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January 19, 2011

Dear Community Friend,

Do you encounter people who may be homeless in the course of your work? It may be surprising to learn just how many people in our community do not have a home.

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is the official coordinator of the January 27, 2011 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County. This Count occurs every other year in January, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). **Our goal is to count every homeless person in suburban Cook County in order to generate the support they need and deserve.**

In addition to counting homeless people we identify on the streets, we need the help of sites like yours that may encounter homeless persons on a sporadic basis. **We are writing to ask for your help in counting people who are homeless between Thursday, January 27th and Friday, February 11th, 2011.**

Enclosed with this letter you will find the 2011 "Service Site Survey" that we are asking sites, such as yours, to fill out. You will also find a "Helpful Hints" sheet that will answer some basic questions about using the survey. And finally, we will have an on-line information and training session to help sites better understand the process of completing this survey and its vital importance. Please visit the homeless count website, www.homelesscount.org to access the training session beginning the week of January 24th. Upon reviewing these materials, you may wish to contact Hallan Hanson, Program Coordinator for the Alliance. Hallan will be happy to provide you with any one-on-one assistance that you may require. She can be reached via email at hallan@suburbancook.org or via phone at 708.345.4035, x05.

Ultimately, our goal is to get the most accurate count possible, so that the federal government and the general public can better understand the extent of homelessness in our communities. A better understanding of our current situation can help generate the resources and energy to make a real change in the future.

Thank you in advance for your help! It is groups like yours that continue to give people hope when they may have trouble finding it.

Warmest regards,

Jennifer C. Hill

Jennifer C. Hill
Executive Director

P.S. – You can learn more about the 2011 Homeless Count by visiting the homeless count website at www.homelesscount.org.



"HELPFUL HINTS"

2011 Homeless Count – Service Site Survey

Remember, our goal is to get the most accurate count as possible of the homeless population in suburban Cook County!!

If you have any questions, please contact **Hallan Hanson** at:

Phone: 708.345.4035, ext. 05

Fax: 708.345.7855

Email: hallan@suburbancook.org

Please return all survey charts by **February 11th, 2011** to:

Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County

1107 S. Mannheim Rd, Suite 304

Westchester, IL 60154.

Fax: 708.345.7855

Instructions for Completing the Survey:

- 1) To begin using the survey, ask every person to whom you provide services between the weeks of January 27th, 2011 and February 7th, 2011 the following question: "Where did you sleep on Thursday night, January 27th?" If they give any answer other than their own apartment/home/etc., include them on the survey chart.
- 2) Complete the survey with as much information as possible. Please write legibly.
- 3) The "OPTIONAL" question can be answered by any person willing to provide the information. If the person being interviewed does not want to provide the information, you may skip this question in the survey.
- 4) Upon completion of a survey chart, please provide your name, your site / agency's name, your address and your phone at the bottom. It may be necessary to contact you at a later time if we have questions.
- 5) Please make as many copies of the survey chart as needed.

We encourage you to view an on-line information and training session prior to January 27th, 2011. These training sessions can provide you (and your staff, volunteers, etc.) with important information on interacting with homeless persons and obtaining the correct information for completing the survey. Please see the homeless count website, www.homelesscount.org during the week of January 24th to access the training video.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- Q:** Who completes the surveys?
A: We ask that staff and volunteers familiar with the survey and its purpose be responsible for filling out the survey chart. Homeless persons should NOT complete the survey by themselves. Please have your staff and volunteers sit with the homeless person(s) to ask survey questions, write down answers and provide any additional information necessary.
- Q:** What is the purpose of the "Homeless Person's Initials" and "Birth date" sections? Are those really necessary?
A: The homeless person's initials and birth date are helpful in our "de-duplication" process. By matching up these characteristics for all persons surveyed, we can attempt to eliminate anybody that may have been surveyed at multiple sites.
- Q:** What if the homeless person refuses to answer?
A: Simply obtain as much information from each person as possible – the more information you are able to get, the more helpful that information is to us.
- Q:** Can we "guess" at some of the answers?
A: Some characteristics may be obvious. For example, **gender** and **race** may be visible. **Birth date**, if not given, can be observed by simply answering an age range (i.e. 20-30 or 65+). Finally, **mental illness** or **disability** may also be apparent, even if the homeless person does not wish to answer this question. For any survey questions that are not answered directly but are visible, please simply write "OBSERVED" after the response written.
- Q:** Should we include information about other family members (referred to in the final column) even if we are unable to survey each family member in person?
A: Yes. If the person being surveyed is willing to provide information about family members, the family members should each be counted as their own separate survey entry. Please make sure to note in the margin that these individuals are in the same family.
- Q:** Can we include information about family or friends of the homeless person, even if we are unable to survey each person individually? Can we provide information for homeless persons that we know well (because they use our services frequently, etc.) even if we did not interview him or her in person?
A: Yes. Just as with family members, you or the person being surveyed may be able to provide information about additional homeless persons. Please use your judgment and make a note in the margin explaining how the information was retrieved (i.e., "information by Joe Smith, a friend", or "I know the person").
- Q:** Is this information confidential?
A: **YES!!** Please inform every person surveyed that the information provided is absolutely confidential! The Alliance uses aggregate data for the purpose of bettering our services for the homeless population with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in suburban Cook County. Information will not be used to find the homeless persons surveyed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!!



2011 Unsheltered Homeless Count Service Site Survey – Suburban Cook County

To be completed by service sites during the weeks of January 27 – February 11, 2011.

Please ask everyone who uses your service between January 27th & February 11th: “Where did you sleep on Thursday night, January 27, 2011?”
If they answer somewhere other than their own apartment/home, add the person to this chart.

Homeless Persons Initials	Birth date mm/dd/yyyy	Male / Female	Race / Ethnicity	Type of place you slept (forest preserve, cross streets, abandoned building, 24-hour restaurant, stayed w/ friends, etc.)	In what town, city, or village?	How long have you been homeless? (# of days, weeks, months, years)	How many times have you been homeless in the last 3 years?	<u>OPTIONAL:</u> Do any of these apply to you? Veteran - Mental illness - Substance abuse - HIV/AIDS - Domestic violence victim - Other disability	Were any family members homeless with you on Thursday night? (If yes, include each family member on their own line.)
MTH	2/15/1965	Male	Asian / Non-Hispanic	Slept in car, near Belmont/25 th Ave.	Franklin Park	5 days	4 times	Mental illness, Veteran	No

FORM COMPLETED BY:

Your Name: _____

Date Form was Completed: _____

Site/Agency: _____

Your Phone: _____

Address: _____

City & Zip: _____

Comments on data collection (e.g., food pantry guests, phone inquiries only, record review, etc.): _____