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CITY OF CHICAGO CONDUCTS ANNUAL POINT IN TIME COUNT OF HOMELESS POPULATION

Survey helps to establish funding priorities and inform service allocation for homeless residents across the city

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) will conduct the 2017 Point-In-Time (PIT) count to assess the city's homeless population. Each year, the count estimates how many homeless residents reside in shelter and in public spaces on any given night, and provides valuable information for planning the delivery of homeless services, while raising awareness of homelessness in Chicago.

"The City of Chicago is committed to ensuring every Chicagoan has a place to call home," said Department of Support Services Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. "The Point in Time count provides us with invaluable information that helps us understand the evolving needs of our clients and match resources in a way that will effectively help residents experiencing homelessness in getting back on their feet."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires municipalities and homeless service providers to demonstrate their needs on a biennial basis by reporting how many individuals experience homelessness on a given night. Each year, data compiled during the Point-In-Time count is analyzed to prioritize areas of need and to allocate resources for housing and services accordingly. While this thorough analysis is done every year regardless, the count is federally mandated only every other year; 2017 being one of them.

The count includes both a comprehensive tally of all persons residing in emergency or transitional shelters on that evening and a count of individuals residing unsheltered on the streets, on public transportation, in parks, cars, and other locations not meant for sleeping.

The success of the Point-In-Time survey relies upon hundreds of volunteers--including city employees, homeless shelter providers, and homeless individuals--with 400 expected to assist in this year's count. Volunteers are trained by city delegate partner, All Chicago, and receive an overview of the homeless count and how to engage residents. Teams are formed to survey homeless individuals who are unsheltered on the street or in the public way. The count typically lasts between the hours of 8 p.m. and 2 a.m., canvassing all shelters and nine core geographic regions of the city.

This annual survey builds on the ongoing work of the city's Homeless Outreach Prevention (HOP) team, which works daily with residents experiencing street homelessness and chronic homelessness to assist them with securing support services and housing. Through partnerships with delegate agencies, DFSS houses more than 4,000 people per night through a citywide network of overnight shelters and interim housing.

While last year was not a year in which the City was required to report, DFSS continued the PIT to monitor the number of residents experiencing both unsheltered and sheltered homelessness to inform allocation of services and outreach. Last year's PIT survey revealed a 13 percent decline in overall homelessness over the previous year, with noted decreases in homelessness among Veterans, chronically homeless, and unaccompanied youth. These improvements are attributed to the ongoing work DFSS does with its delegate agencies, advocates and other

stakeholders to improve systems so that services and housing are provided in a timely manner so that episodes of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurring.

The City of Chicago has made important progress in improving delivery of services to homeless residents, despite limited resources, through the creation of a new coordinated access system. The system works to prevent homelessness when possible, match individuals who become homeless with the right resources when they enter the system, and to coordinate outreach efforts for residents who are sleeping on the street or in public spaces to ensure they have a path to housing.

Since taking office in 2011, Mayor Emanuel has increased funding for homeless services by more than 10 percent and invested in new programs targeting veterans, youth, families, victims of domestic violence and the chronically homeless. Additionally, under the Mayor's leadership, the City of Chicago has launched a series of new initiatives to help reduce homelessness citywide, including: new pilot program aimed at housing residents experiencing chronic homelessness; launch of "Day for Change" jobs program to serve 225 individuals; implementation of the unprecedented surcharge on the house sharing industry, making Chicago among the first municipalities to leverage a dedicated funding source for homelessness; participation in the ending veterans homelessness initiative (EVHI) national campaign has led to housing nearly 3,000 Veterans; and several investments expanding vouchers and creating thousands of new affordable housing units that provide permanent housing for homeless residents.

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