

2024 Point-In-Time: Volunteer Guide



As a volunteer, you have an important and challenging role. PIT Count surveys must be delivered accurately, respectfully, and in a timely fashion. It's important for everyone to feel comfortable, safe, and respected.



An Effective Volunteer Will:

Be Objective	Approach people without bias. Avoid inserting your own views or expectations into the survey process. Be friendly but remain neutral.
Have Patience	Do your best to remain calm and understanding during the survey. Ask a seasoned volunteer for help or advice if needed.
Communicate Clearly	Ask questions clearly and listen thoughtfully to the responses of participants. Consider how their answer best fits with the response options on the survey.
Respect Confidentiality	Do not share any personal information that you hear with your friends, family, or co-workers.
Show Compassion	Keep in mind, homelessness is a difficult and trying situation. Try to show compassion but avoid becoming overly personal with participants.
Be Detail-Orientated	Follow the survey instructions and questions as written.

DO:

- ✓ Ask a person to participate if you think they are homeless
- ✓ Introduce yourself & explain what you are doing
- ✓ Be sincere and caring
- ✓ Remain calm
- ✓ Know how to de-escalate
- ✓ Know emergency numbers
- ✓ Know appropriate distance
- ✓ Honor requests to not participate
- ✓ Dress appropriately
- ✓ Leave valuables behind

DON'T:

- ✓ Wake up someone
- ✓ Approach if you don't feel comfortable
- ✓ Mandate participation
- ✓ Invade personal space
- ✓ Cross barriers
- ✓ Promise anything you can't deliver
- ✓ Be judgmental
- ✓ Share any confidential info or photos of participants
- ✓ Panic
- ✓ Put anyone in danger
- ✓ Deviate from the survey

- Always Be Aware of Your Surroundings -

Pay close attention to the body language of everyone nearby. If you feel uncomfortable, nervous, or threatened, remove yourself from the situation.

Steps to Administering a Survey:

- 1. Identify yourself and explain the purpose of the count.**
- 2. Deliver your script and obtain verbal consent to proceed.**

Sample Script & Consent

You must ask the people you approach if they are willing to participate in the survey.

Assure survey participants the information they are providing is strictly confidential and their participation is voluntary. Make sure they understand all responses are confidential and explain that all the survey responses will be combined together. No information will be released about a single person and will only be seen by coordinators of the count so they can put together summary statewide data. Privacy will be protected and respected.



“Hello, my name is _____, and I am helping _____ conduct a short survey of our community. We would like to learn more about people experiencing homelessness, what kinds of problems they face, and what services they may need. If questions, make you uncomfortable you do not have to answer them. Your answers will not affect the services you receive. Would you be willing to take a few minutes to answer some questions?”

The script serves to introduce you, your role as a volunteer and the purpose of the PIT Count. You should also practice saying it in a way that is comfortable for you, as you will need to say it multiple times.

3. Ask the screening questions to determine if you should proceed.

If you can't easily determine if an individual is experiencing homelessness, ask the individual, **“Where are you sleeping tonight?”** Literally homeless locations: sleeping on streets, sidewalk, car, campsite, abandoned building, under bridge, etc. Only complete the survey with those that are eligible to participate.

4. If eligible, then proceed with the survey.

Be respectful and courteous by:

- Avoiding judgement
- Showing participants that you're interested in what they say.
- Maintaining eye contact and having openbody contact.
- Using familiar, everyday language that will be easily understood.
- Ask questions as written but provide clarification if they have questions.



Asking Sensitive or “Obvious” Questions:

There are a few questions that could be sensitive or obvious, (like questions about gender and ethnicity). **Do not assume anything.** If you are uncomfortable asking certain questions, you may want to say something like:

“I need to ask every person the same exact questions, using the same language. Some questions may seem like the answers are obvious, but we don’t want to make any assumptions.”

Remember: An individual can refuse to participate in the survey at any time. If you have already completed part of the survey, respect their decision to stop and fill in the rest of the survey with the “Refused” response options.

5. Thank them for their participation. If appropriate, provide additional resources.

