

New Bedford to conduct annual homeless point-in-time count for 2020

The City of New Bedford will conduct its 2019 annual Point-in-Time Count of persons experiencing homelessness on Wednesday, January 29 from 1:00 p.m. until Thursday, January 30 at 1:00 p.m. (24-hour count). The Point-in-Time Count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and is conducted across the nation during the last 10 days of the January.

The 2019 local Point in Time or “PIT Count” event includes dozens of teams of community and agency volunteers and will kick off with a public launch. City officials will gather with the public to initiate this year’s PIT Count efforts on Wednesday, January 29 at 12:00 p.m. at the Agnes Braz Community Center headquarters of PAACA, 360 Coggeshall Street.

The Point-in-Time Count (PIT) is conducted in New Bedford through the efforts of the New Bedford homeless continuum of care, known as the Homeless Service Providers Network (HSPN). The HSPN is convened and staffed by the City’s Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development.

The New Bedford PIT Count helps identify vulnerable groups by conducting surveys that provide demographic characteristics, homeless history, homeless experiences and other vital information. The census counts both sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness on a given night. The information collected through the PIT Count is used to help measure New Bedford’s progress towards ending homelessness and to help refine and strategically focus future planning efforts toward that end. Typically the data collected through these efforts provides a reliable snapshot of both

sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Immediately following the city's kick-off, teams of volunteers will begin the 24-hour count and disperse throughout the city to survey individuals and families currently residing on the streets and in other locations not meant for human habitation within the city.

Building off the success and lessons learned from previous counts, the HSPN's PIT Committee is holding a resource event for those experiencing homelessness at PAACA on January 29 from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This Point-In-Time Count and Resource Event is an opportunity for those within the homeless community and volunteers to interact. The PIT Resource Event is multi-faceted and includes a variety of resources, food, health services, haircuts, music and more. The PIT Resource Event is an opportunity to help connect those living on the streets who may not necessarily be aware of resources available to them.

As in past years, the PIT Committee has continued partnering with both Mobile Ministries, the Sister Rose Shelter and the winter Overflow Shelter in order to spread the word among those within the homeless community as to the importance of the count and when it will take place. Instead of only looking for persons experiencing homelessness during the count, organizations have already begun encouraging those whom they serve but are still on the streets to participate in the count, directing them to the PIT Coordination Center at PAACA. It has been found in past years that this approach, coupled with traditional community engagement, produces the most accurate and robust data.

The PIT Committee continues to partner with both Mobile Loaves & Fishes and Catholic Social Services' Sister Rose Shelter in order to spread the word among those within the homeless community as to the importance of the count and when it will

take place. Instead of only looking for persons experiencing homelessness, both groups have already begun encouraging those whom they serve to participate in the count, directing them to the PIT Coordination Center and other locations throughout the city where volunteers will be stationed. It is anticipated that this approach, coupled with traditional community engagement, will produce the most accurate and robust data.

Patrick J. Sullivan, Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development, said, "The Point-in-Time Count provides an important one-day snapshot of those experiencing homelessness in New Bedford in a way that helps us understand both general demographics of those counted, as well as specific characteristics of those individuals and families in these situations. Doing this allows us to strategically act to reduce those numbers as we continue moving toward an end to homelessness in our city."

For more information about the count, please contact Jennifer Clarke at (508) 979-1500 or at Jennifer.Clarke@newbedford-ma.gov; for more information about the work of the city's HSPN please go to www.nbhspn.com.