



To: Secretary of State Tahesha Way, Chair  
Members, New Jersey Complete Count Commission

From: Alana Vega, KIDS COUNT Coordinator  
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Date: March 21, 2019

RE: **What Statewide Census Outreach Should Include**

With April 1, 2019 right around the corner, the clock is ticking for the State's preparedness for the 2020 Census. Coordinating statewide efforts and local complete count committees will be critical to ensuring that the message gets out about the importance of the 2020 Census. Other state complete count efforts suggest a framework for how New Jersey should approach its Census outreach.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) is coordinating nonprofit agencies and community-based organizations at a state level, to provide materials, technical assistance and presentations to local and state groups interested in ensuring a fair and accurate 2020 Census count of New Jersey's young children. More than 5 percent of children under 5 were missed in the 2010 Census in New Jersey.

**ACNJ urges the Commission to complete a preliminary report by the end of April 2019** in order to provide the legislature and public with a framework of its outreach strategy and potential cost estimates before the approval of the FY2020 budget and before key deadlines for state and local government planning, nonprofit funding for 2020 and school planning for the upcoming year take place. Time lost in April and May 2019 will mean weaker outreach in April and May 2020. Although 2020 may seem far away, almost all agencies and community-based organizations that will be undertaking Census outreach are currently planning their staffing and operations for next year.

With the clock ticking down to Census 2020, New Jersey needs to quickly ramp up its education and outreach efforts. Given the risks to New Jersey of a delayed Census campaign, ACNJ looks forward to working with the Commission to ensure every resident is counted in 2020.

ACNJ recommends that the Commission act quickly on a few key areas to ensure that the groundwork is laid for an effective Census outreach effort in 2020:

1. **Develop a preliminary outreach plan with proposed budget by April 30, 2019** in order to provide guidance to the legislature on appropriate levels of funding for the Commission's work.
2. **Request departmental Census plans from all state departments** indicating how state agencies and departments will ensure that Census outreach materials and messaging will be transmitted through their efforts and how they will assist in Census implementation.

3. **Encourage and spearhead the creation of and participation in Local Complete Count Committees** in communities and groups you represent. Many of New Jersey’s hardest-to-count communities still have no Census infrastructure (see **Appendix B**).
4. **Develop needs assessment, subcommittees and targeted outreach strategy for Hard-to-Count Populations** to support the diverse array of populations in New Jersey that will face hard-to-count challenges in 2020.

The reasons for people not being counted vary, and local outreach will be necessary to tailor messaging and strategies to particular groups of hard-to-count people. For example, a strategy to address complex households (i.e. homes where multiple families or unrelated people live) in Paterson will look different than an outreach strategy for households without internet access in rural Cumberland County.

Based on ACNJ’s review of other states, notably California, it’s clear that an “all hands on deck” effort will be necessary, with a strong focus on “ground game” (in-person contact with hard-to-count populations) rather than “air game” (TV advertisements, mailers, etc.):

- **Grants to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)**, which serve as trusted messengers in hard-to-count communities, for targeted outreach such as local presentations, canvassing, workshops and training;
- **Government-based “in-reach” through existing programs** that interact with hard-to-count populations;
- **Education outreach** for schools, libraries, higher education, child care and other organizations that regularly interact with families, children and hard-to-count populations.

Roughly 35 percent of California’s outreach funding is going to local CBOs with another 15 percent to state nonprofits covering HTC groups, with another third going to local government outreach. (See Appendix A at p. 2) The rest of the funding is divided among state administrative costs, education outreach, state agency outreach and other sector outreach. One area to highlight is data capacity at the state level, particularly for mapping of hard-to-count areas at the block and tract level, mapping locations of Census kiosks and outreach centers, compiling calendars of trainings and events, and identifying key areas where more outreach is needed both before and after Census forms begin completion in March 2020.

These grants will require quick turnaround as soon as the FY2020 budget is approved. California’s CBOs have been operating a Census campaign for a year or more and Illinois organizations received grants at the end of 2018. New Jersey will be playing catch-up from now until Census Day, so any delay in getting the grants out the door will likely hinder Census outreach.

ACNJ recommends targeting particular hard-to-count populations that have a high risk of being undercounted. These include:

- Children under age 5
- Hispanic/Latino people
- Black or African American people
- Asian or Asian-American people

- Immigrants
- People with limited English proficiency
- Homeless persons
- Renters
- Young people (18-34)
- Low-income households
- People without internet access
- People with disabilities
- Veterans
- College students living off-campus
- Formerly incarcerated people
- Farm workers
- People living in group quarters (prisons, jails, shelters, assisted-living facilities, dormitories)

In order to reach these hard-to-count populations, an outreach strategy must target a wide range of services and programs that are **trusted messengers** to the community. A message to fill out the Census must come multiple times from multiple messengers.

Necessary groups to carry this message include:

- Local stores and businesses (for both customers and employees)
  - Local chambers of commerce and Latino or Black business groups
- Schools (public and private) and child care
  - PTA/PTO
- Libraries
- Neighborhood or community organizations
- Local non-profits or social services organizations (Kiwanis, League of Women Voters, scouting groups, etc.)
- Ethnic, racial or national-origin minority group associations
- Service organizations for immigrants
- LGBTQ organizations
- Health care providers (hospitals, clinics, doctors, nurses)
- Faith-based and religious groups and charities
- Higher education institutions
- Local media (newspapers, local radio, non-English media)
- Unions
- Tenant groups
- Foundations
- Law enforcement and fire department
- Job training groups
- Government or government-funded services
  - WIC Clinics
  - NJ FamilyCare
  - Motor Vehicles Commission (renewals)

- County and municipal courts
- Housing authorities
- Tax assistance
- Elections
- Veterans services
- Unemployment
- TANF and WorkFirst NJ agencies
- Disability services (children and adults)
- Licensing boards (health care, trades, personal services)
- Utilities (bills)

ACNJ also notes that particular areas of New Jersey are more likely to be undercounted than others. A list of target communities is included in Appendix B of areas that will require additional outreach. ACNJ encourages the Commission's members to encourage the development of local Complete Count Committees in those areas.

These efforts cannot be completed without sufficient funding. The Governor's proposed FY20 budget includes \$2 million in funding for the Complete Count Commission, and a pair of budget resolutions in the state Senate and Assembly would appropriate \$9 million for the work of the Commission. ACNJ strongly urges the State to include at least \$9 million in its FY2020 budget. Along with dozens of groups across New Jersey, ACNJ submitted a letter to the Governor asking for sufficient funding for this Commission to ensure an accurate and fair count of New Jersey's residents. Even a small undercount would cost New Jersey far more in federal funding over the next decade.

As the Commission understands, a fair and accurate 2020 Census is among the most critical elements to effective governance over the next decade. ACNJ urges the Commission to act quickly to begin building the state and local infrastructure needed to ensure an effective outreach effort.