



Simtech
Solutions

Unsheltered Homeless Point- in-Time (PIT) Count Volunteer Training

JANUARY 13, 2025

Training materials provided are informed by US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) guidance, feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and Simtech Solutions for use of mobile technology.

Housekeeping

- ▶ Please keep Microphones on Mute to reduce background noise
- ▶ Use the chat to ask questions—We will answer many in the chat and elevate some for further discussion as we finish each section
- ▶ A copy of this recorded training and slides will be available on <https://pointintime.info/volunteer/SantaClara-county-point-in-time/> within 24 hours of the session

Training Agenda

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ What is a PIT Count?
 - ▶ Who are we counting this year?
- ▶ Your Role as a Volunteer
 - ▶ What are the expectations of volunteers?
 - ▶ Interviewing people experiencing homelessness using a trauma informed and culturally responsive approach
 - ▶ Safety
- ▶ Conducting Surveys
 - ▶ Using the Mobile App to Collect Data
 - ▶ Survey Types
 - ▶ Unsheltered Survey
 - ▶ Observational Only Survey
 - ▶ Vehicle/RV Survey
- ▶ Additional Logistics for the Mornings of the PIT Count
- ▶ Getting Assistance During the Count

Introductions

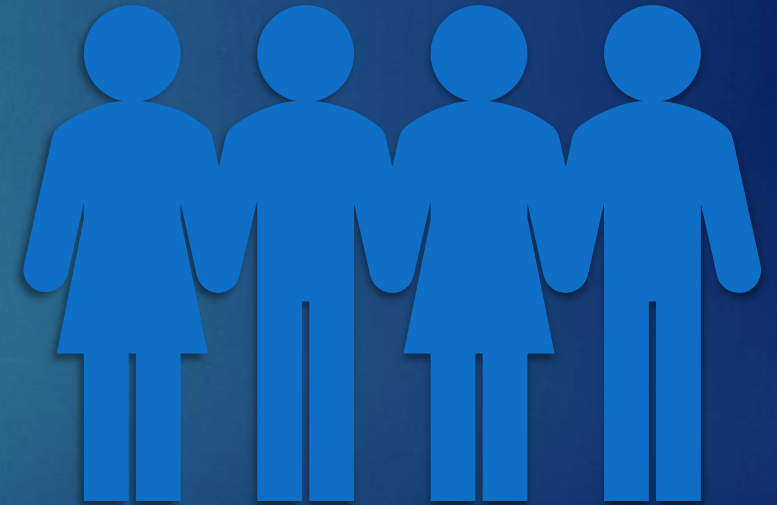
- ▶ With so many volunteers joining the call today, we don't have time for everyone to introduce themselves individually!
- ▶ If you'd like to introduce yourself in the chat, feel free to let people know who you are and which Jurisdiction(s) you'll be volunteering in.
 - ▶ If you're a Jurisdiction Lead on the call, please highlight that in the chat
- ▶ Simtech Staff Supporting the Count:
 - ▶ President of Simtech Solutions: Matt Simmonds
 - ▶ Community Impact Advisors: Jackie Gardner, Joseph Ben Dov, TJ Swanson



Point-in-Time Count Overview

What is a Point-in-Time (PIT) Count?

- ▶ A PIT Count is a federally mandated census count of people experiencing homelessness on a community selected date during the last ten days of January
- ▶ Every community in the country conducts a PIT Count every year, however HUD only requires a count of people experiencing UNSHELTERED Homelessness every other year
- ▶ Data collected from the PIT Count provide a snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness in the community on an annual basis
 - ▶ Collecting information over time helps identify trends in homelessness
 - ▶ HUD requires communities to provide specific information about people experiencing homelessness, including demographic characteristics
 - ▶ HUD allows communities to add additional questions to provide additional insight into homelessness at the local level



Who Are We Counting This Year?

- ▶ This year, Santa Clara County will be counting both Sheltered and Unsheltered People Experiencing Homelessness on January 22 & 23, 2025 during the early morning hours

Sheltered Homeless	Unsheltered Homeless
People staying in Emergency Shelters	People living in places not meant for habitation
People staying in Transitional Housing	People living in their cars: including people using both Sanctioned Safe Parking lots and those in unsanctioned parking lots
People Staying in Safe Havens	People staying in bus or train stations or airports
	People living in abandoned buildings
	People living in campgrounds
	People living in parks
	People living on the street
	People living in homeless encampments

- ▶ The requirements of a PIT Count are to count only people experiencing **literal** homelessness
- ▶ People who are doubled up with family or friends, in an institutional setting on the day of the count, or unstably housed are NOT counted during the PIT

Volunteer Role, Expectations, Cultural Humility, Safety

Your Role as a Volunteer

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Your role will be to interview people experiencing **Unsheltered** Homelessness using a community approved survey instrument through the Counting Us Mobile App. (More on that later!)



Your Jurisdictional Lead will provide more information about the location to which you've been assigned to interview people experiencing unsheltered homelessness



People who agree to complete the survey will receive a “thank you” gift which will help incentivize participation

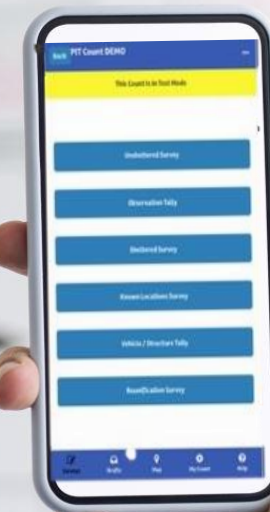


If a person refuses to complete a survey, you will still be able to provide data through an “observation only” survey

Expectations of Volunteers

- ▶ Arrive to your meetup location on time
- ▶ Ensure you have the mobile app downloaded to your phone and that you are logged into your account
- ▶ Ask for consent to conduct the PIT Count Survey
- ▶ Be friendly and respect people's time
- ▶ Have a conversation with people you're interviewing
- ▶ Be respectful of people's space
- ▶ Do Not take pictures of or with people you are interviewing
- ▶ Ask questions as written and do not assume you know the answer
- ▶ Remember that a person can refuse to answer any question for any reason
- ▶ Do not offer anything you cannot/should not provide

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Cultural Humility and Trauma Informed Approaches to Interviewing A Person Experiencing Homelessness

- ▶ **Practice Deep, Compassionate, and Active Listening:**
 - ▶ We all can learn things from each other. Don't be afraid to seize the opportunity as a listener. Deep listening includes a non-judgmental connection with the people.
- ▶ **Be mindful of intent vs. impact:**
 - ▶ Our best intentions and the impact of our words and actions do not always line up. Sometimes our best intentions can lead to a negative impact on someone else. Be willing to apologize if you offend someone.
- ▶ **Remember we are guests in other's space:**
 - ▶ Be mindful and respectful of people's space. Be mindful of people's time, willingness and/or ability to continue the conversation.
- ▶ **Acknowledge when your cup is full:**
 - ▶ Trauma-informed care is acknowledging that everyone has a story to tell. We shift from "What is wrong with you? To what happened to you? When hearing folk's stories, you may feel triggered by some of the more personal questions and responses. This is especially true for questions about sensitive topics. If you feel as if your cup is full, inform one of your colleagues and take a short break.

Ensuring Safety

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- ▶ Leave the Flash at home: Avoid wearing anything that can distract you from connecting with the community. This includes jewelry, clothing, and shirts with quotes or “funny” sayings.
 - ▶ Instead focus on the following:
 - ▶ Does my clothing accommodate the weather?
 - ▶ Am I as handsfree as possible?
 - ▶ Am I prepared:
 - ▶ Masks, attachable hand sanitizers, gloves, Long Sleeves, jackets, flat shoes/boots?
 - ▶ Announce yourself loudly from a distance:
 - ▶ Remember that people experiencing homelessness may not be expecting you. Knocking on anyone's space can be quite alarming. Remember to kindly announce yourself from afar. If you encounter someone in a car, maybe knock gently on the front end of the car rather than a window. This gives enough eye distance for the community members to see you.
 - ▶ Unzipping tents and/or removing items to get into spaces is **unacceptable**.
 - ▶ Do NOT trespass on Private Property
- ▶ Surveying people near highway on/off ramps: Be alert and aware of moving vehicles for both walking and parking purposes

Surveying People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

Conducting Surveys

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Your jurisdictional lead will provide you with the location or locations to which you and your count team have been assigned to canvas



You may be walking around an area where many people are experiencing homelessness or driving around an area where few people experiencing homelessness are anticipated



When you encounter someone who may be experiencing homelessness, the goal is to complete a full interview with them



You should always introduce yourself, explain why you are there, and ask for consent to conduct the survey

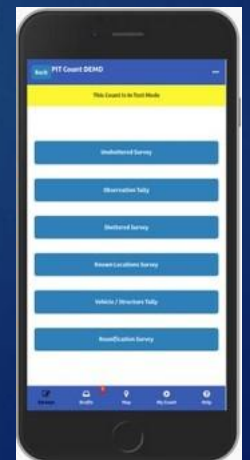
Counting Us App

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- ▶ As a reminder, download the Counting Us Mobile App if you haven't already
 - ▶ Scan the QR Code to the right, visit the direct link below, or search for Counting Us in your device's App Store.
 - ▶ Google Play: https://bit.ly/Counting_Us_Google
 - ▶ Apple Store: https://bit.ly/Counting_Us_Apple
- ▶ Login to Counting Us using the email and password you created when you registered as a volunteer (<https://santaclara.pointintime.info/>)
- ▶ Tap on the Survey you want to conduct!
- ▶ **Create fake surveys to practice using the app**
- ▶ None of the survey data entered prior to the Count will be included in any final reporting so you can create as many test surveys as you'd like
- ▶ Please Note: The Known Location Survey will NOT be visible during the count

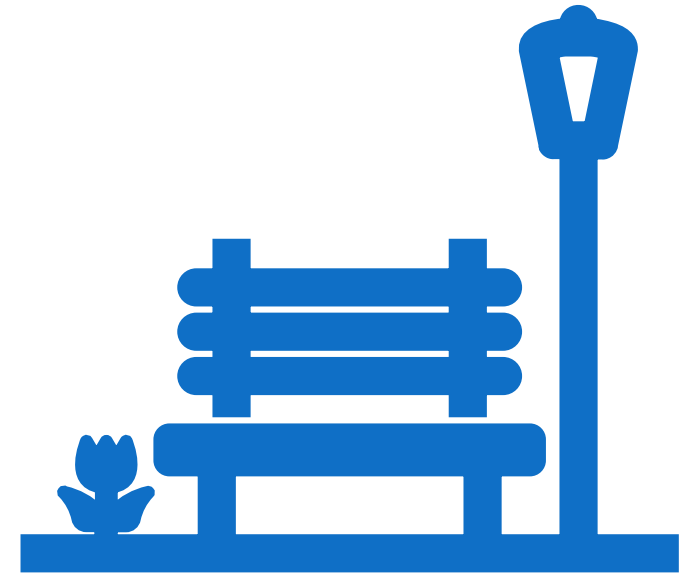


Mobile App
Download
QR Code



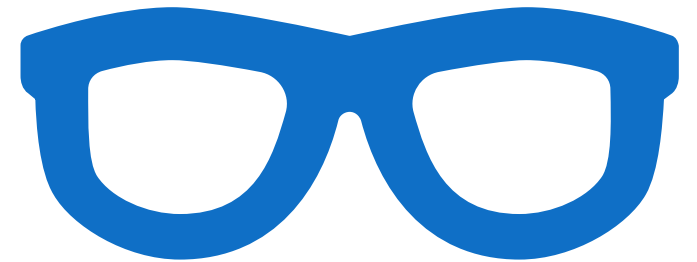
Purpose of Each Survey

- ▶ **Unsheltered Survey (Primary Survey Instrument)**
- ▶ Click on **“I am interviewing a person”** to start the survey
 - ▶ The goal is to collect as many complete unsheltered surveys as possible
 - ▶ If a person experiencing homelessness agrees to complete this survey, they will receive a “thank you gift” or “incentive” for their time
 - ▶ Ask the questions as they appear in the mobile app and record the answers (do not make assumptions, ask all questions)
 - ▶ Respondents can refuse to answer specific questions during the interview and that does not disqualify them from receiving their incentive



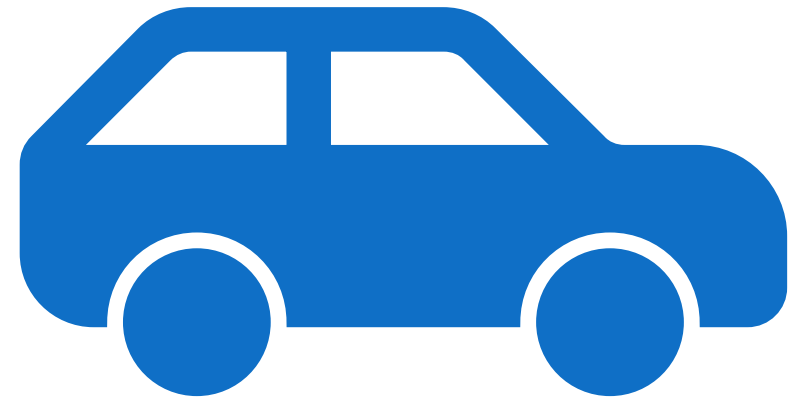
Purpose of Each Survey

- ▶ **Observation Tally** (Used only if a person refuses or is otherwise unable to complete a full survey!)
- ▶ Click on **“I am observing a person”** to start the observation
 - ▶ Provide an answer to why the full interview can't be conducted
 - ▶ Record the observed information as best as possible
 - ▶ There are no “thank you gifts” or “incentives” for this survey as it is used only when unable to engage with a person



Purpose of Each Survey

- ▶ **Car/Other Structure Tally** (Used if you've identified a vehicle, tent, car, RV or other structure that you believe may in use as a place someone is staying)
- ▶ Click on **"I am observing a vehicle or structure"** to start the observation
 - ▶ Provide the information about the structure following the prompts in the app
 - ▶ **If you can engage with the occupants of the vehicle, use the Unsheltered Survey "I'm interviewing a person"**
 - ▶ **If you can see people in the structure who don't want to engage, use the Observation Tally "I'm observing a person"**
 - ▶ **If you see a structure, but cannot determine if anyone is in the structure, use the Car/Other Structure Tally "I'm observing a vehicle or structure"**
 - ▶ This tally survey will ask you to justify why you believe the structure to be in use by someone experiencing homelessness



Visual Guide for Selecting Surveys

I'm interviewing a person:



Yes, I will answer the survey questions



Yes, I will answer the survey questions

I'm observing a person:



No thanks, I am not interested in taking a survey



Looks like everyone is asleep and/or they don't want to take a survey



Looks like this person is asleep and doesn't want to be disturbed

I'm observing a vehicle or structure:



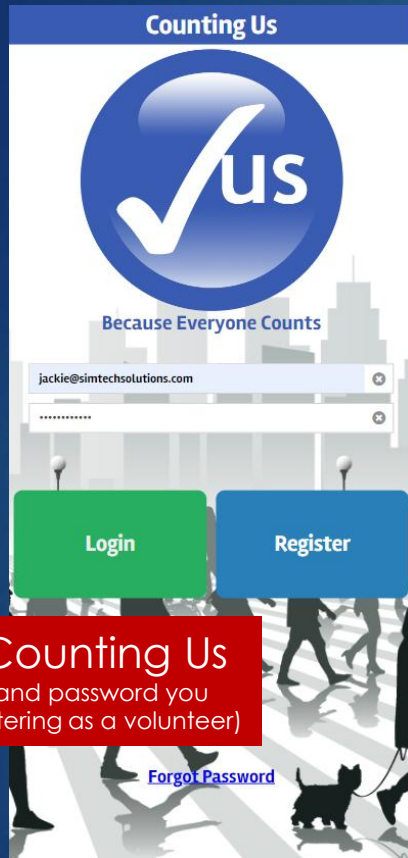
It looks like someone is living in this vehicle, but I can't see inside it



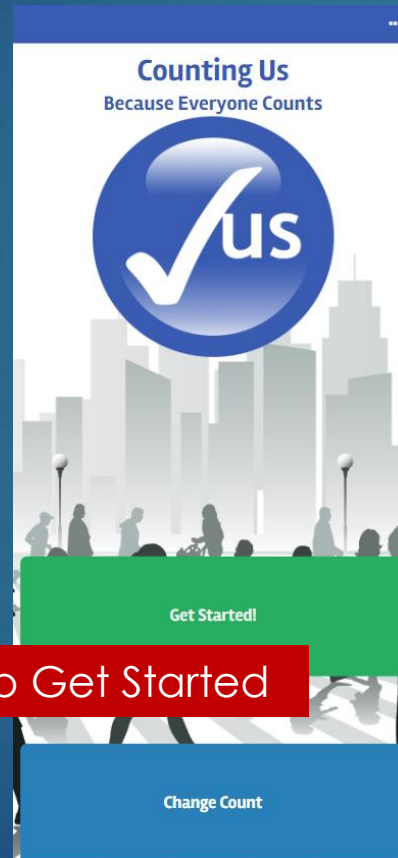
It looks like someone is living in this tent, but no one is responding after announcing myself

Conducting a Full Unsheltered Survey

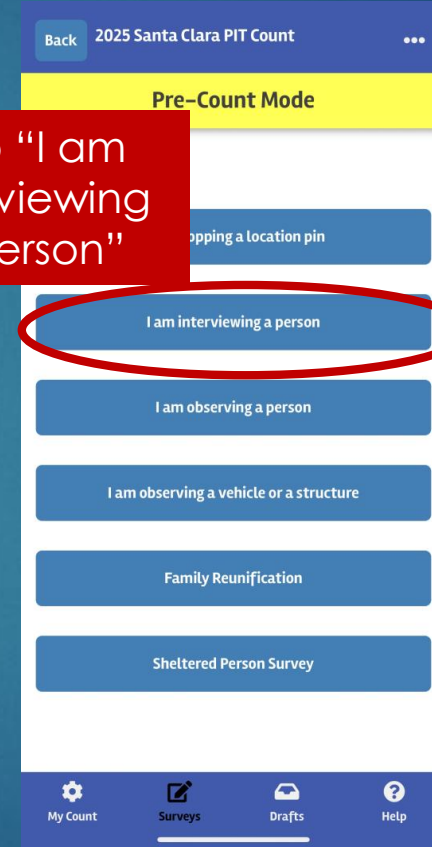
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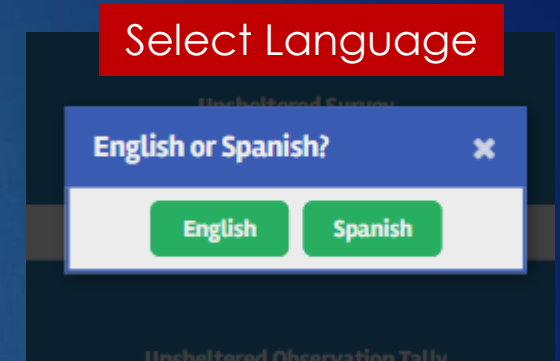
Login to Counting Us
(using the email and password you
set up after registering as a volunteer)



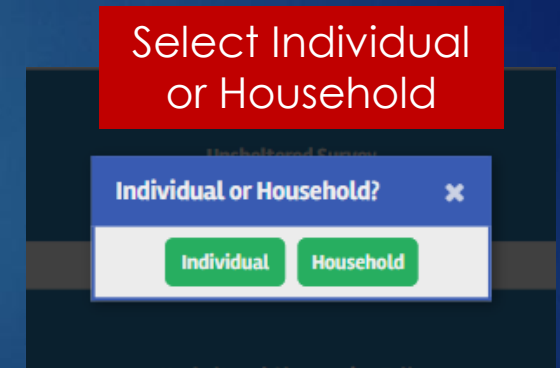
Tap Get Started



Tap "I am
Interviewing
a Person"

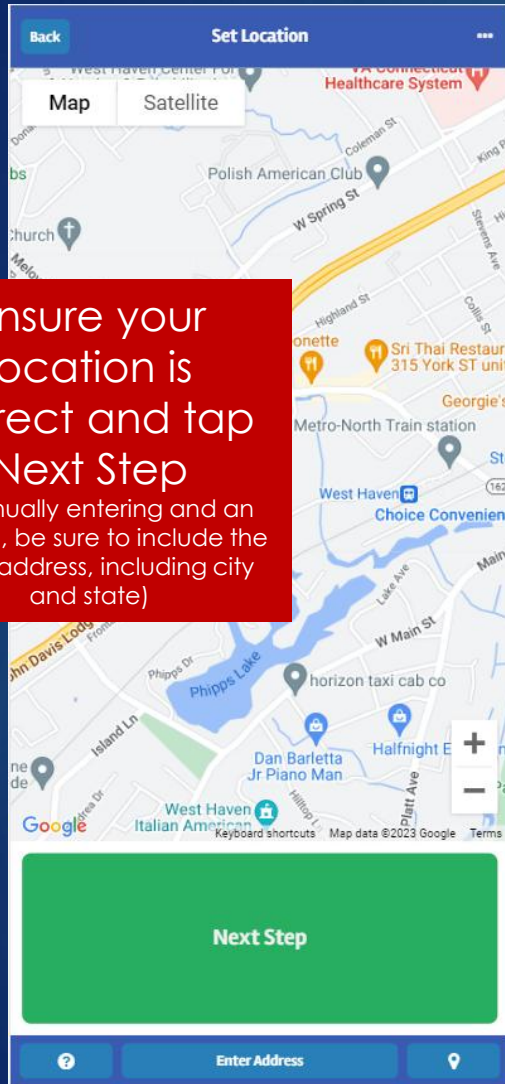


Select Language

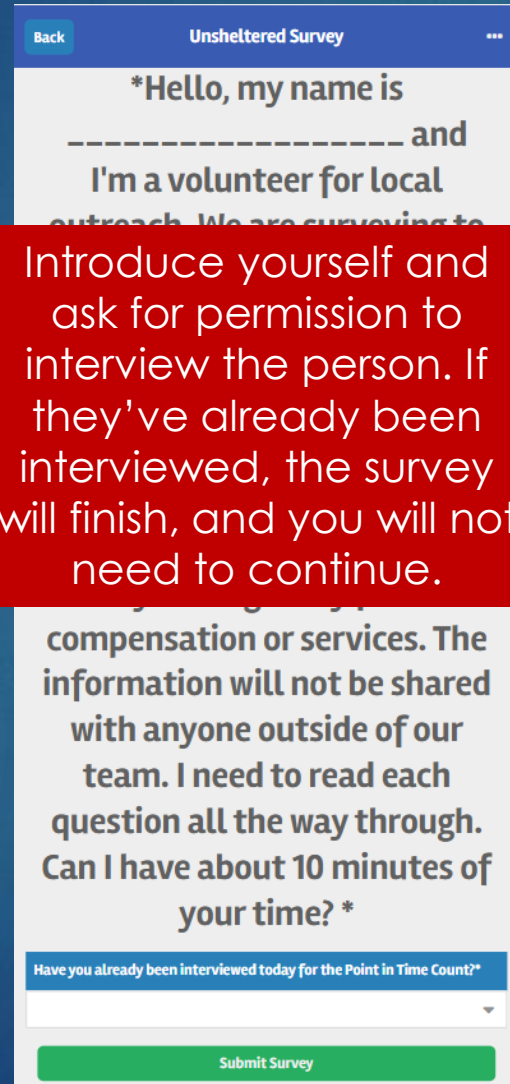


Select Individual
or Household

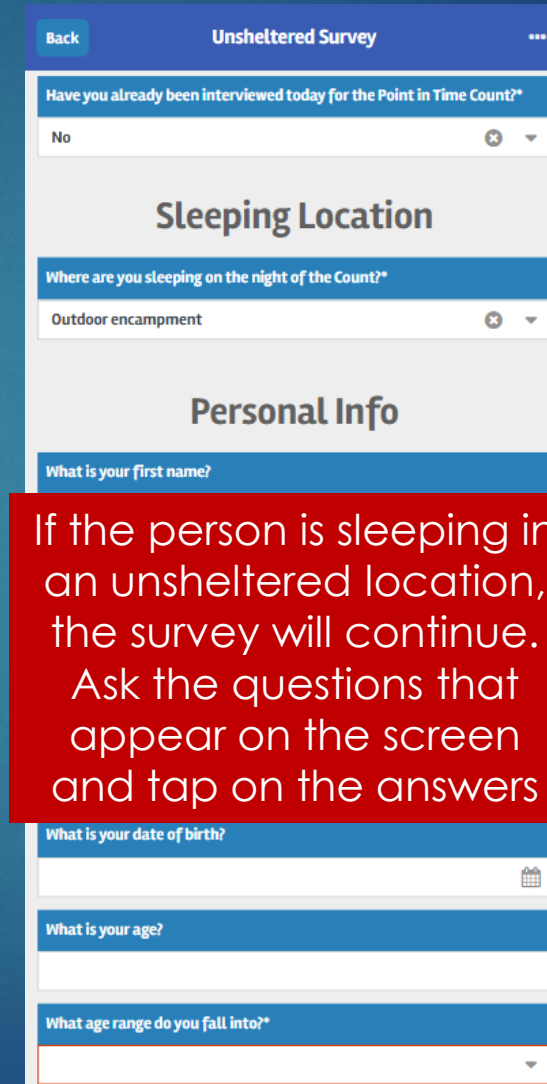
Conducting a Full Unsheltered Survey



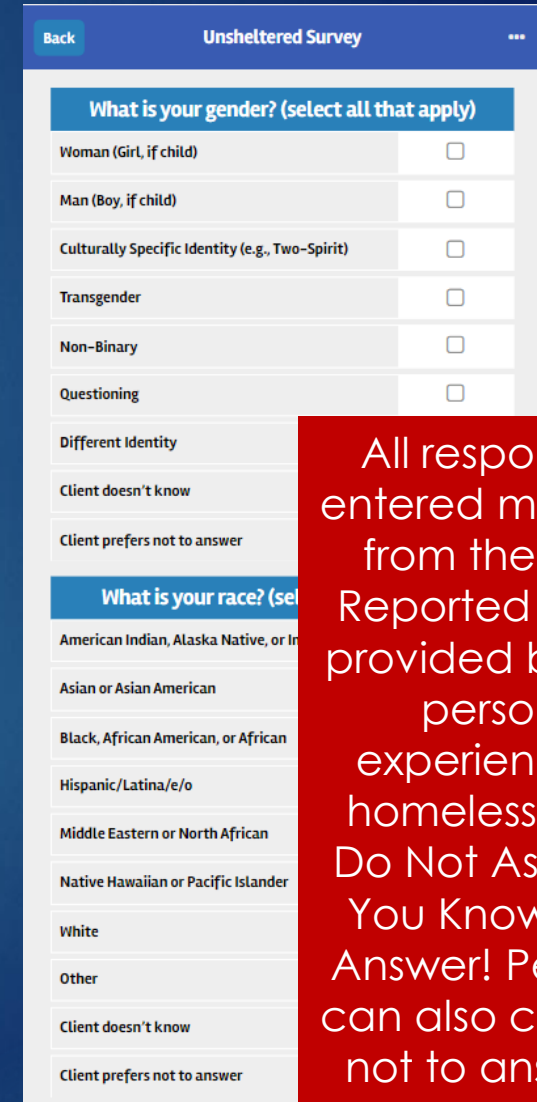
Ensure your location is correct and tap Next Step (if manually entering an address, be sure to include the entire address, including city and state)



Introduce yourself and ask for permission to interview the person. If they've already been interviewed, the survey will finish, and you will not need to continue.



If the person is sleeping in an unsheltered location, the survey will continue. Ask the questions that appear on the screen and tap on the answers



All responses entered must be from the Self Reported data provided by the person experiencing homelessness. Do Not Assume You Know The Answer! People can also choose not to answer.

Conducting a Full Unsheltered Survey

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You will see similar questions in your community's survey:

The image displays four sequential screenshots of the 'Unsheltered Survey' app interface. Each screenshot has a blue header with 'Back' and 'Unsheltered Survey' and a three-dot menu icon.

- First Screenshot:** Titled 'Which of these options best describes your sexual orientation?'. It features a list of radio button options: Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Straight, Other identity, Doesn't know, and Prefers not to answer. Below this is a question: 'Are you currently pregnant or expecting to become a parent within the next 9 months?' with a dropdown menu. Another question follows: 'Do you have a pet (currently living with you)?' with a dropdown menu. The final question is 'Have you served in the U.S. Armed Forces? (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard)' with a dropdown menu.
- Second Screenshot:** Titled 'Homeless History and residency'. It asks 'Is this the first time you've been homeless?' with a dropdown menu. The next question is 'How long have you been homeless this time? Only include time you spent staying in shelters and/or on the streets.' with a dropdown menu. This is followed by 'Have you been living in an emergency shelter and/or on the streets (including bus stations, underpasses, encampments, abandoned buildings, etc.) for the past year (12 months) or more?' with a dropdown menu. The next question is 'How old were you the first time you experienced homelessness?' with a dropdown menu. This is followed by 'How long have you lived in Alameda County?' with a dropdown menu. The next question is 'Do you remember the address of the place you were living before you became homeless this time?' with a dropdown menu. The final question is 'What is the primary event or events that led to you currently being homeless?' with a dropdown menu.
- Third Screenshot:** Contains a large text block: 'The next set of questions asks about sensitive topics. You don't have to answer any question that you don't want to but your feedback will help us improve services in the community.' Below this are seven questions, each with a dropdown menu: 'Do you have a substance use disorder?', 'Do you have a chronic health condition?', 'Do you have a mental health disorder?', 'Do you have a physical disability?', 'Do you have a developmental disability?', 'Do you live with AIDS or an HIV-related illness?', and 'Are you a survivor of domestic violence?'.
- Fourth Screenshot:** Titled 'Services and Assistance'. It asks 'What is your current employment status?' with a dropdown menu. The next question is 'If you are not employed, what is keeping you from employment? (Select all that apply)' with a dropdown menu. This is followed by 'Are you currently receiving (or have you received in the last year) any of the following forms of income or benefits?' with a dropdown menu. The next question is 'In the past 12 months, have you visited a doctor or other medical professional?' with a dropdown menu. This is followed by 'What barriers, if any, prevent you from using shelter services?' with a dropdown menu. The final question is 'Have you had interactions with the criminal justice system in the past year including probation, parole, court appearances, arrests, tickets, etc.?' with a dropdown menu.

This screenshot shows a 'Notes' section in the survey app. It features a blue header with the word 'Notes' and a large white text area for entering information. At the bottom of the section are two buttons: a green 'Submit Survey' button and a blue 'Save Draft' button.

Be cautious when asking the questions shown here. They are very personal. Be mindful of the volume of your voice and tap the answers as provided to you by the person. Do not make assumptions.

Additional notes can be very helpful to document any additional information the person wants to provide or that you want to provide.

Reunification Survey Note

- ▶ During an unsheltered survey where you are **interviewing a person**, the last question before submitting the survey asks if the person has any friends or family with whom they'd like to reconnect.
 - ▶ If the answer is yes, please be sure to conduct a **Family Reunification Survey**

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Back I am interviewing a person

Miracle Messages

Do you have any family or friends that you'd like to reconnect with, even if you do not currently know how to reach them?

Yes

Note to surveyor: Based on this response, after completing this survey please complete the Reunification Survey.

I am interviewing a person

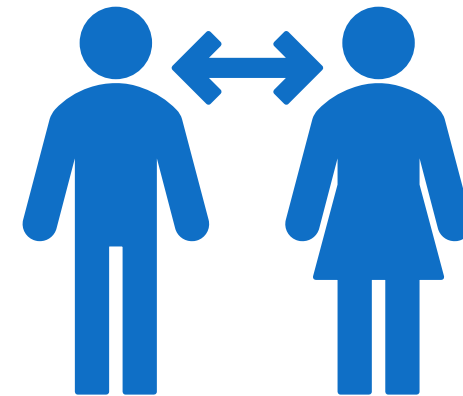
I am observing a person

I am observing a vehicle or a structure

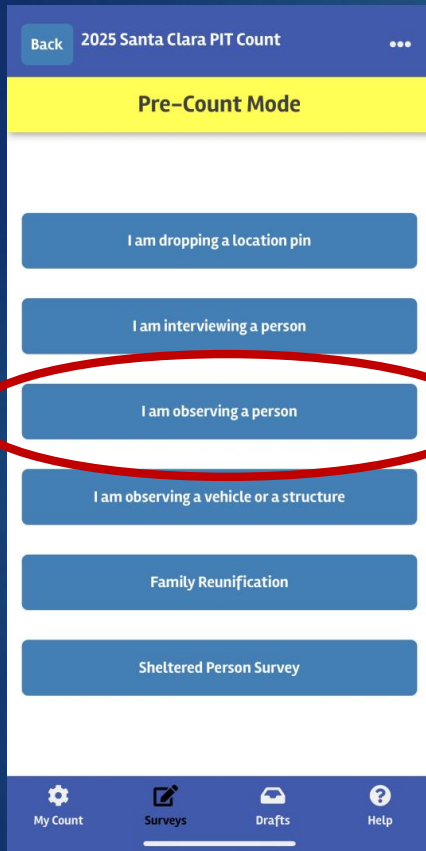
Family Reunification

Sheltered Person Survey

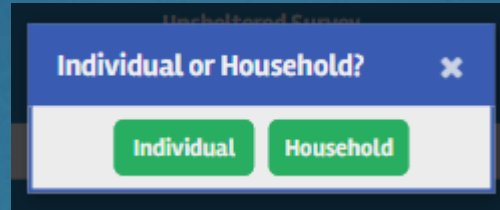
My Count Surveys Drafts Help



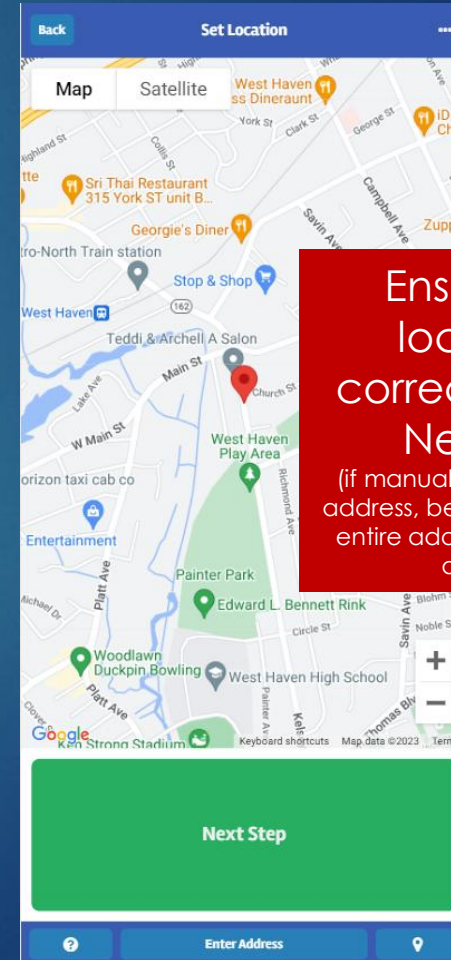
Conducting Observation Only Surveys



Tap "I am observing a person" to start the observation data collection survey



Select Individual or Household



Ensure your location is correct and tap Next Step (if manually entering and an address, be sure to include the entire address, including city and state)

Conducting Observation Only Surveys

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If you are gathering Unsheltered Data via Observation, you will need to provide a reason why you were unable to complete a full survey

Back Unsheltered Observation Tally ...

Survey data is integral to a successful PIT count. Observations should only be completed if a full survey is not a viable option.

Surveyor only: Select the reason an observation is being completed instead of a full survey*

- Person is sleeping
- Person is incoherent
- Safety concerns
- Language Barrier
- Person declined
- Lack of time
- Other

Please estimate the age of the person being observed:*

What is their gender? (select all that apply)

- Woman (Girl, if child)
- Man (Boy, if child)
- Culturally Specific Identity (e.g., Two-Spirit)
- Transgender
- Non-Binary
- Questioning
- Different Identity

What is their race? (select all that apply)

- American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous
- Asian or Asian American
- Black, African American, or African
- Hispanic/Latina/e/o
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

Observation surveys ask for Age Range (required), Gender, and Race Information about the person.

Additional notes can be very helpful to document any additional information the person wants to provide or that you want to provide.

Please enter any additional notes

Collecting Vehicle/RV/Other Structure Data

Select "I am observing a vehicle or a structure"

Back 2025 Santa Clara PIT Count

- I am dropping a location pin
- I am interviewing a person
- I am observing a person
- I am observing a vehicle or a structure**
- Family reunification
- Sheltered Person Survey

My Count Surveys Drafts Help

Ensure your location is correct and tap Next Step (if manually entering and an address, be sure to include the entire address, including city and state)

Back Set Location

Next Step

Enter Address

Please Note: This survey should only be selected if you are unable to engage with the occupants of a structure

Back Vehicle / Structure Observation

Note to Surveyor: Please count the vehicle or structure if you believe there to be people inside who you are unable to engage.

What type of vehicle or structure is this?

Please indicate whether or not the vehicle or structure appears to be actively being used or if it appears abandoned

Please describe why you think this vehicle or structure should be included in this year's count?

Submit Survey Save Draft

Additional questions about the vehicle or structure will appear dependent on the type of structure selected.

Back Vehicle / Structure Observation Tally

What type of vehicle or structure is this?
RV

What color is the vehicle?

Please indicate whether or not the vehicle or structure appears to be actively being used or if it appears abandoned

Please provide the last 4 digits on the license plate (if there is no plate, please enter 0000's):*

Please provide details on the condition of the RV

- RV is in disrepair (e.g., holes, flat tires, broken windows, broken siding)
- Occupants do not have access to sewer, water, or electricity
- RV is parked in an unusual place where RVs are not allowed to park
- RV appears to be in good working order and is suitable for habitation

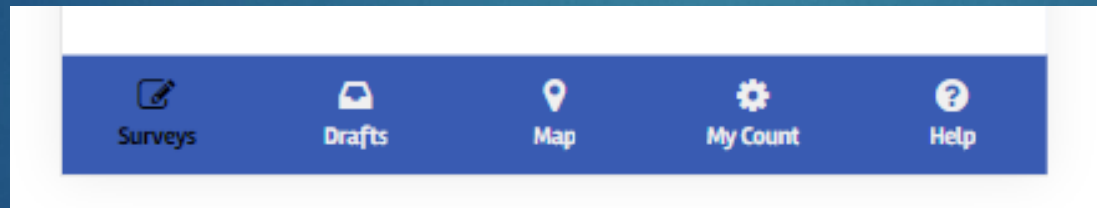
Please describe why you think this vehicle or structure should be included in this year's count?

Submit Survey Save Draft

Additional Counting Us Features

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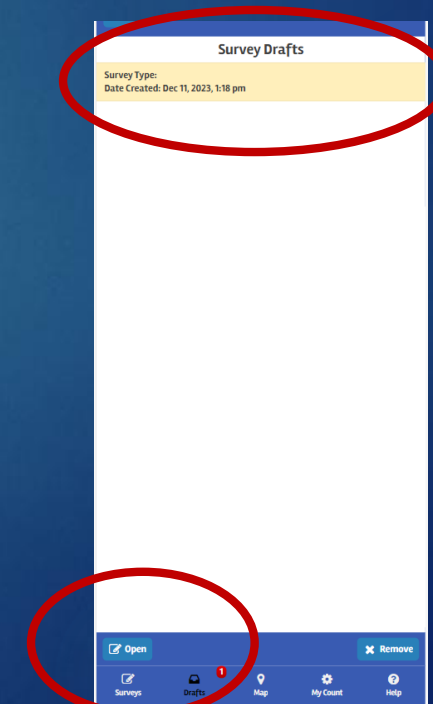
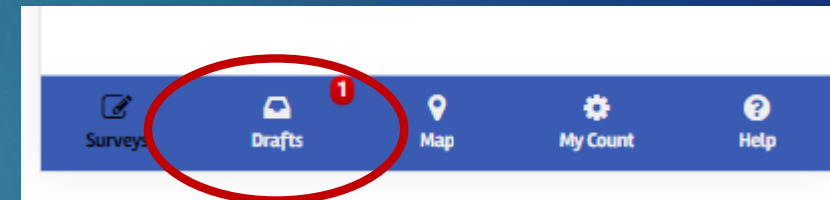
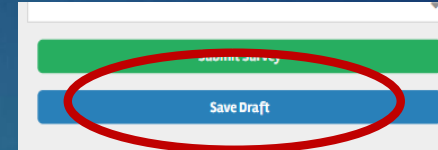
- ▶ The menu of buttons on the bottom of the app screen allow you to do several things:
 - ▶ Conduct Surveys (using the Surveys button)
 - ▶ Review and Submit Drafts of Surveys (using the Drafts button)
 - ▶ Review your Map (using the Map button)
 - ▶ Get details about your specific count (using the My Count button)
 - ▶ Get help with common issues (using the Help button)



Drafts: Saving & Submitting Surveys

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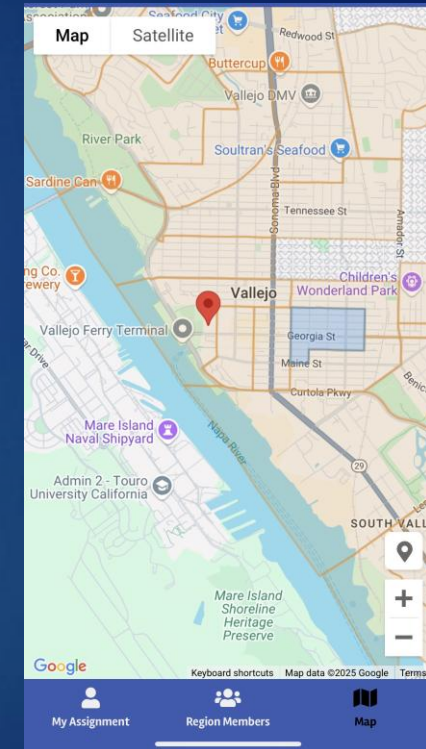
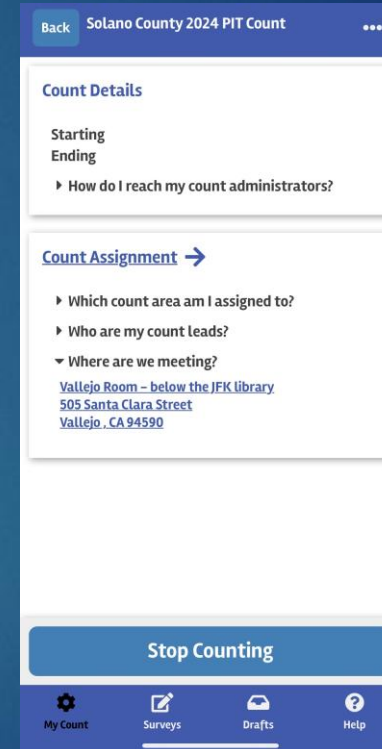
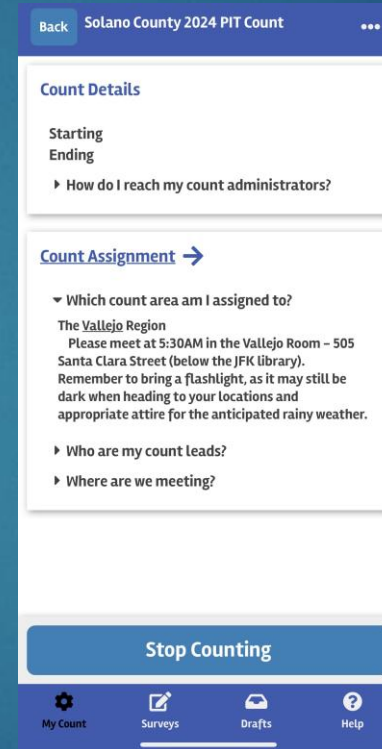
- ▶ Though it doesn't happen often given modern technological advances, there may be places assigned for canvassing that have little to no cellular service
- ▶ In this scenario you may get an error when trying to submit your survey
 - ▶ If that happens, you can save the survey as a draft and submit the information later when you are in an area that has better cell service
 - ▶ Simply tap "Save Draft" to save the data you've collected
 - ▶ Once you're in an area that has cell service, tap Drafts at the bottom of the page, tap the survey you would like to submit, tap Open, and then tap Submit Survey
 - ▶ Please note that the location data you identified will not be impacted by poor cell service—the location data is identified using location services on your phone that are powered by satellites
- ▶ **After you've completed canvassing your assigned area(s), be sure to check your app for any Draft surveys that need to be submitted**



Count Days Logistics

Mornings of the PIT Count

- ▶ Common Questions for the Count
 - ▶ Who is your Key Contact Person?
 - ▶ When and Where do you meet up with your team?
 - ▶ How do I know where to go?
- ▶ Jurisdiction Leads are working to create count team so they can be assigned to locations (census tracts)
 - ▶ The information you provided during volunteer registration will help inform the creation of count teams
- ▶ Most people will be assigned to the city selected as their primary location
- ▶ If other locations need additional volunteers, you may be asked to go one of the secondary cities you selected during registration
- ▶ Once the count teams and locations are assigned, the Counting Us Mobile App will display this information under MY COUNT at the bottom of the screen



Sample Visuals from My Count and Map Screens

What should you bring?

- ▶ Fully charged cell phone or tablet with the Counting Us App ready for use
- ▶ Comfortable, but protective shoes—boots are likely the best choice
- ▶ Weather-Appropriate Clothing in Light/Bright Colors
- ▶ Your Vehicle if You've Volunteered to Drive
- ▶ Any additional items requested by Jurisdiction Leads

At The End of Your Count Shift

- ▶ Be sure to do the following at the end of your shift:
 - ▶ Submit any draft surveys that could not be submitted if you had limited cell service
 - ▶ Return unused incentive items/gift cards to your Jurisdiction Lead at the meetup location
 - ▶ If you canvassed an area and found no people experiencing homelessness, be sure to let your jurisdiction lead know

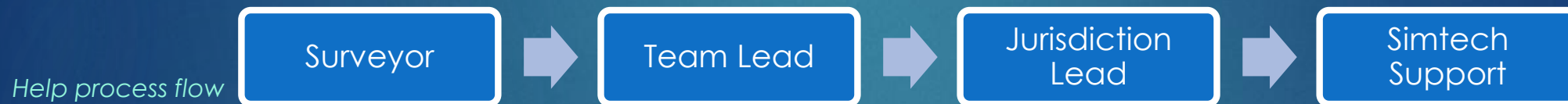


Getting Help During the Count

Getting Help During the Count

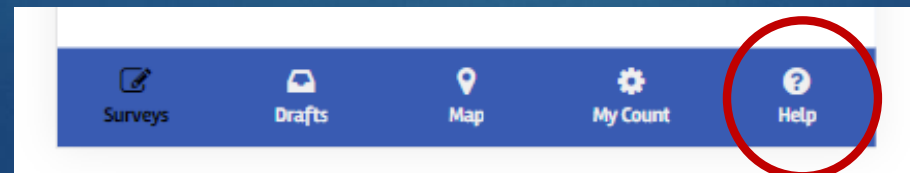
35

- ▶ Simtech Solutions provides technical support for the Counting Us Mobile App and the Command Center (for Jurisdiction Leads) during the count
- ▶ If you have questions during the count, ask your team lead first
- ▶ If the team lead doesn't have the solution or answer, they will escalate the issue to the jurisdiction lead
- ▶ If the jurisdiction lead is unable to provide a solution and it is a technical issue with the mobile app, **they** will submit a helpdesk ticket to Simtech



PLEASE BE SURE YOU HAVE DOWNLOADED THE COUNTING US APP PRIOR TO THE COUNT, CAN LOG IN, AND CAN CREATE TEST RECORDS PRIOR TO THE COUNT!

- ▶ Answers to common questions are also available in the Counting Us App by tapping “Help”



Helpful Links

- ▶ Santa Clara County-Specific Website for Surveyor Resources
 - ▶ <https://pointintime.info/volunteer/SantaClara-county-point-in-time/>
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions for Count Leads
 - ▶ <https://pointintime.info/support/point-in-time-count-faqs/>
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions for Surveyors
 - ▶ <https://pointintime.info/support/support-faqs-for-surveyors/>
- ▶ Resources from HUD about the Point-in-Time Count
 - ▶ <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/#pit-count-methodology-guide-and-other-guides-and-tools>
- ▶ Additional Resources on Cultural Humility (also available on Volunteer Resource Page):

Title	Accompanying Content
How Cultural Humility and Cultural Competence Impact Belonging	Article by Allaya Cooks-Campbell
Compassionate Listening	Thich Nhat Hanh interview with Oprah
Loving Speech and Deep Listening	Thich Nhat Hanh (short teaching video)
Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices A documentary by San Francisco State Professor Vivian Chávez	Part 1 of 4 video (also has link to full video)

Questions?

