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Making Partnerships Count: A Case Study: The Role of Social Capital in the 2009 Homeless Count in Suburban Cook County

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Making Partnerships *Count*

A Case Study: The Role of Social Capital in the 2009 Homeless Count in Suburban Cook County

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Abstract

As research intern for the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County from 2008 to 2009, I served a primary role as the 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator. I approached this challenge with a background in politics and applied community development from Illinois State University's Politics & Government Department and the Stevenson Center for Community & Economic Development. With such a strong foundation in related academic fields, I focused much of my time on utilizing Social Capital Theory to plan the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County. This paper will present the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County as a case study for investigating the impacts of social capital on the 2009 Homeless Count, homeless counts in general and, in the broadest sense, for the homelessness services field as a whole. Specifically, I will outline the processes of planning, implementing and executing a homeless count – including the creation of partnerships, methodology selection, volunteer recruitment and management, data analysis, and follow-through. It is the goal of this paper that the 2009 Homeless Count case study will illuminate not only the great impact of social capital in the implementation of successful homeless counts, but also the great potential for continued social capital building as an impetus for future successes in the homelessness services field.

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Introduction

Between 2.5 and 3.5 million men, women & children experience homelessness each year in the United States. Over 17,000 people will be homeless every night in the state of Illinois alone. [1] Every day, continua throughout the state strive to secure funding, create housing, and provide services for those without homes in Illinois. The goal of each continuum is to decrease and ultimately eliminate homelessness in their region. Such ambition requires an incredible level of organization, planning and development on the part of each continuum – including the determination of need, the plotting of benchmark goals, the creation of a strategic plan, and the collective action to continue moving forward.

Social capital plays a pivotal role in achieving this end. Through the *bridging* of various social networks and the creation of new *bonds* between groups and peoples, social capital can help to strengthen a continuum's vision and better equip those working within the continuum to achieve its goals. In the end, social capital can not only help to bring a single project to fruition, but can help to bolster collaboration between partners for all future works to better the lives of those living in our communities.

This paper will focus on one aspect of the continuum's purpose: the planning, implementation and successful completion of a biennial homeless count. More specifically, this paper will present a case study of the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County. [2] This case study will look to report on and analyze the role of social capital in the 2009 Homeless Count. This paper will be guided by the following constructs:

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[1] National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2007.

[2] All information provided here is relevant to suburban Cook County only – excluding Chicago & Evanston.

- To answer the question, "How important was the role of social capital to the planning, implementation, and successful completion of the 2009 Homeless Count in Suburban Cook County?"

- To present a case study that utilizes both academic foundations – social capital theory & project management application – and practical experience – my work as research intern & 2009 Count Coordinator at the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County.

- To analyze the use of partnerships in the 2009 Homeless Count in the larger context of social capital theory as applied to the field of homeless human services.

- To provide a significant body of work that will help to guide and strengthen the process of planning, implementing and successfully completing future Homeless Counts in suburban Cook County.

Thus, while this paper will focus on the use of partnerships in the 2009 Homeless Count case study, it's academic and practical foundations will help to illuminate the role of social capital in the entire field of homelessness services. In order to achieve this end, this paper has been divided into ten key sections (excluding the Introduction, Conclusion and Appendices sections). The purpose of each section is as follows:

Section II, entitled, "Homelessness: Then & Now" will provide a literary background of homelessness in the United States. This literature review aims to highlight the history of homelessness in the United States, the debate to define "homelessness", the primary causes of homelessness and some of the suggested solutions for reducing and eliminating homelessness in the United States.

Section III, entitled, "The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County" will provide a very brief overview of the Alliance, it's mission, and its role in the suburban Cook County Continuum of

Care. This section is kept short intentionally, since additional information about the Alliance can be accessed on their website at www.suburbancook.org.

Section IV, entitled, "What is a Homeless Count?" will provide a clear description of what a Homeless Count is and who is responsible for conducting Homeless Counts. In addition, this section will address the three primary, and most frequently asked, questions surrounding a Homeless Count: 1) Why do we Count the homeless? and 2) When do we Count the homeless? As well as a very summarized response to the last, and most complicated, question: 3) How do we count the Homeless?

Section V, entitled, "The Social Capital Factor" will provide an academic overview of Social Capital. Without exhausting all literary works discussing the topic, I will provide some basic definitions of bridging and bonding capital. In addition, I will illuminate some of the researched benefits and concerns in the creation and practice of social capital in the United States, particularly amongst the populations discussed in this paper – that is, homelessness service providers and those persons who are currently or recently homeless.

Section VI, entitled, "Creating Partnerships: Who? Why? & How?" will briefly outline the partnerships that were researched and created, or fostered and strengthened during the course of the Count planning process. This section is integral in understanding the vast networks that played a role in implementing and executing the 2009 Homeless Count. It is important to remember that most of the partnerships listed in this section were new collaborations for the Alliance and its staff – making the entire planning process a new experience marked by far greater insights, skills and interactions.

Section VII, entitled, "Step 1: Selecting the Count Methodology" will describe, in detail, the processes through which we selected our Sheltered Count and Unsheltered Count methodologies. This section, as with the other "Step" sections will serve as a case study illustrating of the invaluable contributions of the partnerships fostered in the 2009 Homeless Count planning process.

Section VIII, entitled, "Step 2: Recruiting & Managing Volunteers" will provide a more brief description of another lengthy process in the 2009 Homeless Count planning – that is, the creation of manpower and physical support. Again, this section will serve as a case study illustrating the benefits of pre-created collaborations among diverse partners.

Section IX, entitled, "Step 3: Moving Forward with the Data" will provide results from the 2009 Homeless Count in order to demonstrate the very tedious nature through which information and data was carefully compiled, analyzed and presented. In particular, this section of the case study will illustrate the vital works of myriad specialists and analysts to bring to fruition a clear, statistically reliable, and informative set of results for the Alliance, its partners, and their communities.

Section X, entitled, "Step 4: Giving Back" will provide a description of the ways through which the Alliance sought to follow-through with their work and "give back" to our partners and members. In particular, this section will focus on the "Regional Analyses" and "Countywide Analysis" provided by myself and the staff to each CBSA and their community members, as well as various forms through which the Alliance distributed, utilized, and presented the 2009 Homeless Count results. Specifically, this section will emphasize the importance of maintaining social capital networks once the foundation is in place and simple ways through which those sustained relationships can be achieved.

And finally, section XI, entitled, "Analysis" will recap my discussion of social capital as it relates to the 2009 Homeless Count. In particular, this section will re-analyze the goals of this paper and how I achieved these goals in the writing of this paper. Overall, this section is meant to clarify the importance of social capital in not only the Alliance's work, but in the works of all agencies in the homelessness services field and beyond.

Before discussing very specific aspects of homelessness – such as Homeless Counts and the effects of social capital – it is first necessary to provide some background information on the topic. Thus, before beginning my work as 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator for the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, I undertook a thorough literature review on homelessness in the United States. The books selected, therefore, addressed not only homeless counts, but also the causes of homelessness, the history of homelessness in the states, homeless policies, and research methods for studying homeless populations. This literature review helped to illuminate several key (and controversial) facets of the homelessness issue that helped to guide my work at the Alliance, including: the difficulty of defining "homelessness," past and present causes of homelessness, methodologies for counting the homeless, and solutions (proposed or attempted) for reducing or preventing homelessness in the United States.

I have provided some essential aspects of that literature review here to help explain the foundations upon which I began my work with Homeless Counts and the Alliance.

History of Homelessness in the US

Perhaps the best way to delve into any new topic is to first understand its history. Homelessness, like most social problems, has a very long history. What follows is a rough outline, taken primarily from Rossi's review of homelessness in the U.S. in *Down and Out in America: The Origins of Homelessness.* I have tried to summarize some of the major eras in U.S. history that increased or decreased homelessness or changed the face of homelessness in the U.S.

COLONIAL AMERICA:

Rossi explains that under the Elizabethan poor laws inherited from England, "…each town shouldered responsibility for the care of its own poor, including any homeless persons."[3] For Rossi, this marked a very different attitude toward homelessness that he considers still prevalent in Europe, but markedly absent from the U.S. culture today.

POST CIVIL WAR AMERICA:

Rossi explains that due primarily to the increase in transience of young men, this period saw a dramatic increase in homelessness, especially in the Northern states.

19TH CENTURY AMERICA:

Due entirely to the several severe economic downturns that took place in the 19th century, the U.S. witnessed several extreme surges in homelessness which demanded public relief. Rossi notes, however, that the focus of relief was not specific to homelessness, but rather, "The focus… was the general need for food, fuel, and clothing."[4]

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICA:

Rossi considers this period in the U.S. one of the most defining times for homelessness. The turn of the century created a new phenomenon in America's homeless scene, known as "The Skid Row." Due to the fact that the labor market was concerned primarily with muscle power at this point in history,

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[3] Rossi (1989), 17.

[4] Rossi (1989), 19.

there was an increase in demand for strong, transient workers. These were, for obvious reasons, primarily single men. As Rossi describes, "The Skid Rows were hotels, lodging houses, and restaurants providing inexpensive housing and food for transient workers… thus, Skid Row areas were established in each of our major cities."[5] Rossi points out that this was the heyday of the transient homeless – they were barely scraping by on unlivable wages, but were creating a new culture that they could call their own. Rossi points to Vander Kooi's description of the Skid Row homeless during this period in history. Kooi writes, 'The Skid Rows are viable communities in which many social activities and attitudes similar to those found in all communities are sustained."[6]

In *New Homeless and Old: Community and the Skid Row Hotel,* Hoch & Slayton devote most of their time to this epoch in the U.S.'s homeless history. Hoch & Slayton comment, "A key priority of Skid Row society was independence and personal autonomy."[7] In general agreement, Jencks writes, in *The Homeless,* that Skid Row areas were the preferred form of homeless independence. Jencks explains, "…almost all skid-row residents preferred these hotels to the free missions run by evangelists… due primarily to the level of independence."[8]

Unfortunately, the one characteristic that the public associated with Skid Row more than anything else was drinking. Rossi, however, points out, "…the reality was that, although the rate of alcoholism was much higher than for the cities as a whole, the vast majority of residents were not addicted to liquor (or drugs)."[9] Nevertheless, public opinion of the Skid Rows quickly became unfavorable and by the 1940's, almost all Skid Row areas in the U.S.'s major cities had been destroyed.

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[5] Rossi (1989), 20-21.

[6] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 99.

[7] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 100.

[8] Jencks (1994), 20.

[9] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 98.

In addition to the technology advancements that made manual labor unnecessary, Hoch & Slayton point out that, "This shift was further accelerated by wartime employment, and then afterward, by the reigning prosperity that lasted through to the Vietnam War period."[10] Simply put, the transient labor of Skid Row was no longer desirable or in demand.

Hoch & Slayton also note that the sustainability of Skid Rows (which I should mention here are a suggested solutions for easing present-day homelessness), fell in the hands of interest groups and local governments. Hoch & Slayton write, "Skid Row communities, with an occasional exception, usually lacked the social strength necessary for collective resistance."[11] With no popular support from community organizations or the local government's leaders, Skid Row became a thing of the past.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION:

Rossi comments that this time in U.S. history brought homelessness "home". He writes, "A 1934 survey of social agencies in seven hundred towns and cities estimated 200,000 homeless. Other estimates went as high as 1.5 million in the worst years of the Great Depression."[12] The Great Depression, therefore, created a new reality of homelessness that the rest of America could not avoid.

THE 1970'S:

It was not until the 1970's, however, that Rossi begins to discuss the changing face of homelessness. Rossi writes, "Homelessness began to take on new forms…" and he explains that certain demographics began taking center stage in the homeless issue:

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[10] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 89.

[11] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 123.

[12] Rossi (1989), 22.

"...literal homeless began to grow and at the same time to become

more visible to the public... police patrols no longer picked up people

sleeping out on the streets... homeless families started to appear at

welfare offices... there were more women sleeping in city parks...

interest lawyers began to sue the cities, claiming that the city has the

obligation to provide shelter to the homeless... and so forth."[13]

In many ways, the 1970's not only marked a turning point in the state of America's homeless, but it marked a dramatic change in America's response to its own homeless. After almost a century of worsening conditions, it seemed that the U.S. was getting ready to take responsibility for its poorest citizens.

THE SPRING OF 1987:

Rossi writes, "...it was this spring that advocates for the homeless slept overnight on the Capitol steps and Congress passed the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, appropriating $442 million for the homeless in that fiscal year."[14] This was when homelessness became the "social problem" that it is today. The Spring of 1987, according to Rossi, was what launched homelessness into the spotlight.

<u>Definitions of Homelessness</u>

Very few authors disagree about the basic historical path that homelessness has taken in the last three centuries. What most authors do disagree about, however, is how to define homelessness.

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[13] Rossi (1989), 34-35.

[14] Rossi (1989), 36.

Let it be said first that I have encountered dozens of definitions for "homeless" or "homelessness" in my recent studies. Some take into consideration a physical dwelling, some take into consideration the length of a person's stay in a physical dwelling, some take into consideration the price of a dwelling and the manner in which one inhabits it.

The conceptualizing that seems most confounding, however, is that of the "home." What exactly does a "home" mean? I believe Rossi illustrates the confusion of definition best when he writes:

> "Does 'having a home' include hotel rooms (such as the SROs of Skid
>
> Row), rented rooms in private dwellings, beds in dormitory-like
>
> accommodations, cars, trucks, vans, tents, or shacks made of scrap
>
> materials?... and so forth and so on… we are forced to resort to a
>
> certain arbitrariness regarding the 'home'."[15]

Jencks makes things more simple by observing that, "In today's society, any private space intended for sleeping can qualify as a home, so long as those who sleep in it have a legal right to be there and can exclude strangers."[16] And yet, we still run into the problem of what a "private space" might look like, what it might be built from, what amenities it needs to provide, etc.

A second way to define the homeless is to focus on the people, rather than the physical space. In this way, several authors, including Jencks (and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development), agree that "Sheltered Homeless" and "Unsheltered (Street) Homeless" is a viable, and visible, definition. Anyone attempting to count a homeless population may find this definition the most useful, since one could begin by determining who resides in shelters or other housing programs each

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[15] Rossi (1989), 11-13.

[16] Jencks (1994), 3-4.

night and who resides on the streets. As Hoch & Slayton point out, however, this leaves out any populations living in tertiary stages of homelessness, those are: permanent supportive housing, a friend or family member's couch, and so forth. Furthermore, Jencks also concedes that, "Although the distinction between the street and shelter homeless works fairly well for research on any given night, it breaks down when we follow people over time."[17] Jencks, like several other authors, points to the transient nature of the homeless as an additional factor complicating definition. Thus, a person may be considered "Unsheltered Homeless" for two weeks, "Sheltered Homeless" for three months, and "with a home" for the other eight and one half months, even if that "home" is changing every few weeks.

I found the most helpful definition to be the one provided by Burt in *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing*. Burt simply summarizes the myriad definitions into the three most common factors at the center of the definitions. Burt writes, "Most discussions suggest that three elements, separately or in combination, characterize homelessness. These elements are 1) the transience or instability of *place*, 2) the instability or absences of connections to *family*, and 3) the instability or absence of *housing*."[18] In this way, a working definition of homelessness can be created to address the population to be studied in any given region. Furthermore, understanding the elements of defining the homeless, rather than creating a specific definition, provides for a flexibility that will allow for changes and adjustments in a study.

As I will discuss in more length later on, for the purposes of the 2009 Homeless Count I will use the pre-determined definitions of "homeless" as put forth by HUD. That is,

> "…an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
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> residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that

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[17] Jencks (1994), 4.

[18] Burt (2001), 2.

is 1) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); 2) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or 3) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings."[19]

Causes of Homelessness

The possible causes of homelessness are innumerable. In fact the National Alliance to End Homelessness lists 8 primary causes of homelessness in the United States. Those are (in alphabetical order – as rank is virtually impossible to determine)[20]:

1. Decline in Public Assistance

2. Domestic violence

3. Drug & alcohol addiction

4. Lack of affordable healthcare

5. Lack of affordable housing

6. Loss of employment

7. Mental illness

8. Poverty

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[19] U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (www.hud.gov), 2008.

[20] National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org), 2008.

Before delving into other individual causes, however, I would like to take an opportunity to discuss the last, and most general, cause: Poverty. As suggested by Rossi, poverty is the broader link in the causation chain leading to homelessness. Rossi writes, "Homelessness is more properly viewed as the most aggravated state of a more prevalent problem: extreme poverty."[21] This, he explains, causes most of the other individual causes of homelessness. And as the National Coalition for the Homeless cites, "At any given time, between 12% and 16% of U.S. residents are living below the poverty line – that's about 36 million people in the United States."[22] [23]

Individual cases of homelessness, however, should be considered. Rossi suggests the following six conditions as the most probable causes of homelessness: 1) mental illness, 2) alcoholism and drug abuse, 3) physical health problems, 4) criminal convictions, 5) the continued social networks of the homeless and the extremely poor (ie a homeless person's maintained connections to the street or to a shelter), 6) the accumulation of troubles.[24] Most other authors I read agreed with most or all of these same general causes. Jencks, for example, notes that, "Clinicians who examine the homeless today usually conclude that about a third have 'severe' mental disorders that serve as a partial or total cause of their homelessness."[25]

Jencks, however, adds to this list of causes two other issues that are "friends-and-family-related". These may be issues that became more apparent in the 1990's (as Jencks wrote about five years after Rossi), but are certainly issues that remain prominent today. Jencks writes, "More than half

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[21] Rossi (1989), 8.

[22] National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org), 2008.

[23] NOTE: The poverty line is "the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country." In the U.S., the poverty line is just under $10,500, as of 2007.

[24] Rossi (1989), 145-179.

[25] Jencks (1994), 24.

the Chicago homeless told researchers that they had no good friends, and 36 percent reported no friends at all. A third also said they had no contact with their relatives, even though they almost all had kin in the Chicago area."[26] Jencks explains that as families get smaller, children now coming of age are more likely to have grown up with only one parent and one sibling. Thus, Jencks writes, "If their mother cannot help them and they do not get along with their sibling, they often have no claim on anyone else."[27] Even for a stable, single American, a friend may be a last resort in such extreme circumstances.

Similarly, Jencks sites the breakdown of marriage as a major issue contributing to the rise of homelessness in single women and mothers. "The decline of marriage," Jencks explains, "left more women fending for themselves."[28] He claims, "In theory, any family that falls on hard times can become homeless. In practice, the problem is largely confined to single mothers. Single mothers are much poorer than married couples."[29]

Furthermore, Jencks criticizes the idea of "simple bad luck" that Rossi offers in his sixth causation ("the accumulation of troubles"). Jencks writes, "To say that people choose to become homeless seems indecent. But the homeless are not just passive victims. They make choices, like everyone else."[30] Jencks sites the use of the "victim" image by politicians and interest groups in the 1980's as the origin of the "bad luck" cause. Times, however, have changed since the entrance of homelessness as a "social problem" and, as the section on solutions will suggest, a change in the "moral contract" of the homeless (including their own ability to take responsibility) is necessary to truly effect change and avoid the causes of homelessness.

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[26] Jencks (1994), 22.

[27] Jencks (1994), 80.

[28] Jencks (1994), 49.

[29] Jencks (1994), 90.

[30] Jencks (1994), 104.

<u>Solutions for Homelessness</u>

The heading itself seems deceptive, doesn't it? With so many differing causes, so many varied issues, and so many difficulties in estimating the true number of adults and children in the U.S. that suffer from homelessness, one solution seems hardly realistic. History has shown that often these odds stack up against even the most optimistic advocates of homeless issues and sometimes, sadly, it is easier to just ignore the problem. But as Redhead so poignantly put it, "Ignoring the problem isn't going to make homelessness go away. My God! Even a 4-year old knows that the world doesn't disappear when he closes his eyes."[31] Thus, we must push forward.

Rossi makes the potentially controversial claim that Americans *do* have the power to make homelessness a thing of the past. He writes:

> "That homelessness exists amid national prosperity without parallel in
>
> the history of the world is likewise clear evidence that we can do
>
> something about the problem if we choose to… public policy decisions
>
> have in large measure created the problem of homelessness; they can
>
> solve the problem as well."[32]

But who will do it? One of Hoch & Slayton's contentions is that the greatest possible weapon for the homeless is the "social problem" of homelessness itself. They argue that while advocates and protesters are a definite help, "…the greatest organizing potential for the homeless at present comes from their institutionalization."[33] Homelessness, they explain, is a highly recognized political, economic, and social issue and though researchers and authors may shed the most light on the topic, it is the

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[31] Redhead (2005), 71.

[32] Rossi (1989), 211.

[33] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 216.

institutionalization of the issue that has the most impact. Thus, in many ways, the best possible solution would be one that is home-grown, created from the inside, fought for by the people who are closest to homelessness – the homeless. This involves what Jencks calls, "adjusting the moral contract." By this, he means to describe a long-term change in the homeless themselves and their own abilities and desires to be reintegrated into mainstream society. This involves considerations on their part which must include work (how long and for how much am I willing to work?), transitional housing (what am I willing to pay for my own home?) and responsibility (am I willing to be responsible for my own food, utilities, and basic care?) This dream solution, therefore, is far from becoming a reality. In the meantime, other solutions will have to take its place.

As Rossi explains, "It is useful to divide what needs to be done into two parts: policy changes addressed to the short-term problem of how best to ameliorate the condition of the current homeless…and long-term policy changes designed to decrease the risk of becoming homeless."[34] Needless to say, there are hundreds of short-term changes and dozens of long-term changes that researchers and advocates suggest for reducing, eliminating, and preventing homelessness in the U.S. The authors I reviewed have several similar ideas. Almost all (Rossi, Jencks, and Hoch & Slayton, for example) agree that short-term changes that should take place immediately include: strengthening welfare agencies, making shelters more habitable and creating in-kind benefit programs. Some common long-term remedies shared between authors include: raising real cash benefits to families on the verge of homelessness, utilizing full-care institutions for the mentally and physically ill, creating job opportunities for non-working adults and "re-inventing" the housing market to create affordable homes for homeless adults and families.

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[34] Rossi (1989), 195.

Obviously, there are myriad roadblocks to all of these proposed solutions. Governments argue that there isn't enough funding, agencies argue that there isn't enough man/woman-power, advocates argue that there isn't enough support. Surprisingly enough, however, the greatest roadblock is the American people themselves. Jencks points to an astounding (and scary!) statistic that shows that, "…while three quarters of all American say they oppose further cuts in welfare benefits for the homeless, three quarters also oppose raising benefits."[35]

One long-term plan that has gained greater momentum and support than any other is one similar to the "3-Tier Plan" described by Hoch & Slayton. The plan is as follows: "The first step is prevention or short-term care in shelters… Next is intermediate care in transitional housing… Finally there is long-term shelter in low-rent housing."[36] Though it sounds amazingly obvious, the implementation is unsurprisingly complicated. Hoch & Slayton write, "Unfortunately, this plan, in the context of fiscal retrenchment, has tended to produce fragmented rather than integrated outcomes."[37] Again, Hoch & Slayton point to the lack of public support from the American people as the primary cause for failure. Though it is inevitably the responsibility of the government and of government agencies to implement such a long-range plan, it is the push of the American people that Hoch & Slayton claim is the necessary first step. They contend, "Without broad public support, government will take little initiative to provide decent housing, especially when such housing goes exclusively to the poor."[38]

Taken largely from this approach, many continua around the country have created 10 year Strategic Plans that address this exact issue of "how we can reduce and ultimately eliminate

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[35] Jencks (1994), 109.

[36] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 218.

[37] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 218.

[38] Hoch & Slayton (1989), 232.

homelessness" in our communities. Since the 3-tier plan described above has taken such strong root in community-based efforts at ending homelessness, many of these 10 Year Strategic Plans are focused on a metaphor that HUD uses: "Closing the Front Door to homelessness and opening to back door to stable housing."[39] The idea, akin to the theory described above, is to prevent people from becoming homeless (thus, providing prevention funding, rather than just emergency shelters) and strengthening the supportive housing programs that teach consumers to live independently in a safe, stable housing situation. As I will discuss later on, this is also the 10 Year Strategic Plan of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County.

Finally, the U.S. government has focused on a data-driven method as a major step towards reducing and eliminating homelessness. Through research methods (such as annual or biennial Homeless Counts) HUD produces numerous reports every year on the size, condition, and assessment of America's homeless. Martha Burt, author of *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing*, is the head of several of these research teams. These studies seem almost exhaustive, but the teams are nevertheless tireless in selecting new topics of concern and drawing up new solutions for short and long-term remedy. The primary focus, however, is always *reduction* and *prevention*.[40]

Whatever the method, Burt puts it best when she describes the ultimate purpose of researching the homeless populations in the United States. She writes, "…we need to try to understand why we have homelessness *now*, and why we have it *here*. Only then can we ask who will become homeless out of all the people vulnerable to the condition."[41] What is important to note here is that the long-range goals

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[39] U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (www.hud.gov), 2008.

[40] See Appendix I for key excerpts dealing with the reduction and prevention of homelessness in the U.S.

[41] Burt (2001), 7.

are prevention and reduction and in order to get to that point, there are short-term and long-term solutions that must be acted upon now. The very worst possible solution is to simply ignore it.

Literature Review Conclusion

It is with these insights that I began my work at the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County. Furthermore, it is this literature review that provided the foundation for my work as 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator and, therefore, serves as the background to the remainder of this paper. It was my hope that after writing this literature review I would be able to take to heart the research and expertise of these authors as I began my own work at The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County. Having concluded my work as 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator, I feel confident in stating that my academic research on homelessness provided invaluable expertise in the planning, implementation and execution of the 2009 Homeless Count and its analysis through a social capital lens.

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County[42]

In 1994, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) initiated a Continuum of Care (CoC) process to encourage a coordinated, strategic approach to planning for programs that assist homeless individuals and families.[43] The CoC approach fundamentally reorganized the mechanism by which the government's homelessness assistance funds were awarded. In addition, The Continuum of Care represents a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. Specifically, it includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness. [44]

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County coordinates the CoC for suburban Cook County, which includes homeless services provided in all of Cook County except for Chicago and Evanston. The Alliance uses grass-roots organization techniques to bring together caregivers and service providers in the region, ensuring that homeless issues are dealt with on a day-to-day basis. Through regional Community Based Service Areas (CBSAs) – one each in the North, West & South regions of suburban Cook County – the Alliance has helped to organize a collaborative network of service providers that is divided into three regions; the north, west, and south areas of suburban Cook County.[45] This network is essential to the effective distribution of homeless services throughout the suburbs because it ensures communication, referrals, and, often times, shelter for homeless service consumers. [46]

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[42] See Appendix II for more on the Alliance's "History & Mission"

[43] See Appendix III for "What is a Continuum of Care?"

[44] Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County (www.suburbancook.org), 2008.

[45] See Appendix IV for a map of suburban Cook County's Community Based Service Areas.

[46] Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County (www.suburbancook.org), 2008.

The Alliance is also tasked with planning, implementing, and successfully completing a Homeless Count (described in the following section). This Count, required by HUD, is performed no less than every two years and is overseen by the Alliance to ensure consistency and compliance with HUD standards.

Jennifer C. Hill has served as Executive Director of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County since 2004. Under the supervision of Ms. Hill, my primary objective as Research Intern for the Alliance, was to serve as the 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator for the entire Continuum of Care. As 2009 Homeless Count Coordinator, I was charged with the planning, implementation and execution of both the Sheltered & Unsheltered Homeless Counts to be conducted in January, 2009. This project was brought to fruition in conjunction with the Alliance's Continuum of Care Development Committee, Board of Directors, CBSA coordinators, key staff members, and of course, innumerable community partners.

In 1996, the most qualified estimate suggested that there could be anywhere between 444,000 and 842,000[47] homeless in the U.S. In 2000, the estimate rose to as much as 3.5 million homeless in the U.S. (It may be interesting to note here that 3.5 million homeless would equal .01% of the U.S. population in 2000. The E.U. nations averaged .004% homeless in their countries at this same time.)[48]

But how could these numbers be so drastically different? Martha Burt states that all such estimates may be partially true. She claims, "…the number of people homeless at any given time *and* using homeless assistance programs is highly variable, and probably greatly affected by the season."[49] For this reason, a range from 444,000 to 3,500,000 is not entirely unlikely or unreasonable.

It makes one wonder how a homeless estimate could even be useful – especially if such variations in estimates are not only possible, but actually realistic…

Question 1 - Why Count?[50]

Thus, we encounter the infamous "Question #1", that is, "Why Count?" Rossi explains that a homeless count is necessary for only two specific reasons: 1) to determine "the size and composition of the homeless population in order to make decisions on the size and character of the social programs necessary," and 2) to establish "a baseline measure against which to assess the progress of such

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[47] Burt (2001), 50.

[48] Redhead (2005), 38.

[49] Burt (2001), 50.

[50] Abt Associates (www.abtassociates.com), 2008.

programs."[51] Other homelessness sources (including the Alliance, HUD, and Abt. Associates), however, site myriad reasons to perform the mandatory Homeless Counts. According to these sources, as with any social service, growing the capacity and success rate of a service field is dependent on the ability to quantify and qualify the population. A well-conducted Homeless Count allows CoC's to collect this data efficiently and in a statistically relevant manner to report to HUD. Thus, in addition to basic compliance (and the reasons listed by Rossi above), other vital reasons for conducting a Homeless Count are as follows:

- To increase public awareness of homelessness throughout the region – by engaging local stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages, as well as providing a report that outlines the newest data and trends in homelessness in the region

- To improve the ability of agencies (specifically homeless service providers) to plan and implement effective services for the homeless

- To preserve federal funding allocated from HUD[52]

- To continue to support the "data-driven"[53] success of HUD through relevant and reliable data collection methods and reporting

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[51] Rossi (1989), 71.

[52] As of 2009, the Alliance was responsible for securing and allocating $8.5 million in HUD funding on behalf of its member agencies in the continuum

[53] National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org), 2008.

<u>Question 2 – When to Count?</u>[54]

Once we understand the motivations for counting, we encounter formidable "Question #2", that is, "When to Count?" The easiest answer is this: HUD requires that all Homeless Counts take place within the last 10 days of January.[55] It is also best-practice for the Sheltered & Unsheltered Counts to be conducted during the same Count interval.[56] Finally, it is the Alliance's decision that all Homeless Counts be conducted during the night hours and during a weekday night (Mon-Thurs). The reasons for all of these determinations are as follows:

- Since January is the coldest month of the year in most continental states, CoC's Sheltered Counts are most likely to be accurate during this time – since Unsheltered Homeless are more likely to seek shelter in cold weather

- Conducting the Sheltered & Unsheltered Count at the same time decreases the possibility for duplication – for example, if the Counts were done over two days, then a person counted in the Unsheltered Count the 1st night may be counted again in the Sheltered Count on the 2nd night

- Counting during the night hours also decreases the possibility for duplication – for example, if the Counts were done during the daytime hours only, then a person counted in the Unsheltered Count at 1:00pm may then be counted in the Sheltered Count at 10:00pm that evening

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[54] Abt Associates (www.abtassociates.com), 2008.

[55] A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, 2008, p. 16.

[56] Abt Associates (www.abtassociates.com), 2008.

- Finally, counting during the weekdays decreases the potential for high pedestrian traffic (as on a Friday or Saturday night) as well as the possibility of persons "doubling-up"[57] – this is due to the fact that friends and family are more likely to take in a homeless friend or family member during a weekend when they are less likely to be working – when they are better able to supervise.

Question 3 – How to Count?[58]

Finally, we encounter the last, yet most complex, issue of all: "Question #3", which is, "How to Count?" First, it is worth discussing some of the major problems associated with executing a Count:

For researchers, there are some very specific difficulties that make creating a reliable study on homeless populations nearly impossible. These include: 1) sampling frame, 2) statistical rarity, and 3) transience. Burt and Rossi both address each of these difficulties individually. A traditional sampling frame, for example, is entirely impossible with the homeless population. As Rossi writes, "Conventional social research methods… are based on the assumption that ever person or household has an address and may be reached there by an interviewer or through a telephone call or mail."[59] Second, statistical rarity, Burt explains, poses a major problem for many populations, but especially for the homeless. She explains, "…under even the most inclusive definitions, homelessness is still a rare condition that affects at most 1.5% of the adult population… studying rare populations is not impossible, but it is expensive."[60] Finally, the problem of transience is not an issue that only Burt and Rossi address, but one which finds a

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[57] "Doubling Up" or "Couch Surfing" describes the act of staying over at a friend or family member's house with permission. Even though the residence does not legally belong to the person that is "doubling up" or "couch surfing" it is not eligible criteria for "homelessness" according to HUD.

[58] Abt Associates (www.abtassociates.com), 2008.

[59] Rossi (1989), 48.

[60] Burt (2004), 39.

place in almost any discussion of homelessness. As described in the previous sections on the causes of homelessness, transience is a major characteristic of the entire homeless population. Rossi explains clearly, "…the individuals that homelessness comprises change frequently, as people are moving into and out of a state of homelessness."[61] In respect to a homeless count, Burt points out, "…many more people experience homelessness during the course of a year than are reflected in any one-day or even one-week count, however accurate."[62] Thus, any homeless count, if done in the short-term (which is typical of most homeless counts) will not truly reflect the total number of homeless over the long-term.

The next most likely discussion is how, with all of these difficulties, one can attempt a comprehensive, viable, homeless count. First, it is important to differentiate between the two parts to a Homeless Count: 1) Sheltered Count and 2) Unsheltered Count. HUD defines "sheltered homeless" as "those persons residing in an Emergency Shelter – including temporary emergency shelters open only during severe weather" or as "those persons residing in Transitional Housing for those homeless persons that originally came from the streets or emergency shelters"[63] (or have proof of impending eviction, foreclosure, etc.). Thus, the Sheltered Count attempts to determine the number of persons residing in an Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing program. HUD defines "unsheltered homeless" as "those persons residing in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street."[64] Thus, the Unsheltered Count attempts to determine the number of persons without any form of habitable residence.

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[61] Rossi (1989), 50.

[62] Burt (2001), 27.

[63] A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, 2008, p. 10.

[64] A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, 2008, p. 10.

Second, it is important to understand the difference between the two styles of Counts: 1) Period Prevalence Counts and 2) Point-In-Time Counts. A Period Prevalence Count examines the number of people that are homeless in a specific region over a given period of time.[65] Point-In-Time Counts (or simply PIT), on the other hand, examine only those persons that are homeless in that region on a given day or night.[66] One major draw-back to the Period Prevalence Count is the cost of funding a lengthy study. There is, however, also a great disadvantage to the PIT Count style: it is only a "snapshot" of homelessness in any region. The fact is that the PIT Count will invariably miss people and potentially duplicate people. Those persons that reside in remote or unsafe locations (i.e., forest preserves or abandoned buildings) may not be found and, therefore, will not be counted in the PIT Count. Likewise, the same person may be counted twice if he or she moves from one location in the region to another in a short timeframe and is located by different PIT "counters". Nevertheless, PIT Counts remain the required methodology for conducting biennial Homeless Counts in the United States (as stated by HUD)[67] and Period Prevalence Counts remain on the horizon as a viable option with the full implementation of HMIS (Homelessness Management Information Systems) in all continua.

Finally, it is important to understand the four primary research methods that have been used for the purpose of counting homeless populations. These are as follows:

1. Key-Person Survey: A count acquired through interviews with occupations dealing with the homeless people, or the homeless persons themselves in order to estimate the size and composition of the homeless population.

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[65] National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org), 2008.

[66] National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org), 2008.

[67] Abt Associates (www.abtassociates.com), 2008.

2. Partial Counts: These are counts of only one or a few subsets of the homeless population, usually ones that are easily identified (i.e., mental illness, physical disability, addiction, etc.).

3. "Windshield" Street Censuses: Counts done solely by sight, while canvassing streets and other open places in the city. This may involve key-persons surveys with persons found on the streets.

4. Modified Area Probability Strategy: Considered the most reliable and accurate research method for counting homeless, this method uses volunteers to canvas predetermined blocks of a city or suburb ("Known Locations" methodology) or all blocks of a city or suburb ("Full Coverage" methodology) over the course of one or several days.[68]

A fifth method, "Adaptive Counts", involves utilizing several of the methods above in an attempt to match an appropriate method with each location or subset of the population (i.e., sheltered homeless, street homeless, homeless with disabilities, etc.). When Modified Area Probability Strategy is too expensive, Adaptive Counts can help to cater to a specific region in order to both avoid duplication and simultaneously create a truer picture of the total homeless.

In upcoming sections I will describe the methodology selection for the 2009 Homeless Count[69], as well as addressing many of the above concerns in more depth. It is important to note, however, that all PIT Counts are conducted with the knowledge that the methodology is an "imperfect science." So even when great strides are taken to avoid inaccuracies and include all eligible persons, mistakes will be made in this style of Count. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the study and the nature of the population, little exactitude is possible in the homelessness studies field.

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[68] Burt (2001), 10-13.

[69] The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County selected Thursday, January 22nd, from 9:00pm to 2:00am from the 2009 Homeless Count in Suburban Cook County.

While the purpose to this paper is not to provide an exhaustive literature review of Social Capital Theory and its myriad facets, this section will nevertheless provide a comprehensive overview of social capital as a foundation for approaching the case study to be presented. More specifically, I will look at definitions and functions of social capital, the differences between bonding capital and bridging capital, as well as the benefits and concerns associated with social capital building and development. More importantly, this section will highlight the aspects of social capital most related to the 2009 Homeless Count and, therefore, to the homelessness services field as a whole. The remainder of this paper will focus on the case study at hand – that is, the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County. Discussions of the planning and implementation processes of the 2009 Homeless Count will thereby illustrate the ways in which social capital networks – and the resulting partnerships (discussed below) – really *counted* towards producing a successful Homeless Count.

<u>Definitions of Social Capital</u>

Defining social capital has been a work in progress for years, dating back to Bourdieu and his discussions of French society up to contemporary literature on social capital associated with the internet and beyond. And yet, I have found the following quote to be a truly illuminating introduction to the study of Social Capital Theory – its possibilities and its downfalls. Hume once wrote:

> "Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow…"

This quote embodies the potential for social capital – to give to others what you wish to receive in return – based entirely on the premise of trustworthiness, reciprocity, and the betterment of the community. The quote, however, does not end here. Hume concludes:

> "…And yet, I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I should be disappointed, and that I should in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone; you treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvests for want of mutual confidence and security."[70]

Thus, we see a different side to this situation of opportunity – that is, a community without a tendancy toward building social capital and thriving as a social structure. And with this quote in mind, I begin my analysis of social capital in the modern-day community…

Historically, social capital has been approached from two distinct studies: sociology and economics. Both define social capital in terms of a more fundamental element – that is, social action. The sociologist's take on social capital is based on the premise of social action "…as governed by norms, rules and obligations."[71] On the other hand, the economist's take on social capital is based on the premise of social action "… as governed by independent actions and goals… wholly self-interested."[72] And thus, we approach our first look at social capital from two very different, even competing, premises.

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[70] Hume (1993 reprint), 5.

[71] Saguaro Seminar (2000), 5.

[72] Saguaro Seminar (2000), 5.

If social capital is to be based on social action that is governed by norms, rules, and obligations, then we could propose social capital as a binding force that brings persons in a community together to create a stronger, more unified social structure. This social structure would inherently respect reciprocity and trustworthiness as a basis for leading a life that is communally acceptable to others in the social structure.

If social capital, however, is to be based on social action that is governed entirely by self-interest, we might then propose that social capital is a dividing force in which all persons in a community may compete against one another to reach an individual goal. While the individual goals may be similar and, thus, bind some persons together in alliances towards reaching that end, this social structure would inherently negate reciprocity and trustworthiness and embrace in-group and out-group mentality and, therefore, competition.

While it may seem that these two social structures are to eachother polar opposites, there is actually some truth in both premises. Whereas the goal of social capital is to produce a social structure based on the communal actions of the first proposal, there are often aspects of the in-group/out-group mentality and competition as mentioned in the second proposal. As I begin to dissect Social Capital Theory, therefore, it is imperative to keep in mind these dualistic views of social capital as premised on competing ideas of social action.

Following this theme of the community versus the individual, there are many who similarly define social capital as "Collective" or "Individual" social capital. Referencing other like-minded theorists, Bekkers, Beate Völker, Van der Gaag and Flap define collective social capital in the following way: "Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1990) conceive of social capital as resources inherent in relationships among members of groups or communities that are productive for social solidarity. In this perspective, which we call 'collective social capital theory', membership of voluntary associations is

often regarded as an indicator of social capital."[73] In contrast, Bekkers et all define individual social capital as follows: "Lin (2001), Flap (1999), Burt (2001) and others conceive of social capital as access by individuals to the resources of others through social ties. We call this perspective 'individual social capital theory' because it focuses on the benefits of social capital for individuals."[74]

Again, we find ourselves creating scenarios from both proposed forms of social capital. And again, we begin to see a rift between a collective social capital that would bind peoples and groups to produce a communal social structure and, on the other hand, an individual social capital that would divide peoples and groups to produce a social structure based on competition. Thus, once again, we are confronted with the dualism of social capital – as uniting and divisive – and, once again, we are forced to accept that it may simply be both.

So if the dualism of social capital is unavoidable, perhaps it is better to reason with social capital on different terms. This, I find, to be a much more useful methodology for approaching Social Capital Theory, while remembering to always recognize the dualistic nature of social capital in our society.

James S. Coleman is considered one of the great theorists of modern Social Capital Theory. And while he does address the communal and individual natures of social capital, he presents new ways in which to discuss social capital. One of his best descriptions of social capital, in my opinion, is that of a comparison of social capital to the other, slightly more tangible forms of capital. He writes: "If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons."[75] Here, we begin to understand the difficulty

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[73] Bekkers, Beate Völker, Van der Gaag and Flap (2004), 4.

[74] Bekkers, Beate Völker, Van der Gaag and Flap (2004), 4.

[75] Coleman (1988), S100-101.

with fully grasping the dualism of social capital, in that its very existence is so utterly intangible in our society. Unlike physical capital that we can see and touch, to which we can give proper, actual dimensions, or even human capital that we can measure with tests, to which we can give scores and averages, social capital is more qualitative than it will ever be quantitative. Perhaps that is why social capital is such a popular thing to discuss in terms of its many parts, its benefits, it practical applications, but which is simultaneously so difficult to evaluate and study through traditional means.

For this reason, I will not belabor the topic of definition any further in an attempt to create a new and revolutionary explication of social capital in our modern society. I will simply turn to the man that is perhaps the most famous social capital writer of our contemporary time, Robert D. Putnum. Succinctly put, Putnum defines social capital as such: "Social capital… refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."[76] Without any further complication, this is the premise from which I will present the remainder of the social capital discussion that follows and, to the greater extent, this case study on the 2009 Homeless Count.

Bonding Capital

While many authors may disagree on the exact definition of social capital and what should constitute the premise of Social Capital Theory, most agree that there are two distinct types of social capital in today's society. The first is "Bonding" social capital. Bonding capital is personified as, "Alliances between people who are more alike than they are different."[77] A rather simple analysis of this definition would allow one to come up with some fairly common groups that may be socially connected by

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[76] Putnum (1994), 6-7.

[77] Centre for Community Renewal (2003), www.cedworks.com.

bonding capital, such as: a knitting circle, motorcycle clubs, or a federal political party. All persons in these groups are brought together for the purpose of a common interest or ideal, but often share much more in common that helped to shape those interests or ideals. The knitting circle, for example, may have been created due to locationality (i.e., the members were neighbors) and therefore, may have other correlating characteristics such as age, race, or ethnicity. Even a political party, whose members may come from different and diverse states, probably share more in common than one might think at first glance. To become a representative or senator, for example, there may be certain precursors based on socioeconomic status, level of education, and work experience that produce very similar characteristics across all members of the party. Thus, while bonding capital may seem rather simplistic, it is a complex mechanism, oiled by myriad facets of each individual, that produces such strongly bonded social structures.

Bonding capital in the homelessness services field is quite prevalent. We see bonding capital in the HUD-created Continua of Care in each state and, equally important, in the subdivisions of CBSAs in each region. These groups help to coordinate hundreds of homelessness service providers across large service areas. While these groups may come from very different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic municipalities, all the members are connected by their dedication to provide service for the homeless populations of their communities. And these homeless populations are perhaps the best possible example of bonding capital in this field. As I will discuss at more length in later sections, the bonds between homeless people are strong. And while competition may exist – as described in the individual nature of social capital above – the sense of community amongst the homeless population is outwardly visible. (Yet again, we see the dualistic nature of social capital here.) The ties of trust that connect members of the homeless population are striking – helping one another to keep sleeping locations secret, seek out new services, and guide one another to those people in the community that can be similarly "trusted". And as I will discuss in more depth later, while the service providers and those that

receive services are in constant contact with eachother – interacting and working together towards a common goal – it is important to note that they often exist as two separate groups, each bonded to other members in their own group, but rarely bonding to members of the other group.

Bridging Capital

The second form of social capital is called "Bridging" social capital. Bridging capital is described as, "Alliances between people who are different along some important dimension – such as race, socioeconomic status, or gender."[78] Though not as easily recognizable in society as bonding capital, some examples of bridging capital are: an intramural basketball league, community outreach groups, and LinkedIn or MySpace. While persons in these groups may be brought together by a particular skill or interest, most members of these groups are likely to be otherwise unconnected to one another. The members of an intramural basketball league, for example, may be male or female, any age, any race, any ethnicity and of any socioeconomic status (if we assume that participants are willing to travel outside their own communities to participate and that participation is free). What brings these persons together is an ability or desire to play basketball, but with no other necessary prerequisites based on education, work experience, income, etc. In today's society, a great example of bridging capital is that of the social networking sites available online. Websites such as LinkedIn and MySpace bring together people from all over the world – with the sole commonality being a desire to network. Though few theorists have invested due time in researching the great possibilities of such online networks, the capability of these networks to engage social capital building is only now beginning to be studied, understood, and harnessed.

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[78] Centre for Community Renewal (2003), www.cedworks.com.

In the homelessness services field we see less bridging capital than bonding capital. While one might argue that the connections between homelessness service providers and the members of the homeless population could be considered bridging capital, this is negated by the fact that the existence of homelessness service providers presupposes interaction with members of the homeless population. Thus, where we are beginning to see more forms of bridging capital in this field is in the new partnerships with community groups, businesses and dissimilar service providers or government entities, for the purpose of broadening the scope and impact of homelessness services.

As I will address in great detail in later sections, a major focus of my work as Research Intern at the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County was to create and strengthen the bridging capital available in the suburban Cook County communities. The purpose of this work, particularly in conjunction with the Homeless Count, was to bring about new partnerships in order to broaden the scope and impact of our homelessness services. And while both bonding and bridging capital are important parts of a social structure, the importance of bridging capital is ever more important in our diversifying society. The international Saguaro Seminar addressed this topic with surprising zeal, stating, "…a special emphasis should be placed on the creation of 'bridging' social capital… as research shows that building connections across groups is especially valuable for harnessing action against social ills and securing social and political rights. "[79] As I will show, this was a primary goal of the case study to be presented in following sections.

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[79] Saguaro Seminar (2000), 13.

Functions of Social Capital

While social capital can function to facilitate and engage societal members in myriad ways, Coleman suggests that there are three primary functions of social capital. Those are:[80]

1. Obligations, Expectations and Trustworthiness (to do what is best for the whole)

2. Information Channels (communication to facilitate action)

3. Norms and Effective Sanctions (societal definitions of right and wrong)

Coleman also adds that in the modern society, a fourth function has surfaced as both a cause and a result of social capital. That is:

4. Social Organization (especially into voluntary positions)

In particular, it is this fourth function that plays the most crucial role in the organizational field. Coleman writes, "The central property of social organization as a function of social capital is that it allows the resources of one relationship…" (i.e. a paid job) "…to be appropriate for use in others." (i.e., a volunteer position using the same skills)[81] Thus, it is this function that Putnum analyzes as an indicator of the downfall of social capital in modern society. Putnum theorizes that if members of American society no longer wish to engage in voluntary groups – such as bowling leagues – then the networks of skills and collaborations among Americans will be lost, resulting in the inability of Americans to address the issues facing their societies.

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[80] Coleman (1988), S102-105.

[81] Coleman (1988), S109.

And now we arrive at perhaps the most crucial discussion of Social Capital Theory. It is in such theories of Putnum, and others, that social capital begins to be framed in its more popularized form – as a Public Good. Coleman writes:

> "Physical Capital is ordinarily a private good, and property rights make it
> possible for the person who invests in physical capital to capture the
> benefits it produces… For human capital also – the persons who invests
> the time and resources into building up this capital reaps its benefits…
> But most forms of social capital are not like this. For example, the kinds
> of social capital that make possible social norms and the sanctions that
> enforce them do not benefit primarily the person or persons whose
> efforts would be necessary to bring them about, but benefit all those
> who are part of such a social structure."[82]

What is essential to understand here is that if social capital is to function as a Public Good, then we must agree to Putnum's assertions that a continued loss of social capital may lead to the disintegration of the American social structure. Unsurprising, many theorists have also taken up this notion and have begun to write vehemently in defense of projects geared at social capital building and the reinvigoration of American socializing. At the Saguaro Seminar, Putnum spoke to his peers in virtual pleas. He stated:

> "America faces a crisis… Once commonplace activities such as dinner
> parties and bowling leagues are slowly vanishing from the American
> landscape. Increasingly, Americans are withdrawing from communal life
> and their social bonds and choosing to live along… to play alone. No
> longer participants, we are becoming mere observers of our collective

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[82] Coleman (1988), S116.

destiny. And most Americans see no obvious connection between dinner parties and the health of our society… More worrisome is the fact that many Americans fail to see the connection between social participation and the nation's well being. However, without strong habits of social networks – without social capital – the world's longest and most successful experiment in civic participation is at risk of losing the very norms, networks, and institutions of social life that have made us the most emulated nation in history. "[83]

In the course of my own studies of Social Capital Theory, I too have begun to understand the desperate need for a rebuilding of social capital in our communities. And, as I will discuss below, the further I research and implement theories of social capital, the more I am convinced that social capital has the possibility to produce truly great feats in our modern society.

Social Capital Benefits

So with all its functionality, what can social capital actually do? Many authors have attacked this question with great, and very diversified, success.

Coleman, for example, cites social capital's productivity as a key benefit, like that of the productivity produced by its other capital counterparts. Coleman writes: "Just as physical and human capital facilitate productive activity, social capital does as well… a group within which there is extensive

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[83] Putnum (2001), www.newyorktimes.com.

trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust."[84]

The Saguaro Seminar, on the other hand, points more to the Public Good's nature and, therefore, makes an economic analysis of social capital as follows: "Social capital has, what economists call, 'positive externalities.' That is, networks of action that not only benefit those within them, but also those outside of them."[85]

It is Putnum, however, who I believe outlines the many benefits of social capital in the most clear and generalized terms. He describes three ways in which social capital is capable of strengthening a society, it's people, it's government, and it's economy. Those are[86]:

1. First, social capital creates networks of civic engagement that foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity... A society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter.

2. Social capital networks of civic engagement also facilitate coordination and communication and amplify information about the trustworthiness of other individuals... Dense social ties facilitate discussion and other valuable ways of cultivating reputation – an essential foundation for trust in a complex society.

3. Finally, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can **serve as a cultural template for future collaboration.**

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[84] Coleman (1988), S101.

[85] Saguaro Seminar (2000), 9.

[86] Putnum (1994), 10.

Thus, we begin to see how the benefits of social capital can positively affect all aspects of a society's collective life. And it is this aspect of social capital that has helped Social Capital Theory to gain so much momentum in all studies of human life – from sociology to psychology. As the Saguaro Seminar concluded in 2000, social capital can, and should be present in virtually all fashions of our life. In fact, as this concluding quote on the benefits of social capital illustrates, efforts to rebuild social capital in our societies is not only about regaining those fringe benefits we are beginning to lose, but more importantly, it is about deterring the potential loss of even greater benefits that we may currently take for granted:

> "Research has begun to show how powerfully social capital, or its absence, affects the well being of individuals, organizations, entire nations. Economic studies demonstrate that social capital makes workers more productive, firms more competitive, and nations more prosperous. Psychological research indicates that abundant social capital makes individuals less prone to depression and more inclined to help others... Sociology studies suggest that social capital reduces crime, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, welfare dependence, and drug abuse, and increases student test scores and graduation rates. From political science we know that extensive social capital makes government agencies more responsive, efficient, and innovative… Shoring up our stocks of social capital, therefore, represents one of the most promising approaches for remedying all sorts of social ills."[87]

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[87] Saguaro Seminar (2000), 10.

<u>Social Capital Concerns</u>

And yet, while my enthusiasm for social capital has continued to grow over the course of my research and professional practice, I still approach Social Capital Theory with the cautious knowledge that every story has two sides… and yes, even with all the positive functions and proven benefits of social capital, there is still a negative side to social capital.

Perhaps the most obvious problem with social capital is, as we discussed early, the issue of individualization and competition. With bonding capital, in particular, the potential for competition is very high. Members within groups are likely to formulate in-group vs. out-group mentalities and compete with other groups for resources, skills, etc.

Especially, in today's economy, the competition for resources is vicious and we see this competition every day with for-profit and non-profit groups alike. In the homelessness services field, the same goals that bring us together pit us against one another. Neighboring continua, for example, are constantly at odds with one another to provide better proposals and more enticing pitches during the annual HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. HUD even aptly names this process, "a funding competition." Similarly, once money is secured by each continua, the competition trickles down to Cook County's regional CBSA level, where a three-way tug-o-war begins between North, West and South over newly secured federal funding. And then again, the trickle down effect makes its way to the individual agencies that compete with other, like-minded agencies in their own communities, for particular funds. And yet, what these groups seem to forget in this whole process is, sadly, the people that the money is actually suppose to help – the homeless population. Every year, a concerted effort must be made to remind all involved that members of the continua are members for one purpose – to work towards a united goal of reducing, and ultimately ending homelessness.

Competition, however, is not the most endangering side of social capital. What has presented itself in studies and research of social capital across the country is far worse: inequality. And yet, it is not so difficult to hypothesize how in-group and out-group mentality, especially that of bonding capital, could serve as a root cause of inequality in our society. Lin hypothesizes that there are two factors that contribute to the creation of inequality in social capital. Those are:

1. Socioeconomics: "Inequality of social capital can occur when a certain group clusters at relatively disadvantaged socioeconomic positions.[88]

2. Homophily:, "Inequality of social capital can also occur… when the general tendency is to for individuals to associate with those of similar group or socioeconomic characteristics."[89]

A golf course, for example, in which the majority of members are male, white, and upper-class, may quickly affirm itself as an all-male, all-white golf course for the "well-to-do" members of society. Thus, all women, racial and ethnic minorities, and middle class citizens are inherently restricted access to this golf course – even if the golf course is open to all members of the public within a certain, geographic locale. And, therefore, the members of this golf course will have created a small, bonded group of only wealthy, white males with whom they spend most of their time – making it virtually impossible to build upon any bridging capital or create new social networks.

This holds especially true in the reverse situation. A young, female Latina, for example, may surround herself only with other young, female Latinas – especially if there are issues involving immigration (legality) or childcare. It is unlikely that this young Latina will look beyond her own, small,

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[88] Lin (2000), 768.

[89] Lin (2000), 787.

bonded group for support and resources. And therefore, if she is in need of a job, she is likely to only utilize the members of her own social network – making it difficult to access opportunities beyond the scope of her group. As Lin put it, "…people in lower socioeconomic status tend to use local ties, family and kin ties – to those with whom they share the most in common. Since these ties are usually homogenous in resources, this networking tendency reinforces poor social capital."[90] Thus, as Kao states, "Immigrants, minority groups, and the homeless are, by definition, more alienated… even if trustworthiness is present, the resources may not be."[91]

In the homelessness services field, we see this type of poor social capital clearly with members of the homeless population. This population endures myriad, negative responses from those who are not homeless – fear, disgust, anger, and perhaps worst of all, no response at all. Thus, there is obvious cause for members of the homeless population to feel "outside" the scope of society and to become resentful of those members that are accepted into society – the ones that the homeless disdainfully call "the others" or "the housed". In-group and out-group mentality has been ingrained in this population over decades of distrust and isolation. Furthermore, when members of the homeless population attempt to access services or integrate into society, they often face daunting challenges that again reinforce their poor social capital – a lack of education, poor social skills, mental illness or substance abuse problems, and limited access to resources or communications.

And yet, the building of appropriate, inclusive social capital can avoid some of these inequalities. And while poor social capital already exists, there are means through which a member of a poor social capital group can create more diversified network. Kao suggests:

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[90] Green, Tigges and Browne (1995), 180-181.

[91] Kao (2004), 172.

"For disadvantaged to gain a better status, strategic behaviors require accessing resources beyond the usual social circles and routine exchanges; finding sponsors in new networks; finding ties outside the neighborhood; and finding ties across ethnic boundaries… to generate better returns for members of disadvantaged social groups."[92]

Unsurprisingly, what Kao is suggesting is a move from a reliance on bonding capital to an emphasis on bridging capital. Once again, we see the importance of creating these bridges into new social networks, rather than socializing only with members of society that are alike.

In conclusion, one must walk cautiously down the road to re-build social capital in the modern society. And while social capital has innumerable benefits in the fostering of greater collaboration, these collaborations must be fostered with the utmost open-mindedness and most inclusive agenda possible. Putnum describes this issue best when he writes:

"We have not always reckoned with the indirect social costs of our policies, but we are right to worry… Social inequalities may be embedded in the foundations of social capital. Norms and networks that serve some groups may obstruct others… but recognizing the importance of social capital in sustaining community life does not exempt us from the need to worry about how that community is defined – who is inside and thus benefits from social capital, and who is outside and does not. We must tread carefully."[93]

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[92] Lin (2000), 793.

[93] Putnum (1994), 19.

Creating Partnerships: Who? Why? & How?

      The 2009 Homeless Count was a testament to its creators – the hundreds of men, women and youth that donated their time, energy, skills, and resources to the Count's planning, implementation and execution. As explained in the section prior, the relationships that are formed through such an immense project are not only complicated, but are vital to the project's success. For the 2009 Homeless Count, I sought to utilize both bridging and bonding social capital to the Homeless Count's advantage. Many of these bridges and bonds, however, were not yet in existence and much work was spent to create the partnerships deemed necessary for the scope and purpose of the 2009 Homeless Count. While I will spend a great deal of time discussing the use of partnerships in the creation of the Count methodology, the recruitment and management of volunteers, and the data analysis process in the following sections, I will first dedicate due time to describe those partnerships that I felt would be an important part of the 2009 Homeless Count's planning, implementation and execution. In doing so, I will describe each partnership "sector" (i.e., "Planning & Implementation") in terms of its members (i.e., "Regional CBSAs") and its relevance to the Count.[94] Thus, this section will provide the foundations for the remaining descriptions of the 2009 Homeless Count details.

Planning & Implementation

      As the following section details, the planning & implementation process for the 2009 Homeless Count is virtually impossible without the help of hundreds of professionals and experts in the homeless sector and/or related fields. The partnerships described in this section helped to provide invaluable knowledge on previous counts, methodology selection, the fundamentals of the homelessness

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population in suburban Cook County, and the basics to planning and implementing this large-scale project. We will discuss each partnership separately:

HUD & ABT. ASSOCIATES:

Simply put, The Department of Housing and Urban Development determines the guidelines for planning, implementing, and executing a Homeless Count. HUD's standards outline when the Count is conducted, where the Count should take place, and some suggestions on how the Count should be performed. HUD does not, however, provide one-on-one assistance to continua in the planning, implementation and execution process. Thus, while their guidelines serve as the basis of the Count structure, a Count Coordinator must look beyond HUD to receive guidance and technical assistance with issues and goals specific to the continuum.

In suburban Cook County, for example, we faced the daunting task of tackling very urban areas (i.e., those suburban municipalities bordering Chicago or in other suburban regions with heavily-populated and business advanced centers), as well as very suburban areas (i.e., large, residential municipalities), and even some rural areas (i.e., those municipalities bordering the collar counties or near the park's districts and forest preserves). Therefore, HUD's mutually exclusive guidelines for urban Count methodologies, suburban Count methodologies, and rural Count methodologies were less than helpful for the unique nature of suburban Cook County. Planning for this unique mélange of regional characteristics, therefore, required the help of other Homeless Count methodology experts – namely, Abt. Associates. Serving as a well-known T&A branch for HUD and other federal agencies, Abt. Associates helped suburban Cook County to customize a methodology that would fit the urban, suburban, and rural characteristics of the continuum. With their help, we succeeded in expanding

greatly on the 2007 methodology and were prepared for a much more complete, statistically reliable Homeless Count for 2009.

METHODOLOGY EXPERTS:

While Abt. Associates was the expert in methodology creation, they were not designed to serve as the expert on methodology implementation. Thus, we turned to specialists in the fields that would define our 2009 Homeless Count methodology. As the following section describes in depth, our Count would consist of two primary parts: an Unsheltered Count and a Sheltered Count. Both Counts would require extensive planning for sampling coverage and the tedious creation of reliable data collection tools. Thus, we created a list of specialists for the fields:

For help with regional coverage, we turned to specialists with extensive knowledge on the suburban Cook County area and its breakdown of demographics, income and business vs. residential characteristics. We worked with professors at the University of Chicago, Northern Illinois University and Chicago-land planning agencies to determine the geographies to be covered and the statistical sampling frame for the population to be covered.

For help with data collection, we requested the assistance of for-profit specialists in statistical measurements – that is, the creation of survey materials for use in purpose-specific measurements. These experts guided us in the creation of our tally and survey tools and helped to analyze the reliability of the data that we would be collecting.

NATIONWIDE CONTINUA OF CARE:

While the Alliance has served as the lead agency for the suburban Cook County Continuum of Care since 2004, other agencies have been responsible for much older Continua of Care for a far longer

period of time. These agencies provide the administrative and evaluative support for longstanding and very successful Continua such as Boston, New York, Los Angelos, and Atlanta. These Continua are considered by HUD as the founders of Homeless Count methodology and are the sites of years of trial and error in the creation of regional coverage and data collection. Thus, a review of these Continua's past Counts and lengthy discussions with their Count Coordinators yields invaluable information about technique, pro's and con's, and common pitfalls. Unlike the 2007 Homeless Count planning sessions, our planning process focused a great deal of time reviewing the previous works of these Continua in order to glean the best possible information about the planning, implementation and execution of a successful Homeless Count. The result was a better planned, more statistically reliable, and a further-reaching 2009 Homeless Count.

REGIONAL CBSAs & ALLIANCE COMMITTEES:

At the local level, few groups have greater knowledge of homelessness issues than the regional Community Based Service Area organizations (or simply, CBSAs). As described previously, suburban Cook County works closely with a North CBSA (called Advocates for Homelessness Awareness in the North and Northwestern Districts, or AHAND), a West CBSA (called the West Suburban Council on Homelessness, or WSCH), and a South CBSA (called the South Suburban Council on Homelessness, or SSCH). These groups meet monthly and consist of members from myriad aspects of the homelessness services field – direct service providers, housing providers, prevention portals, township & municipality representatives, healthcare providers, bank and loan providers, utility providers, etc. Beyond providing basic knowledge of the local homeless population, these groups also serve as the governing body for the implementation of the Homeless Count in their region. Count Sub-Committees are created within each CBSA to support regional donations, regional trainings, regional deployment sites, regional volunteer recruitment, etc. Anywhere from 5-10 persons on each CBSA are represented on their region's Count Sub-Committee and

are responsibly for reporting directly to the Count Coordinator with issues, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. Additionally, the regional representatives on all three Count Sub-Committees meet at least once prior to the Homeless Count to discuss progress, problems, and upcoming plans. This helps to reinforce regional continuity and to build better foundations for future Counts.

In addition to the CBSAs, the Alliance's Board of Directors and other committees play vital roles as supervisory bodies of Homeless Counts. In particular, the Alliance's Continuum of Care Development Committee, which directly oversees all Homeless Counts, is important in planning for funding, creating the Homeless Count timeline, selecting dates and locations for key trainings, and providing an invaluable problem-solving function when issues arise. As Count Coordinator, I also worked closely with the Chronically Homeless Committee on issues pertaining to data collection with this unique homeless subpopulation and also the Fundraising Committee & Advocacy Committee for help with networking and creating further-reaching partnerships.

HOMELESSNESS AGENCIES & OTHER SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:

At an even more local level – that is the township and municipal level – I worked closely with the individual homelessness service providers (supportive services and housing) and with other social service organizations in each suburban Cook County region. Directors, case managers and other staff at these agencies played a key role in identifying areas of concern ("Hot Spots"), reviewing characteristics of the local homeless population, and suggesting ideas for volunteer training, interaction with unsheltered homeless persons, etc.

Additionally, as will be reviewed bellowed, these agencies were also instrumental in recruiting volunteers, mapping Count Night locations, and 'getting the word out" to not only their communities, but to the homeless clientele they served on a daily basis.

<u>Local Knowledge & Manpower</u>

Suburban Cook County is over 570 square miles in size, with 30 townships, 131 municipalities and over 5 million people. Needless to say, the area is expansive, diverse, and uniquely different from other suburban counties in the country. Thus, obtaining the quantity and quality of knowledge about local areas, while simultaneously advertising and cause and recruiting volunteers, is extremely difficult. As discussed above, our regional CBSAs, Alliance Committees and BOD, and the Homelessness agencies and other social service organizations at in each region play a crucial role in facilitating these functions. They cannot, however, work alone at this great task. Thus, this section will describe the township & municipal partnerships that help to shed light on those tasks geared at the most local level – that is, finding & identifying the homelessness population and recruiting volunteers that are knowledgeably of their communities.

TOWNSHIPS & MUNICIPALITIES:

While township government offices and municipalities' town halls may not seem like the most fruitful partnership, knowing who to talk to and what to ask for can produce some surprisingly helpful alliances. For example, I spoke with General Assistance Coordinators and Homelessness Liasons at government and town hall offices and offered our assistance in connecting their local constituency to the correct social services in exchange for the attendance at brainstorming meetings and recruiting sessions. Many of these coordinators were very aware of local "hang outs" (what we call "Hot Spots") for the homeless population or lesser-known volunteer groups that may be interested in getting involved in the Count. Additionally, these townships and municipalities were able to connect us with other school, faith community, business, and community outreach contacts that would further our social capital building projects at the local level. Equally important, many townships and municipalities were

able to designate a volunteer to attend Count Night for the purpose of not only helping to support our need for manpower, but also to report back to their local community about homelessness issues.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & FIRE DEPARTMENTS:

Not surprisingly, the local police stations were well-informed on local "Hot Spots" and even some less-likely spots in church basements, library alcoves, etc. where the homeless population is commonly found. Furthermore, homeless persons are often "frequent flyers" at local police stations – with charges ranging from petty theft and public intoxication to burglary or assault. Sadly, for many unsheltered homeless persons, a night spent in lock-up is often safer than spending it on the streets. Thus, while police are often less-than-helpful when asked to assist with homelessness services in their area, discussions with them regarding their community's concerns about homelessness and suggestions on outreach and services in their area can create strong bonds with many law enforcement personel. In fact, several police departments even offered to designate officers to do some independent searching on the night of our 2009 Homeless Count and to provide information on any homeless persons brought into the station (arrested) during the Count hours.

Fire departments, though less likely to interact directly with the local homeless population, were great resources for designating abandoned buildings, warehouses, etc. where our volunteers might find homeless hideouts. Like the police departments, they were also able to provide information on some typical "Hot Spots" behind stores, in parking lots, etc. where the fire department staff may have been called to deal with trash can or pit fires started by unsheltered homeless persons.

PARK DISTRICTS & FOREST PRESERVES:

Though coordinating staff may be able to provide a list of favorite park benches in their communities, employees of the local park districts and forest preserves provide much more invaluable service to the Homeless Counts. While we often allow our Count Night volunteers to enter well-lit parks in municipalities, they are told not to enter unlit parks (for safety purpose) or any forest preserves (as it is illegal after dark to enter a forest preserve). Thus, a large portion of unsheltered homeless persons that call a park bench or a clearing in a forest preserve home will not be found on the night of our Homeless Count. For this reason, I spent a great deal of time reaching out to park district and forest preserve staff to request their helping in identifying their "regulars" – that is, the persons that they are already aware of that are staying on their premises. Unsurprisingly, most staff know these men and women by name and may even know their race/ethnicity, guesstimated age, and possibly some subpopulation characteristics (i.e., substance/alcohol abuse, mental illness, etc.) Since staff at the park districts and forest preserves are intimately aware of their protected areas, they are also well acquainted with those "regulars" that are there when they're not supposed to be there. It is truly amazing how much information these staffers are able to provide on those unsheltered homeless persons that go unfound on Count Night.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS:

As with the law enforcement departments described above, homeless persons are often "frequent flyers" at local hospitals, clinics or health outreach facilities. For the more healthy homeless, a hospital waiting room can simply be a warm enough place to sleep at night. For the sickly, a hospital is a common pitstop for near-fatal infections, malnutrition and major issues with sanitation and cleanliness. Thus, local health care providers are often well acquainted with their local homeless population and,

even more important, are able to provide reasonably in-depth information on race/ethnicity, age, subpopulation characteristics, etc. without breaching patient-provider confidentiality.

SOCIAL NETWORKING GROUPS:

While cocktail parties may not seem like the most efficient method for researching local knowledge and building manpower, social networking was a cornerstone of the 2009 Homeless Count. Unlike the 2007 Homeless Count planning in which very little time was spent outside the office, I reserved a small portion of time every week to attend suburban Cook and downtown Chicago networking events. On any given night, I had the pleasure of meeting fellow graduate students, nonprofit executive directors, medical researchers, photojournalists and hundreds more. Furthermore, at every function I was immersed in a sea of young, passionate, energetic young professionals in both the nonprofit and for-profit world who were eager to connect, to partner, to collaborate and simply put, "to get things done."[95] Thus, in exchange for providing a quote for a publication, attending other meetings, the future utilization of services, a good write-up on LinkedIn, etc. I was able not only recruit over 25% of our volunteer base for the 2009 Homeless Count, but I was able to network with persons knowledgeable in areas that I may never have considered factors in homelessness services. Thus, I conferenced with officials from the American Medical Association to discuss HIV/AIDS concerns in transient individuals, I worked closely with Mission Measurement to analyze our data collection tools, I met with representatives from Crystal Lake Bank to discuss personal finance classes for chronically homeless persons in supportive housing, I reviewed maps and geo-graphs with researchers at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning, and I wrote press releases for and reserved photo opportunities on Count Night for journalists from Pioneer Press.

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[95] AmeriCorps Illinois slogan – "getting things done in Illinois."

In the end, my work at networking sessions provided so many more partnerships than we could have ever possibly imagined at the start of our 2009 Homeless Count planning. And while the partnerships created here may not fall into one specific category, they are of their own unique nature and deserve a very specific mention in this report.

HIGH SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES / COLLEGES:

In previous work, I have often turned to educational institutions for manpower. Simply put, the largest gathering of American's youth is found in high schools, junior colleges and four-year institutions. Furthermore, the student population is often the most eager to volunteer for new and exciting opportunities, to outreach to their community, to learn in a "real world" setting. And yet, the student population can provide so much more to the social service field. So we not only approached high schools and universities/colleges to recruit a young, passionate volunteer base that would bolster our numbers, we also worked with these institutions to produce far greater partnerships. We spoke with teachers, professors, and student groups to garner support for the creation of new homelessness advocacy, to promote the works of the Alliance – beginning with the 2009 Homeless Count – and other state & federal programs for the homeless, and to instill a new sense of responsibility in suburban Cook County's students to help those in our communities that need us the most. And while over 25% of our volunteers came from educational institutions (many in classes geared toward public policy and advocacy work), these students also played an important role in advocating for the homeless in their area and, most importantly, for taking into their professional lives in the future a sense of commitment to our cause.

FAITH COMMUNITIES:

A great amount of support for social service programs can be garnered from faith communities. Similar to the student population, these groups are eager to assist, support and advocate for a good cause. Furthermore, faith communities are often intimately connected with the poorest in their communities – serving as food centers, shelter locations, supply distribution locations, and of course, as a place of worship and respite. Thus, it was vital to outreach to these groups and not only request their help as volunteers on Count Night, but to learn about the homeless in their area and ways in which they may be able to connect with the population. Thus, not only did the faith community serve as a large portion of our Count Night volunteer base, but they were also invaluable in the collection of information about their "regulars" that we could not found on Count Night – those that normally attended a weekly supper at their church, come out of hiding to request warmer socks and a new shirt, or show up on weekends to pray.

CURRENT OR RECENT CONSUMERS:

Perhaps the most invaluable, and yet most complicated, partnership created during the planning process of the 2009 Homeless Count was with the current or recently homeless population itself. Myriad obstacles exist in the creation of such a bond – the greatest one being trust. Nevertheless, I sought to create this partnership and, unlike in 2007, to utilize this partnership in multiple ways throughout the planning, implementation and execution of the 2009 Homeless Count.

My first strategy for gaining trustful entrance into the lives of our consumers was through the executive directors, caseworkers and other staff that work directly with the population. I requested their assistance in creating techniques through which I could interact, survey and glean information from

their clientele without being viewed as distrustful, obtrusive or simply put, an "outsider". Once the foundation was in place, I began my work with the consumer population.

The most extensive work with the current and recent consumer population was via focus groups held at various Emergency Shelters and supportive service sites in suburban Cook County. I selected locations, dates, and times that diversified the sampling group with whom I would meet. I held at least two sessions in each region – North, West & South – and varied my times based on the schedules of overnight shelters and day-service facilities. When meeting with the clientele, I made sure to dress casual, reassure them of the anonymity of their answers (especially in regards to the law enforcement personelle with whom I as working), and to work in conjunction with a well-recognized and trusted staff member or volunteer with whom the clientele felt comfortable. The focus groups were very free-form, allowing plenty of time for individuals to tell their own stories, ask questions and voice their concerns. I also allowed for a lot of pre and post-group time to sit with the consumers during dinner, while playing cards, or chatting in the hallway where conversation was more relaxed and less focused. In addition, I also met with staff and volunteer to gain their own take on focus group responses or to request their help in clarifying certain situations. All in all, the majority of our local knowledge was gained through these sessions. Furthermore, we recruited more than 30 current or previous consumers to volunteer on the night of the Count to offer their invaluable insights and experiences to those in their count group.

Donations & Supplies

In addition to manpower in the form of volunteers, the Count also required a lot of monetary and goods support. All unsheltered homeless persons found on the night of the Count were provided with a Gift Bag containing snacks, toiletries, warm socks, hats, gloves, and small-amount gift cards. Each Count Sub-Committee – that is, each region – was asked to create 50-75 Gift Bags for Count Night,

totaling hundreds of every item needed to fill the bags. Many of these items were donated by partners already listed above, namely: regional CBSA and Committee members, other homelessness agencies or social service organizations, health care agencies, volunteer or other community groups, high schools or universities / colleges, faith communities, or community members at large. Many bulk items, however, were donated by other various partners and required additional networking to secure their procurement. The partnerships described in this section were instrumental in collecting the donations necessary to provide Gift Bags to those persons found in our 2009 Homeless Count.

BUSINESSES & FOR-PROFIT GROUPS:

As difficult as it may be to accept, it is often difficult to convince businesses to donate goods that will increase the number of homeless persons utilizing your services. To avoid the stereotypes and stigmas, therefore, we made requests for one-time (physical) or small-amount gift card donations that would not require continued services. Thus, we chose the businesses to approach carefully and we intentionally worded our requests to appease all parties. We approached CVS and Walgreens for toiletry items; we approached McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Dunkin Donuts, and Starbucks for $5.00 gift cards; we approached CTA for transit passes; we approached Jewel, Krogers and Dominics for travel-size snacks and fresh fruits; and we approached Walmart and Target for hats, gloves and scarves. Thus, all businesses involved could gain the recognition they deserve for their donations, but would not feel uneasy by potentially increasing homeless consumers in their businesses. The compromise, as insensitive as it may seem, allowed us to get what we needed to provide Gift Bags and allowed the businesses to do something good for their communities. In many ways, these types of compromises make a partnership useful that would otherwise be lost entirely if handled differently.

Information Distribution & Publicity

At first, information distribution and publicity seems fairly harmless and perhaps only moderately involved. This aspect of planning, however, can make or break an event and can strengthen or weaken the partnerships created to bring that even to fruition. The way in which you "get the word out" about an event is crucial – Which avenues do you pursue? Do you pay for fancy advertising or attempt "word of mouth" for free? Do you make it a public or private event? Do you tell community members or just partners? Do you do it by email, by mail, or by phonecall? Furthermore, when dealing with a sensitive subject such as homelessness, how to plan to gain support from communities in the middle to upper income tiers. More than once, I ran into the issue of NIMBY – "Not In My Back Yard!" Often, members of certain communities not only dislike the idea of supporting a homeless event, but want to ensure that those in charge of running the event are aware that "there are no homeless persons here in X village/town/city." So one must tread lightly….

In our information distribution and publicity, therefore, we relied heavily on our partners to address publicity in a way that would be acceptable to their own communities. Thus, all of the partners above were instrumental in "getting the word out" in a way that would not only make sense to their fellow community members, but would also gain attention and support for the cause. For example, several high schools held canned food and clothing drives while distributing information, most universities and colleges sent out flyers describing the academic benefits of getting involved in this type of project, the faith communities made announcements to their congregations during meeting times and emphasized the significance of helping one another, health communities offered accreditations for attending trainings, etc. Each method for spreading the word, even those that focused on very specific aspects of the event, helped to publicize the 2009 Homeless Count as a whole.

In addition, we also pursued some more traditional procedures that highlighted the many benefits of a Homeless Count (especially to the members of the communities involved). This was done via mailers and publications and, therefore, required additional partnerships to achieve. The partnerships described in this section helped to publicize the 2009 Homeless Count en mass.

DIRECT MAIL PROVIDERS:

Direct mailing can be expensive – extremely expensive. Especially when your mailing list is 3,000 – 4,000 strong! Having worked with several direct mail companies in a previous internship, I suggested that we partner with an agency in Bloomington, IL. Though it is always best to create partners within the jurisdiction of your work – for the sake of supporting those that will most closely support you – extending beyond the geographical boundaries is often helpful if a previous connection exists. Thus, I telephone my contact in Bloomington and offered to provide him with a new customer in return for some help with our direct mail campaign. This partnership, as business-like as it may have been, was crucial to publicizing the 2009 Homeless Count to our very large constituency.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION & OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

While direct mailings can be expensive, there are always free ways to spread the word about a nonprofit event. Nonprofits, especially in areas anchored by a metropolitan center (such as Chicago), are keen to help one another out. In Cook County there are myriad publications that will provide information and press releases on your event for free, as long as you are a registered 501c3. Thus, we selected general NPO publications, as well as business mailers, Chicago-land events calendars and other commonly distributed materials to post our 2009 Homeless Count information for free. FREE!

REPORTERS & JOURNALISTS:

Perhaps the best way to get the word out about a social service event is through the passions and skills of reporters and journalists. While press releases are great at providing quick, to-the-point information about an upcoming or recently completed event, reporters and journalists provide the "meat" of the story. Most importantly, reporters and journalists are well-equipped to tell the whole story, with lots of details and an artistic flare, that catches the attention of readers and draws them into the cause. Most reporters and journalists, especially those at smaller publications, are eager to be contacted by anyone doing something new, fresh and different in their communities. Thus, we contacted several newspaper agencies in suburban Cook County and offered our knowledge and "soundbytes" on homelessness prior to the Count if they were willing to publish our appeals for volunteers and donations and cover the even on Count Night. Three reporters – one from the North, one from the West and one from the South – jumped at the idea. They were invaluable in spreading the word about the event prior to Count Night and actually participated as volunteers, along with their photographers, on Count Night in order to write in first person about the Homeless Count experience. Their article drew plenty of attention and provided the 2009 Homeless Count, the Alliance and its member agencies with unprecedented, and very needed, exposure to the suburban Cook County communities.

Data Analysis & Reporting

The final part of the 2009 Homeless Count is perhaps the most tedious – data analysis and reporting. This is also a unique phase in which there is little that one can plan for ahead of time, aside from having in place the types of partnerships that can help with these types of crucial assistance. This phase requires a lot of careful compilation and organization, thousands of tabulations, cautious and

frequently repeated analyses to determine patterns and trends, and myriad processes of trial and error to produce useful, clear, and concise graphs, charts, and narrative explications. In addition, this phase requires some very specific skill sets – ones with which I am not particularly experienced or proficient – namely, extrapolation, statistical analysis, and geo-graphical and data-graphical representation. And while HUD, Abt. Associates, and various members of our CBSAs, Committees and Board are efficient in several of these skills, many of the advanced computations and analyses went far beyond our capability to review all data internally. Thus, partnerships described in this section helped to compile, analyze and provide these key representations of the 2009 Count Data for the purposes of distributing, presenting and utilizing the 2009 Homeless Count results.

DATA COMPILATION EXPERTS:

Once again, several contacts from partnerships described above stepped forward to assist with our data compilation and analysis needs. In particular, professors from the University of Chicago and professionals from Mission Measurement were invaluable in our baby steps towards conquering the mountain of information collected from Count night. We consulted with these experts regarding extrapolation and interpolation techniques, population distribution factors, and various other mathematical and statistical skills. With their assistance, we were able to create simplified equations with which to create complete data sets and, most importantly, to fully explain (and therefore defend) our means of data compilation and analysis in our final report and public presentations.

MAPPING SPECIALISTS:

One of the primary goals of the 2009 Homeless Count was to create a deliverable that could provide not only narrative and mathematical (graph, chart, etc.) representation of data, but also

geographically representation. This type of geo-mapping was largely beyond mine or my co-workers' skills sets and, in most cases, was extremely expensive to outsource. Nevertheless, there were several planning agencies in the Chicago-land area that had been recognized for their work with geo-mapping and associated skills training. Thus, we consulted with CMAP, CEDA, local universities and other metropolitan and suburban specialists to request their assistance in selecting the simplest, most user-friendly and DIY-geared software available for geographical data mapping. After selecting and learning the basics of Microsoft MapPoint, I made sure to maintain contact with these partners in order to get their feedback on strategies for mapping and best practices, their suggestions on future uses for the data and, of course, their impromptu technical assistance when issues arose.

HMIS SPECIALISTS:

The final piece of data to be incorporated into the 2009 Homeless Count results was a comparison of Sheltered Data collected through traditional means – that is, Shelter Surveys – and data collected by the newly implemented Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS). While it was decided early on that HMIS would not serve as the primary source of data collection for the Sheltered Count, the ongoing collection and management of data in HMIS could serve as the primary collection tool in future Counts. It was important, therefore, to perform an evaluation of the quality of HMIS data by comparing its numbers to those collected by the Sheltered Surveys. While basic comparison may seem less complicated than some of the extensive analyses performed in other areas of the data compilation, working with the HMIS system to glean the proper information is less-than-simple. Thus, I worked closely with our in-house HMIS data specialists and their partners at Bowman Systems (the HMIS service provider) in order to get the best possible data with which we could compare numbers and evaluate progress. Though time consuming, this partnership yielded invaluable information to guide future Counts and general practices of the HMIS system.

Step 1: Selecting the Count Methodology

As discussed prior, the Homeless Count consists of two separate, yet equal, specialized homeless counts: 1) the Sheltered Count and 2) the Unsheltered Count. Each of these counts require specific and unique methodologies – each requiring their own sets of social capital building programs (as described above) to produce the best data collection tools and analyses available to their area of study. I will discuss the creation of each methodology separately, with special focus on a comparison of the 2007 and 2009 Counts to highlight new ideas stemming from suburban Cook County partnerships.

<u>The Sheltered Count</u>

As in 2007, the 2009 Sheltered Count was conducted via "Shelter Surveys" completed by the Alliance's member agencies. These reflect a methodology similar to the key-person surveys described in the Literature Review section above. In order to cover all areas of "sheltered" locations, four separate surveys were used – representing the four types of housing programs provided by member agencies. Those are: 1) Emergency Shelter, 2) Transitional Housing, 3) Safe Haven Housing and 4) Permanent Supportive Housing. Sixty-two (62) total Shelter Surveys were completed by member agencies.[96]

Unlike 2007, however, the body in charge of administering and collecting these surveys was not Cook County offices (and the housing representatives that had been responsible for most data collection involving HUD-funded housing), but was the Alliance staff (namely, myself) directly. Thus, Alliance staff worked closely with previous members of the Cook County offices previously in charge of such data collection to glean expertise from their past experiences. Although the situation first seemed more bleak – with more work and less time to do it – there were a few noteworthy advantages that arose from the

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[96] See Appendix VI for an example of a Shelter Survey.

single-handed completion of the entire 2009 Homeless Count. In particular, I was also responsible for coordinating the Unsheltered Count, surveys were created to be more consistent with data collected from the Unsheltered Count. For this reason, several data fields that were unparallel in 2007 (i.e., Chronic Homelessness disabilities) were reorganized so as to be comparable in the final dataset. In fact, the 2009 Sheltered Data – as will be discussed later – was far more complete and reliable in its 2009 form than in any previous counts. This was due largely to the fact that multiple parties were not responsible for individual pieces of the entire Homeless Count analysis.

As Shelter Surveys were returned, data was verified by myself and other Alliance staff members and corrections were made via follow-up phone calls to agencies. Once surveys were reviewed, all Sheltered Count data was compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for coding and final counts. Final Sheltered Count numbers were transferred to the Sheltered Count sections of the "2009 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" form to be converted into viewable charts, graphs, and narrative explications for this report and our 2009 Homeless Count presentations.

Finally, Shelter Surveys were compared to reported HMIS data as a measure of the effectiveness of our HMIS implementation (discussed in some detail later on). This process was done in partnership with the Alliance's HMIS data analysts and is discussed in some depth in the "Sheltered Count Results" section (Section VI).

The Unsheltered Count

There were three distinct parts to the 2009 Unsheltered Count methodology: 1) the Street Count, 2) the Service Site Count, and 3) the Record Review Count. I will address the methodology and implementation of each one separately.

1. THE STREET COUNT:

The first part of the suburban Cook County continuum's Unsheltered Count, as with most continua of care across the nation, is the Street Count. As the largest component of the Unsheltered Count methodology, I began planning for the Street Count in September, 2008. Preparations for and implementation of the Street Count included weeks of research on methodology, months of committee meetings to determine data collection methods, and innumerable hours to create the myriad materials necessary for the purpose of organizing and implementing all plans. Simply put, without the partnerships created in conjunction with the 2009 Homeless Count, much of the Unsheltered Count planning would have been virtually impossible. I will return to this point in my conclusionary sections.

First, the we set out to determine a methodology. As HUD states, "A [Public Places] Count can be conducted at 'known locations' (those areas where homeless people are expected to congregate) or can strive for 'full coverage'."[97] In 2007, the Alliance selected only a "known locations" (or "Hot Spots") methodology for the Street Count (one of the two "Modified Probability Area Strategies" discussed in the Literature Review). Since the suburban Cook County region is so geographically vast, it was previously deemed impossible to incorporate any type of "full coverage" implementation. For 2009, however, I began first with extensive research on the resources needed to attempt a "full coverage" methodology. It was my theory that the "full coverage" methodology could be utilized in selected areas (such as the "known locations" or "hot spots" from previous years) and that we could then extrapolate the "full coverage" data to those areas without "full coverage" data from the Street Count. After several discussions with Abt. Associates[98], HUD, and various committees, however, it was determined that a truly complete, "full coverage" methodology would require a year's worth of data research to assign

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[97] A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, 2008, p. 19.

[98] Erin Wilson was the primary contact at Abt. Associates during these discussions.

character points to all municipalities in suburban Cook County (so that each municipality would have a statistically reliable proportionate rating to which "full coverage" data could be extrapolated – i.e., the Unsheltered Count in the state of Georgia). Thus, we converted our 2009 Street Count methodology to a "known location" and *partially* "full coverage" methodology (without the need to do geographic extrapolation in the post-Count analysis). In other words, we would be striving for the most complete coverage possible in those areas with the highest numbers of known locations.

This was achieved in several steps:

The first step involved the identification and description of known locations or "hot spots" in the three regions of suburban Cook County – North, West & South. First, we attempted to make contact with community partners in order to gather information about "hot spots" in suburban Cook County (such as those discussed in the previous section). This was done via an informational direct mailer[99] to community organizations, businesses, and government entities as well as through information trainings and other community meetings. Second, we worked directly with the Alliance's member agencies via CBSA meetings to determine "hot spots" in specific regions of the continuum. Finally, we held 6 focus groups at specific emergency shelters to speak with the homeless population directly about "hot spots" in their area of which partners or agency representatives may be unaware.[100] This proved to be the most valuable resource in the development of our "hot spots" list.

The second step involved mapping the "hot spots" in order to determine the "hot areas", or those locales in each region of suburban Cook County that revealed multiple "hot spots" in close proximity. This was achieved by using Microsoft MapPoint software to map all the locational data collected on the "hot spots." With this visual aid in hand, we then worked closely with CBSA members

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[99] See Appendix VII for an example of the direct mailer sent to community partners.

[100] See Appendix VIII for an example of a Focus Group session and respondents' answers.

and other coordinators to ensure that no "hot areas" were being ignored (in other words, that no specific locales in each region where homeless people might congregate were under-represented on the maps.)

The third step in creating a true "known location" and partial "complete coverage" Street Count methodology was the determination of those areas that would be covered as "completely" as possible, based on the number of "known locations". This was done by creating search blocks around those "hot areas" where a majority of "hot spots" were identified. [101] Search blocks were created with natural boundaries such as major highways, township lines, or forest preserve entrances. Search blocks were an average 5-15 square miles in size and were made smaller or larger depending on the number of "hot spots" in the area and the estimated time to cover the area. On average, each region – North, West & South – was comprised of 8-10 search blocks which comprised, continuum-wide, over 300 square miles of suburban Cook County.

After selecting the methodology for the Street Count, we set out to create the most accurate methods for data collection during the Street Count. Several HUD warnings played an important role in this decision process. Those were: avoiding duplication with the Sheltered Count, avoiding duplication with other Unsheltered Counts, avoiding "counters'" bias and avoiding the omission of important information. Each of these warnings were dealt with individually.

Following HUD's guidelines to avoid duplication with the Sheltered Count, the Street Count was to be conducted on the same night as the Sheltered Count and after 9:00pm (when most shelter programs close their doors to guests).

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[101] See Appendix IX for the North, West & South "Hot Spot" maps.

To avoid duplication with other Unsheltered Counts, Street Count materials requested de-duplication fields from those unsheltered persons that were found – i.e., initials, birthday, gender, race, distinguishing characteristics, etc. These fields, when compared to the same files on Service Site and Record Review materials would help to eliminate any double-counted persons.

To avoid "counters'" bias[102], all Street Count materials were set up identically (same questions, same narrative, same ordering, same data collection tools, etc.) and training was provided to all Street Count volunteers prior to 9:00pm that night (see below).

And finally, to avoid any omissions of key information, all Street Count materials were reviewed by committees for the purpose of identifying any missing information fields. Furthermore, the suburban Cook County Street Count materials were also compared to materials listed as best practices by Abt. Associates and HUD, such as New York's Street Count Survey and Boston's Street Count Tally Sheet.

Once all precautions were considered, the Alliance adopted two Street Count materials – the Street Count Survey[103] (to be used for those persons found who were awake and willing to answer questions) and the Street Count Tally Sheet[104] (to be used for those persons found who were asleep or unwilling to answer questions). These materials, though similar to the materials in 2007, were expanded to include more informational fields and were edited to avoid some pitfalls from the previous Count.

Lastly, in order to ensure consistency of the methodology and data collection methods, training sessions were held with those regional representatives who were involved with Count planning (this was

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[102] "Counters' bias" is described as the inconsistencies associated with how questions are asked (by the counters) or how responses are recorded (by the counters) – i.e., asking questions in a negative ("You don't have any issues with substance abuse, right?") or reporting data negatively ("This person seemed agitated so I will report that he was probably high on something.")

[103] See Appendix X to see an example of the Street Count Survey.

[104] See Appendix XI to see an example of the Street Count Tally Sheet.

done several weeks prior to Count night), as well as with all volunteers and Count Team leaders (this was done on the night of the Count).[105] For those persons involved in Count planning, specific instruction was given as to how the Count methodology would be applied, the purpose of utilizing a dual-methodology, the impact of striving for the most "complete" coverage as possible in our "hot areas" and the important role of the leaders in each area as trainers for Count Team leaders and volunteers. For those persons involved on Count night only, specific instruction was given as to how volunteers should locate unsheltered homeless persons, how to determine if someone met the HUD standard for "homelessness", how a counter should ask the questions, which questions were optional (i.e., only asking personal questions about drug and alcohol use if the person being interviewed seemed cooperative and willing to answer), which questions could be "guessed at" (i.e., gender), how to fill out the actual materials and who to contact with questions or in case of an emergency.

At the conclusion of the Street Count, the Street Count Surveys and Street Count Tallies were returned to the Alliance for review. I was responsible for verifying the information provided in the surveys and tally sheets by eliminating any persons that did not meet the HUD standard for "homelessness", eliminating any persons that were double-counted (because they moved from one search area to another during the Count hours), or eliminating any person whose information was conflictual (i.e., "I am not homeless… I'm just out walking to a friend's house") or indeterminate (i.e., "Person did not wish to answer any questions and was not carrying any bags.") Confirmed numbers were then compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for coding and final counts. Final Street Count numbers were transferred to the Unsheltered Count sections of the "2009 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" form to be converted into viewable charts, graphs, and narrative explications for this report and our 2009 Homeless Count presentations.

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[105] See Appendix XII to see an example of the Volunteer Training Guide Outline.

2. THE SERVICE SITE COUNT:

As in 2007, the Service Site Count was the second part of the Unsheltered Count. The purpose of the Service Site Count is to identify and survey those persons that were not found in the Street Count or Sheltered Count on the night of January 22nd. As described above, this is usually due to the fact that some unsheltered persons will be sleeping in locations that are either unsafe or impossible to enter during the Street Count – i.e., abandoned buildings, forest preserves, etc. Planning for and implementing the Service Site Count, though far less complex than the Street Count, required several meetings to create the data collection materials, determine the scope of Service Site Count and organize the trainings for this specific type of Count.

First, I utilized the Service Site Survey from 2007 as a basis for creating the 2009 Service Site Count materials. These materials were expanded to include additional information fields and edited to avoid pitfalls from the previous Count.[106] Also, as in 2007, since the Service Site Count would be held for the 2 weeks following the Street Count on January 22nd, the largest consideration in creating the Service Site Count materials was the avoidance of false "positives" to be included in the final Unsheltered Count numbers. To avoid these false numbers, therefore, the Service Site Count materials requested information from only those persons "who reported that they stayed somewhere other than their own apartment/condo/ home/etc. on the night of January 22nd."[107] Additionally, I prepared a "FAQ: Helpful Hints" sheet to be included with the Service Site Survey,[108] as well as a list of trainings to be provided for those agencies/businesses that wished to receive more direct assistance.

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[106] See Appendix XIII for an example of the Service Site Survey.

[107] Alliance training materials for the Service Site Count, General Outline.

[108] See Appendix XIV for an example of the "Helpful Hints" sheet that accompanied the Service Site Survey.

Second, I set out to determine who would be considered "Service Sites" and could possibly report on the unsheltered homeless populations in their area. A list of 3,500 locations (based on the Alliance's general mailing list) was selected to receive information about the Service Site Count and participate in the optional training sessions. This list included representatives from food pantries, hospitals, community outreach groups, church communities, local school districts, fast-food and coffee retail locations, discount food and clothing retailers, and myriad other nonprofit and business contacts throughout the North, West and South regions of suburban Cook County. These contacts were sent the first informational direct mailer (discussed in "The Street Count" section above) and were then later sent a second direct mailer with information specific to the Service Site Count – that is, the actual Service Site Survey, the list of training locations and times, and the "FAQ: Helpful Hints" page for completing the tool successfully.

Next, I worked directly with the Catholic Charities organizations in Chicago and suburban Cook County to set up locations and times for Service Site Count trainings. Catholic Charities, as one of the area's largest organizations, has multiple locations in the North, West & South regions of suburban Cook County and also had an expansive network of community contacts with whom to network. With their help, we dated 5 training sessions to be held over the course of a two-week period prior to the weeks of the Service Site Count. These trainings, like that of the Street Count trainings, were aimed at ensuring consistency of data collection and avoiding duplication and omission of information. Specific instruction was provided on how to approach persons in an agency or business setting in order to obtain information, how to ask the questions, which questions could be omitted/"guessed at", and who to contact with questions or concerns throughout the process.

Finally, a selection of Service Sites were chosen from the mailing list to be contacted directly by volunteer, Service Site "callers". These Service Sites were listed as common partners of the Alliance or the Alliance's member agencies and highly likely to encounter the type of homeless population that may

not have been found on the night of the Street Count. Examples of these Service Sites included: the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, municipal police departments, privately-funded homeless outreach programs, and others. Service Site callers made direct contact with these locations to ensure their receipt of the Service Site Count materials, their possible attendance at a training in their area, and a review of any questions or concerns the contact may have when filling out the Service Site Survey.

All Service Site Surveys were returned to the Alliance for review no later than two weeks after the Street Count – January 22nd. I was responsible for verifying the information provided by the Service Site Surveys and for making follow-up phone calls to any Service Sites that provided information requiring clarification. As with the Street Count, I also eliminated any persons that did not meet the HUD standard for "homelessness", any persons that were double counted in other parts of the Unsheltered Count and any persons whose information seemed conflictual or indeterminate. Confirmed numbers were then compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for coding and final counts. Final Street Count numbers were transferred to the Unsheltered Count sections of the "2009 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" form to be converted into viewable charts, graphs, and narrative explications for this report and our 2009 Homeless Count presentations.

3. THE RECORD REVIEW COUNT:

As in 2007, the Record Review Count was the third (and final!) part of the Unsheltered Count. The purpose of the Record Review Count is to identify and retrieve basic information on those persons that are known by the regional emergency shelter staff. Planning for the Record Review Count, unlike the Street Count or even the Service Site Survey, is far less complex. We needed only to contact persons at each emergency shelter provider location, provide a list of questions to be answered, distribute the data collection materials, and provide guidance in completing the forms.

I determined that all five of the regional emergency shelter locations would be contacted to receive Record Review Count materials (as they all served potentially mutually exclusive populations in their respective regions). Those locations are: Bethel Community Facility (Chicago Heights – South region), South Suburban PADS (Chicago Heights – South region), BEDS+ Care (La Grange – West region), West Suburban PADS (Oak Park – West region) and Journeys from PADS to HOPE (Palatine – North region). A contact at each of these locations was emailed directly after the Count with instructions and materials.

As in 2007, questions pertaining to the Record Review Count were reasonably simple. Contacts at each of the emergency shelter provider locations were ask to review their records and provide information in response to the following questions:

1. Were any persons turned away from your shelter on January 22nd?

2. Were any "regulars" not present at the shelter on January 22nd?

3. Were any persons "banned" from the shelter on January 22nd?

4. Since January 22nd, have you had any new intakes that reported that they were

    homeless on January 22nd?

For all questions list above, contacts were asked to provide all information a form similar to the Service Site Survey (the only difference was the title & instructions). Thus, as with the considerations for the Service Site Count, all Record Review materials avoided false "positives" by requesting only information for those persons that were not present at the shelter on January 22nd only.

Finally, as with the Service Site trainings, we provided some general guidance to our contacts at each of the emergency shelter locations. Since the Record Review Count does not require a direct

interview (unlike with the Service Site Count), contacts were told to use their best "professional estimate"[109] in compiling the information. For example, "regulars" was used loosely so as to allow contacts at the emergency shelter provider locations the leeway to determine, in their "professional estimate", which persons in their population would be most likely to be unsheltered if not present at the shelter that night.

All Record Review sheets were returned to the Alliance for review no later than two weeks after the Street Count. Again, I verified the information provided by the Record Review Count and made follow-up phone calls to any emergency shelter contacts that provided information requiring clarification. As with the Street Count & Service Site Count, I also eliminated any persons that did not meet the HUD standard for "homelessness" or any persons that were double counted in other parts of the Unsheltered Count. Unlike the Street Count & Service Site Count, however, very few people were eliminated as a cause of conflictual or indeterminate information due to the nature of the Record Review Count. Confirmed numbers were then compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for coding and final counts. Final Street Count numbers were transferred to the Unsheltered Count sections of the "2009 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" form to be converted into viewable charts, graphs, and narrative explications for this report and our 2009 Homeless Count presentations.

Data Analysis & General Extrapolation

Although geographical extrapolation was not used in the 2009 Homeless Count methodology, general extrapolation was necessary for the completion of some data sets.[110] The Unsheltered Count, for example, results in a large number of "Unknown" areas of data compared to the Sheltered Count. That

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[109] Alliance training materials for the Record Review Count, General Outline.

[110] See Appendix XV for completed data charts from the 2007 & 2009 Homeless Counts in suburban Cook County.

is, some data collection methods used in the Unsheltered Count are unable to record all necessary data for the completion of a Homeless Count – for example, the Street Tally is used in those circumstances when persons found on the streets are unwilling (non-compliant) or unable (asleep, disabled, etc.) to complete the Street Survey. Thus, the Street Tally is meant only to record gender, approximate age, race/ethnicity, and location – if known. Therefore, a large portion of information for those persons counted by Street Tally only is "Unknown". To provide complete data, however, an extrapolation technique is employed after data has been compiled. For the 2009 Count, three types of extrapolation techniques were employed. This were researched and reviewed at length with data specialists (such as analysts at Mission Measurement in Chicago) and with Abt. Associates. These extrapolation techniques were deemed not only statistically reliable but also, and equally important, within the guidelines for HUD data reporting. I will address each technique individually and provide examples:

1) **Extrapolation Formula #1 – Determining Chronically Homeless Persons on the Street Tally:**

$$\frac{\text{Street Survey CH Characteristic}}{\text{Street Survey Total Characteristic}} \quad X \quad \text{Street Tally Total Characteristic} \quad = \quad \text{Unknown}$$

First, we took the total number of persons designated as Chronically Homeless in each of the subpopulation characteristic (i.e., male/female, ages 21-30, mental illness, substance abuse, etc.) from the Street Survey and divided it by the total number of persons in each of those subpopulation characteristics from the Street Survey to obtain a proportion. Next, we took the proportion produced and multiplied it by the total number of persons in each of those subpopulation characteristics from the Street Tally to obtain the total number of persons to be designated as Chronically Homeless for each subpopulation characteristics. For example, to determine the number of Chronically Homeless Men for the Street Tally:

CH Men from Street Survey (19)			
_____	X	All Men from Street Tally (34)	=
All Men from Street Survey (39)			
Proportion (0.49)	X	All Men from Street Tally (34)	= **16.6 (=17)**

2)   **Extrapolation Formula #2 – Determining General Subpop. Characteristics on the Street Tally:**

Street Survey Subpop. Characteristic				
_____	X	Street Tally Total Persons	=	Unknown
Street Survey Total Persons				

First, we took the total number of persons designated in each of the general subpopulation characteristic (i.e., mental illness, substance abuse, etc.) from the Street Survey and divided it by the total number of persons reported in the entire Street Survey to obtain a proportion. Next, we took the proportion produced and multiplied it by the total number of persons reported in the entire Street Tally to obtain the total number of persons to be designated as each of the general subpopulation characteristics. For example, to determine the number of persons with mental illness (MI) issues for the Street Tally:

Persons with MI from Street Survey (16)		
_____	X	Total Persons from Street Tally (39) =
Total Persons from Street Survey (51)		
Proportion (0.31)	X	Total Persons from Street Tally (39) = **12.2 (=12)**

3) **Extrapolation Formula #3 – Determining Age Group 21-59 on the Street Tally:**

Street Survey Age Group + Service Site Survey Age Group

———————————————————————————————————   X   Street Tally Total Persons   =   Unknown

Total Street Survey Persons + Total Service Site Survey Persons

- THEN -

Street Tally Age Group (STAG) 21-30 + STAG 31-40 + STAG 41-50 + STAG 51-60   =   Street Tally Age Group 21-59

First, we took the total number of persons in an age group from the Street Survey and added it to the total number of persons in the same age group from the Service Site Survey. Next, we took the total number of persons reported in the entire Street Survey and added it to the entire number of persons reported in the Service Site Survey. Next, we divided the sums of the persons in that age group by the sum of persons in both surveys to obtain a proportion. Next, we took the proportion produced and multiplied it by the total number of persons reported in the entire Street Tally to obtain the total number of persons to be designated in that age group. We performed this extrapolation for each age group falling in the Age Group 21-59 category. Finally, we added all the numbers produced for these age groups to determine the number of persons in the Age Group 21-59 for the Street Tally. For example, to determine the number of persons in the age group 31-40 for the Street Tally:

Street Survey Age Group (0) + Service Site Survey Age Group (7)

———————————————————————————————————————   X   Street Tally Total Persons (39)   = Unknown

Total Street Survey Persons (51) + Total Service Site Survey Persons (66)

Proportion (0.06)   X   Street Tally Total Persons (39)   = **2.33 (=2)**

Step 2: Recruiting & Managing Volunteers

Whereas the selection of methodology may not readily illustrate the creation of social capital networks without being framed in such terms, the building of a volunteer base is a more tangible example of social capital theory at work. Recruiting and managing volunteers is, quite literally, the creation and maintenance of social capital – of groups of people and of individuals. In fact, volunteerism is often cited as a cornerstone of social capital theory, as it is often the motivation for and actual action of creating social bridges and social bonds. In their unique study of social capital and its affect on or as a cause of volunteerism, Kolodinsky, Kimberly and Isham state, "… many Americans volunteer because they feel that these hours are a better investment in their own social capital and that of the communities [as compared to dinner parties and bowling leagues]… and if this is true, volunteering may indeed be a significant creator of social capital in the United States over the last 40 years."[111]

Thus, there is little we *can't* say about the process of recruiting and managing volunteers for the 2009 Homeless Count that wasn't directly associated with social capital networks. This section, however, will highlight some of the more specific aspects of the volunteer recruitment and management process – aspects that are geared towards the volunteers' reasons for and expectations of volunteerism – in order to illustrate how the volunteer process is simultaneously a step towards and result of social capital.

Before beginning, however, it is important to note the great challenge that I undertook in the volunteer recruitment and management process for the 2009 Homeless Count. While the 2007 Homeless Count utilized approximately 65 volunteers, I had come up with an estimated 120 volunteers necessary to successfully execute the size and scope of the planned 2009 Homeless Count. Furthermore, most of the 2007 volunteers had not been documented or maintained in the previous two years – which

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[111] Kolodinsky, Kimberly and Isham (2003), 3.

meant I had no working volunteer base from which to begin my recruitment and management. Thus, I was faced with the need to double the previous Count's volunteer numbers… from scratch. And while many of our volunteers could be recruited from member agencies, it was my goal to broaden the social networks and utilize as many new sources of volunteer support as possible. From the beginning, I recognized the uphill battle that this aspect of the planning process would present and I worked diligently to utilize my knowledge of social capital building projects and additional resources on volunteer recruitment and management to face this challenge head-on. What follows is a description of the ways in which I merged my foundations of social capital theory and new knowledge of volunteer recruitment and management to enlist over 150 volunteers to count a very daunting population, in the middle of the night, during the coldest month of the year…

The first, and most important step, in recruiting and managing volunteers is to understand a basic, underlying principle: Why do people volunteer? Hundreds of writers, academics and columnists have attacked this problem, but few with as much organization and clarity as Thomas W. McKee. In *The New Breed: How to Recruit and Manage the 21st Century Volunteers*, McKee describes three levels of motivation for volunteerism. Those are[112]:

1. Basic Level – Self-Serving Drive

2. Secondary Level – Relational Drive

3. Tertiary Level – Belie Drive

At the Basic Level – Self-Serving Drive, volunteers are motivated by a need to "get something" in return for volunteering. Though this is rarely monetary remuneration – as the definition of volunteerism often precludes this – the non-monetary remuneration may come in many forms: a sense of pride in

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[112] McKee (2003), www.volunteerpower.com.

doing something good, training experience for a job or skill set, recognition for participation, or repayment of a previous service rendered by someone else. Though this may seem selfish, McKee points out, "a wise recruiter seeks out these volunteers because it is a win-win situation for both the organization and the volunteer… both can get what they want from the relationship."[113]

At the Secondary Level – Relational Drive, volunteers are motivated by a desire to make connections with others. Many people find that volunteering offers an opportunity to spend time with friends or loved ones, make new acquaintances outside one's own "circle", or learn more about those people in particular groups or organizations in the community. This level, of course, relates most directly to the theory of social capital and, as McKee states, "investing in the social relationship among people is one of the strongest stimulators for building networks of volunteers."[114] Thus, it is at this level that we begin to see volunteerism as a result of social capital building, as well as seeing volunteerism as a new source of social capital building.

At the Tertiary Level – Belief Drive, volunteers are motivated by a true passion for the organizational cause. At this level, we begin to see volunteers with a personal connection to the cause, with an employment history related to the cause, or with a strong desire to become better acquainted by the cause-related works of an organization. Simply put, the volunteers at this level have a strong belief that what an organization is doing is *right*. And as McKee points out, if a volunteer is recruited and managed properly, "over time, a basic or secondary level volunteer can become a true believer… passionate about the cause."[115]

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[113] McKee (2003), www.volunteerpower.com.

[114] McKee (2003), www.volunteerpower.com.

[115] McKee (2003), www.volunteerpower.com.

Thus, we arrive at the second step of recruiting and managing volunteers – that is, as McKee puts it, how do we do it properly? According to Helen Little, author of several works addressing the successful recruitment and management of volunteers, including *Volunteers – How to Get Them, How to Keep Them: An Essential Guide for Volunteer Leaders and Staff of Professional, Trade and Charitable Organizations*, there are 12 basic needs of every volunteer[116]. Addressing these needs throughout the recruitment and management process can help to satisfy the needs of the volunteer, regardless of the level at which they are volunteering (as described above). These needs can be categorized into 5 primary categories. Those are:

1. Reason (a task that matches personal interests, goals or beliefs)

2. Timeline (a manageable task with a beginning and an end)

3. Communication (written instructions, access to speak with a supervisor, updates on progress, opportunity to provide feedback after the task is complete)

4. Guidance (adequate training, all necessary tools, follow-up)

5. Reward (appreciation and recognition)

In order to describe the processes through which I was able to ensure all 5 of these needs categories, I will address each one separately – describing action steps taken and providing examples of work.[117]

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[116] Little (1999), www.urbanministries.com.

[117] See Appendix XVI for a Results Summary of the 2009 Homeless Count Volunteer Survey.

REASON:

Once we understand why a volunteer wants to volunteer, the challenge is to literally show the volunteer that the cause for which we are recruiting volunteers is a good reason to volunteer. In order to do this, we must think strategically about how to appeal to each volunteer's own personal interests, goals, or beliefs. To accomplish this, I created several recruiting methods that would appeal to various groups of persons or individuals in our suburban Cook County communities.

First, in addition to the general mailer (described previously) that addressed some volunteer aspects, I also created and distributed a "Volunteer Flyer" via email, mail, web-postings, online bulletins, and at key locations in the community.[118] This flyer addressed several primary reasons for volunteering – many of which were geared towards the basic, secondary and tertiary levels of volunteerism outlined by McKee. To accompany the Volunteer Flyer, I also created a two-page "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet.[119] This FAQ sheet helped to address some of the most common concerns and questions that volunteers for a Homeless Count face. Thus, as a tag-team function, these two flyers were crucial in not only sparking the volunteer's interest by noting the primary reasons for volunteering, but also by calming any basic fears about being a Homeless Count volunteer. This was the first step in initializing contact with prospective volunteers, providing basic info, answering basic questions, and of course, arousing a passion to pursue the volunteer opportunity.

The next step was to address individual groups' or individuals' reasons for volunteering. While the general materials described above were sufficient for a general audience, they were lacking the individualization that many volunteers yearn for in new opportunities. Thus, I created email campaigns

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[118] See Appendix XVII for an example of 2009 Volunteer Flyer.

[119] See Appendix XVIII for an example of the "FAQ: Volunteering for the 2009 Homeless Count" File.

that targeted specific populations in the community.[120] Most of the target populations were large, diverse groups that had shown a history of volunteerism with social service organizations. Several groups, however, were targeted specifically for their "untapped" volunteer opportunities and the unique skills or knowledge that a volunteer from that group may bring to the experience. These population-specific email campaigns provided examples of direct correlations between the group's work (such as a university's social work program) and the goals of the 2009 Homeless Count (reaching out to homeless populations with myriad disabling conditions). As these email campaigns began to circulate, I was pleasantly surprised to see that many volunteers were being recruited from not only the initial site of contact (i.e., a university's outreach director), but also by subsidiary and partner sites (i.e., a local community group associate with the university's outreach program). Thus, the population-specific emails proved their ability to make personal, individualized connections with the groups receiving them and were also extremely successful as a social capital building tool to create more multi-layered , bridging capital-type, partnerships with other groups and individuals.

TIMELINE:

Simply put, the 2009 Homeless Count was a one-night event with a very specific start and end time. Unlike other ongoing volunteer projects, providing an accurate measurement for the duration of the volunteer event was not difficult for this project. Nevertheless, in order to create even stronger partnerships with our prospective volunteers, we provided them a basic outline of the entire Homeless Count's planning process – thus, engaging them in a longer-term volunteer opportunity. As part of the initial project plan, I had created a timeline to guide the general action steps to be taken in the 2009

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[120] See Appendix XIX for examples of Email Campaigns.

Homeless Count planning.[121] By making this timeline available to all volunteers, we were able to create even greater interest and investment in the project, and benefited from additional help with donations collections, the pre-mapping of Hot Spots, and discussions about methodology and the next steps to be taken. While the volunteers for the Count were only asked to donate their time for the one-night portion of the project, many were enthusiastic to be involved on a greater level when provided with the entire Count timeline. Again, I was pleasantly surprised at the result of this information sharing, as it brought in volunteers with new ideas and perspectives on the issue, as well as creating an even stronger volunteer base as we entered Count night.

COMMUNICATION:

Communication is certainly the greatest challenge facing any volunteer recruiter and manager. While communication may at first seem to be simply the act of answering phone calls and emails to address questions or concerns, communication is truly a much more involved task!

Our first form of communication with our volunteers was via the Volunteer Flyer, FAQ Flyer and email campaigns described above. Keeping volunteers interested, however, requires continuous communication beyond the initial contact. Especially with a project as large-scale and long-planned as a Homeless Count, many volunteers were contacted to sign-up in October, even though their actual participation would not take place until January 22nd of the following year. Thus, sustainable forms of communication are imperative.

The best, and most sustainable, form of communication today is the internet. While the 2007 Homeless Count did not invest the time or energy into creating a website dedicated solely to the goals and planning of the Homeless Count, I decided early in the process that this would be a vital part of not

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[121] See Appendix XX for the 2009 Homeless Count Timeline.

only our primary means of communication with our members, partners and communities, but also as an integral tool for recruiting and managing the number of volunteers necessary to perform the 2009 Homeless Count. Andrew Urban, a director with Your Mission, provides analyses for the web services firm with a focus on nonprofit organizations. Urban states, "… many agencies, by turning to the Web, have leveraged their volunteer recruitment efforts to great success."[122] Urban outlines three key elements to a successful webpage directed at sustained recruiting, managing and communication with volunteers. Those are[123]:

1. Make certain that your Website is updated frequently. As the front door to potential volunteers, the site should be inviting. It should reflect the dynamic nature of your organization, so that visitors get a good grasp of what your organization has to offer.

2. Ensure that your Website sells the case for becoming a volunteer. Include the benefits, the joys, and the satisfaction that a volunteer will experience by involving themselves in your organization and its project(s).

3. Do not put up online roadblocks. Make sure that you are easy to contact. You want to capture your volunteers when their interest is hot. Quick and simple online forms are far more likely to be completed than downloadable or print out ones.

Thus, the 2009 Homeless Count website was created specifically to provide a wealth of useful and interactive resources for volunteers, including: all volunteer materials (i.e., flyers, FAQ sheets, meeting locations, Count Team assignments, studies on volunteerism), reports and data on the 2007 Homeless Count, week-to-week updates on progress (i.e., running lists of volunteers recruited and the number of volunteers still needed, lists of donation items requested, meeting locations, training dates

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[122] Urban (2002), www.onphilanthropy.com

[123] Urban (2002), www.onphilanthropy.com

and times), links to all Volunteer Updates (discussed in more depth below), a page to discuss homelessness issues and topics relevant to the count via a bulletin for engaging discussion threads and replying to "Share Your Thoughts" posts created by myself, contact information for all regional coordinators and staff persons, as well as myself, and direct access to a "Contact Us" page for online sign-up or to anonymously address general questions and concerns.[124]

Perhaps the most direct form of sustained communication with the volunteers (including the volunteers and coordinators of the regional CBSAs) was through the creation and distribution of monthly email updates. The Volunteer updates were concise and engaging – each with an easy-to-follow and consistent template to cover that month's important numbers (i.e., days until the count, volunteers recruited, etc.), updates on progress, highlighted partners or donors, and a personal message from the Count Coordinator (myself) to remind volunteers of important tasks and other ways to get involved. The CBSA Updates, on the other hand, were necessarily more involved and covered topics such as planning progress, upcoming action steps, coordinator roles and responsibilities, recruiting and donation techniques, new partnerships and proposed partnerships, etc.[125] These updates also made mention every month of new materials, updates, and links available on the 2009 Homeless Count website (in order to direct more traffic and provide additional ways for the volunteer engage the cause) and, of course, contact information for all regional coordinators, staff persons and myself.

At the conclusion of the 2009 Homeless Count, I made sure to follow up with all volunteers and request their feedback in the form of a Volunteer Survey (see Appendix XVI, as mentioned prior). This survey, created with SurveyMonkey, asked specific questions related to the volunteers pre-Count and Count night experiences – with particular attention paid to the ways in which the volunteer felt that

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[124] Please visit the Homeless Count Website at www.freewebs.com/2009homelesscount.

[125] See Appendix XXI for examples of Volunteer & CBSA Updates.

communication was handled. As the Volunteer Survey results show, the collection of all communication methods was a very positive resource for the volunteers. Furthermore, and most importantly, the level of communication and engagement directed to volunteers resulted in a 100% response rate of "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the ranking statement, "If possible, I would like to participate in another Homeless Count." In my opinion, this is the strongest proof of the success of the 2009 Homeless Count's volunteer recruiting and management technique, as well as a strong testament to the impact of the social capital theories utilized in the creation of these volunteer networks.

GUIDANCE:

While the website, updates and one-on-one contact with myself was perhaps the most sustained form of guidance to our 2009 Homeless Count volunteers, the most comprehensive guidance was provided in the form of a Volunteer Training Session held prior to deployment on Count night. All Street Count materials, discussed in the previous sections, were described and reviewed during this training. Question & Answer sessions and Role Playing sessions were also implemented. (For more information on this training session, see Appendix XII, as mentioned prior.)

In addition to training, all necessary materials for volunteers were provided on the night of the Count (i.e., Street Tallies, Street Surveys, maps, clipboards, pens, flashlights, contact information, safety tips, etc.). And, to provide the best possible guidance, all volunteers were placed on a Count Team with a Count Team Leader. All Count Team Leaders were directors, case managers, or other staff persons from our member agencies. Thus, all Count Team Leaders held positions of long-standing, direct, day-to-day contact with the homeless population and, therefore, were well equipped to handle first-time encounters on the street and any unsafe situations. In addition, many Count Team leaders were bi-

lingual (in Spanish or Polish) and all came from diverse backgrounds that would assist in relations with the homelessn population on the streets.

REWARD:

While most volunteers do not outwardly express a desire to be recognized or rewarded, any experienced volunteer recruiter or volunteer management specialist will inform you that this is the most important aspect of creating and expanding a volunteer base. Not to mention, those that volunteered for Count night were participating in an event that, as mentioned before, was engaging a very difficult – and potentially unsafe – population on the streets, during the night hours, in the coldest month of winter… this was a true show of dedication to the cause on the part of our volunteers. Thus, we attempted to incorporate this "reward" in as many forms as possible to show our gratitude.

First, we made sure to send all volunteers and partners a thank you letter addressing their dedication to the cause.[126] Unlike many template thank you letters, our thank you letters were individualized to the volunteers' experiences as a part of our 2009 Homeless Count and focused greatly on the impact that their service would have on the homeless populations in their own communities. Furthermore, all thank you letters were reviewed by several staff and chair persons prior to mailing in order to ensure the most genuine language to convey the deep appreciation and respect for the volunteers' time, energy and support. Finally, unlike most mass mailings, all the thank you letters – of which there were over 200 – were personally signed by myself and the Executive Director, Jennifer Hill.

Second, we encouraged all volunteers to participate in post-Count discussions at the regional or countywide level. Thus, we were provided with many opportunities in which to publicly recognize volunteers who were attending committee, CBSA or Board meetings. In addition, this not only expanded

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[126] See Appendix XXII for an example of a Volunteer Thank You Letter.

our sources for vital feedback on the planning, implementation and execution of the 2009 Homeless Count, but it also helped to strengthen the social capital between individual agencies and/or partners with our new volunteer base. In fact, many volunteers that participated in the 2009 Homeless Count have since connected with homelessness service providers in their own area to continue volunteer work in the field. Several volunteers that interacted with Consumers who were part of their Count Team – acting as local experts on locating and interacting with the homelessness population – have even requested updates from the Alliance on those men and women who were recent or past consumers on their Count Teams. Overall, this level of participation is not only unprecedented, but it is helping to prove the great strength that these social networks can bring to the Alliance and its member agencies.

Finally, although many members of the Alliance disagree with the idea of hosting annual events, I have already begun to argue on behalf of such an event, if only for the purpose of inviting and recognizing those volunteers and partners that played such an invaluable role in the 2009 Homeless Count. And while many believe that the purpose of such an event should be to fundraise, I have begun to outline the myriad ways in which an annual event is often better suited (though not mutually exclusive from fundraising) to provide volunteer and partner recognition and continue the process of building social capital.[127]

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[127] See Appendix XXIII for a DRAFT Proposal Statement for an annual event to recognize our 2009 Homeless Count volunteers and partners.

Step 3: Moving Forward with the Data

The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of the 2009 Homeless Count as presented in the final report to HUD and all Alliance stakeholders. As the following results analysis shows, the 2009 Homeless Count far exceeded our expectations in methodology, data quality, statistical reliability, and empirical analysis – and this was due largely to the quality and quantity of partnerships created during the planning process. The result was a wealth of information that provided key insights into the Alliance's past, present, and future work to end homelessness in suburban Cook County.

Sheltered Count Results[128]

We will begin with graphic representation and basic description of data collected via the Shelter Surveys for the 2009 Sheltered Count. Specifically, this section will provide comparison data between the 2007 & 2009 Sheltered Counts, as well as a regional breakdown of Sheltered Count data between the North, West and South suburban Cook County regions. Please note, the data presented here are reflective of numbers reported on those surveys from Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing and the single Safe Haven. Additionally, "Chronically Homeless" data presented here are reflective of numbers reported on those surveys from Emergency Shelters and the single Safe Haven only.

In addition, this section will provide a basic analysis of the HMIS data reported for the same period as a point of comparison to the data collected in the Sheltered Count. This comparison will serve as a measure of effectiveness for current HMIS data collection processes and provide recommendations for the use of HMIS in future PIT Counts and for the purpose of compiling more complete data for Period Prevalence Counts in the future.

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[128] See Appendix XXIV for maps of Sheltered Data from January 22, 2009.

Sheltered Homeless by Housing Type
(# change from 2007 to 2009)
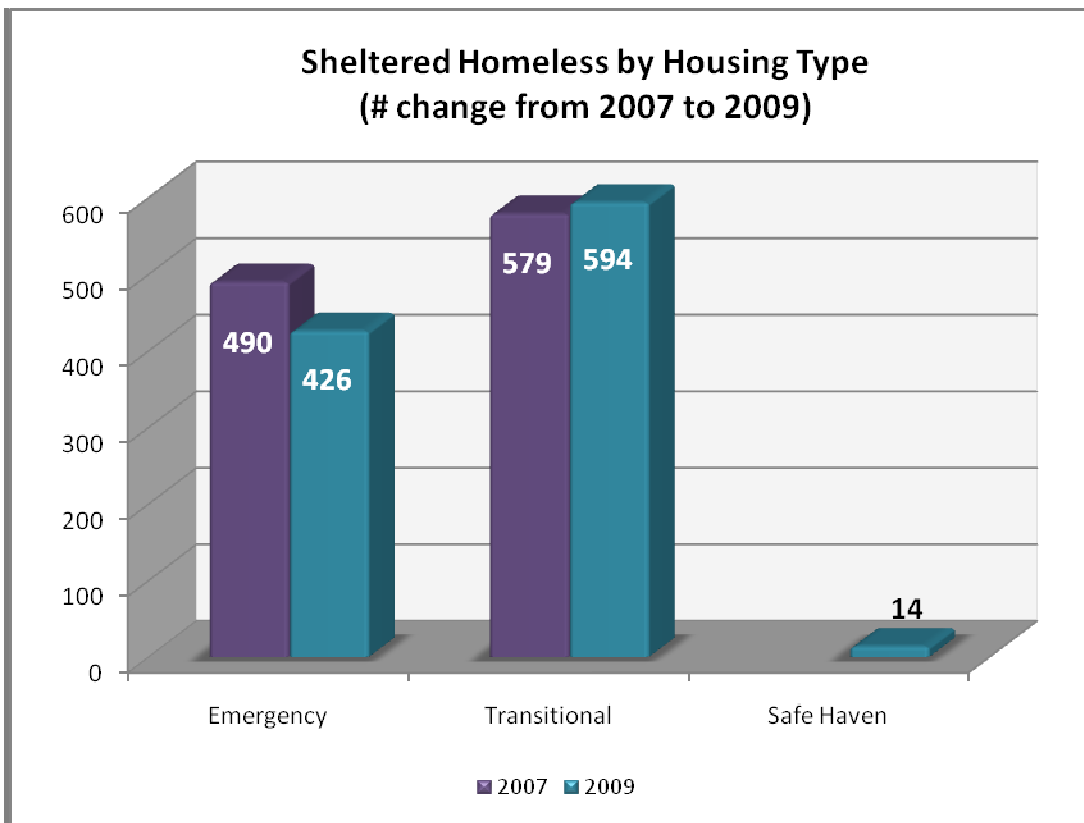
GRAPH 1 - Sheltered Homeless by Data Collection Type (# change from 2007 to 2009):

In general, it is preferable for the number of persons in emergency shelters to decrease over time – as shown by the 2009 Sheltered Count numbers. Since the primary goal in most continua is to end homelessness, a trend towards housing a stable number of persons in transitional (and housing more people in permanent supportive housing) is a positive outcome. In 2009, however, safe havens were included for the first time. And since safe haven residents come directly from the streets or other unsheltered locations, having a safe haven as an option is ultimately positive in ending homelessness in suburban Cook County.
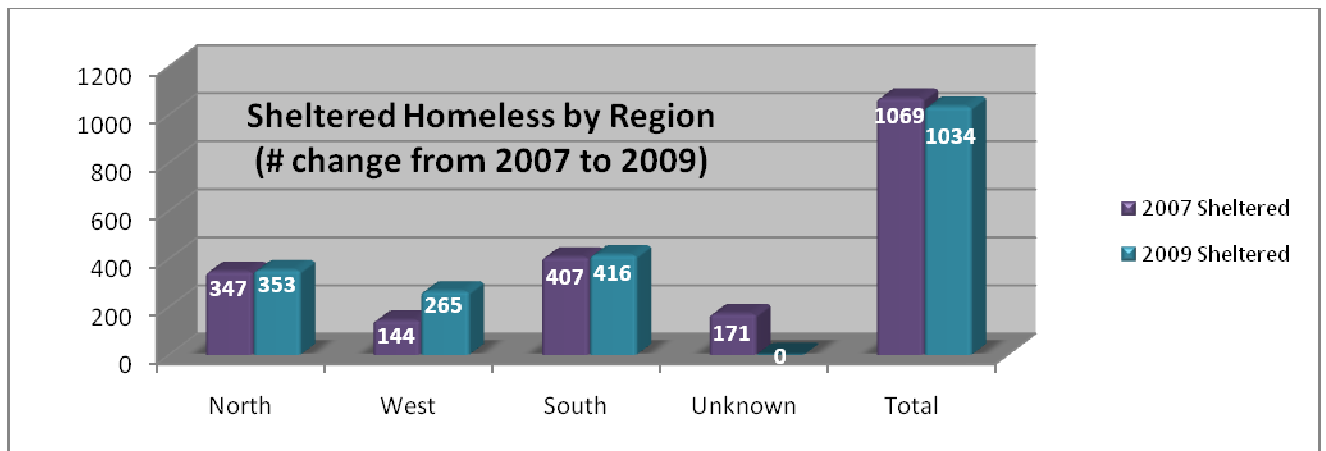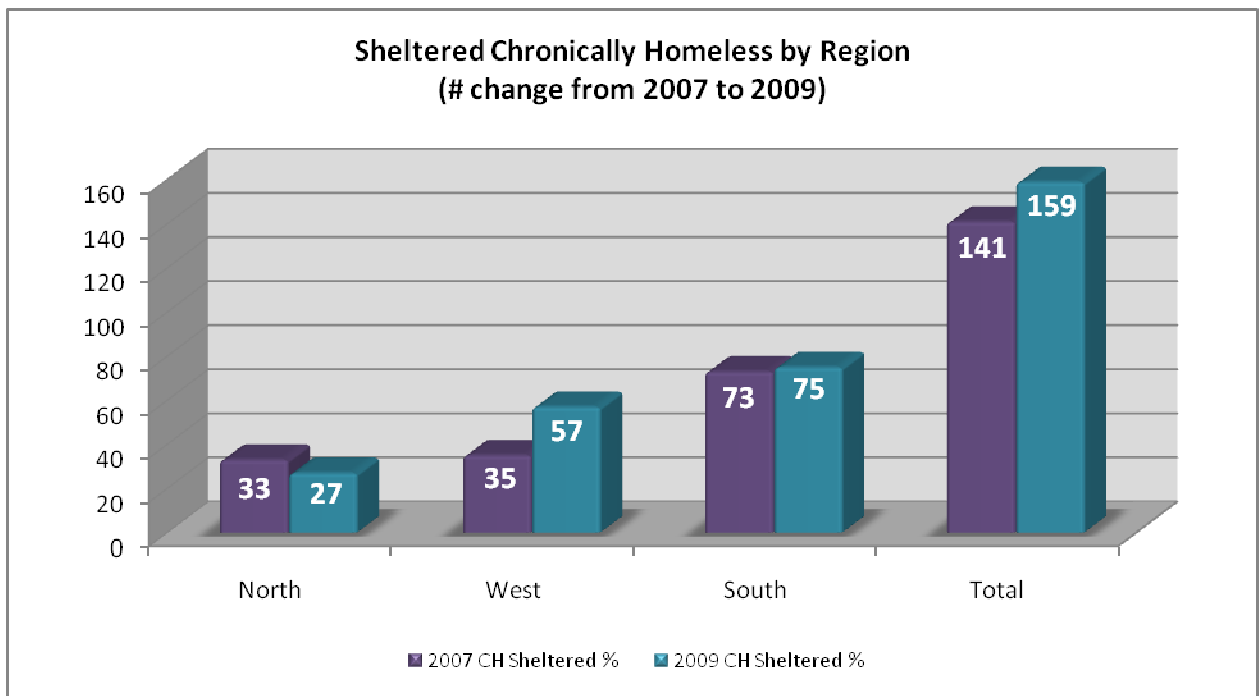
GRAPH 2 - Sheltered Homeless by Region (# change from 2007 to 2009):

Most importantly, we want to see as few "Unknown" numbers as possible in Sheltered Counts. Due to some inconsistencies in the 2007 Shelter Count reporting, however, some "Unknown" numbers exist – as compared to 2009, where there are no "Unknown" numbers.

Overall, an increase in the number of persons sheltered in each region may indicate increased program capacity, so that programs are serving the largest possible number of eligible clients. Increases in the number of Sheltered Homeless persons served in any area may reflect an increase in the number of units available to serve persons or simply that the program is frequently operating at full capacity.

GRAPH 3 - Sheltered Chronically Homeless by Region (# change from 2007 to 2009):

It is preferable for the number of Chronically Homeless in each region to decrease over time. Since the Chronically Homeless portrayed in the above chart are only those sheltered in Emergency Shelters (and the single Safe Haven in 2009), any increases in the number of Chronically Homeless is typically not a positive trend. On the other hand, an increase in the number of Chronically Homeless being served by Permanent Supportive is not only a positive trend, but is a goal for ultimately ending homelessness in suburban Cook County.

HMIS ANALYSIS:

Unlike the 2007 Sheltered Count, the 2009 Sheltered Count was able to make use of the HMIS (Homelessness Management Information System) data as an informative source. After data compilation, the 2009 Sheltered Count data that was collected through traditional means (the Shelter Survey) was placed side-by-side with HMIS numbers from the same night, as a point of comparison. Since the HMIS system is new to the Continuum – implemented in July, 2008 only – it was not intended to be used as the primary form of data collection for 2009, as additional time is needed to ensure data accuracy before the HMIS system can be responsible for all areas of the Sheltered Count. The 2009 comparisons, however, were extremely helpful in providing information for the following: 1) determining the level of baseline consistency of the HMIS data (i.e., that beds and persons active in the HMIS system were actually reported on the Shelter Survey), and 2) researching the consistency of the Shelter Survey data (i.e., that numbers reported in HMIS are being accurately recorded on more traditional data collection methods). These areas of analyses will be reported here.

Before beginning, however, it is important to note that there are aspects of the use of HMIS data as a comparison to the 2009 Sheltered Count that should be considered. Those are as follows:

- This is the Alliance's first attempt to assess Point-In-Time (PIT) Sheltered Count data using HMIS – the process is not perfect and errors may occur on various fronts (human, technological, etc.)

- HMIS does not report on clients in Domestic Violence programs, as the information is extremely sensitive and confidential in these programs.

- HMIS cannot report on clients who have not given consent to be entered – that is, persons that do not wish to have their information included in the HMIS system (their information will only be available in paper form on the Shelter Survey).

- HMIS cannot report on clients with insufficient or missing information – that is, persons that were not actively enrolled in a program and/or who did not provide basic personal information (i.e., name, date of birth, age, etc.).

- All Emergency Shelter clients – including those in Family Households – are entered as individuals in the HMIS system (due to the fact that procedures on entering persons in "Family Households" have not yet been determined for HMIS).

- HMIS cannot, at this time, report on the number of Non-Family Households – for example, HMIS will report 4 single persons and 2 couples as "8 persons in Non-Family Households" (and cannot currently report this as "6 Non-Family Households with 8 Persons").

While other data inconsistencies exist, those listed have the greatest affect on comparisons between HMIS and the 2009 Sheltered Survey data. Nevertheless, since both the HMIS data and Sheltered Survey data are available on a program-by-program basis, the Alliance's HMIS staff was able to follow up with program staff on known data discrepancies, clarifying the data and correcting any minor inconsistencies. The comparative (HMIS vs. Shelter Survey) data for 2009 is as follows:

HMIS Results – Based on Actual HMIS Data Only

	Family Households	Persons in Family Households	Persons in Non-Family Households	Total Persons
Emergency Shelter	0	0	314	314

	Family Households	Persons in Family Households	Persons in Non-Family Households	Total Persons
Transitional Housing	114	355	161	516
Safe Haven	0	0	15	15
Permanent Supportive Housing	19	64	102	166

Shelter Survey Results – Based on Survey Data Only for those Programs Using HMIS

	Family Households	Persons in Family Households	Persons in Non-Family Households	Total Persons
Emergency Shelter	7	33	320	353
Transitional Housing	151	463	121	584
Safe Haven	0	0	14	14
Permanent Supportive Housing	24	79	99	178

In general, results show that the HMIS data reported slightly lower numbers than the numbers reported in the Shelter Surveys. This was to be expected, however, when all the above issues discussed above are taken into consideration. Additionally, the Alliance's HMIS staff fettered out several other issues affecting the 2009 HMIS data – those are:

- At least one agency did not input its data on time and its numbers could not be reported.

- Most over-reporting is due to data errors on the Shelter Surveys, not in the HMIS system. For example, we encountered at least one case in which a program double-counted the same household across two or more agencies (i.e., a housing program and a Supportive Service Only program working in collaboration). In another instance, a program counted persons on the Shelter Survey that were no longer in the program and had already been "exited" (reported as

no longer in the program) in the HMIS system. These types of errors skewed the number of persons reported on the Shelter Survey and were double-checked against HMIS numbers.

- As mentioned prior, all Emergency Shelter clients reported in HMIS, including those in families, were entered as individuals in Non-Family Households – thus, lowering the "Persons in Family Households" numbers and increasing the "Persons in Non-Family Households" numbers.

. In addition to the Domestic Violence victims in DV-specific programs, the HMIS may also miss clients who are victims of Domestic Violence who are being served by programs not specifically targeted for Domestic Violence – thus, it is possible that these persons were not counted.

After much work, however, the Alliance's HMIS staff was able to create a more complete picture of the 2009 Shelter Count results in the form of "Adjusted Results" tabulations. This was done by analyzing program-by-program data and taking into consideration all major discrepancies discussed prior, program-specific discrepancies above, and individual issues within certain agencies. For example:

- If Program X reported 30 clients on the Shelter Survey and only 24 in HMIS, but explained that 6 persons did not sign consent forms to have their information included in the HMIS system, then the adjusted number for that program would be 30 actual clients.

- Similarly, if Program Y reported 30 clients on the Shelter Survey and only 24 in HMIS, but explained that a Family Household with 6 people were double-counted with a partnering agency, then the adjusted number for that program would be 24 actual clients.

- Finally, if Program Z reported 30 clients on the Shelter Survey and only 24 in HMIS, but explained that they may have input a "few" clients late and may have double-counted a "few" others, then the adjusted number for that program would be an average of 27 clients.

Finally, after making these program-by-program determinations for "Adjusted Results", the Alliance's HMIS staff added in the remaining programs that reported clients on the 2009 Shelter Survey, but are not HMIS-reporting programs (i.e., Domestic Violence-specific programs and Supportive Service Only programs). This created the most complete "Adjusted Results" data possible. The 2009 "Adjusted Results" (HMIS + Shelter Survey) data is as follows:

Adjusted Results (Based on HMIS + Shelter Surveys + Program-by-Program Data Clarification)

	Family Households	Persons in Family Households	Persons in Non-Family Households	Total Persons
Emergency Shelter	1	4	335	339
Transitional Housing	146	443	123	566
Safe Haven	0	0	14	14
Permanent Supportive Housing	24	80	101	181

Adjusted Results Including Non-HMIS Participating Agencies' Data

	Family Households	Persons in Family Households	Persons in Non-Family Households	Total Persons
Emergency Shelter	23	68	351	419
Transitional Housing	149	453	123	576
Safe Haven	0	0	14	14
Permanent Supportive Housing	25	82	110	192

Overall, we see some surprisingly similar comparisons when utilizing these "Adjusted Results". That is, including persons staying in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven, the total number of Sheltered Homeless persons in this adjusted analysis is 1,009 total persons, as compared to 1,034 total persons in the Sheltered Survey results, a difference of only 2.4 %! We consider these results not only extremely useful in the creation of HMIS PIT Count benchmarks, but also extremely positive indicators of the HMIS system's ability to provide accurate homelessness information!

Thus, we feel it is important to stress the vital role that the HMIS system can play in these types of homelessness reporting and, more specifically, in frequent PIT Homeless Counts. In fact, with results such as those provided by the 2009 Shelter Count alone, we anticipate the use of the HMIS system as the primary tool to produce the 2011 Sheltered Count!

Unsheltered Count Results[129]

Next, we will provide graphic representation and basic description of data collected via the Street Count, Service Site Surveys and Record Review Surveys for the 2009 Unsheltered Count. Specifically, this section will provide comparison data between the 2007 & 2009 Unsheltered Counts, as well as a regional breakdown of Unsheltered Count data between the North, West and South suburban Cook County regions.

Before continuing, please note that some demographic characteristics were extrapolated from those unsheltered persons who were surveyed to those persons that were tallied. It is important to clarify, however, that this method was the **only** form of extrapolation used (to better determine demographic characteristics only). The total number of persons is not an extrapolation – that is, all unsheltered persons reported in the Unsheltered Count were persons that were actually reported.

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[129] See Appendix XXV for a map of Unsheltered Data from January 22, 2009.
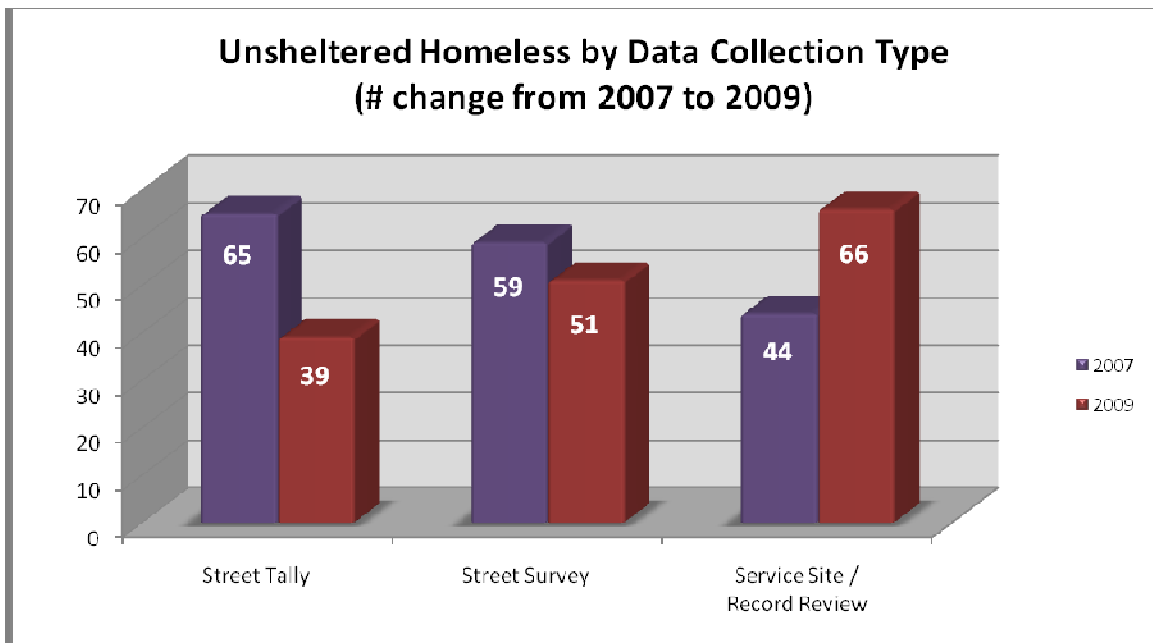
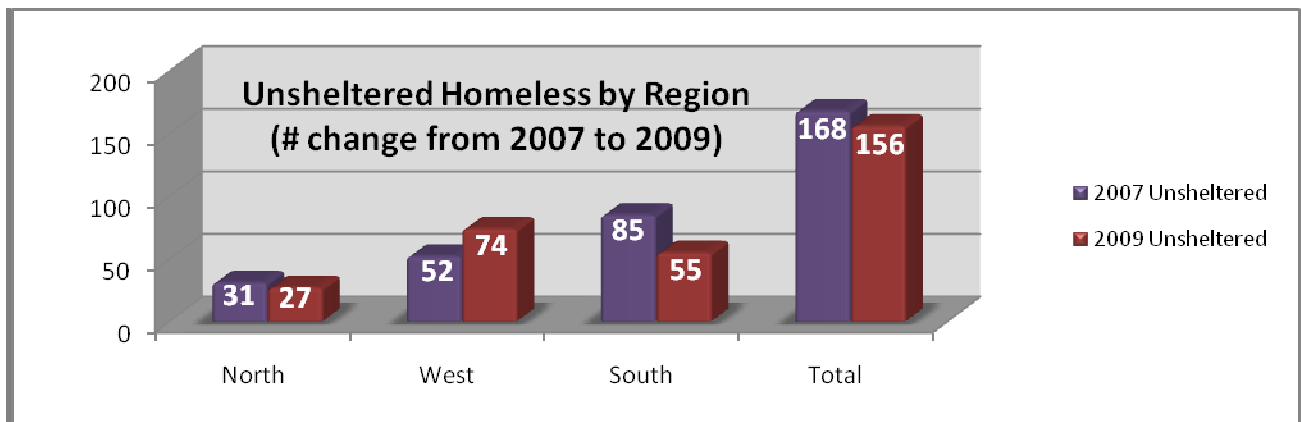**GRAPH 1 - Unsheltered Homeless by Data Collection Type (# change from 2007 to 2009):**

Unlike Sheltered Counts in which all data should be known, a great portion of data is unknown in Unsheltered Counts (i.e., related to those persons that are tallied or those persons unwilling to participate in the surveys). It is important, therefore, to analyze the data from those methodologies that provide the most complete information (i.e., Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys). In the end, we extrapolate "Known" data from the Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys to those "Unknown" areas of the Street Tally, such as subpopulation characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, age, mental illness, veteran status, substance abuse, etc.).

Thus, while Street Tallies provide us with actual numbers of persons found on the streets, Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys are especially important in helping us to gain a better understanding of specific subpopulation characteristics of those on the streets. For this reason, it is always a positive trend to see an increase in the proportion of people counted through survey methods since this technique will likely yield a greater wealth of information about the unsheltered homeless population as a whole.

We have also included the following table for a regional breakdown of persons counted by Street Tallies, Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys, for 2009 only. It is important to note the regional differences in data collection type so as to better understand the statistical reliability of each region's Count results. In other words, regions with lower numbers or persons counted by Street Tallies and a higher number of people counted by Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys will have required less extrapolation to those "Unknown" areas of subpopulation characteristics. Vice versa, regions with higher Street Tallies and lower Street Surveys and Service Site / Record Review Surveys will have required a greater amount of extrapolation to "Unknown" areas of subpopulation characteristics; and, as presented above, the greater the amount of extrapolation from "Known" areas to "Unknown" areas, the greater the possibility for reduced statistical reliability.

Region	Persons counted by Street Tally	Persons counted by Street Survey	Persons Counted by Service Site / Record Review Survey
North	8	6	13
West	28	15	31
South	3	30	22
TOTAL	39	51	66

Thus, based on the chart above, we can assume the following: the South's 2009 data may have the highest rate of statistical reliability; the North also has a high rate of reliability, but falls just below the South; and the West may have a very high rate of statistically unreliable data, based on a large number of persons that were tallied only – therefore, providing very little detail – and required a much greater level of extrapolation for the completion of data. This should be remembered throughout the remainder of the 2009 Homeless Count results' analyses.

Unsheltered Homeless by Region (# change from 2007 to 2009)

	North	West	South	Total
2007 Unsheltered	31	52	85	168
2009 Unsheltered	27	74	55	156

GRAPH 2 - Unsheltered Homeless by Region (# change from 2007 to 2009):

In comparison to the Sheltered Count graph of the same detail, we want to see here a decrease in persons unsheltered in each region. Again, since it is the primary goal of most continua is to ultimately end homelessness in their region, any increase in the number of Unsheltered Homeless in any location of the region can be detrimental to benchmark successes. On the other hand, since the total number of unsheltered homeless persons is statistically small, it is merely informative to view regional changes on this scale (rather than being indicative or positive or negative trends).

Unsheltered Chronically Homeless by Region
(# change from 2007 to 2009)
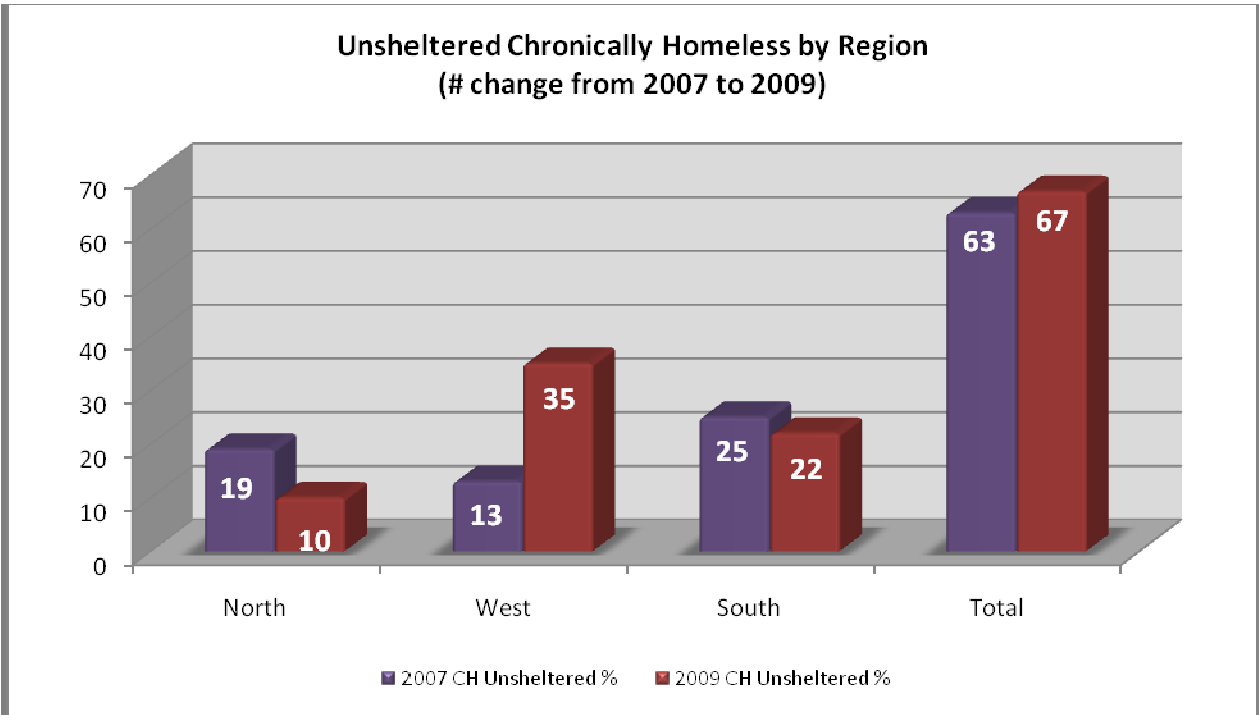
GRAPH 3 - Unsheltered Chronically Homeless by Region (# change from 2007 to 2009):

As with the Sheltered Count, it is always preferable for the number of Chronically Homeless in each region to decrease over time. Especially since the Chronically Homeless portrayed in the above chart are unsheltered and thus, not being served by any housing programs, any increases in the number of Chronically Homeless is a worrisome trend. As stated previously, the ultimate goal is to reduce the number of Chronically Homeless persons on the street and to increase the number of Chronically Homeless being served by Permanent Supportive Housing. This, in effect, will reduce the number of Chronically Homeless persons counted in both the Sheltered Homeless & Unsheltered Homeless Counts.

Comparative Count Results

This final data section will provide graphic representation and basic description of comparative data collected for both the 2009 Sheltered & Unsheltered Counts. Specifically, this section will provide regional breakdowns of both the Sheltered & Unsheltered numbers from the 2009 Count only.

It is important to note here that the Comparative Data represented in this section will include "Unknown" categories (unless otherwise noted in the chart/graph). This is because regional breakdowns of subpopulation characteristics are unreliable if done through extrapolation. In other words, while Appendix XIV will show more "complete" numbers (because the county-wide numbers present extrapolated numbers for persons counted by the Street Tallies), the charts and graphs presented in this section will simply represent "Known" categories with an "Unknown" identifier listed. Thus, we return again to the "Unsheltered Homeless by Data Collection Type" from the Unsheltered section above and note that certain regions will have higher "Unknowns" (i.e., the West region) based on the number of persons counted by Street Tally (which collects less complete data) versus the number of people counted by Street Survey or Service Site / Record Review Survey (which collect more complete data).
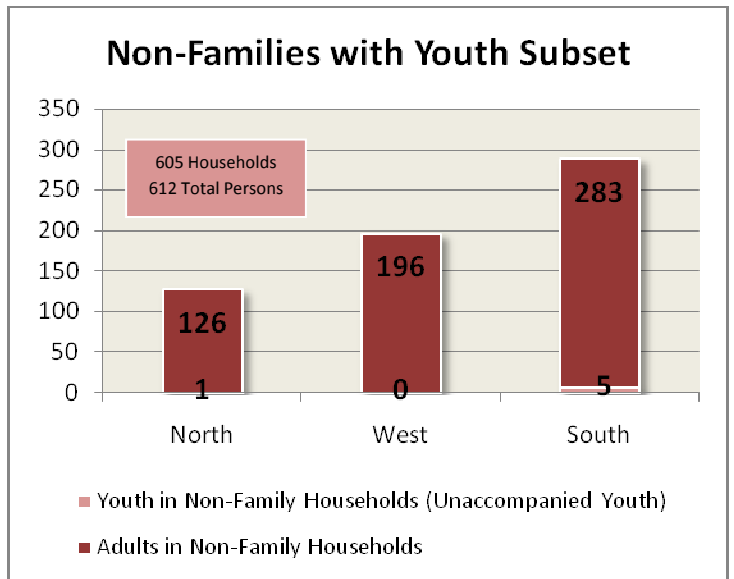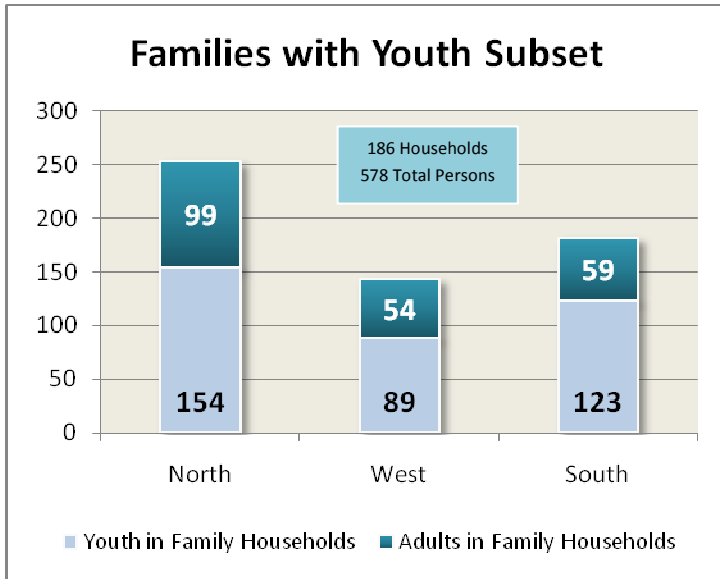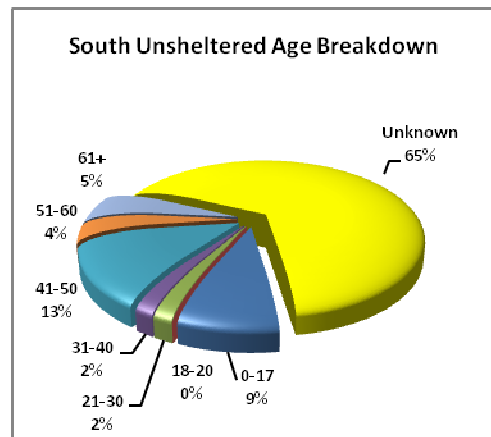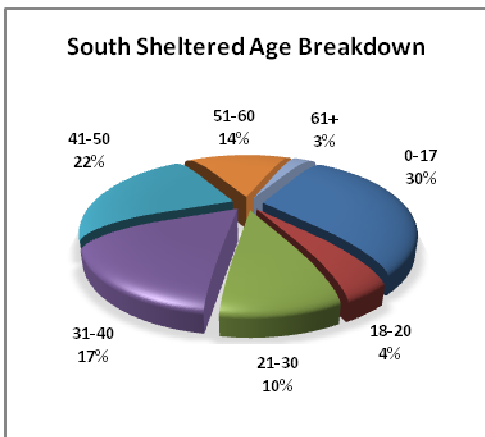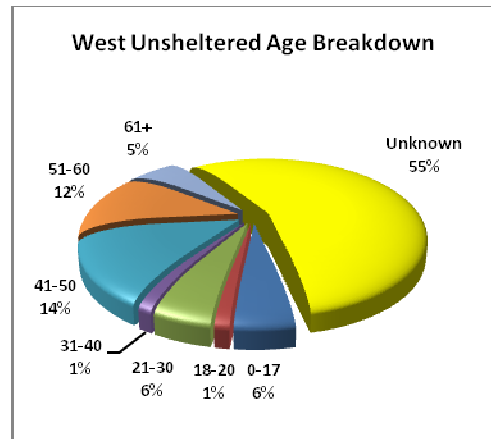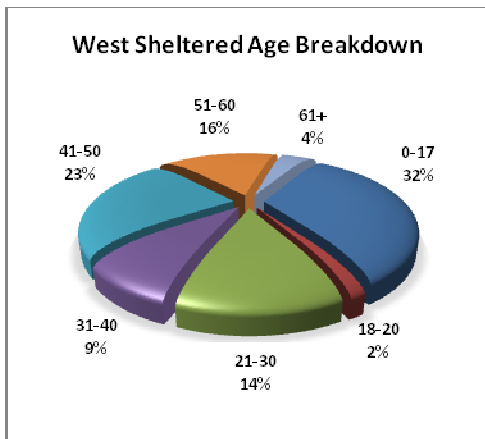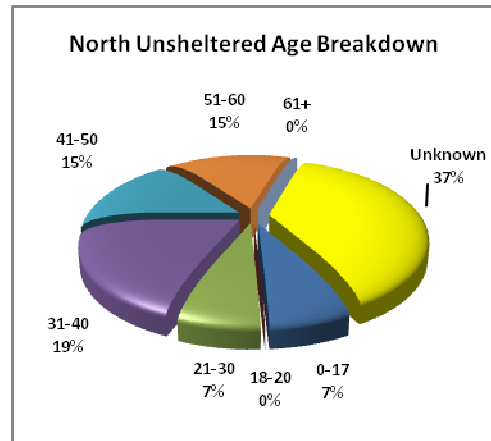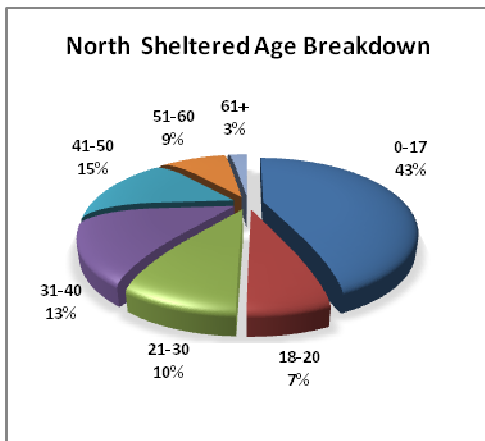
GRAPH 1 & 2 – Family & Non-Family Households with Youth Subset (By Region)[130]

It is important to note first the difference between a "Family Household" and "Non-Family Household". As defined by HUD, these two types of "Households" are as follows:

- Family Household: A household comprised of two or more related persons, at least one of whom is a child (ages 0-17), and that child is accompanied by an adult or juvenile parent. For example, a parenting teen and her child are included in Family Households.

- Non-Family Household: A household comprised of unaccompanied single adults, unaccompanied youth, married and unmarried couples, and any other household that is all adults or all children. For example, a household with a father and son who are both older than 18 are included in Non-Family Households (if there are no minor children in the household).
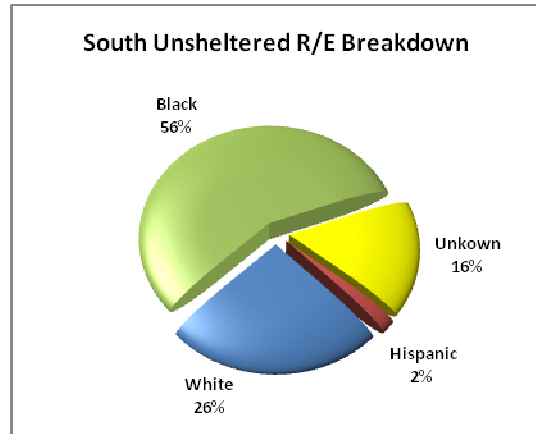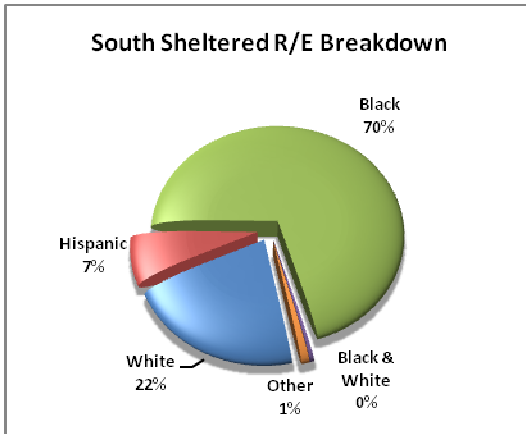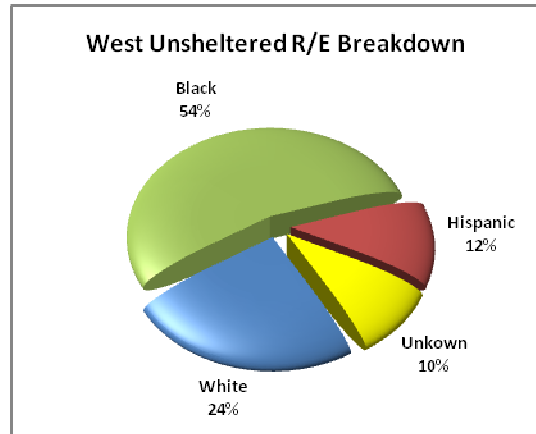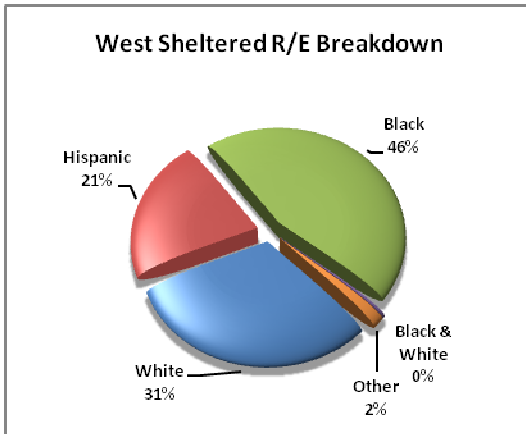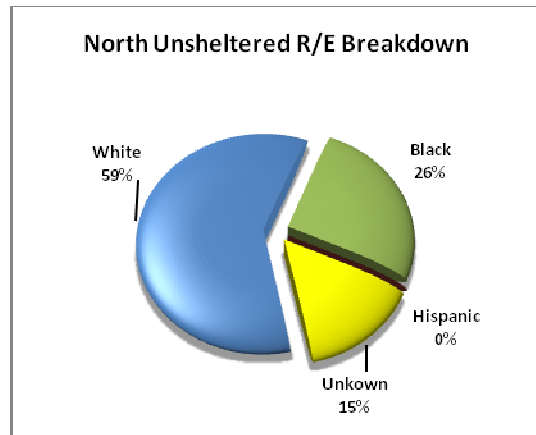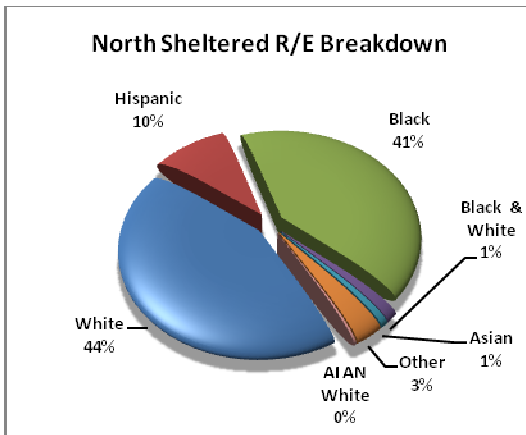
Second, it is also important to note a fundamental difference between Graph 1 (Family Households) & Graph 2 (Non-Family Households). That is, a "Youth" in a "Family Household" is supervised by at least one parent or guardian that serves as the head of that "Household". A "Youth" in a "Non-Family Household", on the other hand, is without parent or guardian supervision. These youths are categorized as "Unaccompanied Youth" and are treated as individuals. Though both categories containing youth are of great concern, "Unaccompanied Youth" are a very worrisome populations as they are young and, in this case, without any adult supervision. Furthermore, it is not only a primary goal of most continua to ensure that services are available to all youth, but a special emphasis is placed on services specific to this high-risk population.

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[130] There are no "Unknowns" for this breakdown, since all persons fall into either a "Family" or "Non-Family" Household by definition (i.e., either "a family member" or an "individual").

North Sheltered Age Breakdown

North Unsheltered Age Breakdown

West Sheltered Age Breakdown

West Unsheltered Age Breakdown

South Sheltered Age Breakdown

South Unsheltered Age Breakdown

PIE CHARTS 3a-3f – 2009 Sheltered & Unsheltered Age Breakdown (By Region)
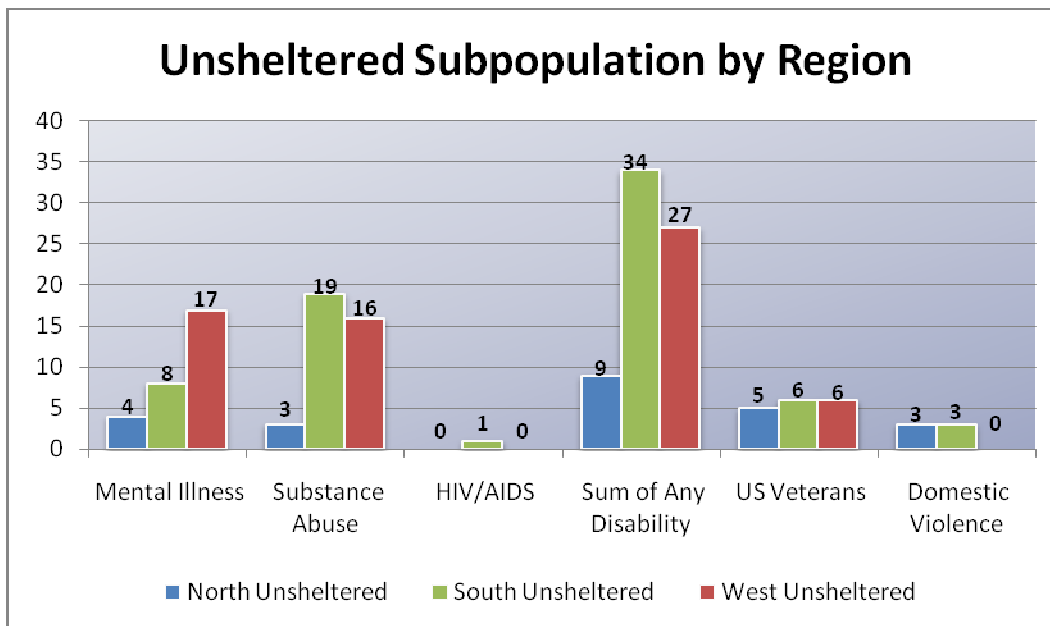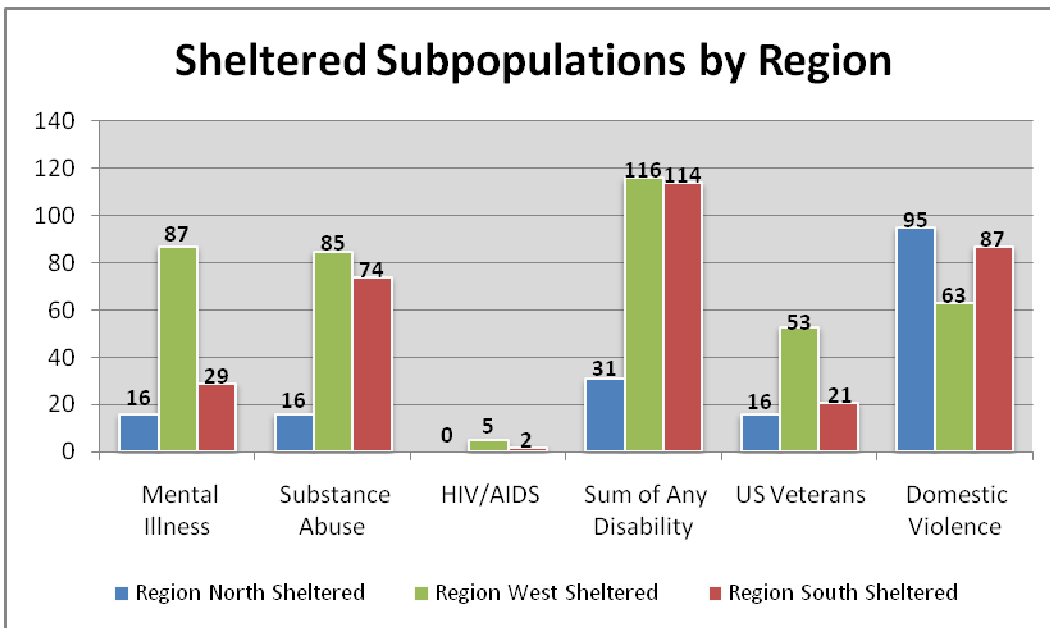
This style of breakdown is meant to be informative for each region. As with the Family & Non-Family Households above, it is preferable to see as few homeless youth (0-17) as possible. Likewise, the 61+ age-group, which is similarly high-risk like the 0-17 age group, should also be as low as possible.

North Sheltered R/E Breakdown

Hispanic 10%
Black 41%
Black & White 1%
White 44%
AI AN White 0%
Other 3%
Asian 1%

North Unsheltered R/E Breakdown

White 59%
Black 26%
Hispanic 0%
Unkown 15%

West Sheltered R/E Breakdown

Black 46%
Hispanic 21%
White 31%
Black & White 0%
Other 2%

West Unsheltered R/E Breakdown

Black 54%
Hispanic 12%
Unkown 10%
White 24%

South Sheltered R/E Breakdown

Black 70%
Hispanic 7%
White 22%
Other 1%
Black & White 0%

South Unsheltered R/E Breakdown

Black 56%
Unkown 16%
Hispanic 2%
White 26%

PIE CHARTS 4a-4f – 2009 Sheltered & Unsheltered Race/Ethnicity Breakdown (By Region)

As with the Age Breakdown, this style of breakdown is meant to be informative for each region. It should be noted that several categories have been grouped into "Other" in Unsheltered (including: Asian, American Indian - AI, Alaskan Native - AN, Native Hawaiian - NH, Other Pacific Islander - OP, and the general category of "multi-racial" or "other"). This was done because there were too few persons in these categories to constitute separate categories. Additionally, it is important to recognize that all races represented are designated as "Non-Hispanic", and therefore, the portion that is designated as "Hispanic" in the pie chart may be racially mixed (i.e., White & Hispanic, Black & Hispanic, or Other/Unknown & Hispanic).

Sheltered Subpopulations by Region

Mental Illness: Region North Sheltered 16, Region West Sheltered 87, Region South Sheltered 29
Substance Abuse: 16, 85, 74
HIV/AIDS: 0, 5, 2
Sum of Any Disability: 31, 116, 114
US Veterans: 16, 53, 21
Domestic Violence: 95, 63, 87

Unsheltered Subpopulation by Region

Mental Illness: North Unsheltered 4, South Unsheltered 8, West Unsheltered 17
Substance Abuse: 3, 19, 16
HIV/AIDS: 0, 1, 0
Sum of Any Disability: 9, 34, 27
US Veterans: 5, 6, 6
Domestic Violence: 3, 3, 0

GRAPHS 5a & 5b – 2009 Sheltered & Unsheltered Subpopulations (By Region)[131]

As with the previous data presented, this style of result analysis is meant to be informative for each region. It should be noted that all of these categories are not mutually exclusive (i.e., a single person may have a mental illness and a substance abuse problem). Additionally, several categories may have sub-categories (i.e., "Substance Abuse" includes drug or alcohol abuse, and "Any Disability" includes mental illness, physical disability, developmental disability and others).

[131] There are no "Unknowns" for this breakdown, since persons without such factors noted may have refused to answer the question (thus, actually be an "Unknown") or, simply, may not be effected by any of these factors.

Step 4: Giving Back

As the section on volunteering described previously, a key aspect of any large-scale project is the way in which those who are involved – members and partners alike – are kept up-to-date after the project's completion. And, as any social capital theorist would argue, follow-up is a vital step in maintaining and extending a social capital network. Thus, a great deal of energy was put into the "deliverables" that we would "give back" to our suburban Cook County communities. In addition to follow-up emails and thank you letters to our partners, we also invited them to take part in the sessions in which we would be distributing, presenting and discussing our 2009 Homeless Count results. For this purpose, we prepared Data Results Handouts (summarized versions of the Sheltered & Unsheltered results section in this paper), press releases and organizational announcements to engage the community in our report results.

Most important, in preparing these materials and the final report, I focused a significant amount of time on providing the appropriate type of information to each category of "stakeholders" – that is, specific handouts, summaries and presentations geared towards donors and volunteers, Alliance Board of Directors members and regional CBSAs, and community partners such as businesses, township offices, etc. Thus, a great deal of time was spent on creating very specific regional and countywide analyses sections. Furthermore, to ensure that the 2009 Homeless Count report didn't end up as a bookend on our agencies' and partners' desks, I also included a section geared towards outlining and making suggestions for the next steps in addressing the challenges and issues facing our homeless populations in suburban Cook County. These sections were vital in the sustainability of not only the report itself, but in the sustainability of the social capital networks we had created for the 2009 Homeless Count. By "giving back" to community partners the types of information that most impact

them, we were providing them with insight on how Homeless Counts can further their own goals and, thereby, strengthening our partnerships in the process.

What follows is the most significant body of analyses produced as a result of our 2009 Homeless Count – those targeted to our member agencies and the Alliance's governing body. These sections outline an analysis and call to action for all members of each region of suburban Cook County – North, West and South – with an emphasis on continued and enhanced collaborations. Rounding out these analyses is our final and most in-depth analysis, which discusses the ways in which the 2009 Homeless Count should impact future steps towards reducing, and ultimately ending, homelessness in suburban Cook County.

Regional Analyses

In 2009, the Alliance focused a large portion of data analysis and reporting time on the regional – North, West and South – reporting of Sheltered & Unsheltered Count numbers. This style of analysis is important in helping region's to determine strengths, weaknesses and cooperatively develop best practices for the Sheltered Homeless & Unsheltered Homeless populations in their communities.

This section will address each region separately with a focus on noting significant changes in each region (from 2007 to 2009), significant differences in each region (as compared to other suburban Cook County regions), and any significant region-specific trends.

NORTH REGION:

First, we will look at the Sheltered Count data:

In general, the 2007 and 2009 Sheltered data from the North remained fairly equivalent. That is, persons served went up just slightly (from 347 in 2007 to 353 in 2009) – indicating that programs were operating at a fuller capacity. Furthermore, Chronically Homeless persons served went down slightly (from 33 in 2007 to 27 in 2009) – indicating that less Chronically Homeless persons are being housed in Emergency Shelters.

More specifically, the North shows some positive trends in the number of persons served by particular housing types. From 2007 to 2009, the number of persons served in Emergency Shelters went up slightly (from 95 to 107); the number of persons served in Transitional Housing went down slightly (from 252 to 246); and, most importantly (though not reported in the "Sheltered Homeless" data), the number of persons served in Permanent Supportive Housing doubled (from 15 to 30). Thus, since 1) Emergency Shelter numbers increased only slightly, 2) Transitional Housing remained reasonably constant, and 3) Permanent Housing increased substantially, the North shows positive Shelter Count trends. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the North still serves the lowest number of people in Permanent Supportive Housing compared to the other two regions – 2009 Sheltered Count data shows that the North served 30 persons in Permanent Supportive Housing vs. 65 persons served in the West and 94 persons served in the South. And although unmet need (demand) varies substantially by region, it is important to remember that Permanent Supportive Housing is vital in suburban Cook County's mission to end homelessness in our communities.

Second, we look at the Unsheltered Count data:

Again, the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered data from the North remained fairly equivalent. That is, persons counted went down just slightly (from 31 in 2007 to 27 in 2009) – indicating a fairly stable trend in Unsheltered Homeless persons. Furthermore, Chronically Homeless persons found went down by

almost half (from 19 in 2007 to 10 in 2009) – indicating that less Chronically Homeless persons are unsheltered and receiving little or no services.

Finally, we look at Comparative Count data (2009 data only):

When comparing Sheltered/Unsheltered Family Households (subset Youth) and Non-Family Households (subset Youth – Unaccompanied Youth), there is a large difference in the North. Based on the 2009 data, the North has the largest number of persons in Family Households (253 total persons) and, therefore, the largest subset of Youth (99 youth) compared to the West and South regions of suburban Cook County. It is important to note here that of the 99 Youth reported in the Family Households, only 2 youth were reported with an Unsheltered Family Household. On the other hand, the North has the smallest number of persons in Non-Family Households (127 total persons) and a small subset of youth (1 Unaccompanied Youth) compared to the West and South. As above, it is similarly worth noting here that the 1 Unaccompanied Youth was reported as a Sheltered Non-Family Household. Nevertheless, it is preferable to have as few youth in Family and Non-Family Households as possible, particularly in Unsheltered Family and Non-Family Households.

Next, when comparing Sheltered Age Breakdowns and Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, we see a similar "youth" trend in the North. Based on the 2009 data, the North has the largest 0-17 age group in the Sheltered category (34%) compared to the West and South regions of suburban Cook County. Likewise, the North has the largest 18-20 age group in the Sheltered category (7%) compared to the West and South. Both of these statistics likely correspond directly to the larger number of Sheltered Family Households in the North region. As for Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, the North data remains fairly equivalent to its West and South counterparts (with only 37% unknown).

Next, when comparing Sheltered Race Breakdowns and Unsheltered Race Breakdowns, the North is reasonably unsurprising. Based on the 2009 data, the North has the largest Non-Hispanic White

race group in the Sheltered category (44%) and Unsheltered category (59%) compared to the West and South regions of suburban Cook County. Likewise, the North has the smallest Non-Hispanic Black race group in the Sheltered category (41%) and Unsheltered category (26%) compared to the West and South. This is due, most likely, to the demographic make-up of the North region of suburban Cook County as a whole. As for Sheltered Ethnic Breakdowns and Unsheltered Ethnic Breakdowns, the North data remains fairly equivalent to its West and South counterparts.

Finally, when comparing Sheltered Subpopulations and Unsheltered Subpopulations, the North shows some very positive trends. Based on the 2009 data, the North has the lowest numbers of homeless persons in all categories (except domestic violence) compared to the West and South regions of suburban Cook County. And although the North's numbers are lower overall than in the West and South (causing the number of subpopulation characteristics to be lower overall) this is, generally speaking, an extremely positive trend! Domestic violence, however, is higher in both areas – the North's number of Sheltered Homeless persons with a history of domestic violence (95 persons) is higher than those in the West and South and the North's number of Unsheltered Homeless persons with a history of domestic violence (3 persons) is equivalent to the West and higher than the South, respectively. It should be noted here that these statistics are most likely attributed to the specialized nature of some of the North region agencies – that is, the eligibility criteria for domestic violence victims in some North region agencies' programs.

Overall, the North shows some positive trends from 2007 to 2009 and in comparison to its West and South counterpart regions. It is our charge, therefore, that progress continues at an aggressive rate. We hope that this information will help to inform future research and recommendations by members of AHAND and other North region agencies.

WEST REGION:

First, we will look at the Sheltered Count data:

In general, the 2007 and 2009 Sheltered data from the West showed some dramatic changes. That is, persons served went up substantially (from 144 in 2007 to 265 in 2009). This is most likely caused, however, by a large number of "Unknowns" in the 2007 Sheltered data. Specifically, there are 171 Sheltered Homeless persons that are "Unknown" – meaning that they may have been served in the North, West or South regions of suburban Cook County. It is most likely that a large number of these "Unknowns" from 2007 were served in the West region. It is, therefore, difficult to make any general assumptions about the increases in these statistics. Likewise, Chronically Homeless persons served went up substantially (from 35 in 2007 to 57 in 2009). Again, this is likely to be reflective of the "Unknowns" from the 2007 data and, therefore, assumptions should not be made about these statistics.

More specifically, the West shows some positive trends in the number of persons served by particular housing types. From 2007 to 2009, the number of persons served in Emergency Shelters stayed about constant (from 88 to 87); the number of persons served in Transitional Housing, on the other hand, went up substantially (from 56 to 164 – again, probably a result of the 2007 "Unknowns"); and, most importantly (though not reported in the "Sheltered Homeless" data), the number of persons served in Permanent Supportive Housing went up slightly (from 56 to 65). Furthermore, the West had an additional 14 persons being served by a Safe Haven in 2009 – a very positive program addition to the 2009 Sheltered Count. And although very little can be reliably discerned from the 2007 data, it is safe to say that since 1) Emergency Shelter numbers did not increase, 2) Permanent Supportive Housing increased slightly, and 3) additional persons are served by the Safe Haven, the West shows positive Shelter Count trends.

Second, we look at the Unsheltered Count data:

Unlike in the North, the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered data from the West showed some very significant changes. That is, persons counted went up rather substantially (from 52 in 2007 to 74 in 2009). This is due, almost entirely, to the fact that the 2009 Street Count methodology included a count of those persons travelling between the west suburbs and the city of Chicago on the 24-hour Blue Line train. It should be noted that this decision was a controversial one, as many groups disagreed with the validity of data concerning those Unsheltered Homeless persons travelling between suburban Cook County and the metropolitan Cook County (Chicago). It was decided, however, that those persons that were counted on the Blue Line train while it was operating within suburban Cook County limits were persons that could be counted in the suburban Cook County Count. Thus, counters only entered and exited trains at the train stops located within suburban Cook County limits. Finally (and similarly), Chronically Homeless persons found went up by almost 3 times (from 13 in 2007 to 35 in 2009) – again due largely to the increased number of people counted on the Blue Line train.

Finally, we look at Comparative Count data (2009 data only):

When comparing Sheltered/Unsheltered Family Households (subset Youth) and Non-Family Households (subset Youth – Unaccompanied Youth), the West remains reasonably mid-range. Based on the 2009 data, the West has the lowest (though not drastically low) number of persons in Family Households (143 total persons) and, therefore, the lowest (though not drastically low) subset of Youth (54 youth) compared to the North and South regions of suburban Cook County. It is important to note here, however, that of the 54 Youth reported in the Family Households a total of 4 youth were reported with Unsheltered Family Households. This could be considered a worrisome trend which deserves further attention – especially since only 4 youth were reported with Unsheltered Family Households in the countywide 2007 data. Similarly, the West has the mid-range number of persons in Non-Family Households (196 total persons) with no subset of youth (0 Unaccompanied Youth) compared to the

North and South. As always, it is preferable to have as few youth in Family and Non-Family Households as possible, particularly in Unsheltered Family and Non-Family Households.

Next, when comparing Sheltered Age Breakdowns and Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, the West again remains fairly mid-range. Based on the 2009 data, the West has the largest (though not drastically large) 21-30, 41-50 and 61+ age groups in the Sheltered category (14%, 23% and 4% respectively) compared to the North and South regions of suburban Cook County. As for the Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, the West can only claim the smallest 0-17 age group in the Unsheltered category (6%) compared to the North and South, with little other trends discernable. Overall, the West data remains fairly equivalent to its North and South counterparts (with only 37% unknown).

Next, when comparing Sheltered Race Breakdowns and Unsheltered Race Breakdowns, the West is, yet again, fairly unsurprising. Based on the 2009 data, the West has the mid-range Non-Hispanic White race group in the Sheltered category (31%) and the lowest Non-Hispanic White race group in the Unsheltered category (24%) compared to the North and South regions of suburban Cook County. Likewise, the West has the mid-range Non-Hispanic Black race group in the Sheltered category (46%) and only a somewhat higher level in the Unsheltered category (54%) compared to the North and South. As for Sheltered Ethnic Breakdowns and Unsheltered Ethnic Breakdowns, however, the West data does show some surprisingly high numbers in its Hispanic ethnic group when compared to its West and South counterparts. Based on the 2009 data, the West has a substantially higher percentage of persons that self-identify as being ethnically Hispanic in both the Sheltered category (21% in the West – as compared to 10% in the North and only 7% in the South) and the Unsheltered category (12% in the West – as compared to 0% in the North and 2% in the South). Thus, this trend may deserve additional attention to ensure efficient service to this larger population of persons in the West region.

Finally, when comparing Sheltered Subpopulations and Unsheltered Subpopulations, we begin to see some potentially worrisome trends in the West – those that would be otherwise unseen in other areas of the analyses. Based on the 2009 data, the West has the highest numbers of homeless persons in all categories (except domestic violence in the Sheltered category and mental illness in the Unsheltered category) compared to the North and South regions of suburban Cook County. And although the West's numbers are slightly higher overall than in the North and reasonably equivalent to the South (causing the number of subpopulation characteristics to be slightly higher overall) this is, generally speaking, a very negative trend. Mental illness in the Sheltered category (87 persons) is particularly worrisome, as the West numbers are nearly more than quadruple the number of persons with mental illness in the North (16 persons) and nearly triple the number of persons with mental illness in the South (29 persons). In all categories, however, the West's numbers should warrant additional research and investigation in order to determine the causes and possible remedies for these types of need in the near future.

Overall, the West shows some fairly mid-range trends from 2007 to 2009 and in comparison to its North and South counterpart regions. Numbers gleaned from the Sheltered and Unsheltered Subpopulations, on the other hand, may be the cause of some concern, as discussed above. It is our charge, therefore, that progress continues at an aggressive rate and that additional attention be paid to certain areas of the subpopulations field. We hope that this information will help to inform future research and recommendations by members of WSCH and other West region agencies.

SOUTH REGION:

First, we will look at the Sheltered Count data:

In general, the 2007 and 2009 Sheltered data from the South remained extremely equivalent. That is, persons served went up just slightly (from 407 in 2007 to 416 in 2009) – indicating that programs were operating at a reasonably full capacity. Likewise, Chronically Homeless persons served went up only slightly (from 73 in 2007 to 75 in 2009) – indicating that there is still room for services aimed specifically at the Chronically Homeless persons that are currently being housed in Emergency Shelters.

More specifically, the South shows some positive and some negative trends in the number of persons served by particular housing types. From 2007 to 2009, the number of persons served in Emergency Shelters went down slightly (from 273 to 232); the number of persons served in Transitional Housing went up slightly (from 134 to 184); and, most importantly (though not reported in the "Sheltered Homeless" data), the number of persons served in Permanent Supportive Housing went up (from 72 to 94). Thus, since 1) Emergency Shelter numbers decreased slightly and 2) Permanent Housing increased some, we can discern some positive trends towards reducing homelessness in the South. On the other hand, since Transitional Housing increased somewhat substantially, we can discern a potentially negative trend in this aspect of the Sheltered Count. Nevertheless, since all areas serve persons with varying levels of need, a longer Transitional Housing stay, though not optimal, may be necessary for a great number of people in the South. Additional investigation into this aspect of the data may reveal a more concrete analysis and aid in the creation of possible solutions in the near future.

Second, we look at the Unsheltered Count data:

Similar to the West, the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered data from the South showed some surprising changes. That is, persons counted went down substantially (from 85 in 2007 to 55 in 2009). This is explained largely by methodological alterations in the 2009 Count. In 2007, several unreliable Street Tallies and Street Surveys were returned from one municipality in the South region. The persons counted by these tallies and surveys was significant, but unverifiable based on the information provided.

Thus, special attention was paid to that area and the mistakes made in 2007 were corrected – resulting, therefore, in a lower total number of people counted in the area. Secondly, one South region agency was not timely in returning data requested in our Record Review Survey. When the final numbers were reported from that agency, nearly five weeks late, the persons counted by that survey were (like the situation explained above) unverifiable. After consultation with committee members and staff, it was determined that these numbers would not be included in the Count, as they were too largely representative of "unknowns". Thus, the South region's Unsheltered Count numbers from 2009 look drastically different from 2007, but are, in our professional opinion, more accurate than in previous years.

Nevertheless, although the South's total Unsheltered Count numbers decreased significantly, the Chronically Homeless persons found went down only slightly (from 25 in 2007 to 22 in 2009) – indicating that even though less Unsheltered Homeless persons were found overall, there is still a large portion of the this population in the South that is considered "chronic". Comparatively, this trend is more worrisome than the change in actual persons above. Since the methodological alterations described above resulted in a large decrease in actual persons, it would be assumed that the same methodological alterations would result in an equivalent decrease in the number of Chronically Homeless persons here. Since this was not the effect, it may be relevant to theorize that a greater effect is at play and that the Chronically Homeless population in the South may actually be a more worrisome trend than expected. Additional research may reveal a large area of unmet need that requires more effective services to this population.

Finally, we look at Comparative Count data (2009 data only):

When comparing Sheltered/Unsheltered Family Households (subset Youth) and Non-Family Households (subset Youth – Unaccompanied Youth), the South, again, shows some positive and negative

trends. Based on the 2009 data, the South has the mid-range number of persons in Family Households (182 total persons) and, therefore, the mid-range subset of Youth (59 youth) compared to the North and West regions of suburban Cook County. On the other hand, it is important to note here that of the 59 Youth reported in the Family Households a total of 5 youth were reported with Unsheltered Family Households. This should be considered a worrisome trend which deserves further attention – especially since only 4 youth were reported with Unsheltered Family Households in the countywide 2007 data. Furthermore, the South has the highest number of persons in Non-Family Households (288 total persons) with a similarly large subset of youth (5 Unaccompanied Youth) compared to the North and West. As above, it is similarly worth noting here that these 5 Unaccompanied Youth were reported as Sheltered Non-Family Households and, likewise, these numbers are due largely to the specialized nature of some South region agencies that serve youth exclusively. Nevertheless, as always, it is preferable to have as few youth in Family and Non-Family Households as possible, particularly in Unsheltered Family and Non-Family Households.

Next, when comparing Sheltered Age Breakdowns and Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, the South remains fairly mid-range. Based on the 2009 data, the South has the largest (though not drastically large) 31-40 age group in the Sheltered category (17%) and can also claim the lowest (though again, not drastically small) 0-17 age group in the Sheltered category (30%) compared to the North and West regions of suburban Cook County. As for the Unsheltered Age Breakdowns, the South seems to have comparatively low numbers in most age groups in the Unsheltered category, but also has the highest "Unknown" category (65%) and, therefore, should not be considered statistically reliable. Overall, the South data remains fairly equivalent to its North and West counterparts (particularly when the unknown percentages are not a comparative factor).

Next, when comparing Sheltered Race Breakdowns and Unsheltered Race Breakdowns, the South is reasonably unsurprising. Based on the 2009 data, the South has the lowest Non-Hispanic White

race group in the Sheltered category (22%) and the mid-range level in the Unsheltered category (26% - just barely above the West Unsheltered category at 24%) compared to the North and West regions of suburban Cook County. Likewise, the South has the a substantially larger Non-Hispanic Black race group in the Sheltered category (70%) and a less substantially high level in the Unsheltered category (56%) compared to the North and West. Like the North, this is due largely to the demographic make-up of the South region of suburban Cook County as a whole. As for Sheltered Ethnic Breakdowns and Unsheltered Ethnic Breakdowns, the South data falls at the mid-range level when compared to its North and West counterparts.

Finally, when comparing Sheltered Subpopulations and Unsheltered Subpopulations, the South shows some fairly consistent trends. Based on the 2009 data, the South lands in the mid-range numbers of homeless persons in all categories (except mental illness in the Unsheltered category) compared to the North and West regions of suburban Cook County. And since the South's numbers are highest overall compared to the West and South (typically causing the number of subpopulation characteristics to be much higher overall) the South's Subpopulation numbers are, generally speaking, a positive trend! Mental Illness in the Unsheltered category, however, is rather worrisome – as the South's number of Sheltered Homeless persons with a history of mental illness (17 persons) is more than triple the number in the North and more than double the number in the West. As discussed above, however, with such small numbers and so many outside factors, seemingly negative trends require additional investigation in order to determine actual need and possible action.

Overall, the South shows some fairly mid-range trends from 2007 to 2009 and in comparison to its North and West counterpart regions. Though some numbers may be cause for concern, very few results are overwhelmingly negative. It is our charge, therefore, that progress continues at an aggressive rate and that additional attention be paid to certain areas of the subpopulations field. We hope that this

information will help to inform future research and recommendations by members of SSCH and other South region agencies.

<u>Countywide Analysis</u>

As with any social service research, but especially with those that establish and update baseline information, a key factor associated with the project is knowing how to analyze and utilize efficiently the information collected. Unfortunately, so many research projects are completed successfully, but never actually serve to impact the field that they were researching. That is the reason that this section was created, reviewed and accepted for distribution to all interested parties – especially those community partners that helped to make the 2009 Homeless Count such a successful endeavor. Furthermore, the hope that this information could serve as guidance for future plans is the driving force behind the amount of analysis that was undertaken to produce this portion of the analysis.

What follows is a series of questions that should stimulate the kind of thought that helps communities to progress towards their goals. These questions are directly related to the quality of information provided by the 2009 Homeless Count and what this information means in "in the real world" to not only the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, but to all its member agencies and extended network of community partners.

DID THE 2009 HOMELESS COUNT ACHIEVE ITS GOALS?

Overall, we feel that the 2009 Homeless Count exceeded the expectations of previous years. Most importantly, the 2009 Homeless Count succeeded in each of its overarching goals:

- *To establish a baseline for a regional homeless population – so that CoC's can track progress and make necessary adjustments to population/environmental changes*: The 2009 Homeless Count has provided the most complete and statistically reliable data to date.

- *To increase public awareness of homelessness throughout the region – by engaging local stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages, as well as providing a report that outlines the newest data and trends in homelessness in the region*: In fact, the 2009 Homeless Count involved more volunteers & partners and received more media coverage than any previous Homeless Count in suburban Cook County.

- *To improve the ability of agencies (specifically homeless service providers) to plan and implement effective services for the homeless*: The 2009 Homeless Count strived to produce detail-oriented reports and presentation materials catered to agency-specific and region-specific needs and services, so as to provide the best possible information for utilization in future funding.

- *To preserve federal funding allocated from HUD[132]*: We plan on it.

- *To continue to support the "data-driven"[133] success of HUD through relevant and reliable data collection methods and reporting*: The 2009 Homeless Count surpassed most people's expectations in the quality of data collected and the quantity of reliable analysis – making for the best possible body of information to be used as guide and benchmark in future years.

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[132] As of 2009, the Alliance was responsible for securing and allocating $8.5 million in HUD funding on behalf of its member agencies in the continuum

[133] National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org), 2008.

But specific successes in both the Sheltered Count & Unsheltered Counts should be highlighted as well. They are as follows:

In the 2009 Sheltered Count, special attention was paid to follow-up and clarification with agencies submitting Sheltered Surveys. This helped to avoid the inconsistencies that occurred in 2007 and helped to create a data set that was more statistically reliable than in previous years. In other words, the review of the 2009 Sheltered Surveys and the data analysis of the 2009 Sheltered Count numbers was strategic in its attempt to ensure zero "Unknowns" and as little incomplete or inconsistent information as possible. Providing more reliable, more complete data is, of course, a positive outcome for any research of this type.

There were also several successes in the Unsheltered Count – the larger of the two Count methodologies. Though we will not discuss all aspects of the Unsheltered Count here, we will address a few important advances in some detail below.

First, the 2009 Unsheltered Count focused on building greater social capital for the purposes of supporting the Homeless Count methodologies. This is achieved primarily through the creation of strong partnerships with community businesses, agencies and community groups that may serve as sources of information, monetary or goods donations, manpower or general support for the project. Examples of groups/persons contacted for partnership in the 2009 Unsheltered Count include colleges/universities, police and fire departments, public aid providers in municipal offices, local fast-food and coffee chains, individual hospitals and other health providers, libraries and townhalls, local church groups, volunteer and community outreach groups, and other organizations that aim to serve a poorer population (i.e., Salvation Army, American Red Cross, etc.). Though the creation of these partnerships are always time consuming and sometimes less fruitful than anticipated, many of these partnerships resulted in large numbers of enthusiastic and reliable volunteers, large numbers of donations or monetary support to

provide items for gift bags and, most often, as conduits for distributing information about the Alliance and the 2009 Homeless Count in general. It is important to note that many of the successes discussed in more detail below were a direct result of the attention paid to building a greater foundation of social capital for the 2009 Unsheltered Count.

Second, for the Street Count portion of the Unsheltered Count over 180 volunteers were recruited to serve as "Count Team Members" on the night of January 22, 2009. This is nearly double the number of volunteers recruited in 2007 and almost triple the number of volunteers recruited in 2005. An increase in volunteer numbers can result in additional Count Teams and, thus, additional area that can be covered in the same amount of time. In fact, the 2009 Street Count covered more than 300 square miles of suburban Cook County! Though exact numbers of area covered in 2005 & 2007 are not available, it is safe to say that this is the largest geographic area covered in a Homeless Count. Furthermore, a large volunteer pool can be an invaluable resource for member agency projects and future Alliance projects (i.e., future Homeless Counts). And finally, this increased volunteer base led to a wider reach for the distribution of information and the reporting of Homeless Count results.

Third, the expanded methodology for the 2009 Street Count was a large step in providing even more reliable and statistically relevant data. With an emphasis on more "complete coverage" techniques in counting, it is safe to assume that several unsheltered persons that would otherwise not have been found in 2005 and 2007 were located and, in many cases, the source of invaluable information about those that frequent lesser-known locations. As a result, we now have better information about additional "Hot Spots" in suburban Cook County and a pool of information that will serve to produce even more comprehensive search areas in future Homeless Counts. Additionally, the attention paid to carefully mapping search areas, assigning Team Leaders and training individuals prior to counting also aided in reducing the number of duplicates in the Street Count and any tendencies towards incorrect or inconsistent reporting.

Fourth, the expanded methodology for the 2009 Service Site Count was also extremely fruitful in supplying us with additional information about those persons that we often cannot find on the night of the Street Count. As compared to 2007, the second mailer, multiple trainings, and conscientious follow-up with potential service site locations resulted in a large increase in the number of Service Site Surveys returned – many of which provided information about Chronically Homeless individuals, unaccompanied youth and families that would have been otherwise unreported.

And finally, Alliance staff spent a large amount of time analyzing, comparing, contrasting and reporting on the 2009 Count Data. The 2009 Final Count Report (this document), the attached appendices and other presentation materials were carefully created to report on information, impacting and interesting results. More importantly, special attention was paid to producing comparative analyses that would provide individual regions and specialized areas of homelessness service with the types of data that would help to inform their services. As compared to much of the reporting in 2007, the 2009 Homeless Count results are specifically reported in a way that should be accessible, understandable, informative, and strategically helpful to anyone in the homelessness assistance field or the greater communities that we serve.

In the end, we feel that it is safe to say that the 2009 Homeless Count, in all respects, was a successful research project that provided additional baseline information, informed benchmark goals, analyses that can guide future strategic plans and, equally important, a new network of partners upon which we can continue to build our social capital and better serve our communities.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT OUR SHELTERED HOMELESS POPULATION SINCE 2007?

In many ways, the 2009 Sheltered Count data has been greatly surprising to Alliance staff and committee members. Simply put, we might have expected the 2009 Sheltered Count numbers to show

significant increases – due largely to the depressed economy and the effects of foreclosures, evictions, job loss, etc. We also may have easily explain incremental decreases in our 2009 Sheltered Count data – a sign of incremental improvements in the provision of additional Permanent Supportive housing. The 2009 Sheltered Count data, however, greatly resembles our 2007 Sheltered Count data, thus, leaving us to with the great task of digging deeper to fetter out trends and changes over the last two years.

We will begin with a discussion of better housing. More specifically, we take a closer look at Permanent Supportive Housing (though not discussed at length in this report) to determine if providing PSH has resulted in incremental decreases in the Sheltered Homeless population. The following chart summarizes the changes between 1) PSH beds available and 2) persons served in PSH between 2007 and 2009.

Permanent Supportive Housing	2007	2009	Net Change
Family Household Beds Available	45	81	+36 beds
Non-Family Household Beds Available	110	112	+2 beds
Persons served in Family Households	49	81	+32 persons
Persons served in Non-Family Households	97	108	+11 persons

Since 2007, therefore, we see an increase of 22% more PSH in suburban Cook County. We see an even more shocking statistic when we look at the vacancy rates in PSH between 2007 and 2009. While there was a total of only 9 vacancies in PSH in 2007 (5.8% vacancy rate), there is an even smaller number of vacancies – a total of 4 – in 2009 (2.1% vacancy rate). This informs us that the need for PSH beds is great and that there is little room for all those that qualify for this type of housing. In other words, even tighter vacancy rates in PSH show an even greater need for more PSH availability!

Thus, while suburban Cook County shows incremental progress in its increase of Permanent Supportive Housing – resulting in incremental decreases in Sheltered Population numbers – there is still a great need for even more PSH in the county and, therefore, the "better housing" theory only partially explains the 2009 trends in the Sheltered Count data. We will now consider the effects of changes in the 2009 Emergency, Transitional and Safe Haven data as it compares to 2007 numbers.

We will first look at the Emergency Shelter numbers from 2007 to 2009. To summarize, Emergency Shelter beds have decreased slightly since 2007 (from 507 to 463) and persons served by Emergency Shelters have decreased only slightly more since 2007 (from 490 to 426). In addition, vacancy rates have actually increased from 17 (3.4%) in 2007 to 37 (8.0%) in 2009! Since we see a decrease in the amount of beds provided and the number of people utilizing the beds, at the same time as we see an increased vacancy rate, this suggests a potential decrease in the actual need for Emergency Shelter housing. These results, perhaps more so than any other category, are extremely surprising! As mentioned before, the economic downturn, and its effects on families and individuals, was expected to play a major role in the potential increase in some Sheltered Homeless populations (especially those in Emergency Shelters). The 2009 results, however, are showing almost opposite results – a truly baffling trend in the current financial situation of Illinois and the United States as a whole. Further investigation, therefore, will be required to determine exactly how the current economy is affecting the homeless population in suburban Cook County and where, if not in Emergency Shelters, additional attention is required to cater to unmet need.

Next, we look at changes between the 2007 and 2009 Sheltered Homeless data from Transitional Housing programs and again, we see some surprising statistics from our TH data. Although people served in TH stayed about the same from 2007 to 2009 (579 to 594), TH beds have actually increased substantially (from 631 to 751). Once again, this makes for a staggering change in the TH vacancy rate from 52 (8.2%) in 2007 to 157 (20.1%) in 2009! And, as mentioned in previous sections,

while a steady number of people being served in TH is typically a positive trend (people are transitioning in and out at a consistent pace), the vacancy rates in 2009 may suggest a potentially large decrease in the need for the current number of TH programs in suburban Cook County. After some analysis, we believe that the increase in TH beds between 2007 and 2009 is due primarily to 3 major factors. Those are: 1) 2 programs were re-classified from Emergency Shelter programs to Transitional Housing programs between 2007 and 2009 (accounting for 50 beds), 2) 1 Transitional Housing program increased its number of TH beds by 15 between 2007 and 2009 (accounting for 30 beds), and 3) inconsistencies between the 2007 Shelter Surveys and known inventory at the time suggests that the 2007 Sheltered Count data may have undercounted the number of total beds in some TH housing programs – thus, reporting a lower total than were potentially in existence. (Finally, it is important to note here, as noted in the "Sheltered Count Results" section above, that some inconsistencies with the 2007 data do exist and the "Unknown" category represented in the 2007 Sheltered Count data proves to be very difficult to analyze.)

Finally, we look at the addition of the 1 Safe Haven program in the 2009 Sheltered Count. Simply put, the addition of this program is a very positive force in the continued efforts to end homelessness in suburban Cook County. For analysis purposes, however, this program (which accounts for only 14 total beds) does little to affect the general increased or decreased trend in the Sheltered Homeless population. Thus, little can be said about the effects of this program on the Sheltered Count data results.

Therefore, we end somewhere near where we began. That is, we face some very surprising statistics that help only to illuminate specific areas of the Sheltered Homeless population. Overall, however, we can draw a few conclusions to help clarify where the Sheltered Homeless population suburban Cook County stands today, as compared to 2007:

- First, we can theorize generally that the incremental increases in Permanent Supportive Housing are attributing to incremental decreases in the number of Sheltered Homeless (i.e., those in Emergency, Transitional or Safe Haven programs) in suburban Cook County. Overall, this may help to account for the slight decrease in numbers between 2007 and 2009.

. Second, vacancy rates in both Emergency and Transitional Housing are showing a potential decrease in the need for these types of housing. These numbers, as discussed above, are somewhat surprising when the current economic downturn is taken into consideration. (Again, it is important to note that this may be related to data quality issues in 2007 as compared to the 2009 data.)

Additionally, it may be worth including here some of the other factors that may affect a decrease in the number of Sheltered Homeless counted in the 2009 Sheltered Count. Although we will not spend dedicated time analyzing each of these factors separately, it is important to include them here for future consideration of these numbers. Additional factors affecting a decrease in the Sheltered Homeless population may include:

- January, 2009 may simply be too "early" to see the effects of a downturned economy: In other words, by 2010 homelessness in suburban Cook County may see a significant increase once the economic situation has hit "closer to home" (quite literally. In general, as 2009 progresses we may expect to see greater numbers of persons who are "at risk" for becoming homeless (i.e., losing their job, home, etc.) or who are recently homeless and staying in Emergency Shelters.

- An increased number of persons doubling-up: We are unable to measure this of "precarious housing" and, therefore, are unsure of the impact of doubling-up on homeless count numbers. Additionally, it is possible to theorize that higher numbers of persons in this type of "precarious

housing" may be only a temporary fix during this economic downturn and "literal homeless" may increase in the coming years as people are turned away by friends and family.

- An increased number of persons moving out of the state to avoid job loss, lack of housing, etc. or in search of increased job pay, less expensive housing, etc.: Again, we are unable to measure many of these factors, making it nearly impossible to measure its impact on homeless count numbers. Furthermore, these factors may work vice-versa as well – that is, bringing larger numbers of persons into suburban Cook County from more depressed areas in Illinois or elsewhere in the Midwest region.

- Unemployment benefits are up: Simply put, this means that those persons that are unemployed are receiving increased funds in 2009 (as compared to 2008) and may be able to keep from becoming homeless for a longer period of time. Even when unemployment is common (such as it is now), if unemployment benefits maintain a high enough pay-out, persons without jobs are often able to stay housed, pay their utilities and sustain month-to-month payments on other basic necessities (i.e., food, clothing, transportation, etc.).

. Issues with data quality: We should note here that data inconsistency is always a possibility with human service studies. Moreover, the 2007 data has some proven inconsistencies, making a comparison to the 2009 data more difficult, as described previously. (For example, the 2007 data reported a range of 35 to 65 Motel/Hotel Vouchers in use on the night of the Count; whereas the 2009 data reported only 15 to 20 Motel/Hotel Vouchers in use. Though this would typically show reduced need, it is more likely that the 2007 numbers were overestimated, as a reliable method for tracking these numbers was not incorporated in the Shelter Survey.) Thus, marked trends from 2007 to 2009 may not be as statistically reliable as presumed, since data quality from 2007 to 2009 is a concern. Furthermore, although there are few known

inconsistencies with the 2009 data, issues may exist that are affecting the results in an unknown manner.

Finally, it is important to include here some contradictory information about the decreases seen in the 2009 Homeless Count. In a January, 2009 Service Provider Survey, Housing Action Illinois reported the following information:

"…a marked increase in the need for [service provider's] services during the last six months of 2008… During December, 2008, 71% of state-funded providers of overnight and transitional shelter reported serving an increased number of people experiencing homelessness compared to six months previous. More than one third, 35%, of agencies reported an increase of more than 10%... These findings are in agreement with a number of recent studies completed in other parts of the country showing that homelessness in increasing due to the recession."[134]

Nevertheless, we feel that the advances made in the area of Permanent Supportive Housing are a hugely positive step towards ending homelessness in suburban Cook County. It will be important, however, to utilize additional resources to further increase the number of PSH programs in suburban Cook County so as to service an even greater population in need (as shown by the very low vacancy rates in these programs). Additionally, we feel that a potentially decreased need for Emergency and Transitional Housing does exist, even in the midst of an economic downturn. This may suggest a need to recalibrate the current models for housing in suburban Cook County, with a focus on providing a greater number of Permanent Supportive Housing units and providing less (or changing the current targeting of) Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing programs. A trend towards a decreasing need in emergency

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[134] Housing Action Illinois, (2009), Summary.

and transitional services, however, should be carefully watched as the economy continues to struggle in the coming years. Furthermore, significant changes in this need should be expected during this time period and any plans for "recalibration" should be pursued cautiously until the economic downturn is remedied.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT OUR UNSHELTERED HOMELESS POPULATION SINCE 2007?

Compared to some of the changing trends in the Sheltered Count, trends between the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered Count data were surprisingly *un*surprising! For example, the 2009 Count found less people on the night of the Count, but reported more people through Service Site and Record Review Surveys. Negatively, the 2007 Count found more people on the night of the Count, but reported far fewer people through the Service Site and Record Review Surveys. Thus, overall numbers of persons counted in the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered Count were very similar. With very few changes in primary categories (i.e., number of unsheltered persons found, men vs. women, subpopulation breakdown, etc.), the numbers between 2007 and 2009 were surprisingly consistent.

Once again, the question of whether or not the economic downturn should have served as an explanation for increased numbers is baffling. As with the Sheltered Count, we virtually expected increased numbers in our 2009 Unsheltered Count – as people who lose jobs, get evicted, etc. – often have nowhere else to land but on the streets. Nevertheless, we again face those immeasurable outlying factors of doubling-up and transient behavior as possible explanations of sustained numbers.

Unlike the Sheltered Count, however, there is one outlying factor that we feel confident in eliminating: inconsistent data. Since the 2007 Unsheltered Data was far more consistent than the 2007 Sheltered Data (also due to the access to 2007 Unsheltered Count raw data), comparisons drawn between the 2007 and 2009 Unsheltered Count were more accessible and statistically, more reliable.

Thus, we feel it safe to state that the Unsheltered Count methodology has "leveled off" between 2007 and 2009. That is, even though we employed far greater numbers of volunteers, increased our response rate to mailers and surveys and covered far more area in suburban Cook County, we saw very little change in the number of persons found (counted). Therefore, though the 2009 methodology was more thorough, the 2007 methodology was complete enough to provide comparable results. Nevertheless, it is important to comment here that while the data seems to show a more "leveled off" methodology, this is not an argument for less thorough methodology. Simply put, the more thorough the methodology, the more reliable the data and, therefore, the more consistent the information reported from year to year. (This is especially important in years such as economic recessions, when subtle changes – that may have great impact – can go unnoticed without thorough research.)

While the majority of data was unsurprising, there is one area that deserves some extra attention. Although the "Family Household" does not show marked difference between 2007 and 2009 at first glance, additional attention reveals some worrisome trends. In 2007, the Unsheltered Count data reported 4 Family Households with a total of 14 persons in those households – of which 4 persons were between the ages of 0-17. Comparative, the 2009 Unsheltered Count data reported 4 Family Households with a total of 15 persons in those households – of which 11 persons were between the ages of 0-17. There are several analyses to consider in regards to this data:

First, it is important to address the potential discrepancy in the changed definition of "Family Household" from 2007 to 2009. The 2009 data collection forms clearly defined a "Family Household" as "…a household composed of two or more related persons, at least one of whom is a child, and that child is accompanied by an adult or juvenile parent. For example, a parenting teen and her child are included in Families."[135] It is suspected, however, that the 2007 Unsheltered Count included adult

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[135] Alliance 2009 Shelter Survey, Basic Definitions.

couples/partners/siblings in the "Family Household" category – instead of in the correct category of "Non-Family Household" with multiple household persons. For this reason, we theorize that the number of actual "Family Households" has increased from 2007 to 2009.

Secondly, we see a marked increase (even though these numbers are statistically small) between the number of youth (ages 0-17) in the 2007 Family Households and the 2009 Family Households (again, partially because several of the 2007 "Family Households" may have actually been "Non-Family Households"). While the 2007 data reported only 4 youth in Family Households, the 2009 data shows a total of 11 youth in Family Households – nearly triple the number in 2007. This trend, unlike many of the trends described in previous sections, is most likely due largely to the economic downturn. Thus, the probable increase in number of Family Households and the obvious increase in the number of youth in Family Households may be greatly attributed to the increase in job loss, foreclosure and eviction that many families currently face in this recession. As with all areas of homelessness affecting children directly, this worrisome trend should be closely tracked and reviewed as necessary to ensure proper services to an increased number of Family Households.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT OUR TOTAL CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION SINCE 2007?

Similar to the Family Household increases described above, we see slight increases in the Chronically Homeless populations in suburban Cook County and some linked trends with worrisome effects. Overall, the Chronically Homeless population in suburban Cook County has increased just over 10% from 2007 to 2009 (from 198 to 226 total). It is important to note that even though the total numbers of "Individuals" is also up from 2007 to 2009 (583 to 612), it is not enough to explain a 10% increase in Chronically Homeless individuals.

So why are there more Chronically Homeless persons now? Also similar to the Family Households explication above, this may be caused largely by the economic downturn. In general, we view the Chronically Homeless population as the most disabled homeless population (affected by the greatest physical and mental disabilities with the longest periods of homelessness in their past) and, therefore, are often the most vulnerable population needing homelessness services. This population often has difficulties accessing services and utilizing resources efficiently. Furthermore, in times of nationwide struggle (i.e., economic recessions) already scares resources and services become even more difficult to accessing – virtually leaving this population behind. Thus, we see even greater reason to strengthen those programs targeting the Chronically Homeless population and provide the support necessary to ensure that this population continues to receive services during this economic downturn.

Finally, as with all explanations accompanying CH graphs in previous sections, incremental decreases in the number of Chronically Homeless persons reported in the Sheltered (Emergency & Transitional only) & Unsheltered Count is an important step towards ending homelessness in our communities. Thus, we look next at one step towards reducing the number of Chronically Homeless persons reported in the Sheltered & Unsheltered Homeless Counts – that is, by increasing the number of Chronically Homeless persons served in Permanent Supportive Housing. Unfortunately, however, the number of Chronically Homeless persons served in PSH actually went down slightly between 2007 and 2009 (from 66 beds to 60 beds). Therefore, while the number of Chronically Homeless persons has actually increased by over 10%, the number of available beds for Chronically Homeless persons in PSH programs has actually decreased! This is an extremely worrisome trend – lending even greater importance to the need for more PSH programs in suburban Cook Count!

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT OUR STRATEGIC PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS?

First, we would like to iterate that our theories on homelessness numbers as they related to the downturned economy are strengthened by many reports from other nearby continua (i.e., Dupage County) and academics alike. Michael Sosin, professor in Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, and avid researcher of HUD's required Homeless Counts, has been quoted saying that homelessness numbers often lag 1-2 years behind economic downturns. Based on this theory, it is safe to assume that we have not yet seen the full impact that the economic downturn may have on our Sheltered, Unsheltered, and Chronically Homeless populations. Thus, it is ever more important to begin planning *now* for rapid changes (increases) in homelessness in the coming year. It is likely that these changes will be reflected best in the 2011 Homeless Count, as the economy (hopefully!) begins to recover at that point. And while it is difficult to pre-determine the effects of these changes on the Alliance's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, the current economic situation should be weighed heavily in discussions about the Alliance's plans to address homelessness in the coming years.

With that caveat in mind, there are other areas of the homelessness issue in suburban Cook County that have presented themselves with verifiable data. In particular, our 2009 Sheltered Count points to a potential reformulation of current housing models in our continuum. As shown above, based on demand and very low vacancy rates, there is an obvious need for more Permanent Supportive Housing programs. As the Alliance's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness explains, the creation of additional Permanent Supportive Housing helps to "open the backdoor out of homelessness" and, therefore, is a vital step in reducing, and ultimately ending, homelessness in suburban Cook County. The data compiled in this year's Homeless Count is a testament to this ever important step.

Similarly, based on lower demand and higher vacancy rates, we see some surprising changes in demand for Emergency and Transitional Housing in our continuum. While these programs must sustain

a large and constantly changing population (especially in this economy), the addition or expansion of Emergency or Transitional Housing programs may not be the best possible use of limited resources. And, while it is impossible to tabulate the affects of changing need in the coming years, continually increasing vacancy rates may soon indicate an actual, verifiable, decreased demand for these services. Thus, as the economy rebounds, the Alliance may reformulate its approach to these housing options as well.

As our numbers (and other studies) have shown, the population that is often hardest hit during economic downturns in the Chronically Homeless population. Similarly, this group of persons is also greatly affected by increases in those numbers related to subpopulations that have direct correlations to our Chronically Homeless population – those are, substance abuse, mental illness, and physical disability. Again, as the Alliance's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness outlines that reducing the number of Chronically Homeless persons (this also involves reducing those numbers in related subpopulations), is a critical step in "closing the front door to homelessness" – that is, reducing, and ultimately eliminating, homelessness in suburban Cook County. While we are already seeing some increases in our Chronically Homeless population (and those related subpopulations), it is also likely that as homelessness numbers better reflect the changing economy, these numbers will continue to rise. Thus, it is imperative that the Alliance provide guidance on better addressing this issue *now*.

As with the Chronically Homeless population, we are already beginning to see increases in the number of Unsheltered Family Households – and therefore, unsheltered youth in families. And while our numbers for Unsheltered Family Households are comparatively low (to Sheltered Family Household numbers), our data is showing the possible beginning of a very negative trend. As with the need to address the incremental increases in the Chronically Homeless population now, this trend too should be address early –before increases reflecting the downturned economy become unmanageable in the coming years.

Finally, there is a great need for our suburban Cook County regions and our neighbors in nearby continua to re-strengthen our partnerships to address area-specific concerns. While we have already outlined analyses based on our own, regional areas (North, West & South) in sections above, additional work must be done to engage and combine efforts with our collar counties. The Alliance's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, while addressing the specific needs of our suburban continuum, must strive to work in conjunction with those continua working alongside us. Especially in the coming years, as our homelessness populations begin to experience greater affects of our struggling economy, the need for partnership, collaboration and collective action will become even more imperative. We encourage our CBSA areas to work not only on issues and concerns specific to their communities, but in close relation with their fellow CBSA areas. Additionally, we charge the Alliance's governing body and those of our neighboring continua, to promote cross-county discussions and work together to address those challenges that will surface in the coming years.

Analysis: Social Capital & Homelessness Human Services

The purpose of this paper was to present a case study for investigating the impacts of social capital on the 2009 Homeless Count, homeless counts in general and, in the broadest sense, for the homelessness services field as a whole. In doing so, this paper aimed to answer the question, "How important was the role of social capital to the planning, implementation, and successful completion of the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County? Simultaneously, this paper was meant to present a case study that utilized both academic and practical foundations, to place this case study in the larger context of homelessness services as a whole, and finally, to provide a significant body of work that could guide and strengthen the process of planning, implementing and successfully completing future Homeless Counts in suburban Cook County.

In analyzing this case study, I feel very confident in stating that social capital played an integral role in the planning, implementation and successful completion of the 2009 Homeless Count in suburban Cook County. Furthermore, I feel equally confident in stating that a case has been made for the vital role that social capital can play in the future planning of homeless counts, as well as the more general works our direct providers in the homelessness services field. In order to provide a solid foundation to these statements, I will provide a brief analysis of each of the original goals of this paper:

First, by reviewing the academic works that discussed homelessness and Social Capital Theory, I was able to provide a context in which to frame the 2009 Homeless Count case study. In my analyses of bridging and bonding capital, I set the stage for better conceptualizing and recognizing the importance of those partnerships that were created prior to and throughout the Homeless Count process. Without first investing the time to strengthen the bonding capital already established with national continua, regional CBSAs, individual homelessness agencies, and, most important, the current and recent

consumers in the homeless population, much of the invaluable information that aided in the planning, implementation and execution of the 2009 Homeless Count would have been underutilized. Likewise, without the great strides taken to create new sources of bridging capital with those social networks outside the homelessness services field, unique and similarly invaluable information would never have been accessed. Our new partners' ability to connect us with resources unavailable in our current social networks was an integral addition to our 2009 Homeless Count process.

Furthermore, the case study was crucial in illuminating the sometimes "behind-the-scenes" role of social capital at every step of the process – the selection of a Count methodology, the recruitment and management of volunteers, the compilation and analysis of data, and the follow-through with volunteers, partners and regional constituents. In addition, I was able to address some more complex areas of social capital best with the case study framework. For example, a major roadblock to investigating and quantifying social capital, as I reviewed in the beginning, is the extremely intangible nature of social capital in our society. Similarly, it is often a complex process to fully explicate the myriad intricacies of the dualistic nature of social capital. By utilizing a case study to analyze the role of social capital, however, I was able to not only provide a more tangible experience of social capital in a practical setting, but I was also able to draw upon some of the already existing examples of social capital concern – such as the poor social capital of the consumers – and highlight the action steps I took to overcome these issues and create more beneficial social capital for the purposes of the 2009 Homeless Count.

Second, by providing the academic background of Social Capital Theory and by analyzing the process of the case study, I feel that the potential for social capital in the whole of the homelessness services field is evident. While the partnerships created this year were integral primarily in the 2009 Homeless Count, they have remained strong ties for ongoing partnerships and projects. Many of our volunteers and partners have become involved on much more active levels – attending regional CBSA

meetings, volunteering for our member agencies, or helping us to fundraise, advocate or market our cause. In doing so, we have begun the slow, but steady, process of building our social capital. In particular, we are beginning to see not only a strengthening of our bonding capital, through a more unified vision of providing homelessness services to those in our communities, but we are beginning to recognize exciting new opportunities to extend our bridging capital – that form of social capital that will help us to reach out to those outside our own fields and continue to gain new insight from other social networks. Thus, while the social capital building process is only in its beginning stages, I feel that the Alliance and its member agencies are now on a new path of collaboration – founded on the idea that social capital, if created mindfully and carefully (with an attention to inclusion and diversification) can produce innumerable possibilities for future success.

Third, and final, I feel that the commitment I have made to the success of the 2009 Homeless Count will continue as the Alliance plans its future Homeless Counts. In addition to this work and myriad other records and notes, I also created a significant body of resources, guides, manuals, materials, and templates for use in future Homeless Count planning. In addition, I invested time and energy in the creation of a "Future Recommendations" file – an extremely useful tool that is often neglected at the completion of a large-scale project – for use by the 2011 Homeless Count Coordinator.[136] Furthermore, I plan to continue my advocacy for social capital at the Alliance level and among like-minded individuals at the member agency level to ensure that what has been learned this year, through the long process of the 2009 Homeless Count, will not be forgotten as the Alliance and its partners continue down the even longer road towards reducing, and ultimately ending, homelessness in suburban Cook County.

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[136] See Appendix XXVI for a "Future Recommendations" file prepared for the 2011 Count Coordinator.

Conclusions

While my role as Count Coordinator required extensive work to *bridge* new groups, organizations and people and to build much stronger *bonds* of trust, support and collaboration, the product of this work is seen clearly in the success of the 2009 Homeless Count. Furthermore, my academic research in social capital theory and my professional experience at the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County has provided me with new insights – and a new sense of optimism – in the great possibility of partnerships founded on social capital.

The people with whom I worked, especially those young professionals such as myself, breathed new life into the theory of social capital and its invaluable role in creating and maintaining projects for the improvement of life in our communities. These networks were of a very special nature: these were collaborative, passionate, new generation-type partnerships – built largely upon recent graduate degrees and internship experiences, set in motion by impacting experiences domestically and abroad, and fueled by hallway discussion of Obama's plans for change and reformulated ideals for the future. These networks were dedicated to the idea that talking with each other, working with each other, *partnering* with each other, could produce results beyond our imaginations.

The connections I made in the planning, implementation and execution of the 2009 Homeless Count are vital resources for not only the Alliance's future work, but also in the future work of the homelessness social services field as a whole. Furthermore, these types of partnerships have the potential to impact all fields of work that strive for the betterment and sustainability of human life. For this reason, it is my belief that continued work to build social capital can, and will, have the impact needed to promote true change in our societies.

Appendices[137]

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[137] All Appendices presented here (excluding Appendices I, II, III and portions of Appendices VI, X, XI, XIII) are original works produced by myself, in partnership with the many specialists and experts with whom I consulted. I owe much gratitude to the guidance of these persons and many others in the creation of these works.

From *Strategies for Reducing Chronic Street Homelessness*,
report to The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
Prepared by Martha Burt. January, 2004.

"The following is a list of the 10 key elements for reducing chronic street homelessness that we discovered in 7 selected U.S. cities…

The most important element is (1) a paradigm shift in the goals and approaches of the homeless assistance network…

The next four elements appear to comprise an important combination that, working together, turn a paradigm shift's promise into a reality. These are (2) setting a clear goal of reducing chronic street homelessness, (3) committing to a community-wide level of organization, (4) having leadership and an effective organizational structure, and (5) having significant resources from mainstream public agencies that go well beyond homeless-specific funding sources…

The remaining five elements contributed to a community's ability to sustain its commitment and guide the development of its new approaches. These are (6) significant involvement of the private sector; (7) commitment and support from mayors, city and county councils, and other local elected officials; (8) having a mechanism to track progress, provide feedback, and support improvements; (9) being willing to try new approaches to services, and (10) having a strategy to handle and minimize negative reactions to locating projects in neighborhoods (NIMBY responses)."[138]

From *Strategies for Preventing Homelessness*,
report to The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
Prepared by Martha Burt. May, 2005.

"The elements found in the study communities that appear to contribute to homelessness prevention all concern *community organization* of one type or another. The more comprehensive and sustained they are, the more they are likely to contribute to developing a *system* of homelessness prevention. The elements include:

Elements affecting ability to target well:
- Agencies and systems sharing information, through a single unifying data system or with the capacity to track clients across different data systems; and
- A single agency or system controlling the eligibility determination process, including agreed-upon criteria combined with housing barrier screening and triage.

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[138] Burt (2004), 16-18.

Elements reflecting community motivation:

        - Community accepts an obligation to shelter one or more at-risk populations—the obligation may come as county council policy, as statutory requirement, as a governor's commitment, or through other mechanisms; and

        - Given the obligation, the jurisdiction accepts that it must provide funds to fulfill it. As these funds are usually substantial, the community is motivated to use them wisely.

Elements that maximize resources:

        - Collaboration among public and private agencies helps stretch resources through referrals to appropriate agencies and creates new resources when two or more organizations work together to identify a need and then develop a service that did not previously exist (e.g., mediation in Housing Courts); and

        - Nonhousing mainstream agencies accepting their clients' housing stability as one of their responsibilities. For example, child welfare departments fund housing options for families in which mental illness is an issue (Philadelphia) and for youth aging out of foster care (Denver).

Elements affecting direction, sustainability, control, and the use of data to guide future development: Leadership is essential at two levels. Agency heads and public figures must commit to developing and sustaining a community-wide prevention strategy. To make such a strategy work, it has to be someone's job to "mind the store," manage the strategy, analyze performance, promote collaboration, and all the other activities that make a system work well. Several elements are involved in making this happen, including:

        - Having a clear goal of preventing homelessness;

        - Developing a strategy to reach the goal;

        - Having mechanisms that provide feedback on progress, stimulate new thinking and innovation, identify gaps and next steps; and

        - Knowing what is needed and making sure contract agencies are committed to providing it."[139]

"This study identified two issues confronting communities desiring to prevent homelessness: 1) knowing what prevention activities are effective and 2) developing a system to deliver them efficiently (i.e., to the households with a very high risk of becoming homeless if they do not receive help)."[140]

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[139] Burt (2005), 21-22.

[140] Burt (2005), 98.

Organization History/Mission

The **Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County** coordinates the Cook County Continuum of Care (IL-511), which encompasses homeless assistance efforts throughout all of Cook County except for the cities of Chicago and Evanston. Established in 1997 as the *Task Force on Homelessness*, the group changed its name and formally incorporated in August 2004. To shift its focus from *managing* homelessness to *ending* homelessness in our county, the Alliance also hired a full-time staff and secured nonprofit 501(c)(3) status in 2005.

As the lead agency for suburban Cook County's Continuum of Care, the Alliance brings together a range of services and housing options for homeless people. The Alliance convenes a variety of stakeholders to cooperatively set priorities, collect data, rank project applications, and measure outcomes. In coordinating the annual application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for homeless assistance grants, the Alliance brings in approximately $7 million per year to support over forty homeless programs in the region.

The Alliance organizes its work at the local grassroots level into three Community Based Service Areas (CBSAs) for Homeless Assistance. These CBSAs—serving the north, west, and south areas of suburban Cook County—form a collaborative homeless assistance information, referral, shelter and service delivery system within their local communities. The CBSAs have been instrumental in the overall development and implementation of the Continuum of Care strategy.

The mission of the Alliance to End Homelessness is to strive for the elimination of homelessness in suburban Cook County through the coordination and maximization of available resources to assist homeless individuals and families. The Alliance serves as a convener for the collaborative, community-based endeavors of homeless service providers, affordable housing developers, local governments, foundations and the private sector.

Current Programs:

Strategic Planning and Community Engagement:

Nationwide, homeless advocacy groups have identified the potential to end homelessness by preventing it when possible and rapidly re-housing people who do become homeless. The Alliance acts as the planning body responsible for translating this national momentum into workable strategies for our county. Ending homelessness requires a community-wide effort, and the Alliance is committed to engaging stakeholders from every sector to be a part of the solution to homelessness.

Housing and Service Coordination:

The Alliance acts as an umbrella organization for the three Community Based Service Areas (CBSAs) of the north, west, and south regions of suburban Cook County. Each CBSA meets monthly to build partnerships, share vacancy information, network on best practices, and engage local community stakeholders. Each area offers a variety of homelessness prevention, outreach services, emergency shelter, and transitional and permanent housing options to families and individuals. These grassroots networks come together as the Alliance to plan for a countywide strategy to end homelessness.

Project Review and Prioritization:

Over 40 current programs for transitional and permanent supportive housing are funded through the suburban Cook County Continuum of Care. The Alliance is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of these programs, building their capacity, planning for future programs, and recommending funding priorities to U.S. HUD for homeless assistance grants. By linking our project review process directly to our strategic planning goals, the Alliance plays a critical role in serving the priority needs of homeless individuals and families in suburban Cook County.

Homeless Data Management:

As we evaluate new and existing programs' effectiveness in ending homelessness, we will rely heavily on data from a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) implemented this year. Implementing HMIS is a federal requirement for every Continuum of Care, but more importantly, it offers us an opportunity to document homeless needs, pinpoint how well our programs address them, and identify where we can improve. The Alliance has collected annual point-in-time homeless data for the past 14 years. In 2005 and 2007, we also completed a full sheltered and unsheltered homeless count. These data are critical to setting priorities for future funding and informing our strategic planning efforts.

For questions:

Call Jennifer Hill, Executive Director, at 708.345.4035, ext. 01 or email her at jennifer@suburbancook.org.

What is a Continuum of Care?

The **C**ontinuum **o**f **C**are (CoC) is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) initiated the Continuum of Care process in 1994 to encourage a coordinated, strategic approach to planning for programs that assist homeless individuals and families. The CoC approach fundamentally reorganized the mechanism by which McKinney-Vento homeless assistance funds were awarded, consolidating Shelter Plus Care, Supportive Housing Program, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for SRO into a single competitive grant process. This change encouraged communities to develop comprehensive systems to address the range of needs of different homeless populations. To apply for these funds, jurisdictions must submit a Continuum of Care Plan that demonstrates broad participation of community stakeholders and that identifies the resources and gaps in the community's approach to providing the range of homeless services. These services include: homelessness prevention; outreach; emergency, transitional, and permanent housing; and related services for people who are homeless. Community stakeholders determine local priorities for funding.

Fundamental components of a Continuum of Care system

HUD identified the fundamental components of a comprehensive Continuum of Care system to be:

- Outreach, intake, and assessment to (1) identify an individual's or family's service and housing needs, and (2) link them to appropriate housing and/or service resource.
- Emergency shelter and safe, decent alternatives to the streets.
- Transitional housing with supportive services to help people develop the skills necessary for permanent housing.
- Permanent housing and permanent supportive housing.

In addition, a Continuum of Care system should include a focus on homelessness prevention strategies and services.

Homeless Sub-Populations

- Single Men
- Single Women
- Families
- Youth
- Elderly
- Veterans

Why is a Continuum of Care plan important?

A comprehensive Continuum of Care plan *considers the needs of all people who are homeless.* This means that in most communities there are different components of the Continuum of Care in operation that respond to the particular housing and service needs of different subpopulations of homeless people.

Assess capacity and identify gaps: Continuum of Care planning provides communities with an opportunity to step back, critically assess capacity, and develop solutions to move homeless people toward permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Proactive rather than reactive: Continuum of Care planning helps communities look comprehensively at needs and to anticipate policy or demographic changes and develop the capacity to respond to these changes.

Common goals for which to advocate: Continuum of Care planning helps communities develop a common vision and set common goals.

Coordination and linkages: Continuum of Care planning helps providers identify ways of coordinating and linking resources to avoid duplication and facilitate movement toward permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Community "buy-in" and access to mainstream resources: Continuum of Care planning ideally involves stakeholders outside of the traditional homeless system with the goal of educating these stakeholders and getting them to become part of the solution.

Competitiveness for McKinney Homeless Assistance Funding: Comprehensive and inclusive Continuum of Care planning makes communities highly competitive for receipt of McKinney Homeless Assistance funding through the Homeless SuperNOFA process. The plan will also be useful in leveraging other, non-McKinney resources needed to build a comprehensive system to address homelessness.

About Our Continuum of Care

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is a non-profit organization responsible for planning and coordination of homeless services and housing options for all of Cook County outside of Chicago and Evanston.

Cook County is an urban county that includes 956 square miles of the upper northeastern section of State of Illinois. With a population of approximately 5.4 million people, it is the second most populous county in the nation. The County contains 133 municipalities within its boundaries. The cities of Chicago and Evanston each have their own Continuum of Care. The Alliance service area includes the other 131 municipalities, which cover 573 square miles within 30 Suburban Townships of Cook County.

The Alliance organizes its work at the local grassroots level into three Community Based Service Areas (CBSAs) for Homeless Assistance. These CBSAs—serving the north, west, and south areas of suburban Cook County—form a collaborative homeless assistance information, referral, shelter, and service delivery system within their local communities. Monthly meetings of the CBSA groups provide a forum to network, plan, and share information about each agency's services. The CBSAs have been instrumental in the overall development and implementation of the Continuum of Care strategy for the Alliance. The Alliance holds monthly meetings of the full Board of Directors. Committee meetings are conducted as needed to accomplish tasks and goals of the Strategic Plan.

The key to the success of the Continuum of Care process is the inclusion of all community members. Membership of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County includes the following groups:

- Providers of homeless services
- County government and local towns and villages
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Neighborhood and community groups
- Private sector
- Philanthropic organizations
- Faith communities
- Interested citizens

Get involved!

We invite interested parties to attend any of these meetings, or call the Alliance office for more information.

CBSA Meetings

North	West	South
Association of Homeless Advocates in the North/Northwest District (AHAND)	West Suburban Council on Homelessness	South Suburban Council on Homelessness
Millicent Ntiamoah (847) 376.2117 Todd Stull (847) 963.9163 x15	Teri Curran (708) 935.9057 Lynda Schueler (708) 338.1724	Carl Wolf (708) 755.4357 Mike Wasserberg (708) 754.4357
2nd Thursday of each month at Catholic Charities, 1717 Rand Road, Des Plaines	**1st Thursday of each month** at Catholic Charities, 1400 S. Austin, Cicero or IDHS, 2701 W. Lake Street, Melrose Park	**3rd Thursday of each month** at rotating agencies, call or visit the Alliance calendar for meeting place

Alliance Meetings

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County meets the 4th Friday of each month at various locations. Please visit the **website calendar** at www.suburbancook.org or call **Sharon King** at (708) 345-4035, ext. 00.

- Community-Based Service Areas -
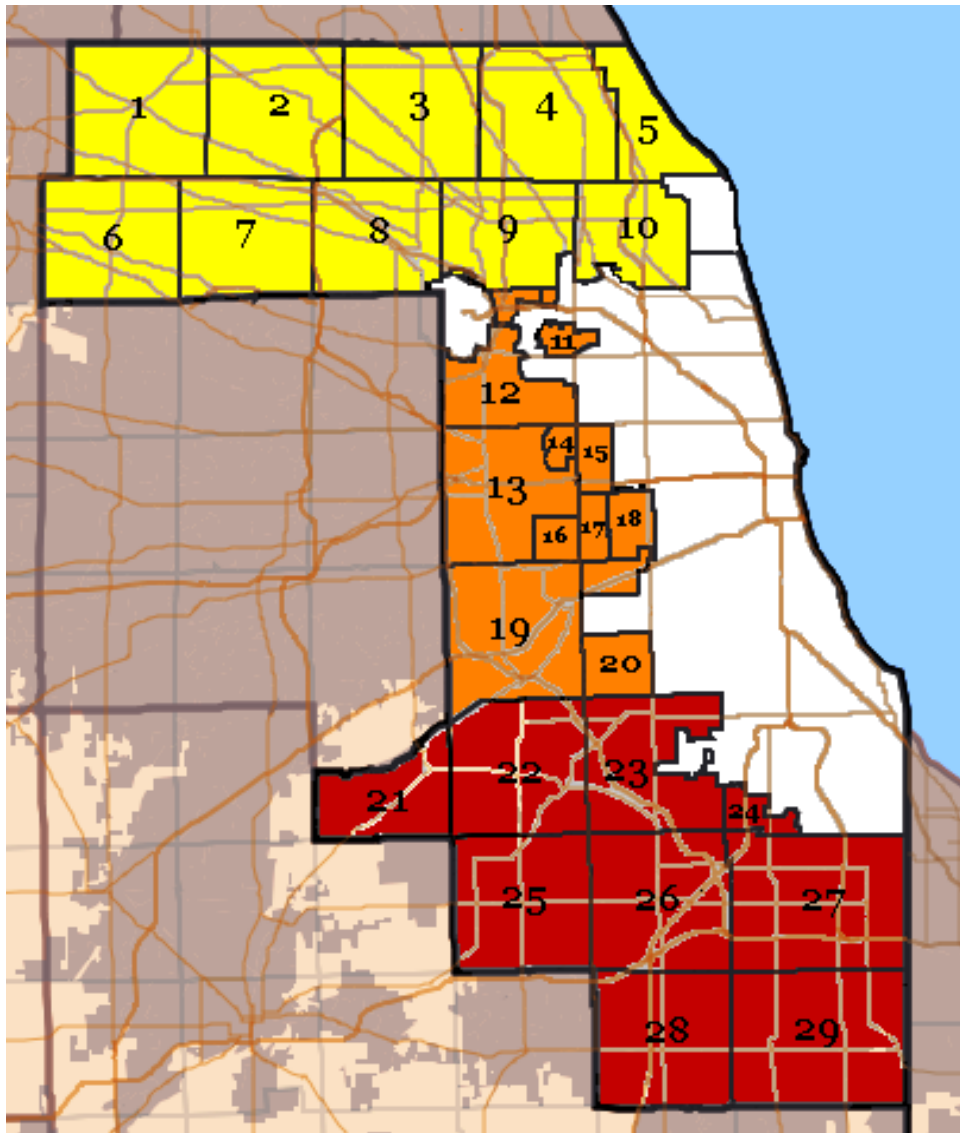
North Region

1 – Barrington
2 – Palatine
3 – Wheeling
4 – Northfield
5 – New Trier
6 – Hanover
7 – Schaumburg
8 – Elk Grove
9 – Maine
10 – Niles

West Region

11 – Norwood Park
12 – Leyden
13 – Proviso
14 – River Forest
15 – Oak Park
16 – Riverside
17 – Berwyn
18 – Cicero
19 – Lyons
20 – Stickney

South Region

21 – Lemont
22 – Palos
23 – Worth
24 – Calumet
25 – Orland
26 – Bremen
27 – Thornton
28 – Rich
29 – Bloom

Acknowledgements

The 2009 Homeless Count in Suburban Cook County was made possible by the generous donations of time, money and loyal support of our community partners. We would like to begin this report by extending our gratitude to them.

COOK COUNTY CONTINUUM of CARE for HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

SHELTERED HOMELESS POINT PREVALENCE SURVEY

January 22, 2009

EMERGENCY SHELTER

FORM A

HUD requires the following information regarding the sheltered homeless population in suburban Cook County. All data should be reported for the night of January 22, 2009 **only**.

Basic Information	Emergency Shelter Count - 1/22/09
Agency Name	
Program Name	
Geocode (see definition on page 3)	
Seasonal Beds	☐ Yes Start Date: _____ End Date: _____ ☐ No, year-round only
Hotel / Motel Vouchers	☐ Yes ☐ No
Address of Shelter	_____ _____ ☐ Scattered Site(s) ☐Confidential
Contact Person's Full Name	
Contact Person's Office Address	_____ _____
Contact Person's Phone Number	
Contact Person's Email Address	

Important: See "Family" and "Non-Family" definitions on page 3.

Total Number of Emergency Shelter Beds Available on 1/22/09	Number of Units / Beds Available for Families on 1/22/09	Number of Units / Beds Available for Non-Family Households on 1/22/09
1. _____ (Total = Line 1b+Line 1d)	1a. _____ units 1b. _____ beds	1c. _____ units 1d. _____ beds

Homeless Population Served by Type	Emergency Shelter Count - 1/22/09
2. Number of Homeless **Families**: 2a. Number of Persons in Homeless **Families**:	2. _____ households 2a. _____ persons

3. Number of Homeless **Non-Family Households**:
    (e.g., *Unaccompanied Individuals, Couples,*
    Unaccompanied Youth, Households with only adults)
 	
    3a. Number of Persons in Homeless
        Non-Family Households:
	3. _____ households
	
	3a. _____ persons

4. Total Number of Homeless **Persons:**	4. _____ (Total = Line 2a + Line 3a)

5. Total Number of Homeless Persons by
Gender:
        5a. Male
        5b. Female
	5a.
	5b. _____

6. Total Number of Homeless Persons by   **Age**:
        6a. Ages 0 -17
        6b. Ages 18-20
        6c. Ages 21-30
        6d. Ages 31-40
        6e. Ages 41-50
        6f. Ages 51-60
        6g. Ages 61+
	6a.
	6b.
	6c.
	6d.
	6e.
	6f.
	6g. _____

| 7. Total Number of Homeless Persons by   **Race**:
        7a. White
        7b. Black/African American
        7c. Asian
        7d. American Indian/Alaskan Native
        7e. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific
              Islander
        7f. American Indian/Alaskan Native
              & White
        7g. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific
              Islander & White
        7h. Asian & White
        7i. Black/African American & White
        7j. American Indian/Alaskan Native   &
              Black/African American
        7k. Other Multi-Racial | Total #   # of Hispanic
by Race   (Subset of Total)
7a. _____
7b. _____
7c. _____
7d. _____

7e. _____

7f. _____

7g. _____
7h. _____
7i. _____

7j. _____
7k. _____ |

Homeless Subpopulations - Total Number of **Persons** Served with the following Characteristics (persons may have multiple characteristics)	Emergency Shelter Count - 1/22/09
8. Chronically Homeless (See definition at top of Form B)	8. _____ (Refer to Form B, Line 2)
9. Serious Mental Illness	9.
10. Chronic Substance Abuse	10.
11. Persons with HIV/AIDS	11.
12. Total Number of Persons with any Disability (Mental illness, chronic substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, physical disability, etc.)	12.
13. Veterans	13.
14. Victims of Domestic Violence	14. _____
15. Unaccompanied Youth (Age 17 years or younger)	15.

FORM A Definitions

GEOCODE – Each geographic area in Cook County is given a 6-digit geocode. If your program falls into more than one geocode, choose the one geocode where the program is primarily located. Geocodes for suburban Cook County are as follows:

Geographic Area Name	6-digit Geocode		Geographic Area Name	6-digit Geocode
Suburban Cook County (other than those listed here)	179031		Mt. Prospect	174734
Arlington Heights	170222		Oak Lawn	175148
Berwyn	170606		Oak Park	175154
Chicago Heights	171302		Palatine	175364
Cicero	171332		Schaumburg	176300
Des Plaines	171776		Skokie	176498
Hoffman Estates	173228			

FAMILIES – A family is a household composed of two or more related persons, at least one of whom is a child, and that child is accompanied by an adult or juvenile parent. For example, a parenting teen and her child are included in Families.

NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS – Unaccompanied single adults, unaccompanied youth, married and unmarried couples, and any other household that is all adults or all children. For example, a household with a father and son who are both older than 18 are included in Non-Family Households if there are no minor children in the household.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

FORM B

The Cook County Continuum of Care is requesting additional information regarding the chronically homeless population in suburban Cook County to assess the specific housing and service needs for this population as defined below.

Chronic Homeless Definition: A chronically homeless person is a person sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. living on the streets) and/or living in an emergency shelter, that is:

      a. **an unaccompanied homeless individual with a <u>disabling condition</u>.** *(A disabling condition is defined as a "diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work of perform one or more activities of daily living");* **and**

      b. **who has either been continuously homeless <u>for a year or more</u>; or**

      c. **has <u>had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years</u>.**

Note: Families can not be defined as chronically homeless, only <u>single</u>, <u>disabled</u> <u>individuals</u> are counted.

Chronically Homeless Population	Emergency Shelter Count - 1/22/09
1. Number of homeless **individuals** reported on Form A, line 3a:	1.
2. Number of homeless **individuals** listed on line 1 above who fit the definition of *Chronically Homeless Persons***:**	2.

3. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* by **Gender**:
    3a. Male
    3b. Female
	3a.
	3b. _____

4. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* by **Age**:
    4a. Ages 0 -17
    4b. Ages 18-20
    4c. Ages 21-30
    4d. Ages 31-40
    4e. Ages 41-50
    4f. Ages 51-60
    4g. Ages 61+
	4a.
	4b.
	4c.
	4d.
	4e.
	4f.
	4g.

Chronically Homeless Population	Emergency Shelter Count - 1/22/09
5. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* Presenting Disability by **Type of Disability**: (Note: persons may have multiple characteristics) 　　5a. Mental Illness 　　5b. Physical Condition 　　5c. Developmental Disability 　　5d. Substance Abuse	 5a. 5b. 5c. 5d.
6. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* with an **Income**:	6.
7. Total Number *of Chronically Homeless Persons* who have an **Income** from the following **Sources**: 　　7a. Current Employment 　　7b. Social Security 　　7c. SSI 　　7d. SSDI 　　7e. General Assistance 　　7f. Unemployment 　　7g. Worker's Compensation 　　7h. Pension 　　7i. Other:	 7a. 7b. 7c. 7d. 7e. 7f. 7g. 7h. 7i.
8. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* with **No Income**:	8. _____

Please indicate in your professional estimate, what type of housing would best meet the needs of the Chronically Homeless counted in your Emergency Shelter on the night of 01/22/09.

For **Definitions** related to FORM B - QUESTIONS 9-12, see page 6.

9. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* needing a **SAFE HAVEN**:	9.
10. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* needing **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**:	10.
11. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* needing **HARM REDUCTION HOUSING**:	11.
12. Total Number of *Chronically Homeless Persons* needing **OTHER TYPE OF HOUSING**:	12. Housing Type: 　　Number of Units:

FORM B – Definitions

SAFE HAVEN – A Safe Haven is housing designed to serve hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who are on the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services. Safe Havens are not programs for homeless people who can be easily engaged in mental health services and who are ready for residential settings, such as group homes, permanent supportive housing, or independent living. A Safe Haven is not a hospital diversion program, nor is it a hospital discharge program for persons at-risk of homelessness. And, although the length of stay is not defined, it is not permanent housing.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING - Permanent supportive housing ("supportive housing") is safe affordable rental housing with supportive services for low-income or homeless people with severe mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS or other disability. Permanent supportive housing provides a permanent home at an affordable rent along with the help people need to live on their own. Permanent supportive housing programs offer rent subsidies to make housing affordable. They also offer many supportive services to help eligible families and individuals live on their own.

HARM REDUCTION MODEL – Harm Reduction is an approach to looking at and responding to drug use that does not require a participant to make a commitment to abstain from their substance of choice prior to them receiving help. The objective is to provide services that help persons manage their addictions and health without abstinence being the only measurement for success. Harm Reduction Housing does not require a client to abstain from their substance of choice to be eligible, but the client does have the capacity or functioning level to live independently.

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BLANK PAGE FOR MAILER #1 – PAGE 2

Consumer Interview / Focus Group Session

Instructions: Please answer each question as thoroughly as possible. Fill in the basic info below and provide answers to each question on the attached sheet of paper. Please contact Jessica Aleksy, 2009 Count Coordinator, with any questions/comments. She can be reached via phone at 708.345.4035 (x 05) or via email at jessica@suburbancook.com. Please mail all completed paperwork to Jessica Aleksy at: Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, 1107 S. Mannheim Rd., Suite 304, Westchester, IL 60154. **Thank you!!**

Date & Time: December 2, 2008 – 8:00pm

Location: 1st United Church of Oak Park (West Suburban PADS)

# of Participants: 6

Given By: Jessica Aleksy

Assisted By: Sherri Hackett

Questions:

1. Do you have a regular place to sleep each night?

2. If Yes, where will that be?

    -Probes: Do you always sleep in a shelter? Do you "double-up" with family or friends?

3. If No, where will you go?

4. Where do you most often see people who have no shelter for the night?

    -Probes: Abandoned buildings? 24-hour locations? Under Bridges? At metra stops? Etc.

5. Does this change in January, when it is even colder outside?

6. Do you use day-services or long-term services?

7. If Yes, what agency do you use?

    -Probes: Where do you get food / clothing / medicine? How do you get around? What other places do

    you frequent (not specifically service-related, ie Starbucks, liquor stores)?

8. If No, where do you get extra help?

9. Would you mind if I tested our 2009 Count survey with you?

10. If No – Go to Question 12.

11. If Yes – Ask the following:

    -Was it easy to understand?

    -Should we take anything out?

    -Should we add anything?

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Consumer Interview / Focus Group Session

1. ☐ All Yes   ☐ All No   ☒ Mixture Yes & No

2. Yes Responses: 2 participants (a married couple) stay at the husband's mother's house on the weekend – they also store most of their belongings there when they are on the streets

3. No Responses: West Suburban PADS locations (Oak Park, etc.), BEDS Plus (La Grange)

4. Riding the Blue Line (blue line runs 24-hours to O'Hare), the 24-hour McDonalds on Harlem (Oak Park), the bridge at Harlem & I290 (Oak Park), all White Castles (all are 24-hour and some have eating/lobby areas), the Oak Park Laundromat (at East & Madison, Oak Park), West Suburban Fellowship (at 7438 Harrison St., Oak Park), Thatcher Woods (on 1st Ave, Oak Park), McNeil Hospital (Berwyn)

5. Yes – the bridges and parks are usually empty in the wintertime

6. ☐ All Yes   ☐ All No   ☒ Mixture Yes & No

7. Yes Responses: The walk-in ministry at 1st United Church, the West Suburban PADS Support Center

8. No Responses: A lot of people work during the day and will not need day services because they are making a living wage (West Suburban PADS will even do wake-up calls earlier than 6-7am for those who need to get to work in the mornings)

9. ☒ All Yes   ☐ All No   ☐ Mixture Yes & No

10. If No – Go to Question 12

11. If Yes – Ask the following:
    -Was it easy to understand? Response: Yes
    -Should we take anything out? Response: No
    -Should we add anything? Response: Yes – we should ask whether or not the person WANTS to be in a shelter (a lot of people would rather be outside at night), we should also ask if they are getting the services they need on the streets

12. Participants suggested that we get a list of the warming centers in Suburban Cook County in case it is very cold on January 22nd. They suggested that most people who would normally be outside at night may be in a warming shelter if it gets too cold.

13. Notes on the Session: All participants were addicts and spoke openly about their experiences on the streets. They were enthusiastic to help. I asked Sherri if any of the participants would be viable volunteers – she will follow-up.

BLANK PAGE FOR NORTH REGION "HOT SPOTS" MAP

BLANK PAGE FOR WEST REGION "HOT SPOTS" MAP

BLANK PAGE FOR SOUTH REGION "HOT SPOTS" MAP

Homeless Count Survey

Please fill complete this survey for those homeless persons who are willing to be surveyed.

Count all persons whom you determine to be homeless people in the public space.

INTRODUCTION:

"Hello, my name is (NAME) and I am a volunteer for suburban Cook County. We're asking everyone a few questions about their housing situation tonight. Your answers are entirely confidential. Would you be willing to participate?"

    -If **No**, then fill out **Homeless Count Tally Sheet** only.

    -If **Yes**, then continue:

1. Where do you plan to sleep tonight?

    _____

2. What is your gender? *(If obvious, do not ask.)*
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

3. What is your birthdate?
- ☐ Answered: _____
- ☐ No / Refused

4. How do you identify yourself racially / ethnically?
(If multi-racial, check all that apply.)
- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

4. Are you Hispanic?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

5. Have you ever been in the U.S. Military?
- ☐ Yes (When? _____)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

6. How many separate episodes of homelessness have you experienced in the last 3 years?
- ☐ 1 (This is the first episode)
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4+ (How many? _____)
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

7. How long have you been homeless during this current episode?
- ☐ Days   (How many? _____)
- ☐ Weeks   (How many? _____)
- ☐ Months (How many? _____)
- ☐ Years   (How many? _____)
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

8. Have you experienced (or received treatment for) any of the following? *(Check all that apply.)*
- ☐ Mental Illness   ☐ Domestic Abuse
- ☐ Alcohol Abuse   ☐ Drug Abuse
- ☐ Physical Disability ☐ Developmental Disability
- ☐ HIV / AIDS   ☐ Refused / Unknown
- ☐ Other: _____

9. Do you have family members / friends with you?
- ☐ Yes *(Complete survey for each family member)*
- ☐ No
- ☐ Refused / Unknown

10. "May we have your initials so that we can make sure not to record your answers more than once?"
- ☐ Yes (Initials: _____)
- ☐ No / Refused

11. Location (Please list the nearest address / nearest cross street / known location)

    [ ]

12. Comments (Please list any distinguishing features, important observations, etc.)

    [ ]

CONCLUSION:

"Thank you for your time. Again, all the information you have given us tonight is confidential. Good night."

(Make sure to give each person you encounter a gift bag!)

BLANK PAGE FOR STREET COUNT TALLY SHEET

2009 Homeless Count
-Volunteer Street Count Training-

I.   **Sign-In & Material Distribution (7:30pm – 7:45pm)**

II.   **Welcome & Introductions (7:45pm – 7:50 pm)**

A.   Welcome all volunteers and thank them for their service to the 2009 Count.

B.   Trainer's Note: make sure that all volunteers / consumers have signed in, have verified their information, and that all Count Team Leaders have received their Clip Boards.

C.   Ask each person to introduction himself / herself (if time does not permit, ask only each Count Team Leader to introduce himself / herself).

III.   **The Interview Process and Paperwork (7:50pm – 8:00pm)**

A.   Gift bags: The gift bags are to be given to <u>all</u> homeless people, regardless of their cooperation in the survey process. They are <u>not</u> to be used as a bargaining tool. Also, remember to point out the Information & Referral Card inside to the client.

B.   Survey Questions: Review all and discuss those that may be sensitive questions:
1. Race / Ethnicity
2. VA Status
3. Physical / Mental Illness
4. Substance Abuse
5. Initials & DOB

IV.   **Training (8:00pm – 8:30pm)**

A.   General facts about the homeless in your (specific) region

B.   Some common characteristics of homeless people
1. Thought disorders: Hallucinations, vacant look, poor communication skills, poor hygiene, poor eye contact, poor coordination.
2. Mood disorders: Depressed, flat affect, slow to respond, simply don't care
3. Personality disorders: In and out of jail, use jail house behavior, act intimidating, gut instinct responses, may view danger.
4. Substance abuse disorders: Most obvious is intoxication, but they may also be using hard drugs with additional side effects. They may still be able to answer these questions but if you feel uncomfortable, stop the interview immediately and remove yourself (and your team) from the situation.

C.   Engagement
1. Approach: Only 2 volunteers should approach a consumer. Determine in advance which person will interview and which person will record the responses. The other members of the team should remain away from the client so that the client is not overwhelmed. The other members should survey the situation and keep an eye out for any signs that the situation may become unsafe.
2. Approach the client as if you are entering their home: Be respectful and aware that you are in their personal space (the place they eat/sleep/etc.)
3. Introduce yourself: "Hello, my name is (use first name only) and I am a volunteer for Suburban Cook County. We are asking everyone a few questions about their housing situation tonight. Your answers are entirely confidential."
4. You may also wish to add: "We also have some gift bags with resources to share with you." OR "This questionnaire should only take 10 minutes." OR "Please know that you may skip any questions that you do not like, and also that you may end the interview at any time."
5. Be aware: At all times, be aware of your own attitude, your body language, the messages you are sending, what the other person is saying, and any changes in the level of tension or dangerousness during the survey.

6. Remain safe: Remember that the client may be very distressed, experiencing extremely intense emotions and feeling immediate needs – keep yours (and your team's) safety in mind at all times.

7. Stay on task: Set time limits on responses in a respectful manner – many of the people you encounter may wish to tell you about their entire background, so keep the survey moving in a way that does not upset the person being surveyed.

8. The 1st priority is the Count, the 2nd priority is the Interview: Therefore, do not wake anyone who is sleeping, do not begin or continue with an interview if you are concerned about your safety, and do not force a consumer to answer questions.

D. Safety

1. Stay with your Count Team at all times.

2. Be cautious around individuals who seemed to be intoxicated or showing signs of substance use – these can be risk factors for violence.

3. Take only reasonable precautions and use your instincts.

4. Be aware of your surroundings including the neighborhood.

5. Allow enough time to interview – rushing an interview can cause violent responses.

6. Do not be pushy when trying to get answers – understand that the person may not understand clearly, may not be able to express himself or herself clearly, etc. Use your best judgement and respect the answers that are given.

7. What to do if a situation becomes difficult

   a. Stop the interview immediately.

   b. Acknowledge the person's frustration/irritability and ask if they would like to stop the interview. You do not need to respond to the content of the anger, but you can respond to the feelings/emotions.

   c. Avoid making the situation worse. Do not challenge the client or attempt to WIN the conversation, simply help to alleviate their anger.

   d. The louder the client's voice gets, the softer your voice should get.

   e. Allow enough space and distance with difficult clients.

   f. Know when to stop trying. Simply thank the client for their help and remove yourself from the situation.

V. 2009 Methodology

A. Maps & Hot Spots: Point out the large, color-coded map and discuss the regions to be covered by each team, as well as the smaller maps & hot spot lists for each Count Team.

B. Full Coverage: Discuss the purpose of methodology and how it is done (i.e., once all hot spots have been covered, teams should attempt to travel as many safe roads as possible in their assigned region in order to cover their area as "fully" as possible). All Count Teams should check in with the Coordinator / Dispatcher for more areas to cover if finished with their assigned area before 2:00am.

C. PADS Availability: Ask regional PADS person to discuss this piece here (North – Todd Stull, West – Lynda Schueler, South – Mike Wasserberg)

D. Contact Info: Announce the Coordinator / Dispatcher's name & direct phone number; ask all Team Leaders & Consumers to write it down and keep it on their person

VI. Role Play Exercises and Q&A Session (8:30pm – 8:45pm)

A. Count Teams should complete a couple "role play" exercises with their team.

B. Count Teams should be encouraged to ask the trainers questions and discuss the process thoroughly prior to deployment.

VII. Count Team Assignment & Deployment (9:00PM)

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"HELPFUL HINTS"

2009 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 **Jessica Aleksy** at:

Phone: 708.345.4035, ext. 05

Fax: 708.345.7855

Email: jessica@suburbancook.org

Please return all survey charts by **February 12th, 2009** to:

Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County

1107 S. Mannheim Rd, Suite 304

Westchester, IL 60154.

Instructions for Completing the Survey:

1) We highly recommend attending one of the Training Sessions in your region prior to January 22nd, 2009. 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 included page for dates, times and locations of Training Sessions in each suburban Cook County region.

2) To begin using the survey, ask every person to whom you provide services between the weeks of January 22nd, 2009 and February 5th, 2009 the following question: "Where did you sleep on Thursday night, January 22nd?" If they give any answer other than their own apartment/home/etc., include them on the survey chart.

3) Complete the survey with as much information as possible. Please write legibly.

4) The "OPTIONAL" question can be answered by any person willing to provide the information. If the person being interviewed does not seem content with providing the information, you may skip this question in the survey.

5) 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.

6) Please make as many copies of the survey chart as necessary.

<u>Frequently asked Questions:</u>

Q: When do we complete the surveys?
> **A:** The surveys should be started Thursday, January 22nd, 2009 and completed no later than Thursday, February 5th, 2009. Surveys may be completed at any time of day during those times. Complete as many surveys as possible.

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 "Birthdate" sections? Are those really necessary?
> **A:** The homeless person's initials and birthdate 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. **Birthdate**, 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 can each be counted as their own separate survey entry. Please make sure to note in the margin, however, how that information was retrieved for each family member (ie, "information provided by father/husband").

Q: What if the homeless person wishes to provide information about other homeless persons with whom he or she is acquainted? Can we include those persons even if we are unable to survey each person individually?
> **A:** Just as with family members, if the person being surveyed is willing to provide the information, each additional person can be counted as a separate entry. Again, please make a note in the margin explaining how the information was retrieved (ie, "information by Joe Smith, a friend").

Q: 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 – please use your own judgement in doing so.

Q: Can we add additional information that we think may be pertinent?
> **A:** YES! Anything that may be important (questions or concerns from the homeless person, other characteristics not specifically asked for by the survey questions, etc.) should be noted if possible. Simply write them in the space provided at the bottom, in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper to be submitted with the survey chart. (Please remember to put your name and contact information on any separate sheets so that we may follow-up.)

Q: Is this information confidential?
> **A:** **YES!!** Please inform every person surveyed that the information provided is absolutely confidential! The answers provided are used solely for the purpose of bettering our services for the homeless population with the ultimate goal of alleviating and ending homelessness in suburban Cook County. Information will not be used to find or contact the homeless persons surveyed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!!

BLANK PAGE FOR "2007 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" FILE

BLANK PAGE FOR "2009 – HOMELESS COUNT DATA" FILE

BLANK PAGE FOR RESULTS SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER SUMMARY – PART Ia

BLANK PAGE FOR RESULTS SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER SUMMARY – PART Ib

BLANK PAGE FOR RESULTS SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER SUMMARY – PART II

BLANK PAGE FOR 2009 VOLUNTEER FLYER

BLANK PAGE FOR "FAQ: VOLUNTEERING FOR THE COUNT" FILE

October 3, 2008

Dear College or University Friend,

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is looking for dedicated volunteers to assist with our January 2009 Homeless Count. Attached you will find a "Volunteer Description" detailing the event and what our volunteers will do.

I have contacted you – faculty, staff and student leaders of local academic institutions – to request your help in recruiting the dozens of volunteers necessary for this large-scale project. As a current graduate student in Community & Economic Development, I understand intimately the invaluable nature of hands-on experience for students and their professors alike. Of course, myriad fields of study may benefit from such an endeavor. For example, programs in community & economic development, human & social services, healthcare, political science, anthropology & sociology, psychology, minority studies, poverty & welfare, housing & urban development, and of course those students and faculty involved in campus-based community outreach & volunteering organizations.

I urge you to spread the word! Please pass this information on to other faculty, staff and student leaders that may be interested in our homeless count. Please also note that I will be happy to visit your campus and hold an informational session for those persons who may be interested in participating. I can make available hard copies of our "Volunteer Description" and other information for flyers and handouts as well.

Please visit our 2009 Count website at www.freewebs.com/2009homelesscount. You can also visit the Alliance homepage at www.suburbancook.org to learn more about our agency. I hope that you will consider this impacting event as an opportunity for volunteer service, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future!

Warmest wishes,

Jessica E.M. Aleksy

Research Intern
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
1107 S. Mannheim Road, Suite 304, Westchester, IL 60154
P: 708.345.4035 (x 05) / F: 708.345.7855
jessica@suburbancook.org
www.suburbancook.org

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

October 14, 2008

Dear Friends, Family & Co-Workers,

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is coordinating its 3rd Bi-Annual Homeless Count on January 22, 2009. We are in the process of recruiting volunteers for our "Count Teams" as well as looking for businesses and agencies to partner with for this important event. Attached you will find a "Count Description" pdf and a "Volunteer Description" pdf – both detail the Homeless Count event and what our volunteers do on their Count Teams.

We have contacted you to request your help in supporting this large-scale project! Are you available to volunteer? Does your business support charitable events of this nature? Do you have information or suggestions that will make our Homeless Count even more successful? We hope that you will take a look at the attachments provided and consider the myriad possibilities for your involvement!

And I urge you to spread the word! Please pass this information on to other friends, family members or co-workers that may be interested in our 2009 Homeless Count. And please feel free to contact me anytime prior to the Homeless Count via the contact information listed below. I will be happy to provide you with more information, answer your questions, and offer suggestions for involvement.

Please visit our 2009 Count website at www.freewebs.com/2009homelesscount. You can also visit the Alliance homepage at www.suburbancook.org to learn more about our agency. I hope that you will consider this impacting event as an opportunity for partnership and/or volunteer service, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future!

Warmest wishes,

Jessica E.M. Aleksy

Research Intern
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
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jessica@suburbancook.org
www.suburbancook.org

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

October 20, 2008

Dear Forest Preserve Directors,

I am emailing to inform you of the upcoming 2009 Homeless Count coordinated by the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County. This Count takes place every two years, as required by HUD, for the purpose of research, continued funding, increased awareness, and evaluation of human services in the homelessness fields. This year's Count will take place on January 22nd, 2009.

Forest preserves are an "untapped" location for us - as we cannot send our volunteers into forest preserves after dark. We are very aware, however, that forest preserves may house numerous homeless persons, even during the winter months. It is for that reason that I am reaching out to you and those resources you may have at your disposal. I hope that you will consider contacting me at the Alliance so that we may discuss the ways in which the forest preserve police may help us to have a more impacting Unsheltered Count this year.

Please visit our 2009 Count website at www.freewebs.com/2009homelesscount. You can also visit the Alliance homepage at www.suburbancook.org to learn more about our agency. Please email/contact me at your convenience to discuss this opportunity for partnership. I look forward to working with you!

Warmest wishes,

Jessica E.M. Aleksy

Research Intern
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
1107 S. Mannheim Road, Suite 304, Westchester, IL 60154
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"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

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BLANK PAGE FOR VOLUNTEER UPDATE (11.07.08) – PAGE 1

What's Happening?

2009 Count Update to CBSA's

Issue 3 – November 7, 2008

Hello CBSA & CoCD Members!

Plans & Preparations are going well! We had a busy October with a lot of progress and I hope to see even greater results from November! I have enjoyed working with each CBSA and, of course, the CoCD Committee and genuinely appreciate the support and encouragement I have received from members! Thank you again for all your hard work for the 2009 Count!

As always, please feel free to contact me anytime during our Count planning. I will do my very best to stay in touch with each CBSA as updates pertaining to each region are available.

GENERAL PROGRESS:

-COUNTDOWN TO THE COUNT: 75 Days

-TOTAL VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED: 45+

-**TOTAL CONSUMERS RECRUITED**: 0

-TOTAL HOT SPOTS LOCATED: 10+

-WEBSITE!!!!: We have created a website for the 2009 Homeless Count! After a lot of work, the website now serves as the central hub for "Everything Count!" You can view it directly by going to www.freewebs.com/2009homelesscount or by clicking on the "2009 Homeless Count" link on the Alliance website at www.suburbancook.org. You will find everything you need to know / use for the Count there!

-Volunteer Updates: The first Volunteer Update goes out today, November 7th to all unaffiliated volunteers, as well as volunteers who have signed up via the CBSA & CoCD meetings. To sign yourself up or to sign up interested employees/partners/clients/volunteers from your agency, contact me (or go online to the 2009 Count website and sign up directly at the "Contact Us" section).

-Monthly Timeline: As always, please find attached our updated Count timeline - items highlighted in the timeline have been completed.

-Coordinators: Also as always, please find attached an updated Organizational Chart w/ a second page describing Responsibilities for each coordinator position.

-**Donations**: Local businesses have already started to send in donations for gift bags. Please find attached the Donor Mailing List of businesses that received requests from the Alliance and the first donations. Also, as donations are brought into the Alliance, I will be distributing them into boxes for each region. Gift Bag Coordinators should speak with me about picking up those boxes monthly (or more as necessary). Please find attached an updated list of the items distributed to each region by myself. Finally, I would like to extend a special **THANK YOU** to Maine South High School for their donation of over 1,000 items!!!

AHAND MEETING (10.09.08):

-**Count Coordinator**: Beth Lindley

-**Volunteers Recruited**: None

-**Consumers Recruited**: None

    -**Consumer Payment**: $50 (flat-rate)

    -**Refreshments**: Pizza (to be paid by CBSA)

-**Hot Spots Designated**: None

-**Other Progress**: Todd Stull using socks for the gift "bags" so that all items are compact – we are looking into that possibility. He also suggested laminating some (if not all) I&R cards to avoid damage from rain/dirt/etc – this may be a good consideration for all CBSA's. The committee motioned and approved flat-rate payment for consumers as well as necessary payment for pizza during the training hour before the actual Count begins. Mary Schurder suggested that agencies ask clients about potential hot spots to help build the list this year.

SSCH MEETING (10.16..08):

-**Count Coordinator**: Carl Wolf & Kim Millender (THANKS CARL & KIM!)

-**Volunteers Recruited**: 7 – YAY!

-**Consumers Recruited**: None

    -**Consumer Payment**: TBD

    -**Refreshments**: TBD

-**Hot Spots Designated**: 4+ (2 Harvey, 1 Robbins, 1 Chicago Ridge, multiple Chicago Heights)

-**Other Progress**: The Police Committee has drafted a letter to be sent out to all chiefs of police departments (to include the Count Description flyer). After mailing out these letters, personal contact will be made with the police chiefs by the Police Committee closer to the January 22nd date. The council also noted that all 24-hour fast-food places (ie Denny's, McDonalds) should be included as "B-List" hot spots for Count Teams to check after all primary hot spots had been completed on Count night.

-**Full Coverage**: After discussing with Erin Wilson at Abt Consulting, it was determined that extrapolation from a full coverage Count would require too many characteristic markers. Thus, Erin suggested and the staff/committee agreed that we would focus on an "as-close-to-full-coverage-as-possible" methodology in those areas with several hot spots so as to best represent the neediest areas. Extrapolation will not be used.

-**Service Sites**: Erin Wilson also suggested that we "beef up" our approach to the Service Site survey which is completed for 2 weeks after the Count (for those who may have been homeless but were not found the night of the Count). For that reason, our second Bulk Mailer to service sites will not only include a newly-revised survey and instructions, but will also list training dates in each region for service sites to attend and get first-hand experience in working with the survey.

-**Focus Groups**: The committee approved the staff's proposal to utilize interview / focus-group sessions at local shelters to speak with consumers and get their feedback on the Count. Topics to be discussed include: potential Hot Spots, popular Service Sites, and input on the 2009 Unsheltered Count Survey and Service Site Surveys.

-**Partnerships**: The Committee provided staff with some additional resources for potential partnership. I will be following up with the following persons/groups/organizations to pursue this possibility: Richard Waszak (Chief of Police at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County), local Suburban Cook County Library Associations, local Fraternal Order of Police groups, and General Aid Coordinators in each Cook County township.

WSCH MEETING (11.06.08):

-**Count Coordinator**: Teri Curran "& Co."

-**Volunteers Recruited**: 8

-**Consumers Recruited**: None

    -**Consumer Payment**: TBD

    -**Refreshments**: TBD

-**Hot Spots Designated**: 6

-**Other Progress**: Payment to consumers and for refreshments will be determined at the December meeting when the Council decides on membership dues. The December meeting will also act as the initial Gift Bag creation date – this may be a good idea for all CBSA's.

UPCOMING:

-11.13.08: Next AHAND meeting (9:30am at Catholic Charities, Des Plaines)

-11.20.08: Next SSCH meeting (2:00pm, 211 W 147th Street, Dixmoor)

-11.21.08: Next 2009 Count Email Update

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Alliance Annual Event

- Proposal Statement -

I.   Introduction

Annual events have long been considered "a drop in the bucket" for most median size nonprofits. Many argue that dinner dances, galas and performances may be entertaining, but rarely produce great results for an organization's mission. Furthermore, annual events often require months of planning, hours of work by dedicated committee members and staff, and are typically cost-associated. So what's the real point in holding one, right?

A new generation of academics and professionals alike, however, are revisiting the comfy realm of annual events. Studies are showing that the challenges facing today's nonprofits may be more greatly alleviated by these "small" annual events than previously thought. In fact, many theorize that these annual events can affect the future success of the organization's mission in far greater ways than traditional marketing or outreach.

Thus, this proposal statement will make a case for the creation and continuance of an annual event for the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County.

II.   Problem Statement

Over the course of 2009 alone, the Alliance has faced several large challenges – retaining federal funding through the NOFA process, completing a successful Homeless Count, investigating the feasibility of a centralized Call Center, piloting new tools for more accurate Outcome & Evaluation, and preparing for changes in the size and scale of our homelessness population in the face of a downturned economy. Each of these challenges has brought with it the realization of several key needs and, most importantly, has forced us to recognize other, new issues on the not-so-distant horizon. Those are:

1. **Funding Streams are Diminishing**: As the economy struggles, funding will continue to be cut until the U.S. "gets back on its feet." Many economists suggest that the economy may not rebound until 2012 and, even then, it may never regain its previous momentum of the late '90s and early '00s. Currently, foundations and corporations (who represent the smallest percentage of donors, but account for the largest monetary portion of donations to nonprofits in the U.S.) are struggling to continue their financial support of current grantees – and virtually no foundations or corporations are accepting new grantees at this time. Likewise, individuals (who represent the largest percentage of donors, but account for a smaller

monetary portion of donations to nonprofits in the U.S.) are also struggling to continue their support to their current charities and, therefore, few households can provide any additional support to new causes.

2. **Homeless Numbers are Likely to Rise**: We, along with others in the field, have theorized that our 2009 Homeless Count numbers are reflecting a one to two year lag behind the economy. Thus, the 2011 Homeless Count numbers are likely to show increases in homelessness across the board – individuals and families, Chronically Homeless and subpopulations. Even now, many agencies are showing increased numbers in persons requesting or receiving assistance – especially at the preventative and emergency levels. As employment rises and evictions and foreclosures continue, more and more men, women and children will find themselves without a home. Furthermore, those persons that are currently "doubled-up" with friends and family are soon likely to overstay their welcome, and therefore, we may see a rapid increase in the number of Unsheltered Homeless persons.

3. **There is Demand for New Solutions**: Even as *resources* are decreasing, *need* will continue to increase. With the rise of a new administration in the federal government and discussions of a different view of the future, the communities that we serve are demanding new solutions to old problems. We will be challenged to seek out possibilities and opportunities that we may not have previously considered. Better data collection, evaluation, training and provision of services are absolutely imperative. The creation of a centralized Call Center and the implementation of a comprehensive Outcome & Evaluation Tool, for example, will be imperative to address increasing need in the near future.

4. **Partners are Hard to Find**: When the money pot gets smaller, competition amongst partners gets bigger... and what was once *best* for the "greater *good*" is only *good* for an agency's "own *best* interest". Thus, collaboration must be encouraged, fostered, even created, to avoid losing sight of the bigger picture.

5. **No One Works for Free**: While studies have shown that individual donations remain rather constant in times of economic downturn, these same studies also show that volunteerism drops dramatically in times of recession. And as funding decreases and agencies struggle to sustain day-to-day functioning, it will become increasingly difficult to recruit a volunteer base. Simply put, when no one is making enough money to survive, no one is willing to work for free!

III. Goals Statement

There are four primary goals associated with the creation of an annual event for the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, those are:

1. **Raising Local Awareness**: Several recent projects have proven that few members in our communities, and even more shocking, few of the non-member agencies in our field, are aware of whom the Alliance is and what we do. Quite blatantly stated: if no one knows who you are, no one is going to care about what you do. Just like for-profit companies, "branding" is an important element of a nonprofit's success. By strengthening (or creating!) recognition of the Alliance in the communities that we serve, we are also increasing awareness of our member agencies, our homeless clients, and our collective mission to end homelessness. A successful annual event, above all else, provides a great atmosphere in which to "brand" an organization and, thus, to raise local awareness about an organization's cause.

2. **Building Social Capital**: We are all aware that the homelessness field is not comprised solely of homelessness providers. The homelessness field is a social service field and, therefore, it often finds itself fitting rather comfortably with other related fields – health services, employment services, veteran's affairs, etc. And yet, even this scope of "homelessness services" is rather limited! What about *everyone* that may be affected by homelessness? Our list quickly lengthens – school districts, law enforcement, food pantries, township and municipal offices, child care providers, park districts, LGBQT communities, economic development councils, legal associations, all members of our communities... and the list goes on. Social Capital Theory suggests that people seek out networks in which to be a part voluntarily. Furthermore, studies on social capital show that these networks are capable of extensive collaborations, partnerships and unified works. What is lacking in today's society, however, is the impetus to create these networks. A successful annual event has the potential to bring together these vast networks of people and, in effect, build the social capital needed to address problems with a more comprehensive, complete outlook.

3. **Recognizing Partners**: The Homeless Count alone utilized dozens of community, nonprofit and for-profit partners and hundreds of volunteers – including directors and staff of our member agencies and, equally important, their current and past consumers. Sadly, the only recognition that these partners and volunteers received was in the form of a one-page thank you letter and, possibly, verbal praise at follow-up meetings and presentations. Regardless of the selflessness of the volunteer or partner, the most important need in the volunteer-agency relationship is recognition. Any project manager or volunteer recruiter will

argue that a "thank you", as genuine as it might be, is simply not enough. Partners, volunteers, and even our own member agencies deserve recognition for their time, energy, skills and work. Moreover, this recognition is vital to maintaining those partners and volunteers over time and developing an extensive partner/volunteer base. A successful annual event can provide the recognition necessary to sustain relationships with partners and volunteers over time and can help to develop an even greater partner/volunteer base for years to come.

4. **Fundraising**: We all want to raise money and, for that reason, fundraising was long considered the primary goal of any annual event. History has shown, however, that the fundraising goal often underwhelmed. Funds don't just raise themselves and a good annual event to fundraise is hard to produce. That is why the previous three goals are so vitally important – without a focus on those three goals, the fundraising goal will never come to fruition. Quite simply, when you raise awareness of your cause, build social capital in your community and recognize those that help from year-to-year, funds *will* get raised. Studies on fundraising trends have shown that, especially now, building and maintaining relations is more important to creating and sustaining a donor base than marketing technique or the scale of our outreach. Thus, while aspects of any successful annual event can, and most certainly should, be geared towards fundraising, the other objectives of an annual event will produce far greater fundraising results than setting your eye solely on the fundraising goal.

IV.   Options Statement

Several options exist for the creation of an Alliance annual event. Most importantly, we want to take into consideration our member agencies who undoubtedly hold some form of fundraising event on a yearly basis. For that reason, it is essential to keep in mind not only what is best for the Alliance, but what is best for its member agencies. Above all else, an annual event should not cause a sense of competition between our already existing partners and, therefore, open discussion and collaboration is key. For this reason, we suggest one, or a similar combination, of the options below:

1. **An Alliance Annual Event, with a Portion of All Proceeds to be Donated to Pre-Selected Member Agencies:** This option presents the least amount of collaboration, but perhaps the most feasibility for creation of the annual event. In addition, this option presents a reasonably good possibility for large proceeds. This option would require work done almost entirely by Alliance staff and committee members, but would highlight one or more agency(ies) each year to receive special recognition and, of course, a percentage of all proceeds.

2. **A Partnered Event Between the Alliance and a Pre-Selected Member Agency, with Proceeds to be Shared:** This option presents a greater amount of collaboration and also a reasonably feasibility for creation of the annual event. In addition, this option presents an even greater possibility for large proceeds – as the number of possible attendees would be greatly increased. This option would require partnership work done by Alliance staff and committee members, in conjunction with a pre-selected member agency. This option would provide special recognition of the partner agency and all proceeds would be split (at a pre-determined percentage, based on work to be done by each partner).

3. **A Collective Event of all Member Agencies, with Proceeds to be Donated to the Alliance:** This final option stands out as a true model of support and collective action. This option presents the greatest amount of collaboration, but perhaps the least feasibility for creation of the annual event (since the coordination would be extensive). In addition, this option presents the greatest possibility for large proceeds (as all money would be donated to the Alliance) – as the number of possible attendees would be unprecedented. This option would require work done almost entirely by member agencies with the purpose of highlighting the collective mission and goals of the Alliance. While this option could be instrumental in combining the efforts of all our members to champion one, united vision of reducing, and ultimately ending, homelessness in suburban Cook County, it is also the option that would require a greatest amount of selflessness on the part of our member agencies. In any scenario, therefore, this option should at least be considered as level of collaboration to be achieved in coming years.

V.   Progress Statement

Since an annual event has not yet been proposed by the Alliance, much work must be done in order to determine its feasibility and structure. We charge the seated Fundraising Committee with the task of addressing this proposal in the following way:

1. By meeting to discuss and determine if an annual event is in the best interest of the Alliance and its member agencies. If so determined, to proceed as outlined in the following steps:

2. To create a committee to serve as a coordinating body for an annual event and to select an Alliance staff person to head that committee.

3.   To select one, or a combination, of the options outlined above to guide the planning of an annual event.

4.   To create a timeline for planning, as well as action steps to be taken to achieve a successful annual event.

5.   To assign roles to the coordinating committee to achieve those action steps.

6.   To prepare a second Proposal Statement to present to the Alliance Board of Directors outlining an annual event to be created.

7.   To plan for, implement, and execute an annual event as directed by the Alliance Board of Directors.

VI.   Considerations

It is the hope of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County that a commitment to the creation of an annual event will help achieve the goals outlined above and strengthen our efforts to better address and provide service to the homeless populations of our communities. By establishing such an annual event, it is our belief that the Alliance and agencies alike with benefit from a more collaborate, unified approach to "branding", social capital building, volunteer and partner recognition and, of course, fundraising.

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ALLIANCE
TO END HOMELESSNESS
IN SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

2009 Homeless Count

-Recommendations for Future Counts-

The following is provided for the purposes of informing the 2011 Count Coordinator (and all other stakeholders) of future recommendations. Such recommendations were based on suggestions and concerns supplied by the Alliance Board of Directors, AHAND, WSCH, SSCH, Volunteer Surveys and all involved Regional Coordinators and Alliance staff persons.

Note: Please refer to all items in the 2009 Homeless Count binder for 2009 strategies/materials as a point of comparison. Items listed with a "NO RECCOMENDATION" indicate a strategy/material that worked well and was not considered an item requiring considerable alteration. Items in **BOLD** are suggested items that were not done/created in 2009 - based on suggestions and/or concerns voiced by participants, these items may be very useful if included in the 2011 Count.

Best wishes to the 2011 Homeless Count Coordinator!!

Pre-Count

- Count Timeline
    - It may be useful to create a CBSA Count Timeline to be used by regional coordinators so that councils can stay on-track with regional decisions, preparations, assignments, etc.
    - Allow more time for researching & identifying possible partnerships in the community

- Methodology Selection
    - 2009 Unsheltered Count Methodologies: 1) "Location-Based" methodology (a.k.a., Hot Spots), 2) "Fullest Possible Coverage" methodology, and 3) Service Site methodology
    - 2009 Sheltered Count Methodology: ES, TH, PSH & SH Shelter Surveys
    - Review methodology decisions with Abt Associates prior to executing Count preparations
    - Avoid any "full coverage" (or other) techniques that require extrapolation
    - Be sure to plan the Street Count, Service Site Survey Count, and Sheltered Count simultaneously – so as to avoid any pitfalls with duplication or missing information

- Regional Coordinators
    - It may be useful to create a "Regional Partnership Coordinator" to be responsible for reaching out to local law enforcement groups, volunteer groups, student groups, etc. for the purpose of helping to locate Hot Spots / Service Sites and recruit volunteers
    - It may be useful to emphasize the following items in the "Roles & Responsibilities" section of the Unsheltered Homeless Count Coordinators Chart:
        - All Regional Count Coordinators are responsible for attending a Count Coordinator's Meeting to be held in mid-December
        - Regional Coordinators: Ensure communication between coordinators

- - - Regional Gift Bag Coordinator: Secures donations for gift bags
      - Regional I&R Card Coordinator: Include PADS/BEDS schedules with I&R Card (either printed on card or included separately)
      - Regional Training & Deployment Site Host: Responsible for writing up very specific directions to be included on the Site List (for Volunteers)
      - Regional Site Coordinator / Dispatcher: Responsible for all materials – their set-up, proper use, and collection at the end of the night
      - Regional Count Team Trainer: Must review Training Guide, must cover all items listed on the Training Guide
    - It may be useful to add the following items to the "Count Team Leaders" Roles & Responsibilities section:
      - All Count Team Leaders are responsible for attending a Count Team Leaders' Meeting to be held one week prior to the Count
      - Count Team Leaders are responsible for reviewing their assigned area (Map & Hot Spot List) at least one week prior to Count Night
      - Count Team Leaders are responsible for identifying additional Hot Spots in their area (especially in "overflow" areas with no assigned Hot Spots)
      - Count Team Leaders are responsible for calling the police departments in their assigned area to inform them of Count Night activities, the Count Team Leaders role, and the presence of other volunteers (this is also a good group of people to ask about potential Hot Spots in the area)
      - Count Team Leaders are responsible for providing a reliable vehicle with space for at least 3-4 volunteers and enough trunk space for 5-10 gift bags
      - Count Team Leaders are responsible for providing a working cell phone as contact for their team, a flashlight for unlit areas, and extra pens/pencils/paper for their team to utilize if additional information is necessary

- CBSA Meetings
  - Micromanage!! Empower all Regional Coordinators to plan for, prepare for, and execute their own responsibilities in a timely manner!
  - Ensure that all major decisions are finalized prior to January
  - Prepare an outline of Count topics "to be covered" in each month's CBSA meetings and request that each outline be made available in the meeting's minutes (this way there is always a "to do list" to refer back to)
  - *See Also: "Count Timeline" above*

- Establishing Partnerships
  - Allow for enough time!! Researching, identifying, contacting and working with regional groups is very time consuming – start this process early and continue throughout the planning process.
  - Creating the role of "Regional Partnership Coordinator" could help alleviate some research in each area (agency reps know their regions – use them!)
  - Some partnerships worth investigating are:
    - University / College groups (post-high school, ages 18 years or older)
    - Law enforcement groups (police stations, Fraternal Orders of police)
    - Township / Municipal governments (public aid office, homeless liason)
    - Physical / Mental Health groups (hospital associations, medical groups)
    - Community Outreach & Betterment groups (other non-homeless 501c3's)
    - Salvation Army & American Red Cross groups (suburban-based)
    - All-Volunteer groups
  - Some of the uses of these partnerships are:
    - *BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL!!!*
    - Recruiting responsible volunteers (often in a related human service field)
    - Locating Hot Spots in each region to be included in an assignment area
    - Identifying Service Sites to be added to the general mailing list
    - Identifying possible Consumers to help with the Count

- Finding Hot Spots
  - Utilizing CBSA meetings is vital, but Focus Groups were an even greater source of viable information for locating and identifying Hot Spots
  - The use of a "Regional Partnership Coordinator" or additional partnerships would be extremely helpful in reaching out to groups that have this knowledge
  - *See Also: "Partnership" above*

- Recruiting Volunteers
  - Make sure to contact all 2009 Volunteers early in the 2011 planning to see if they are willing to volunteer again!!!
  - Utilizing CBSA sign-ups is vital, but the majority of 2009 volunteers were recruited through partnerships (specifically, University Email Campaigns and Friends & Family Email Campaigns) and pre-Count marketing (the website, press releases, etc.)
  - Again, the use of a "Regional Partnership Coordinator" or additional partnerships would be extremely helpful in reaching out to groups who may be interested in volunteering
  - *See Also: "Partnerships" above and "Website & Marketing" section below*

- Recruiting Consumers
  - Several participants commented that there were not enough consumers in order for each Count Team to have one in their group; and several participants noted the following as important aspects to of having a consumer as a co-participant:
    - Consumers serve as "experts" on where to look for homeless persons, how to approach homeless persons, what to avoid, what else to ask, etc.
    - Consumers can share their experiences with participants – shedding light on a subject that most participants know very little about
  - Make sure to contact all 2009 Consumers early in the 2011 planning to see if they are willing to help count again!!!
  - Emphasize the importance of CBSA sign-ups for Consumers! This was lacking in 2009 and it is extremely crucial – agency representatives are in constant contact with consumers who are qualified to help with the Count and recruitment through agencies will ensure a wide variety of regional knowledge and experiences, making for a more successful Count and a more impacting experience for volunteers!!
  - Since CBSA sign-ups were lacking, the majority of 2009 consumers were recruited through focus groups at the local shelters
  - Again, the use of a "Regional Partnership Coordinator" or additional partnerships would be extremely helpful in reaching out to groups that may know interested consumers
  - *See Also: "Partnerships" above and "Focus Groups" section below*

Website & Marketing

- Website Creation
  - Start early!! Creating (or even just editing) the Count website is time consuming, so make sure to have one up-and-running when mailers go out
  - Make sure to include the Count website on ALL pieces of materials related to the Count

- General Marketing
  - It may be useful to brainstorm additional marketing techniques (aside from the internet, non-profit publications, direct mailers, email campaigns, and press releases) to get the word out about the Count prior to January
  - Some additional outlets for marketing may include:
    - Posting flyers at all agency housing & shelter locations
    - Posting flyers in all food pantries / other service locations
    - Posting flyers in all township / municipality offices
    - Free announcements on the radio

- Pre-Count write-ups by 2009 reporters
- Holding "Info Sessions" in each region once the word is out (December)?

- Press Releases
  - It may be useful to have 3 press-releases (rather than 2) – those would be:
    - **1) Press Release announcing active volunteer recruiting (December)**
    - 2) Press Release announcing Count Night (January)
    - 3) Press Release announcing Unsheltered & Sheltered Count results
-

- **Recruiting Reporters**
  - 2009 Reporters: Todd Shields (North) & Jennifer Zimmerman (West)
  - It may be useful to actively recruit 3 reporters (one from each region) to be responsible for covering pre-Count, Count Night, and post-Count activities

Flyers

- Count Flyers
  - NO RECOMMENDATION
  - *See Also: "General Marketing" above*

- Volunteer Flyers
  - NO RECOMMENDATION
  - *See Also: "General Marketing" above*

- **Volunteer's Count Night Guide**
  - It may be useful to provide a flyer will outline the step-by-step process of what volunteers can expect on Count Night, which includes:
    - Times & locations of T&D sites (make specific to each region)
    - List of persons in charge at each location (make specific to each region)
    - Overview of the volunteer training (use Volunteer Training Guide)
    - Overview of the counting experience (use 2009 Testimonials & Blogs)
  - This should be posted on the website, mailed to every volunteer at least one week prior to Count Night, and available for hand-out at all meetings/trainings/info sessions/etc.

- **Ford Heights Flyer**
  - Although Ford Heights did prepare their own information flyer for their area, it may be useful to create a template to be used for Ford Heights
  - Items that should be corrected from the 2009 flyer include:
    - Name of the Alliance
    - Role of the volunteers
    - Purpose of the Count
    - Times & locations

Mailers

- Mailer #1
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Mailer #2
  - NO RECOMMENDATION
  - *See Also: "Service Site Survey" section below*

- Email Campaigns
  - It may be useful to draft and utilize additional email campaigns in conjunction with researching, identifying, contacting and working with new partnership groups
  - *See Also: "Establishing Partnerships" in the "Pre-Count" section above*

- Thank You's
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

CBSA Updates

- Keep updates short! Since there are as many as 2 updates per month, it may be useful for the updates to only list the "items accomplished" and "items to do" for each region (rather than specifics about council discussions, suggestions, additional work, etc.)
  - See CBSA Updates from January (2009) as a model for a shorter style

Volunteer Updates

- It may be useful to send out a final Volunteer Update right after the Count with information about accessing a Volunteer Survey, sharing experiences on a Count Website blog, attending post-Count regional meetings (February CBSA circuit), etc. All of this information was very important and was emailed to volunteers in 2009, but maintaining a familiar format for volunteers may have been more successful.

Donation Requests

- It is absolutely necessary to remind each region's Gift Bag Coordinator that they are ultimately responsible for all donations and all preparation of gift bags, so as to avoid last minute (desparate) requests for help!

- It may be useful to suggest that the Gift Bag Coordinator ask someone to serve as their "Donation Coordinator" since the collection of donations is such a large task

- It may not be useful to do the Business Mailer in 2011, as very few businesses responded. Instead it may be more useful to pursue any of the following techniques:
  - Suggesting that the Gift Bag Coordinator (et all) make a greater effort at face-to-face contact with businesses in their region
  - Suggesting that each CBSA member be responsible for a certain quantity of any given item (i.e., 5 people assigned to collect 10 pairs of socks each, 5 people assigned to collect 10 toothbrushes each, etc.)
  - Suggesting that Gift Bag Coordinators (et all) contact their local schools to request a "donation drive" (this worked very well with Maine South High School in 2009)
  - Suggesting that donation collection begin immediately, since it does take so long

Focus Groups

- It may be useful to hold focus groups earlier in the planning process. Although all focus groups were completed by January, December was a VERY busy month. Holding the focus group sessions earlier would also help to gain more feedback from CBSA's about information obtained (i.e., discussing newly added hot spots, the additional of certain regions/El lines, etc.)

<u>Count Coordinator's Meeting</u>

- Ensure that all Regional Coordinators know that this meeting is mandatory
    - *See Also: "Regional Coordinators" in the "Pre-Count" section above*

<u>Count Team Leader's Meeting</u>

- It may be useful to hold a Count Team Leader's Meeting one week prior to Count Night to meet with all region's Count Team Leaders
    - Ensure that all Regional Coordinators know that this meeting is mandatory
    - Purpose of the meeting may be as follows:
        - Distribute all regional materials & Count Team materials to date
        - Discuss Count Team Leader responsibilities
        - Discuss Count Team assignment
    - *See Also: "Regional Coordinators" in the "Pre-Count" section above*

<u>Volunteers & Consumers</u>

- NO RECOMMENDATION
    - *See Also: "Recruiting Volunteers" & "Recruiting Consumers" in the "Pre-Count" section above*

<u>Count Night Materials</u>

- Sign-In Sheets
    - It may be useful to provide volunteers with a blank sign-in sheet, requiring that they provide their phone number, home address & email address again; this way there would be less blanks to try to fill in later when sending TY's and follow-up emails

- Volunteer Waivers
    - NO RECCOMMENDATION

- Volunteer Training Outline
    - Multiple comments from volunteers & Count Team leaders were related to the Volunteer Training – most believed that the training did not really prepare them for the Count. The Volunteer Training Outline should be seriously reconsidered based on multiple sources of feedback, those include:
        - Feedback from the 2009 Trainers
        - Feedback from the Alliance staff persons in each region
        - Feedback from the Volunteer Surveys
    - *See Also: "Volunteer Training" in the "Count Night Procedures" section below*

- Coordinator Map
    - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Regional Map (large)
    - It would be very useful to use transparent sheeting on a more detailed map, as color-coding the very blank map was difficult

- Regional Map (small)
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Regional Hot Spots List
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Car Badges
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- **Volunteer Badges**
  - It may be useful to provide volunteers with sturdier badges to be worn around the neck or something similar, as the stickers provided fell off in the cold

- Site Coordinator / Dispatcher Packet
  - It may be useful to have all Site Coordinators / Dispatchers review this packet at the Count Coordinator's meeting, so as to eliminate the multitude of questions regarding the large number of Count Night materials and their varying uses

Count Team Materials

- **Count Team T-Shirts**
  - It may be useful to investigate free T-Shirts for all volunteers – due to time constraints, we did not do this in 2009, but several participants mentioned that it would have been nice (it would also help to create "team spirit" and may also make volunteers more likely to volunteer again)
  - Given enough time, the T-Shirts could include:
    - Specific color for each region (i.e., North = blue T-Shirt, West = red T-Shirt, etc.)
    - Region assignment
    - Count Team assignment
    - Volunteer's last name
    - Volunteer number
    - Map of suburban Cook County regions to be covered
    - Etc.

- Count Team Maps
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Count Team Hot Spots Lists
  - NO RECOMMENDATION

- Street Tally Sheets
  - It would be useful for the Street Tally Sheet and Street Survey to ask the exact same questions (but tally sheet shorter) in the exact same order – this would make coding the data during analysis much easier. Corrections to the Tally Sheet may include:
    - Separating Race & Ethnicity on the Tally Sheet (as it is on the Survey)
    - Placing Race & Ethnicity before Age (as it is on the Survey)
    - *See Also: "Post Count" below*
  - It may be useful to breakdown "Age" further (i.e., 1 = <21, 2 = 21-45, 3 = 45, 59, 4 = 60+), as most all answers in 2009 were 2 (21-59) which offers very little detail
  - It may be useful to add a space to include "City/Town/Village" after "Location" (we had to look these towns up based on the location descriptions in 2009)

- Street Surveys
  - Make sure to add BIRTHDAY! This was missing from the 2009 Survey… BIG MISTAKE!
  - As above, it would be useful for the Street Tally Sheet and Street Survey to ask the exact same questions (but tally sheet shorter) in the exact same order – this would make coding the data during analysis much easier.
    - *See Also: "Post Count" below*
  - It may be useful to add an age-range option (as on the Tally Sheet) if person is not willing to provide his/her birthday – this would eliminate blank answers
  - As with the Street Tally Sheets, it may be useful to add a space to include "City/Town/ Village" after "Location" (so as to avoid looking all up post-Count)
  - It may also be useful to add time surveyed (as on the Street Tally Sheet)

Count Night Procedures

- Training & Deployment Sites
  - It may be useful to provide better directions to all T&D sites to be posted online & emailed to all Volunteers with their region assignments

- Sign-In & Material Distribution
  - Remind all Site Coordinators / Dispatchers that it is important to retrieve all blank information sections (i.e., home address, phone number, email address, etc.) for all volunteers signing in – this will avoid contacting volunteers individually to get addresses/etc. post-Count for TY's or follow-up
  - *See Also: "Sign-In Sheets" in the "Count Night Materials" section above*

- Count Team Assignment
  - The largest complaint of 2009 Volunteers was that Count Team Assignment (the process of pairing up volunteers with already designated Count Team Leaders) was "confused, rushed, or chaotic". Upon review, the following are some suggestions for the Count Team Assignment process:
    - All persons that confirm their attendance by RSVPing to the Evite (sent out 2 weeks prior to Count Night) should be assigned prior to Count Night
    - All persons that do not confirm their attendance by RSVPing to the Evite (or respond "maybe" or "no") should not be assigned
    - On Count Night, all confirmed persons will know which Count Team they have been assigned to upon arrival, all others who did not RSVP to the Evite (or any additional volunteers) will be assigned during training
    - NOTE: It is important to remind the Site Coordinator / Dispatcher that does Count Team Assignment that this process can still be messy – some confirmed persons may not show, many non-confirmed persons may show; but hopefully some assignment prior to Count Night will alleviate most confusion

- Volunteer Training
  - As stated before, much feedback from participants was in regard to training – it is important that training be reviewed and revised in 2011
  - In general, suggestions regarding training included:
    - Keep it short – most participants felt that the training was repetitive & lengthy
    - Provide the "how to's" – many participants felt that the training did not cover the step-by-step processes of the Count. Items to cover include:
      - Where to go
      - Suggestions on finding people
      - When to exit the car
      - How to approach someone with the survey

- What to do if someone is sleeping
- What to do if someone refuses to cooperate
- All safety procedures
- Etc.
  - Require that all team members "role-play" a possible interaction

- Site-to-Team (and vice-versa) Communication
  - It may be useful to emphasize the importance of Team-to-Site (and vice versa) communication in training & prior to deployment. Items to emphasize include:
    - The Site Coordinator / Dispatcher if any homeless person is found and thought to be in serious danger (i.e., very intoxicated, disturbed, etc.) – the Site C/D can determine the best authority to call and follow-through to make sure that the person is helped
    - The Site C/D should also be contacted if any homeless person requests shelter – the Site C/D can contact the PADS/BEDS shelter in that region to set up for pick up and transport to the shelter
    - The Site C/D can also provide Count Teams with guidance on what information to include on surveys, how to obtain information, etc. if there are any questions
    - All Count Teams should contact their Site Coordinator / Dispatcher prior to return – this will ensure that Count Teams are not skipping any area that should be covered and also allows for the possibility of searching in other areas if there is time remaining

- Completed Materials
  - The Site Coordinator / Dispatcher should be reminded that all materials should be returned to the Alliance office in their original form (i.e., NOT separate from clip boards, NOT re-organized into other piles, etc.)

Service Site Materials

- **Establishing a Service Site List**
  - It may be useful to re-generate a more up-to-date Service Site List to use as the basis for selected agencies to call (the 2009 list was selected on the basis of "type" category only and was very out of date!)
  - Start early! This process is time-consuming!

- **Follow-Up Phone Calls – Round 1**
  - It may be useful to have volunteers contact all selected Service Sites directly after the second mailer is sent to the 3,500 contacts on the general mailing list. This first phone call would help to do the following:
    - Eliminate any agencies from the mailing list that may not be applicable, make corrections on contact info and addresses, etc.
    - Establish a "known person" for each service site to contact (aside from the Count Coordinator – who will be busy on last-minute preparations)
  - Items to be covered in the first phone call include:
    - Ensuring that service sites received the letter, training sessions list, helpful hints sheet, and service site survey
    - Explaining the importance of the service site survey to the Homeless Count
    - Requesting their presence at a training in their area – providing them with directions and contact information for the trainings if necessary

- Service Site Survey Trainings
    - It would be far more useful to set up Service Site Survey Trainings in conjunction with other community/agency/group meetings, as most of the 2009 trainings did not draw a very large crowd (and the successful trainings were in conjunction with another meeting)
    - Possible meetings to combo the service site trainings with may include:
        - Church / parish meetings
        - Township / municipality meetings
        - Regional health meetings
        - Community agency meetings
        - Community outreach meetings

- Follow-Up Phone Calls – Round 2
    - As mentioned above, start early! By doing a Round 1 of Follow-Up Phone Calls, however, this process may be much smoother, as the bulk of the prep-work will be complete
    - Items to be covered in the second phone call include:
        - Ensuring that service sites understand the use of the survey (either because they went to a training or know who to contact with questions)
        - Answering any general questions over the phone
        - Reminding service sites of the due date for completed surveys to be mailed / faxed back to the Alliance office

Sheltered Count

- As above, it would be useful for Unsheltered and Sheltered materials to ask questions in the most similar way (if possible) and in the exact same order – this would make coding the data during analysis much easier.
    - *See Also: "Post Count" below*
- *See Also: "Methodology Selection" in the "Pre-Count" section above*

Post- Count

- Be prepared for constant requests for results! Provide the fullest possible data in pieces (i.e., street count only, service site only, shelter count only, regional only) and emphasize that all results are a DRAFT version – this way there is no confusion when numbers change slightly in their final, combined form

- As mentioned in several places above, differences between the Unsheltered data collection materials (Street Tally, Street Survey & Service Site / Record Review Survey) and the Sheltered data collection materials (ES, TH, PSH & Safe Haven Surveys) made some coding comparisons extremely difficult. Since the Sheltered Count is not typically done by the Alliance, the forms differ in several ways. This could be avoided by carefully comparing all data collection methods and adjusting them to conform to the most similar formatting as possible. Some sections requiring additional attention are:
    - Age/Birthday breakdown
    - Disability breakdown
    - Chronically Homeless disability breakdown
    - Non-Family vs. Family Households
    - And several others...

- 2009 was the first year that incorporated HMIS data into the final report. This should be a focus in 2011 since there will be better, more complete, data to work with at that time.

- There was very little regional breakdown in 2007, and this was a focus in 2009. Additionally, the 2007 data did not have comparisons to the 2005 data, and this was also a focus in 2009. In all possible areas, data should be compared regionally and chronologically (i.e., Chronically Homeless numbers in the North, West and South in 2007, 2009 and 2011, etc.)

- There was very little visual data in 2007, and this too was a focus in 2009. In all possible areas, data should be presented in data-set form (i.e., Excel spreadsheet) and in visual form (i.e., charts, graphs, etc.) – this helps with the creation of handouts, presentations and the final report.

- There was very little information passed along from the 2007 Count, therefore, this was a MAJOR focus of the 2009 Count. All information necessary for completing the 2011 Count can be found in the 2009 Homeless Count binders (Unsheltered and Sheltered) and in the utilization of this guide in future planning. To continue this type of organization and guidance, future Count Coordinators should strive to do the following:
    - PLAN AHEAD – Expect a lot of work and plan your time carefully
    - TALK TO EVERYONE – There are always things that you and staff will not think of, so make it a priority to get suggestions from everyone in, and outside of, the field
    - CHECK EVERYTHING TWICE – The materials used in the Count will be collecting vital data that you will spend the next 2 months compiling and analyzing, so make sure that all the questions are clear, concise and accurate
    - SAVE EVERYTHING – collect all notes, timelines, meeting minutes, research, and materials in a separate binder... and don't forget to combine everything with the 2009 stuff for use in future Counts
    - DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE NEXT GUY – without those big binders and guides such as these, the next Count Coordinator will be lost, so make sure to provide your insights and help them in any way possible!!

GOOD LUCK!!!

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