



# JURISDICTIONAL NARRATIVE FOR THE 2026 POINT IN TIME AND HOUSING INVENTORY COUNTS

## Introduction and CoC Overview

The Prince William Area Continuum of Care (PWA CoC) is a network of government, nonprofit providers, faith-based organizations, outreach organizations, citizens at large, and persons with lived experience of homelessness. The Prince William County Department of Social Services serves as the lead administrative and fiscal agency, managing the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as well as the Coordinated Entry System (CES).

Programs within the PWA CoC include prevention, diversion, street outreach, drop-in centers, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing. The PWA CoC has forty-five (45) member organizations and seventeen (17) funded homeless service providers; eleven (11) of which contribute data into the CoC's HMIS.

The PWA CoC promotes a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. The CoC's goal is to quickly re-house homeless households to minimize trauma and dislocation. The CoC promotes access to effective utilization of mainstream programs and optimizes self-sufficiency among households experiencing homelessness.

Since the 2025 count the CoC has celebrated growth and success across their system from new staff positions to support street outreach and HMIS needs, strengthened partnerships with the county's Office of Community Safety and victim service providers, a new initiative to raise public awareness about panhandling, the launch of the Veteran and community-wide By-Name Lists, new permanent housing opportunities from programs funded by the American Rescue Plan and the Virginia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, increased hypothermia shelter inventory, and a new collaboration platform (Civic Roundtable).

While the PIT Count is a valuable data source, it is also important to examine annualized data to ensure the community has a fuller, more actionable picture of their homeless system that highlights the prevalence, as well as the incidence, of these experiences.

The table below (Figure 1) provides a comparison of the PWA CoC's PIT Counts to its annual counts of persons in emergency shelter (ES), transitional housing (TH), or street outreach (SO) programs in HMIS over the past 5 years (utilizing the 10/1 – 9/30 report period).

**Figure 1: PIT Counts & Annual Counts of persons in ES, TH, or SO in HMIS over the past 5 years**

Fiscal Year	PIT Count	Annual Count
FY2025	392	1095
FY2024	345	1066
FY2023	326	972
FY2022	241	863
FY2021	282	750

Source: PWC DSS Homeless Services Division

## Local System Context and PIT/HIC Interpretation

PIT Count methodology remained consistent with prior years as the CoC continues to refine effective strategies. This year, 10 teams and over 50 volunteers participated in these efforts. Smaller teams improved coverage, efficiency, and engagement with persons experiencing homelessness.

For the first time in over a decade, the CoC delayed the PIT count due to severe weather conditions. The winter storms that struck the region at the end of January led to immense challenges that would have impacted on the accuracy of the unsheltered count and the safety of volunteers. Delaying the count allowed conditions to stabilize and ensured the CoC could focus efforts on the safety of persons outside in the dangerous conditions. Increased hypothermia inventory and extended hypothermia hours were in place in anticipation of an unprecedented winter in Northern Virginia.

The total number of persons counted remained stable in 2026 (-2%, or 6 fewer persons). However, the emergency shelter count increased (+11%, +27 persons) while the unsheltered count decreased (-30%, -34 persons). This shift is likely influenced by the 34 additional hypothermia shelter beds available on the night of the count.

Household composition remained stable. Adult-Only households (AO HH) represent 84% of PIT households and continue to make up most of the households served annually. Among households with children (AC HH), there was a decrease in adults (14%) and an increase in children (9%), suggesting larger family sizes or more single-parent families. Child-only households (CO HH) remain rare and were not identified during PIT.

The table below (Figure 2) provides a breakdown of the household types counted during the PWA CoC's PIT in comparison to the household types served in emergency shelter (ES), transitional housing (TH), or street outreach (SO) programs in HMIS over the past 5 years (utilizing the 10/1 – 9/30 report period).

**Figure 2: Household Types Counted During PIT in Comparison to Household Types Served in ES, TH, or SO in HMIS over the past 5 years.**

Fiscal Year	PIT Count			Annual Counts		
	AO HH	AC HH	CO HH	AO HH	AC HH	CO HH
FY2025	83%	17%	0%	87%	13%	0%
FY2024	83%	17%	0%	87%	13%	<1%
FY2023	82%	18%	0%	85%	15%	0%
FY2022	86%	14%	0%	86%	14%	0%
FY2021	85%	15%	0%	83%	17%	0%

Source: PWC DSS Homeless Services Division

The PWA CoC believes in building a crisis response system that works for everyone and leaves no one behind. Therefore, it is essential for the CoC to analyze demographic data collected from persons experiencing homelessness; not only to better understand those experiences, but also to identify overrepresented populations and tailor services to specific needs. The typical person counted is a single adult over age 45, staying in emergency shelter, identifying as male and Black, African American, or African.

Racial composition shifted in 2026, with an increase in persons identifying as Black, African American, or African (+9%) and a decrease in persons identifying as White (non-Hispanic) (-14%).

Gender distribution remained stable, with most persons identifying as male (56%). Notable differences in gender appear when analyzing by household type:

- Adults in households with children are more likely to identify as female (81%)
- Single adults are more likely to identify as male (69%)
- Households with more than 1 adult are all couples (50% male, 50% female)

The CoC continues to see an aging population with an upward trend in adults between the ages of 45 and 64. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of adults are 55 or older, and the oldest person counted was 79, residing in emergency shelter.

The CoC analyzes key populations with higher vulnerability or service needs (i.e., “priority populations”), including chronic homelessness, disabling conditions, domestic violence survivors, transition age youth (TAY), and Veterans. Analyzing data on priority populations is critical to understanding the unique, high-risk needs of these groups and helps address systemic inequalities.

Adults reporting at least one disabling condition remained stable (<2% decrease); 50% of adults reported living with one or more conditions in 2026 with the average being 45% over the past 5 years. The most common conditions reported were physical disabilities (42%), mental health disorders (41%), and chronic health conditions (33%). There were increases in reported substance use disorders (+57%) and developmental disabilities (+83%). Reports of disabling conditions among adults in transitional housing also increased significantly (more than 100%).

This year the CoC conducted a deeper analysis of reported conditions to better understand the level and severity of need for persons living with said conditions. The table below (Figure 3) provides a breakdown of the number of reported conditions by “project type” (emergency shelter, transitional housing, and unsheltered situations).

**Figure 3: Number of Disabling Conditions Reported in 2026 by Project Type**

Project Type	1 condition	2 conditions	3 conditions	4+ conditions
Emergency Shelter	45%	33%	14%	9%
Transitional Housing	40%	40%	20%	0%
Unsheltered	48%	24%	24%	3%
<b>All Adults</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Source: PWC DSS Homeless Services Division

Chronic homelessness increased to 30% of adults (up from a 5-year average of 22%). Rates were similar among adults in emergency shelter (30%) and adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness (34%). Nearly all chronically homeless adults are single adults. Chronic homelessness in emergency shelter increased (+43%) while unsheltered chronic homelessness decreased (-17%); likely due to expanded hypothermia shelter capacity.

The share of Domestic Violence (DV) survivors decreased by 19% since 2025; 21% of adults reported they are a survivor with the average being 22% over the past 5 years. The number of survivors reporting their current episode of homelessness is due to fleeing a life-threatening situation has increased by 21% since 2025; 57% of adult survivors reported they are homeless due to DV with the average being 49% over the past 5 years.

Transition Age Youth (TAY) increased by 67% (or 8 more persons), reversing a prior downward trend. Most were single adults (67%) in emergency shelter (93%).

Veteran homelessness decreased by 33% (or 4 fewer persons), continuing a downward trend since 2024. Most Veterans were single adults (85%) in emergency shelter (62%).

## **Built for Zero and Continuous System Improvement**

Since joining the Built for Zero (BFZ) initiative in 2024, the PWA CoC has strengthened real-time data tracking, coordination, and system alignment. Key advancements include the implementation of community-wide and Veteran By-Name Lists, updated assessment tools, and regular case conferencing.

The CoC recently completed a system realignment in collaboration with community partners and adopted five priority goals:

- Goal 1: System Prioritization
- Goal 2: Street Outreach Expansion
- Goal 3: Fair Housing Awareness
- Goal 4: Documentation Optimization
- Goal 5: Public Awareness & Community Partnerships

While still in the early phase, improved data visibility has increased the number of identified persons experiencing homelessness. This reflects better system coverage rather than a definitive rise in homelessness. The current data is still shifting, and more time is needed before the CoC can measure the full impact of the changes made under this initiative.

The table below (Figure 4) provides counts for “inflow” (i.e., persons entering the crisis response system who are newly homeless or that are returning during the report period) and “outflow” (i.e., persons leaving the crisis response system for any reason during the report period) from August 2025 through January 2026 in comparison to the “actively homeless number” (i.e., the monthly total of persons experiencing homelessness who have not yet moved into housing).

**Figure 4: Actively Homeless Number and System Inflow/Outflow from August 2025 to January 2026**

Report Period	Actively Homeless Number	Inflow				Outflow		
		All Persons	Newly Identified	Returned from Housing	Returned from Inactive	All Persons	Housing Placements	Moved to Inactive
AUG2025	730	<b>126</b>	82	19	25	<b>114</b>	49	65
SEP2025	741	<b>135</b>	92	17	26	<b>126</b>	59	67
OCT2025	790	<b>165</b>	98	25	42	<b>106</b>	55	51
NOV2025	880	<b>195</b>	141	27	27	<b>99</b>	40	59
DEC2025	945	<b>168</b>	130	18	20	<b>103</b>	39	64
JAN2026	1050	<b>162</b>	117	19	26	<b>57</b>	22	35

Source: PWC DSS Homeless Services Division

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The past year reflects not a single shift, but rather a series of coordinated improvements that, taken together, are strengthening the community’s ability to respond effectively and equitably. The 2026 PIT Count and accompanying system data illustrate a system that is evolving – one that is expanding capacity, refining its use of data, and deepening collaborations across partners.

The relative stability in overall PIT numbers, paired with a meaningful decrease in unsheltered homelessness and an increase in emergency shelter inventory, suggests that targeted interventions can have immediate and measurable impacts. At the same time, rising rates of chronic homelessness, reported disabling conditions, and shifts in demographic trends underscore the growing complexity and intensity of need among those experiencing homelessness. These patterns reinforce the importance of sustained investment in permanent housing solutions, supportive services, and tailored interventions for vulnerable populations.

The 2026 PIT findings highlight the need to strengthen both data accuracy and system insight as the CoC continues to refine its understanding of homelessness. Expanding and sustaining street outreach coverage will be critical to more accurately capturing unsheltered homelessness, particularly given the impact of seasonal shelter capacity on PIT results. Improved alignment between PIT, By-Name Lists, and HMIS data will enhance data reliability and provide a clearer picture of system trends and population needs. In parallel, continued public engagement and volunteer recruitment will support more effective PIT implementation while helping to reduce stigma and increase community awareness.

The CoC’s participation in the Built for Zero initiative and the implementation of By-Name Lists represents a significant advancement in how the community understands and responds to homelessness in real time. Improved system visibility and data quality are enabling more informed, data-driven decisions and supporting a shift from reactive crisis management to more strategic, proactive solutions.

Several key lessons have emerged over the past year. Data-driven decision making, when paired with strong community partnerships, leads to more responsive and person-centered outcomes. Reducing barriers within the system - whether through streamlined documentation, improved

prioritization, or expanded outreach - is essential to accelerating exits from homelessness. Centering equity and persons with lived experience in system design remains critical, both for fairness and for effectiveness.

Looking ahead, the PWA CoC is well-positioned to build on this momentum. By advancing its newly established goals, the CoC can continue to move toward a system where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Achieving this vision will require ongoing collaboration, adaptability, and a continued commitment to learning from both data and persons with lived experience.



PWC Staff & Volunteers (Keith Walker/PWC Office of Communications & Engagement)



Encampments in PWA CoC (Lynn Fritts/PWC Community Services; Damien Quesada/PWC DSS)