



## NATIONAL CENTER FOR HOMELESS EDUCATION

Operating the U.S.  
Department of Education's  
technical assistance center  
for the federal Education for  
Homeless Children and Youth  
(ECHY) Program

[www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)

## HUD POINT-IN-TIME COUNT COLLABORATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

### INTRODUCTION

Every year on one night in January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) asks its Continuums of Care (CoC) to conduct a survey of homeless individuals called a Point-in-Time (PIT) count in order to get an estimate of homeless people and to determine the effectiveness of HUD programs. In 2012 local educational agencies (LEAs or school districts) were invited to participate in the 2013 Youth PIT Count led by the CoC covering their geographic area, either through the local CoC or the Balance of State (BoS) CoC. That year, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), HUD, and the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) launched *Youth Count!*,<sup>1</sup> an inter-agency PIT count of unaccompanied homeless youth, in nine locations, one of which is an LEA featured in this program highlight.

CoCs<sup>2</sup> promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts to quickly re-house homeless individuals and families to minimize trauma and dislocation; promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. BoS Continuums exist in communities that are not covered by regional, county, or city continuums. These are typically in rural areas of the state

<sup>1</sup> Visit [http://usich.gov/population/youth/youth\\_count](http://usich.gov/population/youth/youth_count) for more information about the *Youth Count!* initiative.

<sup>2</sup> Visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/coc> for more information about HUD CoCs.

*This brief is part of a U.S. Department of Education series of program profiles that highlight local innovations, program improvements, and collaborations that can improve educational outcomes for homeless children and youth.*

and “often benefit from the involvement of representatives of several state agencies that participate on steering committees or other committees within the continuum.” (HUD, 2009)

Through its Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program,<sup>3</sup> the U.S. Department of Education works to ensure that school-aged children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free and appropriate public education. Under the EHCY program, every state must appoint a State Coordinator for Homeless Education (hereafter *State Coordinator*) and every school district must appoint a local homeless education liaison (hereafter *local liaison*). It is important for State Coordinators and local liaisons to understand the relationship between HUD and CoCs with regard to the PIT count.

This profile features perspectives from interviews with local liaisons in three LEAs in North Carolina that collaborated with CoCs, including the North Carolina BoS CoC, on identifying unaccompanied homeless youth for the PIT Count in 2013 and subsequent years. The State Coordinator for the [North Carolina Homeless Education Program \(NCHPEP\)](#) played an important role in fostering these local collaborations.

## THE HUD PIT COUNT

---

HUD requires CoCs to conduct PIT counts<sup>4</sup> at least once every other year, although many CoCs choose to conduct them annually. CoCs are required to count those individuals residing in places not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelters, and in transitional shelter on the night of the count, though these are not the only populations eligible for HUD-funded services.<sup>5</sup> HUD does not require, for example, a count of all persons attempting to flee or fleeing domestic violence or at imminent risk of homelessness, who may be among the EHCY doubled-up or hotel/motel homeless populations;<sup>6</sup> however, CoCs are encouraged to collect additional data, including aggregate EHCY data, and include them in their public community reports. BoS CoCs exist in communities that are not covered by regional, county, or city continuums. These are typically in rural areas of the state and “often benefit from the involvement of representatives of several state agencies that participate on steering committees or other committees within the continuum.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2009).

## THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE COORDINATOR

---

The North Carolina State Coordinator, Lisa Phillips, has been in the position for more than five years and meets with the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH) semi-annually. She also participates in NCCEH meetings via conference call. NCCEH representatives presented at the NC 2014 Homeless Education Learning Institute, an annual training for local liaisons. The presentation addressed the challenges of inter-agency data sharing and ways CoCs and LEAs can collaborate more effectively. Further, Ms. Phillips has provided trainings to the NC BoS CoC on the Subtitle VII-B of the

---

3 Visit <http://ed.gov/programs/homeless/> for more information about the federal EHCY program.

4 Visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/hdx/guides/pit-hic/> for more information about the PIT count.

5 HUD and ED use different definitions of *homeless* to determine program eligibility. Visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1928/hearth-defining-homeless-final-rule/> for more information about the HUD definition of *homeless*; visit <http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/mv-def.php> for more information about the ED definition of *homeless*.

6 See previous footnote.

McKinney-Vento Act.<sup>7</sup>

As Youth PIT count methods were developed in North Carolina, Ms. Phillips worked with the NCCEH to review the Youth PIT count questionnaires to determine what questions were appropriate for working with youth. According to Ms. Phillips, local liaisons in NC typically review the CoC's Youth PIT count data and remove duplicated student names. Privacy for homeless children and youth is paramount. Ms. Phillips and her NCCEH collaborators continually seek ways to ensure that the privacy of youth is protected.

## LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

---

The LEAs profiled below are **Winston-Salem/Forsyth County (WSFC) Schools** (54,000 students), **Henderson County Public Schools** (13,446 students) and **Cumberland County Schools** (51,119 students). These three LEAs have experienced local liaisons who are full-time in their roles and active in the communities they serve. These local liaisons are part of a liaison leadership cohort. Using their experience, they assist other LEAs in determining the best way to collaborate with their local CoC or the BoS CoC.

North Carolina LEAs have participated in Youth PIT Counts in a variety of ways. This profile highlights the differences in approaches among the featured LEAs and reinforces the importance of strong community relationships.

## HOW MANY YEARS HAVE THE FEATURED LEAs AND CoCs WORKED TOGETHER ON THE YOUTH PIT COUNT?

---

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

WSFC Schools participated in the first Youth PIT Count in 2013 as one of the nine inter-agency *Youth Count!* communities. Schools in the nine communities worked through their LEAs to identify and include unaccompanied homeless youth in the 2013 PIT Count. The LEA was a key partner in this effort.

### HENDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

In 2013, Henderson County Schools participated in a “practice” Youth PIT Count. The CoC conducted a service and shelter count but not a formal street count. In 2014 and 2015, the LEA participated in formal Youth PIT Counts.

### CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

Cumberland County Schools worked in partnership with the Cumberland County CoC on the Youth PIT Count before this type of collaboration was encouraged by HUD. Their relationship spans more than six years.

---

<sup>7</sup> Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC §§ 11431-11435) is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of homeless children and youth in U.S. public schools. Visit <http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/mv.php> for more information.

## WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE LEA AND THE CoC AT THE TIME OF THE YOUTH PIT COUNT?

---

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

The LEA has been an active partner in the Winston-Salem CoC for many years, even before they began working together on the Youth PIT Count. This longstanding relationship helped both entities work well together as they created and implemented a dedicated Youth PIT Count. In 2013, WSFC Schools received a grant from the local CoC. For many years, the LEA homeless education office and the CoC Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)<sup>8</sup> lead organization office have been co-located.

### HENDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

The local liaison was active in the creation of the NC BoS CoC and the development of the BoS Youth PIT count process in Henderson County. It was important to have the local liaison present to advocate for the representation of homeless youth in the PIT count and the overall needs of these youth.

### CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

The local liaison serves as a member of the CoC executive committee. Monthly committee meetings are held with the Veterans Administration and other CoC member agencies. Their working relationship enables them to communicate on a regular basis about the needs of homeless children and youth.

## HOW DID THE LEA ASSIST WITH THE YOUTH PIT COUNT?

---

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

WSFC Schools identified students to assist with marketing a dedicated site for youth to drop in the night of the Youth PIT Count and help spread the word throughout the school system about the effort to count homeless youth. The CoC assisted the LEA in reaching out to youth service agencies and programs with which they did not have previous relationships to encourage them to join the effort.

### HENDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Henderson County does not have an emergency shelter for youth. Occasionally, older youth might stay at either the Hendersonville Rescue Mission or Mainstay (a domestic violence shelter). These shelters each conduct their own surveys for the Youth PIT Count. Since the LEA assists unaccompanied homeless youth and homeless families with school-aged children, it made sense for the LEA to act as the lead agency on the Youth PIT Count.

---

<sup>8</sup> Visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis/> for more information about Homeless Management Information Systems.

## CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

The CoC trained school social workers on the format of the questionnaires to be distributed during the Youth PIT Count. The CoC and LEA agreed that because school social workers work closely with unaccompanied homeless youth, they were in the best position to disseminate the questionnaires.

## WHAT RESOURCES WERE NEEDED FOR THIS INITIATIVE AND HOW WERE THEY OBTAINED?

---

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

CoC staff planned the Youth PIT Count process and provided the marketing materials. Food for the dedicated youth drop-in site the night of the Youth PIT Count was donated by school social workers. Other incidental costs were folded into the CoC general PIT Count budget.

### HENDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

The only resources necessary were the youth questionnaires provided by the CoC. These were given out to the Henderson County Homeless Coalition members who volunteered to participate.

### CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

Limited resources were needed. Pen, paper, and electronic notepads were used for the youth questionnaires.

## WHAT LESSONS LEARNED CAN BENEFIT OTHER CoCs AND LEAs ON A YOUTH PIT COUNT COLLABORATION?

---

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

The relationship between WSFC Schools and the CoC is a critical part of the CoC's response to unaccompanied homeless youth and homeless families. By having the LEA participate in the Youth PIT Count, the CoC was better able to understand the picture of homelessness in the community among families who qualify under the education definition of *homeless*, as well as those who qualify under the HUD definition.

### HENDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

A mid-year practice Youth PIT count was conducted to facilitate a smooth process during the actual count. The CoC includes the information on all youth identified as homeless under the education definition as a way to see the bigger picture of homelessness in the local community. While some families and youth identified as homeless by the LEA will not qualify for services under HUD programs, they likely will be eligible for services from other homeless providers at some time. Including families under both the education and HUD definition of *homeless* has allowed the Henderson County CoC to discover gaps in services that may or may not be outside of HUD's scope of

service.

## CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

A commitment to working for the good of the community is vital. Through working together, the LEA and CoC became familiar with one another's programs and resources. This collaboration allowed them to work collectively in the identification of homeless families and youth and to ensure that they receive services. School social workers refer families to transitional housing programs and work closely with CoC staff. The LEA shared some of its data in aggregate form and now meets regularly with the CoC to work out such issues as transportation from shelters to schools of origin for homeless children and youth. Hearing the educational perspective at meetings helped CoC members gain a clearer understanding of how to more closely align education and housing goals.

## CONCLUSION

---

With an emphasis on relationship building and shared cooperation, LEAs and CoCs can work together to bridge their differences and gain a greater understanding of needed services in their community. Despite the differences in the education and HUD definitions of *homeless*, the common goal of identifying unaccompanied homeless youth provided a foundation for a more unified approach to serving them in the communities featured in this profile.

## REFERENCES

---

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001. 42 USC §§11431–11435. Retrieved from <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/mv-full-text.docx>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2009. HUD's homeless assistance programs: Continuum of Care 101. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/coc101.pdf>

This brief was developed by:

National Center for Homeless Education  
800-308-2145 or [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)  
[www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)

July 2015

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) operates the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. NCHE is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students. The contents of this brief were developed under a grant from the Department; however, these contents do not necessarily reflect the views of policies of the Department.