

2009 HOMELESS CENSUS FAQs

What is the 2009 Homeless Census?

The 2009 Homeless Census is a comprehensive street-based and service-based enumeration process designed to identify how many people are homeless in Riverside County at a given point-in-time.

When will the Homeless Census take place?

The 2009 Homeless Census will be conducted on **Wednesday, January 28th, 2009 from 4:00a.m. – 10:00p.m.** Planning and organizing activities will take place throughout the months of December 2008 and January, 2009.

Where will the Homeless Census be conducted?

The 2009 Homeless Census will be conducted on the streets and other locations where homeless individuals can be found, and at service provider locations in every city, school district and unincorporated area in Riverside County.

Who will be counted in the Homeless Census?

Persons that will be counted will be those individuals and members of families that are considered homeless on the day of the count based on the definition of homelessness provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD provides the following definition of homelessness:

"A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the places described below:

- a. in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings;
- b. in an emergency shelter;
- c. in transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter;
- d. in any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution;
- e. is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing; or
- f. is being discharged within a week from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and he/she lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

Why are we doing a Homeless Census?

To obtain an unduplicated count of homeless individuals and families in Riverside County at a given point in time in order to help us better understand the nature and extent of the current trends in homelessness in our communities.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the largest source of homeless program funding, has directed that continuum of care communities (such as Riverside County) biennially perform a “one-day, point-in-time” count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals beginning “in the last week of January 2009”. Results of the 2009 Census will provide a benchmark number by which the success of our efforts to provide effective programs and services to homeless individuals and families will be measured in the years to come.

The completion of the 2009 Homeless Census combined with the results of the planned (budget-permitting) 2009 Homeless Survey will provide us with a battery of information that will serve as the basis for:

- responding to the unmet needs and gaps in services for homeless individuals and families in Riverside County;
- developing local community and county-wide strategies to meet the goal of ending homelessness as we know it today over the next ten years.

When will the Census activities take place?

Countywide activities on the day-of-the-count, January 28th, 2009, will begin at 4:00 a.m. and last through much of the evening depending on the types of locations to be counted. The specific hours of activity in your community will be established based on the types of locations to be enumerated on the day-of-the-count.

The first wave of street-counter volunteers should be asked to gather at the community count headquarters at 4:00 a.m. to begin dispatch to encampment locations during the pre-dawn hours. All safety pre-cautions will be reviewed again prior to the pre-dawn dispatch. Other volunteers will follow throughout the day to assist with pre-assigned tasks and locations.

Volunteer shift hours may vary by community, but should generally be set in structured shifts. Volunteers should be asked to sign-up for at least four hour shifts and encouraged to help for eight hours if possible. Volunteer Training and Orientation sessions will be conducted before each shift. An example of volunteer shift hours might include:

4:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Who should participate in the 2009 Homeless Census?

In order to conduct a complete and accurate count of homeless individuals and families throughout Riverside County, we need the participation of every public and private social service provider who assist and/or encounter homeless individuals and Community Volunteers from all walks of life including:

- Municipal employees including Law Enforcement
- Social Service providers
- Colleges and Universities
- Faith-based institutions
- Community Service Clubs
- School District staff and students
- Business and Neighborhood Associations
- Board members and other volunteers with Non-profit agencies
- Currently and formerly homeless individuals

How can I get involved in the 2009 Homeless Census?

Community Key Informants and other *Volunteers* are needed from every community in Riverside County who will help identify service providers and street locations where homeless people can be found in their communities and who will help recruit and serve as volunteers to help conduct the count in their communities.

Volunteers are needed before the day-of-the-count to:

- help organize the count in your community
- promote community awareness of the count
- help identify locations where homeless people can be found
- enlist other volunteers to help complete the count
- contribute items to give to homeless people on the day-of-the-count

Volunteers are needed on the day-of-the-count to:

- participate on street-counter teams
- help conduct the count at social service locations
- to assist with phone calls, collecting count data and running errands
- help with preparing incentive items and refreshments for volunteers
- transporting count volunteers to assigned locations throughout the county

How will the Homeless Census be conducted?

The 2009 Homeless Census will involve both a street-based and service-based enumeration of all homeless individuals in every city, community and unincorporated area of Riverside County on the designated day-of-the-count. The Census will include a methodology for counting all homeless persons using an identifier that will avoid duplication of persons counted during the enumeration process.

The street-based enumeration will include homeless encampments and other places that homeless people use as part of their daily activities. Homeless encampments are those places that homeless people use primarily for sleeping. Other places (non-encampments) include

streets and sidewalks where homeless people are usually en route, and locations that homeless people gather or hang out such as vacant lots, parks, municipal service or business centers, parked cars, abandoned buildings, and other locations that are not homeless encampments.

The service-based enumeration will include both residential and non-residential locations where homeless persons receive services. Such places will include emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, substance abuse treatment facilities, mental health service facilities, public social service agencies, public schools, food and clothing programs, etc.

The enumeration will be conducted using a simple count instrument recording a small amount of information from each homeless adult encountered including their initials, gender, ethnicity and other identifier information. Identifier information for the head count will generally not be collected from children under the age of 18 unless they are emancipated or otherwise homeless and unaccompanied.

Where can I get more information on the 2009 Homeless Census?

For more information on the census, go to homeless-research.com or contact one of the Census Project Team members below:

- Amanda Johnson, DPSS Staff, 951.358.3372, amajohns@riversidedpss.org
- Karen Moore, DPSS Staff, 951.358.5637, kmoore@riversidedpss.org