



**PARTNERSHIP
FOR AMERICA'S
CHILDREN**

State and local child advocates working
together for a better future



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

**Public Comment of Deborah Stein, J.D., Network Director of the Partnership for America's Children
And Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs
to the Census Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting, September, 2019**

We are submitting these comments on behalf of the Partnership for America's Children and the Coalition on Human Needs. Both organizations are on the leadership team of the national Count All Kids initiative, a national working group of child-serving organizations that is developing strategies and tools and resources to help ensure that all young children are counted.

The Partnership's mission is to support its network of state and community, multi-issue, child advocacy organizations in effective advocacy. The Partnership has 53 member organizations in 41 states. Our members advocate to improve policies for young children at the state, local, and federal levels. Collectively they represent over 90% of the nation's young children. Partnership members use Census data in their advocacy, and 31 Partnership members are also KIDS COUNT grantees in their state, serving as that state's data hub on young children for policy makers, administrators, and nonprofits.

The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is an alliance of one hundred national scope organizations, representing human service providers, faith organizations, policy experts, civil rights and labor groups, and other advocates in every state, who come together to defend and improve federal policies aimed at assisting low-income and vulnerable people. CHN has long made use of Census Bureau surveys documenting poverty, income, and health coverage, and also trains advocates nationwide in the accurate use of this data. CHN understands that a complete decennial census count is vital for many reasons, including the fair distribution of federal funding and the reliability of other Census Bureau surveys.

As part of our work, we commissioned Lake Research to conduct message research with families of young children around the 2020 Decennial Census. We conducted 11 focus groups with families with young children as well as two focus groups with service providers, and an online survey with 800 families with young children aged five and under, making less than \$50,000 a year. On September 10, we presented our national findings on a webinar; the full webinar and slides are or will be shortly available at <https://funderscommittee.org/resource/recording-slides-fci-briefing-series-census-2020-messaging-testing-results/>.

Our research shows that nearly one in five parents of young children in this income bracket said they would not include their young children age 5 and under on the census (10%) or are not sure if they would (8%).

We also tested a variety of scenarios with different relationships to the householder, such as part-time residence or temporary residence. Parents are most likely to include on their census form those young

children who live in the household “all of the time,” no matter their relation to the others in the household. They are less likely to include those who are temporary residents, even if they have no other permanent home. In every case, respondents were less likely to include those young children than their own young children who lived with them full-time.

Most importantly however, in the best scenario nearly one in five parents either would not or might not count their own child living with them full time.

When we asked them why they thought parents might leave their young children off the form, they identified the following possible reasons:

- Half (50%) believe people might not include children ages 5 and under on the census form because the person filling out the form isn’t sure whether to include them or not.
- The next most likely scenario is that the person filling out the form doesn’t see why the government needs to know about the young children (38%).
- Various scenarios where young children are mobile and part-time residents are another set of reasons that parents believe contributes to uncounted young children:
 - Another adult who lives somewhere else has custody of the young children;
 - The young children are living in the household temporarily;
 - The young children live in the household some days, but other days they live somewhere else;
 - The young children aren't the children of the homeowner or renter, but another person's child.

Our findings show that it will be imperative to include specific messages telling families to count all young children living in the housing unit including those age five and under, and to address specific scenarios including young children who may not be the child of the householder, young children who split their time between two or more households if that household is where they live and sleep most of the time, and young children who are living temporarily in the household and have no permanent address. We are therefore asking the CSAC to recommend that the national communications campaign and the communications campaign targeted to households with young children have explicit messages on these points. We also ask it to recommend that these points are highlighted in any FAQs and other resources for families seeking guidance on who to include, and that enumerators and those staffing the phone centers probe for the presence of such young children.

Thank you for considering our recommendations, and for giving us this opportunity to comment. We are happy to provide further information; you can contact Deborah Stein at dstein@foramericaschildren.org or 202-290-1816, and Deborah Weinstein at dweinstein@chn.org or 202-223-2532 x111.

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