

# Counting Kids in the 2020 Census

**A fair and accurate census is essential to the appropriate allocation of federal funding for programs and services that support maternal and child health.**

In the 2010 census, over 10% of children under age 5 were missed. Young children are undercounted in the census at a higher rate than any other age group, and young Black and Hispanic children are especially at risk of being missed. This undercount is largely due to confusion – parents or guardians are unsure whether to include young children on the census form. When young kids are missed in the census, it has a long-term (10 year) impact on them, their families, and their communities.

## Why the Census Matters for Children

The census determines how more than \$675 billion in federal funds, grants, and support to states, counties, and communities are distributed. That money is spent on services and programs for children, such as:

- *Health insurance and nutrition programs:* Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- *Education programs:* Title I funding to schools in low income communities and IDEA special education funding for children with disabilities
- *Early childhood programs:* Head Start and Childcare and Development Block Grants



Census data is also used by states and communities to make sure that children and their families have the programs and services they need to be healthy and thrive - by deciding where to open new schools or hospitals, for example - making an accurate and fair count vital to family and community well-being. Undercounting children in the census could misinform these impactful decisions for the next 10 years.

## Census 101: The Basics

**Timeline:** In March, the government will send every household a letter in the mail with instructions on how to fill out the census form online, by phone, or by mail. The census questionnaire can be completed on [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov) or by phone at [844-330-2020 – English] or [844-468-2020 – Spanish]. When someone in the household completes the form, they are asked to list everyone who is living at that address on April 1, 2020. From May through July, census takers will visit homes that haven't responded to the census mailing, to ensure completion of the form. The Census Bureau conducts a special outreach effort from March 30 - April 1 to count people who are experiencing homelessness, including children and families living in shelters.

**Counting Kids:** All children living in a home on April 1, 2020 should be counted on the census form. These include: children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, newborn babies (even those who are still in the hospital on April 1, 2020), children who split time between households if they are living in the home on April 1, 2020, and children who sleep in the home most of the time, even if their parents don't live there.

**Confidentiality:** Responses to the census are confidential and protected by law. Answers are only used for population counts; the law does not allow answers to be shared for any other reason. Census employees take an oath to protect census data. Violating the oath carries stiff penalties.

**Setting the Record Straight:** The census does not ask about citizenship status and every member of the household, including those with mixed-immigration status, should reply to the census. The census counts every person living the country, including non-citizens. The law prevents the Census Bureau from sharing information with law enforcement.

## The Title V Role in Census Promotion

State Title V staff are trusted ambassadors for children and families, and there are many opportunities for Title V involvement in the 2020 census:



**Use internal and inter-agency meetings as opportunities to educate colleagues on the importance of the census.** Stress the need for an accurate count of your state's children, and how this will influence future funding for programs that support MCH populations.



**Broadly disseminate the AMCHP parent education material,** available in both English and Spanish, and other census promotion resources, to health department divisions, other state agencies, and local MCH grantees.



**Promote the census** on all health department social media outlets.



**Coordinate with front-line staff providing MCH services.** Examples of messaging efforts in MCH service settings include posting [Census Bureau fact sheets](#) in waiting rooms, offering handouts with [frequently asked questions](#) in order to demystify the census, or including [census information](#) in packets that are given to parents with newborn babies.



**Elevate the importance of counting children in your state or local Complete Count Committee (CCC).** CCCs represent the diversity of the locality or state and are committed to working collectively to get the word out about the census and increase response rates within all communities. [Find your state or local Complete Count Committee](#) and get involved to ensure MCH populations are represented.

## Resources:

- [AMCHP Parent Fact Sheet \(English\)](#)
- [AMCHP Parent Fact Sheet \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Young Children and the 2020 Census](#) – a presentation on the January AMCHP all-member policy call by Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs
- [NCSL State Census Profiles](#)
- Census Bureau Resources
  - [Census 101](#)
  - [Counting Young Children](#)
  - [2020 Census Toolkit for State & Local Officials](#)

## AMCHP Contact Information

This fact sheet is part of a series of AMCHP documents and resources on the 2020 census and its impact on maternal and child health populations. All AMCHP staff can be reached via phone at (202) 775-0436.

