

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

Instructions for Volunteers Doing the Shelter Count on March 23

A. General Information

1. Your **safety** as an interviewer is the number one priority. You will be working with a small group of other volunteers in a shelter that is supervised by shelter staff. If you feel you are in danger, alert the shelter staff 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 shelter approximately 15 minutes before your shift starts to meet the shelter staff, sign in, pick up your count package and meet your group.
5. Your package contains questionnaires, a clip board, cigarettes, candies, safety information, a count button and pens. Each volunteer will receive his or her own package.
6. The time of your shift has been determined by shelter staff. They base their decision on the time at which the most shelter guests will be present. This can vary from shelter to shelter, depending on when the shelter opens, when dinner is served, etc.
7. Shelter staff will facilitate the count in the shelter. They will have arranged a place for you to sit to do the count, and they will bring shelter guests to you one-by-one. You will not be approaching shelter guests yourself. Being in a shelter is similar to being in someone's home.
8. Greet shelter guests 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. 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, see if other volunteers in the shelter have extras, or call the Shelter Coordinator.
11. Speak slowly and clearly and keep your explanations simple.
12. Answer respondent's questions as clearly as you can.
13. Ensure that you thank all respondents for their participation, and offer them a candy.

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

**** MEDIA:** It is very unlikely that you will be approached by the media in a shelter, but if you are: 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. Questionnaire Instructions

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

WRITE DOWN THE SHELTER 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 _____. I am volunteering for the City of Vancouver Homeless Count. Have you spoken to someone today wearing this yellow button? May I 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.

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 an interview, review your completed questionnaires to ensure that all questions have been completed, before starting your next one.

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

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 shelter guest agrees to be interviewed, begin the questionnaire with the screening questions (Questions 1-3). The screening questions are to be completed for every person you interview in the shelter because you have reason to believe they may be homeless (i.e. because they are in a shelter), but you need to confirm this. 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

Will you be sleeping in a shelter tonight? If they answer yes, continue. If they answer no, END the interview and thank them for their time.

Question 2

Have you already completed a shelter survey tonight? Show your button to help jog the person's memory. If they answer yes, END the interview and thank them for their time. If they answer no, go on to Question 3.

Question 3

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 4. If they do not want to answer this question, mark 'No answer', and go to Question 4.

SURVEY QUESTIONS (4-14)

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

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

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

Question 8

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 9

How long have you lived in the city of Vancouver? If the person lives in Vancouver, write down the number of days, weeks, months or years that they have lived here, and then go on to Question 10. If the person does not live in Vancouver, please ask and write down which city they live in, and go on to Question 11.

Question 10

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

Question 11

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 12

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 13

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 14

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 shelter staff. 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, you can ask the shelter staff or contact one of the COV Staff or the Homeless Count Project Manager or the Shelter Coordinator (phone numbers will be in your package).

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

C. Safety Plan

Alert SHELTER STAFF in the event of an emergency or concern.

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:

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

City of Vancouver 2015 Homeless Count Training

D. Tips for Interviewing and Staying Safe

Things to keep in mind about people sleeping outside or in a shelter

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

How to greet

- SMILE
- As you greet, introduce yourself - "Hi I'm..."
- If you have cigarettes in your package, offer one - it is the currency of the street. It acts as a 'meet and greet'. If you don't have cigarettes, offer a candy. Candy is also the thank you at the end.
- 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 - either move away or call the shelter staff.

Breakfast

- Eat a good meal before your shift, include protein

What to wear

- Clothing that is comfortable and suitable for being in a shelter
- Sturdy solid shoes with a closed toe

What to bring

- Cell phone - fully charged
- Small back pack to carry your belongings - bring very few things.

What NOT to bring

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

During the interview

- Let the person see the questions.
- Listen well. Be compassionate, empathetic and non-judgmental.
- If person appears unpredictable, use humour, e.g. "I'll see you tomorrow".
- If the person is threatening, move away, call shelter staff.
- 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, move away, and alert shelter staff.

Ending the interview

- Thank the person and offer them a candy.