

2023 PIT Count Office Hours: Transcript

January 11, 2023

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Caroline Roddey: Hi, everyone. Welcome. Thank you for being here. We're just going to give it a couple of minutes as folks transition in and then we'll get started. All right, so it looks like the flow of people is starting to come or settle down. So, we'll go ahead and get started. Hello everyone and welcome to PIT Count Office Hours. I'm going to spend a couple of moments going over some tech notes and then we will get into the content that we have for today because we know it is a busy day for many of you with the LSA deadline, so we want to get through this. So next slide please. So, a couple of housekeeping reminders. We are recording the office hours today as we do every office hours, and we will post a copy of the recording along with the slides and any content that we receive through the chat box in the HUD Exchange within the next week or so. If you have any issues with audio during the webinar, we encourage you to switch over from computer to phone audio at the audio at the numbers that are up there on the screen and then also in the chat. Next slide please. So, during the Q and A portion of the event, we will pause for questions, and we anticipate and hope to hear from you through the chat feature and Webex in the meantime. So, to find the chat just take a look at the bottom righthand corner of your screen. You should see the word chat and what looks like just a message bubble and then click on that to open the chat. So, throughout the webinar, please send all questions comments and feedback in there. When you are sending these messages, please do take a moment to make sure that the toolbar is set to everyone. That will make sure that all participants as well as panelists and presenters can see those messages. If you would like to ask a question, verbally, during the Q and A portion, you can use the raise hand feature. So, to raise your hand, 1st, select the participant list at the bottom of the screen, and then select the raise hand icon on 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, we will put you back on mute, so please remember to click the hand icon again to lower your hand after your question and call. Users can unmute by hitting star 6, and then are asked to please mute again by hitting star 6 once you have asked your question. And I think I may have skipped over the slide about closed captioning, which is enabled for this event. So that is on the lower left-hand side of your screen. So, you can click there to activate the captions, or to hide the captions please click the closed captions button and then click disable. All right, thank you. Next slide please.

So, on the line today, we have several resource advisors. From HUD, we, of course, have William Snow from the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, or STAPS, and William uses he, him, and his pronouns. And then from Abt Associates, we have myself, Caroline Roddey, Shantae Smith, Tanya de Sousa, and Meghan Henry. And Alyssa unfortunately could not join us, but we all use she, her, and hers pronouns. Next slide. So, on today's agenda, we have a few topics. So, first off, we will be discussing just the situation right now for many CoCs experiencing an influx of migrants into their communities and there are very important considerations around the PIT count and how HUD is thinking about that right now. We will then just review the age category expansion that we've discussed before in the 2023 PIT count. So, we'll do that quickly. And then we will discuss updates to the count methodology questions. So, after that, we'll have a Q and A, so the remainder of our session will be left for communities to ask questions. With that I will hand it over to William.

05:45

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William Snow: All right. Thank you. Very much. Caroline. Thanks for joining us today. Excited to talk about it. I can't believe we're like 2 weeks away from many of you starting counts. So, it feels like it comes quickly. A couple of quick reminders. By now, I imagine, you know what the changes are, so we'll do this briefly. The only real change to the count this year was the update to the age category expanded to align again with other reporting that you already do and give us a better picture of what's going on with a broader perspective from age, especially our elder population, which we know is growing. So, we want to capture that and be able to have that story available to communities to talk through it further. That's really important. Actually, the question that just came into chat goes, right along with what's here - we're still updating the extrapolation tool. That is something we will do, and we know that it's important to get that up for you. So, we'll provide updates on that, but it is something we are absolutely working on. Uh, hopefully, that's not going to impact you like now, or right before the counts. You should be able to move forward, and the extrapolation should be able to be available as you have the data and need to make the appropriate extrapolation. Um, a reminder as well, if you conducted a full count in 2022, including an unsheltered count, you are not technically required to do a full count in 2023, many have asked that. You will still need to do your sheltered counts in conjunction with your housing inventory count, but you will not have to do an unsheltered count in 2023 if you did one in 2022. Next slide, please. All right, well, I want to talk a bit about the influx of migraine to various parts of the nation, but just again want to pause here. It's a complicated topic. It's one that's driven by humans, humans who have a need that all of you are well familiar with. Right? Because people experiencing homelessness is that's the universe that you live in. You assist them all the time. Folks in this situation are also in that same camp, right? They are being displaced for whatever reason. They don't have housing and they need some stability. So, I just want to remember kind of the human aspect here. The reality of who we're serving, how we should be looking at this as a human standpoint before we jump into kind of technicalities around how do you count them here in our data and how you serve them? I should also note that we know this is different for some communities. Some communities have had different influx from migrants or other populations types to disasters and are maybe familiar with how to address the influx. For others, this is brand new, and you don't know what to do necessarily. And that also creates some challenges and complications. So, I want to acknowledge that reality as well.

Next slide please. So, let's talk a couple of details around this. First and foremost, we start with the situation that they come with in terms of their housing on the night of counts. Remember this is the PIT counts uh, the housing inventory count as well. It's all tied to a single night. So, look at the housing status of every person on that night. So, if they are bust into the community and outside - they're outside - that's their housing status. If they're bust in the community and put into some kind of shelter, whether it be one that the CFC normally operates maybe it's some that's another part of the city or county operates... If it is operating like a shelter well, then they're in a sheltered situation and so you count them and include the inventory on the housing inventory count. So just want to make sure that very practical reality of like, just look at their housing status and that generally drives where they should be included, in terms of this count. I also want to consider the importance of in this and how this may or may not impact your HMISS coverage and how it should be viewed in terms of your larger inventory. We know, that's a big question, right? Like. Well, how does this fit in? Where should I

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include them again? We see this in the disaster context. All of a sudden, you have a bunch of new disaster beds. Well, they're emergency shelter beds. And how do you how do you do with them? Where do I put that? It's more or less the same. You need to start by asking the question, how permanent is this? Do I think this is a couple of months and then for whatever reason the assistance or just the level of need here will change type specifically to this population? If it's a couple of months you're probably going to count the inventory associated with him as ad hoc, not year-round, and treated as temporary. On the flip side, you may know that this is a long-term situation that you're going to face that you probably have to take this into how you operate from here on. That feels a lot more permanent. You may at that point, you want to consider them part of your year-round emergency service inventory, whatever you're doing. Now, most of you are probably in between, where you don't know, right? You have a situation that's here in front of you. Now, it probably has some political ramifications. You're not sure if it's something that's going to be here in 3-6 months. In that case, I would also encourage you to treat it as ad hoc. That's the inventory, you don't know if it's year-round. Again, the way we treat ad hoc inventory and year-round inventory differs in some context, I will say, historically, in our competitive space in our application we typically looked at bed coverage from the perspective of year-round, partly because we know situations like this exists. It allows us to mitigate for that. So, we'll just kind of flag that as you, you just need to look at how temporary how permanent this may be and make adjustments. Accordingly sorry, ad hoc I saw the chatter yes. By ad hoc, I do mean overflow. So, yes. Use the overflow designation as opposed to even seasonal or year-round and that's, again, it helps you figure out also that long term should I put them in. We would always encourage you to consider putting people you're serving through this kind of system, right? Those who don't have housing or you're putting them in an emergency context, consider, putting that in. But just like, in disasters, that's not always possible especially if you think it's going to be very temporary and you're not sure you can get everything set up in time. So, some of this is just a practical reality of like, if you're not sure. Set it up as overflow, it will help you hopefully in the long run to make sure everything's kind of flowing as it can and getting a picture of what's going on. One other note here in your HIC please do not put any inventory associated with them under disaster. The disaster inventory is tied to federally declared natural disasters. That's an important distinction. Not to say this isn't a terrible event disaster like, but it is not the same as what we try to capture in that data collection. So just want to note that we actually have to treat that data different if it's tied to a natural disaster. So, we want to make sure we're clear on that upfront. With that, let's go to the next slide please.

All right, we're going to take a few minutes to talk about updates to the PIT count methodology questions. We don't often talk about the bootcamp methodology questions. You just kind of filled them out at the end of your submission, but we've made a few updates, so, we want to step back and talk about it in general and talk about what you're going to see in terms of changes. Next slide, please. Let's start with the why we've tried to at least give you a sense of why any kind of changes happening that way. It doesn't come completely out of the blue and, you know, what's driving it. Next slide please. So, in understanding the why it'd be good for us just to step back and say why we've collected at all. Why do we bother asking background questions. PIT counts - they're hard. Takes a ton of work a ton of hours lots of money. Uh, we want to understand what that level of effort is, we want to document it as much as possible. We understand that, but I'm sure we don't fully understand how

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much you put into it all that you're doing. This gives us a glimpse into it gives us a good sense of level of efforts, the types of changes you're doing, the types of resources you're using. We appreciate that. We need to understand it and we actually use that to help tell the message or tell the story when we engage others. Uh, we're also working on a communication kit right now, partly with the intent of helping you as communities, and others know how to talk about methodology among other things. When I look at methodology around the country, most communities do, like, stay within the confines that we laid out in our methodology guide. There's only like a handful of methodologies on the unsheltered side in particular that communities do, but the way you implement. What's different in every community? Um, so methodologies are the same, local implementation differs based on your volunteer based on your well, a variety of things and so this gives us a sense of what's going on there. So, why are we updating the methodology questions? First, we wanted to make sure we weren't asking you something that we don't use that you don't use, that's not necessary. You get plenty of things that you get to do every day. We don't need you to answer questions that nobody uses. So, you'll see a reduction in questions. Actually, we reduced the number of questions we're asking because we want to not ask what's unnecessary. There are some areas where we felt like when we would read the response, we didn't actually know what it meant. And so, a lot of that was on us. We needed to ask better, ask the question better, or ask for more. So, we tried to update the questions in some areas to bring a little more context. One final reminder we use this. we don't use it in a competitive sense. We've intentionally kind of stripped that away from the competition. I can't say it'll never be part of that. We do actually ask you a question in the competitive space, but this is separate. Like, we just want you to tell us what you're doing. So, we get a sense of what you understand your methodology to be, but also your changes. I read almost all of your statements about changes. I want to know what's going on. We often use this as a baseline if there's a big change to kind of understand what, what's your story? What are you saying? Is changing things-we want to hear from you as much as possible and some of them quite frankly, like, we want to know if you understand what's driving it. It's hard. The PIT counts. Not always easy to tell what's going on and some of the responses in the past kind of said, it's not clear that, you know, what's driving the change, like, based on the responses. And some of that was the way we asked it. And some of it was, you probably just didn't know. So, we want to adjust the questions a little bit to get a sense for, like, do you know what's driving it? And if you do, what is it? If you don't, it'd be good to get some clarity there as well. All right, uh, next slide please.

All right. Just a very quick overview of the updates and then we'll do a little more deep dive into some of these. First of all, we removed the majority if not all of the population questions. We weren't using them. A lot of it was actually a reflection again of what was being done at the population level, so we were just asking more questions than we needed there. So that's a good example of let's just take it out, if we're not using it. We wanted to simplify data source questions for shelter. There's not a whole lot of variation there. So, we just wanted to make sure what we're asking is clear, but also just as simple as possible. We updated some of the words and added some examples where we wanted a little more clarity. Hopefully that helps you know how to respond. We added some more detailed questions about approaches for the unsheltered. Obviously, that's where we get the most questions. That's where we have the most questions. So, we wanted to give a little more space for you to provide some detail there. Not too much again we want to respect.

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Takes a lot to submit counts data already. We don't need you spending a ton of time doing this, but just some quick reflections and some details about your count. We updated response options for the change prior to the PIT count questions. So, just to give a sense of what's driving your change? We actually wanted to narrow it to the top three. It's very hard to tell what's going on when somebody selects every reason and there were 15-20 reasons available. We wanted to get a sense of what the big drivers and so just narrowing it to select the top three. And then finally, we added some open-ended options to help with some of the questions, give you a little more space for specificity. With that, I'm going to turn it back over. I think I'm going to send it to Shantae, and she'll walk through some of the other changes or am I going to Caroline? I'll turn it over to whoever's turn.

19:23

Caroline Roddey: Thanks William, great. So just a few examples of what William was just describing in terms of the updates that we made to the methodology questions again. Really? Just to make sure that this was as streamlined for you all as possible and also to really check ourselves in terms of what we are asking and how we use that information. So, one of the things that we did was remove subpopulation questions. So, an example of an unsheltered subpopulation question that will no longer be asked is-were-all people who were encountered during canvassing on the night of the count or during post night of the count two activities asked to complete a survey or interview. And so that was specifically about subpopulations and keep in mind that we really make sure that all of the important information coming out of those questions was captured in other questions. So that question would always say, how did the CoC select these people? So, we did that in terms of the both the unsheltered and sheltered populations. Next slide please.

We also simplify the data source questions for the sheltered population. So, again, this goes along with the last slide. So, rather than at the subpopulation level, he will now only have to answer question about data sources used for the shelter population at the overall full population level. So, you'll only have to answer what data sources were used to produce. The total number of people included in the shelter population and there's also to provide specifics that are specific to you, within many of the open-ended response areas. Next question, I mean, next slide, thank you. We also just updated some of the wording of some questions for clarity and then tried to provide examples where we thought it might be useful of the categories that we're talking about. So, for example, last year, one of the questions was what information or methods was used to produce an unduplicated count, total count, of homeless people across your sheltered and unsheltered populations. And this year, it says what information or methods were used to de-duplicated the total count of people in the unsheltered population, and then you can also see some additional examples were added, for example, near the blitz count of unsheltered people. And so that's. That's an example of where we updated the wording to just make it a little bit clearer. Next slide please. We also added more detailed questions about approaches used for counting the unsheltered population. So, really just trying to get more into the weeds of what approaches you use in terms of whether it was a census, if you were conducting a night count, unsheltered population count, if you were surveying known locations, or if you were just doing a random or stratified random sample. And then also, the options are a service based in administrative

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data and really that is to, or that question allows you to apply any of those, or all that apply. And I'll just reiterate that these slides will be available to you and the updated methodology questions will be available for you. So, it's not like you need to memorize any of this or write it down because you will see it again. All right next slide.

Okay, one new aspect too is that we are now the question about the change in your unsheltered or sheltered or unsheltered count from last year to this year. We'll now ask you to select up to three reasons you believe best explain the changes in the count. So, the numerical changes in the sheltered or unsheltered counter or any other significant changes. So, each of these response option categories has a selection of examples for you to choose or a set of examples for you to look at and reference and then there's also the opportunity to provide an open-ended response to each of these response options. So, those are changing basic PIT count approach, change in implementing the PIT count, changing capacity and we really do define what capacity means in that spot, changing participation of partners and programs due to policy implementation, natural factors. And then if you had changes that were due to other factors, that really aren't captured in any of these options, there is another category where you can specify that. Next slide, please.

All right, so this is the last option, I mean, the last update that we'll go over today. So, now you will see these responses available as open-ended responses. So, that will allow you all to provide more specificity, like William said, he really does read through all of the methodologies and it's really interesting and also important in terms of providing information for future planning. So, you'll see these responses available when asked to speak about changes made locally, and the approach and delivery of the count methods for de-duplication, specific factors that impacted the count, that kind of thing. So, that is an overview of the information that you can expect to, to see in the updated methodology questions, which again will be shared with you all in the next in the next week or two. And now I will hand it over to Shantae.

25:02

Shantae Smith: Wonderful, thank you so much Caroline. So, this is the moment where we kind of just review some of the general PIT count resources. So, we see a lot of questions in here that actually could be answered, if you take some time to read some of the sampling guidance and tools, the methodology guide, and really just digging deep onto the HUD exchange website. In the event that you are still not able to find an answer to your question, assuming that it is a policy question, please email that to the HICPITCount@HUD.gov again, if you're going through all of these tools and documents, and you have a specific policy question to the PIT count, please email that directly to the HICPITCount@HUD.gov. And again, it takes some time when you have a moment to read through this methodology guide the guidance documents, the tools recordings, um, their survey tools, and just coming through the landing page on the head exchange. Next slide. Please. So, again, I don't think that we necessarily have the opportunity to ask some questions verbally, but a lot of you haven't submitting some questions in the chat and this is the moment we're going to go through some of those questions as we're talking about these questions. And if you have more questions, please, please, please feel free

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to put it in the chat. We were capturing every single one to also be added to an FAQ document at a later date. That will also be available and all of the links that you've already been provided. Please check out those links again. I cannot stress this enough to review some of those documents. From previous calls, because a lot of your questions would be answered there. Next slide, please. So, the last 30 or so minutes of the call, we're going to start with this Q and A portion and I'm going to just start throwing out some questions whether it be to William, or some of my colleagues at Abt. Please, anyone at any given moment you feel like you were quite equipped to answer this question, please do so.

27:11

Caroline Roddey: We're gonna start with this and this is a specific category to talk about the shelter count. Someone asked, for having a lot of discussion about inclusion or not in the shelter count, people who are in transitional housing, following treatment for substance abuse. Thank you for any guidance you can share about that. Um, William, I'm not sure if you'd like to address that.

27:20

William Snow: Yeah, it's a very good question. We know that there can be a fine line between institutions and what would be considered transitional housing. So, this is where we'd say there is going to be a discretion at the community level. Some of them, the fine line is fine enough that we wouldn't be able to make that call here without a deep dive on our end, where you can be empowered to make those decisions. The key is just looking at the model of services. Who are you serving? What are the nature of services? What's the timeline attached to the services? Those tend to be the core drivers. Right? So, if you're primarily serving people who are coming off the streets or coming from a shelter, and you're providing them substance abuse treatment, that would probably meet most of the criteria. And then you got to answer the question around how long is the service? Is this a defined set of services, in terms of what's offered as well as the timing? Is that definition beyond 24 months that's trigger for us? It is not defined; they can be there for as long as they want? Again, so, there's no defined set of services or timeline associated with it. Those are all the types of things that you're gonna have to ask about your specific examples to determine whether or not they would be qualified as transitional housing or institutional programs. Most of the time I think community default putting them as transitional housing. You may also consider who's funding it. Sometimes the funder is very specific about who should be served and who they think is being served. Again, I'd say that a little cautiously because even if the funder says one thing, but you're really, like, let's say, you, they say something along the lines of you must serve family in a certain system, but not necessarily homeless, but really everyone you're serving is homeless. Well, then it makes sense to include them. You're really running a homeless model there, so you'll have to look at again, some of the specifics around the nature of your model in here, so.

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Caroline Roddey: Well, thank you so much so popping over to the next question. We had quite a few questions in the chat come up about the age update. Some of it was entered in the chat, but I guess I would say that this is actually a really great question that I think you can kind of speak to out loud William. Does CoC need to add that each category question to our sheltered and unsheltered PIT surveys or will the age categories just be used on the PIT extrapolation tool?

30:01

William Snow: That's a good question and it looks like from some of the chat questions that not everyone is familiar with what the changes are. So, start with going to notice that was put in the chat. Uh, the notice in, like, page 3, it has changed, and it lays out the categories. It's essentially under 18, 18 to 24. and then you do these kind of ten year, increments, 24 or 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 60... I think it still goes to 64 and then 65+, but that is laid out in the notice. Please look at that. That is going to be required for all of your reporting on your entire estimate. So, this should be incorporated into your counts. There are lots of ways to do this. Yes, we do need to update the survey tools. I don't know that that's going to happen beforehand, we need to update the survey tools. I don't know that that's going to happen beforehand I was given a reminder that actually, the extrapolation tool should be ready very soon, maybe in the next couple of days. So that part is moving. You have some choices around how you want to ask age. You can ask an open-ended age question. How old are you? You can ask a question of what is your date of birth? You could ask instead for an age category, right? Can you identify which 1 of these 8 categories most appropriate response to, uh, what you identify us, right? Like, you have lots of options. I think the key is whatever option you take I'm asking age needs to provide the level of specificity to be able to put people in those categories. Right? I think we have 7 categories. You need to be able to respond to the 7 categories. Again, the extrapolation tool will be able to help you with that. But I don't know that we'll have things up for you prior to the count in terms of the specific thing to do for your age question. We don't really provide questions per say, anyways, we do have the model surveys. We love when folks use them. At the end of the day, communities, will be able to make a call around how exactly they're going to ask that question.

32:06

Caroline Roddey: Really helpful. Um, thank you so much. So, there's actually a really great question in specific to tribal considerations. Do we need tribal resolutions again this year to include tribal data?

32:21

William Snow: Great question. So, we weren't explicit about that. Actually, in the context of the PIT counts last time, it was tied to your registration. I'm sure that will be the same case in registration. But that similar practice is something that really should kind of permeates the work you're doing. Engage with your tribes, be respectful of their sovereignty, get their not only buy in, but permission in using any data associated, especially with tribal lands you're counting on patients or other Indian lands. We certainly encourage you to work with the tribe but like, work with them and get their authorization

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permission to be able to include their date. We appreciate it, all the work there and we know there's more that needs to be done on the tribal side. On our part, we have a lot to figure out there. But we know a lot of you have already moved forward and have done things with tribes and we, we appreciate that.

33:17

Caroline Roddey: Wonderful. Thank you so much. Um, there's actually, this is kind of like a CoC planning question in regard to the PIT count, which, I think could be a really great discussion. So, can a CoC planning grant funds we use for one, food for volunteering volunteers who are conducting outreach with, and two, incentives for filling out survey, soft hats, gift cards, et cetera?

33:41

William Snow: So, this is a little more complicated than it would appear on the surface. So, the food part is the complicated part. Part 200 drives most of grants and what's allowed to be and there's a provision that essentially says, you can't spend federal funds on entertainment in this context, in grants like this. So, there may be some minor circumstances or rare circumstances where food is allowed for an event like that. But often it gets associated as an entertainment expense, even if, like not entertainment in your mind like, you wouldn't get volunteers otherwise it's necessary. We get that, but part 200 is not written that way. It's like it's somewhat agnostic to that and just treats it as entertainment. So, I would not encourage you to use PIT count funds to pay for food prior to an event. Not to say you shouldn't try to get that type of food option again, a lot of communities ask for donations from local restaurants, other partners. We just want to make sure you're safe on that one above board. It cuts so close to entertainment that it just creates a potential that you would find, you would have a finding, and it would be difficult to be able to justify that in a way that doesn't sound like entertainment. So, we just say, don't pay for food with it. Now, other incentives, you certainly can use the funds for other incentives. Gift cards a good kind of another on the line category of I would not encourage you to use your CoC planning dollars for gift cards, if for no other reason again engage others, other community partners. So, to donate that to engage that way many of them often are willing, but it also is on the line for, like, well, how do you account for that? On the back end? But that is one where we have been able to say that yes, you could in kind of the reasonable amounts side, use it for gift cards included things like survival kits. Absolutely, some communities do T-shirts so that people can readily identify who is part of the counting group, so there'll be like a bright orange T-shirts that makes total sense. Absolutely is eligible as a cost. So, certainly explore that. I will put one other plug out there. We did a document on how to do, or what's eligible for ESG funds and it goes through a little more specificity of how you can use that. You could either use street outreach dollars. Or you could use admin dollars, you could use street outreach if your count is essentially an interview-based count where you're doing normal street outreach activities. That's a good resource to look at, though, because not, everyone knows that they can even use their ESG dollars to help them do their PIT counts and you can in some limited contexts.

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36:38

Caroline Roddey: I also think it would just be a really great place to also add that if you have questions about eligible costs through any of your planning grants in planning dollars, submit that to the head AAQ. There's a team of really wonderful people in the background that could also just continue to dig deep into that and provide you written language, if that's equally as helpful outside of what William just described for us. Okay, we have a couple more questions William, bear with us. If a community chooses to skip the 2023 unsheltered count, will a waiver letter be required?

37:18

William Snow: Yeah, another good question. So, if you conducted your continuing conducted count in 2022 a full count, including an unsheltered, then no, you do not have to do any kind of waiver that's baked into the statute and baked into the regulation. So, you are allowed to skip an unsheltered count in 2023 if that's the case. No other documentation needed. When you submit your sheltered data in your HIC data in HCX, you'll have that option to identify whether you did the shelter option to identify whether you did the shelter count sheltered, only or sheltered and unsheltered. You'll just identify there. We look at that universe. We do actually keep track of those who didn't conduct counts in 2022 or whatever the previous year was. We keep an eye on, which communities didn't do that and look at that for who conducted counts in the subsequent year. So that's more to say, like, we are watching that. That's really important to us. We want to make sure everyone's fulfilling their obligation, but more of the... we need that picture, you need that picture as a community of what's going on and it meets an important need. I'm hoping you use your unsheltered data in particular to understand what's going on. As I talked to communities, I see that over and over again. So, it's not merely a reporting requirement to us, but hopefully, it's something that serves your community.

38:36

Caroline Roddey: Wonderful, thank you. Can someone clarify how we were to ask about additional homeless population, for example, SMI, HIV AIDs, without asking about the nature or severity of their person's disability?

38:56

William Snow: That's a really good question. I think, in our sample survey, we actually have that layer tied in. And so, I guess in short, what we would say is, yes, you actually should try to get that information. It's not always possible. I'll be honest that these are the types of questions, if I have my own range or continuum in terms of the data quality associated with the PIT count, my highest quality data tends to be the total number. Then I kind of have a 2nd tier of the household data tends to be pretty good and then you move into subpopulations, and you start losing the granularity and kind of the competence level demographics tend to be okay, but certainly a lower level of data quality than say your household data and your sub population data. Similarly, people seem to be graded veteran

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data. Chronic data is much more difficult and then, when you get in these specific disability categories, it is much more difficult to get accuracy there. We know that we try to acknowledge that in the public, believe it or not. We even asked, like, do we have to ask these questions? Is that something that we can do away with? We've asked those questions internally and there are reasons that we actually can't, but again we question what's on the PIT count as well because it's a lot of work and we want to make sure we're getting the best data we can with some sense of accuracy. So, in short, we would say, yes, you probably should have a follow up questionnaire, but we recognize not everyone does, and that's more of the, like, by the time you get to that question, is anyone even answering that question anymore. So, you get that survey fatigue that reality lens it's just placed on it.

40:35

Caroline Roddey: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, I hear you, when you say that survey fatigue as well. Okay, so this next question, William, you are off the hook. I'm going to pass it over to my colleague, Meghan Henry. Um, it's more of a comment, but I believe what we're able to kind of address. It says, but if you're doing an unsheltered observation survey, PIT count, while writing in your car, being specific on each category is going to be tough. We are instructed not to approach the folks who are homeless. Therefore, the 10 year-each increment will be tough to assume.

41:11

Meghan Henry: Yeah. So, um, to cut to the quick of it. No demographic information should be collected by observation. If they're doing an observation-based PIT count, the best thing to do is to pair it with a service-based count for the following 2 days after where you can do surveys and collect information, demographic information, on people who are at various service locations, asking them where they spent the night of the PIT count and collecting the demographic information that way. It really is not advisable to try and get the race, age, the ethnicity of anybody that you sort of view from afar.

41:55

Caroline Roddey: Great, thank you so much. And this kind of dovetails into another question that since we have an extrapolation tool, but wondering if you can go into detail about how to help our volunteers count vehicles? And Megan and William, this could be either one of you.

42:06

William Snow: I don't mind taking a stab at that or Meghan if you want to start and I don't mind as well. Up to you, if you want to start making or would you like me to start? Right, this is something we've been watching over the past couple of years. Certainly, trying to understand vehicles and how they play into, that's definitely a part of many communities' unsheltered population. Historically many communities just literally counted cars or other structures outside. What we have found is that that

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often is not terribly accurate. There are lots of reasons that a vehicle or even a structure may exist and may or may not have somebody experiencing homelessness. And so, what we ask folks to do, if you're doing a particular PIT count, is to engage a small sample. Nothing that's easy. We totally understand that, but you really don't know what you're getting if you don't engage some people in vehicles. I'll give you an example from some of the communities that that have shared about this when they engage the community people sleeping in vehicles, including RVs, but they found what some of them identified as not homeless at all. Right. Either they were sleeping in a car because they had a 2 am shift and they were waiting for that shift. They said I have an apartment. I sleep there in the day, but it just makes my life easier if I can sleep in my car and just go to my shift at 2 am. You had a lot of people in RVs saying, no, this is my home. I don't see myself as unstable house. This is a choice a place I want to be in my vehicle, it's fine, it moves right in. Like, I meet the RV standards. I can sleep in RV park if I choose whenever I want. Otherwise, I am okay, and please don't include me. I don't consider myself homeless. I don't want to be included as part of your homeless system. And then, of course, you have the like... There are lots of vehicles out there that have anybody in them. Not on any given night, they're just there and so that also came into the equation where you kind of in doing a sample, need to get a sense for out of, you know, X number of people, how many were not homeless? How many had people in them, but nobody wanted to talk? That's normal. And then how many had nobody in them, just nobody and you didn't need to make some adjustments to account for the data you glean from that. Also, a good idea to, like, engage with your street outreach teams, primarily some folks sleep in cars during the day because that gives you a better sense that you probably will not have much success at 2 am waking a lot of people up. They're more likely to conduct those types of counts in the early morning hours, early as in between 6 and 8 is where we saw more success counting, especially RVs, more likely to get traction there. I don't know, Megan, if you have more, you want to want to add as well.

45:12

Meghan Henry: That was great. The only thing I would add is that I believe last year we developed and put out some guidance on the ways to use a sampling approach when counting people in cars. And it sort of sums up some of what William had talked about, in terms of, you know, what you encounter if you look at five cars and you encounter three people and two of them are experiencing homelessness and one of them is not, that ways to apply that sort of ratio to the rest of the cars that you count as well as other options for counting cars.

45:49

Caroline Roddey: Thank you so much, and this is just a plug to everyone again that when you have a moment, please, please, please go to the HUD exchange and review all previous count documents, guidance or tools where, like we said, a lot of these questions would be answered there. So, this is the last question that we are going to throw up, which I, uh, we previously addressed in the chat, but it looks like it has a little bit, um, more information needed to be answered. So maybe if we speak this out, verbally, it will be really helpful. So, it says we will use a night of the count no locations count, supplemented by a service-based count. The date of the PIT count is January 23rd and serving will take

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place between January 23rd to January 27th. Everyone surveyed will be asked where they spent the night of the 23rd. My question: are we required to count folks at the known locations during the evening hours? Are we required to do the majority of the survey on the 23rd?

46:44

William Snow: Yeah, I love that question. We love when communities consider their flexibility. There's more flexibility in conducting the counts than people realize. If you're using an interview-based approach, both in doing maybe a known locations as well as doing a service based, which often are paired together, just like this example, you have flexibility to change your hours a bit. We still encourage you to use those nighttime, early morning hours, but we also recognize, especially with service-based, a library during the day - great opportunity to engage people. And so, we see those open for 3 or 4, and again up to the 7 days after the PIT count, where people are asking questions in those settings about their experience on that 1st night. Right? So, in this case on the 23rd, all of that is good. You peg it all to the 23rd so, even if you're answering questions on the 27th of January, you're still asking where they were sleeping on the night of January 23rd. But you absolutely can be asking about that in those days following. So, there's nothing to say, you know, all the questions should be asked on the 23rd. That kind of negates the whole purpose of doing the service-based count. So absolutely ask those questions. Again, you can use other hours service-based, that's very common to use just about any set of hours. And then use the data there. I'm going to just suppose you have enough to do the duplication with the other counting efforts that you've done so that you just make sure you're not double counting anyone. But it's a great example. It's a good model. The one presented in the question; we want people to do stuff like that. So that's good.

48:26

Caroline Roddey: Great. Thank you so much. So, it looks like this might be, um, the end of our questions, except for this one that has actually come up a few times. And this would actually be our very last question: is delaying the PIT count an option, maybe in February, due to the inclement weather and bad storms?

48:50

William Snow: Yeah, it's a great question. So, in the PIT count, there's a section I don't know 4.6, 4.8 some section that talks about exceptions. We did a bunch of those last year with Omicron kind of staring us in the face. Most communities actually moved their count from the end of January to sometime in February. It is definitely possible. You just have a few things you got to do. You got to send an email to the email address that's in the notice. It's HICPITCounts@HUD.gov. In there you have to state what the change is, right? I want to do my count not in the last 10 days of January but doing it in the week of February 23rd. So, you need to be prepared to say when you're going to conduct counts and you need to provide the cause. What's driving the need for that change? We actually need that documentation. That's part of the exception allowance. I would also ask you to consider if the situation

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is similar. In most parts of the country, I actually can't think of anywhere where it's not, January and February, it looks about the same. Cold, it's hard to access some places, but it feels more or less the same and so just considering the circumstances around your, like, climate and what's available for services if it's similar...yes. Were I the one who reviews those, I can't remember saying no to communities that provide some sort of reason for it. There's been a few where there was no reason. I can't actually grant that if there's no reason provided, but, if, like, in California right now, where there's massive, massive flooding. Yeah, that's totally reasonable. I will take an opportunity here actually, to answer one of the other questions from Brianna and it's an interesting question around why we do this and when we do this. And this is something that comes up so quickly. There is a lot of evidence around why we do the PIT count in January. We documented that actually in the PIT count methodology guide that was released in 2014. There's nothing to suggest that there's been a change there, but some of the things we outlined there, this is not something just made up. The PIT counts are something based on research, based on tasks, practices, based on what we learned in the research field, in particular. We chose the end of January because what resulted was that was the time when we found the highest total number across the country of people experiencing homelessness. Largely because you see a larger engagement of other shelter options, get your winter shelters, so we know that the sheltered/unsheltered dynamics are going to change in every community, especially the cold communities, as was mentioned, right. In Chicago, you're probably going to have a higher unsheltered population in August than you are in January, no doubt about that. We don't question that. Part of the data that we want to look at here is the change. Right? So, we're looking for, are your numbers going up/going down as compared to the past? We tried to avoid going too far into well... Is Chicago similar to LA, are there unsheltered numbers? The same yeah, we take a look at that. Yes, but we also know LA is 30-40 degrees different than Chicago is during that same time frame. Totally understand that. There's a lot more factors actually tied into January things around, like, public engagements. The reality that nobody should be homeless ever. But, in the dead of winter, like, that's awful. That is absolutely terrible. The fact that we count 230-240, whatever the large number is we get now, for unsheltered, is atrocious. It's real. It exists. The fact that we get a number in January is awful. That's part of the reason we do it. We need people to understand. It's something that has to be addressed and it can't be hid, right? It's there. We also get a lot of public engagement. More sympathy for the people we're serving because they know this is a wretched time to be out for volunteers too. But especially people who are sleeping out there, they're not out there by choice. They're out there because they have no other options. Again, that's just kind of a sample of some of the things we share in that methodology guide statement. A lot of communities ask, it's a great question. I'd encourage you to take that statement if you're not sure. Provided it to others, let them hear it, because it's not a random decision to do it in January.

53:20

Caroline Roddey: Thank you so much and thanking everyone in the chat that's just providing some information and background information about their local communities between the East Coast, and the West Coast, which, during the winter months can look very, very different. But again, this is a national PIT count and we're just really thankful for all of you and you're planning, your participation,

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your input, and all of the really, really, incredibly hard work that you all put in to make this successful every year. I believe that is all we have time for today, and as we have put in the chat, there is a link to prior PIT count office hours as well as copies of materials. You'll also find the links to that PIT count and HIC landing page on the HUD exchange. The PIT count methodology guide, the sampling guide, the tools office hours recordings, count survey tools, as well as the link to the HUD AAQ. And again, thank you all so much for taking the time out today to be with us, to listen, to speak with us, to ask your questions, and we will see you next time. Have a good day everyone.