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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

January 12, 2024

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(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 003-24 SYSTEM AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School District Principals
School District Homeless Liaisons

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Annual Point in Time (PIT) Count of Homeless Individuals in Washington

CONTACT: Melinda Dyer, Assistant Director, Education of Homeless Children and Youth
360-725-6505, melinda.dyer@k12.wa.us

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

This bulletin is regarding the annual Point in Time (PIT) count of homeless individuals in Washington. Each year in January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) asks its Continuums of Care (CoCs) to conduct a survey of homeless individuals to estimate the number of homeless people in each state. Together, the Washington Department of Commerce and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) encourage communities and school districts to increase local awareness and participation in the PIT count to create a greater understanding of homelessness in communities. The PIT provides a key data point that helps communities work to strategically end homelessness. While the PIT count is not a function of OSPI, this bulletin will highlight ways in which districts can assist with the upcoming PIT count, which is set to occur on January 25th.

The PIT count is not to be confused with the required OSPI Annual Homeless Student Data Collection, which occurs at the end of each school year, as required by the U.S. Department of Education. The PIT count is a separate effort as required by HUD, and school district involvement in the PIT count is voluntary.

While schools/districts are restricted in the data they can collect and share, schools can support the CoCs PIT count in many ways:

- Schools may discreetly refer homeless youths and their parents or guardians to community organizations participating in the PIT count.
- Schools may advise PIT count staff and volunteers on where homeless youths may congregate in the community.
- Schools may provide district-level aggregate student data that does not disclose personally identifiable information (data suppression applied for small N size).
- Schools may post youth-friendly information about the PIT count throughout schools to inform youth of event locations in the community, when to participate, who the target population is (in this case, youth experiencing homelessness under the HUD definition) and any incentives that may be provided for participation in the count.
- When supporting the CoCs in the PIT count, schools cannot distribute or collect surveys, they cannot complete surveys on school property, or use district staff time or resources for the completion of surveys. Instead, youth and families must be directed to community locations for survey completion.

School districts wishing to participate in the annual PIT count have certain limitations regarding the sharing of personally identifiable information. Privacy rights and protections found in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibit school districts from sharing personally identifiable information such as a student's name or identification number as well as other identifiers such as date of birth or other information that can be used to trace an individual's identity either directly or indirectly. The disclosure of a student's homeless status would very likely be harmful to that student, and the sharing of directory information would not be an allowable disclosure under the directory information exception to consent. It should also be noted that a student's homeless status is maintained as a part of the student's record, subject to the protections of FERPA.

Ongoing collaboration and open communication between school district homeless liaisons and community PIT count organizers is critical to the success of the annual PIT count event. School districts can help in this effort by becoming involved in the local service provider planning, informing students experiencing homelessness of appropriate services and encouraging students and their families to attend PIT count events that provide services and help identify persons experiencing homelessness. Data collected from the PIT count helps drive funding to programs that provide housing and other supports to people in need.

Housing and education partners are encouraged to reach out to each other in advance of the January 25th PIT count to discuss parameters and prepare for the event. Please visit the links below for more information.

- National Center for Homeless Education: [Housing and School Partnership on the Point-In-Time Count](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [Interagency Data Disclosure](#)

- To locate the local homeless education liaison in your area, visit [OSPI's Homeless Education Liaison Contact List](#)
- To locate the CoC in your area, visit [Washington State Department of Commerce's Continuum of Care](#)
- To Identify the local PIT coordinators or get more information, visit: [Washington State Department of Commerce's Annual Point in Time Count](#)

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Melinda Dyer, Assistant Director, Education of Homeless Children and Youth at 360-725-6505 or email melinda.dyer@k12.wa.us. The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

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