



For Immediate Release

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Volunteers and food vouchers needed for homeless street count

Merced, Calif., Thursday, December 29, 2011 – The Merced Region Continuum of Care, administered by the Merced County Association of Governments, is conducting a point-in-time street count of the homeless on January 24th from 630-930 a.m. and a survey of the homeless on January 26th. Volunteers are needed for both dates.

The street count, which is part of a nationwide count that takes place each year in January, is conducted during a specific time frame to avoid counting the same person multiple times and to estimate the number of homeless people at a given moment. It is performed in the dead of winter to maximize the percentage of the population in shelters, where people are easier to locate.

Volunteers also conduct surveys with willing homeless individuals. “The surveys request basic information such as age, term of homelessness, if they have a mental illness, if they’re a veteran etc.,” said Su Briggs, Chairperson of the Continuum of Care and Housing Manager at Community Action Agency. “The data is not only reported to the federal government, it also helps local homeless service providers determine if existing programs are meeting the needs of the homeless and if we are in fact meeting our 10 Year Plan goals of reducing the homeless population year to year,” said Briggs. Incentives, such as food vouchers and toiletry items are provided to those willing to participate in the survey. Donations of food vouchers are still needed.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that a homeless count occur within specific guidelines in order to qualify for Continuum of Care funding. Merced County homeless services providers have received nearly \$2 million in funding since 2004 through the program.

During the January 2011 count, 485 homeless individuals were identified throughout Merced County. To view the detailed report, visit www.mc10yearplan.com.

For more information, to donate food vouchers or to volunteer, please contact Alicia Ochoa-Jones, (209) 723-3153 ext.328.

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About MCAG

MCAG is an association of city and county governments, with members who meet to discuss and solve program of regional interest. More information can be found at www.mcagov.org or by calling (209) 723-3153, ext. 308.