

Chicago's 2017 Point-In-Time Homeless Count



**Thursday, January 26th, 2017
8 PM to 2 AM**

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 their 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 the City uses 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 attend one session to receive an overview of the homeless count and what to expect that night. Please email homelesscount@cityofchicago.org for the link to a pre-recorded session that you may watch from any computer or smartphone.

Do I have to have experience or 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: www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017ChicagoHomelessCount or email homelesscount@cityofchicago.org. Registering is your commitment to participate that night. The registration process provides DFSS and your Lead Site with information on how to contact you and what resources you will provide on the night of the count. At the bottom of the form, you are asked to provide your first three choices of locations you would like to report that night. Most volunteers are granted their first choice; however, some sites are quite popular. Therefore, choices are granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Do I have to be there for the entire time between 8 PM and 2 AM?

Yes. Volunteers will be trained and divided into teams between the hours of 8 PM and 9 PM. Teams will be dispatched after 9:30 PM to cover their assigned areas. Teams generally require several hours to cover their areas and do not typically return to their site until 1:00 AM or 1:30 AM. Therefore, there is no guarantee that you will complete your team assignment before 2 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 three or four other volunteers. Ideally, teams will have 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 9:30 PM and 10:00 PM. During those hours, teams will be traveling by car and on foot to canvass their assigned area. We recommend that volunteers dress for the weather, since a survey requires standing in the cold for at least 15 minutes at a time.

Will any safety/security measures be provided for volunteers?

Volunteers will work in teams of three or four and are instructed not to separate from their teams. No one should conduct the survey without other team members present. 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 will remain at your lead site or at the City's Count Command Center at all times 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 a set of dry gloves and 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 312-746-6685.

