2027 PIT Captain Guide

Thank you for stepping into the role of a **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Team Captain**.

Serving as a Team Captain is an important commitment. As team Captain, you are helping to gather and lead our community through the structure, preparation and safety protocols in place. Your leadership will help volunteers feel informed and supported while engaging respectfully with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our community.

The Team Captain role requires **commitment, compassion, patience, and good judgment**. Some parts of the work are logistical: recruiting and communicating with volunteers, becoming familiar with your assigned section, planning routes and meeting locations, and making sure your team knows what to expect. Other parts require something less tangible but equally important: remaining calm when plans change, paying attention to the safety and comfort of your team, respecting the people and spaces you encounter, and remembering the purpose behind the work.

What You'll Find in This Guide

This guide is designed to help you understand what is expected of you and prepare for each stage of your Team Captain responsibilities. It will walk you through the practical information you need to lead your team with confidence, including:

- **Role and Responsibilities** — recruiting volunteers, communicating expectations, and helping your team feel prepared.
- **Volunteer coordination** — using the VolunteerLocal web application to access volunteer and team information and communicate with your group.
- **Scouting and outreach** — learning the boundaries and landscape of your assigned section, identifying areas to visit, and helping prepare community members for the night of the Count.
- **Safety and situational awareness** — keeping your team together, respecting personal spaces and boundaries, responding appropriately when something does not feel safe, and understanding what to do in an emergency.
- **Planning for PIT Day** — determining where and when your team will meet, creating a plan for covering your section, and deciding when and where your team will reconvene (if your separate at any time).
- **Preparing for the Count** — knowing what to bring, how to dress, and how to make sure you and your team are ready for the conditions you may encounter.

- **The PIT Count timeline** — understanding the sequence of activities leading up to and during the Count, so you know what needs to happen and when.

Role and Responsibilities

Your team will look to you for direction. You do not need to have every answer, and you are not expected to manage every situation on your own. As Captain, you are asked to **prepare, communicate, and lead responsibly**.

The PIT Count is a collective effort, and strong Team Captains make that effort possible. Your preparation before the Count and your leadership during it help create a safer and more organized experience for everyone involved.

Use this guide as both a preparation tool and a reference. Read through it before PIT Day, share relevant information with your volunteers, and return to it as questions come up. The goal is not perfection. The goal is to arrive prepared, stay connected to your team, exercise good judgment, and approach this important work with the care it deserves.

Timeline of Key Responsibilities

Recruitment (Now through January 2027) – Volunteer recruitment should begin as soon as you receive your Team Captain Confirmation email. People can sign-up to volunteer through January 22nd, 2027.

Trainings (January 2027) – All volunteer training are conducted in January of 2027. Each volunteer must complete training. As soon as people sign-up to volunteer in your section, make sure you communicate this requirement with them.

Scouting & Outreach (Now through January 2027) - Captains can complete their scouting and outreach at their convenience, prior to the PIT Count.

Volunteer Coordination

How ECHO Recruits

ECHO begins its recruiting efforts in late summer/early fall of the year before the PIT Count. ECHO prioritizes securing Team Captains first to ensure support for other volunteers. Team Captains are encouraged to recruit volunteers for their section while ECHO also actively recruits volunteers for all sections. ECHO runs its volunteer campaign via various media outlets, social media, and the ECHO website.

Volunteer Platform (VolunteerLocal)

A link to VolunteerLocal is shared publicly on ECHO's website. Team Captains and HRS partners can also share the sign-up link with their staff and contact lists. Team Captains are highly encouraged to recruit their teams by contacting friends, colleagues, family, and other networks. This ensures that Team Captains reach the recommended number of volunteers needed to adequately cover their assigned section. The recommended number is available on VolunteerLocal. Please refer to the VolunteerLocal PIT Captain training video for more information.

VolunteerLocal Platform Review

- VolunteerLocal is ECHO's volunteer management platform for the Point in Time Count.
- As Team Captain, you can access information about the volunteers in your section. This includes their name, e-mail address, and phone number.
- See Appendix A for VolunteerLocal for Team Captains

Volunteer Recruitment by Team Captains

If a person meets the criteria below, then they are eligible to sign up as a General PIT Count Volunteer:

- Person is at least 18 years old
- Ability to walk approximately 2-3 miles if necessary
- Must complete the 1-hour training session before the Count
- Commit to a total of 5-6 total volunteer hours. This is the total of the one-hour training and the 4our or five hours the night of the Count
- No previous experience with PIT Count or the HRS is required

Guiding Your PIT Team

- You can see the volunteers assigned to your section on VolunteerLocal. The volunteer's e-mail and phone number should be available on the platform.
- Create a group chat and add new volunteers to the chat as they sign up, making sure to introduce them to the chat when they are added.
- Sending emails periodically to ensure your team completed the training and keeping them informed of any new information is also a good idea to ensure everyone is updated.

Scouting & Outreach

Scouting is an integral part of a successful PIT Count. Spending a little time driving through your section to familiarize yourself with landmarks and possible areas for encampments can make your night easier and more efficient.

Outreach, while more difficult to do, can offer insight and support. If you can connect with someone in your section experiencing homelessness, it can build trust and a network of communication with others in their community. The goal with outreach is to let our unhoused neighbors know when the count is happening, so they know ahead of time and will share the information with their community making it easier to connect the night of the Count.

Team Captains are expected to scout and outreach in the days leading up to the PIT Count. Then Captains can share any insights with their teams. For example, share areas you think require more time and focus or scout for a centralized location to meet in case you decide to split up.

Doing the above sets up the Team Captains for success. Over communication is never a bad thing coming into the PIT Count with a plan for how to canvas your section is always appreciated by your volunteers.

Safety and Situational Awareness

Safety is a priority for ECHO during the PIT Count and should also be a priority for Team Captains. Emergency situations can occur. There are a few options available should you encounter a potential emergency:

- Call 911
    - If you or someone on your team needs medical attention, please call 911. It is the quickest way to receive care.
- Call Integral Care (512) 472-4357, Press 1 for English, then Press 1 for Mental Health Crisis
    - Integral Care can dispatch a mobile crisis team if needed. They also offer a variety of services that could be helpful.
- Call 311
    - For non-emergency and non-life-threatening situations.

Preparing for PIT Day!

- **Day Before PIT Count**
    - Team Captains must pick up care kits from ECHO's PIT headquarters. (Address below)

    - **Pick up for kits is between 12pm and 6pm on January 22, 2027**
    - This is a great opportunity to ask last minute questions.
- **PIT Count Day**
    - Official ECHO PIT Headquarters
        - **Greater Mount Zion Church – 4301 Tannehill Lane, Austin, TX 78721**
        - As the Team Captain, you can decide to meet with your team at HQ or at a designated area in your section. Feel free to incorporate your team's feedback when making this decision.

ECHO does encourage Captains to have their teams meet at HQ. ECHO coordinates speakers from City Council to thank and congratulate our volunteers. Media outlets are also there to capture the event for local news. This is an excellent way to build positive energy in the early morning hours.

- What to Bring
    - Regardless of where you meet, Captains must have their care kits with them when they begin canvassing. Make sure your teammates have their phones, a charger, and water.
    - Care Kits are distributed the day before the Count at the PIT HQ. Pick up time is shared closer to the PIT Count.
- What to expect
    - January weather is not always predictable. Prepare for rain or mist. Where closed toe shoes or boots. Wear layers. It will be chilly, but walking around will warm you up quickly.
    - Most of our unhoused neighbors will not engage in the surveys. That is OK.
    - Volunteers will complete Observational counts more than actual surveys.
    - Your team might be nervous, especially if they have not done a PIT Count before. Lead with confidence and compassion. People will adjust faster this way.
- ECHO Contact Information
    - Contact Angela de Leon, ECHO Director of Operations, if you have any questions about your section, need guidance about canvassing or if you need more Care Kits delivered to you.
    - Contact Sara Fuetter if you have any questions about Hyperion, the survey app, or the survey questions themselves.
- Key information
    - Survey app site (QR code) (Coming Soon)
    - VolunteerLocal (Direct Link)
    - ECHO PIT HQ: Greater Mount Zion Church: 4301 Tannehill Ln, Austin, TX 78721

- Points of Contact at HQ
  - Sara Fuetter: (512) 956-4305 or Angela de Leon: (512) 981-6817

Appendix A