



Get Out the Count (GOTC) Field Guidance: How to Support Self-Response in the 2020 Census

To support the tireless efforts of organizations across the country to ensure our communities are fairly and accurately counted in the 2020 Census, the Get Out the Count Field working group has developed some guidance for organizations and campaign staff to consider in the development of your GOTC plans. We understand that without the engagement and direct interactions with our communities, it's tough to create genuine change and interest, and we are grateful for the work local organizations do and will continue to build on in preparation for the 2020 Census.

The Census Bureau released guidance for stakeholders [supporting the 2020 Census](#).¹ The Census Counts campaign and national hub partners are providing more specific details about how your organization can follow that guidance when doing your census outreach. We hope this helps your organization during your strategic field planning and as you think through tactics and opportunities to engage our communities on the census.

Community Outreach and Door to Door Canvassing:

DO:

- Build your list for census outreach by distributing [Pledge to be Counted](#)² commitment cards or linking to an online pledge (ex: [Census Counts Pledge](#)).³
- Educate communities about the importance of the 2020 Census via promotional materials, and educational materials such as door hangers, flyers, etc.
- Host census parties/events for households to learn more about the census and fill out the form together.
- Work with other partners in hard-to-count communities to identify key dates where you can provide materials to facilitate census participation.
- Go door to door, through early May (during the self-response phase), to encourage participation in the census. Organizations planning for GOTC strongly believe that given the barriers to a fair and accurate census – including the digital divide – significant, in-person outreach by those with longstanding, established trust is critical, particularly in historically undercounted communities.
- Organizations with existing canvassing programs can include census information within their campaigns/programs. Canvassers from any given organization should take care to identify themselves as a “volunteer” or “community leader” and NOT as a “canvasser” or “enumerator” to avoid confusion. All canvassing scripts should clearly state the above.
- Direct community members to [2020Census.gov](#) and the [phone questionnaire assistance numbers](#)⁴ in all your education materials during the self-response phase (occurring March-May).

DO NOT:

- Organizations should **NOT** fill out census questionnaires on behalf of households or directly collect the information called for by the questionnaire.
- Organizations should **NOT** dial in and respond to the census questionnaire for any household.
- The Census Counts campaign does not encourage stakeholders to do door-to-door census canvassing during the NRFU phase beginning in mid-May, so as not to interfere with on-the-ground efforts of Census Bureau enumerators or create confusion among households.
- *Organizations, staff, volunteers, or any individual who is not part of the Census Bureau should **NOT** do any data collection that is associated or identified as information collected for census efforts, to ensure that respondents are not confused between organizational intake forms and actual census questionnaire*

Phone and SMS Outreach:

When doing phone and SMS outreach, make sure you follow the provisions of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (or TCPA). This 1991 law is designed to address the ever-growing flood of unwanted communications.

- The TCPA only applies when calls or texts are sent using a prerecorded voice or an automated telephone dialing system (ATDS) to a cell phone.
- For more information, watch the recorded webinar on [Best Practices and Staying Legal: Census Phone and Texting Outreach](#).⁵

DO:

- When doing outreach, make sure you have included opted-out messaging, such as: “By submitting your cell phone number, you are agreeing to receive periodic text messages from this organization. Message and data rates may apply.”
- Train your team/volunteers on the importance of opted-out messaging on scripts, sign-up sheets, organizing asks, etc.

DO NOT:

- Start a phone and/or SMS outreach effort without consulting your legal counsel and without developing opted-out messaging.

Language and Questionnaire Assistance:

DO:

- Train staff and volunteers on the questions asked on the [census questionnaire](#)⁶ and on the language support available from the Census Bureau that is in 12 non-English languages by phone and 59 non-English languages in [printed guides](#).⁷ (View the [guides](#) and [language assistance phone numbers](#).)⁸
- For languages not covered by the Census Bureau, connect with organizations like [Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC](#), [National Congress of American Indians](#), [Arab American Institute](#), and [Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#) for additional language support.

- Provide in-language instructional videos and other content (such as infographics, flyers, and posters) on how to complete the form.
- Try to have materials translated in the dominant language for communities in the area

DO NOT:

- Volunteers should **NOT** fill out the questionnaire for a household; instead, refer them to various ways to answer through the options provided by the Census Bureau (online, phone, etc.).

Supporting People with Disabilities:

DO:

- Assist people with disabilities (e.g., ask if they would like any written instructions/materials read out loud). People could ask someone to help them fill out the 2020 Census. This could be an individual they trust such as a family member or trained caregiver, among others. For additional information, [NDRN: National Disability Rights Network](#) is a great organization to start with.

DO NOT:

- ****Never assume that a person with a disability needs help; always ASK first.*

Technology, Digital & Questionnaire Assistance Centers:

- Set up a [census kiosk](#),⁹ ensuring that you deploy [cybersecurity best practices](#)¹⁰ to allow people to fill out their own census questionnaire.
- Follow guidelines from [Census Counts](#), the [American Library Association \(ALA\)](#), and the [Census Bureau](#) regarding cybersecurity best practices.

For additional Dos and Don'ts, check out our [expanded resource here](#).

References

PAGE 1

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4. “Memorandum 2019.18: Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) Phone Numbers.” United States Census Bureau, 16 August 2019. Retrieved 23 January 2020. Available at https://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html.

PAGE 2

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6. “2020 Census Informational Questionnaire.” United States Census 2020. Retrieved 23 January 2020. Available at <https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2019-08/2020-informational-questionnaire.pdf>.
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8. “Memorandum 2019.18: Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) Phone Numbers.” United States Census Bureau, 16 August 2019. Retrieved 23 January 2020. Available at https://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html.

PAGE 3

9. “Next Century Cities’ 2020 Census Kiosk Toolkit.” Next Century Cities. December 2019. Retrieved 23 January 2020. Available at <https://nextcenturycities.org/census-kiosk-toolkit/>.
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