

# GROUP QUARTERS OPERATION

## 2020 CENSUS FACT SHEET



CENTER ON POVERTY and INEQUALITY  
GEORGETOWN LAW



ECONOMIC SECURITY and  
OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

## COUNTING PEOPLE LIVING IN CRISIS & INTERIM HOUSING

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- People living in crisis and interim housing (e.g., shelters for people experiencing homelessness) will be counted in the 2020 Census as part of the Group Quarters enumeration (GQ)—a special operation to count people in group living situations.
- Crisis and temporary housing residents are counted using several methods. Housing administrators and 2020 Census enumerators will decide jointly which method to use for each location.
- Shelters for victims/survivors of domestic violence/intimate partner violence (DV/IPV) are counted using special procedures that help protect the privacy and safety of their residents.

### COUNTING PEOPLE LIVING IN CRISIS & INTERIM HOUSING

The decennial census is the constitutionally-required count of every person living in the United States. People residing in group living arrangements (e.g., shelters for people experiencing homelessness) will be counted in the 2020 Census through an operation called the “[Group Quarters](#)” (GQ) enumeration. Crisis and interim housing<sup>1</sup> includes group living facilities for victims/survivors of domestic violence/intimate partner violence (DV/IPV), people experiencing homelessness, children who have run away or been neglected, and those experiencing displacement as a result of an extreme weather event or other disaster. These facilities are part of the [Service Based Enumeration \(SBE\)](#) operation within the GQ enumeration. For more information about SBE and about

how people experiencing homelessness who are not staying in crisis housing are counted, see [Counting People Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide to 2020 Census Operations](#).

Beginning February 3, 2020, the Census Bureau will contact housing administrators during an operation called [Group Quarters Advance Contact](#) (GQAC). During GQAC, a census enumerator will contact an administrator for each location to confirm the address, explain the enumeration process, collect an expected Census Day (April 1, 2020) population count, and determine a preferred date, time, and method for enumeration.

The GQ enumeration operation will take place in April 2020. Housing administrators can choose from the following enumeration methods:

<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, language around housing is changing. Advocates are moving away from terms like “emergency shelters” and “transitional shelters,” preferring “crisis housing” and “interim housing” instead. For the purposes of this fact sheet, we use “crisis and interim housing” although the Census Bureau uses the “emergency and transitional shelters” terminology.

- **In-Person Interviews:** In some cases, in-person interviews will be conducted by official census enumerators who will enumerate people using modified paper forms called Individual Census Questionnaires (ICQs).
- **Paper Response Data Collection:** A housing facility administrator will fill out a paper listing on behalf of the people residing at the facility and a census enumerator will pick it up. The Paper Response Data Files are reviewed by Area Census Office staff and then mailed to the Census Bureau's National Processing Center (NPC).

## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO KNOW?

### PEOPLE DISPLACED FROM THEIR HOMES DUE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS & OTHER DISASTERS

People displaced from their homes due to extreme weather events and other disasters and temporarily living in interim group housing on Census Day (April 1, 2020) will be counted at their [usual residence](#) (i.e. where they live and sleep most of the time) if the pre-disaster home is habitable, and the household members can return as soon as **the danger passes**. However, if people displaced due to extreme weather events and other disasters cannot return home because their residence is destroyed or not habitable, they will be counted at the interim facility (or in the housing unit) where they are staying on Census Day, whether or not they intend to return to their former residence when it is again habitable.

Households should use their best judgement, based on the guidance above, about whether they will return to their home. Stakeholders supporting communities impacted by natural disasters may consider deploying targeted communications campaigns to educate them about this process based on the specific circumstances.

## HOUSING FOR VICTIMS/SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/ INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

People living in crisis or interim housing for victims/survivors of DV/IPV are [counted](#) using special, confidential, and [ad hoc procedures](#). All census data is protected by strict federal confidentiality laws (Title 13, U.S.C.). Additional safeguards are utilized in this enumeration to ensure the confidentiality of victims/survivors of DV/IPV. Only census enumerators with specialized training in safeguarding the privacy and security of these respondents will engage with the shelters. The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) provides ongoing technical assistance and support to the U.S. Census Bureau, in an effort to help the agency create a process that protects the privacy and safety of victims/survivors residing in domestic violence shelters, as well as the confidential location of such housing. NNEDV then works with its members – the 56 state and territorial domestic violence coalitions – to ensure that shelters around the country are informed about the special procedures and the options victims/survivors have for how they can be counted. As with all information it collects about specific living quarters and individuals, the Census Bureau will not disclose names, addresses, or other information about these facilities and their residents to protect confidentiality as the law requires and to help ensure the safety of survivors.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Support a fair and accurate census by joining or supporting the work of a local [Complete Count Committee](#). More resources about the 2020 Census can be found on the [Georgetown Center on Poverty & Inequality website](#) and at [censuscounts.org](#). The numbers for assistance in other languages are available at [http://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019\\_18.html](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html). They can also visit the Census Bureau's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

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