



Point in Time Count Volunteer FAQ

1. What is the Point in Time Count and why is it important?

The purpose of the Point in Time Count (PIT Count) is to obtain a snapshot census of people experiencing homelessness in Kalamazoo County on a single night. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities to conduct the PIT Count and uses that information to inform the Annual Homeless Assessment Report, a yearly report to the U.S. Congress. The data gathered from the PIT Count also helps us better understand who is experiencing homelessness in our community, receive local, state, and federal assistance, and strategize the best ways to use our resources to end homelessness.

2. Who is counted in the Point in Time Count?

The Point in Time Count includes a sheltered count and an unsheltered count.

- The sheltered count includes all individuals and families who are residing in a place dedicated to serving people who are homeless and would otherwise be unsheltered, including emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.
- The unsheltered count includes all individuals and families whose primary nighttime residence is a place not meant for human habitation, including tents, cars, parks, camping grounds, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, parking lots, and other areas. Volunteers will assist with the unsheltered portion of the count.

3. What is the Continuum of Care?

The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care is a planning body designed to promote the communitywide commitment to ending homelessness.

Our vision: A county where everyone has equitable access to safe, affordable, dignified housing.

Our mission: To convene partners to improve communication and services, advocate for equitable solutions to end homelessness, and leverage state, local, and federal resources to implement a county-wide Plan to End Homelessness.

4. Why do people experience unsheltered homelessness?

There are several reasons people experience unsheltered homelessness including, but not limited to, a lack of adequate housing, lack of adequate shelter, lack of shelter options, or personal preference.



5. Do I need any special skills or experience to volunteer for the Point in Time Count?

- Personal lived experience with homelessness or experience working in homeless services or with vulnerable populations is an asset but not a requirement
- Adaptable and comfortable talking to strangers
- Friendly, positive, open-minded, and non-judgmental attitude
- Desire to help
- Ability to walk diverse terrains
- Ability to walk several miles in cold weather
- Ability to complete paper survey and observation forms to collect information
- Respectful of team members and the people you encounter; willingness to meet people where they are
- Respectful of individual privacy and autonomy

6. What should I expect on the night of the Count?

On the night of the Point in Time Count, you will be surveying and observing (canvassing) assigned areas of the county in teams by vehicle and/or foot to locate individuals who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This may include check points that have been established throughout the County specifically for the PIT Count. The CoC will provide flashlights, clipboards, surveys, pens, resource guides, and incentives for respondents. An experienced homeless services worker will lead each team.

You should expect to have fun interacting with other volunteers and meeting your unhoused neighbors. You should also be prepared to meet vulnerable people where they are at, and be respectful of the fact that, in some cases, you will be interrupting them in their home environment. You may encounter real-life situations including people who are sleeping, using alcohol or other substances, or who are uninterested in speaking to you. All individuals you encounter should be treated with dignity and respect and have their privacy safeguarded.

7. How should I prepare for the Point in Time Count?

- Dress warmly in something comfortable
- Wear practical shoes (You may be stepping in mud and/or dirt)
- Take the required training (dates listed in volunteer sign up)
- Arrive at the United Way of Southwest Michigan (UWSCMI) 708 S. Westnedge Thursday January 23rd, 2025, between 6:15pm and 6:30pm.

8. Do I need heavy shoes?



Yes. Please wear shoes that are durable and will withstand the elements, dirt, and mud.

9. Will I be going to any locations on my own?

No. Everyone will be working in teams.

10. Will I see drugs, alcohol, or related paraphernalia?

Yes, there is a possibility you will see drugs, alcohol, or related paraphernalia.

11. Where will I be counting?

The Point in Time Count takes place throughout Kalamazoo County. Each team will be given their location assignment the night of the count.

12. What protocols will be in place to ensure the health and safety of participants and unhoused residents?

- You will be in teams, led by an experienced homeless service provider
- Flashlights and clipboards will be provided by the CoC
- No weapons of any kind (including pepper spray) will be allowed by any volunteer
- All volunteers will complete a brief COVID-19 screening questionnaire
- We recommend masking while conducting interviews
- Additional safety principles will be covered in more depth during the required training.