Health News & Notes • July, 2007• STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

Every decade a census is conducted in the United States, as mandated by the U.S. Constitution. There is a lot at stake in the upcoming 2010 census beyond the demographic information that it provides to your grant writers or tribal epicenters. The census data will directly affect how more than $200 billion in federal grant funding is distributed to state, local and tribal governments each year. In addition, the census data will be used to ensure proper apportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and that federal and state funding is dis­tributed fairly. Therefore, if we want a fair and equitable distribution of federal funds directed at our popula­tions as well as better congressional representation, the participation of tribal populations in the 2010 census is critical.

In past decades, tribal populations have often avoided participation in the census data collection for a vari­ety of reasons including lack of trust in an external government, as well as lack of trust in the person asking the questions, historically a non-Indian. In the 2000 census, Tribes under­took aggressive efforts to improve participation. These efforts included advertising in tribal newspapers that census takers will be on the reserva­tion and stressing the importance of participation, as well as encouraging tribal members to become census takers for the reservation. Tribes have also placed on General Council meeting agendas the importance of participation in census data collec­tion. These actions were taken so as to increase tribal participation.

The 2010 census, unlike the censuses of past decades, which date back to the first census in 1790, will have one of the shortest questionnaires in the history of the United States. The Questionnaire, consisting of only seven or so questions, will take most households about ten minutes to complete and will likely result in a simpler, less costly and more accu­rate census.

The shortened census question­naire is the result of the removal of the bulk of the demographic ques­tions which are now included in the American Community Survey (ACS) which was fully implemented in January of 2005. The ACS is a large, continuous demographic survey that produces annual and multi-year estimates of the characteristics of the population and housing. Each year the ACS is administered to 3 million addresses throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

To facilitate more accurate census taking, the Census Bureau is also embracing new technology to count this nation’s growing and chang­ing population. The census Bureau anticipates using 500,000 hand-held computers for data collection in the 2010 census. These secure devices will be used to update address lists and to conduct follow-up interviews with people who fail to complete and return a census questionnaire.

An important aspect of tribal mem­bers’ participation in census data col­lection or the American Community Survey is the proper record keep­ing of addresses on the reservation. With the success of tribal govern­ments came the housing boom meant to move our tribal members back on the reservation (home). Lack of ac­curate tribal housing record keeping will lead to under representation of American Indians in either the ACS or census count. Tribal govern­ments can ensure their new housing develop­ments are included in the potential houses to be surveyed by regis­tering with the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA). LUCA allows partici­pating governments to review, correct and update the Cen­sus Bureau’s address list. The infor­mation contained in the address list is confidential by law. Governments participating in the LUCA program and reviewing the Census Bureau’s address list must take an oath to protect the information they review. Like all census employees, those who review and update confidential address lists are subject to a jail term, a fine, or both if they disclose any protected information.

Your tribe may have already received promotional materials about LUCA and the training workshops that started in February, 2007. To date, over 80 tribes have had representa­tion in some of the training sessions. Beginning in August of this year, LUCA will be sending invitation let­ters to local governments to partici­pate. Because it is so important for the list of addresses to be reviewed before the census data collection be­gins, any government that determines they are unable to participate can designate a representative to conduct LUCA for them. The deadline for LUCA sign-up is December 31, 2007 and participants will conduct LUCA review beginning in September 2007 through April 2008. Correction and addition feedback will begin in Au­gust 2009 through October 2009. If additional correc­tions are needed, the appellate process begins in September 2009 and ends January 2010.

I highly encourage all of our Tribes to keep a watchful eye for any mate­rial requesting your participation in LUCA or offering training to your staff. If the material is not forthcom­ing, contact the Geographic Entity Programs Branch at 301-763-1112. A website for general information is; [www.census.gov/geo/www/luca2010/luca.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/luca2010/luca.html)

This is the first critical step to ensure that our membership receives the proper allocation of federal resources and legislative representation. So stand up and be counted.