

Interim Report
NAC Undercount of Young Children Work Group
June 15, 2018

The Undercount of Young Children Work Group (UYCWG) has made considerable headway on its first deliverable. We have read numerous reports from Census Bureau researchers and others and heard from several demographers and other SME's. We have made numerous recommendations via the NAC that the Bureau has accepted including the continuance of the UYCWG through FY 2019. Other recommendations have in part included strategies for raising awareness about the Undercount both inside the Bureau and in the community at large; forming Undercount teams across Bureau departments with recognized leadership to improve accountability and focus on the issue as a priority for 2020; suggested a range of potential partnerships with national organizations, state, federal and local entities; as well as for the development and testing of specific messages about the importance of the undercount of young children.

The UYCWG's second deliverable asks for the following: "The Census Bureau would benefit specifically from the working group's advice on how to turn the research results on the Undercount of young children into tangible and accessible materials and messages for partnership and outreach efforts." To that end, based on what we have learned from the research and SMEs, it is clear that there is considerable misunderstanding about who is to be counted. That misunderstanding begins at the level of whomever is filling out the Census and as such being considered the head of household. With that in mind, it is time to be very direct about the inclusion of young children in the count. That means explaining that any child in the household should be counted (1) whether they are directly related to the head of household or not; (2) no matter the age of the child; and (3) including if the child's living arrangements are divided among more than one household. Once this last criteria is acknowledged, Census will have to find out the time periods (day's, weeks, months) and frequency of the child's stays to solidify the count.

The part 2 of this more direct approach must share with the head of household and the community at large about the specific amounts and sources of dollars available and potentially flowing into that community based on the count from the Census. Specifically noting the dollars impacting children would be advantageous. We recognize that the Bureau has in the past done some version of this through its state and local partners. We are advising that specific amounts spent in those hard to reach communities be called out.

We also recognize that the Bureau understands the power and effectiveness that community partners and individuals trusted by their constituencies and neighbors bring to the messaging. ***The issue is that in 2020 the Bureau cannot assume a business as usual posture.***

Context matters! In the current environment, trusted messengers may not be willing to put themselves on the line. Their reputations are at stake. It can take but a moment to undermine

years of consistent “good works”. The impartiality of the Census is being called into question in the current political climate. ***This unease reverberating through hard to reach communities and beyond means that the Bureau will have to assume the worst and start from scratch to rebuild the web like infrastructure of true believers who have assisted in the past. None of this bodes well for improving the Undercount of young children. It is quite natural for people to act to shelter their children from perceived dangers.***

Submitted by Jerlean Daniel, Chair of UYCWG