

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

Instructions for Volunteers Doing the Street Count on March 24

A. General Information

1. Your **safety** as an interviewer is the number one priority. You will be working in teams of 2 people. Stay with your partner. If you feel you are in danger, return to a safe location immediately.

Remember - Call 911 if you or someone else is injured.

City of Vancouver staff members and the Homeless Count Project Manager and Area Coordinators are available to assist you. Their numbers are in your package.

Notify them to report any incidents.

2. Review these general instructions and be familiar with the questionnaire form.
3. If you have a cell phone, bring it in case you have a question or need assistance.
4. Arrive at your assigned Area Station approximately 30 minutes before your shift starts to sign in, pick up your count package and meet your partner.
5. Your package contains your assignment (map), questionnaires, a clip board, cigarettes, candies, safety information, and pens.
6. You will go from the Area Station with your partner to the beginning of your assigned route.
7. An assignment has been prepared for you identifying the main locations that you should visit. It consists of a map with markings on it. People who are knowledgeable about where homeless people may be found have prepared this map. Please ensure that you visit the location(s) at the time(s) indicated and follow the instructions provided.
8. Approach people with confidence and act courteously. Always identify yourself and the purpose of the interview. If necessary, you can refer to the script that is taped to the clipboard in your package.
9. Remember that a person can choose not to answer any questions or can stop the interview at any time. A person's participation in an interview will not affect their use of services in any way.
10. You may need to bring a light (book light, head lamp) to assist you in writing in the dark.
11. Offer a cigarette or a candy as an icebreaker **whether or not the person answers the questionnaire**. These are provided with your package. If you run out, call your Area Coordinator.
12. Speak slowly and clearly and keep your explanations simple.
13. Answer respondent's questions as clearly as you can.
14. Ensure that you thank all respondents for their participation. You can hand respondents a candy as a thank you.

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**** MEDIA:** If you are approached by the media, stop your interview immediately and step away from the person you are interviewing to protect the respondent's privacy. Refer the media to the City of Vancouver at media@vancouver.ca or 604-871-6336.

Resume the questionnaire when you are confident your conversation will remain confidential.

B. Map/Route Instructions

You and your partner will be given a map that identifies a route to follow and/or key locations you should visit. Each map has special instructions. These instructions are guidelines to follow. Ensure you complete the special instructions first, but feel free to step outside of the route if you see someone or have time. Be sure you don't go too far off the map.

The **red boxed-in areas** on a map are **zones**. When you see this on a map it means you are to check everywhere inside of the boxed area including alleys, inside major coffee shops or fast food restaurants, parks, etc. Do not just walk the boundary of the zone.

Red stars on a map indicate a **point of interest** where you should be able to find someone. There will be explicit instructions on these stars in the special instructions section on the map. Each special instruction point of interest will line up with a star.

Be sure you are covering the entire map as given to you, and more if you can. Always be moving.

Remember to look carefully along all areas of your route - in nooks, crannies, doorways, parks, alleys, etc.

If your shift takes you less than the allotted time, take a break, then do a quick second sweep of the route.

C. Questionnaire Instructions

BEFORE YOU START Make sure your **NAME** is clearly noted on the top of each questionnaire.

WRITE DOWN THE NEAREST INTERSECTION: Write in the approximate location of the interview e.g. *Main and Hastings*, Please note closest intersection, not just one street name.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and see if you can ask the person a few questions, for example:

“Hi there, would you like a cigarette? My name is _____. We are volunteering for the City of Vancouver Homeless Count. Have you spoken to someone today wearing this yellow button? May we ask you a few questions?”

If the individual agrees to be interviewed, let them know the survey is **anonymous** and the questions are **voluntary**. If they do not wish to answer one or more of the questions, they do not have to, and they can stop the interview at any time. Doing the interview will not affect the individual's use of services. The information will be used to measure our progress in reducing homelessness and help us plan appropriate programs to address homelessness.

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GENERAL TIPS

- Except where you are specifically asked to read a list of responses, let the respondent answer questions in their own words, and then try to select a matching category. Write down an abbreviated form of the response on the form if you can't find a matching category. If the respondent is really struggling to come up with an answer, you can show them the list, or read aloud the possible answers. You can also remind them that the question is optional and voluntary.
- Use any blank areas or the reverse side of the questionnaire as needed or to make extra notes.
- Some individuals may want to watch what you write down on the questionnaire form. This is fine. Or you may want to hand them a blank questionnaire so they can follow along.
- After you have completed interviews at one location, review your completed questionnaires to ensure that all questions have been completed.

SCREENING QUESTIONS (1-3)

The screening questions are important and must be completed to ensure no double counting. If you do not complete the screening questions, but do the rest of the survey, we will not be able to use the data.

Someone is considered homeless for the purpose of this survey if they do not have a place where they can stay for more than 30 days and they do not pay rent. The purpose of the screening questions is to determine if someone is homeless and to ensure they have not already been counted. They are very important to ask.

If the person you have approached agrees to be interviewed, begin the questionnaire with the screening questions (Questions 1-3). The screening questions are to be completed for every adult and unaccompanied youth whom you approach because you have reason to believe they may be homeless (i.e. because they are in a location identified as such). Children and youth who are accompanied by a parent (mom or dad or both) are not interviewed separately, but note this and their age on a form.

Question 1

Have you already answered this survey today? Show your count button to help jog the person's memory. If they have completed the questionnaire, END the interview and thank them for their time. If they do not want to answer this question, mark 'No answer', END the interview and thank them for their time. If they have not already answered the questionnaire, go on to question 2.

Question 2

Do you have a place you pay rent for? If they say yes, then END the questionnaire and thank the person for their time. If they do not have a place they pay rent for, go to Question 3. If they do not want to answer this question, mark 'No answer', and go to Question 3.

Question 3

Where did you stay last night? If the individual answers a question so it ENDS the interview, thank the individual for their time, otherwise go to the next question indicated. Note that if the person stayed in a shelter the night before, the interview ENDS. This is because the count will have taken place in shelters the night before. Even if the person you are speaking with was not interviewed in a shelter, they will have been counted - the shelters provide us with the total number of shelter guests in each shelter on the night of the count. To avoid double counting, please END the interview if the person stayed in a shelter the night before, even if they were not interviewed. The same is the case for detox centres, safe houses, transition houses,

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recovery houses, and hospitals.

SURVEY QUESTIONS (4-17)

Question 4

How long have you been without a place of your own? If the person asks for clarification, you can say “How long have you been without a place where you pay rent?” For a young person, this could be the length of time since they lived at home with their parents. Make sure you write the **number** of days, weeks, months or years. Only one response is necessary.

Question 5

What is your age or year of birth? Please note either the person’s age in years OR date of birth. Only one response is necessary.

Question 6

Do you identify as male, female, or transgender? Respectfully ask the person how they identify and what they would like you to write down.

Question 7

Why did you NOT stay in a shelter, safe house or transition house last night? Please check the appropriate answer based on the responses the person gives. If the person did not stay in one because they DISLIKE emergency accommodation, ask why and specify. If they give a reason not provided, note ‘Other’, and write in the response as specified.

Question 8

Did you feel safe where you stayed last night? With this question, we are seeking to find out how the person felt regarding their safety the night before. The definition of what ‘safe’ means is up to them. We are not asking for details or why they felt safe or unsafe. If they are hesitant to answer, you can remind them that the question is optional.

Question 9

Have you stayed in a shelter in the last 12 months? Only one response is necessary.

Question 10

Have you slept outside in the last 12 months? Only one response is necessary.

Question 11

Where else have you slept in the last 12 months? Please check the appropriate answer based on the responses the person gives. If the person is hesitating or having a hard time remembering, give prompts. Note, if the person says they have stayed at someone else’s place in the last 12 months, ask them whether they paid daily rent, if they bartered or traded a service for a place to stay, or if they did not pay rent.

Question 12

How long have you lived in the city of Vancouver? If the person indicates that they live in Vancouver, write down the number of days, weeks, months or years that they have lived here, and then go on to Question 13. If the person does not live in Vancouver, please ask and write down which city they live in, and go on to Question 14.

Question 13

Where were you living before Vancouver? Write the city or town or region where the person used to live.

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Question 14

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person? Please do not hesitate to ask this question. Our Aboriginal advisors note that people do not mind being asked this question and that it may not be possible to tell visually if a person is of Aboriginal ancestry.

Question 15

Where do you get your money from? Check all that apply. Let the respondent answer in their own words, then try to select the matching category. Only if the person is really struggling to come up with an answer should you read the possible answers. Feel free to write down more than one response.

Question 16

Do you have the following health concerns? Read list. You can remind the person you are interviewing that this is an optional question and they don't need to answer if they don't want to. If they agree to answering the question, please read out the possible responses. You will need to ask about each health concern separately (pause for a moment between each).

Question 17

Have you ever had any military service in the Canadian Forces (includes army, navy, airforce)

This is a simple YES or NO answer. Recent data from Canadian communities suggests that a small but consistent number of Canadian veterans are experiencing homelessness. The wording has been verified by Veteran's Affairs to specifically identify people who have had military service in the Canadian Forces.

After completing the interview, review survey to ensure you marked all necessary responses.

WHAT TO DO WITH COMPLETED FORMS

Please return your package at the end of your shift to the Area Coordinator at the Area Station where you started. This includes completed and incomplete questionnaires, maps, clipboard, pens, and remaining candy and/or cigarettes.

THANK YOU!

Remember, if you need assistance or have any questions while you are on your shift, contact one of the COV Staff or the Homeless Count Project Manager or an Area Coordinator (phone numbers will be in your package).

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D. Safety Plan

If **EMERGENCY**, call 911 or go straight to emergency

If violence, then 911 will trigger police

Needle stick injuries: send to St. Paul's Hospital. They are best equipped to deal with injuries of this nature.

OTHER incidents - Call a Count Coordinator or Project Manager:

Downtown Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Downtown Eastside Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Eastside Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Westside Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Shelter Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Project Manager	Name	Cell phone number
COV Count Coordinator	Name	Cell phone number
Director Homeless Services	Name	Cell phone number

Victim Services Unit of the Vancouver Police Department

Telephone: 604-717-2737

Email: vpd.vsu@vpd.ca

Regular office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday - Friday;

24-hour on-scene crisis response at police request

If non-emergency health issues volunteer calls Provincial nurse line 811

Registered nurse answers health questions, any hour of the day or night.

Vancouver Family Services (sliding scale for payment)

Provides counselling in a variety of languages

604-874-2938 to speak with an intake worker (9:00 am - 4:00 pm, Mon - Fri)

Employee Assistance Program (volunteers working for organizations such as CoV or VCH may have access to this)

Own GP for referral to a psychiatrist (extreme, long term issues)

Faith based supports

MEDIA: Direct media requests to City of Vancouver Media Relations at:

media@vancouver.ca or 604-871-6336

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E. Tips for Interviewing and Staying Safe

Things to keep in mind about people sleeping outside

- Many are sleep deprived
- Most people are eager to talk

How to approach

- SMILE
- As you approach, introduce yourself - "Hi I'm..."
- Offer a cigarette - it is the currency of the street. It acts as a 'meet and greet'. Candy is the thank you at the end.
- If person is sleeping - wake person up cautiously and slowly without touching them. Talk loudly. "Hey friend. Do you mind talking to me?" "Do you want a smoke?" "I've got a smoke for you."
- If the person has a dog. Note: the dog will protect the human. Don't get too close. Ask the human if the dog will let you talk. Compliment their relationship with the dog.
- If a person is threatening - walk away.

Breakfast

- Eat a good meal before your shift, include protein

What to wear

- Clothing that is comfortable and suitable for the outdoors and the weather
- Sturdy thick soles and solid shoes or boots with a closed toe

What to bring

- Cell phone - fully charged
- A headlamp might be good to help write in the dark
- Small back pack to carry your belongings

What NOT to bring

- Don't bring a purse, umbrella, jewelry, excess cash

During the interview

- Let the person see the questions.
- If person appears unpredictable, use humour, e.g. say, "I'll see you tomorrow".
- If the person is threatening, walk away.
- Health issues - if person says they are fine, but you notice something, say, "I notice you are limping." You may need to kindly push. "I know you are fine, but you are on crutches, what's with that?"
- Safety - the difference between feeling anxious and feeling fear: if you feel anxious, you feel it above the diaphragm. This feeling keeps you alert. It's an OK/safe feeling. If you feel fear, you feel it in your belly button. Listen to that feeling of fear and walk away.

Ending the interview

- Thank the person and offer them a candy.