



707 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Ph: 213 683.3333
Fax: 213 892.0093
TTY: 213 553.8488
www.lahsa.org

MEMO

To: The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
From: Gita O'Neill, Interim Chief Executive Officer 
Date: October 16, 2026
CC: Paul Rubenstein, Chief of Staff
Bevin Kuhn, Deputy Chief Analytics Officer
Re: **Report on Council District 8 Point-In-Time Count Increases in Homelessness (CF 26-1121)**

This memorandum is submitted in response to [CF 26-1121](#), introduced on August 12, 2026. The motion requests that the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) conduct a formal investigation into both sheltered and unsheltered data in Council District 8 following a spike in unsheltered individuals. Additionally, the motion requests a report with findings as to how discrepancies may have occurred, impacts on the results of the 2026 Homeless Count, and actions necessary to prevent similar problems in the future.

An internal investigation by LAHSA's Risk Management Department concluded that the volunteers counting tract 238400 did not follow explicit instructions given in LAHSA's Homeless Count Trainings. Deployment site volunteers reviewed the count and did not flag these exaggerated numbers for a recount, and no technical issues with the data would've otherwise triggered a flag for LAHSA reviewers. Additionally, despite multiple layers of review, thresholds for identifying unusually high counts were not in place at the time. LAHSA acknowledges errors for this census tract, but the issues were localized, and the results of the PIT count as a whole are valid. Improvements will be made in 2027 to ensure that these issues are not repeated.

BACKGROUND

The 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless Count, which was held January 20 through 22, 2026, was, by far, the most accurate and technologically advanced PIT count in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care's history. Many improvements have been made that have made volunteer recruitment and training smoother than ever, and LAHSA has further refined ESRI software to ensure more accurate data collection and validation. As a volunteer-led event, LAHSA staff and trained volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that results submitted to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are as accurate as possible.

Still, as an example of citizen science at scale, the PIT count does encounter inevitable human-caused errors, and in 2026, there was a significant increase in unsheltered homelessness reported within Council District 8 (CD8). After receiving the raw data in July 2026, CD8 requested additional information on this

increase. In response, LAHSA reviewed CD8 on its Tableau dashboards to pinpoint which census tracts experienced the highest increases in unsheltered homelessness. Our review identified an anomalous jump in unsheltered homelessness in Census Tract 238400, with 277 adults in 2026 compared to 19 in 2025 and only 1 in 2024. Once this was identified, CD8 staff interviewed HOPICS staff who were part of the team responsible for conducting the count in that census tract. LAHSA also performed a truncated internal review.

After conducting an interrogation of the data—and the processes used on the night of the Homeless Count to verify its veracity—LAHSA concluded that several procedural failures contributed to what may be an overcount of unsheltered individuals in Census Tract 238400 and reported these initial findings to CD8. CF 26-1121 is a response to these findings, and city council requested LAHSA to conduct a formal investigation into this data.

CAUSES OF A POTENTIAL OVERCOUNT

LAHSA's initial findings indicate that two important factors led to an inability for accountability measures to capture outliers in the count of unsheltered adults in Census Tract 238400. The LAHSA Risk Management Department report (Addendum 2) further validates these findings, indicating that Census Tract 238400 experienced two critical failures that led to a possible overcount.

Volunteer Counting Errors

Los Angeles conducts the largest unsheltered count in the country, each year covering more than 4,000 square miles. Working in small groups, volunteers tally the number of people, tents, makeshift shelters, and vehicles within the ArcGIS QuickCapture App. LAHSA relies strongly on volunteers to follow our procedures and processes on how to count and verify, as this is a volunteer-led event.

LAHSA has spoken to the LAHSA staff and CD8 staff who were present at the deployment site managing Census Tract 238400. All have verified that volunteers were trained on counting procedures and were required to watch a training video prior to being deployed.

The volunteers who counted Census Tract 238400 were employees of Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System (HOPICS), an organization which contracts with LAHSA and provides volunteers each year for the PIT Count. These volunteers are trained service provider staff who are familiar with the area and populations. Interviews with the HOPICS staff members who counted uncovered that some of these volunteers did not follow the guidance given to them in LAHSA's training, which is the exact same training provided to all Homeless Count volunteers. LAHSA specifically outlines that volunteers should *not* guess the number of individuals living in dwellings identified during the PIT count, to avoid overcounting when the dwelling multipliers are applied. Instead, these volunteers admitted to logging dwellings and vehicles, while also recording an estimated number of people inside each one, which led to an exaggerated count.

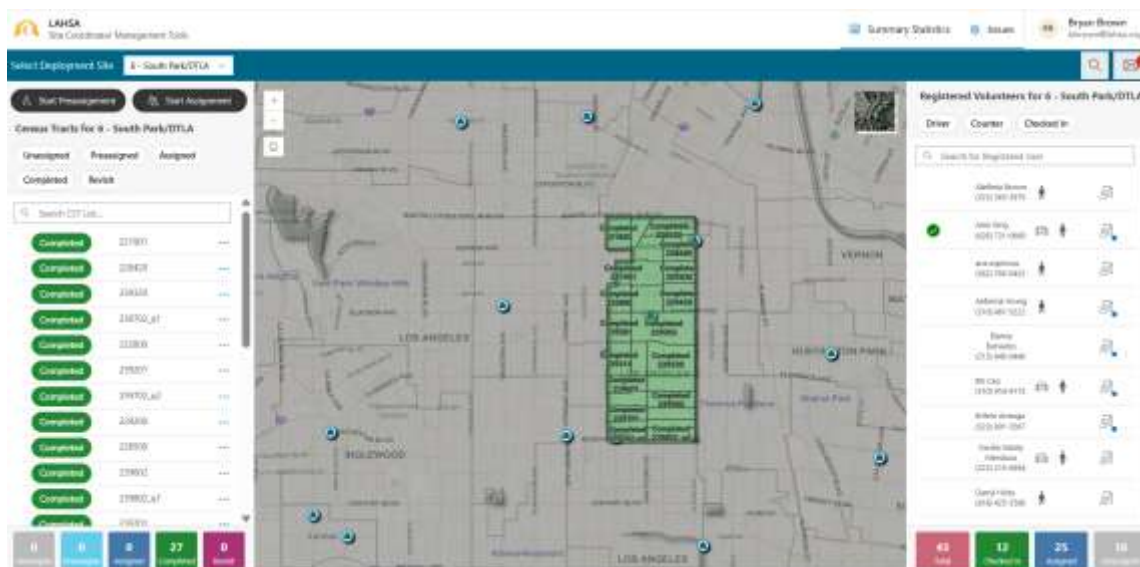
Deployment Site Coordinator Approval

Typically, LAHSA relies on trained and experienced volunteers to catch exaggerated numbers such as these at the deployment site before they verify the data and send it to LAHSA for validation. This role primarily falls on the Deployment Site Coordinator (DSC), who is the volunteer that manages and oversees the direct operations of deployment sites and volunteer teams. DSCs are trained to coordinate the following activities at each site¹:

1. Coordinate all volunteers at the deployment site
2. Review all data brought back by volunteers
3. Validate data on the night of the count through the DSC Dashboard.

DSCs have the opportunity to, and are responsible for, reviewing the census tract data assigned to the volunteer teams at their site. The expectation is that volunteers and DSCs review the totals counted by the volunteers in the field. Then the DSC, with the volunteers present, signs off on and submits the total counted through the DSC Dashboard. The DSC dashboard review process is required to ensure confidence in areas covered and total observation counts. The DSC and Volunteer see total counts for the census tract for each population, but they do not include established thresholds or guidelines to identify unusually high census tract counts that may have needed further review or a recount.

In addition to the DSC, LAHSA assigns a LAHSA staff member to each site to act as the Dashboard Lead (DL). DLs receive the same training as DSCs, and their responsibility is to reduce the DSC's administrative burden by helping volunteers use the app, operating the dashboards, and assigning and closing out census tracts. An example of the dashboard the DSCs and DLs have access to can be seen below.



¹ <https://count.lahsa.org/pages/site-coordinator-hub>

For the deployment site that covered Census Tract 238400, the DSC assigned to oversee the site was a CD8 staffer, and the DL assigned was a LAHSA staff member. In instances where the DSC is a city staff member, DLs are trained to defer to the DSC's jurisdictional leadership and local knowledge. LAHSA relied on the DSC's expertise to ensure volunteers did not make mistakes in the data they entered and that they understood the instructions and counting procedures. As this role was held by an experienced CD8 staff member who affirmed the data on the night of the 2026 Count, the data moved to LAHSA's internal data review and validation process, which is designed to ensure that there are no technical errors with data entry.

Internal Data Validation Process

Census tract 238400 was not flagged in internal data validation reviews because the data checked all of the boxes that LAHSA looks for in submissions by the site: 1. Counted by Assigned Counter, 2. Data Collected at the Expected Time, and 3. Submitted as Reviewed and Approved by the Deployment Site. The LAHSA team's second-pass analysis to highlight major changes also relies on a review of available data. This process previously required contact with Deployment Site Coordinators only when data appeared to be missing or contradictory, such as when all tracts at a deployment site show 0 counts, or when data entry patterns seem unusual, such as all counts being entered in a single minute or location.

Given that complete, non-contradictory data was approved by Deployment Site staff, nothing further was flagged for Census Tract 238400. Ultimately, LAHSA's existing validation processes primarily look for technical issues and errors, rather than an audit of all volunteer-submitted and deployment site-approved data. The Continuum of Care's Homeless Count process relies on volunteers and Deployment Site Coordinators to follow training and guidance to properly count and review data. On-site volunteers are there day-of, interacting with volunteers and seeing the results in real time. LAHSA does not want to tamper with results validated by volunteer leaders.

VALIDITY OF INVESTIGATION AND RECOUNT RESULTS

CF 26-1121 specifically requests LAHSA to *"issue a formal update to any PIT count findings to ensure the public record accurately reflects the state of homelessness in Council District 8"*. While LAHSA staff, alongside staff from Council District 8, recounted selected census tracts and sub-tracts in September 2026, LAHSA is unable to use the data from the recount to update the official record. (Recount results can be found in Addendum 1).

The unsheltered homeless count follows a specific and rigorous preapproved approach, and data collected outside of the set structure carry too many caveats for inclusion in the final results. The HUD window for updating official Point-In-Time Count numbers is closed, and LAHSA is not aware of any circumstances in which HUD has allowed edits to official counts this far after the official date. Additionally, for official HUD numbers, the count methodologies must be approved by HUD, and any deviation from the approved plan would not be accepted. Specifically:

- The official count is mandated to occur in the last 10 days of January. LAHSA's count occurs over 3 nights, with entire SPAs counted in a single night, to minimize potential double counting or

undercounting that can occur from people moving over time. The makeup count, being conducted many months later, has no way of reflecting or reliably indicating who would have been in the same tracts several months ago.

- The count occurs in winter, which HUD believes to be the time of the year most likely to have as much of the population in shelters and staying in place for warmth, where they can be more reliably counted. The September count did not follow this standard.

This being said, LAHSA acknowledges that volunteer errors likely caused an overcount in census tract 238400. Still, there is no feasible way to verify how much of the overcount was caused by error rather than actual conditions. Even if there were a way to verify the actual unsheltered homeless count on the exact night in January of 2026, there is no accurate process to amend results at this point.

2027 IMPROVEMENTS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

For Homeless Count 2027, LAHSA will implement several improvements to further enhance an already robust quality assurance process. These changes include:

- Ensuring that Deployment Site Coordinators have access to prior-year census sub-tract level data on the night of the count, to facilitate the identification of tracts that see significant swings in counts, and to better ensure that tracts are verified as accurately captured by counters and deployment site reviewers.
- Identifying additional opportunities to emphasize proper counting protocol in training and site materials to reduce the risk of volunteers over- or under-counting.
- Reiterating in training and follow-up communications with Deployment Site Coordinators that they retain access to their site's count data for the remainder of the week after the count. Deployment Site Coordinators are already expected to review counts, identify potential errors and discrepancies, and certify results while there is still time to recount within the methodological timeframe.
- Building out internal dashboards and review processes to easily identify potential outliers or inaccurately collected data and bring these to Deployment Site Coordinators'/Deployment Logistics Specialists' attention while there is still time to recount if needed.

LAHSA is planning to submit an additional report on Citywide data validation and proposed improvements to Continuum of Care PIT Count operating procedures before November 2026.

CONCLUSION

LAHSA relies heavily on volunteer manpower but has measures in place to ensure that volunteer-led Homeless Count data is verified at each deployment site. However, after an initial investigation, there were failures that may have caused an overcount of unsheltered in Census Tract 238400—namely an overcount by volunteers that was approved by deployment site volunteers on the night of the count. While LAHSA was able to recount this tract with CD8 staff, the new data from the recount will not be reflected in the Point-In-Time Count results for 2026. The PIT Count data for 2026 will remain the data submitted to HUD shortly after the PIT Count was completed in January 2026. In the coming weeks,

LAHSA will submit an additional report recommending specific changes to PIT Count procedures to prevent miscounts like the one identified in 238400. LAHSA looks forward to continued partnership with the City and County for a successful 2027 Count.

Appendix 1: 2026 Homeless Count Data versus September 2, 2026, Recount

Sub- Tract	Adults	Cars	Vans	RVs	Tents	Makeshift Shelters
238400 – Official	277	88	20	44	30	0
238400 – Recount	18	8	4	26	0	2
238000_1 – Official	21	3	4	8	2	2
238000_1 – Recount	0	0	4	7	0	0
238100 – Official	2	1	3	5	0	0
238100 – Recount	0	3	4	7	0	1
238200_j1 – Official	13	3	1	5	5	2
238200_j1 – Recount	2	2	0	14	0	1
238200_j2 – Official	9	8	0	0	1	0
238200_j2 – Recount	0	0	0	0	0	0
600100 – Official	12	1	9	10	0	0
600100 – Recount	8	1	1	4	3	1
600201 – Official	13	1	7	7	1	1
600201 – Recount	3	0	1	3	0	0
600801 – Official	1	0	1	0	0	0
600801 – Recount	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Note that minor variations in results may exist in September recount results, as the counts were completed entirely on paper, rather than with ESRI software, and are therefore subject to minor data collection errors which should not affect overall impact of results.*

APPENDIX 2: Risk Management Department Investigation

Date: October 15, 2026
TO: The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
FROM: Christopher Williams, LAHSA Deputy Chief Risk Officer
SUBJECT: 2026 Point in Time Count Review by LAHSA's Risk Management Department

Background and Purpose

At the direction of the Los Angeles City Council, LAHSA conducted a formal review of the 2026 Point in Time (PIT) Count. LAHSA's Risk Management Department (RMD) focused on the PIT Counts in Council District 8 (CD8), specifically in census tract 238400, and prepared this report to serve as an appendix to a wider-ranging report from LAHSA's Government Affairs and Data Management Departments.

The review followed concerns raised by the City Council President and CD8 staff regarding the significant increase in reported numbers of people experiencing homelessness in their district, and whether those results reflected actual conditions in the district. Subsequent analysis identified census tract 238400 within CD8 as a significant outlier.

This review examines what occurred, when and where it occurred, the teams and functions involved, and the likely contributing causes for the outlier data in CD8. This review also identifies control gaps, resulting risks, and potential corrective actions.

Scope and Methodology

RMD interviewed 14 individuals, including representatives from:

- LAHSA staff
- CD8 office staff
- Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System (HOPICS) staff
- Community Coalition staff

HOPICS and Community Coalition are two homeless service providers that provided volunteers for the PIT Count. Interviews addressed training, responsibilities, geographic coverage, identification of people and dwellings, occupancy estimates, entry of information into the ArcGIS QuickCapture application used by LAHSA for capturing the results of the PIT Count, closeout of the PIT Count, and subsequent review of PIT Count data. The identities of the interviewees are being kept confidential in this report.

RMD reviewed administrative support records, tract assignments, annual count figures for 2024 through 2026, recount figures, and the training videos for PIT Count volunteers and for use of the ArcGIS QuickCapture application employed by the volunteers. This review compared these materials with accounts provided in the above-mentioned interviews to assess counting practices and identify discrepancies.

Timeline and Locations

Date or period	Event and location
January 21, 2026	Census tract 238400 is the primary tract under review. The team that conducted the PIT Count in census tract 238400 deployed from the CD8 South Vermont site near Manchester and Vermont. That team covered two census tracts; the second census tract did not have an anomalous count result in 2026. Additional teams deployed from the same site, as well as from a deployment site managed by HOPICS.
Late July 2026	LAHSA provided a preliminary briefing of results to council and city staff prior to public release. CD8 staff questioned the district's increase in the number of unhoused people reported in CD8. LAHSA analysis identified census tract 238400 as an outlier.
Late July to August 2026	CD8 and LAHSA sought census tract details and communicated with HOPICS. Original team members described occupancy estimation.
August 31, 2026	CD8 internal recount, approximately 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., as recalled by INT-04.
September 2, 2026	Joint LAHSA and CD8 recount date identified in supplied data and INT-01's account. The recount covered the primary tract and neighboring areas.
September 17 to October 9, 2026	RMD conducted interviews with relevant personnel.

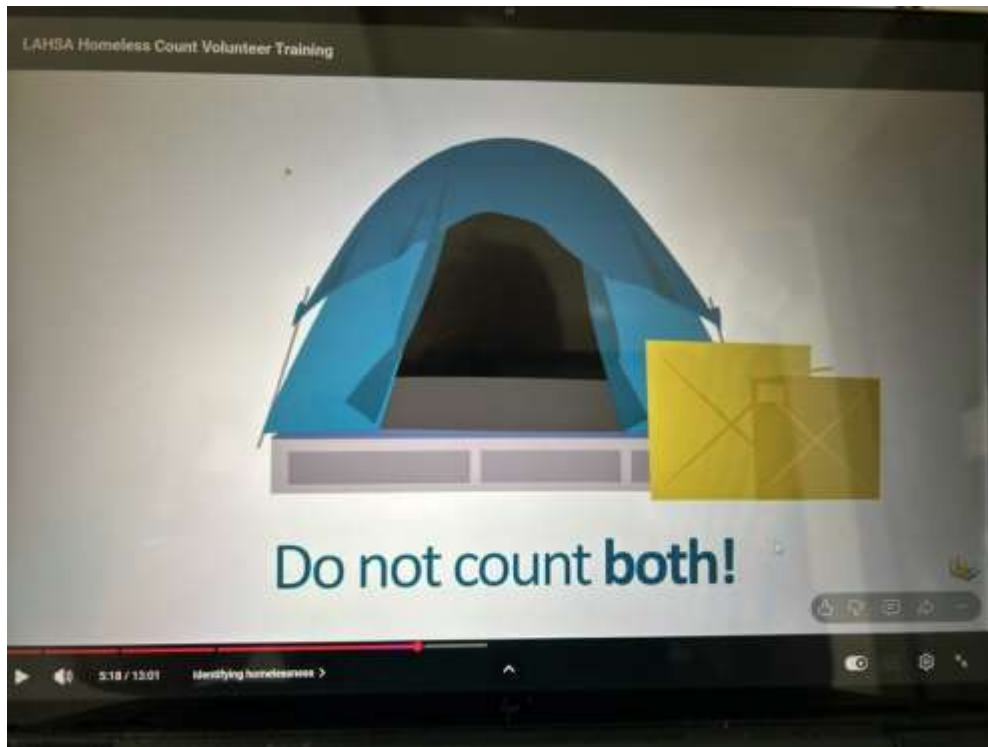
Observations Regarding What Occurred

Original Counting Team for Census Tract 238400

As noted above, review of detailed results from the original PIT Count identified census tract 238400 as the source of virtually all of the significant differences in CD8 count results between 2025 and 2026. The original counting team for census tract 238400 comprised five volunteers who were all employees of the same service provider, HOPICS. All five had outreach experience in CD8, meaning that they had personal experience interacting with unhoused individuals in CD8 in their makeshift shelters, tents, cars, vans/SUVs, or RVs/campers (collectively referred to as “dwellings”). Team members collectively discussed and estimated occupants for each dwelling using dwelling size, outreach experience, and familiarity with the area to estimate how many people they thought would be inside each makeshift shelter, tent, car, van/SUV, or RV/camper. The team then entered both the dwelling and the number of individual people the team estimated was in each dwelling in the ArcGIS QuickCapture application (“app”) used by the PIT Count to record individuals and dwellings on a virtual map.

The team entered estimated counts for people in dwellings despite clear instructions shown to all volunteers that such estimates were not to be made. (See 5:15 in the [LAHSA Homeless Count Volunteer](#)

[Training video](#) shown to all participants.) Per the instructions in the video (see screen capture below), estimates of people were not to be made, and each dwelling was to be recorded as an individual dwelling, with individual people being counted only if they were seen inside or outside of the dwelling.



The lead counter in the census tract 238400 team confirmed entering estimated people in the app in addition to recording dwellings in the app. Observers and the navigator in the vehicle corroborated that the team used this approach. This approach resulted in “double counting,” since LAHSA, like many organizations nationwide carrying out PIT counts, follows HUD guidance in applying a separate multiplier to each type of dwelling to estimate the number of unhoused people in dwellings, rather than asking the counting teams to estimate the number of individuals in each dwelling. In this case, the team counting census tract 238400 entered both the number of dwellings and the number of individuals they estimated were in each dwelling, as well as any individuals they actually saw either in dwellings or on the street outside of dwellings.

Outreach work involves direct conversations and repeated contact with people in the community. Through this work, staff may know how many people usually stay in a particular makeshift shelter, tent, car/SUV, or RV/camper, or feel confident in their ability to estimate how many people are likely to be in an unfamiliar dwelling based on various indicators. The team members counting in census tract 238400 described relying partly on that knowledge during the 2026 PIT Count.

These accounts establish that the counting practice involved input from multiple team members rather than the lead counter alone. They also suggest that the five participants in the counting team for census

tract 238400 may have carried routine outreach practices into the 2026 PIT Count without clearly understanding the different recording requirements. That explanation remains a possible contributing factor for the team's use of an incorrect counting methodology in this census tract.

This review has not definitively established the source of the occupancy estimation instructions cited by the census tract 238400 counting team. They claimed that they had watched the LAHSA training video referenced above, and that "the training" instructed them to enter both individual dwellings and the team's estimates of how many people were in each dwelling, but they were unable to pinpoint exactly what "training" gave them those instructions.

Deployment and Closeout Functions

CD8 operated the deployment site that included census tract 238400 with LAHSA support. The above-referenced *LAHSA Homeless Count Volunteer Training* video and a separate *Homeless Count How To Use QuickCapture* video were shown to volunteers at the CD8 operated site, and verbal guidance was also provided, along with a statement by a formerly unhoused person from the area. However, individual comprehension was not assessed or documented.

CD8 and LAHSA personnel reviewed and confirmed reported totals captured by each counting team in the ArcGIS QuickCapture app as part of the closeout process when the counting teams returned to the deployment site. This confirmation was limited to comparing the numbers from the app on the designated counter's phone to the numbers shown on the Deployment Site Coordinator's computer. While there was an opportunity for the Deployment Site Coordinator or their designee to raise questions about the results with the counting team, none of the interviewees recalled such questions being raised.

Limits on Broader Attribution

Other CD8 and Community Coalition participants described counting shelters individually without estimating occupants. HOPICS leadership confirmed that there were two deployment sites in CD8, one managed by CD8 staff and one managed by HOPICS. HOPICS management reported that the CD8 team that counted census tract 238400 attended training at the CD8-managed site and did not attend training that was provided at the separate HOPICS deployment site. HOPICS management also reported that they did not provide their own training for HOPICS staff prior to their travel to their respective deployment sites.

Causes and Gaps

C1 Counting Method and Training Comprehension

This review included interviews with three different counting teams from CD8, deployment site support staff, and CD8 staff. Interview accounts showed differences in how participants applied the counting instructions.

Before teams left to count, training videos were shown at every deployment site covered by the interviews. At some sites, staff also explained the rules and answered questions. Advance materials were sent based on where volunteers registered. Participants remembered receiving physical maps of the census tracts that they were to cover.

The volunteer training videos provided by LAHSA and reviewed by RMD instructed participants to record qualifying makeshift shelters, tents, cars, vans/SUVs, and RVs/campers as dwellings rather than estimate and enter the number of people inside them.

Members of the original team counting census tract 238400 described recording dwellings and also entering the number of people they estimated were inside. Other teams described recording dwellings without estimating their occupants. The original team's reported practice therefore differed from the training instruction reviewed and the reported practice of other teams.

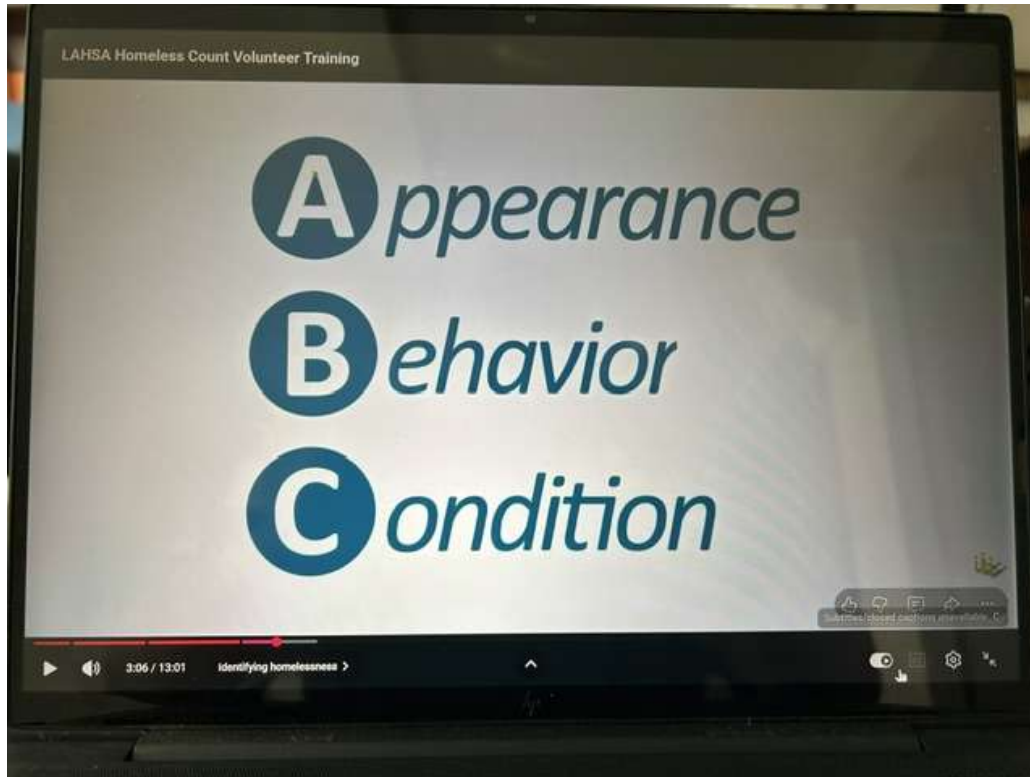
The interviews establish the (incorrect) counting practice described by the original team counting census tract 238400, but do not establish the full extent to which it affected the final results. For instance, they said that they would estimate that a small tent would hold one person, while a larger one could hold two or three people, while the tent itself would only be identified in the ArcGIS QuickCapture app as a tent, with no reference to size. Similarly, they said that a small RV might contain two to four people, while a larger one might contain four to six, or even up to ten, individuals. Due to the judgment applied by the counting team in estimating how many individuals could be inside each dwelling, it is not feasible to estimate with certainty how many "individuals" noted on the census tract 238400 map were specific individuals seen by the counting team near or inside a dwelling, and how many were entered as individuals estimated to be inside the dwelling.

As noted above, training videos were shown at the deployment sites. However, showing a video did not ensure that everyone understood how to enter data. Specifically, the team counting census tract 238400 reported using incorrect practices they claim they learned during earlier counts and informed by their experience conducting outreach work. In addition, participants did not all receive the same preparation before arriving. For instance, volunteers at the HOPICS-administered deployment site in CD8 reportedly received emails with links to the training videos and a request to watch them in advance of the PIT Count, while the HOPICS staff who went to the CD8-administered deployment site did not recall receiving such instructions.

There was a gap in confirming understanding and correcting mistakes before counting began. This review was unable to confirm who originally (and allegedly) provided the instruction cited by the original counting team for census tract 238400 to both estimate and enter a number of occupants for each dwelling, or exactly how much that practice affected the final results.

Showing the video confirms that training was offered and delivered. It does not confirm that every person watched the entire video, paid attention, or understood the instructions. The records reviewed did not establish whether anyone arrived late, missed part of the training, or was distracted by talking or

other activity. These are gaps in what could be verified, not confirmed events (that is, the review was unable to confirm or deny late arrivals or distractions during the showing of the videos). However, almost all of the interviewees were not familiar with the phrase “the ABCs of homelessness,” (see screen capture below) which was used at 3:02 in the LAHSA Homeless Count Volunteer Training video. While some difficulties in recollection should be expected eight months after a person watched a 13-minute video, the lack of familiarity with the phrase could indicate that some participants were not paying full attention.



C2 Closeout Verification and Accountability

Closeout is the step when teams return from counting, report their results to the Deployment Site Coordinators, and complete their submission of data. This review examined closeout through interviews about what participants remembered doing.

Participants described checking the reported numbers before submission. However, checking the numbers alone does not show how the team counted or whether it followed the rules. For example, a site coordinator could confirm that the totals recorded by the counting team matched the totals shown in the site coordinator’s version of the data in the ArcGIS QuickCapture app without knowing whether the number of individuals reported in the count included individuals actually seen or people estimated to be inside vehicles and dwellings.

The interviews did not clearly establish who reviewed the results for census tract 238400, who finalized the submission, or whether anyone checked the counting method. This leaves a gap in understanding what was verified and who conducted the verification. The Deployment Site Coordinator, who in

principle should have knowledge of the conditions in the areas in which the PIT Count is taking place, did not identify that the numbers reported in census tract 238400 were unusual when the counting team checked in. Likewise, CD8 staff did not identify that the numbers reported in census tract 238400 were unusual in the approximately one-week period that the ArcGIS QuickCapture software was open for review of the figures. That said, it has not been LAHSA's practice to provide Deployment Site coordinators, CD staff, or others with historical census-tract-specific information that could be used to compare a given year's results with those of previous years.

C3 Exception Detection and Review Timing

Exception detection means identifying results that look unusual and need a closer review. Deployment Site Coordinators are responsible for verifying results in the dashboard match volunteer's counts, and CD staff have the ability to review results as well for approximately a week after they are recorded. Such reviews to date have been based on their knowledge of the area due to their working or living in neighborhoods where the counts are done. To date, it has not been LAHSA's practice to make previous years' census tract numbers readily available to Deployment Site Coordinators or CD staff, which could make it harder for them to notice large changes and ask questions before validating the results.

The timing of the review for each census tract matters because memories and conditions change. Several months passed before participants were asked to explain the count in detail, and some could no longer recall specific instructions, observations, or closeout steps.

The later recount in CD8 also occurred under different conditions. Weather, season, time of night, local events, construction, cleanups, and movement between locations can affect what counters see. These are possible influences, not confirmed reasons for the different results.

Unusual results should be flagged and reviewed promptly, while participants' memories are fresh, and conditions are more comparable. A later recount can provide useful information, but it cannot establish exactly what was present on the original count night and therefore cannot be used to replace original faulty count data.

C4 Field interpretation and Geographic Attribution

Participants described different ways of deciding whether a person, vehicle, or RV/camper should be counted. They also gave different accounts of instructions for entering alleys and who performed each team role. The original counting team for census tract 238400, citing their experience as outreach personnel, specifically reported driving down alleyways and dead-end areas to find potential vehicles, RVs, tents, or makeshift shelters that would not be visible from the street. The original counting team questioned whether other counting teams were as diligent in going into such constricted areas, despite the fact that the training provided by LAHSA clearly instructs counting teams that all such areas should be covered in the count.

C5 Evidence and Calculation Reconciliation

The review examined available count figures and interview accounts concerning how the original team recorded and submitted its observations for census tract 238400. The same team also counted another tract, whose reported results were compared with prior years to assess whether it showed similar unusual changes.

A review of the individuals and dwellings counted in the past three years shows significant differences between previous years and 2026.

Count	Adults	Cars	Vans/SUVs	RVs/Campers	Tents	Makeshift Shelters
2024	1	2	0	11	0	0
2025	19	11	5	15	4	2
2026 original	277	88	20	44	30	0
2026 recount	18	8	4	26	0	2

The difference in adults is at least partially explained by the original 2026 team not only counting dwellings but also adding their estimates of individuals in each dwelling to the total of individuals counted. However, there is no obvious explanation for the large differences between the original 2026 counts for cars, vans/SUVs, RVs/campers, and makeshift shelters, other than the counting team citing their experience as outreach workers perhaps giving them greater insight than others into whether they are likely to be used as dwellings by unhoused people, and their practice of driving through alleys and into dead-end areas to seek out dwellings that aren't visible from the street. It is interesting to note that the 2026 recount data, while collected seven months after the normal timing of the PIT Count, is much closer to the historical data than the original 2026 PIT Count data.

Over seven months passed between the 2026 PIT Count and the interviews conducted by the LAHSA RMD team. Participants could not consistently recall individual observations or explain each entry into the ArcGIS QuickCapture app. The available evidence therefore does not establish exactly which entries included estimated occupants versus individuals seen outside of dwellings, or how those entries affected the final population estimate. Determining the precise impact of the counting team's incorrect practice is likely impossible with full certainty given the time that has elapsed.

The findings support conclusions about the counting practice described during interviews, but do not establish an exact corrected count.

Assessment of Training

Training was delivered, primarily by showing LAHSA-provided videos at the deployment sites, but attendance did not reliably establish comprehension. The clearest gap was the entry by the original team that counted census tract 238400 of estimated occupants in addition to dwellings into the ArcGIS QuickCapture app. Practical application of appearance, behavior, and condition (“ABCs”) also varies. Lack of recognition of the ABC terminology alone is not proof of inadequate understanding; however, the practices described during interviews provide stronger evidence of the gap.

Controls should verify completion, test the counting rules, correct misunderstandings, provide written field guidance, and prepare counters and reviewers for their respective duties.

Assessment of Data

As noted above, the supplied annual figures establish a substantial increase in recorded adults and several dwelling categories for census tract 238400. Interview evidence indicates that the recorded number of adults includes not only individual adults observed during the 2026 PIT Count but also estimated occupants of dwellings. The amount of any overstatement in the final count cannot be calculated from the interviews alone or a review of entries in the ArcGIS QuickCapture app.

Conclusion

Consistent interviews support the finding that the original team from census tract 238400 recorded estimated numbers of occupants in dwellings in addition to the dwellings themselves and individuals observed either in dwellings or outside dwellings. This reported practice differed from the counting instructions described in the training reviewed and actual practice reported by other census counting teams. Review by the Deployment Site Coordinator and by CD8 staff, who in principle should have knowledge of the conditions in the areas in which the PIT Count is taking place, did not contemporaneously identify that the numbers reported in census tract 238400 were unusual.

The review also identified limitations in the available documentation of training comprehension and closeout review of census tract results.

The evidence does not establish the precise numerical effect of the reported practice, an exact corrected count, or whether similar practices occurred beyond the teams and tracts examined. The recount several months later reflects conditions at a different time and cannot establish what was present on the original count night.

Risk Assessment

The identified gaps create risks for the precision of LAHSA’s count results and the ability of City and County leaders to assess homelessness needs and progress.

Risk	Potential organizational impact
Data reliability	Results may give leaders a less precise picture of homelessness and changes over time.
Assessment of progress	Counting differences may look like improving or worsening conditions, making it harder to assess whether homelessness efforts are working.
Resource allocation and equity	Imprecise counts may influence where services are directed, leaving some communities underserved.
Public trust and credibility	Unexplained discrepancies may weaken confidence in LAHSA's results and City and County reporting.
Oversight and accountability	Unclear responsibilities may make it difficult to explain how results were checked and whether counting rules were followed.
Coordination across organizations	Different counting practices may produce results that are difficult to compare reliably.
Operational burden	Late review may require additional interviews, analysis, and recounts, taking staff time from other priorities.

Overall Recommendation

LAHSA should work with its partner institutions to ensure consistent training practices, check participant understanding, clearly assign submission review responsibilities, and promptly review unusual results. These steps would strengthen reporting accuracy, support informed decisions, and protect public confidence in homelessness efforts.

Specific Recommendations

The investigative team would like to note that several of these recommendations are already standard practice for LAHSA in conducting the PIT Count. However, given the observations made above, we believe that it is useful to highlight them to ensure that they are given consideration and, if accepted, appropriate emphasis in the preparation, execution, and review of future PIT Counts.

The investigative team would also like to note that LAHSA should weigh the potential costs versus the potential benefits of each recommendation when considering whether to accept and implement them. There is no indication that the experience in census tract 238400 occurred in any of the other hundreds of census tracts that were covered in the 2026 PIT Count. However, we believe that the recommendations below are relatively low cost and could help proactively address any future concerns about the reliability of the count in specific regions and overall.

1. Use consistent training practices at every site

- Provide links to the training videos, including the approved counting instructions, to all volunteers and ask them to watch them prior to the PIT Count dates.
- Show the same videos at all deployment sites where possible (i.e., where volunteers are all instructed to arrive at a certain time), or at least have them available to be watched if a volunteer has not watched them or would like to watch them again.
- Have an individual at the deployment site explain the difference between counting a makeshift shelter, tent, car, van/SUV, or RV/camper, and counting a person. Make clear that volunteers should not estimate how many people are inside a dwelling.
- Explain how count rules differ from routine outreach practices, especially where volunteers have outreach experience, as such volunteers may be tempted to use their experience to provide a “better” count.

2. Check understanding before deployment

- Ask every participant a few short questions about the counting rules.
- Explain missed answers before they deploy into the field and counting begins.
- Ensure late arrivals have watched the training videos or watch them prior to deployment.
- Document completion and understanding of the training as part of the check-in process for volunteers.

3. Provide a simple written guide

- Give each team a short reference sheet showing what to count, what not to count, and how to handle uncertain situations, perhaps referencing the “ABCs.”
- Include safety instructions and a contact for questions during the count.

4. Clearly assign and document counting team responsibilities

- Before teams leave, confirm who will drive, follow the map, observe, and enter the counts. Make sure the written assignments match those roles and record any changes.
- Review census tract boundaries, alley instructions, and procedures for areas that cannot be safely accessed.
- When teams return, confirm who did each job and ask about any differences.
- Have the entire team participate in checking that the entries reviewed by the Deployment Site Coordinator match what the team observed.

5. Strengthen closeout review

- Have the Deployment Site Coordinator or their designee confirm the reported totals and ask how the team developed them, including whether entries of individuals reflect direct observations of individuals or estimates of people inside dwellings.
- Have teams document areas they could not cover and any changes to their assignments so reviewers can determine whether follow-up is needed.

- Record who reviewed and submitted the results, along with any questions, corrections, or unresolved concerns.

6. Review results promptly and identify unusual results compared to historical data

- Provide detailed prior year census tract figures for at least two prior years to Deployment Site Coordinators prior to the PIT Count day so that they can compare the results with historical data.
- Ask the Deployment Site Coordinators to review and flag large changes in each counting category separately, preferably while counting teams are checking in but no later than the end of January, when access to the ArcGIS QuickCapture program usually becomes restricted. Use those figures to identify questions, not to tell teams what their totals should be.
- Complete an initial review within one week, while participants' memories are fresh and conditions are more comparable.

7. Retain clear supporting records

- Keep training records, participant roles, tract assignments, submitted data, and closeout notes together.
- Document changes and review decisions so LAHSA can explain how the results were produced and checked.

8. Track corrective actions through completion

- LAHSA should assign an owner and due date to each agreed recommendation.
- LAHSA's Risk Management Department should verify completion and report any remaining gaps to the DCRO before the next count.