

MERCED COUNTY

2017 Homeless Count and Survey

2017 Merced County Homeless Survey Instrument

Name: _____ Date: _____

City or Area: _____ Describe location: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

1. Did you sleep in an abandoned building, tent, vehicle, or other structure? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Are you Hispanic or Latino? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. What is your race? ☐ African American ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Multiple Races

5. What is your age? ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65+

6. In what city did you first become homeless?

7. What city do you consider to be your current city?

8. Do you consider yourself a resident of this city?

9. Do you have family who live in Merced County?

10. Do you have friends who live in Merced County?

11. Have you ever worked in Merced County?

12. Are you currently working in Merced County?

13. Have you ever attended school in Merced County?

14. Are you currently attending school in Merced County?

15. Have you been living in a shelter or transitional housing program?

16. Have you stayed in a shelter or transitional housing program?

17. If yes to #16, was the combined income of you and your family less than \$2,000?

18. Have you served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?

19. Has a healthcare provider ever diagnosed you with a mental health condition?

20. Do you have a Permanent Physical Disability?

21. Do you have a Permanent Developmental Disability?

22. Do you have an on-going Drug Court case?

23. If yes to #22, has it continued for more than 12 months?

24. Do you feel you have a Serious Mental Health Condition?

25. If yes to #24, has it continued for more than 12 months?

26. Do you have a Chronic Health Condition (e.g., Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma, etc.)?

27. If yes to #26, has it continued for more than 12 months?

28. Has a healthcare provider ever diagnosed you with a physical health condition?

29. Have you been diagnosed with a physical health condition?

30. Ever been a victim of domestic violence?

31. During the last 12 months, have you been in contact with a court-order served on you?

32. How much is your monthly income?

Questions: (NOTE: If person is sleeping or you feel unsafe ONLY complete gray shaded questions based on observation)

	Person 1	Spouse/ Partner	Person 2	Spouse/ Partner	Person 3	Spouse/ Partner	Person 4	Spouse/ Partner
1. Circle "yes" if you are certain that the person you are about to count and survey meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.) If not certain, ask question 2 before asking other questions.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
2. Did you sleep in an abandoned building, tent, canopy, or vehicle last night? (do not count the person if the person states that he or she slept in a shelter or transitional housing program? If the answer to question 2 is "no," then record "no" and do not ask other questions.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
3. What is your gender? (Record M for Male; F for Female; T for Transgender)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
4. Age: please record number for age group: 1=(under 18) 2=(18 to 24) 3=(25 to 49) 4=(50 to 54) 5=(55 to 61) 6=(62 to 69) 7=(70 to 79) 8=(80+)								
5. What is Your Race? (please read the race code at bottom of page before recording)								
6. Are You Hispanic or Latino? If person does not respond, answer "yes" or "no" based on your observation.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
7. Are you Southeast Asian (Hmong, Cambodian, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.)?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
8. Have you served in the United States Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard)? If the person does not respond leave this column unanswered.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
9. Were you ever called into active duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist? If person does not respond leave column unanswered.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
10. Have you ever received healthcare or benefits from a Veterans Administration medical center? If person does not respond or know leave this column unanswered.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
11. Do you have children under the age of 18 who are homeless and living with you on the streets today? (record number of children; if none note "0")								
12. Do you have a spouse or partner* living with you today? If "Yes," record answers to same questions for spouse or partner in the next column								

Race: 1=African American or Black; 2=American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3=Asian; 4=Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; 5=White; 6=Multiple Races or Other; 7=don't know; and 8=refused to answer

March 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2017 Merced County Homeless Count and Survey was a success due to the efforts of the following volunteers:

Adam Goebel	Cynthia Zapata
Adam Lane	Dan Reese
Aldus Jackson	Danielle Beliveau
Alex Mejia-Santana	Danielle Bohn
Alex Tazaras	David Bernabe
Alex Vang	David Chandler
Alison Luna	David Daniels
Allen Bossard	David Gomez
Amanda Chavez	David Lohman
Andrew Tolsma	David Maze
Angel Chavez	Dena Medeiros
Anthony Morris	Derrick Simpson
Anzueth Barela	Donna Barnes
Athena Xiong	Dwena Phillips
Beatriz Hernandez	Edward Chetham
Betty Garcia	Elida Del Toro
Bill Redmond	Eric Herr
Birginia Espinoza	Esteban Martinez
Bonnie Ketcher	Evelyn Silvas
Bruce Metcalf	Francine Williams
Candace Montoya	Geraldine Williams
Carol Bowman	Gina Thomas
Cecilia Garcia-Cardenas	Gina Trujillo
Cecilio Solano	Gino Hardozzo
Chantale Pakosz	Guillermo De La Rosa
Charles Martin	Gustavo Cruz
Chaz Brewer	Harold Mithcell
Chetna Patel	Hector Barocio
Chris McCall	Hector Vasquez
Claudia Zambrano	Helene Mitchell
Collin Vaughn	Ian Hinojsa
Corina Garcia	Issac O'Harr
Cornelia Levy	Jamie Ellison

Janet Ash
Jason West
Javier Ramos
Jeanette Costa
Jeff Daniels
Jennifer Dozal
Jennifer Mockus
Jeremy Martinez
Jessi Hagelshaw
Jim Nash
Jim Nash
John Pantoja
John Verrochi
Jonathon Reynoso
Josefina Baeza
Joseph Homer
Joseph Weiss
Juana Garcia
Julie Nelson
Karla Narvaez-Flores
Kathy Fowler
Kathy Smith
Kelly Correia
Kerri Gough
Kiabeth Landa
Kimberly Valle
Lara Olson
Lawrence Nichols
Leslie Reyes
Leslie Reyes
Linda Dash
Lorely Chavez
Lori Newman
Lupe Tapia
Lupe Vega
Makda Yohannes
Marbella Reyes
Marcy Montano

Maria Azavedo
Maribel Baron
Mario Garcia
Marissa Gonzales
Mark Hamilton
Marrissa Meskus
Marta Slovak
Mary Kiely
Matthew Gonzalez
Melissa Alamilla
Melissa Proietti
Michelle Reid
Missy Mead
Molly Carolan
Mona Rivera
Monica Villa
Morgan Penner
Murphy Miller
Naly Thao
Natalie Mora
Nora Hart
Norma Cardona
Nou Moua
Octavio Valencia
Oscar Gomez
Patrick Pakosz
Pauline Rodriquez
Perry Watkins
Phil Schmauss
Rafael Rivas
Raul Gonzalez
Rebecca Wood
Rigoberto Lopez
Rosalino Mendez
Rosemarie Hernandez
Ruben Bargas
Ruben Reyes
Sabrina Degon

Sargeez Teimoorshahi
Shawn Grenolds
Sonya Severo
Stacy Salinas
Stephanie Cervantes
Stephanie Dietz
Stephen Hammond
Steve Carrigan
Steve Cutshall

Steve Russos
Steven Ortiz-Donato
Sukhi Cheema
Terry Pitman
Tommy Rainey
Victor Guerra-Cardoza
Yvette Soriano
Zach Van Houten

and the following Organizations:

Atwater Police
Atwater Rotary
Bethel Community Church
Catholic Charities of Merced
Central California Alliance for Health
City of Merced
City of Merced Housing Department
Community Action Agency
Community Social Models Advocate
Dos Palos Youth Crisis & Otreach
Employment Development Department
Golden Valley Health Centers
Lifeline
Livingston Community Health Center
Los Banos City Manager
Los Banos Human Services Agency of Merced County
Love Inc
Merced Association of Police
Merced City Manager & Office
Merced County Department of Mental Health
Merced County Human Services Agency
Merced County Rescue Mission
Merced Police Department
Merced Union High School District
Riggs Ambulance Services
Sierra Saving Grace
Turning Point C.A.R.E
UC Merced Blum Center

UC Merced Delta Gamma
UC Merced Earth Club
UC Merced Hands for Help
UC Merced Kappa Delta Chi
UC Merced Omega Delta Phi
UC Merced Phi Kappa Phi
UC Merced Phi Lambda Phi
UC Merced Rotaract
United Way of Merced
Valley Crisis Center

Appreciation is also extended to the following for providing incentive care packages for survey participants experiencing homelessness:

Street Count Volunteers and participating Agencies

Atwater 4-H Club
Bethel Community Church
Catholic Charities of Merced
City of Merced
County of Merced Human Services Agency
County of Merced Mental Health
Golden Valley Health Center
Merced County Community Action Agency
Merced County Rescue Mission
Sam Geil & Central Valley Opportunity Fund
United Way of Merced

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NOTE: Please contact Carol Bowman concerning any volunteer or agency that was mistakenly omitted.

A copy of this report is available at www.MercedCoC.com.

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I. Executive Summary

A. Total Number of Homeless Persons by Location and Subpopulation

The primary purpose of this report is to answer the following question **"How many homeless people are there in the County of Merced on a given day?"** The answer is 454 adults and children of whom 450 were adults and four (4) were children. Of the 454 persons counted, 297 adults and one (1) child were unsheltered and 156 (153 adults and 3 children) were in shelters or transitional housing programs.¹ These numbers will be officially reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as required of all Continuums of Care (CoCs) who receive HUD CoC funding.

As recorded below, the new number represents a significant decrease of 12.5% or 65 persons when compared to the 2016 homeless count and survey.

Table 1. Comparison of Total Number of Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless Persons

Year	Total Number of Homeless Persons	Variance	
		#	%
2016	519		
2017	454	-65	-12.5

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 454 persons who were counted by unsheltered and sheltered persons within the incorporated and unincorporated areas in which they were counted.

¹HUD limits the count to persons who are defined as 1) Homeless persons who are living in a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans must be counted as unsheltered homeless persons; and 2) Persons living in emergency shelters and transitional housing projects must be counted as sheltered homeless persons.

Table 2. Break Down of Unsheltered and Sheltered Persons by Area

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Total Number of Unsheltered Persons	Total Number of Sheltered Persons	Total Number
Atwater	19	15	34
Cressey	1	0	1
Dos Palos	12	0	12
El Nido	0	0	0
Gustine	1	0	1
Hilmar	0	0	0
Le Grande	0	0	0
Livingston	3	0	3
Los Banos	78	0	78
Merced	177	141	318
Planada	0	0	0
Snelling	0	0	0
South Dos Palos	0	0	0
Winton	7	0	7
Total:	298	156	454

It is important to note that there was a change in the unsheltered methodology applied in 2016 and 2017 when compared to 2015. Prior to 2016, counting unsheltered persons consisted of an observation-only method that only required counters to count while they were walking or driving a given area. In 2016 and 2017, counting unsheltered persons included a combination of personal-contact and observation method. Counters asked 13 questions while counting each person that was homeless. If counters did not wish to disturb the person because the person was sleeping, or if they felt it was unsafe to engage the person, they were to complete questions 3 through 7 ONLY based upon their observations (See Appendix A for the list of questions and Instructions to Complete Unsheltered Count Instrument).

In order to implement a personal-contact method, a higher number of volunteers had to be recruited in 2016 and 2017 due to the new methodology. This was accomplished through the 100+ Merced Campaign. In 2015, there were approximately 45 counters and in 2016 and 2017 there were over 160 volunteers each year.

The majority of the counters in 2016 and 2017 counted in the City of Merced where the majority of homeless persons live. In 2015, the City was divided into 10 areas and approximately 25 persons were assigned to cover these designated areas. In 2016 and 2017, the City was divided into 28 areas and 100 volunteers were assigned to teams that covered all city areas. This allowed counters to effectively canvass areas and to adequately implement a personal-contact method to complete a more thorough count.

The personal-contact method also helped prevent duplication, meaning counting the same person more than once, something that can happen more easily when only an observation-only method is used.

The Merced CoC, however, believes that there was a decrease in homelessness as a result of the efforts that so many CoC members made to help homeless persons end their homelessness experience. Throughout 2016, many homeless service providers reported significant numbers of homeless persons who exited homelessness through their resources and community partnerships.

A striking example of numbers going down concerns homeless veterans. During the past couple of years, veteran service providers worked together unlike ever before. Federal, county, city, and private nonprofit agencies worked together and implemented the best practices of Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing through the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) provides Rapid Rehousing assistance that includes temporary financial assistance and appropriate social services.

Consequently, the number of homeless veterans significantly decreased as noted in the next table.

Table 3. Comparison of total Number of Homeless Veterans

Year	Total Number of Homeless Veterans	Variance	
		#	%
2015	88	-	-
2016	25	-63	71.5
2017	17	-8	-32.0

Of the 17 homeless veterans, all 17 were counted on the street as unsheltered.

Another primary purpose of this final report is to provide a breakdown of the homeless population as required by HUD and as part of the annual Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program application. HUD requires information about the following homeless subpopulations for both the unsheltered and sheltered population:

- Chronically Homeless Families;
- Chronically Homeless Individuals;
- Families;
- Persons with HIV/AIDS;
- Persons with Mental Illness;
- Single Individuals;
- Substance Users;
- Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18;
- Veterans;
- Victims of Domestic Violence; and
- Youth Ages 18 – 24.

B. Total Number of Unsheltered Persons by Location and Subpopulation

The following table provides a breakdown of the total unsheltered population (adults and children) by city.

Table 4. Unsheltered Adults and Children by City

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Total Number of Unsheltered Persons	
	#	%
Atwater	19	6.4
Cressey	1	0.3
Dos Palos	12	4.0
El Nido	0	0.0
Gustine	1	0.3
Hilmar	0	0.0
Le Grande	0	0.0
Livingston	3	1.0

Los Banos	78	26.2
Merced	177*	59.4
Planada	0	0.0
Snelling	0	0.0
South Dos Palos	0	0.0
Winton	7	2.4
Total:	298	100.0

*Merced had 176 adults and 1 child; all other jurisdictions had no unsheltered children.

The following table provides a breakdown of the total unsheltered adult population by gender.

Table 5. Unsheltered Adults by Gender

Gender (Adults Only):	#	%
Men	217	73.1
Women	70	23.6
Transgender	4	1.3
No Answer Recorded	6	2.0
Total:	297	100

The following table provides a breakdown of the total unsheltered adult population by ethnicity. Concerning ethnicity, HUD only requires that Hispanics or Latinos be noted. However, the Merced CoC included Southeast Asian ((Hmong, Cambodian, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.).

Table 6. Unsheltered Adults by Ethnicity

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Hispanic or Latino	98	33.0
Southeast Asian	8	2.7
All Others	191	64.3
Total:	297	100

Table 7 provides a breakdown of the total unsheltered adult population by race.

Table 7. Unsheltered Adults by Race

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
African American or Black	35	11.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	17	5.7
Asian	8	2.7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	5	1.7
White	122	41.1
Multiple Races or Other	105	35.3
Did not Know or No Response was Recorded	5	1.9
Total:	297	100.0

Table 8 breaks down the total number of unsheltered adults by subpopulations based on a homeless survey that was conducted after the count and administered to a sample of 88 unsheltered adults, which represents a 30% sample of the 297 unsheltered adults who were counted. Following HUD guidelines, the information gathered through the sample was used to estimate numbers of adults that fall within each subpopulation category as noted in the table below. For example, 25.0% of the unsheltered adults surveyed stated that they have a serious mental health problem. Thus, 25.0% or 74 of the 297 unsheltered adults counted were estimated to have a serious mental health problem.

Table 8: Estimates of Unsheltered Subpopulations Based on 2017 Homeless Count & 2017 Homeless Survey

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Total Unsheltered Adults:	297	100
Chronically Homeless Families	0	0.0
Chronically Homeless Persons	119	40.1
Persons with Chronic Health Condition	84	28.4
Persons with Developmental Disabilities	50	17.0
Persons with HIV/AIDS	3	1.1
Persons with Serious Mental Health Problems	74	25.0
Persons with Physical Disabilities	119	40.1
Substance Users (on-going problem)	94	31.8
Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18	1	0.3
Veterans	17	5.7
Victims of Domestic Violence	88	29.5
Youth Age 18 to 24	23	7.7

Persons Released from Correctional Institutions*	67	22.7
Seniors age 62+*	17	5.7
Income of \$1,000 or less*	294	98.9

*There were three additional subpopulations in which survey data was collected—persons released from a correctional institution such as a prison or jail after serving a court-order sentence during the 12 months prior to the survey, seniors age 62+, and monthly income.

C. Total Number of Sheltered Persons by Location and Subpopulation

Table 9. Sheltered Adults and Children by City

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Total Number of Sheltered Persons	
Atwater	15	9.6
Cressey	0	0.0
Dos Palos	0	0.0
El Nido	0	0.0
Gustine	0	0.0
Hilmar	0	0.0
Le Grande	0	0.0
Livingston	0	0.0
Los Banos	0	0.0
Merced	141	90.4
Planada	0	0.0
Snelling	0	0.0
South Dos Palos	0	0.0
Winton	0	0.0
Total:	156	100.0

As required by HUD, the sheltered count included the number of persons and households sleeping in emergency shelters (including seasonal shelters), transitional housing, and Safe Haven programs (of which the County has none) that were listed on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). In addition, any persons staying in hotels or motels as a result of receiving a voucher from a social service agency were included in the sheltered count per HUD's instructions if the voucher program was listed on the HIC.

HUD encourages the use of Homeless Management Information Services (HMIS) data to generate sheltered counts and subpopulation data for programs with 100% of beds participating in HMIS. Thus, HMIS was used to gather the total number of occupied beds and the number of persons that provided a total number of sheltered persons and a breakdown by subpopulation.

Table 10. Total Shelter Count by Location

Facility	Program:	Total # of Persons
Shelters:		
Community Action Agency	D Street Shelter	44
Merced County Human Services Agency	Motel Vouchers	0
Merced County Rescue Mission	Emergency Shelter	6
Merced County Rescue Mission	Hope Respite Care	15
Merced County Rescue Mission	Room at the Inn Shelter	0
Merced County Rescue Mission	Winter Warming Center	14
Valley Crisis Center	Domestic Violence Shelter	4
Sub-Total:		83
Transitional Housing:		
Community Social Model Advocates	Hobie House	22
Community Social Model Advocates	Tranquility Village	15
Merced County Mental Health	Parsons House	4
Merced County Rescue Mission	Bridge to Hope	21
Merced County Rescue Mission	Haven of Hope	11
Sub-Total:		73
Total:		156

The table above reveals that just over half—83 persons or 51% of the sheltered population were in shelters and just a little less than half—80 persons, or 49% were in transitional housing programs.

The following table provides a breakdown of the 160 sheltered adults by gender.

Table 11. Sheltered Adults by Gender

Gender (Adults Only):	#	%
Men	111	72.1
Women	42	27.9
Transgender	0	0
Total:	154	100.0

The following table provides a breakdown of the 160 sheltered adults by ethnicity. Concerning ethnicity, HUD only requires that Hispanics or Latinos be noted.

Table 12. Unsheltered Adults by Ethnicity

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Hispanic or Latino	16	10.4
All Others	137	89.6
Total:	153	100.0

The next table provides a breakdown of the total unsheltered adult population by race.

Table 13. Unsheltered Adults by Race

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
African American or Black	25	16.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	3.9
Asian	1	0.6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	1.3
White	95	62.1
Multiple Races or Other	1	0.6
Did not Know or No Response was Recorded	23	15.0
Total:	153	100.0

The next table provides a breakdown of the sheltered population by subpopulation for adults.

Table 14. Sheltered Adults by Subpopulations

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Total Sheltered Adults:	153	100
Chronically Homeless Families	0	0
Chronically Homeless Persons	15	9.8
Families	1	*
Persons with HIV/AIDS	0	0.0
Persons with Serious Mental Health Problems	15	9.8
Substance Users (on-going problem)	13	8.5
Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18	0	0.0
Veterans	0	0.0
Victims of Domestic Violence	7	4.6
Youth Age 18 to 24	0	0.0

*There was one family with one adult and three children.

D. Next Steps: Implementing Recommendations to Prevent and End Homelessness

This section outlines next steps that each city should take in partnership with the County and the Merced Continuum of Care (CoC) to prevent and end homelessness within its jurisdiction. These steps are aligned with the Merced County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, which in turn are consistent with several evidence-based and best practices that have helped achieve unprecedented decreases in the total number of homeless persons, particularly among families, chronic homeless persons, and veterans, across the country during the past several years.

Next steps include the following six recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Each city listed in Table 4 is strongly encouraged to adopt their unsheltered homeless count numbers as new baseline numbers and commit to significantly reducing these numbers by next year as a result of supporting and implementing the best practices described in recommendations 2 – 6.

However, the following table notes that of the 298 persons counted as unsheltered, 281 or 94.3% were counted in the three cities of Merced, Los Banos, and Atwater including Winton.

Table 15. Comparison of Cities with Largest Total Number of Unsheltered Persons for 2016 & 2017

	Merced	Los Banos	Atwater/Winton
Total # of Unsheltered Persons:			
2016	218	62	28
2017	177	78	26
	-41 (-18.8%)	+16 (+25.8%)	-2 (-7.1%)

The next table provides the breakdown of selected unsheltered subpopulations for each of the three (3) cities.

Table 16. Breakdown of Selected Subpopulations by Cities with Largest Total Number of Unsheltered Persons in 2017

	Merced	Los Banos	Atwater including Winton
Total Unsheltered Adults & Children	176	78	26
Chronically Homeless Individuals	71	31	10
Chronically Homeless Families	0	0	0
Families	1	0	0
Men	139	53	21
Seniors 62+	11	5	1
Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18	1	0	0
Youth Age 18 to 24	11	10	2
Veterans	13	1	1
Women	37	25	5

- **Recommendation 2:** Design and implement a dedicated Street Outreach and Engagement Team that applies a Housing First model and Rapid Rehousing Approach.

In order to achieve significant reductions in homelessness by next year, each jurisdiction should share in the design and implementation of a dedicated Street Outreach and Engagement Team that will put into practice a Housing First model and Rapid Rehousing Approach and serve each

city proportionately in terms of the percent of the overall homeless population in their jurisdiction.

Housing First

Housing First is recognized as an evidence-based and best practice by national researchers and policymakers based on years of research and implementation. The implementation of a Housing First model has helped jurisdictions across the country significantly reduce their homeless population. Implementation involves moving homeless persons from the streets and directly into housing and providing wrap-around services to ensure housing stability. This model should be linked to the provision of permanent supportive housing, which provides subsidized housing and appropriate supportive services. This is in contrast to a “housing readiness model” which emphasizes that a homeless individual or family must address other issues such as substance abuse and mental illness through case management prior to entering affordable permanent housing. Housing can be provided through a project-based or scattered site model.

In particular, the Street Outreach and Engagement Team will work with local community stakeholders to identify chronic homeless persons in need of the housing first approach. Special attention will be given to the most visible and hardest-to-reach individuals.

Rapid Rehousing

Rapid Rehousing is also a recognized best practice by national researchers and policymakers.. The implementation of Rapid Rehousing has helped jurisdictions across the country reduce their homeless population.

Rapid Rehousing helps families and individuals who are not chronically homeless obtain permanent housing immediately and to stabilize themselves as soon as possible. Such households have not been living on the streets for years with physical disabling conditions such as serious mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and/or chronic physical illness. They have lived independently in permanent housing in the past and are in need of temporary assistance for several months instead of years. During this time, they are able to become increasingly self-sufficient through public assistance and/or employment. They may need long-term non-monetary assistance to prevent the loss of their housing such as free or low cost clothing, food, health care, household supplies, and transportation.

- **Recommendation 3:** Adopt a no tolerance policy for children living on the streets, in vehicles, and other places not meant for human habitation.

Each jurisdiction should adopt a no tolerance policy for children living on the streets, in vehicles, and other places not meant for human habitation.

- **Recommendation 4:** Increase the Number of Permanent Supportive Housing Units.

The Merced CoC should work closely with the County and cities to increase the number of permanent supportive housing units. Priority should be given to chronically homeless persons.

Permanent Supportive Housing provides long-term affordable rental housing and a broad range of on-site and/or off-site wrap-around supportive services for persons with disabling conditions. The goal is to increase independent living skills of residents who pay no more than 30% of their monthly income for rent so that they are able to maintain their housing. Those persons without permanent disabling conditions may ultimately become self-sufficient while living in affordable housing and may eventually pay 100% of their rent and may or may not need supportive services.

- **Other Recommendations**

Other recommendations to significantly reduce the number of homeless persons by next year are included in the Merced County 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness (to obtain a copy go to www.MercedCoC.com).

II. Background Information Concerning the Homeless Count

The Department of Housing and Urban Development, as part of its requirements for local jurisdictions to continue to receive continuum of care funding for homeless persons, asks local jurisdictional applicants to conduct a “one night point-in-time” homeless count every other year during the last 10 days of January.

- **When Was the Count Conducted?**

The homeless count was conducted, in accordance to HUD instructions, on the streets of Merced County during the hours of 6:00 am-8:00 am on Thursday, January 26, 2017 except for Dos Palos, where the count was conducted on January 31. The count was also conducted on January 26 in shelters and transitional housing programs.

- **Who was Counted?**

A person was considered homeless, and thus counted, only when he/she fell within the following HUD-based definition by residing 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.

HUD does not consider the following persons to be homeless—persons who are “doubled up,” or persons who are “near homelessness”—but considers them to be at-risk of homelessness. Following HUD’s guidelines, such persons were not included in the county’s homeless count.

The County of Merced, like many other counties, has a substantial number of households that are at-risk of becoming homeless. Twenty-five percent (25.4%) of Merced County residents were living below the poverty level according to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS). This means that approximately 66,000 County residents representing around 20,000 households are at risk of becoming homeless on a day like today. One type of household that is notably at risk of becoming homeless is single-female headed households because 36% of all such households with children live below the poverty level. Another is households with children under age 5 because 34% live below the poverty level. Also according to the ACS data, 20% of all families and 11% of persons’ age 65 and over live below the poverty level.

The City of Merced has a substantial number of households that are at-risk of becoming homeless. The 2014 data also reveals that 30% or more than 24,000 of 81,743 residents representing more than 7,000 households were living below poverty level.

Households living below the poverty level are at risk of becoming homeless. Because of their limited income, they frequently have to choose between paying their rent or mortgage and other daily living costs such as child care, clothing, food, health care, and transportation. The generally accepted standard for housing affordability is that households should not spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent and utilities.

Many households can become homeless because of social structural issues such as increases in rent, loss of job, and rising health care costs. In addition, personal experiences such as domestic violence, physical disabilities, mental illness, and substance abuse can cause members of a low-income household or an entire household to become homeless as well. Often, one or more of these experiences factor into a household's homelessness experience.

- **Who Conducted the Count?**

One hundred and sixty-nine (166) counters carried out the street count on January 26 between the hours of 6:00 am - 8:00 am. They consisted of a wide-range of local representatives from various public and private organizations that included:

- Businesses;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Homeless and Formerly Homeless individuals;
- Local government;
- Non-profit agencies.

In addition, staff from shelters and transitional housing programs counted residents in their respective programs.

- **How Was the Count Conducted?**

The 2017 homeless count was a community-wide effort. Prior to the count, volunteers attended planning meetings and an orientation. During the planning meetings, key locations and mapping of sites were discussed in order to ensure that areas where persons congregate were identified and that efforts were made to minimize duplication.

- **Where Was the Count Conducted?**

The following table lists all the areas in which the count was conducted.

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Total Number of Unsheltered Persons	Total Number of Sheltered Persons	Total Number
Atwater	19	15	34
Cressey	1	0	1
Dos Palos	12	0	12
El Nido	0	0	0
Gustine	1	0	1
Hilmar	0	0	0
Le Grande	0	0	0
Livingston	3	0	3
Los Banos	78	0	78
Merced	177	141	318
Planada	0	0	0
Snelling	0	0	0
South Dos Palos	0	0	0
Winton	7	0	7
Total:	298	156	454

III. Homeless Count Methodology

Counters were divided into teams and assigned areas to count. Teams assigned to areas where homeless persons were pre-identified included a homeless person or a formerly homeless person to help ensure that homeless persons would feel comfortable with counters.

The homeless count consisted of a personal contact method and an observation-only method. If the counters could not implement the personal contact method, then an observation-only method was used.

The personal contact method required counters to ask each homeless person a series of questions beginning with whether they were certain that the person they were about to count met HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.)

If not certain, counters were required to ask the following question:

- Did you sleep on the streets, in an abandoned building, tent, canopy, or vehicle last night?

If the answer was "no," they were instructed not to include the person. If the answer was "yes," they were instructed to ask the rest of the question listed on the homeless count instrument (see Appendix A).

An observation-only method was used for the following reasons:

- If a homeless person did not wish to speak to a counter, then the counter was to thank the person and complete questions 3 through 7 based on observations ONLY if the counter was certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.);
- If the counter believed that a person was homeless and did not want to disturb the person because the person was sleeping, questions 3 through 7 were to be answered based on observations ONLY;
- If the counter believed that, a person was homeless and the counter felt it was unsafe to engage the person, questions 3 through 7 were to be answered based upon observations ONLY.

IV. Background Information Concerning the Homeless Survey

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the annual Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program application requires information about the following homeless subpopulations:

- Chronically Homeless Individuals;
- Chronically Homeless Families;
- Persons with HIV/AIDS;
- Persons with Mental Illness;
- Substance Abusers;
- Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18;
- Veterans;
- Victims of Domestic Violence;
- Youth Ages 18 – 24.

Thus, a survey was compiled that asked questions in order to ensure that accurate data would be collected for each subpopulation.

In addition to the subpopulations noted above, additional questions were asked to collect data for the following subpopulations:

- Men;
 - Persons with Chronic Illness;
 - Persons with Developmental Disabilities;
 - Persons with Physical Disabilities;
 - Persons Released from Correctional Institutions;
 - Seniors;
 - Women.
-
- **When Was the Survey Conducted?**

The survey was administered at various locations during the two weeks following the count. Most surveys were administered during the first week following the count.

- **Who Was Surveyed?**

The homeless survey was administered to 88 homeless adults. The percent of adults surveyed in relationship to the homeless count is more than one of every four adults (30%).

Of the 88 homeless adults surveyed

- 64 or 72.7% were men and 24 or 27.3% were women;

- **Who Conducted the Survey?**

Approximately 20 volunteers carried out the survey. They consisted of a wide-range of local representatives from various public and private organizations that included:

- Businesses;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Homeless and Formerly Homeless individuals;
- Local government;
- Non-profit agencies.

In addition, staff from shelters and transitional housing programs administered the survey to residents in their respective programs.

- **How Was the Survey Conducted?**

The process involved administering a one-on-one interview survey with a representative sample of homeless adults living in the County of Merced. There were two (2) primary methods of contact with homeless persons who participated in the survey. They were: 1) interviews with homeless persons who were contacted on the streets and 2) interviews with homeless persons who were contacted while using non-residential homeless services.

- **Where Was the Survey Conducted?**

The survey was conducted on the streets and at various residential and non-residential social service sites that participated in the homeless count.

Appendix A

Instructions for Merced County 2017 Homeless Unsheltered Count Instrument

Pre-Count Instructions

Before counting someone

1. Please Inform the person that the Merced City and County Continuum of Care is conducting a count of persons who are homeless;
2. Their participation is **completely anonymous and confidential**;
3. You are not asking for their name, social security number, or any personal information that can be linked to the participant;
4. Their participation will help provide better programs and services for people who are homeless.

Safety Comes First

If you believe a person is homeless and the individual does not wish to speak to you thank the person and complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

If you believe a person is homeless and you do not wish to disturb the person because the person is sleeping complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

If you believe a person is homeless and if you feel it is unsafe for you to engage the person complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

NOTE: The goal is to have all of your questions answered by at least 90% of all persons counted. Therefore, please ask each person that you are counting each question unless noted otherwise. For example, asking a question may be contingent on the answer of the previous question.

Having all questions answered with accuracy will help ensure that enough data has been collected for each subpopulation that is required by HUD for each city within the county. The less data the less chances of accurate data.

Instructions for Merced County 2017 Homeless Unsheltered Count Instrument

Pre-Count Instructions

Before counting someone

5. Please Inform the person that the Merced City and County Continuum of Care is conducting a count of persons who are homeless;
6. Their participation is **completely anonymous and confidential**;
7. You are not asking for their name, social security number, or any personal information that can be linked to the participant;
8. Their participation will help provide better programs and services for people who are homeless.

Safety Comes First

If you believe a person is homeless and the individual does not wish to speak to you thank the person and complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

If you believe a person is homeless and you do not wish to disturb the person because the person is sleeping complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

If you believe a person is homeless and if you feel it is unsafe for you to engage the person complete questions 3 through 7 based upon your observations ONLY if you are certain that the person meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.).

NOTE: The goal is to have all of your questions answered by at least 90% of all persons counted. Therefore, please ask each person that you are counting each question unless noted otherwise. For example, asking a question may be contingent on the answer of the previous question.

Having all questions answered with accuracy will help ensure that enough data has been collected for each subpopulation that is required by HUD for each city within the county. The less data the less chances of accurate data.

Count Instructions for All Questions

Question 1:

Circle "yes" if you are certain that the person you are about to count and survey meets HUD's criteria of sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., sidewalk, abandoned building, tent, vehicle, park bench, etc.) **If not certain, ask question 2 before asking other questions.**

Question 2:

Ask the following question if you did **NOT** circle "yes" for question 1.

Did you sleep in an abandoned building, tent, canopy, or vehicle last night? (do not count the person if the person states that he or she slept in a shelter or transitional housing program. **If the answer to question 2 is "no" record "no" and do not ask other questions. Thank the person for their participation.**

Question 3: Gender

Please record

M=Male; F=Female; T=Transgender; O= does not identify as Male, Female, or Transgender

Question 4: Age

Please record the number for age group:

- 1=under 18
- 2=18 to 24
- 3=25 to 49
- 4=50 to 54
- 5=55 to 61
- 6=62 to 69
- 7=70 to 79
- 8=80+.

Question 5: Race

Please read the race code at bottom of the count instrument
before recording which is as follows:

1=African American or Black; 2=American Indian or Alaskan Native;
3=Asian; 4=Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; 5=White;
6=Multiple Races or Other; 7=don't know; and 8=refused to answer

Question 6: Ethnicity

Are You Hispanic or Latino?

Record "yes" or "no" or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 7: Ethnicity

Are you Southeast Asian (Hmong, Cambodian, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.)?

Record "yes" or "no" or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 8:

Have you served in the United States Armed Forces?
(Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard)

Please record yes or no answer or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 9:

Were you ever called into active duty as a member
of the National Guard or as a Reservist?

Please record yes or no answer or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 10:

Have you ever received healthcare or benefits
from a Veterans Administration medical center?

Please record yes or no answer or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 11:

Did you first become homeless during the past 12 months?

Please record yes or no answer or leave blank if person does not answer.

Question 12:

Do you have any children under the age of 18
who are homeless and living with you on the streets today?

Record the number of children; if none record "0"

NOTE: If 18 or older please enter the persons as an adult in another column.

Question 13:

Do you have a spouse or partner* living with you today?

If you can see the person,
ask the same questions to the spouse or partner
and record the answers in the next column.

- **A Partner is a person you live with and share a common family life
but are not joined in a traditional marriage.*