About the Alameda County Homeless Point in Time Count (EveryOne Counts!)

- In odd numbered years, Continuums of Care (CoC) across the U.S. conduct a census of people experiencing homelessness.
- It provides a point in time snapshot of where people slept on a single night.
- Information about people in shelters is collected from administrative data sources like HMIS.
- The count of people who are unsheltered takes place during overnight hours and involves hundreds of people physically traveling each census tract in Alameda County and counting the number of people sleeping outdoors, in vehicles, tents, or abandoned buildings.
- Some parts of our county are best covered by car and others on foot. Some areas are hidden and require specialized knowledge to find.

Recommendation

- The CoC Board, tasked locally to oversee the census, will be reviewing a proposal to submit a waiver to HUD to opt-out of the unsheltered count. Date for vote is TBD.

Rationale

1. **Flexibility Granted by HUD.** HUD is encouraging CoCs to request exceptions to unsheltered PIT Count requirements to protect the health of homeless persons and frontline staff. HUD has assured that funding will not be impacted.
2. **Frontline service providers and volunteers** indicates that the community do not have the capacity or staff resources to support an unsheltered count. A survey of outreach teams and direct service staff, who are heavily relied for an accurate count, shows that these essential workers are particularly stretched and do not have the capacity to take on additional work. If staff members get sick, it will disrupt the delivery of essential homeless services in some programs.
3. **The safety and well-being of frontline staff, community partners, and volunteers is of concern.** The methodology requires 200 paid Homeless Guides to lead teams to count familiar areas and 500 Counters (including city and county staff, nonprofit providers, outreach workers, police and sheriff, and volunteers) to work in close proximity to each other. This type of activity is currently prohibited.
4. **Intersection of health and racial disparities.** COVID-19 disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities, who also make up the majority of our direct service staff and homeless population. Methodology of the count will expose Guides and frontline homeless services staff to additional, unnecessary risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 as they interact, travel, and walk into places where homeless people are sleeping.
5. **The State of California and Alameda County have released a new public health stay-at-home order,** including an overnight curfew prohibiting non-essential activities that limits our ability to conduct a nighttime count as required by HUD. The Point in Time Count is a non-essential activity. In a statement issued by the Alameda County Health Officer, Dr. Moss and the Health Care Services Medical Director, Dr. Clannon do not recommend proceeding with a Point In Time visual count or survey as long as the County remains in the State of California's Coronavirus Purple or Red Tier based on transmission and hospitalization rates.
6. **We are concerned that the accuracy of a 2021 unsheltered count** would not be comparable to past and future unsheltered counts given these impediments. Without Guides or enough Counters, our research partner, Applied Survey Research, expects a significant under count of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, even returning lower numbers than 2019.