, you simply won't because they're already accounted for. I don't know if that helps you, but it's this idea that accounts can happen over several days. If you're using some way to de-duplicate so that you can make sure you're, you're not having people in multiple cases. Does that make sense?

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**Steve:** It makes sense, and I thank you very much for your time.

**William Snow:** Great, thank you.

**Aubrey Sitrler:** Hey William. I also just stuck into the chat a link to HUD developed count standards and methodologies training a few years ago that also features William if you haven't heard enough from us on these office hours. But it walks through in general years, and all other years, what HUD's approved standards are, and different kind of approaches you can use to conducting a PIT count, and some of it speaks to part of your question about, kind of the length of time that you can conduct different activities and what needs to be in a sort of 24 hour period versus what your, would CoC have flexibility to broaden out a little bit. Just to kind of add to William's analysis and explanation there.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you both so much for going into detail on that again. If anyone else would like to ask questions, verbally just click on that raise hand feature or hit star three on your phone. Would you have a question from the chat about observation counts and someone just wanted to confirm if you're doing an observation only on unsheltered count, does the count need to be done the night of the count? Only and not the following day or day.

**William Snow:** That's a great one. So the short answer is, it depends on your geography. The factors that, like, make that dependency occur are how much transience. Are is your homeless population, or how much transience is there among your homeless people? So, if, for instance, you kind of have some natural barriers, last boundaries or regions, whatever it is maybe you at multiple counties, and people just don't really cross lines, they kind of stay within their county. You could stage your count so that you do an observation over two or three days. Do you, you may have limited staff? That may be all you can do. And so doing one night, it's not required in that case. However, if you're in an environment where the folks really do kind of move across your entire CoC, and it's not really clear that there's any sort of natural areas where that, they don't really cross boundaries, then I'd say, yeah, you're going to have to do one night just because you, you don't have any other way to account for de-duplicating people as they move.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much for answering that, William. Um, we do have a number of questions on alternate datasets. So someone is asking a little bit about if they have, if they want to use HMIS to capture unsheltered PIT data, um, using a phone Coordinated Entry system, um, do they need to get HUD approval for that?

**William Snow:** Absolutely, so if your folks are not going out to do a count, providing surveys doing observation, you're just doing it from your data, the data you already have, you definitely need to send an email requesting an exception. And again, you need to go through the things we talked about earlier. Be

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prepared to show a comparison. Be prepared to account for any differences. Uh, do that type of comparison based on the level of data you plan on submitting to HUD. So again, short answer is, yeah, that's going to require you to seek an exception.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** William, if people are seeking exceptions to use alternative datasets, what do they need to send them the email as follows as far as that alternate dataset? Like top line summaries, the comparison difference, or do they need to send you the actual raw dataset in the email?

**William Snow:** I don't need to see the raw datasets, but again, if you're going to, think about the level you're submitting and be prepared to speak to those elements. So if you're just submitting a headcount well, you'd say we counted about 800 people in the 2020 PIT count. My dataset shows, I got about 790. That's pretty darn close, right? Like, that's good. And then you're probably good to go and if you do the comparison and you have a plan on submitting demographics, I would say, yeah, it looks generally like our demographics are lining up in terms of percent, about the same between our unsheltered and the other dataset. So again, you don't have to go into each of the numbers for those other pieces, but you do need to be prepared to speak to them. Right? If you're doing demographics, say I compared the percent, and they're about the same. "About the same" to me means you're within again, 2 or 3%, we give this 2 to 5 variance. That's really thinking about the larger number. If you're if you're thinking about this and you're saying yeah, they're about the same. Again, that should be certainly 5% or lower. Don't say "about the same" and it's 10% or something worse than that. Cause that doesn't. That's not about the same for me.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** And to cap off the series, um, alternate datasets, William, um, if a CoC has an alternate dataset and comparing it to a previous PIT count, and it's pretty different, but they're actually more confident that this alternate dataset is a more accurate reflection of the unsheltered population, what should they do?

**William Snow:** Uh, you just have to be prepared to explain that. Some of, some things to consider, are, there are folks who say, look, it looks like, uh, today's data looks like last year's data. Right? They, maybe they don't want to compare the 2020 to the 2020. That's not great, because the pandemic is causing the changes. That's the very reason I need you to run the data in the past so I have kind of a validation point, but there are reasons where the datasets may not line up. Again, just be prepared to speak to them, and if you don't show me something on the numbers, I'm going to assume something is wrong. So, be prepared to say, I ran the numbers, this is what they show. This is the variance, and this is what we think happened. If you share that, like, you generally feel, this is why I'm probably going to prod you a little more. You need to be pretty specific. Right? For instance, just saying, well, we think we had undercounts in the past. Yeah, that in itself is not a great explanation. Right? Like, why did you have under? Can't, why do you have a stronger count here? Are you sure you're not duplicating? Right? What universe are you



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including? And your alternative dataset is their cause for concern there right? That's the types of things that I'm going to want to know.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you for hitting that series of questions, William. We have someone with their hand raised, Corey [name]. Um, Corey, if you'd like to ask your question, you are now unmuted.

**Corey:** Yeah, can you hear me?

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** That we can.

**Corey:** Okay, so I just want to verify that we do not need a waiver. Our plan going forward is to count the sheltered beds as normal. For the unsheltered count though, we are going to send out our outreach staff with no volunteers. The morning of the PIT, they are going to go to known locations that they absolutely know people are there. And then they are going to spread out over the next three days, looking for anybody that may be unknown. We still plan on doing the full surveys collecting all of the datasets and such. I just wanted to verify that we do not need an exemption or a waiver.

**William Snow:** That is correct. That sounds like you did not need a waiver for that.

**Corey:** Okay, thank you very much.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** All right, thank you Corey. Again, if anyone else would like to ask a question verbally, you can raise your hand, or if you're on a phone hit star three o ask a question verbally. We have a few questions here about the timing of the PIT count in general. I'm hoping, Aubrey, you can maybe answer a few of these. Um, someone's asking, if their PIT count is the night of January 25<sup>th</sup>, then is the night of the PIT count between 10 PM on January 25<sup>th</sup> and 6 AM on January 26<sup>th</sup>?

**Aubrey Sitrer:** I think I can defer to William to answer that if you want, and there's a graphic that I'm going to look for to pull up to paste in the chat.

**William Snow:** Oh, that's great. Yeah, that graphic's really good. So we think of it as when does the night begin? So, even though you may be counting the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, really you started the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> that's the night that we typically say, where were you sleeping last night? We tend to think of the night, so that's the way to think of it. When did the night begin? Use that date.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. And if a community, uh, is asking for an exception to do their unsheltered count outside of the last 10 days in January, should their sheltered count and their HIC still

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happen in the last 10 days of January? Or will it move to the same date that their accepted moved unsheltered count will then happen at?

**William Snow:** Yeah, that's a good question. Your date should always line up. That's the short answer. HIC, sheltered, unsheltered. All of that should be the same.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much. So, again, if you'd like to ask a question, verbally just go ahead and raise your hand or hit star three. If you're on the phone, we do have Johnny [name], with a hand raised. So, Johnny, you are unmuted to ask your question.

**Johnny:** I can be as quick as possible we are definitely going to need to seek an exception this year. We represent Yuba and Sutter counties in California, which are the two worst counties, and the worst state, and the worst nation in the world for COVID. So, we're definitely not going out. My question is, if we wanted to do alternative dataset, we suspect that our numbers in HMIS would be drastically different than what we submitted on our last unsheltered count in 2019. If we were able to discuss that with you Mr. Snow, and that was approved to use, in a year or two years when we do our next unsheltered count, could we continue to do it through HMIS? Or would we have to go back? Provided that COVID is over.

**William Snow:** It's a good question. The short answer is, I can't answer that for now. I suspect the answer is going to be no for now, although I'm definitely open to considering something. It's, it's helpful to remember the Point in Time count is a data collection effort, but that's not its core purpose, right? There's actually a lot of parts to this. There's public engagements, there's, uh, there's certainly the education piece, there is volunteer recruitment, there is, there's, there are a bunch of pieces. Now, do I want to make everyone go out and count just for those pieces? No, but they have to be considered. It probably means that in the future, you likely can use some form of that data. But if your PIT count is that drastically different, it probably needs to be adjusted. Like, your methodology probably needs to be adjusted. You might just use a different extrapolation routine. So do some sort of survey or sample, and use some of your data help supplement, and then do some adjustment to how you account for the areas you don't currently go in, or anyway, there's lots to discuss for the future on that. But the short the short answer is, for all of these exceptions, I'm only giving the exception for 2021, but we can have a future conversation.

**Johnny:** Thank you so much

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Thank you for that question Johnny. All right, we have a few HIC questions. So, we have some questions asking about how overflow beds, temporary emergency shelters, non-congregate shelters, should be recorded on the HIC. Could you talk a little bit about HIC's set up for those sorts of shelter?

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**William Snow:** Uh, the short answer is yes. Record it all. The area where it's most complicated is, let's say you're using a decompression model, right? You have a current shelter that maybe with 100 beds and now you're at 50, but you're actually still providing the other 50 through hotel and motel, and you have something set up in HMIS. If you followed our HMIS project, set up, early on, you would have kept it under "shelter" as your project setup. We're not going to make you break that up in HMIS or the HIC. They'll actually just report that as it's set up in HMIS. So that would report the report that's facility based. But other than that, most of the other circumstances, thankfully, the HMIS project setup should govern how you act. So, if you are doing a temporary emergency shelter, you're going to report that as an emergency shelter. And you will report it under whatever you're collecting it at. That's, right, if it's voucher or hotel motel principally, then you're going to record it as such. So, my, my goal there was try to align with set up as much as possible. I don't want you changing anything now, like that feels often, right? That would be a pain in the butt. So we don't want you to have to do more work, uh, on project set up, and you did months ago when you tried to get everything moving. So that's, that's our kind of thing that we're using to guide how we approach the HIC.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful and William, one more tricky HIC question. I know you answered in the, this in the chat, but if you could just talk a little bit about the guidance on persons in SSVF emergency housing assistance funded units, and how they should be counted in the sheltered count or on the HIC?

**William Snow:** Yeah, that was one where I don't actually know the answer. I actually have to talk with the folks at SSVF. And I know that won't happen. I'm actually going to be out for a couple of weeks and have just limited access to email. And so I know the SSVF folks, a lot of them are actually unavailable. So, we will get the answer to that. I don't know how we should treat it, but, um, but I think the person who asked, I'm just going to ask you to submit an AAQ. So, I'll use that AAQ in here to help me get an answer from the, uh, SSVF staff.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much William. And William, we've had a few different versions of some questions about exceptions and surveys come in. So, basically, if a CoC is, you know, changing the number of questions, eliminating some questions, not collecting data on some things, whether it's chronic status, veteran status, anything else that's included on the normal PIT counts. Do they need an exceptions?

**William Snow:** Yep, yep. If you're collecting one element less, you'll need to seek an exception. So, let's say you don't, you're not going to submit the chronic data. You're going to need to take an exception, even if you're collecting every other thing.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful, wonderful. Thank you so much. Again, if you'd like to ask a question, uh, verbally, you can go ahead and raise your hand. We have a few minutes left to ask the question

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directly. If you'd like to raise your hand or hit star six, um, we have some questions asking for just some clarification. I know we talked earlier about alternative datasets and Coordinated Entry, but just about how the more traditional, normal year, service, for service provider surveys, and accounting after the night-of count will work during this pandemic year?

**William Snow:** Maybe, I'm not understanding the question. Can you ask the question again? Maybe reframe it a little bit?

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Sure, can you talk a little bit about delivery about survey about options to do the count after the night of accounts such as surveys at a service provider?

**William Snow:** Ah, so, I see. The service-based counting approach. So I guess it's very similar to how you have done this in the past, in the sense that for those engaging in services, you'd ask them whatever you're going to collect in the survey. You may still want to limited interactions in those cases. You still can seek an exception, even there, to collect less than the full, the full set of questions, or you could, you could ask the full set of questions, kind of, up to you, what you want to do there. You have the option to do that for 14 days. That's one of the allowances under the guidance we provided. I'd encourage you, if you're gonna do that again. It's just a little hard once you get after, like, day 10, for people to remember where they were on the night-of the count, because you're always going to have to hearken back to that first night. So you might want to limit your window there about how far you collected that data. Service-based counts rarely are done on their own. We know often they are paired with, uh, some of the other efforts, usually a survey. So it is something that you can't really use that with observation because you can't de-duplicate that, so don't try to do that follow up count and an observation. It won't work. But if you're going to do short surveys, and then you want to do this kind of window, I'll follow up through service base. That's a great idea. Again, figure out what's feasible in your community and use it, use it to the fullest.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. So William, we have a very specific question is, uh, the question is around, is a person fleeing DV a required PIT element? And if so, does a community need an exception if this question isn't asked, or collected this year?

**William Snow:** Great question. We certainly are sensitive to those survivors of domestic violence. Funny enough, this is the only optional element of all the PIT counts that we've published over the past several years. We've made it optional because the sensitivity of that question. It is important if your community can't do that safely and sensitively, and in a way that we'll maintain confidence, we don't want you doing it in the normal years. So we've allowed it to be optional with that in mind. We strongly encourage you to find ways to do that, so that it can be collected. It's very valuable information. But again, this is another example of safety comes first. In the context of COVID, you do not have to identify that you are not going

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to collect that data element, because it's already optional. So, if you're going to do everything else except that, you don't need an exception, um, or even if you're going to collect some things, um, but not others, and that's in that, not other group. Yeah. You don't need to actually let us know on that because it's already optional.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful. Thank you so much William. I know we have a couple more questions, um, coming in into the chat. Again, if you'd like to ask the last verbal question, you can raise your hand or hit star three on your phone, um, Aubrey, was there any that you saw that, uh, jumped to the top?

**Aubrey Sitrler:** I think that you have asked most of them. I mean, I think there are a lot of questions coming in about specifically what does and doesn't require an exception in the way of data elements. But I think we've hit on that a lot today, so hopefully, you know, people can submit AAQs or review the transcript for these recordings.

**William Snow:** Get familiar yeah. We definitely, I think there are two things that I can hit on to maybe close and maybe, if you see, you can kind of scroll and see if there's another one or two that pops up that really shouldn't be addressed. One people have asked in the past, I didn't really see it here. How quickly they'll get a response back if they submit an exception. I would have told you if it was prior to today, I, some folks, I've responded to in minutes. Most people have gotten a response in 24 hours. I'm actually going to be on leave for the next couple of weeks with limited access to email. I will be actually following some of the exceptions during that time, but it does mean that responses will be much slower during this next about three week window. So if you submitted, then you're not sure what's going on, it's likely just that it's gonna take me some time to get back to it. So just be prepared for that. The other piece, um, that I saw, I forget who asked it, but it was about, what are we going to do with this data? There are a lot of people who are seeking exceptions. So, we're not even going to have a complete dataset. Here's the short answer of what we're going to do. We feel a lot of the data is not really for HUD. It's more for you. That sometimes probably doesn't feel that way. But we want you to be able to understand what's going on with your unsheltered population. We will still do something with the data. At this point, we plan on trying to have enough to say about what's going on in certain types of geographies, like rural communities or more urban communities. We do not anticipate being able to say something nationally. There are enough exceptions, there are enough differences in what's going on in the counts that we, we don't think that's going to be a thing we're going to be able to do, and we're okay with that. Right? Again, safety is first. We're fine with that messaging we're working on crafting that hopefully you can teach and use some of that too. Right? You should be able to say, look, even, if you did a count, say, this is still different, drastically different than what we've done in the past. And so again we're looking for, is your methodology enough that you can confidently say, things went up or down as a result of your count? That's really what we care about, that thumbs up thumbs, down type look. Uh, we're not going to be very precise in our analysis, and we're going to try to clarify that for the public as well.

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**Tommy Joe Bednar:** Wonderful, thank you so much, William. As we head towards our close, I want to remind everyone that we will have two upcoming sessions of these PIT count office hours on January 12<sup>th</sup> and January 19<sup>th</sup>. The registration for both of those is open. Aubrey has been wonderfully kind and put the AAQ link in the chat again. As William has said, and it's already said, if you have specific questions, please send in AAQs asking those. With the exception of actually requesting your exception. There should be email to William. William, any other closing notes as we finish out for today?

**William Snow:** Nope. Thank you all very much.

**Tommy Joe Bednar:** All right. Thank you, everyone. Again, the materials will be available on the HUD Exchange. We hope to see you January 12<sup>th</sup>. And that concludes our webinar.