

## Counting Our Homeless Neighbors While Envisioning a Future Without Homelessness

By Amy Lieber and Kate Coventry

Last Wednesday night, volunteers braved the rain to conduct the annual Point in Time (PIT) count. The PIT aims to get an accurate snapshot of people experiencing homelessness in DC on a single night. Providers survey their clients and volunteers fan out across the District to survey residents living outside. Conducting a PIT count is a requirement for receiving federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the information gathered helps us know how to better address homelessness. It tells us about who is homeless, where they are staying, and whether the strategies we are using to combat homelessness are working.



Both of us participated in the count this year, surveying individuals in two different neighborhoods in the city. We looked in alleys, outdoor staircases and under bridges for folks experiencing homelessness. We found homeless neighbors sleeping in parks, doorways, and outdoor patios as well as on church steps. Most of the residents we found outside were chronically homeless, meaning they have been homeless for a long time and suffer from life-threatening health conditions and/or mental illness.

Chronic homelessness [cuts lives short](#). People who don't know where they're going to spend the night struggle to receive needed services like medical treatment or counseling. And they are often forced to stay in places that are unsafe or make their illnesses worse. As a result, the life expectancy of people facing chronic homelessness is far shorter than for those who are stably housed.

As a member of The Way Home campaign, the campaign to end chronic homelessness in the District, DCFPI envisions a future where no one is chronically homeless. The Way Home calls on the Mayor to end chronic homelessness in her second term and to invest \$35.5 million to house 1,140 individuals and 177 families in fiscal year 2020. [You can support these efforts by signing the petition.](#)

