

## Concept Paper

Census results are used to determine state legislative districts and to distribute federal and state funding. The data collected in Census 2020 will determine the political representation and the public resources for New Jersey residents for the next ten years, through 2030. Data collected from the Census influence almost all federal formula funding grants and policy decisions. New Jersey cannot afford an undercount in 2020. More than \$22 billion in annual federal spending in New Jersey relies on Census population counts, including:

- Health Care: Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP, health care centers
- Education: Title I schools, Special Education, student loans, Pell Grants, Head Start
- Nutrition: SNAP, school meals, WIC
- Housing: Section 8 housing vouchers, housing loans, public housing, LIHEAP
- Infrastructure: highway construction, federal transit grants

There are considerable challenges to completing an accurate Census count in 2020. Federal funding for Census outreach has been cut. For the first time, the Census Bureau will use an online questionnaire. The administration plans to include a citizenship question in the Census. Whether that will be upheld is currently before the Supreme Court. About 22 percent or 1.9 million New Jersey residents live in hard-to-count areas, including a disproportionate number of Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian residents and children under age 5.

### Statewide Census Outreach Campaign

In April 2019, ACNJ received a grant from the Fund for New Jersey to head a state level outreach campaign for the 2020 Census. The goal of this campaign is to increase participation rates among hard-to-count populations, leading up to Census Day (April 1, 2020) and through the Nonresponse Follow-up Operation (April – July 2020). Campaign objectives are to engage and strengthen the capacity of community-based and nonprofit organizations across NJ to participate in Census 2020 outreach.

ACNJ is responsible to:

- Develop the statewide strategic plan to ensure an accurate count of all NJ residents, including roles for nonprofits, foundations, local community organizations, and state and local government;
- Organize a coordinating group of key statewide organizations, representing the undercounted populations, to carry out the strategic plan. These include the Institute for Social Justice, the Latino Action Network, Wind of the Spirit and the Asian-American Network;
- Draft materials to support the statewide outreach campaign, targeted towards particular outreach partners, such school districts, health care providers, clergy, nonprofits, business, other affinity groups, etc.;

- Work with statewide partners and local stakeholders to convene local complete count committees in fifteen communities with the greatest population likely to be undercounted, including local governments to develop implementation plans for Census 2020 outreach;
- Advocate for resources the NJ Complete Count Commission and coordinate outreach with the commission and Secretary of State's office, which oversees the Commission.

The census campaign is headed by Peter Chen, ACNJ Policy Counsel, who was reassigned to oversee the project. The Fund for NJ's grant supports the personnel and non-personnel costs associated with the statewide outreach.

### **Focusing on the Undercount of Children Under Age 5**

Addressing the undercount of children under age 5 presents different challenges to outreach. The reasons for the undercount of young children differ from other undercounted populations and are not as concentrated in specific communities. Parent education and awareness are of greater importance, requiring different outreach strategies. ACNJ has extensive relationships with the early care and education community across the state, due to our *Right from the Start NJ* advocacy campaign, and is the logical choice to carry out outreach to ensure that young children are counted.

While the strategies and materials developed for the statewide outreach campaign will be useful, an effective campaign specifically for children under age 5 will require a more targeted, intensive and community-based approach to engage local networks and community programs to provide direct outreach to families with young children. ACNJ is seeking \$150,000 to staff this campaign and provide support to the local networks and programs that must be engaged in outreach to parents. Strategies will include:

- **Identify and engage state and local networks of programs serving parents with young children.** Potential networks to engage are: NJ Council on Young Children and County Councils on Young Children; Child Care Aware NJ and county-based resource and referral agencies; school district Preschool Advisory Councils; central intake for the home visitation network; other networks for child care, home visiting, prenatal and well-baby care, and early intervention.
- **Develop a communications strategy specific to the undercount of young children.** This would include activities that ACNJ would carry out directly as well the development of materials that partners can use. ACNJ would add a special section on the under 5 undercount to our website section on the census, do e-news and e-blasts, social media and print media, primarily local news outlets. ACNJ will assist our partners in their own media strategy.
- **Develop an advocacy tool kit and disseminate to partner networks.** This will include outreach strategies that partners can use to parents, as well as materials that can be replicated for use in local communities. ACNJ will disseminate this in a "train the trainer" model, providing presentations that partners can then provide on a local level. Model fact sheets and other advocacy tools will be developed in English and in Spanish. Translation to other languages will be considered if needed.

- **Provide technical assistance to partners on outreach activities.** ACNJ would help partners host events, such as:
  - Holding information sessions and distributing materials at regular contact times (recruitment, enrollment, family newsletters, appointment reminders, school conferences, events/performances, community outreach)
  - Census awareness activities for early 2020, such as Census Day at school where families can fill out forms in person.
  - Setting up Census kiosks in hardest-to-count areas to disseminate materials.

The project will be supervised by Peter Chen, who is heading the statewide outreach campaign. ACNJ staff writer, Catherine Felegi, will be reassigned to provide communications for the project and ACNJ Kids Count Coordinator, Alana Vega, will provide data for outreach and assist in outreach activities, as needed. ACNJ will hire a one-year, full-time position to coordinate the campaign, preferably an individual who is fluent in Spanish. A job description for this position is attached. In addition to its direct costs of ACNJ's printing, travel and meetings, ACNJ will help partners and local agencies cover the cost of meetings, materials, and travel.