

Update on the 2020 Census for College/University Student Housing Administrators

March 13, 2020

The Census Bureau has been closely monitoring the national situation with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic and has noted that a number of colleges and universities have closed their campus housing temporarily. In light of this change, the Census Bureau wanted to convey that we are still planning to enumerate college students, but need to make adjustments in light of the closings, and to protect the health of our staff and your students, while ensuring an accurate enumeration.

We recently concluded the 2020 Census Group Quarters Advance Contact operation, during which our field staff contacted college/university student housing administrators to ask them to select enumeration methods for their students. The majority, about 47 percent, chose the electronic response data transfer (eResponse) methodology, meaning administrators will upload directory-level information about each student onto the Census Bureau's secure server. About 35 percent selected the drop-off/pick-up option, which involves census field staff dropping off individual census questionnaires (ICQs) for the administrator to distribute to students, after which census field staff would return to pick up the completed ICQs. About 9 percent chose In-Person interviews, meaning census field staff will conduct interviews with students to complete the ICQs. And, about 7 percent chose Paper Response Data Collection meaning administrators will provide census field staff with a paper listing containing directory information about their students.

Given the current health situation, the Census Bureau will be contacting all colleges/universities that chose the **In-Person and the Drop-off/pick-up** methods to ask them to choose either the [eResponse](#) or the [Group Quarters Enumeration](#) Paper Response Data Collection options. We believe the safety of your students and our field staff will be best served by these options. However, as shared during the February 13, 2020 joint Census Bureau and [Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office webinar](#), the eResponse and Paper Response Data Collection methods have FERPA implications and schools could provide "directory information" for each of their students unless the student opted out. While these methods do not give students the opportunity to self-respond, which is preferred, it does allow the Census Bureau to accurately enumerate students at school in spite of the fact they may be temporarily living at home or elsewhere.

Additionally, as a reminder, students who are living off campus in private housing can expect to receive an initial invitation in the mail before March 20, asking them to respond to the Census. Given that some off-campus students may miss this invitation, particularly if they are temporarily at home or another location, we are asking you to remind off-campus students to respond, particularly via the Internet at my2020census.gov. You may wish to remind students of the Census Bureau's residence criteria found below, indicating that in most cases students living away from home at school should be counted at school, even if they are temporarily elsewhere due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hundreds of millions of dollars annually are allocated based on census results and it is important to enumerate individuals where they live and stay most of the time. The Census Bureau has not changed its "residence criteria" – its rules on where individuals should be counted – as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These criteria can be found [on our website](#) and are summarized below.

Thank you for working with the Census Bureau to ensure an accurate count for our nation's campuses.

College Students and Staff Living in College Housing)

- a) ***College students living at their parents' or guardians' home while attending college in the United States*** - Counted at their parents' or guardians' home.
- b) ***College students living away from their parents' or guardians' home while attending college in the United States (living either on-campus or off-campus)*** - Counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they are living in college/university student housing (such as dormitories or residence halls) on Census Day, they are counted at the college/university student housing.
- c) ***College students living away from their parents' or guardians' home while attending college in the United States (living either on-campus or off-campus) but staying at their parents' or guardians' home while on break or vacation*** - Counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they are living in college/university student housing (such as dormitories or residence halls) on Census Day, they are counted at the college/university student housing.
- d) ***College students who are U.S. citizens living outside the United States while attending college outside the United States*** - Not counted in the stateside census.
- e) ***College students who are foreign citizens living in the United States while attending college in the United States (living either on-campus or off-campus)*** - Counted at the on-campus or off-campus U.S. residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they are living in college/university student housing (such as dormitories or residence halls) on Census Day, they are counted at the college/university student housing.
- f) ***Staff members living in college/university student housing (such as dormitories or residence halls) on Census Day*** - Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a usual home elsewhere, they are counted at the college/university student housing.