



Point-in-Time Homeless Count Thursday, January 23rd, 2020 9:00PM-3:00AM

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the City conduct a homeless count?

In order to receive federal homeless funding from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Chicago and the continuum of homeless service providers must demonstrate need by collecting data on how many persons experience homelessness on one given night. During the hours of the count, the City conducts a tally and survey of every homeless person in shelter and a canvass of the streets and public spaces for those unsheltered. The count also provides valuable information used in planning for homeless services and raises public awareness about homelessness in Chicago.

Do I need to attend an Information Session?

First-time volunteers are encouraged to view the informational video that will be posted on the DFSS website. The video will give you an overview of the count and what to expect that night. Please go to <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss.html> or email homelesscount@cityofchicago.org for the link to the video that you may watch from any computer or smartphone. Every volunteer will also receive training on the night of the count.

Do I need experience or need to be a city employee to volunteer?

No. Anyone over age 18 is qualified to volunteer. City employment is not required. You will receive training the night of the count.

How do I know where to go on the night of the count?

To volunteer, please register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020homelesscount> or email homelesscount@cityofchicago.org. Registering is your commitment to participate that night. While registering, you will be asked to choose a lead site to report to on the night of the count. Please note that site assignments are first-come, first-serve, and some sites fill quickly. You will receive confirmation of your lead site no later than Friday, January 10th, 2020.

Do I have to be there for the entire time between 9 PM and 3 AM?

Yes. Volunteers will be trained and divided into teams between the hours of 9:00 PM and 10:00 PM. Teams will be dispatched after 10:00 PM to cover their assigned areas. Teams generally require several hours to cover their areas and do not typically return to their site until 2:00 AM or 2:30 AM. Therefore, there is no guarantee that you will complete your team assignment before 3:00 AM. Teams are instructed not to separate under any circumstances. All team members must report back to their site to close their assigned area.

Will I be asked to look for homeless persons by myself?

No. Volunteers will be partnered into teams of four or five volunteers. We strive to create teams with at least one experienced team member. Teams are expected to count and survey homeless individuals and families on the street in a designated area of the city near their site location.

Will I be outdoors the whole time?

Teams will be dispatched between 10:00 PM and 10:30 PM. During those hours, teams will be traveling by car and on foot to canvass their assigned area.

Will any safety/security measures be provided for volunteers?

Volunteers will work in teams of four or five and are instructed not to separate from their teams. No one should conduct the survey without other team members present. Volunteers will receive training on how to safely conduct the count, including guidance on where to cover, e.g. volunteers should not enter any abandoned building or non-public space. The Chicago Police Department has been alerted and made aware that volunteers will be out that night. Staff at your lead site and at the City's Count Command Center will be available during the count hours to take your call.

Do I need to use my own car?

No. But volunteers may also donate the use of cars for the homeless count. It will be used as your team's transportation that night to cover the specific area assigned to your team. If you do not have a car, you may still volunteer and will be assigned to a team with a volunteer who has a car.

Will I be paid to volunteer?

Unfortunately, volunteers are not paid or reimbursed for any expenses, such as transportation to and from the site location.

Do I need to bring anything with me that night?

Bring layers of warm clothing for yourself, including gloves and a hat in case of snow and wet weather. Also, you may want to bring a clip board, flashlight, and pencils to use with the forms. For you and your team's safety, do not bring any large sums of money, items/food to pass out to the homeless, or other valuables.

Other questions or concerns?

Contact homelesscount@cityofchicago.org or call 312-746-8864.

