NORTH DAKOTA CoC CONTINUUM OF CARE

ND Continuum of Care

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT
JANUARY 2026

1

Agenda

▶ Overview of the Point-in-Time Count

▶ Sheltered/Unsheltered Count Process

▶ Unsheltered Survey

▶ Regional Lead Responsibilities

▶ Tools and Resources

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

2

Introduction to the Point-in-Time Count

3

What is a Point-in-Time Count?

▶ A snapshot of sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness on a single night in January

▶ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires an annual count during odd-numbered years as a condition of CoC funding and other funding sources

▶ North Dakota CoC conducts one count annually in January and another count during the summer

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

4

—

Why Count?

▶ Data is critical to planning and performance management toward the goal of ending homelessness

▶ Used in federal and local funding decisions

▶ Counting people living in unsheltered situations helps ensure people with the highest needs are considered for community and state planning

▶ Helps connect people with services

**NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE**

5

Who to Count

▶ Unsheltered Homeless Definition

▶ "Individuals and families with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground"

**NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE**

6

Who NOT to Count

- People in uniforms (e.g., security guards, maintenance people, construction workers)
- People who appear to be engaged in illegal activities (e.g., selling drugs or engaged in prostitution)
- People conducting commercial transactions (e.g., delivery people)
- People who are obviously not homeless (e.g., leaving an office building late at night)
- People residing in institutions (e.g., jails, juvenile correction facilities, foster homes, hospitals, in-patient treatment centers)

NORTH DAKOTA
C♥C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

7

Persons NOT Included in the PIT Count

- Persons residing in permanent supportive housing programs or other permanent housing
- Persons temporarily staying with family or friends
- Persons residing in housing they rent or own

NORTH DAKOTA
C♥C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

8

Other Types of Housing Situations

- ▶ 'Doubled-Up' or 'Couch Surfing' Populations
  - ▶ Persons staying with family or friends do not get reported to HUD during this time
  - ▶ Data collection on doubled-up or couch surfing individuals is permitted but is not the primary focus
- ▶ Hotel/Motel
  - ▶ If a location is being paid for by a social service agency, notify ICA as soon as possible, as they may be counted on the Sheltered Count

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

9

Why January?

- ▶ Count data may be more accurate because only people who are the most reluctant or unable to access emergency shelter or other crisis response assistance will be unsheltered
- ▶ Recruitment of volunteers and donations can be easier because the public is more inclined to help people living in unsheltered situations during the coldest time of the year
- ▶ CoCs have time to report to HUD before the CoC program competition

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

10

PIT Count Timeline

- Training webinars
  - Unsheltered Training
    - Tuesday, January 20, 10 a.m.
    - Wednesday, January 21, 2 p.m.
  - Sheltered Training
    - Thursday, January 22, 9 a.m. – HMIS Participating Providers Only
    - Monday, January 26, 1 p.m. – Non-HMIS Participating Providers, Including Domestic Violence Providers
- January 28: PIT Count portal opens
- January 29-February 4: Service counts
- February 13: Unsheltered PIT Survey Deadline

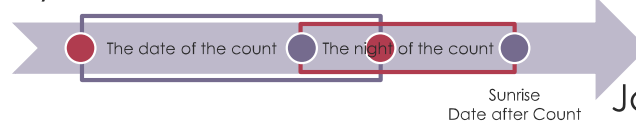NORTH DAKOTA
CₐC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

11

Street Count

January 28, 2026

Sunset
Date of Count

The date of the count   The night of the count

Sunrise
Date after Count

January 29, 2026

- January 28, 2026: "Where **will** you sleep tonight?"
- January 29, 2026: "Where **did** you sleep last night?

NORTH DAKOTA
CₐC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

12

Sheltered/Unsheltered Count Process

13

Sheltered vs. Unsheltered

- Sheltered Count
  - Counts people living in a supervised public or private operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements
  - Reports on agencies funded and unfunded
  - Relies on agencies entering accurately into HMIS
- Unsheltered Count
  - Counts people who are living in places not meant for human habitation
  - Collects self-reported or observed data from the person completing a survey
  - Relies on volunteers, local leaders, and community coordination to complete surveys
  - Can include people who are "doubled-up", but this is not our focus and they will not be reported to HUD

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

14

Sheltered Count Process Overview

- ▶ ICA will administer the Sheltered Point-in-Time Count
  - ▶ Separate trainings are being offered
  - ▶ ICA will meet with each agency to collect the appropriate data

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

15

Unsheltered Count

- ▶ Multiple methods are used
  - ▶ Street count
    - ▶ Interview
    - ▶ Observation
  - ▶ Service-based count
    - ▶ In-person
    - ▶ Phone
- ▶ Regional leads coordinate volunteers to perform the survey and ensure they are completed accurately and submitted in HMIS on-time.
- ▶ Web-based survey helps quickly submit data. Paper forms will be made available if internet service is not available in remote areas.

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

16

Street Count

- Ask persons with lived experience or that were formerly homeless for ideas on where to look
- Ask local law enforcement to help locate areas where individuals or families experiencing homelessness stay
- Contact local hospitals prior to the count and talk with the social worker on staff
- Compile a list of locations with the help of other local service providers
- Ask school district liaisons for ideas on where to locate families experiencing homelessness (assure them privacy is respected)

NORTH DAKOTA
CONTINUUM OF CARE

17

Street Count

- Foreclosed homes/homes for sale
- Campgrounds
- Riverbanks/levees/under bridges
- Cemeteries
- Wooded areas
- Abandoned buildings
- Truck stops
- Gas stations
- 24-hour stores
- Meal distribution centers
- Empty storage units

- Parks
- Parking lots/sheds
- Cars
- Rest stops
- Public transit areas
- Hotels and motels
- Libraries
- Local landmarks
- Emergency rooms
- Post Office

NORTH DAKOTA
CONTINUUM OF CARE

18

Street Count through Interview

- More thorough and preferred to observation-only counts
- Interview gives more information about unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Information MUST be collected for all members of a household
- Better data – helps avoid duplication and better differentiates people who are chronically homeless and those who are not

NORTH DAKOTA
CₒC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

19

Street Count Interview Example

Volunteers approach a person who appears to be living in their car at a 24-hour rest stop. They explain that the survey is optional and will take about ten minutes. The person says they will answer questions if they do not have to give their full name. The volunteers explain to the person that all questions are optional, and that no specific identifying information will be collected. After they answer all the questions, the volunteer will thank them for their time.

NORTH DAKOTA
CₒC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

20

Street Count through Observation

▶ Only used when interview is not possible

▶ Easy to gather and results are easy to summarize

▶ Does not provide comprehensive, in-depth information

▶ Volunteers should record as much information as possible about physical description and location to help with de-duplication

▶ May only occur on the night of the count

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

21

Observation Example

Volunteers approach an individual appearing to wake up in the city park. The volunteers explain the survey is voluntary and will only take a few minutes. The person says they are not interested in answering any questions. The volunteers thank them and completes only demographic portions of the survey that can be observed.

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

22

Service-based Count

▶ Organizations that do not provide overnight beds but may work with people experiencing homelessness

▶ May only be conducted in the 7 days following the count (January 29-February 4, 2026)

▶ Must include an interview that confirms the person was homeless on the night of the count

　▶ January 29-February 4: "Where did you sleep the night of January 28, 2026?"

NORTH DAKOTA
C❂C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

23

Service-based Count Example

Volunteers know of a food pantry that takes place the last Thursday during January at a local church. A week prior to the count, they explain the purpose of the Point-in-Time Count and ask if food pantry staff would be willing to watch the training webinar and use the online survey tool to interview clients. The food pantry staff agree to survey attendees with the Point-in-Time Count survey.

NORTH DAKOTA
C❂C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

24

Service-based Count with Phone Interview

▶ Organizations that do not provide overnight beds contact clients during the count to confirm housing status and conduct the survey

▶ The client must report they were homeless on the night of the count

▶ Less preferred than other methods

NORTH DAKOTA
CONTINUUM OF CARE

25

Service-based Count with Phone Interview Example

A caseworker regularly works with three clients who live in unsheltered situations. During the service-based count period, the caseworker contacts them over the phone and asks them to participate in the Point-in-Time Count survey.

One client reports they were able to stay with friends or family on the night of the count, so the caseworker completes all sections of the survey as completely as possible.

The second client reports they slept in a tent at a campground on the night of the count, so the caseworker completes all sections of the survey as completely as possible.

The caseworker was unable to contact the third client during the service-based count period, so that client's information is not included in the PIT Count.

NORTH DAKOTA
CONTINUUM OF CARE

26

Service-based Count Location Examples

- ▶ Drop-in centers
- ▶ Street outreach teams
- ▶ Soup kitchens
- ▶ Warming shelters
- ▶ Day shelters
- ▶ Food pantries
- ▶ Community Action Agencies

- ▶ Health & Human Services
- ▶ Libraries
- ▶ Hospitals/health care settings
- ▶ Day labor sites
- ▶ Employment centers
- ▶ Churches/religious institutions

27

Completing an Accurate Survey

- ▶ Complete all survey questions as thoroughly as possible
  - ▶ All questions should be read to participants. Volunteers should help answer any questions the participant has about the survey.
  - ▶ Some survey questions are difficult to ask and answer, volunteers should ask all questions instead of skipping. Only skip questions when the survey participant declines to answer.
- ▶ If people decline to answer a question or don't know, indicate as such
- ▶ When completing an observation survey, please be as detailed as possible without making assumptions
- ▶ If this survey is conducted via phone by a social service agency with clients they know to be homeless, please indicate as "service-based" on the portal/paper form

28

Survey Tools

- ▶ Web-based survey created by ICA
- ▶ Paper surveys
  - ▶ All paper surveys must be entered into the HMIS portal by volunteers and/or regional leads

NORTH DAKOTA
COC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

29

Regional Lead Responsibilities

30

Regional Lead Responsibilities

▶ Regional leads are responsible for PIT Count data collection and submission for their region

▶ Duties:
  ▶ Build a network of volunteer teams
  ▶ Train volunteers to accurately complete surveys
  ▶ Map out areas to conduct the count and assign volunteer teams to those areas to reduce risk of duplication
  ▶ Coordinate with agencies for "service-based" portion
  ▶ Act as the primary contact for volunteers in your community
  ▶ Submit any paper copies through the HMIS PIT Count Portal

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

31

Optional Regional Lead Responsibilities

▶ Regional leads are encouraged to use additional resources to facilitate great PIT Count participation

▶ Examples of effective optional responsibilities include:
  ▶ Coordinating donation distributions
  ▶ Creating local resource sheets to hand out during the count
  ▶ Verifying what local services are available the night of the count
  ▶ Working with the community to collect any additional data important to local providers

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

32

Volunteer Recruitment

- Recruitment methods
  - Social media
  - Traditional media
- If volunteers can't help the night of the count, they may be able to help with other preparations including:
  - Soliciting donations (i.e., blankets, items for hygiene kits, snacks, bottles of water, etc.)
  - Preparing hygiene kits for distribution
  - Creating maps or resource guides
  - Reaching out to other agencies to request volunteers
  - Entering paper form data in the portal after the count

NORTH DAKOTA
C❤C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

33

Where to Solicit Volunteers/Partners

- Colleges/Universities
- People with lived experience
- Local government
- School district homeless liaisons
- Public assistance offices
- Outreach workers
- Local law enforcement
- Churches

- Friends and family
- Social service agencies
- Detox programs
- Local businesses
- Food banks/soup kitchens
- Community development organizations
- Other community groups

NORTH DAKOTA
C❤C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

34

Volunteer Training

▶ Focus on understanding and objectiveness when conducting the survey

  ▶ Emphasize the importance of being respectful and keeping information confidential

▶ Stress a "no assumption approach" when asking survey questions

▶ Give volunteers a single-point of contact for questions and guidance (regional lead)

▶ Supply volunteers with local resources to assist individuals they meet, for example:

  ▶ Resource sheet/guide

  ▶ Contact information for local homeless organizations and coordinated entry front doors (if applicable)

  ▶ Donated supplies/resources (if applicable)

35

What Volunteers May Need

▶ Flashlight

▶ Cell phone

▶ List of phone numbers (regional lead, other volunteers)

▶ Survey instructions

▶ Tablet, smartphone, or other electronic device, or paper copies of the form

▶ Details and map of what areas they will be counting

▶ Comfortable shoes/warm clothing

▶ Bottled water and snacks

▶ Local resource sheet and donations (if applicable) to hand out

36

Safety

► The personal safety of volunteers and survey participants is extremely important and our top priority!

  ► Always work in teams, never alone
  ► Use caution when approaching camps
  ► Announce yourself and explain what you are doing
  ► Do not trespass or enter a structure/tent
  ► Be aware of exit routes
  ► If law enforcement in your area has positive relationships with people experiencing homelessness, ask law enforcement officers to accompany you during the count
  ► Avoid people you suspect are engaged in illegal activity
  ► Avoid bad weather
  ► Trust your gut

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

37

Privacy and Confidentiality

► Paper surveys should be kept in locked and secure locations following the count
► Paper surveys should be retained until PIT count data is submitted to HUD
► Paper surveys should be shredded and securely disposed of following submission of PIT count data to HUD

NORTH DAKOTA
C●C
CONTINUUM OF CARE

38

Contact Information – Regional Leads

► Region 1, Williston: <u>Shawnel Willer</u>, (701) 328-8080

► Region 2, Minot: <u>Christy Miller</u>, (701) 839-2994

► Region 3, Devils Lake: <u>Kristie Tollefson</u>, (701) 665-2276 and (701) 381-8131

► Region 4, Grand Forks: <u>Jaime Zuniga</u>, (701) 792-2880

► Region 5, Fargo: <u>Chandler Esslinger</u>, (701) 936-7171, or <u>Sara Wiederholt</u>, (701) 461-7361

► Region 6, Jamestown: <u>Mike Weatherly</u>, (701) 253-6300

► Region 7, Bismarck: <u>Renae Moch</u>, (701) 355-1540

► Region 8, Dickinson: <u>Heather Ingman</u>, (701) 255-4506

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

39

Reminders

40

Important Dates

▶ January 28-29: Street count and sheltered count occurs

▶ January 29-February 4: Service-based count occurs

▶ Post January 29: Regional leads and volunteers enter data from paper surveys into PIT count online survey platform as quickly as possible

▶ February 13: Deadline for surveys to be entered in the portal

▶ Spring 2026: PIT count data submitted to HUD

▶ Summer 2026: Summer PIT count (more information to come)

▶ Summer/Fall 2026: Final CoC PIT count report available

41

Other Reminders

▶ Volunteer recruitment, training, and coordination are the responsibility of regional leads

▶ Surveys must be completed, or we cannot use data for HUD quality purposes (if the participant declines to answer, indicate as such)

▶ "Doubled up" populations are not the focus of this count, but can be used in regional/state planning

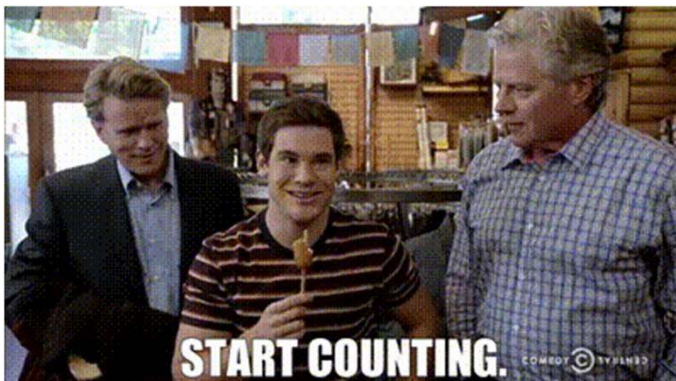▶ STAY SAFE! Go in teams, never go alone, and trust your gut

42

Contact Information

Shawnel Willer, ND CoC Coordinator
smwiller@nd.gov

Christina Morris, ICA
christina.morris@icalliances.org

NORTH DAKOTA
CoC
CONTINUUM OF CARE

43

Thank you,
stay safe,
and start
counting!

CONTINUUM OF CARE

44