

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Caroline Roddey: Alright, I think we can go ahead and get started. Hello everyone and welcome to PIT count office hours. We're glad that you're here. I'm going to spend a couple of moments today going over some tech notes, and then we will get into the content that we have for today. So, a couple of housekeeping reminders, we are recording the office hours today as we do every time, and we will post a copy of the recording along with the slides and any content that we receive through the chat box on the HUD exchange in a few business days. If you have any issues with audio during the webinar, we encourage you to switch over from computer to phone audio at the numbers that are up there on the screen and then in the chat. During the Q and A portion of the event, we will pause for questions, we anticipate and hope to hear from you through the chat feature and WebEx. To find the chat, take a look at the bottom righthand corner of your screen. You should see the word chat and what looks like a message bubble. Click on that to open the chat. Please send all questions, comments and feedback in the chat. When you are sending those messages, please do take a moment to make sure that the "To:" bar is set to everyone. That'll make sure that all participants as well as panelists and presenters can see those messages. If you would like to raise, ask a question, verbally during the Q and A portion, you can use the raise hand feature. To raise your hand, first, select the participant list icon at the bottom of the screen, then you can select the raise hand icon on the bottom right corner of your screen. We will call on you then unmute you to ask a question. Once you've asked your question, we will put you back on mute. Please remember to click the hand icon again to lower your hand after you have asked your question. And call-in users can unmute by hitting star 6 and are asked to please mute again by hitting star 6 once you've asked your question. So we have several speakers and resource advisors today on the line from HUD. We have William Snow from the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, or SNAPS. William uses he, him, and his pronouns. From Abt Associates, we have myself, Caroline Roddey, Tori Morris, and Meghan Henry. Tori, Meghan and I all use she, her, and hers pronouns. So, in today's office hours, we will discuss the topic of conducting the PIT during COVID; using ESG and ESG-CV funding to pay for PIT count activities; and counting people and structures for the count. We will also discuss PIT count resources and updates, and then the majority of our session will be left for communities to ask questions. So, with that, I'm going to turn things over to William.

4:00

William Snow: All right thanks, Caroline, looking forward to today's session. I wanted to kind of step back for a second and talk a little bit around doing this in the context of COVID. So we've got lots of questions. Are we canceling postponing, changing the PIT Count. From a national perspective, no, we're

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not. HUD's kind of keeping it as we have in the past in terms of going forward with the count. However, hopefully you guys saw an email this last week, or a ListServ this last week that highlighted the option of seeking an exception to the timeline. Obviously, this count, the end of January coincides pretty closely with when we think the surges will happen for Omicron. That certainly wasn't planned; nobody wants that. We know that has lots of implications if you're using provider staff, a lot of them seem to be impacted by this. And so you have people out in addition to kind of making sure folks are safe in your different facilities and out on the streets. So we've encouraged folks to consider if this is feasible to move your count out even if a, a week or a few weeks if that makes sense to you. If so you would still need to get approval from HUD and all the information is on the screen on how you do that. I know a lot of CoCs have already requested this. We try to respond relatively quickly. We usually get around to it within 2 business days. And so this is something again we're watching closely and want you to consider. We are concerned about everyone's health and safety. I know that sounds a little contrary to the fact that we're actually still asking you to count, but we, we do care about it. We do want to provide opportunities to have some flexibility on that. So we strongly encourage you to consider that. Please in your request make sure you provide these three things that are on the screen, right? Focus on your name and number, your revised date and then the reasons that you're going to be changing your account. So we have a good faith or a good cause requirement that we have to meet regulatorily, and so we just have to have enough to show good cause. And COVID is pretty darn good cause. So if that's impacting staff and the concerns about people you're serving and interacting with that's certainly going to qualify there. We're, we're fairly liberal with granting these exceptions. So if you ask there's a high likelihood, you're going to get it. If you ask for something other than an exception to the 10 days, that likelihood goes down quite a bit. But most people are just asking for those last 10 days of January to be moved to February sometime. The one other note here is that, at this point, we don't have a plan to change the date by which you submit your data. So historically that's been the end of April or the very first day of May. If you're going to seek a request or an exception to move your count dates, we do ask that you'd be prepared to submit your data by the end of April. We're still looking to see if we have flexibility there; we also have congressional deadlines and other things that we have kind of dictating when we collect the data. But we are looking into that to see if there's something that we can add to, in terms of flexibility there. But for now, let's count on it closing at the end of April. All right, let's go to the next slide please. And one more slide, please. So we talked a little bit about using ESG funding, in particular as many of you have ESG-CV dollars in your community. We've talked about ways to use that funding. So we wanted to document it here. I think maybe more importantly, we finally put a document out that you guys can pull down and you can point to help understand what you can pay for with ESG

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dollars. And again, that definitely goes for ESG-CV dollars as well. I think the important thing, especially as most communities seem to be relying much more heavily on staff, which makes sense, given the kind of liability concept surrounding using volunteers during Omicron. It's really critical to understand what you can charge. You probably can fund more than you realize. ESG or ESG-CV allows you to pay for street outreach activities. So, if you're doing an interview-based counts, and you're engaging and asking, various questions, and also offering them assistance at the end, that's a street outreach activity, so that's definitely something that you can charge under those accounts under your street outreach activity. We certainly encourage you to consider that. We want you to be able to pay for your staff. This is a large undertaking, and we want you to be able to have the flexibility. There is a little more there than just the staff. You can pay for PPE, you can pay for the types of things you would hand out in a street outreach engagement. So, if you hand out food items, or socks something to that effect something that's kind of on the survival side that's part of your street outreach, that can be included as part of your point in time count allowable costs under street outreach as well. I think one of the most important parts of kind of seeing what you can do with street outreach is just considering the nature of your count. So, if you're doing an observation based count, where you're collecting all of the elements, but maybe you're doing a survey after the fact, but you are not engaging people on the night that you do your count then you can't use the street outreach activity for reimbursing. It needs to be actual street outreach activity, right? You need to engage and ask questions and offer assistance. And if you do that, then it becomes eligible. One other piece of this is all of the 3 outreach requirements kind of apply and that's fairly loose. But one that I want to be clear on is if you're collecting this data, there is an expectation as with your normal street outreach activity that you're going to be entering the data into HMIS. You could do that with volunteers on the backend, or you could do it on the night of the count. However, you normally do your street outreach activity documentation in HMIS, you should plan on doing that if you're going to seek reimbursement under the street outreach activity.

10:51

Let me shift gears a little bit to the administrative side. So there's a lot of flexibility there. Most costs are actually eligible, right? Staff time to coordinate the PIT count. Mobile count software, and related to the hardware, that actually could apply to your street outreach side as well. If you would use that as part of your street outreach engagement, most count activities, where you're doing surveys is why you would use an app. So, that kind of makes sense that you would be able to pay for that. PPE for staff and volunteers. I think the two things I put on here is you can't use food for volunteers. We have some restrictions in part 200 around what gets designated as food for allowable around providing food. Gift

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cards is a little bit tricky. So we're saying, no. There's a little bit of a nuance to that reality of—to use gift cards in and of itself is not prohibited, but you also need to be able to show that all of the expenses tied to the gift card is spent on eligible costs. That's the part that seems prohibitive giving given the population that you would be giving this to, we just generally say for the PIT count, don't pay for gift cards, unless you plan on tracking every single person with every single expense, which I don't think anybody here plans on doing or wants to do. With that, I think I'll turn the time over. Let's see. Is it Tori that I'm turning over to?

12:15

Tori Morris: Yep for me. Thanks, William. Hi everyone. So, HUD also recently published some guidance on counting people in low visibility structures for the PIT count. So I'm going to quickly go over the information in that document and clarify the information. So next slide. Thanks. So we'll post the link in the chat to the guidance document, which is now up on HUD exchange. So, when we're talking about a low visibility structure, we're talking about outdoor structures with loads of visibility that could serve as sleeping situations. So, specifically, some examples are recreational vehicles otherwise known as RVs; tents and sheds.

So when you're thinking about counting these structures for your PIT count, there are two primary ways that you can gather that information from people experiencing homelessness and those structures. So the first is to do a full census count. That would mean that you're going to go to every, for example tent and talk to every person in those, in that tent to determine if they're experiencing homelessness and also survey to get them to get their information. The second approach is a sampling approach, which I know we talked about if you made the last office hours, we talked about sampling and more depth for that office hours. But very generally, sampling is a way to account for information about a whole group of people by only collecting data for a portion of that group. So when it comes to counting structures, that means that, say you have 30 tents in a location, if you do a sampling method, you may, you can randomly sample, for example, five tents and then, you can extrapolate from that information to get a full PIT count. Next slide.

So, considering the context of COVID-19, and that generally speaking, lots of are going to be trying to reduce the amount of physical contact between PIT count enumerators and people experiencing homelessness. We're assuming that many CoCs are going to want to take use the second method to count these structures for their PIT count. And so, caveat before I go into some steps that you can take, but, when you're doing any kind of sampling, it's always a good idea to work with the local research partners. That could be a local research consultant, a university, any professional with experience in

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statistics and sampling. So, it's always a good idea to partner with those folks to develop your sampling approach. Setting that aside, CoCs can follow the following steps when counting structures, these 4 steps listed below. For these 4 steps, we are going to be talking about vehicles, but these steps can really be adapted to, for tents and sheds and any other structures with low visibility.

So, the first thing that you're going and going to want to do is create a criteria that can be used to determine when a vehicle might be housing a person experiencing homelessness. So, before you get started counting, you're going to create this criteria and, for example, this criteria could be that a vehicle is parked, some of the windows are covered and you can view household belongings are living necessities in the car. So, that might not be the case. It might be different for your community, depending on what your community looks like. But you're going to want to create a criteria like that before you start counting those structures. And then you are going to establish an approach for your PIT count, enumerators. So this can be really simple; it could be as simple as knocking on the window of every other vehicle that meets that criteria in an area. And for this particular kind of counting, you are going to want to have an experienced PIT count enumerator that can, you know, assess the situation and safety and things like that, when you're counting these structures. So, once your count, PIT count, enumerators go out and the survey, for example, every other vehicle you're going to, through that survey, you're going to be determining how, if those cars or vehicles have people in them and how many of those people are experiencing homelessness. And then the last step is a little bit of math, but it's simple math, I promise, is you're just going to count those vehicles that meet the criteria for inclusion and then extrapolate. So next slide.

So, to make this very abstract steps a little clear, we're going to go through one example of what this could look like again with vehicles. So, the first step again your, well, let me step back. So, propose, let's suppose that there is maybe like a parking lot or an area with a lot of part cars that you think it's likely that people are in those cars who are experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. So, suppose you identify that area and it's a parking lot, and then on the night of the count, you're going to go to that area, and you are going to apply your criteria to assess the number of, or the cars that are going to be part of your count. So, for example, in this example, imagine there's a big parking lot with lots of cars, but there's 10 cars with that are parks that have coverings on the windows and that have household belongings in them that you can see. So, those are going to be your universe of cars that you are serving and counting, is those 10 cars and then the next step is, you're going to instruct your PIT count enumerator is to approach serving those cars in a particular way. So, in this example, the PIT count enumerator is surveying every other car, so we highlighted that in this circle to the left of the first box with the green cars. So those are the cars that PIT count enumerators are actually going to go out to and

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count. So, the third step is after the PIT count enumerator surveyed those 5 cars, let's suppose that the enumerators determined that 1 car was empty and 1 car had people in it who are not experiencing homelessness. So, the other 3 cars that they surveyed have 1, 2, and 3 people in them experiencing homelessness. And from that, we can calculate that there's an average household size of 2 people in that sample. Okay, so once you are done surveying, you can basically take a step back and look at your universe of 10 cars and create an estimated PIT count. So, when we look back at the 10 cars, which is that last circle and last box on the slide, you'll see that, since 2 in every 5 cars that you surveyed were empty, or did not have people experiencing homelessness, the CoC should exclude 2 of every 5 cars that meet the criteria. So, we're back at the 10 cars and based on our sampling, we are going to be able to say that there's 4 cars of those 10 that don't have people experiencing homelessness in them, and we're not going to consider them in our calculation. So, from the 10 cars identified, 4 are excluded, and this leaves the 3 cars that your PIT count enumerator surveyed, plus 3 cars that were not surveyed. And with all that information, I know it's a lot of information, you can get to an estimated PIT count, by only surveying 5 cars, instead of 10. And I'll show you how to get to that estimation. You can do the next animation. so all of that considered, your PIT count is going to be 12 people and I'll show you how I got that number. So, the first, number is 6 and that is the number of extrapolated cars with people experiencing homelessness. So, again, that's that last circle and those are those 3 cars that you surveyed that you found people experiencing homelessness in, and then 3 cars that you didn't survey. So that's the number of extrapolated cars. Next animation. Great. And then you can multiply that number by 2, which is the average, the sample's average household size. So of the 3 cars that your PIT count enumerator surveyed, you found that there was an average household size of 2. So you're going to multiply 6 times 2 and that gets you 12 people, which is a way to do this kind of counting and reduce also the number of people that you're having to survey. I think that's it. I am going to then pass it on to Caroline to review some PIT count resources and updates.

21:08

Caroline Roddey: Okay, thanks Tori. Yeah, we want to take some time to show you the PIT count resources that are available as well as some updates to existing resources. Next slide please. So, the screenshot in this slide shows the landing page on HUD exchange for all PIT and HIC guides, tools and webinars, and the link to this web page will be dropped in the chat. These tools and resources should be used alongside the official PIT and HIC data collection notice. Next slide, please. We made changes to the model surveys and the observation-based PIT count example form in order to reflect the recently updated 2022 HMIS data standards. So these updated tools were published yesterday, and the changes

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to these tools include updates to allow individuals to identify with multiple genders as well as with new gender categories. The race and ethnicity categories were also updated to reflect the HMIS data standards.

Next slide please. We additionally created two new guidance documents. The first one discusses how to count people in structures for the PIT count and resembles what Tori was just discussing. And the second document discusses using ESG funding to pay for PIT count activities, as William just discussed. Those were also posted on HUD Exchange yesterday and outlined by William and Tori as well. We also have several more updates and resources that have not yet been posted on HUD exchange, but they will be soon. The first is a guidance document that covers how to report gender for the PIT count, which has changed to a multi select question to align with the 2022 HMIS data standards. The extrapolation tool will also be reflected, updated to reflect the data standards as well as the PIT count youth survey materials. And with that, we will now move to the question and answer part of this session.

As a reminder, if you would like to ask a question verbally during this section, you can use the raise hand feature to raise your hand first, select the participant list icon at the bottom of the screen then select the raise hand icon at the bottom right corner of your screen. We will call on you then unmute you to ask the question. Once you've asked your question and we will put you back on mute. Please remember to click the hand icon again to lower your hand after you have asked a question. And again, call-in users can unmute by hitting star 6 and are asked to please mute again by hitting star 6 once you've asked your question. And please also make sure that if you're typing a question in the chat that it gets sent to all panelists, and not just all attendees. So that—sorry, that it's sent to everyone and not all panelists or all attendees. Are there any hands raised right now?

24:01

Micah Webster: We have one hand raised from Heather Hutton. Heather, you are now unmuted if you'd like to ask your question, verbally.

Heather Hutton: Hi, we're out in Rockdale County and Newton county in Georgia and this is our first PIT count and we're not really clear on the sheltered count whether it— the unsheltered count, whether it should include people in hotels on vouchers. Can you address that, please?

William Snow: Yep, I can address that, great question. The assistance depends a little bit here, right? So, it does matter how that's being funded, but generally hotel motel vouchers that are provided as a form

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of emergency assistance should be included as part of your sheltered count and you would include the families in the sheltered count and the inventory in your housing inventory count.

Heather Hutton: Thank you.

Micah Webster: And we've got another user, Chris Davis. Chris, you are now off mute if you'd like to ask your question.

Chris Davis: Awesome, thank you so much. I appreciate you all hosting these office hours, so we can get these questions answered. So my question is our community, like many communities of course, we're facing a major surge in COVID cases right now and our local health authority just recently moved us back to the highest level of safety guidelines. So these guidelines for high risk individuals vaccinated, and unvaccinated recommend no gatherings with people outside your household, even outdoor gatherings. Meanwhile, our region is seeing a shortage of available beds than fewer than 50 total for our 11 county region, that's as of yesterday. So, given the high risks associated, of course, with 19 for people, living in sheltered will communities like ours have the option to submit an exception to an in person count as allowed last year? And if so, can the same alternate methodology approved last year be used to submit a full count this year?

William Snow: Great question.

Chris Davis: Sorry, that's a lot.

William Snow: Nope, that that makes a lot of sense. So we're definitely seeing the same thing, like you said, across the country. Definitely aware of the Omicron. I think the first thing is we would strongly encourage you to consider moving the counts. Probably not going to give an exception all around, so far we haven't done that. You can always ask, in my opinion, you can always ask and you can email the HICPITCount inbox. That's something that I actually generally respond to, but I'll work with managers on kind of larger requests like that. With regard to the alternate dataset, so we had 20 CoCs last year that used either a combination of by name lists with coordinated entry or HMIS data. This year, we're not extending the same type of, everyone who did it last year or if you want to make this happen for this year, we're not extending it generally. We will honor, like questions about it, so far of the communities that did it last year, many have actually asked. We have follow up questions, things that we noticed

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were likely missing in the count last year. And so these are things that would actually have to be addressed, but that's better for one on one. I think the biggest thing is if you use alternate data sets— one of the virtues of doing the PIT count, is the idea that you're engaging a group of people who are not necessarily service engaged. Your PIT count, or your administrative data, right, or by name list that, by definition tends to be people who are service engaged. So we'd have to talk through, if you use an alternate data set, how you overcome that hurdle? What type of measures are put in place for that? So, so far we only have 1 community, that's kind of met that threshold so far, but always willing to entertain the question and we can kind of explore. But send those questions directly to the count at HICPITCount@hud.gov.

Micah Webster: And it looks like we have one more question from Joseph Desanklos and then after that, we're going to take a couple from the chat and then go back to call in users. So Joseph, you are now off mute, if you'd like to ask your question, verbally.

Joseph Desanklos: Awesome thanks for this update, meeting. This is Joseph Desanklos from Ramsey county in the state of Minnesota. We are also seeing this uptick in COVID, like one of the other persons that. My colleague put in a chat a question around the use, besides the use of ESG-CV money for the PIT count for PPE, hand sanitizers, and masks, could we use some of our planning grant funding for that as well?

William Snow: Great question, yes. Think of everything you saw in the or the admin side of that screen and actually what we'll put out in the document, or is out, all of that essentially follows in the CoC planning side as well.

Joseph Desanklos: Okay, so just to confirm, we can pay for additions, for PPE and like, hand sanitizer. Is that right?

William Snow: Yep.

Joseph Desanklos: Awesome. Thanks, William.

William Snow: Thank you.

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Joseph Desanklos: Thank you.

Caroline Roddey: So, I think we're going to take a couple from the chat. So there are several questions about when in February CoCs can conduct the HIC and PIT count. So, could this extension be for any date in February or is it only the last 10 days?

William Snow: Yeah, great question. So we typically say we would encourage you to think about the last 10 days of February, partly because the premise of doing the counts in the last 10 days is when, when people tend to run out of their support checks or whatever possible funding source, or mainstream benefit comes in, that's kind of our normal take on it. During COVID, right now we just want you to consider what you can do safely. So, any dates in February, we've taken, we've had some that we've approved for early March. That's been rare. You kind of again have to understand your parameters and can you submit the data by the end of April. So that again has been a tough one, but we have 1 or 2 communities at this point that had been approved for that. So, yes, you can pick any day in February that makes sense to you. At this point, probably near the end of the months might be better in terms of letting the Omicron wave ride a little longer. So, I think many communities are looking at around the 22nd or 23rd because of that. But we are flexible with you on that. We don't, we don't need to impose any extra burden or requirement tied to that. I saw another question, I do want to answer kind of nested with this. Folks want to know if this also impacts the date for the other parts right? The housing inventory counts and the sheltered count. Sorry I didn't touch on that earlier. That is absolutely the case. We see this count as a simultaneous count. It all happens on the same day, all 3 parts of it. So, yes, a movement of your unsheltered PIT count date impacts your entire counts. You'll, you'll move everything to that same date.

31:29

Caroline Roddey: Thanks, William, and along those lines, what is the last day that CoCs can request the exception to be moved to February?

William Snow: Yeah, that's a great question as well. So, typically, those requests come in before the last 10 days of January, right, that's when your compliance period, so to speak kicks in. The reality is we have disasters, natural disasters every year, right? Like a freak snowstorm or fires or any number of natural disasters. And we've dealt with requests into like, February 1st, even though it was the last 10 days of January, basically we'll apply a reasonableness factor for any of this, especially for natural disasters.

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Now, the COVID stuff, like, that's not a surprise everyone, that you guys know about it, or are dealing with it. So, we would expect those requests would come in before the last 10 days of January. But again, you may have a change because of a natural phenomenon that happens locally and we'll, we'll accept those and again address them as quickly as they come in.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks, William. If we conducted a full 2021 count and decide to forego an unsheltered count in 2022, are there any repercussions for opting out in 2022?

William Snow: That's a great question. So, the short answer is no, but if you committed in your application to do a, an unsheltered count in 2021 or 2022, or you committed to the shelter or the homeless youth counts portion as well, that's something we're trying to figure out, the short answer on that piece too is that I don't have an answer on it. I probably won't in the short term, that's going to have to be tied to our 2022 NOFO. So don't expect an answer on that anytime soon. If you did not commit to that, and you did a count, either a full unsheltered or a partial unsheltered, then you don't have a requirement to do the unsheltered portion this year. And that also translates into, you don't have some sort of obligation to notify us either. You're simply covered under the regulation and when you submit your data in HDX, you can just submit your sheltered and your housing inventory data.

Caroline Roddey: Great, so now we're going to move on for the moment to topics around, or questions around counting people in structures. So, this first one is, rather than waking people that are sleeping in cars at night, can we survey the same cars in that parking lot the day after the PIT night?

William Snow: So, I'll take a first stab at this and feel free, Caroline, Meghan, or Tori. So, it depends a little bit on how you, again, how confident you are that people are not moving. So, cars are much more difficult, because obviously, cars are mobile. So, if you're going through a place where you see, maybe a set of RVs that don't look like they could move if they wanted to, yes, that's probably okay. However, I would say that needs to happen in hours where you would expect to find them. So if you do it in the early morning, not at 2 AM, but at like, 6 or 7, and you knock on the door, that's much more reasonable. That's okay if you do it at like 2, we have a lot more questions around, well, how are you sure, that A, you're going to find people, it seems like that likelihood is going to go down the further into the day that you get, and then B, you have to consider is there any sort of transient aspect of that population that would happen during the daytime that would be different than what you would expect to see at night time. So, again, abandoned cars or things that don't look like they're going to move structures. Yes,

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that's fine. I just again, you really have to consider are you going to find people? Because if you wait and do it the next day, and then you find nobody, you have no way of applying any sort of factor to your data because you don't know how many people are actually in these structures. You don't know the nature of the folks in the structures, so just layer that kind of caveat to moving it to the next day. I don't know Caroline Megan or any of you have more that you would add to that.

Meghan Henry: I would just agree with you wholly; unless you're there to survey them when they wake up, I'm not sure waiting until the next day will sort of garner the same type of information that you're hoping to get.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks, so this next one, our CoC conducts a full unsheltered count, and our CoC is fairly small in size; the unsheltered count was 199 last year. When we are unable to survey an individual due to safety, sleeping, or refusal how should we estimate the demographics for these individuals? Our sample size is too small for the extrapolation tool.

William Snow: So that's a great question as well. The extrapolation is always tricky. I would say, still use the extrapolation tool even though it's small. If you are confident in your street outreach data, you could also supplement with that. Right? Some people have kind of run the numbers only on their street outreach data then run the numbers on their extrapolation from the small, small sample, and see if they if they kind of match. If so, then you can have confidence moving forward. If there's some sort of glaring difference between the two data sets, then yeah, you probably want to adjust towards your street outreach data again. This makes a big assumption that you have that kind of street, average data, not every CoC does. 199 people actually doesn't sound that small, that's a lot of people in your unsheltered count, so that's certainly something I would consider, but you can to some extent ignore some of the flags on the extrapolation tool if you really have no other way of getting some sort of extrapolation. It's just not ideal.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, thanks. And I think maybe now we can go to a couple of people who have their hands raised.

Micah Webster: Sure, so Dina Javattione. You are now unmuted if you'd like to ask your question verbally.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Dina Javattione: Thank you so much for the opportunity to ask a question. I also put it in the chat so that can be disregarded. I just wanted to ask, in the notice, it indicates that we should not be asking about the nature or severity of a person's disability, however, then we are expected to collect data around the additional homeless populations relating to substance use disorder and mental health. Any suggestions, strategies on how we get that data and also honor not asking about the nature or severity of a disability?

William Snow: Yeah, it's a great question, one we struggled with quite honestly. It's a challenge to say you have to collect on chronic. So a lot of this has to do with probing. So, in our model surveys, we try to approach the bare minimum, like, this is the type of thing you could ask and really it maps to the elements of HIV status, and there's really not a ton, but there are certainly some there. We would say, just stick to the minimalist. We've seen some scenarios where communities have said well, they described a disability and then they've asked further with this disability, what type of medical attention have you received for. And it'd kind of be, like, going further and then you're getting much more into, well, into areas where we wouldn't want to go through in the middle of the night, so I would say, look at the model surveys to see how far that goes and I would not recommend going further. But it does quite honestly, go into some of that, touches lightly on some of those areas that get into severity. But, but try to keep it on the surface.

Dina Javattione: Thank you.

Micah Webster: And Eneshal Miller, you're up next, you are also off mute if you'd like to ask your question verbally.

Eneshal Miller: Oh, thank you. Hi. I would like to ask a question in relation to people who couch surf. How can they be into the PIT count if you know that they spend about 20 days outside, and maybe they get an opportunity to sleep on someone's couch, are they included?

William Snow: Yeah, good question. Short answer is no, they're not included. We actually literally have a statutory prohibition. So, you can't include them for the purposes of the data that you submit to HUD. However, many communities, especially as we've done much more deep engagement with youth have kind of included in their list of housing status the kind of doubled up or couch surfing option and so rather than asking are you homeless? Which again, we generally would not say that's a great question,

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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you would ask the nature of their housing status and include that as an option. In the local data that you could collect, you certainly can collect that information and use it for local purposes. Many communities actually take that doubled up information on housing status, and they'll share that when they released their local count report, they'll say, look, we found this many who are homeless under these definitions but we also found this many who qualify, or find themselves homeless in a doubled up situation. I would caveat if you do that, which actually, I think is a great thing to do, is to reflect that to the extent you collect that data. But the caveat that the reality is, you're going to be missing a whole lot of people who are in that situation. You won't know the full extent of people who are doubled up unless you actually knock on more doors. People who, like, going into residential neighborhoods and knocking on doors. So, it's a good starting point and a good way to kind of wake people up to, hey this also happens on the night of the count, people identified in these circumstances. And this is important, and even pair it with your education data would be great as well, but you can't submit that to HUD, and again. That really comes down to statutory prohibition, but also just the reality that. We couldn't ask you to knock on everyone's door to kind of get that information. And so it's, it's one of the realities of the PIT count that we just couldn't possibly administratively get that information in a meaningful kind of comprehensive way.

Micah Webster: All right, we're going to take one more question from a verbal question now, Jennifer O'Reilly Jones, you are off mute if you'd like to ask your question.

Jennifer O'Reilly Jones: Great, thank you. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to ask my question. It is in the chat. So you can disregard that. My question is, is there any distinction between which activities and expenses can be billed to ESG, as opposed to ESG-CV, the slide that you showed, and the document that HUD published doesn't really distinguish between the 2. So can we only use our CARE ESG-CV funds for COVID related PIT costs like PPE, and coordinating and planning COVID-related safety measures? Or if we're using the street outreach component, you know, it, it'd be for things like distributing PPE or can we use cares funding for general planning and also purchasing kind of general basic physical needs item under the street average component like socks, hats, gloves.

William Snow: Yeah, thanks, Jenny, I like that question a lot. The short answer is you can use it under both. We believe that this activity, one of the reasons that we would say we want a point in time count is to understand the impact of the pandemic on our un sheltered population; that clearly gets you in, that prevent, prepare for, respond category. So those, there's no real distinction between what's in the

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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in that slide in that document is ESG-CV tied to as opposed to ESG. So you can, you can charge it all. And again, knowing kind of the amount of ESG-CV money out there, we would strongly encourage communities to consider if you can access your CARES dollars as part of this activity and do that. It's a great way to, to spend that money, a very meaningful activity.

Caroline Roddey: I think we'll move to a couple more chat questions. On the topic of ESG-CV, regarding utilizing to pay for outreach, street outreach staff is that only for the recipient of ESG-CV 2 funds or can a lead agency pay for our CoC agency staff?

William Snow: That's a good question. So technically it allows you to pay for street outreach activities so you could pay for street outreach staff doing this activity; you certainly have to document that they are fulfilling the street outreach activities, but that's not very difficult in terms of the PIT counts, so you could do that. You also have the option of considering of, like, volunteers who say that they're willing to do it under this basis, you can actually do that if they're conducting all of the same eligible activities under street outreach, you can pay for that time as well. So it's fairly broad. It looks again more at the activity than at the who is doing the activity part.

45:10

Caroline Roddey: Thanks William. Back to the use of planning grant funds, can a planning grant be used to purchase, for example, socks to hand out to unsheltered folks who participate in the survey?

William Snow: Yep, yep, that is possible. Again. The gift cards is a different option and that's one of the few where we say yeah, I wouldn't go there just because it's so hard to document, but things like socks, a lot of people will provide some sort of, a small food, right? Like granola bars or gloves—yes, those are all okay to pay for it.

Caroline Roddey: And as a follow up question, there was another question about saying, we cannot fund gift cards, but can we provide cash incentives for volunteers and survey participants?

William Snow: So, the short answer on that is, I don't know, you'll have to submit that one to the HICPITCount desk, I actually have to check with our ESG folks if that's allowable. I don't think so, because actually, I think the cash incentive is very strictly tied to the vaccination part. So, I'm going to assume the

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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answer is no, but I'd have to check with them to make sure or to verify whether that language is broader, but I'm almost positive that's vaccination based for the cash payments incidents.

Caroline Roddey: And one more question for the moment about ESG-CV funds, if we do an observational count and sampling through street outreach in the days, following the count, can we use ESG-CV funds for food for people experiencing homelessness while collecting sampling surveys?

William Snow: It depends how you do it. Again, is it otherwise eligible under street outreach? A lot of times that's going out and providing, providing again, small food items. That's fine. If it's like a dinner party, right, like, it, that probably is no, I don't think anybody's really saying that's what you're going to do. So there's a fine line there. For us, the thing that's kind of guiding what we have to go off of is part 200, where it talks about entertainment costs. So, if what you're doing looks a lot like entertainment, as opposed to providing critical, supportive service, then it's going to be hard to let it fly as a as an eligible cost. So, if you have a specific event where you're wondering, if, is this the type of thing that's eligible? I, would like, do you normally pay for that under a day shelter or emergency shelter right? Do you normally hand out food in that regard and is it eligible that way? If so then it's probably, okay if you've never done anything like this and you're not sure it's probably not actually. Okay, but you can always send the email again to the HICPITCount@hud.gov email address and I'll check with our ESG folks.

Caroline Roddey: Great. So I'm going to take it back to some COVID and PIT count waiver related questions. Can we do a full observational account again? Or do we need to push for interviews this year?

William Snow: A good question. So you, you have to submit the full data element is the key. So you could choose to do an observation based count with a follow up survey in the unsheltered community within the next week or so after. There are communities who do that normally, right, that's allowable under the PIT count methodology guide. So you could do that. If you're proposing to do a count and you're, you're not sure how you're going to get the other pieces, the demographic and the other data then no. You have to make sure that you at least collect all of the data elements, but from what the, from the way the question was framed, it sounds like you're looking at that first example of trying to collect the data after the counts through again street outreach activities. That's okay.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Caroline Roddey: Okay, and this person is asking there is no requirement to do an unsheltered count this year even if you received an exception last year to use coordinated entry data. Is that correct?

William Snow: If you received an exception to use coordinated entry data last year, you probably submitted a full unsheltered count. And if you did that, then you fulfilled the requirement, so you don't have to do an unsheltered count in 2022. If you got the exception, but then you didn't submit the data, well, then the account requirement stands, and if you want to use the coordinated entry, you would need to submit that request and be prepared for a lot of back and forth on it.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks. Due to Omicron, and are we allowed to do aggregate data sheets in those facilities that do not participate in HMIS?

William Snow: If you have a way to confidently extrapolate to account for those communities or those projects yeah. And actually, that happens in non, non-COVID experiences as well where somebody just does not want to provide the data and that that is okay.

Caroline Roddey: And last COVID-related question for the moment, is there any chance that the count might be canceled for those who postpone until February?

William Snow: Not that I'm aware of, I don't know if I'm reading that question right. Or is there a question of, like, is it going to get canceled all together?

Caroline Roddey: I'll read the full question. In our community, we engage over 300 volunteers and cover over 9,000 square miles that includes urban, suburban, and rural areas. COVID is terrible here, like everywhere else, but we don't think we can reengage volunteers if we move the count. And there is no reason to assume COVID would be better then. Is there any chance that the count might be cancelled for those who postpone until February?

William Snow: I would not count on it being canceled for anybody at this point.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, thanks. And going back to counting people in structures. This question is, I want to make sure I completely understand the sheltered count. So tents, sheds, cars and RVs count as sheltered—what about a makeshift shelter made of wood like, under the highway?

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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William Snow: So that's a tough one. Actually the, the PIT count notice says that most of the things that weren't labeled up front are not sheltered, right. So tents, when they're standalone for a single household, no, those are not counted as sheltered, that's counted as an unsheltered situation. You'll note in the PIT count notice, so section 4.3 is what covers this, this particular issue. It talks about pop up tents right, which are more or less large structures or sprung structures even and they look a lot like shelters in that they're large open spaces. They often have bunks kind of spread out. If that's what you mean by tents then yes, that might be counted as shelter. Cars are not counted as sheltered; abandoned buildings, most of that stuff actually, that was mentioned is not counted as a sheltered situation. That's unsheltered.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, and regarding extrapolation, if you do the sampling and how do you report on the required demographic information—age, gender, race, and ethnicity for that portion of the sample that you did not actually interview to get this information, do we extrapolate to fill in the missing demographic information?

William Snow: The short answer is yes, but I want to be clear that it does mean that somewhere along the lines you're collecting that, right? So unlike last year, last year we allowed for you to skip certain elements. This year, you actually need to submit on all the elements. So you need to make sure somewhere in your data collection process you are collecting the elements so you have something to extrapolate from, but the short answer is, yes, you'll extrapolate from that data.

Caroline: Okay, thanks. We have thought about doing a service site survey only count, a service site survey only count, asking folks who come in for services where they slept the night of street outreach, surveying the week following, working with community partners to do service site surveys. What are your thoughts about something like this?

William Snow: That's a tough one. So what we found in the past, very rarely does the relies solely for the PIT count on service based counts. What we have found is that it's fantastic to find folks that are not otherwise identified in a count, right? Doing stand ups or doing some sort of activity, or event that encourages people to come in and receive some kind of service and fill out the survey while they're there. Doing it on its own, it's technically allowable. So if I were you, I would seriously consider how comprehensive you think that is right, is the nature of the event that you're proposing, or the sites

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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you're proposing to do it at? Are they comprehensive enough spread out enough, geographically dispersed to give you a good sense of your counts? There is a good chance that, this data again, because last year, the 2021 data was lacking and so many on the unsheltered side, there's not going to be a public national number, but in 2022, there likely will be some kind of national number, which has press associated with it, right and the questions that come so, you, you kind of have to step back and answer the question. If I get a question from the press about my count, what's my answer to them on that? Right? Is it comprehensive? Does it, does it include a large part of the population? If not, did you extrapolate to account for what you might be missing? So, those are the types of things I would consider with all of this and just recognize, yeah, service based on its own would be tough. But you may not have many other options; you would just have to consider how comprehensive it would be.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, so, in our community, we have a large number of individuals moving in and out of hotels that are not formally entering a shelter project in terms of entry into HMIS. With the time limited nature of their hotel stays, would these folks be considered unsheltered if they're in a hotel on the night of the PIT, or should they be included in the sheltered count?

William Snow: We would need more information. So the definition says people who are in hotels or motels are that are funded by nonprofit organizations or government entities can be considered sheltered. So if they fall in that category, where they're receiving some kind of assistance, then you could count that. If they're kind of floating the costs on their own from whatever source that they have, or their private funding, then we would not count them. We wouldn't count them at all. They would either be sheltered or unsheltered. They would be considered housed for the purposes of the homeless definition. So you would have to dig a little further to figure out what category these folks fall into.

56:08

Caroline Roddey: Okay, thanks. The next question is, for the sheltered PIT, can we count a provider as HMIS participating if they only enter client information in HMIS for the PIT? Meaning they only enter the clients in HMIS that were in the facility on the PIT night, or would they need to enter all client information that was in the facility for the entire year?

William Snow: This is one we've gone back and forth on. I think the lowest standard is they have to do it at least, they have to upload their data at least once during the year, but that upload tends to reflect not just a single point in time. It would actually include data from the year. So if that point in time count

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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data is only for the single night, then, no, that's not considered participating if it is data that while it's being provided on that night, but reflects the data collected throughout an entire year? Yes, that would count. So, I think the best example is what we've done with the HUD VASH data the data that's exported from, from the HOMES system at the VA isn't just a single point in time. It's data that reflects activity throughout a larger period to cover at least a year.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks, William. I think we're going to move back to a few verbal questions now.

Micah Webster: Yeah, Caroline or Carolyn Beck, you are now off mute if you'd like to ask your question.

Carolyn Beck: My question was actually about the service site only count. Sorry, I forgot to put my hand back down. But I do have a follow up question regarding the service site only count. That you know, most of the "certainty" zones that we have identified for, if we were going to go out and do you know, like a regular unsheltered count, coincide with a lot of the locations where we would be doing service site only counts. And I'm wondering if that is like a better justification for trying to do a service site only count knowing that, you know, we have quite a few providers who are not wanting to do the count because there's a huge increase in their areas of COVID.

William Snow: Yeah, I mean, I'd say that's a critical factor, right? There's a difference between having the site kind of co-located with hotspots for people who are on shelters and then those people actually accessing those sites. So, you kind of have to do your own analysis of those are located there probably, because there's a critical mass of people experiencing on shelter and homelessness. Do we actually think that if you did an event like that, they would actually come to the events and that you would be able to collect their information? If the answer to that is yes, I think that's a pretty big factor the way towards moving that way and then you might consider supplementing the areas that don't have that kind of support with some extra street outreach activity, right? So, especially if you do an interview-based, you might do like, two nights where you do the service-based type interaction and have a follow up with your street outreach team over the next five days in other areas, where that's not possible, just asking folks again, interviewing them on their experience, but tying it to that first night. But that's the type of thing to consider is just again that correlation between people who engage at the sites and the location of the sites.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Micah Webster: Then we have another question here from Christina Capobianco, Christina you may now ask your question verbally if you so choose.

Christina Capobianco: Thank you so, I live in Rapid City, South Dakota and this question is involving the unsheltered count with the new definition that includes sleeping in RVs, campers, tiny homes that may not have utilities. So how our community works, if we come across individuals that may be living in those situations or locations, since it's so cold, and they don't have heat or electricity and there may be multiple people kind of like a double up situation living in that household—can those be counted as unsheltered?

William Snow: So, this is a tough one. I wish I could pull in some of our folks from Alaska who have struggled with this type of situation, in all its forms. So you have a couple of factors to consider. You have some flexibility and discretion as a CoC to count them. If they have no access to hook up to kind of meet what's in section 4.3 of the notice, yes, you could count them. You do have to consider the flip side of this and I think with our Alaska conversation, some of these other factors came out. Right? So there are some larger, multifamily type settings in Alaska and other places where lots of people are seeing there, but it is their house, right. And it doesn't meet all of the qualification, but there's something that doesn't feel right about saying this is not, this would not qualify, or this is unsheltered and so they generally opted to not include that. Not all these were like, mobile parks though, or mobile home parks. So there's some kind of political discretion in particular to kind of consider if you just all of a sudden take a large swath of a community that is in substandard housing that is kind of on the line of is it unsheltered? Or is it just substandard housing? And then you dedicate them or designate them as unsheltered—what does that mean for you guys? What are you saying about kind of their, their housing situation, about who they are there? There's some, some fascinating messages there. So, you can use that criteria laid out in the notice as a starting point and then you're just going to have to make some decisions around, is that the right way to designate them. And again, sometimes the answer will simply be no. Like, yes, it doesn't, it's not ideal, or there's lots of things here that that raise concern maybe even push them to the unsheltered side. But at the end of the day, they're in housing and it is, it's substandard, but it is housing and we prefer to count them as housed, which means not count them at all here. So it's, it's a tough call. And one we again trust, trust you guys to make and you don't you don't want us to get in that business. You, you know, way better what's going on in your local community.

Christina: Thank you.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Micah Webster: And we have one last question for verbal questions for now and that is from Bonnie Wallace. Bonnie if you'd like to ask your question, you may.

Bonnie Wallace: Thank you and thank you all for doing the office hours. I am new to this on this side of it. I've volunteered for it for many years. But my question is this—our CoC did an observational unsheltered count last year and a full sheltered count. Do we have to do an interview, interviewing, type shelter count this year? Or can we do observational again, because of the rates of the COVID infection.

William Snow: Yeah, good question I actually saw your question in the HICPITCount email box and my response bounced back. So I'll have to figure out how to get that. I think the short answer kind of gets into what we talked about earlier. It depends on what your observation count included. So if last year, if you did any count last year, actually, you can count that as your unsheltered count. And technically you don't have to do unsheltered count this year. If you're proceeding with an unsheltered count this year and your observation includes those components of, you may be counting people, like, doing a tally sheet so to speak or an observation generally, but you're going to do a follow up somehow to get the demographic data, then that would count. If you don't plan to do some sort of follow up to get the other set of data, other than just the PIT count, then that would not count as an unsheltered count. So, again, you'd want at that point to consider then, are we going to submit data this year if we did it last year? If you didn't do it last year, you're going to have to find some way to collect that data. And that will typically be with street outreach teams in a follow up after the count with your unsheltered community.

Bonnie Wallace: Thank you.

Micah Webster: And it looks like we have no new verbal questions with hands up, but for those of you, who've already asked a question verbally, I just want to remind you that you can lower your hand by clicking the same spot that you click to raise it. Thank you.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks, Micah. So this question is about compensation again. So, if there is no ability to provide gift cards or cash, what suggestions do you have for compensating those with lived experience who are helping as enumerators?

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

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William Snow: Yeah, so let's not conflate the issues here, right? So when we're talking about gift cards and cash, often, we're talking in the context of the incentives given to people who count. So, let's go back to the idea of, like, paying for people who are doing counting if it's not street outreach staff directly. If it is a street outreach activity, we look more at, are you fulfilling the requirements under the activity than the organization itself. So, if your CoC has small group of people with lived experience who goes out and participates in the count, that could be an eligible street outreach activity. Which is reimbursable, right? You would actually give compensation, I guess, you might call it cash, we don't see it as a cash incentive, we see it as paying them for their time, right? And that could be very eligible. Again, you just have to consider, are you doing your count in such a way that allows you to count that as a street outreach activity? Are you asking questions and offering services and then entering data as a follow up in. And to be clear, they may not be the ones entering the data as a follow-up in HMIS. They may be collecting it and then giving it over to your organization and your organization has been committing to take that data and put it into HMIS. It's not uncommon for volunteers, especially in the type of circumstance you're describing to not do the HMIS piece, they, they probably don't have access, have username or participation fees that they've paid. And so that's okay. You can do it as an organization, but we love the idea of engaging people with lived expertise. They really are the experts here and they think that they had a lot to this.

Caroline Roddey: Great, thank you. This question is about the updated guidance that we referenced. So did you say there was new guidance on how to collect and report gender data? Where would I find that? And I'll just quickly note that there will be a one-page document posted on the HUD exchange in the next few days or weeks regarding this topic, and the HMIS data standards that were updated in the fall for 2022 also have updated changes to gender collection and reporting. And William, I don't know if you wanted to add to that.

1:07:40

William Snow: Yeah, no, that I'm just going to highlight that as well. If you want to find some more guidance, right, the count is kind of sparse, the notice, it's sparse on the details, but the HMIS data standards goes more into detail on that. There are more groups you can actually ask about multiple gender categories. We will provide a mapping document, that's what Caroline was referring to. So, if you collect on multiple, at the end of the day, one gender will be associated per person and the mapping document will talk about how you do it if they've selected multiple options. So that's, again, we've dealt with that on the side. We're really excited about this actually. It's a, a move in the right direction to do a

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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better job at collecting on demographics, on gender identity, on race and ethnicity. There were some minor changes this year that I think are really important, but they look minor on the surface. And we're looking to do more. So in the 2024 standards, which, for us actually we're starting to think about those already, we will likely have more changes on the race, ethnicity, and gender identity side. Because we know that the current elements are not adequate as they are. We want to do a better job both on the identification and getting the right information to connect people to services. So we're really encouraged by it and look forward to more changes.

Caroline Roddey: Great, thank you. And last year, CoCs could survey people over the phone. This year, can CoC partners and CE desk staff conduct the unsheltered PIT survey over the phone with people who call in seeking services?

William Snow: That's a good question. So, I want to make sure we're clear on what it means. Like, we've never approved folks to do an unsheltered count over the phone. But that's not what's being said here, I think. It's that when people seek services, especially in the context of coordinated entry, can you include that data as part of your point in time count if it's clear from their responses that they're unsheltered? Yes, you can do that again this year, you can do it always that's not a kind of allowance. That's a, that's an allowance at all times. Similarly, you can use other data, right? If you have street outreach data and you've done an interview-based count, but in your data, you don't see a group of folks that you would normally see, you could run that by your street outreach team. If they see again, people on their caseload that they are fairly confident were homeless that night, they can do a follow up just to verify hey, were you homeless on this night or where were you sleeping on this night? You're going to have all that HMIS data. So they don't actually need to do a full interview at that point. They just need to verify if they were homeless on the night of the count. If so, they can include that data. So, we, we owe you more instruction on how to use other data sets, they're kind of supplements not in lieu of, but as a kind of contributor to your data, especially when that data has ways to validate and communicate across what you do in your count. So, sorry, that's the long answer, but we want you to be able to use other data sets. Especially if you have a way of verifying their homeless status, which is the key to this.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, so a couple of questions about sheltered, the sheltered count. So to clarify, by HUD's definition, those who are in a sheltering program of any sort, including a warming shelter, etc would be counted as part of the sheltered count?

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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William Snow: Yeah, yep, the way we think about the sheltered count is, it's literally defined as emergency shelter, transitional housing, or safe haven if they are dedicated to people experiencing homelessness. Or we would include things, like winter shelters, sometimes people don't classify them as strictly for the homeless, because they're really available to anyone, we include those as homeless shelters. So that's the type of thing you would include, a warming shelter falls certainly in that in that side of the, the definition there.

Caroline Roddey: Great, thanks. So would a household be included in the PIT count if the family owns the lot or leases (government leases) the lot, and is living in a shed, like structure with no official connection to power, water, or sewer?

William Snow: We probably need more details on that. On the surface, that doesn't sound like it would count. There are actually a lot of like sanctioned encampments or things like that, where we would say no, that doesn't make it sheltered. If you had a group of tents on one lot, we wouldn't count that as sheltered either. So you need to be able to meet the criteria laid out in 4.3 of the notice. But just because people are aggregated in a single space under an organization doesn't make it sheltered. It often tends to push it that way. But we actually have to look a little deeper into the types of services offered and the nature of the housing itself.

Caroline Roddey: Great. And this one, is we currently have households that have been displaced from their homes due to an apartment fire. They are residing in a hotel being paid for, by a nonprofit while repairs are being made. Would they be considered sheltered if they are still residing in the hotel on the night of the count?

William Snow: Oh, I think you could count them as sheltered, that one's on the line, right. So, if there were a natural disaster, and people are displaced, because of a natural disaster, like a large flood, we've counted people who were displaced because of that as sheltered if they're in a temporary housing situation. We rarely kind of think of it on an individual disaster basis. It also depends on like, were they in a permanent housing project where that project has been used to pay for lodging. So, while they're temporarily not in the housing, they're really seeing it as we move them to another unit, but they're still receiving permanent housing. They're still actually being assisted with the same assistance, and they're going to go back to the unit, or maybe they won't even go back to the unit, but that remains a permanent housing assistance. So if it's that category, I would not count them because really, you're just

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

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continuing your permanent housing assistance, you're doing it in another unit but the assistance is still occurring. But if this is someone who was never in the homeless system, their house burned down, they presented to the homeless system, even as their house was being built, they really have nowhere to go in the meantime, yeah, that that could be counted.

Caroline Roddey: All right, can we leave surveys with our churches who pay for hotel rooms? They have the closest contact with families that they are putting into the hotels.

William Snow: Yeah, churches can be a fantastic resource if you provide them the adequate training on what should be included, then yes. I know that sounds like an obvious, but we've had lots of situations where things are just handed to them—and we sometimes hear from the church side as well saying, I want to participate, but I don't know what to do with this. So just make sure that they are given clear instructions on who to include and who not to include. And absolutely, we strongly encourage that partnership with faith-based partners.

Caroline Roddey: So this is an overall PIT count question. Why do we do this in the winter instead of the summer when our homeless are more likely to come out?

William Snow: I love that question. So we have addressed this in the PIT count methodology guide, so you can look there if you want more details on it; it'll flesh it out more than what I'm going to do here. The short answer is we've done some homework on this. The homework occurred really around the, 2000, early 2000s and leading into the 2000s on PIT counts in general. What we found was the total count, certainly across the nation, but actually often in individual communities was actually higher. Now, some of the sheltered and unsheltered dynamics obviously were changed, right? In some of these colder areas in the Midwest you're going to find more who are sheltered than unsheltered, especially when you compare winter to summer, but overall, the total homeless count is higher by doing it in the winter. That's just because that's when many people are actually seeking services. That's certainly not all people seeking services. Unfortunately, our unsheltered count remains way too high. We see too many people sleeping outside, but again, that's the reality of it. So, there's that and there's actually a lot of other reasons tied to why we do the January, but that's probably gets closest to what you're really wanting.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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Caroline Roddey: Thank you. One county in our CoC yielded an extremely low count last year due to various reasons. Does that mean we should do both unsheltered and sheltered? Example—last year the count was 8, but our BNL indicates over 100.

1:16:31

William Snow: If it were me, I would strongly encourage you to do some kind of count this year. That's going to be a choice for you. If you submitted data to us last year, technically, you don't have that requirement to do the unsheltered data. A big caveat that I kind of hinted at or mentioned a little bit is the reality that we probably will publish a 2022 national number. We will use either this year's data or last year's data. We didn't do that with, like, 2020 and 2021 because that was too different right? The COVID experience changed everything. So if you're comfortable with that coming forward, you won't actually have control over that, unless you do an unsheltered count this year. So we would encourage you to think about that but also consider what's on your by name list, right. Are you talking about what happened over the year or are you talking about what happened over a 30-day period? PIT Count is shorter than that. So, is it, is it accurate to say 8 people probably were unsheltered, maybe, actually, again, especially if you're looking at it over the year, as opposed to over a month or over a 14 day period. So there again, not an easy thing to, to answer. We also recognize this is kind of crazy time so you may not have the ability to do an unsheltered count, and you don't have to if you did it last year. So you'll just have to take all that into account.

Caroline Roddey: Great, thank you. For substance use disorder and SPMI, do individuals need to have a previous diagnosis to be counted?

William Snow: The short answer, no. That's too hard to get in the PIT count. We wouldn't make anybody get that, like, medical confirmation, so it is okay to go with whatever the self-declaration is. You can supplement that data with HMIS data. So, if, you know, somebody has SMI or substance abuse issues, because you have that recorded in HMIS, but they answer no, it is okay for you to use your HMIS data for what you submit to us, that's fine.

Caroline Roddey: Great, and related to HMIS, will there be allowances for missing HMIS data if we use ESG funds instead of the street outreach project? e collect most of the data on our surveys, but required data elements as the date of engagement would be blank.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 12, 2022

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William Snow: I'd have to think more on that, and actually I'd have to talk with our ESG reg team. So if you are wanting to do that, I'd send a question again to the HICPITCount@hud.gov website, and then I'll get back to our ESG team. It may take a little longer to get the, the answer to some of these questions, because it involves more partners kind of looking at it. So, just a heads up on that as well.

Caroline Roddey: Okay. In the past we've used planning funds to pay for food for volunteers. Is this acceptable?

William Snow: Again, in the way we described it earlier, like, if they're coming to the event, and you're paying for them, you're providing food as they come to the training event and then they're going out to count, probably not. That's too, a little too close to the entertainment definition in part 200. We can, if you want to kind of probe further, we can certainly look at details. There is a fine line there. Again, that's something I just have to dig with our red team on to discuss further, but that ends up being a case by case analysis, as opposed to a broad principle that we can apply.

Caroline Roddey: Great. This is a follow up question to the question about warming centers. And this says in the past, we had been told that if there are only chairs in a warming center, and the persons in there noted that they had no place to sleep, they would be counted as unsheltered. If there were beds or cots, it would be sheltered. Can you please clarify?

William Snow: Yep, so we would assume that when you provide or put something on the inventory as of as a bed, it actually is a residential bed right? So we would expect that it is actually a place for people to sleep. This is why cots are okay, because it actually provides a sleeping accommodation. If you actually have no beds or no sleeping accommodation, again a chair for us would not satisfy the requirement then. Yes, you'll have to follow that same pattern of bed—sheltered, no bed—unsheltered.

Caroline Roddey: So, going back to counting people in structures, we have a large CoC and intend to use sampling because we are not using volunteers and are relying on rapidly thinking, outreach staff and police. If we do observation on midnight in the sub areas, and then do surveys after in the sub areas, is the demographic information from the surveys extrapolated to the observed sub areas?

William Snow: Yeah, and again, you may end up doing further extrapolation. It depends on areas you're not able to cover. So that's something you'll just have to consider. That makes things a lot more

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

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complicated. Not everyone, even in this kind of shortened or more concise way of doing the count are still able to get to everyone. So, we understand that as well. It means your extrapolations will be a little more stretched this year than they would be in a normal year, and we just understand that as a reality.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks. So this question is saying the NYC shelter has been a gateway for the criminal justice system and inmates are being released in the shelter. Is all that data is supposed to be counted together?

William Snow: So, if they're being released into the shelter, and it's as, they're being released as people experiencing homelessness, they're homeless, right? So you would count them. Do we have a lot of other concerns around that? Absolutely. Right, that's part of the discharge planning protocols. There's, there's all sorts of concerns that would raise for us, but for the purposes of kind of stepping back and seeing this in the PIT count context, you're serving people who have no other place to go when they're presenting in the shelter for service. That sounds a lot like somebody who, who's homeless in a shelter.

Caroline Roddey: So, extrapolating data, like the car example that we used earlier provides a guesstimate about the count that doesn't give gender status or veteran status. How do we gather correct information on demographics?

William Snow: Yeah, this is one of the challenges I've always kind of—considering this, so there are some communities who have actually asked not just three questions, right? is this where you're sleeping, you have no other place to go type questions and then how many people in your household—some have asked more, like, done full surveys in their sample. We certainly encourage you to try that if possible. That's an ideal way to go. If you can, you can extrapolate from your general, your general data. That could be your general unsheltered PIT count data, could be your street outreach data. Obviously, there's a lot of caveats with that. We actually think this population likely looks a little different than your normal unsheltered population. So ideally, you're going to get some sort, kind of small sample in the very least about the demographics of this population. So, we would strongly encourage that, but again we recognize there's some, some practical realities to how you're going to collect that data, especially this year.

2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

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Caroline Roddey: Alright, so a couple of people are asking for follow ups about funding. So are there, there are specific street outreach costs, or do street outreach and admin have to both come out of the admin costs?

William Snow: No, for those street outreach, those are specific street outreach costs. That's why we try to present them separately, but you can charge them under the street outreach line item. We know admin line items tend to get capped—you're using your admin line items for a million other purposes. So that may not actually be feasible for you to use that. Whereas you may have street outreach dollars that are not being fully extended. You can charge the costs we outlined under the street outreach activity and that's reimbursable again under ESG or ESG-GV.

Caroline Roddey: Great, thank you. So, specifying on the gift cards question. If the gift cards or for something like Dunkin Donuts, wouldn't the entire expense be on the cards be allowed? Would we still have to track?

William Snow: Yep, I mean, that's the rub with it. That's why we don't do it. That seems like, duh, this is Dunkin Donuts, what are they're going to spend their money on other than food? The, the requirement though is to track to make sure the expense is eligible. And so if you presented, you know 300 gift cards from Dunkin Donuts, the follow up from an IG audit would be well, that's not eligible in and of itself. So, can you verify that those cards were used at Dunkin Donuts for these people? So it seems ridiculous but that's the standard that we're kind of stuck with as well. So, just for all of us to avoid any potential, like, audit problem, we just say, yeah, I'd avoid it altogether.

Caroline Roddey: Okay, so this question is, we have people in a hotel paid for by FEMA after Hurricane Ida, are these people counted as sheltered homeless.

William Snow: Yeah, we would generally count those as sheltered if they're again displaced due to hurricane. So, you can look to see the circumstance if, if there's something that suggests that they're not sheltered that they are there for a long-term engagement. That's really rare. So, I wouldn't expect that that would be something you would have, but you can kind of look into that and we can send a question my way and we'll, we'll address it. But generally, Hurricane displacement, fire, displacement, tornado, displacement, all of those kind of natural disaster displacement. It tends to be temporary, especially funded by FEMA and you could count that as emergency shelter.

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1:26:20

Caroline Roddey: Okay, and I want to pause to see if anyone has their hands up and it looks like that's not the case. So, one question is actually about reporting data from the PIT and HIC count. So are data reports included in the extension?

William Snow: I think you're asking if you get an extension on the deadline for when you submit the data and the short answer is no. So, that's the rub with seeking an exception. At this point, we're not changing the dates from the end of April. We'll look at that to see if we can. I mentioned earlier that we also have some limitations that we are kind of stuck with on our side at HUD, and if we push it out further, we actually run into violations also. So we're trying to balance that, that reality. But if you get an exception to move your PIT count date out, that doesn't apply to your data submission deadline. That's not moving.

Caroline Roddey: Thank you, and regarding street outreach, are sleeping bags okay to be used with or to be bought with street outreach costs or purchases?

William Snow: I think so, so that's one I again, I'm not.

Like, so deeply ingrained in how street outreach costs are incurred, but I believe that is eligible. You can send an email to us. I think one of the bigger issues there is you're going to get into a reasonable cost principle. If this is an incentive tied to participating in the count that probably doesn't work as a reasonable incentive. Is this, one, because you're doing normal street outreach activity, and as part of your normal street outreach activities, you would provide this type of protection? Probably. Again, even still reasonableness, obviously, no one's buying hopefully a 1000 dollar sleeping bag and handing that out, that's not likely what we would see. But, yeah, that's, that's something you can certainly follow up and ask more on and I can follow up with our red team.

Caroline Roddey: Thanks. So I know we're coming up near the end, so a couple more questions. this one is, can we go into schools to collect data for the PIT? And can we use our participants that are in our YHDP programs that are homeless?

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William Snow: We love engagement with schools. Can you go into your school? Certainly not without engagement with the school. If you're going to count in that kind of environment, which actually, we think is there's a lot of information that can be gained from the schools, I would go through the schools. Work with your SEA or your LEA liaison to, to figure out the right way to do it. Often they're fantastic partners in saying where can you find youth experiencing homelessness? Where are ideal locations? What are best times? Partner with them to figure that out? There are school privacy laws that are going to prevent you without that permission to go into schools and seek that information so, I would just say, yes, try to get that data, do it within the boundaries of the law by working with that staff. YHDP staff and participants tend to be fantastic to engage with. We definitely encourage you to talk with them and figure out the right way to use them both in planning and engaging in counting process. So we love the idea of using your, your kind of information and folks you engage with there.

Caroline Roddey: Okay. With persons or households experiencing homelessness, staying at quarantine and isolation centers due to COVID, be counted as sheltered homeless on the night of the count?

William Snow: So this has been a little bit tough to, to walk through. But I think the biggest thing to consider is if they were in a sheltered situation before, even unsheltered in this case, and they are going to return to that situation, although for unsheltered, we hope they don't return to that, but some sort of shelter setting at least you can count that as sheltered. I would definitely look at the funding source. I'm assuming you're talking about an isolation or quarantine facility that's being paid for as a temporary assistance to this population. So, again, assuming that's all correct, continue to count that as shelter. If there is somebody who's in, like, a rapid rehousing program and again, they're being put in isolation or quarantine for the short term, but will return to that program, I would not count them as being homeless at that point, or in the sheltered context. That's just a temporary move for all intents and purposes. So I would, I would just look at again what circumstance you're talking about here.

Caroline Roddey: And it looks like we have time for just one more question. So, this one is saying, if they submit a request for services online with their name age, phone, number, etc., and say they are homeless and living in a car or a tent or a place not meant for habitation, we can use that information in HMIS? What do we need to get their permission to do that? And wouldn't we need that in writing?

William Snow: So, like, all the right questions. This actually would have to essentially tie to your coordinated entry. For instance, you can't put a survey out there that says, hey, anybody who's

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interested on this night, enter all that information. That's not going to work. If this is part of your coordinated entry process, and you have a way already to collect that information, then that's possible. I don't think I was envisioning people using a web-based platform for this. In a phone setting, you're able to actually verify homeless status and have that conversation. That's much more easy to kind of lay a line down on. For, again, the more web based approach I would, again, add lots of lots of verification points so that you can be certain that this is somebody who is actually experiencing homelessness, somebody who meets all those qualifications. I'm assuming your CES protocols will address the very questions raised in this question on privacy. We definitely don't want you to move forward without getting that kind of privacy aspect built into the, the conversation. So all the right questions and again goes back largely to your coordinated entry data collection, protocol and privacy standards there.

Caroline Roddey: Thank you and we are at 3:01 so it looks like we're out of time, but thank you all for being here. And these materials will be posted on HUD Exchange in the near future.