

2026 Hennepin County CoC Unsheltered Observation volunteer
driving preparation information & tips

Thank you for your time to drive around in one region of Hennepin County on the evening of Wednesday, January 28, 2026 (from 11:00pm to 1:00am) as part of the 2026 Unsheltered Point in Time Count (PIT)! The reason for this observation exercise is to assure we are covering the full geography of our Continuum of Care (CoC) region on the evening of the PIT, and to observe all people who are living outside, in tents, abandoned buildings, cars or other places outdoors not meant for human habitation. This population may not get counted without your time/observation.

This is a unique opportunity that will take a few hours of your time prior to the evening of the count. We recommend researching your area, making a few calls or in person visits, and mapping out your route for your selected area a few days before the night of the PIT.

You should be able to select which geographic area you will cover. If you can pick an area that you are familiar with, it should make it easier for you to canvas. If you are not familiar with the City/area that you will be observing, please take up to 4 hours right after you sign up to research the city/area and review a map to see the geographic region you will be canvassing. Please map out your drive for that evening using some of the potential strategies listed below. It is also required that you have 1 other person with you for safety purposes and to assist with the recording of details and driving navigation. Below are a few strategies/tips to consider a week before you head out to begin your observations:

1. Are there any 24/7 gas stations, laundromats, restaurants, Wal Mart etc., that you can drive by to see if anyone is congregating or hanging around outside that evening. You can also leave a little bit early before your shift and allow time to walk into some of the 24/7 gas stations, restaurants, stores to inquire with staff if there are any known areas where unsheltered households congregate in that area.
2. Are there any parks with large lit or unlit parking lots, train tracks, or other large green spaces where folks may be congregating or camping out? If so, incorporate that into your driving route.
3. Google any non-profit social service agencies in the area that you can call a few days ahead of the PIT night to inquire about areas where folks who may be unsheltered congregate in that region? Also go inside and/or drive by to see if anyone is inside or nearby.

Because we have street outreach teams out that evening as well canvassing known locations, it is very important that you get as much detail as possible, so we can de-duplicate if another volunteer observes the same person. Details that are helpful include: the time, location (address/streets or cross sections/park/store names), AND descriptions of all of the people in the group (if more than one), what the people are wearing, male/female, color of hair or description of hat, backpacks or bags, color of car or any carts, bikes or tents, as well as any other details you are able to observe.

Thank you, and please let us know if you have any questions!