

New Bedford's Homeless Service Providers Network to Launch 2015 Annual Point-in-Time Count



Mayor Jon Mitchell to kick-off the census on Wednesday, February 11th at 2:00pm in the Charles S. Ashley Room.

The City of New Bedford will conduct the annual Point-in-Time Count of homeless persons on Wednesday, February 11th from 2:00pm until Thursday, February 12th at 2:00pm. As a sign of solidarity and support for the Point-in-Time Count, teams of volunteers will gather with Mayor Jon Mitchell to kick-off the census on Wednesday, February 11th at 2:00pm in the Charles S. Ashley Room located on the first floor of New Bedford City Hall.

The Point-in-Time Count (PIC) is conducted in New Bedford through the New Bedford Homeless Continuum of Care, known as

the Homeless Service Providers Network (HSPN), coordinated by the City's Office of Housing and Community Development. The information collected provides a reliable snapshot of sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The Point-in-Time Count is required annually by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The counts are designed to collect data on the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness on any given night. The information collected through the Point-in-Time Count is used to help measure New Bedford's progress towards ending homelessness and help focus our future planning efforts.

The Count covers single adults, as well as people in families staying in emergency shelter, transitional housing, temporary drop-in centers, and on the street. This year, a special focus has been placed once again on outreach to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth ages 14-24. According to national statistics, homeless unaccompanied youth are a growing portion of the homeless population. As a result, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was the first state to take the initiative and develop a campaign to try to understand the characteristics of this vulnerable population. New Bedford has made significant efforts to conduct outreach to children and young adults that are without families and experiencing homelessness.

In preparation for the Count, the HSPN PIT Committee has held weekly planning sessions since November to plan the overall logistics of the count, identify "hot spots," gather donation items, and recruit volunteers. As a result of these efforts, the PIT Committee successfully recruited and trained over 60 dedicated volunteers for the unsheltered homeless count. In addition, numerous local businesses and organizations have graciously donated gift cards, clothing, backpacks, and other essential supplies that will be either placed in the backpacks or handed out during the course of the count.

During the course of the count, teams of trained volunteers will canvass the streets of the city and visit various "hotspot" locations. Prior to going out, teams will attend a briefing session and receive name tags, clip boards, surveys, and a map that details the specific area(s) of the city that they will be counting. Teams of volunteers who encounter unsheltered persons will ask them to first complete a short survey and offer to assist them in whatever way possible, either by bringing them to shelter, giving them warm clothing, gift cards, or simply by handing them a "Street Sheet," the HSPN's comprehensive resource guide to services for persons who are experiencing or threatened with homelessness. In addition, the New Bedford Police Department will be on hand to provide support to both the teams of volunteers and any homeless person they encounter that needs help.

For more information about the count, please contact Joseph Maia at (508) 979-1500 or at jose.maia@newbedford-ma.gov.
