



2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness:

Training for UNSHELTERED PIT Count (County Coordinators)

Eastern and Western PA Continuums of Care

by Diana T. Myers & Associates, Inc. (DMA)
on behalf of the PA Department of Community
and Economic Development (DCED)

Today's Agenda

- PIT Overview & Updates for 2025
- Unsheltered PIT Methodology
 - Brief Surveys vs. Observation only
- Unsheltered PIT Tips and Considerations
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Overview of PIT Mobile App
- Request for time documentation for the CoC Planning Grant in-kind commitment
- Community Spotlight: Carbon County

Today's Presenters

- Jessica Sones, DMA
- Brendan Auman, Homeless Program Manager, PA DCED
- Lisa Cielepak, Venango
- Jana Welkey, Carbon

What is the PIT count?

A census or count of all people experiencing homelessness on a single night (i.e., at a given point in time), including some required demographic information and characteristics about those people, as defined in the annual HIC/PIT Data Collection Notice.

The PIT Count includes 3 parts:

- Housing Inventory Count
- Sheltered PIT
- **Unsheltered PIT**

HUD requires CoCs to conduct PIT counts of people experiencing homelessness.

Who is counted in the unsheltered PIT count?



Unsheltered PIT includes persons residing in:

- **Cars**
- **Parks**
- **Abandoned buildings**
- **Bus or train stations**
- **Airports**
- **Camping grounds**
- **Parking Lots**

*persons residing in emergency shelters (including hotel/motel vouchers) and transitional housing are counted in the sheltered PIT count. Any person residing in emergency shelter, hotel/motel, or transitional housing the night of the PIT count should NOT be counted in the unsheltered PIT count.

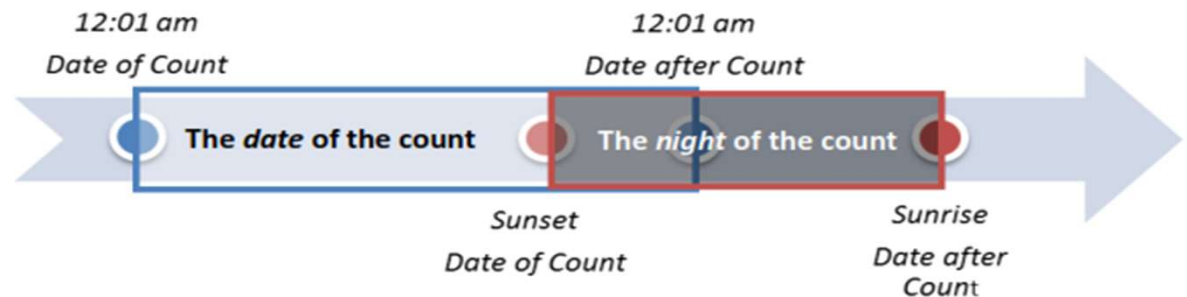
When is the PIT count conducted?



CoC program regulations require sheltered and unsheltered counts to be “conducted on one night in the last 10 calendar days of January.”

**2025 PIT Count Date:
Wednesday,
January 22, 2025**

This means the period of time from **Wednesday night Jan. 22nd through Thursday morning Jan. 23rd**.





Overall PIT Timeline

Fall 2024: County-level planning meetings

December 2023: Unsheltered PIT webinar **YOU ARE HERE!**

Late December 2024/Early January 2025: Unsheltered PIT interview form and volunteer training materials distributed

JANUARY 22, 2025: PIT COUNT DATE

February 12, 2025: All data due to DMA

February – March 2025: Data entry, checks for duplication, follow-up with questions

By end of April: Submit all data to HUD

May 2025: County-level PIT reports distributed

What's new
for the 2025
Unsheltered
PIT?

**No changes
for the 2025
PIT Count!**

Unsheltered
Count:
Guiding
Principles

- Safety
- Anonymity
- Each person counted
- Each person counted once

Unsheltered Count – Methodologies



STREET-BASED COUNT



SERVICE-BASED COUNT

Unsheltered Street-Based Count

- Seeking out people who are sleeping outside & other unsheltered locations
- May be conducted the late-night hours of Wednesday, January 22 and/or any time on Thursday, January 23
 - January 22: You will ask, “Where will you sleep tonight?”
 - January 23: You will ask, “Where did you sleep last tonight?”

Unsheltered Street-Based Count

Count includes individuals sleeping
in these types of locations:

- Streets/sidewalks
- Vehicles
- Parks
- Hunting cabins
- Tents
- Campgrounds
- Barns
- Truck Stops
- Abandoned buildings
- Bus station/ transportation depots
- Chicken coops
- Railroad cars
- Storage units
- Lumberyards
- Sheds/Shanties

Unsheltered **Service-Based** Count

- Conducted at places providing services to persons experiencing homelessness
- **Must occur on Thursday, January 23, 2025**
 - You will ask, “Where did you sleep last night?”

Unsheltered **Service-Based** Count

Examples of service-based locations include:

- soup kitchens
- food pantries
- health care clinics
- service agencies
- public libraries
- other

Unsheltered Count: Locations

Unsheltered Count DOES NOT include individuals living in these locations:

- Hotels/motels not funded through public/ charitable resources
- Shelters, transitional, or permanent homeless programs
- Jails/prison
- Emergency rooms/ hospitals
- Halfway houses
- Recovery houses
- Residential/medical facilities
- Youth in custody of state in foster care or other out-of-home placement
- Doubled up in the homes of family/friends

Unsheltered Count: Locations

HUD guidance on ambiguous sleeping locations:

- 1) People living in tents, sprung shelters, cars, trucks and vans are never to be considered housed.
- 2) People living in RVs are considered housed if they are regularly connected to water, sewer and utilities or a septic system, well and generator, meet local codes, and the household owns or rents the RV and the land upon which it is located.
- 3) Residents of tiny homes and sheds are considered housed if the home meets local codes and contains a toilet, shower, kitchen, sleeping and living space, and is connected to water, sewer and utilities. The household must either own or rent the land and unit. The unit must also have climate control if located in very cold and very hot climates (regular seasonal patterns fall below 32 degrees or above 100 degrees Fahrenheit).

What methodology will work best in your county (street-based, service-based, or a combo)?

- This is a local decision (up to each county). *Your role as the coordinator is to determine the methodology with your community and communicate this to volunteers.*
- If your county has a known unsheltered population, a street-based count is likely the best option (possibly combined with service-based)
- If your county does not have a known unsheltered population, a street-based count in hot spots only plus a service-based count may be best.

Unsheltered Count – Who?

All household types are included:

- Households with children
- Households without children
 - Couples- married and unmarried
 - Single individuals
 - Other makeups where the persons define themselves as a household (intergenerational households of adults, siblings, etc.) and there are no children
- Youth
 - unaccompanied children < age 18
 - unaccompanied youth, 18-24
 - parenting youth

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

Step 1: Approach & Introduction

- Approach the person and introduce yourself
- Ask if the person has a few minutes to answer some questions
- Keep in mind:
 - Individuals sleeping outside may be dealing with active addiction, mental health concerns, and significant trauma histories. Do not sneak up on or startle people. Never shine flashlights in people's faces.
 - Maintain eye contact (if possible) and an open stance with your hands visible. Use a tone of voice that's approachable. Speak slowly, be polite, and don't shout.



Hi, my name is [name]. I am with [org.] we're out here trying to talk to folks who might not have a safe place to sleep tonight. Can I ask you a few questions?

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

Step 2: Explain what you're doing & get consent

→ Explain why you're there (sample script on next slide)

→ If you are providing supplies/ survival packs/ etc, explain to volunteers how you want them to make these available (please do not make it contingent on participation)

→ If they consent to answering your questions, continue with the interview. If they don't, thank them for their time, and use the observation form.

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

We are conducting a survey to count people experiencing homelessness in order to learn more about people experiencing homelessness, what kinds of problems they face, and to better understand what services are needed to address homelessness. Your participation is voluntary and your response to each question is voluntary.

I will ask for your initials and your age, but I will not need your name, date of birth, social security number, or any other information that could be traced back to you. The responses to these questions will not be shared with anyone outside of our team. I will need to read each question all the way through.

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

Step 3: Conduct the interview using the survey form

→ Go through each question in the survey form.

- Remember: people have the right to not answer some or all questions!

→ Add any notes that may be helpful

- Example: If a person says that they have their own apartment, but they're sitting on a bench outside of a 24-hour grocery store at 2:00 am with what appear to be all of their belongings, write down that you think there may be a discrepancy in what they are saying vs. where they will sleep that night.

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting Interviews

Step 4: Closing the interview

- Thank the person for their time
- Refer them to any services or resources they may have asked about or may need.
 - If you have the ability to provide transportation to shelter, please offer that to anyone you encounter. (Make a note indicating that shelter was provided, if applicable.)

Step 5: Recording what you heard and observed

- Walk away from the person interviewed to a safe place
- Take a few minutes after your conversation to double check that you've completed the whole survey form
- Include any additional notes or details
- Make sure everything you have written is readable

Unsheltered Count – How?

Unsheltered PIT surveys are conducted either via:

- Brief Interviews
- Observation Only (*use only when necessary*)

Unsheltered Count – How?

1. **Brief interviews** – preferred

- Complete one Interview Form for each household
- If a household has more than five members please record additional data on a second form, clearly indicating that they are part of same household
- If a household includes more than one person, please ensure that data is recorded on the form consistently recording the data based on the assigned “person #”.
 - e.g. If LH is person # 1 and BH is person # 2 on page 2, please ensure that BH is also person # 2 on the subsequent pages.

Unsheltered Count – How?

- 2. Observation** - If someone will not or cannot provide the information requested on the Interview Form, complete the box at end of survey based on your observation.

County Coordinators: The observation only section is where we tend to see incomplete information and errors. **Please make sure your volunteers fill out the ENTIRE section (double check forms the night/day of the count).** Without all the information, we may have to exclude a survey (or reach out to you for more info).

Brief surveys

Brief Surveys: What information are we collecting?

- Number of persons in household
- For each person in household:
 - Age
 - Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)
 - Gender (select all that apply)
- Additional data collected for adults or youth under 18 who are head of household:
 - Number of homeless episodes and length of time homeless
 - Domestic violence status (not asked in front of two adults who have identified that they are part of the same household)
 - Veteran status
 - Disability information

Brief Survey Instructions

- Initials only, no name
- Age – Estimate if person does not reveal
- Gender and Race/Ethnicity – Read the lists out loud and have the person self-identify their response. Please do not assume a response
 - Both of these question are multi-select – select all that apply.

Unsheltered Interviews – Brief Survey Count

- Ask all questions as written on the Interview Form or within the Mobile App.
- Individuals may refuse to answer some or all questions.
- Refusal to participate will not result in a denial of shelter, service, or other assistance.
- If a household/individual does not want to provide any information but you believe them to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness, please complete an observation only count.
- If person refuses to give initials, assign initials and complete rest of interview.

Observation only

Unsheltered Count – Observation Only

Observation Only Section

OBSERVATION ONLY. Interviewer: If you are unable to survey an individual/household that you believe to be experiencing homelessness, because individual/household is asleep or is unable or unwilling to be interviewed or to complete the full interview, please provide the following information to the best of your ability based on what you can observe for each person within the household. (Each household should be submitted as a separate survey.)

- **# adults in Household:** _____
 - **Estimated age of adults:** # age 18-24 = _____ # age 25-59 = _____ # age 60+ = _____
- **# children (under age 18) in Household:** _____
- **Details as to how you know/why you believe this household is unsheltered (REQUIRED):** _____

- **Description of location, clothing and any other details that would help to ensure this household is only counted once (please be as specific as possible) (REQUIRED):** _____

MUST fill out details and description sections. Without enough information sometimes we have to exclude the survey and not count the individual.

Unsheltered Count: Observation Only

When to conduct count by observation only

- Observation only count must be conducted the late **night hours** of January 22 or early morning of January 23.
- Individual/household is asleep/bedded down (*need to write this on the form*)
- Individual/household is unwilling to be interviewed/complete the full interview, but you believe them to be experiencing homelessness (*need to write the details on the form*).
 - E.g., on a park bench outside in winter with all of their belongings
 - E.g., the individual is known to you and your team

Unsheltered Count: Observation Only

Write down as much detail as possible that helps to make the person identifiable and to provide clues on their housing status.

- What is the person **wearing**? (e.g., “black beanie, navy sweatshirt, jeans, and tan utility boots.” or “bundled in a grey, puffy sleeping bag that covered their face.”)
- What does the person **look like**? (e.g., “shoulder-length grey hair, white, female, 50-60 years old”)
- **Why** were you unable to complete a survey with them? (e.g., “They said they did not want to complete a survey, but they were awake.”)
- **Where** did you see them? (e.g., “In front of the TD bank at the corner of 6th and Cedar St.”)
- What makes you think that they are or may be **experiencing homelessness**? (e.g., “They were sleeping on a park bench with a large bag of their belongings next to them.”)

Unsheltered Count: Observation Only

When is an observational survey NOT appropriate?

- “Standing on side of road, Ford Blvd., dark clothing”
- “Person has been in the same spot for a while outside 7/11. Appears disoriented.” (*no time filled out on survey*)
- “Male is in his car. It appears there are pillows in the back seat.” (*no time filled out on survey*)
- Flying J said there is a man who hangs out sometimes who is homeless.

Why not appropriate?

- Not enough detail (age, appearance, location, TIME OF DAY, *details of why you believe they are experiencing homelessness*)
 - If we have more information, the unsheltered coordinator can work to make sure they were not counted by another team or an emergency shelter
- Third party reports are not appropriate to include in the PIT count. The person must be counted/observed by your team.

Unsheltered
Count:
Observation
Only

We need help from county coordinators to ensure the observation only section is filled out properly. If we do not have details about the sleeping location and details to help ensure the household is only counted once, we often must exclude the survey.

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Lisa Cielepak

Unsheltered PIT Tips

Surveying Tips

- Remember that you are speaking to highly vulnerable people and asking some very sensitive questions. Always lead with respect for the person you're speaking with and respect for their dignity.
 - Introduce your self
 - Ask them their name
- Everyone has the right to refuse to answer any or all of your questions.
- Ask all questions, unless the person has already given the answer to the question over the course of your conversation.
- Always ask questions as they are written; do not ask questions in a way that shows you think you already know the answer.
 - Example: Ask: "How do you identify your gender?" Do not ask: "You're male, right?"

PIT Count Dos



DO get consent before asking PIT count survey questions



DO remember that you may be entering into someone's personal or private space



DO have a conversation with the people you interview



DO respect people's time

PIT Count Don'ts



DON'T take personal photos of or with the people you survey



DON'T ask questions in a way that assumes you know the answer



DON'T insert yourself into the person's story



DON'T force people to answer questions they don't want to answer



DON'T make promises you can't deliver

Other Considerations

Considerations for Domestic Violence Survivors

- If you identify someone who is fleeing DV or identifies as a domestic violence survivor during the PIT Count:
 - If the survivor is interested, refer to local DV program for safety planning assistance
 - PIT volunteers are not expected to safety plan, but if engaged, listen to the survivor and ask what they need

Considerations for Domestic Violence Survivors

- Make sure the survivor knows that all collected information from the PIT count is non-identifiable
- Make sure the survivor knows that you will not share their disclosure and/or story with anyone, other than submitting non-identifiable data
- If a survivor feels uncomfortable sharing, don't press for information



Safety Considerations

The safety of all PIT count volunteers is of highest priority. Please do not enter a situation that is unsafe. This may include:

- Building that is not structurally sound.
- Traveling down unpaved/ snow covered roads unless you are in a car that can handle those conditions.
- Approaching an individual or group of people if it does not feel safe.

Volunteers should always go out in teams (should never conduct interviews or observations alone).

Tips for Engaging Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Preparing to engage youth:

What can we do to prepare?

- ★ put out flyers to announce the count
- ★ contact homeless liaison at schools
- ★ contact cys agencies and il workers
- ★ talk to people with lived experience!

Where can we look for homeless youth?

- ★ in cars on school campuses
- ★ abandoned buildings, sheds
- ★ public bathroom, port a jon
- ★ park / pavilion / gazebo
- ★ near libraries
- ★ 24 hr restaurants, stores, gas stations

Guidelines & Recommendations

General guidelines:

- ★ include a mix of age and gender
- ★ involve people with lived experience
- ★ dress casually in light colors so you can easily be seen
- ★ wear a nametag to identify yourself
- ★ announce yourself, knock & ask if they are comfortable / have time to talk

Youth need to know they are seen as a people and not just a demographic.

These are some ideas that can be used to communicate this message:

- ★ plan a youth specific event and deliver the invitation during the conversation
- ★ give out resource bags... (tampons/pads, wipes, condoms, dental hygiene items, hairbrush, battery pack, hand warmers, snacks, something fun!)
- ★ connect them to resources

Standards for Counting Youth

EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL COUNTIES:

- Coordinate with other systems that serve youth
- Engage youth
- Identify hot spots
- Plan with safety in mind
- Provide local training

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH (AGE 24 AND UNDER)

1. Are you pregnant, a parent, or a stepparent?
2. Which of the following best fits how you think about your sexual orientation?
3. Were you ever involved in the foster care system, such as a foster home, group home, or child welfare placement?
4. What help or resources would improve your current situation?

Roles and responsibilities

Who will conduct the Unsheltered PIT Count in your county?

- This is a local decision (up to each county). This will largely depend on size of your county, number of persons exp. homelessness typically identified via the PIT, etc.
- You may choose to engage community volunteers.
- You may choose to conduct the count with only homeless service provider staff.

Role: County Unsheltered PIT Coordinator

KEY ROLES:

- **Select method and timing of conducting the count**
 - Street based count & timing
 - Service based count & timing
 - Combination
- **Identify who in your community will participate in the count (homeless service provider staff, community volunteers)**
- **Provide volunteer training**
 - Required by HUD
 - Must be done immediately prior to count (no more than a week prior)
 - Power Point training slides/recording provided by DMA
- **Decide if you will use PIT mobile app or paper forms**
- **Night/day of PIT logistics**
- **Ensure surveys are completed fully/accurately and submitted to DMA**

Role: County Unsheltered PIT Coordinator

Tasks of the coordinator, in partnership with volunteer committee*, may include:

- Outreach to youth serving orgs, school district homeless liaisons, veteran serving orgs, etc.*
- Notification of police, first responders, etc.*
- Media publicity*
- Volunteer recruiting; Determining volunteer or staff assignments
- Communicating with volunteers/staff prior to the PIT so they know what to expect, bring, etc.
- Map out which teams will count specific areas, to prevent overlap/duplication
- Provide app instructions, if relevant
- Coordinate with CES Regional Manager/local CE centers
- Soliciting donations for incentive/care packages; Assembling care packages*
- Developing a transportation plan (Are persons offered hotel/motel voucher and/or transportation to emergency shelter?)
- Collecting supplies – clipboards, pens, flashlights, etc.
- Ensuring sufficient copies of Interview Forms
- Designating drop-off location or person for all Interview Forms

**coordinators should determine if these tasks make sense based on how you are structuring your count*

Role/After the Count: County Unsheltered PIT Coordinator

Role of the Unsheltered County Coordinator

By February 12, 2025:

- Submit all Interview Forms (one per counted household), if completing surveys on paper. **We ask that Coordinators do a review of all survey forms before completion to make sure they are accurate and complete.**
- If completing surveys via mobile app, surveys will be submitted in real time.
- Complete and submit the County Summary Form (required whether you used paper surveys or app)
 - The number of homeless households reported on the Summary Form must equal the number of Interview Forms (DMA will follow up if there are discrepancies)

PIT Liability Form

Pennsylvania Balance of State CoCs (Eastern and Western PA CoCs) Point in Time Count Privacy and Liability Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that I will have access to information (verbal, written or observed) that will be sensitive in nature and requires professional discretion. I understand information regarding consumers is strictly confidential and shall not be communicated to others outside the group. I understand that to release or disclose information is unacceptable and my signature indicates that I understand and agree with the contents of this document. Violating this statement could result in being excluded from all future meetings and information regarding consumers and services.

Assumption of Risk and Liability Waiver

I understand that conducting a survey of homeless people located outdoors involves a certain degree of risk. I accept that risk and hereby hold harmless and waive any and all claims that I may have against the Western PA CoC, Eastern PA CoC, Department of Community and Economic Development, its agents, employees or assigns for any damage done to me or my property while taking part in the Balance of State CoC Point in Time Count.

I am over 18 years of age and have the right to make this agreement:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Cell Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Company: _____

Emergency Contact

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____



Stipends are available

The CoC has funds available to pay stipends to people with lived experience to participate in/assist with their local PIT. This could include participating in planning meetings or participating in shifts during the count.

Eligibility

- Persons with lived experience of homelessness, including current homelessness or recent homelessness within past 7 years.
 - Persons with lived experience may assist with planning for the PIT, or participation in shifts during the count. Specific volunteer opportunities/hours available should be determined by county coordinator.
- There is no official limit on how many persons with lived experience can be engaged by a county to assist with the PIT. ***However, if you anticipate having more than 5 persons volunteering more than 5 hours each (i.e., more than 25 total hours for your county), please let DMA know.***

Payment Information

- Payment rate for persons with lived experience assisting with local PIT count will be \$15/hr.
- There are 3 options from which individuals can opt to be paid: check, Venmo, Gift Card.
- Or county can pay with cash and submit an invoice to DMA (this is encouraged if possible)

PIT Mobile App

Brendan Auman, PA DCED

ArcGIS Survey123 Mobile App

- Counties have the option to complete their surveys using the PIT mobile app.
- You may use a mix of paper surveys and mobile app, which is **permitted**. (only one survey per household (either paper or mobile app))
- You can download the Survey123 field app on a device via Apple Store or Google Play store.
- If you download the Survey123 field app and are out of cellular service area when conducting count, you can still capture the survey information and submit later when you are in service area.
- You can also use the survey in a computer browser, but functions work better in the app.

Documentation request for in-kind match

Brendan Auman, PA DCED

Carbon County Unsheltered PIT

Jana Welkey, Carbon County Action Committee for Human Services

Next Steps

- **DMA will send out materials in next week:**
 - Survey forms for 2025
 - Volunteer training materials: PowerPoint and recorded training
- **Unsheltered Coordinators:**
 - Convene your local planning team if you haven't done so yet
 - Finalize local plan/methodology
 - Week before PIT Count: Ensure that all volunteers receive PIT count training using materials sent by DMA (you can edit/add for your local context)

Contact Information

Questions - Jessica Sones or other DMA staff:

- pahomelesscount@dma-housing.com (fastest way to reach us)
- (215) 576-1558 (leave a message and we will get back to you ASAP)

CoC PIT Count website:

- <https://pennsylvaniacoc.org/2025-point-time-pit-count-and-housing-inventory-count-hic>
- All PIT materials will be posted here

YHSI

- **The Eastern and Western PA CoCs are soliciting communities for participation in a county-level youth-focused systems coordination pilot program, called the Peer-to-Partnership (P2P) Pilot.** The P2P Pilot Program will operate in 10 communities/counties across the CoCs' combined geography.
- The P2P Pilot will include the **placement of a paid youth and young adults (YYA) with lived experience/expertise of homelessness and housing instability in each participating P2P Pilot Community.** The P2P YYA will work with service providers and representatives from various youth-serving systems in each selected P2P Pilot Community to:
 - Identify the strengths and gaps of the youth homelessness response system.
 - Work collaboratively to create a plan for reducing youth homelessness and amplifying the current youth homelessness response system.
 - Begin implementing the agreed upon plan within the pilot community.

YHSI RFQ (Request for Qualifications)

- Release date: anticipated by 12/05/2024
- Due Date: 2/26/2025
- Link: [P2P Pilot Community RFQ Revised 12/5/2024](#)
- [P2P One-Pager](#)
- Informational webinars: Two informational webinars on the P2P Pilot Communities RFQ will be held and will include time for Q&A. Each webinar will be recorded and posted on this webpage.
 - Webinar #1: Thursday, 12/19/2024, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Registration link: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0tdu-gpjkqGddA8dcMB2zuFRaFuWoR-dzt#/registration>
 - Webinar #2: Thursday, 01/16/2025, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Registration link: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0vduGpqzktHN0Qa2JDpMnEBQrLQ89GXsXw#/registrat>