

## **Recommendations to Enhance the Point-In-Time Homeless Street Count**

In an effort to make improvements to the annual point-in-time (PIT) homeless street count, a working group was created and was charged with researching PIT methodology and developing recommendations. The working group met over a period of six months, from January 2012 through June 2012 and spent time understanding the street count approaches being used by municipalities throughout the region. In addition to the working group, an Arizona State University (ASU) School of Public Affairs summer 2012 Capstone class also conducted research. A team of nine students spent seven weeks researching street count methodology and best practices both locally and from across the country. The ASU team produced a report which included recommendations for consideration by the working group. The working group reviewed the ASU report and developed recommendations that were reviewed by the MAG Continuum of Care Planning Subcommittee on June 11, 2012. The following recommendations were developed over the six month process and are for consideration by the Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness.

### ***Recommendation One: Implement a Universal Methodology***

To improve consistency and strengthen the PIT homeless street count, the CoC should consider adopting a universal street count methodology for the entire MAG region. (This would be in place of each city and town developing their own count methodology.) The universal methodology would incorporate all of the PIT requirements issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the following recommendations.

- The universal street count methodology should mirror the City of Phoenix methodology. (Additional information on the City of Phoenix methodology included below.)
- Cities can elect to opt-in or opt-out of the universal street count method.
- The CoC should develop a document that describes the agreed-upon methodology in detail. The document should be provided to all of the cities and town within the region and used as a training tool.
- The CoC should provide regional training on the universal methodology and encourage all of the participating cities and towns using the universal methodology to attend.
- The timing of the universal street count should take place during the hours of 3:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. This timing will make it easier for volunteers to accurately identify persons who may be experiencing homelessness and enhance the accuracy of the count.

### ***Recommendation Two: Identify Hidden Locations***

To help identify hidden and unknown locations, such as encampments, an attempt should be made to research hidden locations. Unsheltered populations that are often hard to find are homeless families and unaccompanied youth.

- Cities and towns should make an attempt, in advance of the count, to identify hidden locations where individuals and families may be sleeping. Once locations have been identified, they can be included in the geographic areas in which volunteers will be assigned to count. Outreach teams and homeless and/or formerly homeless persons can be good resources to identify unknown locations.
- The CoC should consider contacting Homeless School Liaisons as a resource for identifying areas to search for unsheltered homeless families and unaccompanied youth.

***Recommendation Three: Partnering with Arizona State University (ASU) for Volunteers***

To ensure the CoC has enough volunteers and manpower to conduct a regional universal count, the CoC should consider partnering with ASU about utilizing students who need Career Field Exploration (CFE) hours to complete their degree.

- Four different bachelor's degrees require CFE hours: Nonprofit Leadership and Management, Parks and Recreation Management, Tourism Development and Management, and Parks and Recreation Management.
- Students can earn volunteer credit to count throughout the region in geographic areas identified by the Street Count Coordinators.

***For Consideration: Collecting Additional Data***

Option: Adding questions to the survey:

To collect additional information about unsheltered individuals and families, beyond the requirements issued by HUD, the CoC should consider enhancing the survey instrument to include additional questions.

- The purpose of the questions would be to gather additional information from unsheltered persons to inform the CoC. Five was suggested as the number of additional questions to include in the survey.

Option: Partner with Project Connect:

To collect additional information about unsheltered individuals and families, the CoC should consider collaborating with Valley of the Sun United Way monthly Project Connect Events. Data collected at Project Connect can be used to supplement information collected in the PIT street count.

- Collect supplemental data from monthly Project Connect Event in January to learn more about unsheltered individuals and families.

Option: Summer Survey Data:

Utilize data collected in the Summer Survey.