Historically, unaccompanied youth have been undercounted during local Point in Time (PIT) count efforts that are mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in January of every other year (some communities conduct them every year). Data from PIT counts can be used to inform the need for particular service and housing interventions; as well as inform systemic planning and funding. The Alliance and the National Network for Youth encourage communities to fully include youth experiencing homelessness in PIT counts to improve the data on the prevalence of the issue. Developing key partnerships is a vital first step that will ensure all of the right players, such as youth experiencing homelessness, are a part of the planning and execution of the PIT count.

Getting the right partners involved is an important step in successfully including youth in your PIT count. There are many stakeholders in your community that are committed to ending youth homelessness and are willing to participate in the planning and implementation of the PIT count. By getting these stakeholders on board street outreach teams will better identify the locations and times when youth congregate. You may already have a pre-existing relationship with many of these stakeholders. Reach out to them! Ask them to participate.

Youth Homelessness Stakeholders

Organizations that deliver services to homeless youth have particular knowledge of when and where youth congregate. They will also have partnerships with other organizations in the community that can be potential partners. These organizations may run a drop-in center for youth, an emergency shelter or basic center for youth, or a longer-term transitional housing program for youth. Getting any and all of these organizations on board for the PIT count can greatly improve efforts to target youth. By having youth-serving organizations as part of the planning process, the

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1 Content of this brief contains recommended steps proposed in the Alliance’s and National Network for Youth (NN4Y) toolkit called, “Counting Homeless Youth” from 2010.
Continuum of Care (CoC)/lead planning body can ensure that as many youth as possible will be counted.

**Currently and Formerly Homeless Youth Volunteers**

Organizations that deliver services to youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness have a particular relationship with homeless (and formerly homeless) youth. These relationships will be helpful to recruit these youth to become volunteers. These youth volunteers can play very active roles in the recruitment and training of other volunteers, as well as leading street outreach efforts the day of the count. Youth volunteers who have experienced homelessness will have great insight into locations where youth congregate, which are sometimes referred to as “hot spots.” These hot spots are key targeting areas; therefore, it is very important to know of these them.

**Schools**

Schools are a valuable resource in the counting of homeless youth as they are required to collect data on the prevalence of homelessness amongst students. Collaborating with schools can increase the number of youth identified as homeless that should be included in the count. Be aware that the school’s definition of homeless² is different from the HUD definition of homelessness for the purposes of the PIT count³.

**Police Department**

The police department is another key partner to approach well before the day(s) of the PIT count. At a minimum, the police department should be informed of the date and time of the effort, but the police department may also be able to share locations (or “hot spots”) in the community where they know youth congregate. It will be important to let police officers know that you require their support in not asking youth to disperse from areas of congregation on the day and evening of the PIT count, as they normally might. Their presence may be a hindrance to getting youth to feel comfortable being included in the count.

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² For the definition of homelessness for schools under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act go to: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/guidance.pdf
³ The definition of homelessness, from the HEARTH Act can be found here: http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3006/