



## OVERVIEW OF LOGISTICS FOR STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNT

*The statewide homeless count will be a census of the homeless population on one day: Monday, January 29, 2007. The count will take place the night of January 29, 2007 and continue throughout the day on Tuesday, January 30, 2007. Agency staff and volunteers will attempt to survey every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, in all of the identified locations.*

### I. Cover Sheet

Each participating agency/organization and each group of volunteers will be given a cover sheet. This form will include:

- Number of surveys attached
- Agency/organization name, city and county
- Contact name, phone and email
- How many unduplicated clients they serve in January during a typical week
- Proportion of agency's clients who are homeless

### II. Tracking Form (For Count/Estimates Of Unsheltered Homeless Persons)

Use this form ONLY if it is NOT possible to obtain completed surveys from unsheltered homeless persons. An unsheltered homeless person resides in a place not meant for human habitation, such as a car, park, sidewalk, abandoned building, on the street, etc. This form will include:

- Number of people counted
- Number of people estimated
- Agency/group name, city and county
- Contact name, phone and email

### III. Process

By early January, 2007 each county coordinator will create a master list of all locations where homeless persons stay at night. This completed list will be used by counties and local agencies for planning how to proceed on the night and day of the count. You will need to identify whether or not native language speakers (in which languages) will be needed and at which locations.

On the night of Monday, January 29, 2007 as soon as any shelters (for example, transitional shelters, emergency shelters) have closed their doors for the night and all homeless individuals have entered the facility, the survey process can begin. Also on Monday night, unsheltered street surveys (or count) can begin. Agencies serving

homeless persons will begin their participation in the survey process at the start of business on Tuesday, January 30, 2007 and continue until the close of business on that day. Agencies serving homeless persons that are not open on Tuesday, January 30, 2007 will conduct interviews the first day of that week they are open for business.

#### **IV. Day Of The Count Packet**

Every person involved in the survey process will be given the following materials:

1. Survey instrument in English and Spanish
2. Definition of Homelessness
3. Brief overview of how to handle questions about the survey
4. County and State coordinator contact information
5. List of local homeless resources
6. HIPPA release form if relevant
7. Cover Sheet – one per survey administration location
8. Tracking Form for Counts and Estimates of Unsheltered if relevant

#### **V. Day Of The Count Supplies**

1. Day of the count packet (see IV above)
2. If necessary, pre-arranged permission to enter site to conduct surveys, keys to site, person responsible for site and their telephone number
3. Name tags for agency staff and volunteers
4. Enough pens
5. Clipboards/notebooks or other writing surfaces (consider laminating copies of the survey for respondents to use)
6. If giving out incentives for participation, need the incentives
7. Large envelope or box to store completed surveys

#### **VI. Priorities**

**THE HOMELESS COUNT WILL BE BASED ON RETURNED SURVEYS (with rare exceptions noted below), SO IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU SURVEY EVERY INDIVIDUAL OR, IN THE CASE OF FAMILY GROUPS AND COUPLES, ONE ADULT FAMILY MEMBER.**

- **ENCOURAGE RESPONDENTS TO ANSWER ALL SURVEY QUESTIONS. HOWEVER, WE WILL ACCEPT INCOMPLETE SURVEYS**
- **WE STRONGLY URGE AGENCIES/VOLUNTEERS TO INTERVIEW HOMELESS PERSONS, AS RESPONDENTS OFTEN HAVE DIFFICULTY COMPLETING SURVEYS ON THEIR OWN.**

1. **Every location where homeless persons are known to congregate should be targeted.** If that is not possible, coordinators need to find someone – law

enforcement personnel, clergy, etc. – who can estimate the number of homeless persons at that location, ideally with the help of a key informant. The key informant may be a homeless person or someone who works closely with the homeless in that location.

**Every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, only ONE adult family member in every targeted location should complete a survey!**

2. **Assign experienced staff to higher risk locations. Use volunteers in non-threatening environments. If a staff member or volunteer feels that his/her safety is in doubt, they should leave.**
3. **The priority is to complete as many interviews as possible.** Ideally, every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, will be surveyed, and all surveys will be conducted by an interviewer. All interviewers will be trained and the use of trained interviewers should increase the reliability of the data.
4. **The interviewer should not complete a survey for a homeless person!** He/she can help someone complete a survey by explaining questions, etc., but the homeless person should be the one giving the responses. This will increase the validity of the data, and also reduce the likelihood of duplication. Please refer to Section VII for additional options for completing surveys.
5. **The interviewer should ask the questions as written.** However, if asked, s/he can explain questions to the respondent or help them figure out the correct response to a question.
6. In locations where you are unable to interview all respondents but can distribute surveys for respondents to complete themselves, **please DO NOT place the surveys on a table.** A staff member or volunteer should hand out the surveys to ensure that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member receives a survey. Individuals who do not return surveys will not be counted, nor will the other members of their family group.

## **VII. Specific Locations**

1. **Transitional Housing.** Staff with large case loads may complete the survey on behalf of a homeless person if interviewing one member of each household is not possible. It is preferred that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, be interviewed so that we hear first hand from the homeless individual about their service needs and their understanding of the reasons for their homelessness.
2. **Emergency Shelters.** It is preferred that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, be interviewed so that

we hear first hand from the homeless individual about their service needs and their understanding of the reasons for their homelessness. If a homeless individual volunteers that she is a victim of domestic violence, she may choose to leave identifying questions blank (initials, month of birth, age, gender, race and ethnicity, table for other relatives, and health/mental conditions.)

**3. Domestic Violence Agencies and Shelters.** Agency staff are asked to complete two tasks. 1) Complete an Excel spreadsheet documenting in aggregate form the demographics of clients served the night of January 29, 2007 and 2) administer the Domestic Violence version of the homeless survey.

- **Excel spreadsheet** – The Excel spreadsheet will be used to document clients served on the night of January 29, 2007 in aggregate (group form, for example, 15 women, 3 children ages 6-12, 4 resort workers). Client demographics including: age, gender, military service, resort worker, ethnicity, mental illness, medical/physical condition, alcohol or drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and age and gender of family members staying with them. The Excel spreadsheet will be available online at <http://www.colorado.gov/cich/pit.htm>. Once completed, it should be emailed to Jennifer Lynch at [jlynch@ccadv.org](mailto:jlynch@ccadv.org) by February 2, 2007. Jennifer Lynch will then compile all data received organize it by region and forward to The University of Colorado at Denver. Because these demographics are supplied in group format, individuals should not be identifiable.
- **Survey Administration** – Agency staff are asked to administer a modified version of the survey to their clients. This version of the survey will not include any questions that are personally identifying (age, gender, military service, resort worker, ethnicity, mental illness, medical/physical condition, alcohol or drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and age and gender of family members staying with them). Whenever possible, DV shelter staff should interview individuals in person; however, agency and shelter staff may complete the survey on behalf of their clients/residents if necessary. In the event that you give a hotel voucher to a family for the night of January 29<sup>th</sup>, you still need to make sure that they are counted as homeless. All surveys, cover sheets and demographic data go to Jennifer Lynch Information & Technology Director, Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 900, Denver, CO 80203 by February 2, 2007.
- Domestic Violence Agencies and Shelters may choose to submit copies of completed surveys, cover sheets and the Excel spreadsheet to your county coordinator by February 1, 2007. Please be mindful of client confidentiality throughout the process. County coordinators will need to have a secure process for data collection and holding until surveys are forwarded to the State. The University of Colorado at Denver has safe guards in place for the protection of all survey data.

4. **Congregate Meal Sites and Food Banks.** All persons at these sites must return surveys in order to be counted.

5. **Pre-arranged Homeless Gatherings.** In some rural communities, agencies may choose to advertise a special meal or event to encourage homeless persons to come to town to participate in the survey. Communities promoting a gathering will need to exercise extra caution to ensure that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member completes only ONE survey. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, agencies and other sites must be sure to ask potential interviewees if they or another family member already completed a survey earlier in the day.

6. **Encampments.** If you cannot interview or survey homeless individuals in an encampment due to remote location or safety issues, you have two options: (1) go to the site and count the number of homeless persons, or (2) ask local law enforcement, clergy, a local homeless person or other key informant to estimate the number of homeless persons at the location. The count or estimate should include all homeless persons – adults and children. Counts and estimates must be documented on *Tracking Form for Counts/Estimates of Unsheltered Homeless Persons*.

7. **Street Outreach.** County and Local Coordinators will need to recruit and coordinate with agency and law enforcement staff to conduct a street outreach effort. This effort would include people staying in hotels and motels, either paid for themselves while looking for permanent housing, or paid for by vouchers. Normally, street outreach is conducted by agency staff most familiar with where local unsheltered homeless individuals and families may be found, as well as familiar with the homeless people themselves.

8. **Farm Labor Camp/Dorm.** (summer count only) County and County Coordinators will need to contact local Public Health Centers with Migrant Health workers to identify locations and facility managers (if unknown). Prior to the count, county coordinators will need to educate migrant work groups that the count is confidential and that participation in the count WILL NOT put residents at risk for deportation. In addition, arrangements to visit the Farm Labor Camp/Dorm will need to be made in advance of the count.

9. Other locations/groups in your community that you should attempt to survey include:

- Clinics
- Hospital emergency rooms
- Public libraries
- Day laborers
- Jails/prisons
- Nursing homes
- Temporary Resort Housing

## VIII. Contingency Planning

1. If there are not enough interviewers to interview all homeless individuals and ONE person in each family group at a given location, conduct as many interviews as possible. **Do not select persons to be interviewed! As soon as you complete an interview, try to start interviewing the next person in line, etc. Make sure that every** homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, **who is not interviewed is given a survey to complete. Staff should make sure that persons given surveys return them. Staff should review surveys for completeness and consistency when they are returned.**

- Assign one person to hand out surveys to persons whom interviewers can't get to. This person is responsible for making sure that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member receives a survey. The agency staff/volunteer should be available to answer questions and to provide help in completing surveys as needed. S/he should make every effort to get everyone who is given a survey to return it. S/he should review surveys for completeness and consistency when they are returned, and ask for clarification of questions if needed.

2. If a site has insufficient personnel to conduct interviews, agency staff/volunteers should make sure that every homeless individual or, in the case of family groups and couples, one adult family member, is given a survey to self-administer. Staff should be available to answer questions and to provide help in completing surveys as needed. They should make every effort to get everyone who is given a survey to return it. Staff should review surveys for completeness and consistency when they are returned, and ask for clarification of questions if needed.

3. If it is not practical or safe to conduct interviews or distribute surveys at a site where unsheltered homeless persons congregate, there are two options.

- The first is to go to the site and count the number of homeless persons. The count should include all homeless persons – adults and children. Counts must be documented on the tracking form.
- The second option is for law enforcement personnel, clergy, a key informant, etc. to collaborate to produce their best estimate of the number of homeless – adults and children -- who frequent the site on a single day at that time of year.

## IX. Completing the Cover Sheet and Tracking Form for Counts/Estimates

**1. Cover Sheet** – One cover sheet will be used PER LOCATION - the cover sheet will be attached to completed surveys submitted for each location. If agency staff/volunteers are conducting surveys in several locations during the count period, please complete one cover sheet per location. If several volunteers are conducting

surveys at the same location, for example a congregate meal site, one individual needs to collect all surveys and complete the cover sheet.

**2. Tracking Form for Counts/Estimates of Unsheltered Homeless Persons**

This form is only to be used in situations where it is impossible to conduct surveys (due to safety concerns or remoteness of location). The Tracking Form for Counts/Estimates should be completed by someone qualified to count or make an estimate. Please be sure to complete only one Tracking Form for Counts/Estimates of Unsheltered Homeless Persons per location.

## **X. Collecting and Submitting Completed Surveys**

**1. Agencies/volunteers need to get their surveys and tracking forms to their county coordinator within one or two days after the surveys are completed.**

2. County coordinators are responsible for collecting surveys and tracking forms from all agencies/volunteers working in their county in a timely fashion. Coordinators should have received all of the surveys and tracking forms from participating agencies and volunteers in their county no later than Friday, February 2, 2007. County coordinators should keep a master list of all the agencies/volunteers to whom they give packets of surveys and tracking forms, and make sure that they receive packets from all of them after the survey is completed. The county coordinators can ask agencies to deliver the packets of completed surveys and tracking forms to them, or they can pick them up.

3. The County coordinators are responsible for delivering all the packets of completed surveys, the Tracking Form and the Form for Counts/Estimates of Unsheltered Homeless Persons from their counties to Lynn Shine, State of Colorado, Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing by Monday, February 5, 2007 at the latest. The address is as follows:

Division of Housing  
Lynn Shine  
1313 Sherman Street, Room 518  
Denver, CO 80203

If anyone plans on mailing packets of completed surveys and tracking forms either send via Fed Ex or certified U.S. mail, **THEY MUST COPY EVERY SURVEY, COVER SHEET AND TRACKING FORM FOR COUNTS/ESTIMATES BEFORE IT IS PUT IN THE MAIL. IF SURVEYS ARE COPIED ON TWO PAGES, THE PAGES MUST BE STAPLED TOGETHER. THE ORIGINAL SHOULD BE MAILED AND THE COPIES SHOULD BE KEPT BY THE COORDINATORS. ALL SURVEYS FOR A GIVEN LOCATION MUST BE CLIPPED TOGETHER ALONG WITH THE COVER SHEET FOR THOSE SURVEYS. IN THE EVENT A PACKAGE IS LOST IN TRANSIT, WE CAN EASILY RECREATE ALL OF THE SURVEY PACKETS.**