

POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING TOOLKIT: TRAINER’S GUIDE

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PART 1: PIT COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

Many Continuums of Care (CoCs) rely on volunteers to support their annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count efforts. Based on conversations with and feedback from communities nationwide, HUD has developed this toolkit as a response to CoCs' requests for support in training their PIT count volunteers. This document is a comprehensive guide to the resources in this toolkit and how to use them.

Please provide any feedback you might have on this toolkit and other PIT count resources your CoC would like HUD to develop through the [Ask-A-Question \(AAQ\) function](#) on the HUD Exchange.

PIT COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING TOOLKIT: LIST OF RESOURCES

The resources that make up the PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit include:

- This document: **PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit: Trainer's Guide** (PDF)
 - *This document – a guide for PIT count volunteer trainers that covers each of the toolkit resources in depth*
- **PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit: Sample Slide Deck** (PowerPoint)
 - *A sample slide deck that could be used to train your own PIT count volunteers*
- **PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit: Sample Volunteer Refresher Handout** (Word)
 - *A sample handout or handbook that provides tips and resources to volunteers conducting your PIT count*
- **PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit: Sample List of Resources** (Word)
 - *A list of potential types of local resources your CoC might consider documenting and printing off for volunteers to take with them when they conduct your PIT count*

Each of these documents is explained in detail throughout this Trainer's Guide, and each of them can be accessed and downloaded from the [PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit](#) page on the HUD Exchange.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

THIS TOOLKIT IS INTENDED TO BE:

- **Used by those responsible for training PIT count volunteers.**
- **A starting point to develop a training and other resources for PIT count volunteers.** This toolkit was developed for rural, suburban, and urban CoCs of all sizes, climates, and populations. All CoCs that choose to use it will need to change at least some details to match local circumstances and meet local needs.
- **A reference to guide updates to existing PIT count volunteer trainings and resources.** If your CoC already has developed similar tools, this toolkit may provide a refresher or further insights for consideration.

THIS TOOLKIT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE:

- **An instruction manual on how to plan or implement a PIT count.** There are many other resources available on HUD Exchange with specific guidance on PIT count planning and implementation:
 - [PIT Count Methodology Guide](#)
 - [PIT Count Standards and Methodologies Training](#)
- **Completely aligned with the way your CoC implements its PIT count.** These resources are published in editable formats because HUD expects CoCs to change them to fit your local circumstances.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

As is the case with any toolkit developed for communities across the country – each of which has its own unique size, PIT count methodology, population density, climate, character, resources, partners, etc. – there is no way to create a one-size-fits-all model. To create this toolkit, a few assumptions had to be made about how CoCs use their volunteers for the PIT count, so CoCs should carefully consider the degree to which their local circumstances do and don't fit what is documented here.

- **Customization.** HUD created this set of resources to serve as building blocks that should be customized to your CoC's practices and needs. To this end, HUD has published these tools in editable formats with the intention that communities will change and customize them. That is, they are downloadable as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint files that can easily be changed to suit your needs, rather than as PDFs. Any **red text** in these materials marks the places where you need to adjust the description and content to ensure it accurately reflects how your CoC conducts its PIT count.
- **Methodology.** To ensure consistent framing throughout this toolkit, we had to make a few PIT count methodology-related assumptions. Based on what we know about how and when CoCs tend to use volunteers, this toolkit is intended to train volunteers to conduct your unsheltered PIT count, and we assumed that volunteers will be going out on the night designated for the PIT count. All of the tips on conducting surveys, how to prepare, what to bring, and where to go are focused on counting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. If you use volunteers for any other component of your PIT count, or if your methodology differs, you should change the relevant slides in the Sample Slide Deck to reflect this.
- **Survey tools.** HUD is aware that many CoCs have created their own survey forms to use during the PIT count. As explained alongside the relevant sample slides in [Part 2](#) of this guide, the Sample Volunteer Training assumes that you use something similar to three of the [model survey tools](#) published on the HUD Exchange:
 1. The **Model Interview-Based Unsheltered Night-of Count PIT Survey** (referred to as the "General PIT Count Survey Form")
 2. The **PIT Count Youth Survey – Addendum** (referred to as the "Youth PIT Count Form")
 3. The **Model Observation-Based Unsheltered Night-of Count PIT Survey** (referred to as the "Observation Form")

If your CoC uses different surveys or forms, please pay attention to how those forms are discussed in the Sample Slide Deck. Change those discussions to reflect your local survey tool(s).

- **Documentation.** Ultimately, volunteers help with your PIT count to increase your CoC's ability to collect and report accurate PIT count data. Ensuring that volunteers' efforts translate into high-quality data starts with how they are trained to document their work. Each CoC expects different types of documentation from volunteers to ensure that they can track who completed surveys or forms, where and when they were completed, and what happened during their interactions with clients. Be sure that whatever training tools you use educate volunteers on those expectations and requirements – whether they need to number surveys, how to document any interviewees' refusals to answer questions, provide descriptions of people interviewed for deduplication later, etc.
- **Language.** Each CoC refers to the PIT count and its associated activities differently. This toolkit tends to refer to the PIT count as "the PIT count" and to the survey process using terms like "survey form," "observation-based form," and "interview." If people in your community – including those with whom your volunteers will interact – is accustomed to hearing other terms such as "tally" or "census," ensure that you cater the language in your volunteer training slide deck to use those terms.

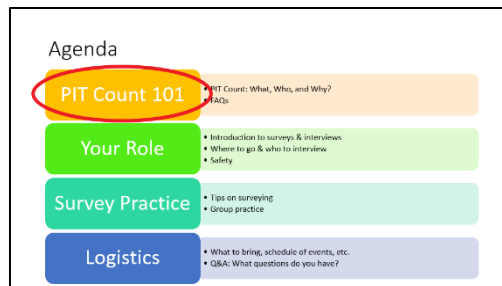
PART 2: PIT COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING SAMPLE SLIDE DECK

This toolkit includes a **PIT Count Volunteer Training Sample Slide Deck** – that is, a sample PowerPoint presentation for you to use in creating your own PIT count volunteer training. The Sample Slide Deck is intended to be used by your CoC in thinking through how to ensure your volunteer training is thorough and catered to your CoC’s geography, climate, PIT count methodology, and other regional nuances.

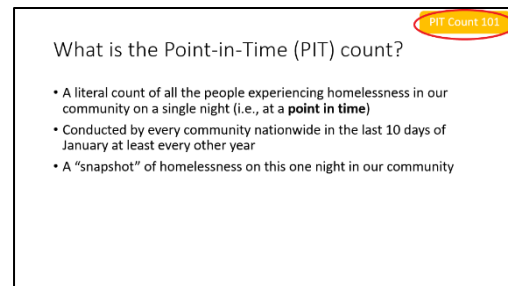
It is important to keep a few things in mind when using this resource:

- **These slides are simple in their design** so that you can customize them to your needs and preferences. Please feel free to add your own branding, graphics, colors, fonts, etc.
- **The only pieces that are intentionally color-coded are the following:**
 - The **agenda (slide 3)** breaks the training out into 4 main sections, each with a different color: PIT Count 101, Your Role, Survey Practice, and Logistics. That section name and its color appear in the upper-right-hand corner of each slide throughout the presentation to orient your viewer to where they are in the agenda. An example of how this plays out is pictured below:

Slide 3: Agenda



Slide 5: What is the PIT Count?



- Any **red text** in the PowerPoint presentation marks a place where you need to adjust the description and content to accurately reflect how your community conducts its PIT count. The sub-section below specifies which slides have red text and why, and the “notes” pane of the slide deck also provides further information.
- **The PowerPoint “Notes” pane includes details on what is intended to be covered with each slide.¹**
 - Throughout the PowerPoint slide deck, there are notes to help guide your thinking through the content on each slide before you finalize your training, as well as to assist you in phrasing and framing the content when presenting it to volunteers.
 - There are three types of notes, as distinguished by the following symbols:
 - ①: Notes that follow this symbol are **descriptions of the slide content and intentions** for your use when finalizing your PIT count volunteer training.
 - 🗨️: Notes that follow this symbol include **sample scripts to use during the training** to explain slide content.
 - 📄: Notes that follow this symbol **link to other relevant resources or references** that could assist you in developing your PIT count methodology or training.

¹ For tips on how to customize the slide deck using standard PowerPoint features, please consult **Appendix A**.

SLIDES THAT NEED LOCALLY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO BE ADDED

- **Slides 14, 16, 17, and 23:** These slides introduce the survey tools volunteers will use to conduct the PIT count. Whether your CoC uses printed survey forms or a mobile app, be sure to change these slides to include only information that relates to your CoC's PIT count methodology and the survey tools you use.

For reference, this sample slide deck assumes that there are 3 total forms that could be used on the night of the PIT count, each of which is based on HUD's model survey tools:

- **General survey form:** <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Model-Interview-Based-Unsheltered-Night-of-Count-PIT-Survey.pdf>
- **Youth survey addendum form:** <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/PIT-Count-Youth-Survey-Addendum.pdf>
 - *Note that there is also a **comprehensive youth survey form** that integrates the youth questions into the same document as the general form:*
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/PIT-Count-Youth-Survey-Comprehensive.pdf>
- **Observation-based form:** <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Model-Observation-Based-Unsheltered-Night-of-Count-PIT-Survey.pdf>
- **Slide 19:** The red text on this slide refers to incentives. That is, some CoCs offer incentives, such as gift cards, food, clothing, and warm weather gear to people experiencing homelessness while conducting the PIT count. If your CoC does not offer any incentives, you can remove this bullet point. If your CoC does offer incentives, consider adding more specific information about how, when, and in what quantities those incentives should be offered.
- **Slides 24 and 31:** It is up to your CoC to determine whether or not volunteers should wake someone who is sleeping while conducting the PIT count. The red text on these two slides speaks to that point and should be changed based on your CoC's preferred practice.
- **Slides 26-27:** These slides are placeholders for your CoC to add in maps that show volunteers how they will know where to go on the night designated for the PIT count. Slide 26 shows an example of how you could create your own map for a **hotspot or known locations methodology**, where volunteers would go to specific points within a geographic region. Slide 27 shows an example of how you could create your own map for a **complete coverage or full census of random areas methodology**, where volunteers would be asked to cover the entirety of an identified region. While HUD does not endorse the use of any specific mapping brand or software, the notes sections of these slides contain links to learn how to create your own maps for free using Google or Bing.
- **Slide 28:** This slide is a placeholder for you to add information on where volunteers should expect to go and who they should survey and count within their assigned geography.
- **Slides 31-33:** These slides should be considered a starting point for talking about safety concerns with volunteers. The red text highlights places where locally-specific information, contacts, instructions, and precautions could be added. Note that slide 32 focuses on volunteers' safety, while slide 33 focuses on the safety of those encountered in unsheltered locations.
- **Slide 42:** This slide is a placeholder for any specific logistics and timing you need to cover with volunteers. If you train volunteers before the night designated for the PIT count, you might consider including information such as:
 - The initial meeting time
 - Starting and ending locations
 - Duration of PIT count activities

- Any relevant parking or public transportation information

If you train volunteers on the night of the PIT count, you might consider including information such as:

- Duration of PIT count activities
- What volunteers should expect to do with their completed surveys at the end of the night
- **Slide 43-44:** Some CoCs – especially those with larger numbers of volunteers – divide people into strategic groups to conduct the PIT count. These slides are placeholders to make sure people understand who they will be working with on the night designated for the PIT count and any specific roles you want each team of people to have. For example, if each team will have a more experienced PIT count volunteer or staff member leading the effort, consider explaining that here. If there is a specific way volunteers should request to be in the same group as other people they know, consider covering that here.
- **Slide 45:** Use this slide to tell volunteers what to bring with them on the night designated for the PIT count. It already includes a number of best practices that may apply to your CoC, but the content should be changed to suit your geography, climate, and PIT count approach. If your CoC completes your volunteer training before the night designated for your PIT count, use this slide to go over what you want volunteers to bring with them on the night of the count. If you conduct your training on the night designated for your PIT count, communicate these points to volunteers before they arrive to ensure they dress appropriately and come prepared. If you are using a mobile app for your PIT count, be sure to ask people to bring any necessary technology (e.g., their own phones, a mobile charger, etc.) or provide them with appropriate equipment (e.g., tablets/smart phones, backup chargers, etc.). Keep in mind that cold temperatures may impact the functionality of mobile devices, and that people may require something like a stylus to complete anything on a touch screen to prioritize keeping their hands and fingers warm enough during an outdoor count in a colder climate.
- **Slide 47-48:** Some volunteers may have questions about what happens with PIT count data or how they can get involved with other efforts to end homelessness in the community. Slide 47 is a placeholder for any information you wish to share with volunteers about helping with other PIT count planning and implementation efforts. Slide 48 includes links to the *Annual Homelessness Assessment Reports* on the HUD Exchange for those volunteers interested in seeing nationwide data, as well as to the *PIT Count Methodology Guide* for those wondering about the PIT count data collection process. You may consider adding in any other local information about how and where your CoC uses or publishes PIT count data, volunteer opportunities, etc.

PART 3: PIT COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING: SAMPLE VOLUNTEER REFRESHER HANDOUT

Many CoCs put together handouts or handbooks with tips, reminders, and other instructions for volunteers to have in-hand on the night of the PIT count. This toolkit includes a **Sample Volunteer Refresher Handout** that you can use to build a handout or short handbook that is specific to your CoC's PIT count methodology, climate, geography, and other factors.

HUD recommends that a refresher handout be provided to volunteers *after* the training, as reference sheets or guides. It should *not* function as a replacement for a full volunteer training.

When developing your own volunteer handout or handbook, think through how you want volunteers to use it, and structure its format and page length accordingly. Do you want volunteers to review it prior to leaving their starting point to conduct the PIT count? Do you want them to carry it with them on foot while canvassing part of your CoC? The **Sample Volunteer Refresher Handout** is formatted to be a single-sided handout that volunteers can review or take with them during the PIT count. You may consider including some or all the following in your own version:

- **Reminders of what to do and what not to do while conducting the PIT count.** These may include a “dos and don’ts” list or some recommendations for how to approach people and start conversations.
- **Instructions for completing surveys and/or observation forms.** Consider including information about how to complete an interview in general, and include any necessary information related to the actual paper forms and/or mobile surveys, depending on your methodology.
 - For paper surveys: Aside from question responses, what should volunteers note on their sheets? Time? Location? Any specific physical description of the person interviewed?
- **A list of what to bring with them on the night of the count.** This might include weather- and temperature-specific recommendations, clothing and suggestions, etc.
- **Instructions for how to use any maps you use to show volunteers where to go.** Ensure that volunteers know where to go on the night of the PIT count, including:
 - How do they know where to go or what part of the map is in their catchment area?
 - Are there any areas to avoid? If so, how are those marked on their maps?
- **Safety precautions and protocols.** Include important safety tips, as well as contact information for staff who are reachable on the night of the count.
- **Timelines, agendas, and other logistical instructions.** This might include:
 - Parking information (including parking validation, if applicable)
 - Where to go and when at the start of the night
 - Where to go, what to do with information collected, and when at the end of the night
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Your CoC may already have a list of PIT count FAQs, and those FAQs may change or expand from year to year. Below are several to consider answering:
 - What if there’s bad weather?
 - Can I bring a friend?
 - Where should I park?
 - When and where should I arrive?
 - Where are the bathrooms?
 - Who will be on my team?
 - Will we be in contact with any staff while conducting the PIT count?
 - What do I say to the people I encounter during the PIT count?
 - What kinds of places will we go to find people experiencing homelessness?
 - Will I be safe as a PIT count volunteer?
 - Why are we doing the PIT count?
 - Why is the PIT count in January?
 - Why aren’t all people experiencing homelessness in shelters?
 - What is our state/county/community doing to end homelessness?

PART 4: PIT COUNT VOLUNTEER TRAINING: SAMPLE LIST OF RESOURCES & SAMPLE RESOURCES HANDOUTS

Many communities send PIT count volunteers out with resource sheets to use with or hand out to anyone in need of immediate assistance, general services, or specific resources. This toolkit includes a Sample List of Resources document, which lists a variety of types of resources you might include on this type of quick-reference sheet, as well as few nationwide resources, such as hotlines.

Keep the following in mind if you choose to create a resource page for your CoC's PIT count volunteers:

- **List any services or resources that might be helpful to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and that are specific to the community or communities your CoC serves.** Some of the items included on the Sample List of Resources page may not exist in your community, and there may be other options in your area that are not in the sample. Regardless, ensure that you include the most relevant options available. Consult with people with lived experiences of homelessness to hear what they would include or exclude from such a list.
- **Format resource lists to fit on a single page or smaller.** This will make it easier for your volunteers to hand out to folks, or to navigate themselves if they need to call one of the resources, rather than fumbling through a multi-page document. Some CoCs also create card-sized resource lists with a few key contacts, such as coordinated entry access points and weather-related shelters and centers.

Note: The [PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit](#) page on the HUD Exchange includes four pre-formatted sample resource handouts in the following sizes:

- Full Page (8.5" x 11" each – one per page)
 - Half Page (5.5" x 8.5" – two per page)
 - Postcard (5.5" x 4.25" – four per page)
 - Business Card (3.5" x 2" – eight per page)
- **Include key details about each resource.** These will help people figure out when and how to access services and resources listed. Such details might include:
 - Resource name
 - Services offered
 - Address
 - Hours
 - Phone number / website
 - Any special instructions that might help someone access services (e.g., "walk-ins welcome on Tuesdays and Thursdays" or "call between 8-10am to set a same-day appointment")

PART 5: ADDITIONAL PIT COUNT RESOURCES

In addition to this [PIT Count Volunteer Training Toolkit](#), HUD offers a range of other resources to assist CoCs with planning, implementing, and reporting on their PIT counts.

CoCs should start by exploring the [PIT and HIC Guides, Tools, and Webinars](#) page on the HUD Exchange, which includes quick links to all of HUD's PIT count resources, including:

- [PIT Count Methodology Guide](#), which CoCs should read thoroughly to develop and continue to refine their PIT count processes
- [PIT Count Standards & Methodologies Online Training](#), which walks through the basics of the *Methodology Guide*
- The annual **HUD Notice for Housing Inventory Count and PIT Count Data Collection**, which details the data reporting requirements for the upcoming PIT count
 - Webinars that cover any changes to the annual Notice are also accessible here
- [PIT Count Implementation Tools page](#), which houses the PIT Count Data Extrapolation Tool, the Sheltered PIT Count and HMIS Data Element Crosswalks, the PIT Count Planning Worksheet, and a brief with tips for including people experiencing homelessness in PIT count planning efforts
- [PIT Count Survey Tools](#) for HUD-approved survey models that CoCs can choose to use when conducting PIT counts
- Recordings of all [PIT Count Methodology Office Hours](#) calls that HUD has hosted, which usually include a topic of focus and open Q&A discussion with CoCs on anything related to the PIT count
- [Resources for Counting Specific Populations page](#), which provides guidance on counting youth and survivors of domestic violence, as well as working with other mainstream systems, such as schools
- [PIT and HIC data since 2007](#), which can be downloaded by CoC or by state
- HUD's official **PIT count posters & social media images files**, published in advance of odd-numbered years' PIT counts

The HUD Exchange also houses a number of FAQ collections. The PIT count FAQs are located in the [HDX FAQ collection](#). Filter for "PIT" questions on the left-hand panel of the page.

For inquiries that are not answered by the above resources, CoCs can submit a question through the [Ask A Question](#) desk, and someone will reply with an answer specific to the issue at hand.

APPENDIX A: POWERPOINT FEATURES & SUPPORT

Microsoft PowerPoint includes a wide range of features to display your information in a user-friendly and engaging way. In the **PIT Count Volunteer Training Sample Slide Deck**, we use speaker notes, SmartArt graphics, and free online photo and image sources to enhance the presentation. If you are new to these features or want to continue learning how to create and edit them, the links below lead to online training and support resources to help.

- [Create speaker notes](#). This link leads to a page that includes a video and visual instructions that teach how to find, use, and edit notes in a PowerPoint presentation. Each slide in the **PIT Count Volunteer Training Sample Slide Deck** contains notes to help guide your presentation. To add context, the following symbols are used to show three different types of notes:
 - ⓘ: Notes that follow this symbol are **descriptions of the slide content and intentions** for your use when finalizing your PIT count volunteer training.
 - 🗨️: Notes that follow this symbol include **sample scripts to use during the training** to explain slide content.
 - 📄: Notes that follow this symbol **link to other relevant resources or references** that could assist you in developing your PIT count methodology or training.
- [Create and change SmartArt](#). This link leads to a page with a video and visual instructions on how to create and change SmartArt. Many of the text graphics in the **PIT Count Volunteer Training Sample Slide Deck** were created using SmartArt. This resource can help you sort through how to edit them or create new ones.
- [Add a picture to a SmartArt graphic](#) or [add pictures to slides](#). Many of the SmartArt graphics in the **PIT Count Volunteer Training Sample Slide Deck** were created using features that allow users to add in images or pictures to the graphic. All of the images used in the slide deck are available through the “Online Pictures” search feature, and they are all available in the Creative Commons – meaning they do not require special legal permission for use. The images used in the slide deck can be easily deleted and replaced with others that you choose. Additionally, you can use the same online photo collection to add images into new SmartArt graphics you create or as general images on your slides. The links above provide visual, written, and video guidance on how to use picture-related features on SmartArt graphics and in general.