

December 18, 2020

Abigail Stewart-Kahn, LCSW
Interim Director
San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing
440 Turk Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: Recommendation to Suspend 2021 Unsheltered Point-in-Time Count

Director Stewart-Kahn:

Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Public Health (DPH) recommends that the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) request an exception from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from conducting the required 2021 Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless count and survey of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness.

About the PIT Count and Survey

HUD requires all Continuum of Care grantees (CoCs) to conduct a biennial enumeration of unsheltered homelessness in their community. San Francisco typically conducts a complete census visual count, meaning that on one night in January hundreds of volunteers canvas the entire city tallying the number of homeless individuals they see. In addition, a survey is typically administered in a peer-to-peer, in-person format in the weeks following the count to collect supplemental information from a statistically significant sample of over 1,000 individuals experiencing homelessness.

COVID-19 Impacts

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, DPH has provided ongoing review of PIT Count and Survey planning efforts to ensure the project design is in accordance with public health directives and orders and to recommend safety measures that can be taken to minimize health risks to participants.

HUD has issued guidance for the 2021 PIT count indicating that CoCs can request exceptions to postpone or forgo either some or all components of the unsheltered count if they do not believe the count can be conducted safely.¹ CoCs are still expected to report information on sheltered persons experiencing homelessness by the end of April 2021. In order to meet reporting deadlines of April 2021, HSH determined that the end of February 2021 would be the latest date by which HSH could feasibly execute the unsheltered count and/or survey to meet HUD reporting deadlines.

DPH Considerations

In late November 2020, DPH provided guidance indicating that HSH should not move forward with an unsheltered count or survey when San Francisco is designated as a Tier One (Purple) county risk level as defined by the California Department of Public Health's four-tier, color-coded classification system².

¹ <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Conducting-the-2021-Unsheltered-PIT-Count.pdf>

² <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>

Recent modeling from the COVID Command Center (CCC) indicates a high likelihood that San Francisco will remain in Tier One through the end of February due to projected case rates.³

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Borne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Borne, MSW, MD

CCSF COVID-19 Command Center Role: Operations Section Deputy
Health Policy, Vulnerable Populations and People Experiencing Homelessness
San Francisco Department of Public Health

³ The State of California assigned San Francisco to its [most restrictive \(purple\) tier](#) on November 28, 2020.