



*U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of Inspector General*



Bureau of the Census

*Review of Special Population
Enumerations and Questionnaire
Assistance Centers*

Final Report No. ESD-12593-0-0001/September 2000

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Kenneth Prewitt
Director
Bureau of the Census

FROM: Johnnie Frazier

SUBJECT: Review of Special Population Enumerations
and Questionnaire Assistance Centers
Report No ESD-12593-0-0001

We have completed our review of the Census Bureau's special population enumerations and questionnaire assistance centers. The purpose of our review was to evaluate the effectiveness of special population enumeration procedures and questionnaire assistance centers. We reviewed applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures; examined selected files and records; and reviewed appropriate documentation. OIG teams observed enumerator training and the enumerations of special places, interviewed regional personnel, local census office employees, and special population enumerators. We also visited questionnaire assistance centers and interviewed staff. Our review was conducted at bureau headquarters in Suitland, Maryland, the Regional Census Center and local census offices in Boston; and local census offices in Atlanta, Denver, Houston, and Seattle.

Our review revealed no significant conditions meriting additional OIG recommendations. However, we did find several issues warranting your attention. An insufficient amount of time was allowed for training, with just four hours scheduled for enumerators to complete pre-employment paperwork and receive their enumeration training. Moreover, much of this four-hour session was used to complete the paperwork necessary for employment, leaving little or no time for training for the enumerations. As a result, the local offices had to either add additional hours of training or send enumerators out without adequate training.

Late delivery of supplies meant training materials often arrived at the training sites just a day before the start of training, which did not allow instructors adequate time to familiarize themselves with the materials before presenting them to the class. Numerous corrections to the training workbooks were also received just prior to training sessions. Also, at each of the sites we visited--Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Denver, CO; Houston, TX, and Seattle, WA--local offices had not received the quantity of supplies and forms they needed. The shortage of materials required local offices to spend the time and money to photocopy forms and to borrow supplies from other kits in order to complete enumerations. An additional complication occurred where there was a shortage of long form questionnaires. Not only

did the office staff have to photocopy questionnaires for the enumeration, but the responses on each photocopied long form had to later be copied by hand onto original questionnaires.

As we assessed selected aspects of the bureau's special population enumerations, we found that some shelters and soup kitchens were missed even though the bureau had worked with local governments and community-based organizations, such as homeless advocacy groups, in identifying and updating the list of service locations to be enumerated. However, officials of several organizations that provide community services to the hard-to-enumerate said they were never given the opportunity to identify special places and, as a result, their soup kitchens had been missed. The director of one multi-service center said that although she had called the local census office repeatedly to inform them that her organization had a homeless shelter and to request that the shelter be enumerated, no enumerators visited the facility.

The effectiveness of questionnaire assistance centers was not evident. We found a wide variance in usage at centers: some were well attended, while others were closed early for lack of customers. The centers, located in heavily minority neighborhoods, received the most traffic. However, other centers had few clients when we visited, with staff advising us that they were busy for the first few weeks after opening but had very few clients in late March.

At this point in the 2000 decennial, we have no additional recommendations to address these issues.¹ However, we believe that the bureau should consider our observations on special population enumerations and questionnaire assistance centers in planning for the 2010 decennial.

Please give me a call on (202) 482-4661, or Charles Tegeler, Director, Economics and Statistics Audit Division, at (202) 482-2395, if you have any further questions about the audit. We appreciate the assistance of Census Bureau officials and staff during the audit.

¹For previous OIG recommendations addressing these issues, see the following reports: *Bureau of the Census: Columbia Dress Rehearsal Experience Suggests Changes to Improve Results of the 2000 Decennial Census* (Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, ESD-10783-8-0001, September 1998); *Bureau of the Census: Sacramento Dress Rehearsal Experience Suggests Changes to Improve Results of the 2000 Decennial Census* (Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, ESD-10784-8-0001, September 1998).