



*By William Considine*

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## Making kids count: The 2020 census

One way to start the new decade on the right foot is to ensure that children are correctly counted in the 2020 census.

Every community has a large stake in making sure all residents are counted. The census, after all, influences how much federal money flows into communities for children's health, education and other essential programs such as food assistance. It also determines how congressional seats are apportioned.

Children, especially the youngest, are most in danger of being missed in the census. They are undercounted more than any other age group by far. It's estimated that the 2010 census missed more than 2.2 million kids age 4 and younger – about 10% of them. This has been a problem for decades, and many believe it will be worse this time around.

In Ohio it's estimated that some 100,000 kids could go uncounted in 2020. The risk is especially high for children living in the largest cities.

According to Count All Kids, a campaign of child-focused organizations and allies, Ohio lost an estimated \$1,206 per child annually for each child not counted in 2010. That adds up to \$26 million a year in federal funding for five programs, including Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and foster, adoption and child care programs.

All told, the 2010 undercount reduced federal funding to states by more than a half-billion dollars a year for those five programs. That totals over \$5 billion for the decade. To view the financial impact on every state, visit [countallkids.org](http://countallkids.org).

**Why is this happening?** The reasons vary. The Census Bureau identifies children among hard-to-count populations. Children from racial and ethnic minorities are among those most likely to be omitted, as well as children living in low-income, multi-family and non-traditional households. Children in certain rural areas also are prone to being missed.

Imagine how often children who are homeless or living in foster care or with relatives are overlooked. Sadly, homelessness among children is on the rise. In Ohio, the Department of Education reports there were 25,600 homeless students enrolled in K-12 schools in 2018-19, and that number is likely an underestimate. How many will be left uncounted in the 2020 census?

How many children of immigrant families will be missed? Many immigrants, documented and not, are fearful of participating in the census.

I'm surprised to learn that many people, including policymakers, are not aware that the undercount of children is such a critical problem. We need public support for local efforts to reach into all communities. [The good news here is we can make a difference](#). Community partnerships are mobilizing across the country in preparation for Census Day on April 1.

Similar to voter registration drives, advocates are fanning out to engage people face to face, explaining the importance of answering the census and reassuring those who may be reluctant.

Count All Kids is working with Census Bureau Complete Count Committees on outreach efforts. In our area, health care organizations, educators, the faith-based community, and immigrant and homeless groups are all part of the effort. We especially need to get the message out to those households and communities that are most at risk.

Here at Akron Children's Hospital, we are educating health care providers and other staff to make sure they answer the census and are encouraging patient families to do the same. Without an accurate count, vital resources that children and families depend on will dwindle.

**COUNT ALL OUR CHILDREN!** We can all do our part to make sure every child is counted in the 2020 census and our communities are not short-changed.



### Contact:

**William Considine, CEO Emeritus  
Akron Children's Hospital**

One Perkins Square, Akron, OH 44308-1062

Phone: (330) 543-8293 | Email: [wconsidine@akronchildrens.org](mailto:wconsidine@akronchildrens.org)

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