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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

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(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 001-26 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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: Keith Woodruff, Assistant Director, Education of Homeless Children and Youth
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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 count 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 in late January.

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, complete surveys on school property, or use district staff time or resources for the completion of surveys. Instead, school staff must direct youth and families to community locations for survey completion.

School districts interested in participating 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. Disclosure of a student's homeless status would likely be harmful to that student, and sharing directory information would not be an allowable disclosure under the directory information exception to consent. School districts should also note 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 support this effort by becoming involved in the local service provider planning, which will inform students experiencing homelessness of appropriate services and encourage 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.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction encourages housing and education partners to reach out to each other in advance of the January 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](#)
- 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 Keith Woodruff, Assistant Director, Education of Homeless Children and Youth, at 360-725-6505 or email keith.woodruff@k12.wa.us. The OSPI [Telecommunication Relay Services](#) number is 711 or 1-800-833-6384.

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

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Chief Education Officer

Dixie Grunenfelder
Assistant Superintendent
Student Engagement & Special Programs

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