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## Kansas City Star, The (MO)

January 18, 2005

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### Homeless counts to be in unison

*DEBRA SKODACK*

Next week, a special count of the area's homeless will be done.

The count, to be taken Jan. 27, will include homeless people in Jackson, Johnson, Wyandotte, Clay and Platte counties.

It will include those in emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for those with disabilities and mental illnesses.

Also counted will be those people using other services for the homeless, such as lunch programs, on that day.

The count was requested by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which distributes money for homeless services through its Continuum of Care program.

The federal agency has asked all Continuum of Care communities to count their homeless populations during the last week of January. It was the Homeless Services Coalition of Greater Kansas City that decided the area counts should be done the same day.

"We've never had a metrowide look," said **Cynthia Larcom**, the coalition's executive director.

Kansas City counts its homeless yearly. But **Larcom** said there never has been a five-county count made on the same day except for the U.S. Census, taken every 10 years.

**Larcom** said the federal government uses the numbers to help in its funding decisions.

"They ask for it so they know what the need is," she said.

Kansas City and Jackson County receive about \$3.2 million through the Continuum of Care program.

The actual counting will be done by agencies that provide housing and programs for the homeless. Those agencies are being trained by the area homeless coalition.

Results from the count should be compiled in March.

A community snapshot is a good idea, said Carol Smith, associate director of United Community Services of Johnson County, a private nonprofit human-services agency.

"We are a region; we are not a single community," Smith said. "People move across the state lines, the county lines, even the homeless.

"It should give us a clearer sense of what our services are and our system of response."

To reach Debra Skodack, call (816) 234-4738 or e-mail [dskodack@kcstar.com](mailto:dskodack@kcstar.com).

How to help

Agencies interested in participating in the homeless population count can call **Cynthia Larcom** at the Homeless Services Coalition of Greater Kansas City, (816) 924-7997.

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