

## **Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the Annual Point in Time Survey**

### **1. What is it?**

The point in time survey provides a baseline as to the numbers and needs of the homeless, along with the causes of homelessness and possible solutions. Surveys are carried out in local “cachement” areas as assigned by the federal government, which in our case is Okaloosa and Walton Counties. There are two parts to the survey: a count tool, which just captures the number of homeless; and a long-form survey which speaks to the causes of homelessness and need for services.

The actual point-in-time is implemented using two methodologies: service providers such as cold night shelters, emergency shelters, transitional housing, soup kitchens, food pantries, etc., use the count tool to sign in homeless clients for the week of January 23-30. On January 29-30, our official “point-in-time” day, we utilize volunteers to seek out those homeless who do not access services. Given how few services relative to the homeless population we have, the “street count” is critical.

### **2. Why do we do it?**

First, federal and state governments require a point-in-time count before awarding grants which assist homeless populations of any kind. Many of these grants can only be accessed through application by the designated Continuum of Care. Even those that do not, such as grants for mental health and substance abuse treatment, have to present point-in-time data certified by the Continuum of Care, in order to apply. Many private foundations require the same data.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, the leadership in Washington and Tallahassee make frequent pronouncements that “homelessness is a big city problem.” They are so convinced of this “truth” that they allocate virtually all resources to large cities. We need compelling data that supports our contention that homelessness is a nationwide program, not confined to urban areas. Rural homelessness may take different forms. We may not have as many people wandering the streets and crowding non-existent day services, but we have lots of homeless people who need help in regaining self-sufficiency and self-respect.

Finally, we use data locally to inform our own strategic planning. The point-in-time survey identified the shift from chronic homelessness to family homelessness, and we were able to get ahead of the curve, first in obtaining homeless prevention and rapid rehousing funds, and by establishing an emergency shelter for women and families (too small, but a start).

### **3. Who does it?**

We rely heavily on volunteers. We hold meetings to gather information as to where homeless persons are likely to stay, and to assign locations for a survey. We will schedule at the convenience of volunteers in a given area. Call or 850-409-3070 for further information. Thank you.