

Uncounted children will grow up being excluded from policy-making consideration

By Han Li (World Journal), 01/29/2020

Q: In the 2020 Census, should children participate?

A: Of course. Some parents might think that their children are still too young to be counted, or no big deal to be uncounted. That's wrong. Regardless of age, from a baby born less than a month to a three-year-old kid, everyone in every age living in the United States should participate in the Census. Even babies born on the Census day (April 1) or newborns who still in the hospital on that day, all need to be counted. Babies born on April 2 and afterward will have to wait to be counted in the 2030 Census.

Q: Why is it important to count the children?

A: The result of the Census will affect government funding, especially school, education resources, social welfare benefits, parks, hospitals, medical services, housing vouchers, and other fields that have huge impacts on children's growth. If a child is uncounted, the child will need to wait another ten years to be counted in the U.S. population. This decade, the key growth period for this child, will be excluded from the consideration of government decision-making.

Q: Lots of kids were uncounted in the 2010 Census?

A: It is estimated that in the 2010 Census, about 5% of children and infants under 5 years old were not counted, which is equivalent to 1 million children. Imagine, when the government decides to allocate resources and fundings, the existence of 1 million children is not taken into account. So the education resources and child welfare will be in shortages. According to Children's Partnership, California receives about 75 billion annually for children programs, reflecting a 3 billion shortfall because of those uncounted amounts.

Q: So, the key is the parents, right? Because the children are too young to fill the Census form.

A: Yes. Parents, and legal guardians of the kids, should include the children and infants while they are participating in the Census. Some children live with their grandparents. For example, those children who live in senior housing, should all be counted, too.

Q: An immigrant family has children, but none of them speak English. What should they do?

A: The Census Bureau, together with community organizations, will help with the immigrant community to get counted. Immigrant families who do not understand English and do not have digital access can also participate in the census through the assistance of public libraries and community organizations. In addition, the Census online website and telephone hotline provide Chinese language services, including simplified and traditional Chinese questionnaire, Mandarin and Cantonese speakers by phone.

Q: Some new immigrant families with children who just moved to the United States, and have unstable housing status. What to do?

A: These families can participate in the Census online or by phone. If they move around during March or April and miss the printed questionnaire during moving, online services can be a good option.