

COUNTY OF MERCED 2011 HOMELESS COUNT: PRELIMINARY REPORT

February 2011

County of Merced 2011 Homeless Count Unsheltered Count Instrument

Name of Counter: _____
 Date: _____
 City or Unincorporated Area: _____
 Describe Location: _____

 Total Number of Homeless Persons at this Location: _____

Of the total # of persons, record # of single individuals (not family members) in table:

# of Individual Men	# of Individual Women	# of Persons unable to Determine Gender	# of Single Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18

Of the total # of persons, record # of family members (not single individuals) in table:

Family Units:	# of Adult Men	# of Adult Women	# of Adults unable to Determine Gender	# of Accompanied Children
Family 1				
Family 2				
Family 3				
Family 4				
Family 5				
Family 6				

When the exact number of person(s) is unknown for some reason, please record the number of estimated persons in the appropriate row:

Place or Location	Estimated # of Persons
Persons in abandoned buildings	
Persons in outdoor remote encampments	
Persons walking, sitting, etc in remote area	
Persons in a vehicle	
Persons in a crowd or crowded area	
Other:	

Additional Notes or Comments (continue on back side if necessary):

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2011 Merced County Homeless Count and Survey was a success due to the efforts of the following volunteers:

Art Barajas, Phyllis Boyer, Sherry Boyer, Allen Buker, John Carlisle, Randy Cocker, Diane Crain, Renee Davenport, Jennifer Favors, Elizabeth Freitas, Alejandra Gaona, Steve Hammond, Darren Hughes, Mary Jauregui, Cheryl Large, Elizabeth Lopez, Irma Lopez, Mollie Lucas, Roberta Medina, Jennifer Mockus, Jesse Molina, Renee Mounce, Justin Peterson, Lisa Popejoy, Michael Prow, Terry Raley, Jeremiah Reeves, Saundra Reeves, Roberta Romero, Natalie Rios, Tammy Sanderson, Fran Slaughter, Audrey Slocum, Kathi Shannon, Terry Tatum, Mauricio Torres and Anna Yang;

and the following Organizations:

City of Merced, County of Merced Human Services Agency, Central California Alliance for Health, County of Merced Mental Health, Merced County Community Action Agency, Salvation Army, Merced County Rescue Mission, Bethel Community Church, Institute for Urban Initiatives, Love INC, Community Social Model Advocates, Turning Point Community Programs and Valley Crisis Center.

Appreciation is also extended to Walmart and McDonalds for contributions toward program incentives, which were provided to homeless individuals that participated in the survey.

**For more information about this report please contact
the 2011 Street Count Coordinator**

Jeanette Garcia
Merced County Association of Governments
Tel. 209.723.3153 x324
Jeanette.Garcia@mcagov.org

The report was prepared by the Institute for Urban Initiatives

Joe Colletti, PhD, Executive Director
Sofia Herrera, PhD, Associate Director
www.urban-initiatives.org

NOTE: Any volunteer or agency that was mistakenly omitted will be included in the final report. Please contact Jeanette Garcia with information.

I. PURPOSE

The main purpose of the preliminary report is to answer the primary question **“How Many Homeless People Are There In The County of Merced On Any Given Day.”** The answer is 485 adults and children. Of these persons, 299 or 62% were counted on the streets and/or were unsheltered, and 186 or 38% were counted in shelters and transitional housing programs.

A final report will be provided to the community next month that will provide a breakdown of the homeless population as required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the annual Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program application. HUD requires information about the following homeless subpopulations:

- Chronically Homeless Persons;
- Families;
- Men;
- Persons with HIV/AIDS;
- Persons with Mental Illness;
- Single Individuals;
- Substance Abusers;
- Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 18;
- Veterans;
- Victims of Domestic Violence; and
- Women.

Such information will be taken from the County of Merced 2011 Homeless Subpopulation Survey, which was administered two days after the homeless count. The survey included various questions to ensure that necessary data would be collected for each subpopulation.

The final report will also include a breakdown of the total number of homeless persons by jurisdiction and location within each jurisdiction.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 THE 2011 COUNT WAS CONDUCTED

The homeless count was conducted on the streets during the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. on January 25, 2011. The count was also conducted on the same day 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.

WHO WAS NOT COUNTED

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. 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%) of Merced County residents were living below the poverty level according to the 2009 American Community Survey, which is the most current data available from the U.S. Census Bureau. This means that approximately 61,000 County residents representing nearly 19,000 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. The data also noted that 20% of all families and 11% of persons age 65 and over live below the poverty level.

Households living below the poverty level are at risk of becoming homeless. Due to 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 homeless experience.

WHO CARRIED OUT THE COUNT

Approximately 25 volunteers carried out the street count on January 25 between the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. The volunteers represented a wide range of 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.

III. METHODOLOGY

The 2011 homeless count was a county-wide effort. Prior to the count, volunteers attended two planning meetings and an orientation. During the planning meetings key locations and mapping were discussed to ensure that concentrated areas were identified and efforts were made to minimize duplication. Areas identified included 12 regions in the City of Merced, target areas in Los Banos and Livingston, and numerous unincorporated locations.

IV. NEXT STEPS

A final report entitled the Merced County 2011 Homeless Assessment will be provided to the community during March. The report will include a breakdown of the various subpopulations listed at the beginning of this preliminary report.

The findings in the assessment will also be used to complete the Homeless Point-in-Time section, which is part of the annual Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program application due in May. HUD requires this information in order for local jurisdictions to 1) determine if the total number of homeless persons is increasing or decreasing, and 2) to determine if each homeless subpopulation is increasing or decreasing.

The findings will also be included in the Merced County 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in order to help prioritize the residential and non-residential services that are needed to end homelessness in the lives of local residents. The plan will be completed by June, 2011 and it is expected to be adopted by the Merced County Association of Governments' Governing Board for immediate implementation by a wide-range of public and private agencies that have strived to end homelessness in Merced County.