



HOMELESS SERVICES DIVISION
**2026 Point-In-Time Count
Volunteer Training**

January 15, 2026

Welcome to Volunteer Training

2026 Point-in-Time Count

Please sign in



Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division

2026 PIT Count Volunteer Training

Welcome

Kari Howell

*Program Manager, Homeless Services Division
Department of Social Services*



**Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division**

Volunteer Training Agenda

6:00 - 6:10 **Welcome**

6:10 - 6:20 **Your Impact**

6:20 - 6:30 **What is a Point-in-Time Count?**

6:30 - 6:45 **Unsheltered Homelessness**

6:45 - 7:15 **Survey Practice: *Role Playing***

7:30 - 7:45 **Logistics Center Arrival Details**

7:45 **Training is Complete**



Your Impact

Linda Belch

*Deputy Director, Adult and Homeless Services
Department of Social Services*



**Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division**

Your Impact

Thank you for participating in the nation's largest census of people experiencing homelessness.

Information learned in a Point-in-Time Count can influence funding opportunities, inform local policy, and help drive our community's will to end homelessness.

This is important work that we can't do without you.



What is a Point-in-Time Count?

The Point-in-Time Count, also known as a *PIT Count*, is a count of all people experiencing homelessness on a single night within the last 10 days of January.

The night of the count is **Monday, January 26** and the surveys are conducted on **Tuesday, January 27**.

The PIT Count meets federal funding requirements.



What do we do with this information?

- We report aggregate data on demographics (race/ethnicity, age, veteran status, chronic homelessness status) to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- We share similar aggregate data publicly in the **Community Report** allowing for jurisdictions, organizations, and policy makers to address local homelessness.



What the PIT Count is NOT

Location information is used help inform outreach efforts for the purpose of serving our unhoused community. We do not use this information to track or clear encampments.

This is not a photo opportunity. **No selfies or pictures while in the field.**



Who is Counted?

We follow requirements from HUD regarding who can and cannot be counted.

Unsheltered Homelessness is defined as, “Primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.”



Who is not included in the Count?

- Anyone temporarily staying with friends or family, or “couch surfing.”
- Anyone staying in a motel/hotel using their own funds.
- Anyone staying in a hospital, jail, or treatment facility on the night of January 26.



What about Shelters?

Anyone staying in an **emergency shelter, warming center, or interim housing** (such as transitional housing) is counted in the ***Sheltered Count*** with the assistance of a countywide database, the Homeless Management Information System, known as HMIS.

Warming Centers will be activated countywide, regardless of weather, on **Monday, January 26**.



Unsheltered Homelessness

The PIT Count Survey



Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division

The PIT Count Survey

Each volunteer group will complete a **survey** or **interview** for *every* identified person experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

When you cannot interview the person, you will complete an **Observational Survey**. Please complete one observation form per person.



Identifying People Experiencing Homelessness

A

Appearance

B

Behavior

C

Condition



Appearance

Layers of clothing, carry a large backpack or many belongings

Behavior

Pushing shopping cart, sleeping in a public area

Condition

Environment/Vehicle



Identifying Vehicular Homelessness

- Towels or blankets covering windows
- Fliers or parking tickets on windshield
- Filled/packed with belongings or portable lights



Sleeping Locations

- Street or **sidewalk**
- Park
- Abandoned building
- Bus, Train Station, airport
- Woods or outdoor **encampment**



Ambiguous Sleeping Locations

- Tiny Homes / Shed
- RV / Motorhomes
- Boats
 - **No regular connection to water, sewer, or utilities**
 - **No onsite access to water, sewer, or utilities**
→ the household is considered Unsheltered.



The PIT Count Survey

Your name will populate.

Write in your Agency:

- Volunteer
- Homeless Service Provider
- City or Government Organization

Select your Logistics Center then
begin survey.

X 2026 SLO County PIT Count  

Interviewer name *

Kari Howell (X) (↻)

Agency name (if applicable)

Volunteer (X)

Home Logistics Center *

Atascadero

Arroyo Grande

Morro Bay

Nipomo

Paso Robles

San Luis Obispo

San Miguel



The PIT Count Survey

The survey contains prompts.

If you cannot survey the person, you will complete an **Observational Survey**.

Ask if the person has already been surveyed.

X 2026 SLO County PIT Count  

Are you able to survey this person? *

Yes No

Hello, we are conducting a survey to interview people experiencing homelessness in our community. This will help us provide better programs and services in the future. Your participation is completely voluntary, and the survey can be stopped at any time.

Can I have 10 minutes of your time? *

Yes No

Did another volunteer or survey worker already ask you questions about where you stayed last night? *

Yes No



When to conduct an observational count?

- **Private property.**
- Environmental or Geographic barriers.
- **Train Tracks.**
- If the person does not want to complete the survey.
- Medical crisis or safety concerns.
 - If concerned for someone's safety, refer to the non-emergency contact information in the volunteer packet.



What is a Household?

- A single individual.
- Any group of persons residing together and identifying themselves as a household.
- Two or more adults with or without children.

X 2026 SLO County PIT Count  

▼ Household Questions

Ask the following questions to the original respondent and then repeat for other household members in order of oldest to youngest. If the other household members are not present the original respondent should answer for them.

What is your date of birth? *
mm/dd/yyyy (Example: 02/28/1980). If no answer, enter today's date.



How old are you? *
46 

What are the last four numbers of your Social Security Number? *
If no answer, please write 0 (zero).





Date of Birth

- Some people may be more comfortable sharing their age rather than their birthdate.
- If someone prefers to not share their birthdate, enter today's date in the birthdate field.
- Enter their age and capture the last four digits of the SSN.

X 2026 SLO County PIT Count  

▼ Household Questions

Ask the following questions to the original respondent and then repeat for other household members in order of oldest to youngest. If the other household members are not present the original respondent should answer for them.

What is your date of birth? *
mm/dd/yyyy (Example: 02/28/1980). If no answer, enter today's date.

01/01/1980 

How old are you? *

46 



Sleeping Location

- You will complete a survey for every person age 18+ in the household.
- Use your best judgment and provide details when possible.

2026 SLO County PIT Count  

Where did you sleep on the night of January 26, 2026? *

Arroyo Grande 

Atascadero
 Arroyo Grande
 California Valley
 Cayucos
 Grover Beach

In what type of sleeping accomodation did you sleep on the night of January 26, 2026? *

Do not read the list of categories, but you may offer some as examples.

Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck) 

Street or sidewalk
 Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)
 Park
 Abandoned building
 Bus, train station, airport

Details about sleeping accommodation:

Parked by the dumpster behind Vons 





Conducting the Survey

People can choose to not answer any question or stop the survey at any time but are encouraged to answer all questions.

The survey asks private questions that require vulnerability to answer. Be respectful.

Do you drink alcoholic beverages or use drugs (illegal or prescription for non-medical reasons)? *

- Yes
- No
- Doesn't Know/Prefers not to answer

Do you experience a mental health disability? *

- Yes
- No
- Doesn't Know/Prefers not to answer

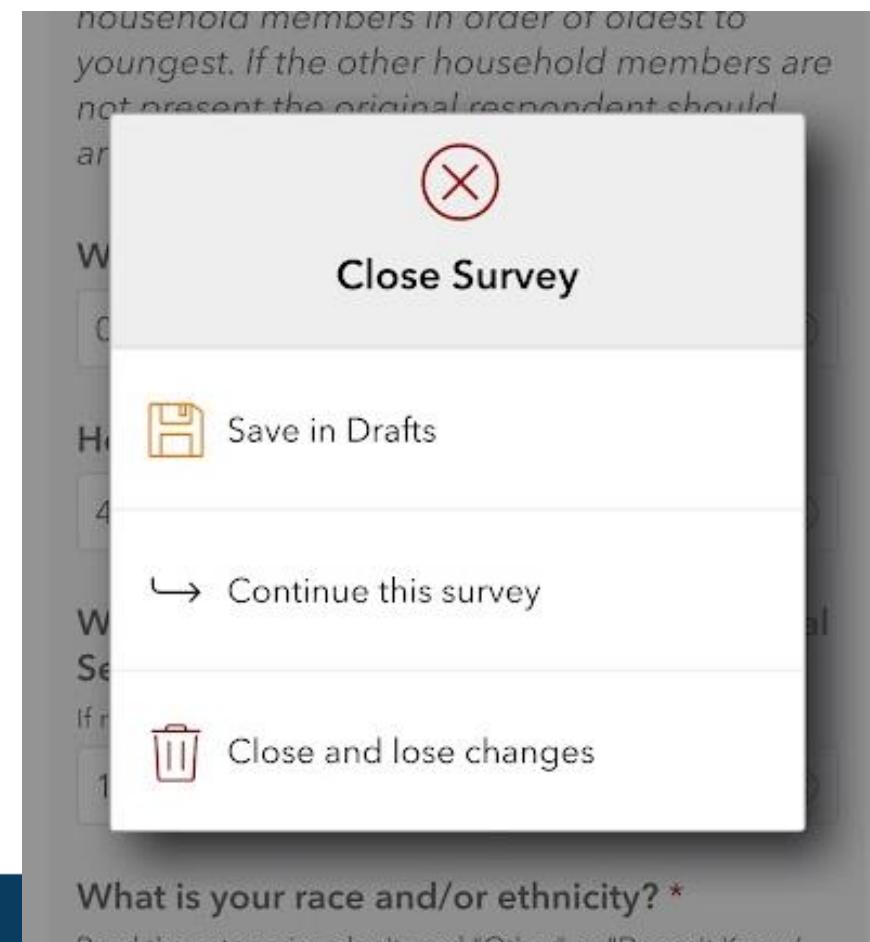
Do you have a physical disability? This could include something that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying? *

- Yes
- No
- Doesn't Know/Prefers not to answer



Conducting the Survey

If you hit the “x” in the corner of the survey to close the survey at any point, you will be prompted with options prior to exiting.

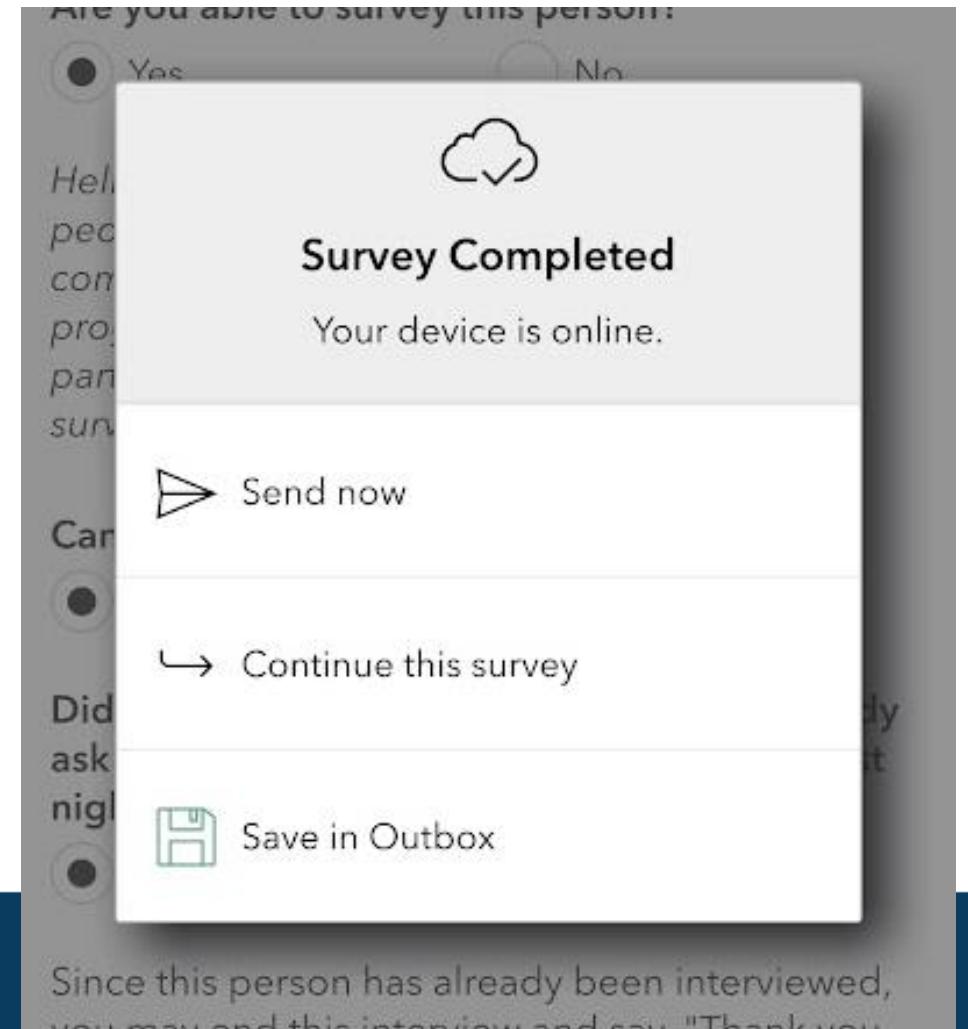


Completing the Survey

Thank the person for their time.

Upon completing the survey, each adult in the household can receive a **\$10 gift card** or other incentive:

- Grocery Outlet, Walmart, RTA Bus Pass, Gas Cards



Everyone's Safety

Be aware of your surroundings.

Be mindful of pets.

You are entering someone's home – be compassionate.

Stay with your volunteer group at all times.

Stay in well-lit areas and use your flashlight respectfully.



Compassionate Engagement

Nathan Rubinoff

*Data and Systems Manager, Coordinated Entry
Community Action Partnership SLO (CAPSLO)*



Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division

Trauma-Informed Care: The Basics

Trauma-informed care recognizes that many people experiencing homelessness have lived through trauma.

Building from this knowledge our approach should prioritize respect, safety, and dignity in every interaction.

Trauma-informed care is a form of compassionate engagement and way to express empathy.



Tips for Surveying our Unsheltered Neighbors

- Introduce yourself, from a distance, and make eye contact.
- If approaching tents early, alert people that you are approaching by saying, "***Good morning, is anyone home?***"
- Some people may still be sleeping. Be gentle in your approach and give them time to wake up and agree to the count.



Tips Continued

- Let the person know you are a volunteer with the PIT count. Explain what the PIT Count is and its purpose.
 - ***The PIT Count is a homeless census. Can I ask you some questions?***
- Let them know their answers will be anonymous and combined with all other answers to help advocate for more services and resources.
- Let them know that, if they participate, they will receive a \$10 gift card as a thank you.



Tips Continued

- **Groups are intimidating!** Don't surround the person and make sure they have space to walk away.
- Posture matters! Stay relaxed and be mindful.
- Sometimes people want to talk, that's okay!



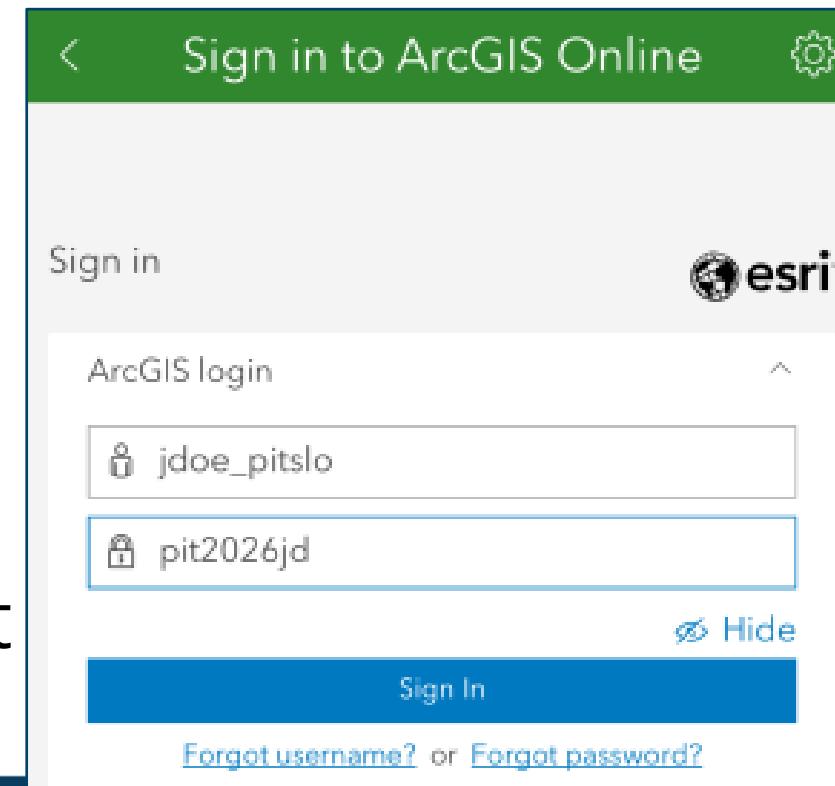
The PIT Count Survey

Go to your device's App store and download
ArcGIS Survey123

Open the app, and click “sign in with
ArcGIS Survey123”

- khowell_pitslo
- Temporary password: pit2026kh

Suggested New Password: 2026slopitcount



Role Playing Scenarios

You observe a person experiencing homelessness on private property and it's clear you would be trespassing to directly interview this person. You determine that the only means of counting this individual is via an observational approach. Do not make assumptions unless you know the person being observed. Use your Survey 123 app to create an observational scenario to complete a practice survey.



Role Playing Scenarios

35-year-old who identifies as a white woman and is employed part-time. She was born in Atascadero and has lived there her entire life. She has reported that she has schizophrenia and has a hard time staying employed. She stated that she first became homeless in August of 2020 and has been unhoused since that time. She wanted to serve in the Army, but felt that her mental health was a barrier.



Role Playing Scenarios

You meet a 25-year-old who identifies as an African American woman and her 23-year-old husband who identifies as a Hispanic man, with their 3-year-old son. This is their first time being homeless and they moved to San Luis Obispo 3 months ago for better employment opportunities but went to elementary school in the County. She reports that she does drink alcohol and has been diagnosed with depression and that neither are barriers to employment or stable housing. Both adults state that affordable housing is their main barrier to stability.



Practice Survey

- Pair up with someone and take turns being the surveyor and the person who is surveyed.
- Alert us to any technical issues you have.
- Debrief:
 - How did it go?
 - Any issues?



Logistics Centers

Arrival Details



What to Bring and Wear

- Layers of warm clothing and supportive shoes.
- Friendly clothing: no all-blue clothing, no sports teams, no logos, no body armor.
- A flashlight.
- Fully charged device, extra power bank/chargers.



Arrival Details

You will arrive at your assigned Logistics Center at 5:30AM on Tuesday, January 27 - *rain or shine!*

You will check in, meet your **Volunteer Group**, and review the materials in your **Volunteer Packet**.

Logistics Centers will have **breakfast** for volunteers, charging stations, **reflector vests**, and face masks.



Your Volunteer Group and Shift

You are assigned to a **Volunteer Group**, which will include a Homeless Services Worker.

We ask all Volunteer Groups to remain in the field for a minimum of 3 hours, maximum of 5 hours. Do not split up your volunteer groups.

After your shift is completed, you will check back into the Logistic Center and **return any volunteer materials**.



What is in the Volunteer Packet?

Logistics Center Contact Information:

- Who to contact for non-emergencies in your area.
- Who to contact for survey questions.

Volunteer Helpful Guides:

- How to download and complete the survey.
- Best Practices of the PIT Count: *“Do and Don’t”*
- Guidance to unsheltered homelessness in your assigned area.



What is in the Volunteer Packet?

Gift Cards, stored securely in a Fanny Pack, for those you survey.

Resource Cards.

Maps for your assigned area.

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT		2026	SLO COUNTY
SUR	Grover Beach 5 Cities Homeless Coalition 805.574.1638 100 S 4th ST	Santa Maria Good Samaritan 805.347.3338 401 W MORRISON AVE C	<i>Llame al proveedor de servicios para conseguir refugio y/o servicios.</i>
NORTE	Paso Robles ECHO 805.462.3663 1134 BLACK OAK DR	Atascadero ECHO 805.462.3663 6370 ATASCADERO AVE	
COAST	Morro Bay Community Resource Connections 805.225.1991 695 HARBOR ST, SUITE D		Encuentra la ayuda que deseas cerci de ti
CENTRAL	San Luis Obispo 40 Prado 805.544.4004 40 PRADO RD		

Internet gratuito está disponible en todas las bibliotecas del condado de San Luis Obispo

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT		2026	SLO COUNTY
SOUTH	Grover Beach 5 Cities Homeless Coalition 805.574.1638 100 S 4th ST	Santa Maria Good Samaritan 805.347.3338 401 W MORRISON AVE C	<i>Call the service provider to secure shelter and/or services</i>
NORTH	Paso Robles ECHO 805.462.3663 1134 BLACK OAK DR	Atascadero ECHO 805.462.3663 6370 ATASCADERO AVE	
COAST	Morro Bay Community Resource Connections 805.225.1991 695 HARBOR ST, SUITE D		Find the help you want near you
CENTRAL	San Luis Obispo 40 Prado 805.544.4004 40 PRADO RD		

Free Internet is available at all San Luis Obispo County libraries



Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division

2026 PIT Count Volunteer Training

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

A 4

Census Tracts: 126.01, 126.02

- Roads
- Railroad
- Your Area
- Volunteer Areas
- 2024 Survey Clusters
- Parks

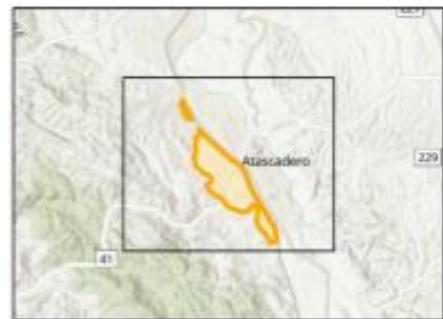
0 0.85 1.3 Miles



Date Created: 1/9/2026
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COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



Media and Press Inquiries

If approached by the media, please refer them:

Kari Howell

805-806-7538

khowell@co.slo.ca.us



What's Next?

Volunteers will be assigned a Logistic Center the week of January 20.

Arrive at the Logistic Center at **5:30AM** on January 27, 2026.

Be prepared to volunteer for a minimum of 3 hours, maximum of 4-5 hours.

Questions? Contact HSD_PITCount@co.slo.ca.us



Thank you!

Questions? Contact
HSD_PITCount@co.slo.ca.us



COUNTING EVERY PERSON BECAUSE EVERY PERSON COUNTS