

**GET YOUR
COMMUNITY COUNTED:
A Guide for Organizations**

The 2020 Census will begin shortly!

Organizations need to be prepared to support the communities they serve to get counted! Learn the basics about the census, why it matters to people with disabilities, and how to get involved.

CENSUS 101

Every 10 years, the Constitution requires the United States to count the number of people living in the country. **The census helps to direct more than \$675 billion annually** in federal funding. Census data is used by businesses, governments, and civic organizations to inform decision making about what services should be available in local areas.

The census asks every household to answer nine questions. These questions are: how many people live in the house or apartment, whether the property is owned or rented, phone number, name, sex, and then a few questions about the age, race, and ethnicity of each person. The answers to these questions are used to help enforce anti-discrimination laws, set federal funding levels, and much more.

Why is the census important to people with disabilities?

There are two main ways the census affects people with disabilities.

- 1. Census data is used to figure out how much money programs, state, and local governments will get from the Federal Government to pay for certain services.** The data is used to allocate hundreds of billions of Federal dollars to states for Federal programs including Medicaid, housing vouchers, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and education programs. When there isn't enough money, services and programs for people with disabilities can be cut.
- 2. Census information is also used to figure out how many members each state should have in the U.S. House of Representatives.** The number of representatives each state is allocated is based on how many people live in the state.

People with disabilities, people of color, LGBTQ people, people experiencing homelessness, and other communities are considered hard to count populations and face a higher risk of being undercounted. This means that the communities where these people live face a higher risk of losing federal funding and not having accurate representation. Every community benefits from an accurate census!

HOW CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION GET INVOLVED?

It is critical to reach self-advocates, family members, direct support professionals, provider organizations, and other community members about the importance of everyone being counted! There are many ways for an organization to get involved.

BE A PARTNER: Your organization can join local and state-based census coalitions and stay up to date on the latest census news by joining the State Count Action Network and finding your state coalition leaders (censuscounts.com/states). In addition, connect with your local and state level official Complete Count Committees (CCC/SCC). **Find your local CCC/SCC here: census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-complete-count-committees.html**. It is crucially important that voices from the disability community are represented to raise concerns about undercounts, accessibility, and to share information and resources.

Learn ways to partner directly with the Census Bureau at:
2020census.gov/en/partners

SHARE INFORMATION ONLINE: Send out materials and reminders about the census to your existing networks or other outreach channels, such as social media. Think about other ways that your organization communicates with people and consider adding information about the census. **Follow @thearcus on Twitter and facebook. [com/thearcus](https://www.facebook.com/thearcus)** for sample messaging.

SHARE INFORMATION AT MEETINGS: Include materials and reminders about the census as a part of all meetings and events that you have already scheduled or are planning. Even just a brief reminder at the beginning of a meeting can help build awareness.

BUILD A COALITION: Provide information and resources from thearc.org/census to partner organizations and ask that they share with their constituencies. Think broadly about how your organization can partner and share information with groups representing other hard to count communities – so everyone gets counted!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I help someone fill out their census form? Yes, you can help someone fill out their form! The Census Bureau can also help. If you have questions about how to fill out the census, you can visit 2020census.gov or call the **Census Bureau at 1-800-923-8282**.

Can the Census Bureau share my information with immigration authorities? By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share the data with immigration or law enforcement agencies or use it to determine eligibility for government benefits.

Are my answers kept confidential? Yes, your answers are kept confidential. It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census or survey information that identifies an individual or business. This is true even when other governmental agencies ask for the data—other governmental agencies do not have the legal right to access this information.

Why aren't there questions about disability? The census is limited in the number of questions it can include every 10 years. Information about disability is collected in other ongoing surveys.

What resources are available to help people with disabilities fill out the census? The Arc has information and resources about the census available at thearc.org/census. There will be guides from the Census Bureau to help people with disabilities fill out the census, including a large print assistance guide and a braille language assistance guide. The Census Bureau is working to ensure accessibility, if you have questions, **you can call 1-800- 923-8282** or go to 2020census.gov.

THE 2020 CENSUS TIMELINE & HOW TO COMPLETE IT

In January 2020, the Census Bureau will start mailing out instructions on how to fill out the census. By **Census Day, April 1, 2020**, every household should have received these instructions.

The census can be filled out in three ways:

1. Online
2. Over the phone
3. By mail

In May 2020, census workers from the Census Bureau will begin visiting households that have not yet responded to the census to ensure that everyone is counted. A census worker will have an identification badge from the Department of Commerce with a picture and expiration date.

IS IT REALLY THE CENSUS?

There is a risk of fraud or spam related to the census. But there are things that census forms or census workers will never do. **So be aware the census will not:**

- ask for your Social Security number
- send people to jail for not answering questions
- ask for money or your bank account information
- come from a political party, like the Democrats or Republicans

For more resources on the census and people with disabilities visit **thearc.org/census**