



OVERVIEW: POINT IN TIME HOMELESS CENSUS

PURPOSE OF THE POINT IN TIME HOMELESS CENSUS

The Annual Point in Time (PIT) Homeless Census is the way we learn who is homeless and why here in Thurston County. This “point in time” one day count was first pioneered by Olympia area service providers and soon thereafter adopted by the state as the singular annual measurement tool to help guide the investment of federal, state and local funding. Each year in late January, service providers and volunteers use a confidential questionnaire to gather data, which is entered into a Statewide database called the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to be tracked, analyzed and reported on. Please note the total PIT Homeless Census number includes people who are:

- 1) **Unsheltered** living out-of doors, in vehicles, in sub-standard buildings not fit for human habitation;
- 2) **Emergency Shelter** Short-term 90 day accommodations, either dormitory style or in apartments; and
- 3) **Transitional Housing** Short term housing offering 18 months or less.

POINT IN TIME HOMELESS CENSUS ACCURACY

While the PIT Homeless Census provides valuable data that helps to identify trends, it appears there are homeless people who do not participate for a number of reasons, including fear of camp clearances, outstanding warrants, minor children being forced to return to parents or guardians. For this reason, many homeless people and their advocates claim that the annual PIT numbers for unsheltered people - - this year that number was 324 - - should be doubled or tripled for better accuracy.

PIT RELATION TO OTHER HOMELESS DATA SETS

The PIT data is considered the definitive annual count of homeless people in the State, with all County data presented year over year on the State Commerce website located at:

<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/annual-point-time-count/>

HMIS Data: The State maintains a database with information on residents of emergency shelters and transitional housing. This provides rich information on people who are “in-system” yet misses those who are unsheltered or residing in facilities not funded by the State. Data not available at this time.

Homeless Public School Students Pre-K through 12: Each year the Office of Public Instruction (OSPI) collects data on homeless students during the entire school year, as opposed to a single day count. OSPI data also includes students living in unstable housing, including motels, staying with friends and family. This year the total OSPI Count for Thurston County was **1670 homeless K-12 students 2016-2017**.

Olywa Survey: This year the City piloted a new process, modeled after King County that combined pre-dawn downtown doorway counts and camp surveys conducted with homeless guides. This year the Olywa Survey found **130 camping in downtown doorways and 633 camping in the urban hub** of Olympia and nearby areas in Tumwater and Lacey.

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