

## 2022 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

December 7, 2022

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**Shantae Smith:** Alright, I understand that some folks are still popping in, as folks trickle in that's okay but we're just going to get started. Hello, thank you so much for joining us today for the 2023 office hours for this December month. The PIT count is coming upon us folks, it's going to be interesting—an interesting year. So, next slide. So, we just wanted to start off with a few housekeeping rules. So, just to note that a recording of today's session along with the slide deck, and the copy of the chat and the Q and A content will be posted on the HUD Exchange within a few business days. Materials from this session, along with recording and materials from prior PIT count office sessions can be found on the HUD Exchange that is listed there. You're also more than welcome to go to the HUD Exchange yourself and search for that or you can kind of just wait for that link to kind of come out to you all. In the event that you're having some audio issues, we highly suggest that you join the webinar using your cell phone or any phone that's close to you with that information listed in that slide, and we will make sure that it's posted in the chat as well. If you need to call into a toll-free line, we also have a phone number for you as well. Next slide. The chat feature, so we very much encourage you all to kind of interact with us. Ask us questions in the chat at any point in this presentation and towards the end of the presentation we will have a Q and A section. So, to select that chat icon to make a comment, or ask a question, just make sure you go to the bottom of your screen, and you look for that icon at the bottom right that says chat. Click on it and let us know. Next slide, please. Also note that closed captioning is enabled for this event. To hide captions, click the closed captions button on the lower left hand of your screen. Next slide. And if you would like to ask us a question, verbally select the participant list icon at the bottom of the screen, you'll see the icon that kind of looks like a person with three little lines underneath it, which is to the left of the chat button. Hover over your mouse next to your name and select the raise hand icon. Alternatively, you can click the raise hand icon at the bottom of your screen. We will call on you then unmute you so that you're able to ask your question, and then once you've asked your question, we will put you back on mute. Call in users can raise their hand by dialing star 3 and can unmute and mute by dialing star 6. Next slide.

So I would like to introduce some of our speakers and resource advisors today, beginning with our trusted colleague William Snow through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Office of Special Needs and Assistance Programs. We also have someone from the Fredericksburg regional Continuum of Care, Sam Shoukas, Housing and Community Health Program Director. We also have an AmeriCorps VISTA, Michael Garcia, who's the Program and Partnerships specialist and then with Abt Associates, you have me, Shantae Smith, my colleagues, Alyssa Andrichik, and Tanya de Sousa. Next slide. Today's call, just through the agenda, we're going to talk about the 2023 HIC and PIT count data collection notice. We're also going to be talking about what it looks like to engage volunteers with AmeriCorps VISTA, and then go through Q and A. So, to kick off our next slide, I'm going to trust hand it over to our colleague William Snow.

03:54

**William Snow:** Alright, thanks Shantae. Welcome everyone, excited for today's office hours. I'm going to quickly go through some of the stuff that we went through last time, just to make sure folks know. Excited to get to the other content today, though. So we made one change in the PIT count

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requirements; that was around age data collection, we expanded the age categories. Again, we went through this last time. This is in the notice, which is available. We encourage you to look through that. But this is the main highlights. Next slide, please. There continue to be some questions around do I have to count, or is 2023 a required year, so we lean on the regulation for that. The regulation says that communities or CoCs are required to count, conduct a full count at least every other year or biannually. Most can and do conduct a count every year, but whether or not you need to conduct a count this year in 2023 depends on whether you conducted and 2023 depends on whether you conducted a full count last year. If you did conduct one in 2022, again, a sheltered and unsheltered count, you're not legally required to conduct a count in 2023. Again, we strongly encourage it. Most communities do it. It's a strong touch points, but it is not a legal requirement if you did. If you did not conduct a count, both sheltered, non-sheltered in 2022, you do have a requirement to do that for the regulation, a requirement to do that per the regulation.

Alright, with that, I'm excited to have a conversation today around volunteers, around resources that we have in terms of manpower. In prepping for this, we've been thinking about different ways to support you and a couple of times we had talked about AmeriCorps VISTA, and we realized, well, we should probably bring folks on from AmeriCorps VISTA to talk through how, how they have been able to help with counts in the past, how they might be able to help with counts in the future. So we're going to be lucky to have first, some discussion from Sam who's going to help us walk through her experience more as a long term support for the PIT count, right, what does it mean to plan for and conduct; she's seen that in others as well. The AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers can do so much, right—the PIT count is just one highlight of a potential way that they can support your community, but there is a lot that they can do. So, this is again kind of an unabashed attempt to let you see more about AmeriCorps VISTA and just put it out there that they're a great resource. Mike will then help us understand what's the way you can reach out to access AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers in this 2023 Count, right. Immediately, you may have access to folks in your area, folks in your area who are passionate, interested, want to join you and support you and they, Mike's going to help us understand where you can post that opportunity to help folks kind of better understand how to access you. So, with that, I will turn the time over to Sam.

7:07

**Sam Shoukas:** Great, thank you. So, my name is Sam Shoukas. I am the Housing and Community Health program director at our regional commission. We serve the Fredericksburg regional Continuum of Care, and we also do some things with housing. But I'm going to talk to you a little bit today about what it means to use AmeriCorps VISTA, both from someone who has used VISTAs and someone who was a VISTA themselves. So, next slide. So just a little bit so you can situate our area and kind of understand where we are. We serve five counties. We are a mix of urban and rural, so we have about two pretty rural counties, King George and Caroline, suburban Spotsylvania and Stafford, and urban Fredericksburg. And we are situated smack dab in the middle of Washington D.C. and the capital of Virginia, Richmond. So next slide. And so what is an AmeriCorps VISTA? I think one of the biggest things when you hear AmeriCorps is, you think, you might think domestic Peace Corps, you might think of

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other things that you've seen AmeriCorps do, but the VISTA project in particular is about expanding the ability of organizations to do their work. What it's really centered on is building capacity. So I think the Point in Time count, though it's a moment in time and VISTAs can be really helpful pulling it off and that implementation for that day. It's really important to also think about the role that VISTAs can play in your community for a longer term and success and future years of your Point in Time count. So next slide.

8:56

So a couple of things that VISTAs can do, I've done myself, I've had our VISTAs do for our Continuum of Care: they can do things around recruiting for volunteers. So what that means for capacity building is they can write volunteer assignments, they can develop your forms. Sustainability wise, right, like, at some point, your capacity should be built. And so what they can do to help you get there and have that sustainable piece of it is they can help you do a volunteer handbook that you can use ongoing. They can help you with training. I've had a VISTA completely redo our Point in Time count training and really think through how to do that in a better way, in a meaningful way, adding in more things that we're talking about, and so they've developed a training manual for us. So these are just some of the options, and I'm going to walk through what each of these kind of mean for the Point in Time count and how you can use that on the day of your Point in Time count and planning for that, but also in the long term. Next slide.

So a little bit about during your count. So VISTAs are usually full time for a year, so you have a lot of time to really get them engaged and knowing about the work, and what it means to do the Point in Time count, and some ways that they can really be helpful in the actual implementation of the day of your count is, you know, have them develop and implement your Point in Time count timeline. I think we who have done this for a really long time intrinsically know what should and shouldn't happen. But how do you document that? If you were to win the lottery and leave, how does the next person kind of take that up and have a really successful count? So we've had our VISTAs really develop what that timeline looks like and make sure that we're staying on course. We have them develop our Point in Time count survey. So for changes in the age, they're going to update our surveys that we use. We do those on paper and electronically and so we use our VISTAs to help us build that capacity and make sure that our forms are meeting all the things that we need to collect and are asking all the questions that we would like them to. We talked a little bit about training curriculums, so they actually are going to host trainings for our volunteers that they help us recruit. They also are able to kind of write sales pitches and go out into the community and really talk to folks about what the Point in Time count is and really help to connect it. This goes over with, you know, they've developed press kits for us and press releases on everything from beginning our volunteer search to when the Point in Time count data comes out, how do you control that narrative of what the Point in Time count data actually says for your community.

11:57

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Fundraising and gathering donations – our community gives incentives for those who take our service, and so it takes a lot of time to be able to do that, whether that's money to be able to purchase gift cards, or bus tickets or something like that, or collecting hygiene products. I'm doing a drive, so our VISTAs have been able to help with figuring out what does that look like, and the marketing outreach for those. For our task force, we rely a lot on the community to know kind of where to send our volunteers, and so our VISTAs have been able to make sure the right people are at the table, help us with hosting those, being able to kind of go beyond and even bigger than what one person on a CoC might be able to do to collect that information from across your community. They've been able to design posters and brochures and social media posters for us for volunteer recruitment. They track our volunteer recruitment and figure out where the majority of volunteers came from, how they heard about the volunteer opportunity and tracking the time slots so that we can figure out where we need to put some more emphasis, and then they help a lot with the analyzing of PIT count data and the distribution of it. So they have helped us trying to become as efficient as possible with analyzing our data and figuring out how you translate this very HUD-centered data pieces into something that's relatable and translatable to the community. Next slide.

13:37

So I think all of those things are great, right? Like, those are all things that we would have to do anyway. I think we spend a lot of our time putting out fires, and sometimes we get to the Point in Time count day and if we had just done this one more thing, or engaged one more person, like, could we have had a Point in Time count be that much more successful? So, I think just the bandwidth and human power that VISTAs does bring to a conversation like this is really helpful. But, I think the actual benefit of VISTAs is that overall capacity that they bring to an organization. So great, they've made an event happen successfully, but what does that mean in the long run? And so, for us, we really focus our visitors on, but before and after of a PIT count. So, how do we develop community partners in that way that the next time the Point in Time count comes up we know them by name, they already, I don't have to explain what the Continuum of Care is when I engage them, they're already in those conversations with us on a regular basis to make our Point in Time count easier. Securing media partners is a huge one for us. We have media partners who are on our newsletters and will take whatever we send out and run with it if we don't design the narrative. But our VISTAs have been able to help us really secure really strong relationships with media partners to the point that I now have reporters who send me their articles and say, did I get this right? And I think for my experience, that's very rare and the relationship that VISTA was able to kind of connect for us was super helpful in being able for us to get there.

15:30

They have also been able to help us with that volunteer management system. So, how do you track people who are coming in, and what does that look like, and how do you develop them skills? How do you track them over time? We do volunteer leads, and we know people who have done volunteering for us for a long time, and make them a lead of a group so that our team doesn't have to be that all the

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time. But we can really put some leadership skills on our volunteers and have them be the expert of their team. They've made really wonderful handbooks and training for us. They've done research of other communities for us for us to figure out what other communities do really well, and we would love to incorporate into ours. They have helped us with thinking through that you have a captive audience at a time when you're doing your Point in Time count. And so what supplemental questions can we put on our Point in Time count that maybe we don't report to HUD, but are really meaningful to us as a CoC while we're already asking them all of these questions, so how can we help get some of the other quantitative data that's helpful for us and our services. And then, I think the biggest thing is the driver of data. So what are the data telling us and what the recommendations that we should do? How do we actually implement those? So right like, the Point in Time count data tells us one thing, but then off of that is this project that ends up happening of how we have recommendations and then they're going to do a timeline implementation plan like all of these things to build the capacity over here on these other projects. So I think overall, especially for us if you're not familiar with the Fredericksburg CoC, we are a staff of one and so me being able to do all of the things that need to happen for a CoC on a regular basis is very challenging, and I spend a lot of my time putting out fires, so just the bandwidth of another person to help me with those, but also just the room to breathe and dig and feel through what works and what doesn't work. So that just time to breathe and critically think about our process and our community is really helpful. So I think, you know, we think through how do we get bodies and how do we get volunteers and how do we do all of these things? But, you know, they help us with building it and making it better. So, I think overall the thing that I just want to incorporate to you is, I think some of the time we think about the work that it takes to train and bring someone up to speed, but really the outcome that we have, and the advantage that we have of people who are coming into this work, they want to be helpful, so allowing them to do that, but really giving them a direction to do that. And so, I think that's where I'm going to leave it for now and I'm actually going to pass it to Mike to talk a little bit about what that means in the grander scheme and what you might be able to do this year.

18:43

**Mike Garcia:** Thanks, Samantha and thank you for your service as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. I myself was a VISTA volunteer almost 20 years ago. Time flies when you're having fun. So, as folks may, or may not know AmeriCorps administers the National Day of Service. This is an event we encourage all of our National Service participants, whether they're AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps senior members to participate in the day of service; to get out in your community and really make some deep impact. In the past, there's been promotions between volunteering for the PIT count and the day of service, which both of these events occur in January. So, with that, we just ask you to consider using the MLK Day of Service as a way to market the PIT Count, but also have folks participate in the MLK Day of Service. It'd be a great way for you to just get volunteers out in your community to make that, continue to make that deep impact. Next slide, please. So, AmeriCorps VISTA sponsors play a huge role in supporting days of service by actively encouraging their members to host or participate in service events. More times than not, the sponsors host the events themselves, but we also see many opportunities for members to participate in events outside of their particular project, which could be,

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for example, a PIT count. Lots of members organize these events throughout the community, and they play very different roles than what they might be conducting in their normal day to day service activities. So, with that being said, we actively encourage folks to ensure that MLK Day of Service is a day on, not a day off. We know that it is a national holiday, so we encourage folks to make it a day of service and not just take it a day off. Next slide, please.

20:50

So, how do you find out, or how do you recruit volunteers to participate in MLK Day of Service? Well, our agency utilizes various websites, like VolunteerMatch, Idealist and JustServe, and using the link in the presentation, you can find you use these websites as a tool to recruit volunteers or find out what's going on in your particular areas. We have also listed volunteering with PIT count as a project idea and that's on our website, so please follow that link and it's under the provide other community service to neighbors and families option. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps senior volunteers can engage in episodic volunteering opportunities like MLK Day of Service and 9/11 Day of Service. So we ask that, please do consider to engage volunteers and utilize them whether it's for PIT count or any other opportunities that you feel might be beneficial to you and your organizations. With that, I want to pass it off and if you have any questions, I'll be here through the duration of the call, please do not hesitate to ask.

22:08

**Shantae Smith:** Thank you so much Mike. Super, super helpful. So now we just kind of want to review this slide to kind of talk about the general PIT count resources. So, in the event that you're needing additional resources, guidance on methodologies and guidance on sampling and tools, or perhaps, we've had some questions in the chat about how to access the slide deck, please know that today's slide deck has not yet been uploaded to the HUD Exchange website but will be in the next couple of business days, but in the event that you're looking for some prior material from past calls, please again, feel free to visit the HUD Exchange. In the event that you have specific questions, you can submit those to the head AAQ desk. Just note that we will no longer answer policy questions, including those about planning for, or implementing the HIC or PIT count. Instead, those policy questions should be sent to the [HICPITCount@HUD.gov](mailto:HICPITCount@HUD.gov) and someone will be getting back to you to provide you with the response that you're needing. Also, just note that the HUD Exchange HDX AAQ inbox will continue to answer questions about technical assistance tools to assist communities with their HIC or PIT counts, or how to submit data in HDX 1.0. Now, next slide please. We're going to kind of go transfer over into the Q and A section. So, if you have more questions, I think things are kind of flooding into the chat right now. Please put them in the chat. We're going to call some of these out.

23:45

The first two questions I'm going to start with are both, I'm going to have our colleague William answer them. William, you already answered them in the chat, but I think it would be really great if we can just

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verbalize these two responses, so I'll go ahead and read this one to you, and then just kind of let us know. So, the first question was: with the PIT count change to age categories, we could use some guidance on how to collect this for observation only surveys, as previously, we could usually distinguish between adults and under the age of 18, but it will be harder to distinguish between a 34-year-old and a 35-year-old. Any suggestions on how to best do this?

**William Snow:** Great question. So, I want to make sure the standard is understood, right—for observation counts. There are still communities that do them, not a lot of communities do only observation accounts, but some do. In the event you do an observation only count, you still have to have a sampling regime that you use so that you can complete the survey or complete the HUD requirements for age, race, ethnicity gender, it actually is a great reminder that we shouldn't be assuming actually any of those characteristics. We shouldn't assume that somebody is a man or a woman or assume that somebody identifies as black or white. Those are things that are, that you should leave up to individuals and give them the opportunity to state their own identities. And so, we encourage sampling or really, you are required to use a sampling approach to get any of that. I would just put age breakouts in that same sampling approach. The important thing to remember there is you have to have a large enough sample size, so just make sure you're collecting on enough folks to be able to offer a representative sample across. There are some kind of ideal standards in the statistics world. We know we often don't hit those in the PIT count. We're not quite in the same realm as academia, but at the same time, you need to have enough of a sample that you can confidently say this is an appropriate weight or percent that I can apply to the larger population. So that's just the big caveat there.

26:05

**Shantae Smith:** Awesome, thank you. Super helpful. That question was asked by Lynn. Lynn, we hope that that provides you the clarification that you need. In the event that you have additional questions, please submit them in the chat, but we're going to start with the next question. So William, this was also answered by you in the chat, but I think it'd be great to call it out. So, the question itself is: any ideas of how to count those who may be patronizing libraries without burdening library staff?

**William Snow:** Yeah, I love that question. I love the back and forth in the chat as well on that. I think you guys are the experts and probably can say the most which we saw that stated well. There are different ways to approach that. So, I should start with that's great—you can absolutely conduct a PIT count personally in libraries. Many communities actually use libraries as part of their efforts. The back and forth in the chat was really helpful because there is a big question about well, who do I ask, right?

Who does that question go to? I would say that actually is a bigger question in most of the PIT count if you're not doing it in the very late-night hours, there's always like a judgment call of who do you ask? And this is where, especially with folks like our homeless youth, they don't want to be seen as homeless, right? Like, they're often not going to be seen. If you're going purely on observation, you're not, you're not going to be able to know. That was substantiated in some of the research done as well.

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And so, we would encourage you to use the approach actually stated. I believe it is Natalie who's stated in the chat that their approach is to kind of take a soft question, try to ask most patrons coming into the library with a soft question of, like, hey, we're asking about housing status and if they indicate that they are renting or owning, that's a good approach of okay, well, thank you, right? We're done there. No more questions for you. And if they have something other than those, then you can pursue the more full or complete survey that may actually give you more information around your double that population as well, which though you don't submit to HUD like, that certainly is valuable. So, I think that's a fantastic approach. The PIT count is a little sensitive in many ways, because we frame it as a homeless count, right? That's what it does. But when you're engaging people on the streets or elsewhere, often, it is much more sensitive not to approach it as a, hey, we're doing a homeless count. Do you fit in this group? Right, like, people don't always like to be identified as homeless. So approaching it as a look, we're conducting a housing survey, want to know if you're able to answer a few questions that seems to be a lot more sensitive, especially as you engage folks who are not in encampments or settings that are a little more obvious in terms of homelessness. So great questions again thankful for the chat there as well.

28:55

**Shantae Smith:** Really great, thank you so much, William. So, we've got a couple more questions kind of coming in, so bear with us as we kind of pile through them. So, the next question we have is coming from Adriana. The question says, should the CoC collect housing inventory count information from, or vouchers or public housing units using a general preference for people experiencing homelessness? There's also a whole explanation of where this is kind of coming from, specifically the page 8 of the PIT and HIC Notice.

**William Snow:** Yep, love that question. This gets more complicated as we try to do a better more comprehensive look at the various resources that are targeted. If it is a general preference, it depends a little on how it gets implemented. So, you actually have some flexibility here. What I would say is, if you consider this part of your homeless inventory, I would absolutely do some kind of survey there and tie it to your housing inventory counts. What tends to happen is you get a sense of whether your community has either a specific number of units set aside, or if there's a pattern of a certain set of units that gets more or less targeted to your population. And so, with the general preference, we've often seen, like, a community will say, look, I have roughly 20 beds that go to this population every year. That's a good marker. You can enter that as a project in HMIS. At least in the HIC, you can represent it in the HIC. This is a project that's 20 beds. Again, that's not your whole HV portfolio, you're just representing that part of the portfolio that's associated with those who received the general preference, or otherwise are homeless, and that's a great way to approach it. That would apply to some of the other programs within that are funded by Public and Indian Housing administered by the PHAs, so it's not limited to HCV, but that's, we tend to see it the most with, with the HCV program, because it's tied to preferences.

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**Shantae Smith:** Awesome, thank you so much. And again, Adriana, if that doesn't answer your question, or if you have additional questions, please feel free to submit them in the chat, and we will try to get you the response and further guidance. So the next question, William is going to go to you, and I actually really appreciate this question, because it kind of touches a little bit on trauma informed data collection. The question is coming from Diego. The question is, we are hesitant to ask people about HIV status or domestic violence history. Is there a way to use coordinated entry or by name data to answer that question? If not, what are some of the recommended ways to ask this to the smallest subset of people?

31:40

**William Snow:** Yeah, fantastic. It's interesting. Just this year—we do actually evaluate what data we collect and try to determine, should we continue to collect things? PIT count is such a hard environment to ask questions. Many communities are doing it late at night, right, so it may surprise you, I don't know, to know or not that we step back and question should we do this? Not the PIT count in general—we do definitely want to continue that, but should we ask certain questions? There is a reason the DV question in particular is an optional question. It is very sensitive. Not everyone can do it. We would encourage if you have staff that you're using, or street outreach workers, they're probably most adept at doing it. They're probably most comfortable and understanding how to ask those questions. If you have a more lay audience of volunteers who have 20 minutes of training or an hour of training, yeah, that's probably not a question that you necessarily will need to ask—that's up to you. It is optional. HIV, we've continued to use as an optional element, or as a required element, but it has certainly the same sensitivity. Yes, you can try to use the sampling approach for that, if you're not comfortable and asking it everywhere. The catch there is making sure if you're going to do that as a sampling concept, you got to find a way to be consistent. Right, you can't just pick spots and say yeah, I'm most comfortable with these guys here or this group and so I'm going to ask them. You got to, you got to find a way to be consistent, otherwise you have no idea what you're getting out of that. So that's one I actually did ask, can we make that optional at best? And I was informed not this year, not clear that that will happen in the future. That data is used; it's one of the few sources we have on people experiencing homelessness with HIV/AIDS. And so just because of the uniqueness of it, we've, we've continued to collect it, but we absolutely recognize it is a sensitive question. A tough question.

Let me touch a little bit on the how. So, I remember actually, asking the DV question, I don't know. 8 years ago in Arlington, Virginia and it was definitely an eye opener to me to ask a woman sleeping on the streets at 1 or 2AM in the morning about her DV experience. One of the things that we did to try to make this an acceptable thing to ask is first make sure upfront they know they can still choose not to answer any of the questions here. It is always up to them to respond or not respond. So, giving them the choice upfront—really, really critical. When we did it, we made sure that we were a little more, little out of the way of ear shot of others. There was still people that could see us, right, we were apparent to folks, but wanted to make sure that she had space to be able to answer that in a way that was not available to everyone necessarily. And so we did that, took a little bit of space to ask the question. Let me get at the last part, so that's just kind of if you're going to continue to ask—you can

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absolutely use your, or by name list data. This is something again we owe you some more resources on this. We won't do it prior to the 2023 count, but this is something we will work on in the future. There are lots of great ways to use existing data. We certainly encourage that. In fact, if you collect information in the process and do it while you're doing your interviews, and you're able to map that to your data in HMIS, you can use your HMIS data to fill in any of the questions, right? It's possible folks will say no, I'm not going to answer these right or they'll answer one or two, and then they're done. You may have information on them already in your HMIS; it is, again, okay to use that data. It's also okay to override what they say in the PIT count with your HMIS data, assuming that that data was collected from a trusted source, right, which, our case managers are great. I tend to assume that the HMIS data is fairly strong; not perfect, for lots of reasons, but probably a little more reliable than what you're going to get on the night of the count at 2am in the morning while somebody's trying to sleep. So definitely okay to use that, that could be again primarily HMIS data, it could be by-name list CES data again has some limits in that we ask that you look at those who are coming in on the night of the count with that data, but you could also validate against it, right—if you've already collected your PIT count interview surveys and you're wanting to fill in some blanks, or you think you have different information than what they've given you, you can look at your CES data. That's definitely acceptable. So, using your existing sources is fantastic. We'd ask you again to think through how confident you are. Sometimes it's tough on the night of the count, you may get information again that's contradictory. Step back, think through what you know. There are some folks who may be on the streets of the night of the count but they're actually in permanent supportive housing, they just happen to be out at that hour. Can you take them out? Yes, if you have that information, you know their house, they have a move in date, you have all of that. Yes, you can use that. That's just one of many, many examples. But this is great when you think about other parts of the data like veteran status, right? You can use squares data to help validate. You can use other data you have to help validate. It is absolutely acceptable to use that information to help make the data you submit as part of your PIT count more accurate and more valid.

37:16

**Shantae Smith:** Great, thank you so much and just to kind of further support what you already said, Cole Hickman in the chat, shout out to Cole from the Phoenix home team, also just kind of mentioned with the DV there's always that risk that risk that perhaps the abuser is close by when asking that DV question. So, again, this just kind of goes back to the trauma informed data collection. And just from personal experience, I've been participating in the PIT count since probably 2014 and there are times when I can kind of assess my surroundings and the situation and whether all folks feel comfortable enough doing this or not, but one of the things that I've done, when I find that the question might be sensitive or the area around us is a little sensitive, I will just get a little closer to the person and ask permission to do so, and kind of point to the question on the paper so I can say, I don't want to say this too loudly, can you tell me if this is yes or no? And for me, that has always worked, and we have just respected boundaries and I've respected people and how they choose to answer that question. So there's plenty of ways, I think, that we can be very mindful, respectful, but also just making sure that we're safe for ourselves and for the people around us when answering those questions. William, I'm

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going to give you a break from answering questions because the next question is actually going to go over to Mike.

**Sam Shoukas:** Can I real fast just jump in on the DV part? I think a part of that question was also how do you ask it, and so we've worked really closely with our domestic violence provider about how do they ask their questions. I mean, they run a help line, they're the best ones to know about how to ask those, if you have a DV provider in your area, that could be a great person to tag. So we have changed a little bit about how we ask a domestic violence question. We don't ask "are you experiencing domestic violence?" Most people actually won't even describe themselves as in a domestic violence relationship, and so we actually change it a little bit to be are you in a relationship in which it makes you feel fearful, or at risk of harm. And so changing that to again just like those words alone, I think are more trauma informed care than talking about violence in any way. But being able to know the full breadth of feeling fearful can be anything from physical to mental, emotional, and all of those things that come along with domestic violence. So, I just say, lean into your domestic violence providers in your community to help you understand and come up with the most trauma informed way to really talk about the situation you're trying to get information on.

39:54

**Shantae Smith:** Sam, thank you so much, so, so helpful. Like I said, we're going to throw this next question over to Mike. So, Mike, we have a question that's asking: how can we learn whether there are any AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers serving in our CoC, and if so, how can we make contact with them?

**Mike Garcia:** Great question, so to learn if there are any AmeriCorps VISTA members serving in your particular geographic area, first step would be to contact your state office. Each state throughout the country has individual overlooking the portfolio of projects and so the way you do that is use the 2 letter abbreviation for a state. So, for example, for California ca, so it'd be [ca@cns.gov](mailto:ca@cns.gov). And the same can be said for every other state across the country. And reach out to that email inbox, it is monitored, and just reach out posing the question and provide the information such as I live in Los Angeles and I am looking to see what VISTA members might be serving in my particular area, and the individual that's responsible with monitoring that inbox will get back in touch with you with a wealth of information. They might, they could provide you the names of the projects in your particular area, which then can be filtered down to how many members are serving. Once we get down to PII, we can't give out names and such but usually we filter it down to project names. There is, for example, Habitat for Humanity serving this area, or a Red Cross, or whatever projects may be in your area and dependent on the need, there could be potential connections made, but you would work with that individual to make those connections whether it's with this VISTA members or with the VISTA projects themselves. And so I hope that has helped to answer that question.

**Shantae Smith:** Sure, and that question actually came from Lloyd. So Lloyd, if that, if you have additional questions, please post them in the chat so we can make sure that we're still getting you the information that you're needing. There have been so many great questions, kind of coming in the chat,

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so we're just going to keep rolling y'all. So the next question is, is the extrapolation tool going to be updated to account for the age range changes? The answer is yes. if you have additional questions about that, let us know, but the answer is yes, this will be updated to account for ages. The next question is asking, when will the HUD site be updated with the 2023 tools and resources and again, this answer, it looks like it's a question from Anna and Melissa, the answer is as soon as possible. If you have additional questions around that, please put them in the chat and let us know. So this next question actually is going to be directed towards William and Sam. So, this question is, do you have recommendations for engaging youth during PIT? Our community hosts youth PIT events, but we traditionally have low participation.

**William Snow:** Sam, do you want to start us off, actually?

43:20

**Sam Shoukas:** Sure. So we partner really closely with a couple of different partners who are already touching that group. So, in particular, we partner very closely with our school system um we also have a community college and a university, and so they are the ones who we partner with most closely to figure out where those events are and how to get people engaged. We also, we know that not all people who are experiencing homelessness and are youth are going to be at one of those school systems, but they may have friends that do, so we really rely on that kind of snowball effect of sampling about how you come to one—where can I go, and where can I go from here, and where can I go from here. We also have a lived experience committee so we have people who have lived experience and experience as youth homeless, who help us with really tailoring what that looks like and where to count. I think we're also really unique, we have a local business owner who was formerly homeless, he runs a coffee shop that is very community centric. So, it has a recording studio in it, they do poetry night, they do Super Smash brother tournament, so it really brings in the youth, so honestly, I drop off a stack of surveys at his coffee shop and have people do his. So it's really challenging, I think, to really figure out how to get at this population of youth who don't traditionally look homeless or experience homelessness in the same way that our adult population does. I think what will be different for us this year is we have had a large amount of fostering youth to independence vouchers come to our community, and so we have that perspective that's now, being honed in where before some one else may have kind of taken on that group, our street outreach provider has really fallen into the youth population and being able to help us with administering some of the services to that youth population. We, with our CV funds that came in for COVID, we're able to really move the needle on our chronic homeless numbers. So ones who we were seeing on the street a lot year after year are now in housing. And so what we're seeing in our unsheltered population is really that 18 to 24 group—they're younger, they don't really know how to survive on the street, and so they're leaning in more to our street outreach services, and so they've been really helpful, though they're also saying to me I don't know how to do this, I don't know how to do services. So we've been trying to work with our office on youth and other partners across the state to really tailor training and figure out how to engage that group. I think the last thing I'll say is in Richmond, there is actually a participatory action network of homeless youth, they're called Advocates for Richmond youth. They did a specific youth count about five years

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ago and so we have leaned on them about, how does it work in Richmond. We are very small compared to Richmond and so I think it's been, it's been interesting to figure out, like, how has a bigger city like Richmond navigating kind of translate to what we try to do. But I think mostly in particular, like, be okay with the idea that you don't know how to do it and realizing that and telling your community partners that, and they want to be helpful just as much as you want the information.

47:18

**William Snow:** I'll just add a tiny bit. Sam's response was so fantastic, rich with great ideas. I think part of part of what you do when we around the youth piece is also the back end and I think Sam was kind of getting at that as well, it's owning what you know and what you don't know. Some of that needs to come out and how you communicate around this using other data sources at the end, not as part of your data collection per se, although it can be helpful. I love teaming up with education where that's possible. They are fantastic partners, but they're also doing a lot of things, right, they're not always available, but kind of naming the realities around your various youth well, not just youth, but various homeless populations. We see almost the exact same dynamic with our native population. Very rarely are we accurately representing every single person who's experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. What context can you provide? The youth situation is particularly fun, because they can bounce much more than our adult population across settings that wouldn't be considered homeless on the night of the count, so I would say, as you try to message around whatever you end up doing with your PIT count, especially with something like the youth aspect be prepared to own that reality. And again, it's okay, but it's naming that like, this is their experience, this is how it looks and it's a little different. We should never be afraid of that, right? The PIT count is not perfect, and it is also limited in what it is intended to do. A lot of people say it should do a lot more and sure, yeah, I think people think that because it's one of the only sources that does as much as it does. So, naming what it does is really powerful. It's okay again to say what it doesn't do, and you need more to help support what it doesn't do and again, there are some other things to help do that framing. So that's been helpful in particular with the youth space. Again, I think that's going to be more and more important as we do a better job engaging our tribal community, lots of work there to be done. I'm looking forward to learning over the next couple of years of doing a better job supporting them.

**Shantae Smith:** Thank you so much both William and Sam for that response. I think that that was really helpful. So we have about a couple minutes left. These next few questions are actually directed at Mike again. Mike, so we have a question saying, if we were to engage the VISTAs in our area, would they be knowledgeable about the information that was shared in today's presentation? Or would they have access to this information and received guidance from VISTA? Or, would we at the CoC have to train the individual?

50:05

**Mike Garcia:** That's a great question. So it all depends on the service activity. Some VISTA members might be conducting a service project that is directly in alignment with their normal day to day service

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activities. One thing I do want to put into context is VISTA members serve a full annual year of service, and so, when they sign on for a year of service, they are assigned what's called a volunteer assignment description, which is basically their job description for the year. And so, if the proposed activities that are outside of that potential volunteer assignment description, yes, there would need to be some training involved. But if it's in direct alignment with what they're doing 364 other days throughout the year, then no, they wouldn't. But in regards to PIT count information, there probably would need to be—unless they're directly working with HUD on this type of data collection, there would need to be some need to be some type of training or guidance provided to them. So, I think another question was, will this training be provided to them? To my understanding, no, it will not. I would highly suggest that if any sites or any individuals on this call would like to utilize VISTA members, you would work with the sponsors to gully engage them and make them aware of what the requirements regarding the count collection are and that with everybody is well aware of what the expectations, what the deliverables are for any particular service activity programming.

**Shantae Smith:** Wonderful, thank you. And I think the other question for you, Mike is asking, if you could list the email address for making contact with the state AmeriCorps coordinator be placed in the—I believe you had mentioned it earlier and someone was just wondering if you could just add that to the chat.

**Mike Garcia:** Sure, it's going to vary state by state. There's not one broad email. It's going to be an email inbox for every state. So, as I mentioned earlier, I used, I think I used California as the example the email inbox for California would be [ca@cns.gov](mailto:ca@cns.gov). And so I'll put it in the chat, the two letter abbreviation @ CNS.gov. And those email inboxes are monitored by the respective individuals working out in the field, and they will be able to get back to you with the requested information.

**Shantae Smith:** Great, thank you so much. So we have time for probably one more question. I do want to say there have been a lot of really great questions in the chat. Please note that we have recorded all of them and we will do our best to give you a Q and A document or an FAQ to address the questions. Should you continue to have questions as we continue to round this out? Please please put them in a chat so we can make sure that we're capturing them. So, this last question is going to go to William. So someone has a question about the observation count. They're not doing sampling, but they're doing comprehensive and field out. If someone declines to talk to us, but it appears “homeless,” for example, in a tent et cetera, can we do our best observation? I think that is allowed—is the question from Johnny.

53:41

**William Snow:** Yeah, it's a good question. So again, just getting back to how observation counts should be done with the sampling piece. So, we would not encourage you to try to guess at somebody's identity. We did have guidance in the past, maybe 5 years ago, that kind of encouraged that. We've learned over the past couple of years, we're trying to improve. And one way of doing that, we want to step back from that and say identity is important. It's not something we impute on somebody, it's

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something that somebody shares with us and they own that, so we would not encourage you to make guesses as to people's demographics or things that, like, literally can't be seen, like veteran status and things like that. This is where using a sampling approach is really important. Again, many communities don't do a full census counts, they have some sort of observation. The more data you have, obviously the easier it is to extrapolate. When you say you do the field piece, I'm not exactly sure what that means, I assume that means you're using some kind of street outreach team, or otherwise collecting data on your unsheltered population and using that to do your extrapolation. It's a good thing to note actually, again, if you do observation only, please, when you extrapolate based on your sample based your extrapolation on the unsheltered population don't mix in the sheltered population. We find different characteristics. I was actually just looking, we're hoping to release the most recent PIT count, right, the 2022 data sometime shortly, and we've been looking at that and the demographics are definitely different across sheltered and unsheltered and so mixing them in an extrapolation setting is not a good idea. So, please make sure when you're doing your extrapolation on your unsheltered population, you use an unsheltered base for that for that use. Again, you can base a lot of that on street outreach, if you have street outreach data. I wouldn't solely do street outreach. It assumes that everyone who's engaged in street outreach are looking like and acting like everyone else in the unsheltered population, but there are many people who choose not to be service engaged and that includes street outreach. They just don't want to be connected. And that part of the population may very well look different than your other unsheltered population. So do your best to get at that, and if you have further questions, again, that's I'm happy to dive further into. It's a good one. Shantae, I see your lips moving, but I don't hear you.

**Shantae Smith:** Haha, just kidding, so sorry y'all. We've got one last question and then we're going to wrap this up. So this question I think is just really great, and really important for everyone to know. People are asking questions about when are we mandated to conduct the PIT count? Is it odd number of years, is it even numbered years, or it has nothing to do with those? And so I was hoping you can just speak to that pretty quickly.

**William Snow:** Yep, so historically we used the odd years as the required, and even as the not. The actual regulatory requirement is that CoCs conduct a count at least every other year, that includes sheltered and unsheltered—that's the regulatory requirement. Again, it was implemented in a way that did odd and even years, and thanks to that pandemic, among other things, we just lean back on the regulatory requirements, so it's not necessarily odd or even. Look at whether or not, you counted in the last year, did a full count, and then make that determination about what you'll do this year. That is something we're looking at actually, as we continue to look at our CoC program regulations. So we'll just note that, as the, like, how heavy handed should HUD be in that regard, we may take a more firm stance in the future. I think one of the keys is making sure we get a critical mass of communities conducting every year so you can have confidence in saying this is the estimate based on the count, so that is something we keep a pretty sharp eye on.

**Shantae Smith:** Awesome, thank you so much. Well, that is all the time we have for our Q and A portion today, we can go to the next slide, please. Oh, I think we went backwards. That's okay. We'll

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just end right here on the general PIT count resources. Again, this is our resource page. We thank you all so much for coming and attending today, asking these really great and really important questions. Please go forth, have a really great rest of your day. Should you have additional questions, we're going to leave the chat open for another 30 to 45 seconds, then we're going to close it out. And again, you will see these slides and all the materials posted on the exchange website within the next couple of business days. Thank you so much again. Thank you to Mike and Sam for taking time out of their day to come and join us and present. We appreciate you, your active participation in this work, in this space, and in these conversations and we just, thank you all so much for you very, very hard work and dedication to the populations that we serve. So, thank you so much, and a really great day, everyone.