

# 2026 Point in Time (PIT) Count

MA Balance of State CoC  
MA-516

- Please put the following in the chat:
  - Name
  - Email
  - City/town(s) in which you are conducting PIT
  - How you are participating
    - (e.g. Going out with ABCD team night of Jan 28 to conduct surveys, etc)

# Agenda

- Overview of the Point in Time count
- Successful practices to keep in mind
- VESTAcourt
  - How to use app
  - Review of questions you will be asking
- FYI we will be recording this training

# Unsheltered Count

- This training is focused on the unsheltered component of the PIT Count
- Unsheltered PIT aims to count households in the following locations:
  - Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (on street, encampment, vehicle, etc)
  - Warming Centers that do not have beds, cots, or mats (i.e. centers with chairs)

# Sheltered Count


- Individuals in the locations below should be counted as part of the sheltered component of the PIT Count. If you operate one of the below projects and do not have a VESTA or ETO project, please contact Laura Robertson about next steps ([laura.robertson@mass.gov](mailto:laura.robertson@mass.gov))
  - Emergency shelter
  - Transitional housing projects in line with HUD TH definition
  - Safe havens
  - Warming centers with beds/cots/mats
- Again, if you're working with households in the above locations, the following slides won't pertain to you.

# PIT Overview

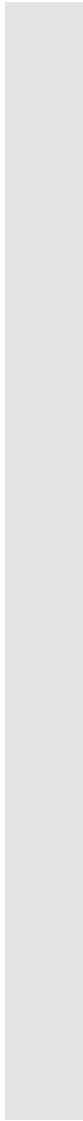
- "HUD deems most important the quality and accuracy of the count as opposed to merely the size of the count."
  - The PIT aims to get a broad picture of homelessness, not just the number people experiencing homelessness
  - Data from the PIT informs policy decisions at federal and local levels
- The ask is that you complete a PIT form for everyone you encounter on the night of the count
  - The information HUD wants is captured through the questions on the PIT survey (also called Interview form)
  - Unless it is not possible for a specific reason, please ask everyone you encounter if they're open to answering the survey questions
- Data shared back to HUD is aggregated, so we don't share individual responses. The PII we collect for deduplication purposes is not shared with HUD.

# Individual's right to answer

- Please always ask for people to participate, but if they don't want to complete the interview, don't push
- If someone agrees to answer questions, please ask every question. If they don't want to answer a specific question though, don't push
  - Answer options if the individual doesn't know or refuses to answer a question



2026 PIT is the night of  
Wednesday, January 28th



# When to conduct the Count

- Balance of State (and most surrounding CoCs) are conducting the PIT the night of Wednesday, January 28th
  - This means the night of Wed 1/28 into the early morning of Thursday 1/29
  - All surveys must reflect where individuals stayed on this specific night
  - Teams going out to conduct count during the night – please plan to do so when you are confident that individuals have settled into where they are staying for the night (no earlier than 10pm)
- When to conduct count
  - Threading the needle of finding a time when individuals have settled into where they are staying for night, but are awake to answer questions
- If you find you are asking "Where do you plan to sleep tonight?", you are conducting interviews too early!

# Making your teams

- If at all possible, aim to have a Street Outreach (SO) staff who works in the area on each team
  - SO staff have relationships with individuals you will be encountering. The best case scenario is that it's not a stranger approaching someone where they are staying for the night
  - SO staff have experience with how to do this work, including how to approach someone they don't know
  - If your team encounters someone they cannot talk to in the moment (e.g. asleep, aren't willing to answer questions, etc), SO staff may know who they are and be able to complete an observation form with their name. This allows us to get info from HMIS as opposed to just submitting an anonymous observation form
- Keep groups small so as not to be intimidating (2-3 ppl), but **always make sure there are at least 2 ppl in each group**

# VESTAcount

- This year we are using an app, not paper forms (!)
- Created by PCL, our HMIS vendor that manages VESTA
- Links up to VESTA so it can do cool things like:
  - Preload info for clients already in VESTA
  - Make de-duplication easier
  - Create encounters for clients in SO projects

# Different Forms

- Previously we had two different paper forms:
  - **Interview form** – A form with questions to ask someone you encounter the night of the PIT. This is the default form we want PIT volunteers to complete unless there is a clear reason you cannot ask someone the questions.
  - **Observation form** – Short form that is used only when you cannot complete interview form for specific reason (individual refused to participate or is asleep, situation unsafe, etc)
- These forms are within VESTAcount, but the app will automatically direct you based on some initial questions
- Theme still remains – please make all efforts to engage people and ask them the PIT survey questions

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## Service-based forms

- Ideally all PIT forms are completed on the night of the PIT
- If that's not possible for your community and you work in a service setting like a drop-in day center or soup kitchen, you can complete interview forms in the seven days following the PIT if clients coming in report they were outside on the night of the PIT
  - Important note: Forms still need to capture where individual stayed on night of January 28th
  - If we receive a large number of observation forms from the night of the count, we won't be able to use forms completed in the seven days after. This is because we cannot ensure deduplication
- Service-based forms must be completed after the night of the PIT so you can ask definitively where someone stayed, not where they are planning to stay
- If you plan to complete service-based forms, please email me now to let me know

# Street Outreach teams in the week after the PIT

- SO Teams – please follow up with folks in your Street Outreach project who you didn't encounter on night of the PIT. If they were staying in a place not meant for human habitation in our CoC on the night of the count, please log into VESTAcount and create a record for them.

Locations  
we're looking  
for help  
covering

- Belmont
- Saugus
- Watertown
- Woburn

## Misc. notes

- As you are planning and going over logistics with your team, please be sure to discuss safety protocols.
  - Always make sure people are going out in teams, never alone
  - If anyone feels unsafe, leave the situation immediately and when in safe location complete observation form to best of your ability
- Give your clients a heads up that the PIT is happening
  - "Just wanted to let you know we're going to be out tonight, don't be concerned if you see us or some other teams out"
- If we need to reschedule the PIT due to extreme weather, I will send email
- Will email slides to everyone who attended today who put their email in chat
- If you have questions on the night of the count, please call me at (617) 573-1461 or email me at [chris.moskal@mass.gov](mailto:chris.moskal@mass.gov)