

2020 Census Operational Press Briefing

Archived News Conference TRANSCRIPT

March 20, 2020

Michael Cook Hello everyone. Thank you for joining us via teleconference this afternoon. I'm Michael Cook, Chief of the Public Information Office. Today's briefing has been convened to provide the media with updates on the 2020 Census. As you know, most households in the United States have been receiving their invitation in the mail to participate in the census over the past week. These invitations include instructions on how public can respond online, by phone, and by mail. We've been releasing operational updates on our website. We will continue to do so in the coming weeks to remain open and transparent. I'd like to thank you for your patience today and being able to join us today on this call. Today, we have with us Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations and Al Fontenot, Associate Director of Decennial Operations. These individuals have been very involved in the planning for the census and are now overseeing its execution.

Michael Cook After they provide updates, we will open the phone lines to members of the media for questions. Please be prepared to provide the operator your name and media outlet. And now, I'd like to turn it over to Al Fontenot, Associate Director for Decennial Operations.

Al Fontenot: Thank you Michael. We'd like to take a few minutes this afternoon to give you an update on our current operations for the 2020 Census. On March 12th, one week ago yesterday the 2020 Census fully kicked-off, invitations went out to start arriving in mailboxes across the country. And by today, every mailbox in the country should have received an invitation to participate in the census. We encouraged everyone to keep looking for those mailings and make sure you have your census invitation. We looked at our numbers as of early this morning. Over 18.6 million people have already responded to the 2020 Census on their own. As you've all heard, because of the COVID-19 virus, we've already adapted some of our work and are adjusting some of our operations.

Al Fontenot: Earlier this week, we announced the two-week suspension of many 2020 Census field operations until April 1st to help protect the American public and our employees from the coronavirus outbreak. We are also making temporary adjustments to our operations at our Census Bureau facilities in Jeffersonville, Indiana, our National Processing Center, and our paper data capture centers east and west. We are currently evaluating what we can do in those operations to keep our employees safe and be able to maintain a minimum operation. We're also actively working with colleges and universities to make sure students that have been temporarily sent home or sent away from their normal campus living situation know how to be counted. We're working with administrators at

nursing homes and other group quarters to ensure those residents are counted regardless of any quarantine situations. We're working with service providers to determine the best way forward to count the people that they are continuing to provide services to, and we're working with emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens, mobile food vans to adapt our plans to count the populations that they serve.

Al Fontenot: Even though many things may seem uncertain at the moment, one thing isn't... the 2020 Census this year. It's important to our nation that everyone respond. The current situation underscores the need for census data. Census results are used to inform planning and funding for hospitals and health clinics and emergency preparedness, even school lunch programs. And in order to get those resources communities desperately need, when we plan a census we plan all sorts of contingencies. We are adjusting operations as needed. When we began planning for the 2020 Census, our goal was as always to make it easy and safe for the public to respond. Before a community, a facility, a service organization make a change that would affect any field operation, we adapt to make sure we're getting the population count another way. We will continue to share information about any change in operations. We'll also work with community partners to continue to encourage self-response.

Al Fontenot: The California governor's order last night is obviously an evolving situation, but we're already in touch with California state government to discuss work we can do after April 1st, and we will make adjustments to our program at that time. We're also looking at the New York state situation. Remember, the majority of our fieldwork will not have begun by April 1st. We're encouraging everyone to respond online, by phone, or through the mail as soon as you receive your census invitation. You can visit <2020census.gov> for more information. Again, the public is strongly encouraged to respond to the 2020 Census online using desktop computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet, and can also respond by phone or mail. We want to emphasize that everyone should respond to the 2020 Census as soon as they received their invitation. And when they're finished, they can make sure their friends, family and social networks know about the importance of responding.

Al Fontenot: Despite the current situation, the nation's response rate is on track. Later today, we'll post updates to our response rate map so you can see the current 2020 response rates for your community on our site. The plan for the 2020 Census is resilient and it's adaptive. We'll get through this with your help and the help with the American people, and we will conduct a complete and accurate census. And now, let me turn it over to Tim Olson, the Associate Director for Field Operations for more details.

Tim Olson: Thank you Al. This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations. First and foremost, we want the public to know that the health and safety of our staff and the public remains of the utmost importance in everything we do. We're also focused on getting a complete and accurate census, even in the midst of these uncertain times. We are carefully monitoring the situation and we are

following the guidance of federal, state and local authorities. Today I want to expand on what AI talked about and provide some specific updates regarding 2020 Census field operations. As I said earlier, it is our priority to protect the health and safety of the American public, Census Bureau employees and every person who's going through the hiring process to become temporary census takers. We continue to evaluate all of our operations and we are incorporating the latest guidance from federal, state and local health authorities.

Tim Olson: Should any additional adjustments need to be made, we will communicate these changes broadly and promptly. So let me give you some of the details. Currently, we have 2.8 million applicants that have applied to be considered for temporary census jobs. This is actually more than our goal of 2.67 million applicants. And every day right now, we continue receiving about 8,000 new applicants, and our recruiting website will remain open for the foreseeable future at <2020census.gov/jobs>. And we are urging people to consider applying, as we may need more temporary employees than originally planned for. As AI mentioned earlier, we are making staffing adjustments to the National Processing Center and our paper data capture centers, particularly the ones located in Jeffersonville, Indiana. For the next two weeks in Jeffersonville, until April 1st, these two facilities will transition to the minimum number of essential onsite staff necessary to continue operations. These temporary adjustments will help us protect the health and safety of our employees in Jeffersonville as they continue to process 2020 Census responses from all over the country.

Tim Olson: Staff in our 248 area census offices have nearly completed making all job offers for field operations plans for the 2020 Census. To date, more than 600,000 individuals have accepted job offers and are now in the onboarding process, which includes getting fingerprints, going through a security background check and completing a few additional forms before they begin training that occurs just prior to each specific field operation they've been hired for. So during this pause, we have suspended all activities related to hiring and onboarding until at least April 1st. We are communicating with both applicants and those who recently accepted a job offer of this pause.

Tim Olson: Census workers began dropping off questionnaire packets in Puerto Rico, some tribal areas and in rural areas that have predominantly low router, PO Box delivery. This field operation began in these areas this past Sunday. This hand delivery of questionnaires affects less than 5 percent of the nation's addresses and does not involve direct contact with individual householders. But out of an abundance of caution for everyone's health, this operation is on pause until March 29th at the earliest. We've delayed the start of our mobile questionnaire assistance program, where we had planned to have staff in communities throughout the country with low response rates to help people respond to the census. We had a plan to offer assistance with responding to the census at events and locations where people naturally gathered, but we are pausing that effort until further notice. We count people living in dormitories, nursing homes, prisons and jails and other nonhousing unit type locations throughout our GQ, group quarters enumeration process.

Tim Olson: We also count people experiencing homelessness through our service-based enumeration. Both operations were scheduled to begin in late March and early April, and both operations are now on hold until at least mid or late April pending condition throughout the nation. Additionally, as part of our normal operations, we send census takers to households that have not responded on their own. This is called nonresponse follow-up, and this operation involves the largest number of temporary census workers during the census, about 500,000 people.

Tim Olson: In areas with high concentrations of college students, we had plans to begin this operation on April 9th. For the rest of the nation, we had planned to begin following up with households on May 13th. Both nonresponse field operations will have a delayed start. For college areas, we will now begin no earlier than May 13th. And for the majority of the nation, this operation will begin May 28th. In both operations, we have extended the completion date from July 31st to August 14th. As we continue to monitor this evolving situation, the COVID-19 outbreak, we will adjust census taker and service operations as necessary in order to follow the guidance of federal, state and local authorities. And as Al said, it has never been easier to respond on your own. You can respond online, over the phone or by mail, all without having to meet a census taker. Thank you.

Michael Cook: Thank you, Al. Thank you, Tim. Before we begin questions, I would like to reiterate that for the interest of time and everyone getting their questions heard, media will be offered one question and one follow-up. As well, I'd like to also let you know that if you don't have an opportunity to ask your question, please contact the Public Information Office at <pio@census.gov> for any follow-ups. Operator, do we have a first question?

Operator: And as a reminder, if you would like to ask a question, please press star 1 and record your name and affiliation. If you need to withdraw your question, please press star 2. One moment as we wait for the first question.

Michael Cook: Thank you. While we wait for our first caller, I'd like to also remind those that are listening that we do plan to release later today the first initial response rates for every state, county and city across the nation in our response map. I encourage you to take a look at it. The map will be updated daily for everyone to see the response rate in their area and compare it to other areas across the nation. This map will also show the comparable response rates from the 2010 Census for each geography. Operator, do we have our first caller?

Operator: Yes. Our first question comes from Olivia Winslow from Newsday. Your line is now open.

Michael Cook: Hi Olivia.

Olivia Winslow: Hi, Mr. Cook, thank for taking my question. There were a lot of dates given and I'm not sure I have them all, but I'm in the New York area on Long Island

specifically, so how does field operations affect New York in light of the closings that the governor has ordered, as well as in California?

Michael Cook: Before we answer that question, Olivia, I forgot to mention and just for everybody's edification, because we are doing this on a phone, I'm going to ask all the speakers before they answer the question to go ahead and identify themselves so you know who's actually responding. And in addition to the many dates that were given out, I want you to watch the electronic press kit. And on that electronic press kit for today's press briefing, it's called "2020 Census Operational Press Briefing, March 20, 2020." We will be posting an updated operational timeline so you can clearly see the dates that were in play and the new dates. So without further delay, Olivia Winslow. I'll get somebody on the phone to address your question about how these changes impact people in New York. I'll turn that over to Al and Tim. And whoever's responding, if you could just please announce yourself before you respond?

Al Fontenot: Yes, hi. This is Al Fontenot. One of the things I wanted to say is that our staff has been in touch with the state government in New York and the state government in California to discuss what we can do under their current guidelines. We are classified in many places as the same type of critical services that the United States postal carriers have, but we want to make sure whatever situation we end up in protects the safety of the American people and our workers. Right now, we're encouraging the people in New York and our people in California to respond online.

Al Fontenot: In terms of specific operations, we don't start any field operation in those areas prior to the 1st of April, so we have two weeks to work with the local government there to determine exactly what the best course of action for each one of those operations will be. And I might add, our biggest field operation is nonresponse follow-up and that's for people who do not respond online. Which for the bulk of the country starts on May 28, so we're still several months from that starting. Tim, do you want to add anything to what I said?

Tim Olson: Yeah, just affirm what Tim Olson, Associate Director for Fields. In terms of New York, California and there are other areas as well, Puerto Rico for example, where they're really urging people to stay home. In all our offices, our regional offices that conduct surveys and our regional census centers that are responsible for the census in their designated states, we have instituted a full telework policy. So these folks where normally they'd be in an office, they are now working from home and conducting their work in that manner. As Al said, we are not currently in the field. And so that is on pause, and we provided the dates verbally. But as Michael said, shortly after this call, those days will be posted so you can easily see them. And these are current, planned, revised dates, but all of them are dependent and are being evaluated on a daily basis in light of local conditions and there could be further changes.

Operator: Thank you. Thank you. As a reminder, if you would like to ask a question, please make sure your phone is not muted and record your name and affiliation. Our

next question comes from Craig Lamont from WBGA Boston. Your line is now open.

Operator: WBGA Boston, your line is now open.

Tim Olson: Hi Craig, thanks for calling.

Craig Lamont: WGBH actually. Thanks so much. I have a question and a follow-up, first for Tim. Tim, we had a chance to speak last month and you mentioned that the census was behind in recruiting in New England. You're at 63 percent of what you wanted to do. I can imagine with the coronavirus ramping up over the last week, it's perhaps even been a harder to recruit new people. I'm just wondering where we're at right now in recruiting the census workers in New England.

Tim Olson: Craig, thank you. Actually, since we talked a month ago, our numbers have increased substantially throughout the nation, including New England. And even now, even today, we had 8,000 new applicants across the nation. I'm encouraging people to still consider applying for these jobs. We won't shut down that site for the foreseeable future. I'm also urging people to just be on hold as we evaluate how we move forward. I think that's really important.

Craig Lamont: Can you say how people, census workers can be kept safe going door-to-door when there are people at home or even self-isolating because of symptoms?

Tim Olson: Well currently we're not in the field so that is not a current situation for us because we don't have anybody in the field making those contacts. Once we resume operations, we certainly will be practicing social distancing, very strong social distancing. Also when we begin, resume update leave, which is rural areas primarily, we are not having direct contact with householders. We're simply updating addresses in those areas and dropping off a questionnaire package with no direct contact with the householder.

Michael Cook: Thank you for your questions. Operator, can I have the next caller please?

Operator: Our next question comes from Evan Koslow from WUSA9. Your line is now open.

Evan Koslow : Hi there guys. Thank you for taking the call. Hope you guys are all safe. Here's my question. If we're all hoping that coronavirus is going to pass and this pandemic will pass soon, if it continues for months and we need to stop door-to-door canvassing, could the census be delayed or will you guys just have to rely on online responses and mail responses?

Al Fontenot: This is Al Fontenot, I'm Associate Director of the Decennial Census Programs. We don't want to attempt to forecast what will happen in the future, but what I will tell you is we are meeting daily to address changes in the field, changes in our states, changes in the disease progression and adjusting on a day-to-day basis. We're not going to anticipate what might happen if it keeps extending

out, but we're going to take firm, direct action on what the current situations are as we continue to review it every day. Tim?

Tim Olson: Yeah. I just wanted to add that the way we conduct a census is the vast majority of people are going to self-respond. But when it comes to completing the census to make sure it is accurate and complete everywhere, there is that door-to-door counting of households that have not responded. That has not changed. That is still a major component of the census. And as Al said, we're just monitoring and evaluating on an hourly and daily basis in terms of moving forward.

Evan Koslow: And if it becomes impossible to do door-to-door, then what? Are you able to delay it or is that just not an option?

Al Fontenot: It depends on what you mean by delay. I'm sorry, this is Al Fontenot again. It depends on what you mean by delay it. I'm sure there are certain delays that we will be able to implement in our door-to-door data collection. As I had said earlier, that does not start until May 28th, so we do have some window of time between now and the start of our nonresponse follow-up operation. We are looking to see if we bring on larger numbers of people and start several weeks later or a month later, what does that do in terms of our completion time? We're currently studying and evaluating those things on a constant basis.

Michael Cook: Thank you for that. Operator, can I have the next caller?

Operator: Yes and our next question comes from Rosemary Connors, excuse me, from NBC Philadelphia. Your line is now open.

Rosemary Connors: Hi guys. It's Rosemary Connors from NBC 10 in Philly. I have a question. There was a date at the end that I believe Tim gave when he gave his part of the discussion, from July to August. If you can go over that, that would be great. And also sort of speaking of dates, is there a deadline people have to respond by and has that deadline been adjusted as of yet?

Tim Olson: This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. In terms of the dates I was referencing, it was for our nonresponse follow-up operation, which is where we only go to specific addresses that we've not received a response from. Our original deadline to complete that data collection nationwide was July 31st and, in our current plan, we have extended the completion of that data collection to August 14th. Al, you want to talk about the self-response phase?

Al Fontenot: Yes. Then our self-response, we are keeping self-response open unlike prior censuses where self-response would end early in the process and then we're going to nonresponse follow-up. We're keeping self-response open all the way now to August 14th. It was scheduled to end at the same time as our nonresponse follow-up was scheduled to end, July 31st, but we're keeping that open until August 14th so people can continue to respond online, by phone or by mail all the way up until August 14.

Michael Cook: Thanks for those lines of questions. Operator, next caller.

Operator: Yes, and our next question comes from Edith Katrina Bellatrano from Chicago Enterprise. Your line is now open.

Edith Bellatrano: Hello everyone. This is E-Kat with Chicago Media Enterprises. Thank you for putting this conference really quick. I wanted to know, obviously, I'm not sure if you guys are aware if you have a plan of action for the [inaudible 00:26:34] imposters. Chicago is really big on imposters. They have started knocking on the doors, using fake letters of recommendation. They are fully masked, like literally all dressed up with nobody to recognize them. The authorities have not been able to arrest them because they have no way of validating them. Which means there's no hotline, there's no website, there's no, I would say an app, perhaps, that could be used for people to validate a real employee versus an imposter. And they're robbing people and literally flourishing within Chicago.

Al Fontenot: Tim, do you want to?

Tim Olson: Yeah, yeah. Tim Olson, the Associate Director for Field Operations. It's a concern that we have every single census, that there could be impostors. What we have done proactively is to communicate with all law enforcement agencies, informing them about what and how a census employee identifies themselves. The fact that they have a photo ID badge, they have census materials and they have a very specific way that they conduct their business.

Tim Olson: We urge law enforcement if there are questions to contact us so we can validate if the person is in fact census employee or not. We also put up on our website for the general public what to expect and how a Census Bureau employee identifies themselves.

Tim Olson: The other thing that we broadly tell people, publicly and with law enforcement and with our more than 330,000 organizational partners, is a census employee working on the 2020 Census, or any of our surveys, will never ask anybody any financial information, bank or credit card numbers. They will never ask for social security numbers and they do not ask for political donations. And if somebody who is fraudulently impersonating a census worker is asking any of those questions, the householder should immediately call 911 and alert their local law enforcement.

Michael Cook: This is Michael Cook. Wanted to let the reporter know who asked the question about our <2020census.gov> page. There's a section called Privacy and Security. In that section, you will find four different topics: How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data, Avoiding Fraud and Scams, information about our Trust and Safety Team that's been appointed to watch and to take action 24/7 on things of this nature, and also a Fighting Rumors page. We have a portal that enables people who identify scams, frauds to let us know. So I encourage you reporters,

to please point people to this page in your stories. It'll help us to fight misinformation and disinformation. Do you have any other questions?

Operator: And our next question comes from Hansi Lo Wong from the NPR. Your line is now open.

Hansi Lo Wong: Thank you. Can you confirm, is the Census Bureau currently continuing in-person visits for the American Community Survey, and are any other surveys the Bureau conducts that is not the 2020 Census until April 1st?

Tim Olson: Yeah, this is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations. Earlier this week, we suspended all in-person interviews through our survey program. As many of you on the call know, the Census conducts literally hundreds of surveys every year. Business, household surveys, etc. The American Community Survey is a multimode survey operation. People respond online. And if we don't hear from them, then we follow up in person with households interviews. The same with the Current Population Survey and the National Crime Victimization Survey and on and on. We took that decision to discontinue personal visits at households and all of our approximately 9,000 field representatives, permanent employees that work on surveys, they are now making those contacts with householders that are in sample specifically by phone only.

Hansi Lo Wong: Thank you. If I could ask a follow-up on a different topic. Regarding your processing centers where paper census forms, what is the Bureau's contingency plan if all of your facilities in Phoenix, as well as Jeffersonville, Indiana, for processing paper census forms, if they are not able to operate at full capacity as this outbreak continues?

Al Fontenot: Well, let me try to answer that Hansi. Thank you for that question. This is Al Fontenot, Associate Director of the Census. We had currently planned out a schedule that they could operate on one shift in our two facilities, and by operating in one shift, they had more capacity than the paper that would be coming through the facilities. We now know that if we have to delay and have to put off processing the forms, we can go to two [inaudible 00:32:11] shifts in both facilities in a shorter time frame and still complete the processing of the information. Of course, that's dependent on what type of delay we're talking about. But right now, that could accommodate a fairly long delay by just doubling-up the shift capacity to be able to move additional paper through those processing centers. And that's in our contingency planner for both of those centers, for all of our paper-processing capability.

Michael Cook: Operator, next caller please.

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Michael Macanoni from CQ Roll Call. Your line is now open.

Michael Macanoni: Hi, thank you for having the call. I wanted to ask, the commerce sector has mentioned that there's a \$2 billion contingency fund, and I was wondering if the Census Bureau has been able to dip into that for some of these delays in additional hiring? And also, you haven't mentioned whether there's been additional purchases of the advertising campaign or changes in the messaging on that.

Al Fontenot: This is Al Fontenot. I'll address the first part of that question and then turn it over to Michael Cook for the second part of that question. As far as the contingency, we have been authorized to use funding in the contingency where necessary to accommodate the changes that we're putting into the operation. Yes. And I control that budget, so yes we have. And we've focused on making sure we know where we need to apply that to accomplish any change that's necessary to protect the health of our staff, to help protect the health of the people and to continue the mission.

Michael Cook: This is Michael Cook. I have with us Ali Ahmad. He is the Associate Director for Communication at the Census Bureau. I'll have him address your question specifically, Michael, about our ads. Ali?

Ali Ahmad: Hi Michael. And thanks for the question, Michael. So, Ali Ahmad, Associate Director of Communications. Now the U.S. Census Bureau is actively working with its lead communications contractor, Team Y&R and all of the subcontractors and the multicultural subcontractors that are a part of team Y&R to update, expand and upgrade its communications campaign in line with the evolving situation.

Ali Ahmad: First, starting the same way we built the campaign with a robust understanding of the media consumption landscape and how that is changing with the current situation. We will use additional funds to do more advertising, as well as re-scope and reshape our messaging in order to be more relevant to the current time. I would like to note that our earned media efforts on that front are already actively engaged as our partnership efforts, and we have seen excellent outpouring of support across the country. The 2020 Census folks focused on the fact that one of the best ways that you can help your community right now and one of the best ways you can support a wide variety of public health is by completing your 2020 Census online today.

Michael Cook: Thank you, Ali. And Operator, do we have our next caller?

Operator: Yes, and our next question comes from Matthew Derry from Forum News Service. Your line is now open.

Matthew Derry: All right, thank you. I just wondered if this is going to alter any of the training that field takers are going to receive if people may be sick, or if there's going to be any kinds of hygiene practices that they are going to be told to abide by when going door-to-door whenever those operations resume.

Tim Olson: Yeah, this is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations. The original plan for training our temporary field workforce was primarily using online training materials with some limited in-person classroom sessions for each of these people. We're in the process of updating and revising the training method so that virtually all of the training will be either virtual online, and there will be virtually no in-person classroom trainings going forward.

Michael Cook: Operator, our next caller.

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Deborah Berry from USA Today. Your line is now open.

Deborah Berry: Oh, thank you. And thanks for the call. I just want to be clear, Mr. Olson, about the training and the hiring, which you said is underway. Did you say that process is going to be on hold until April 1st? And secondly, with the pushing back to the deadlines to August 14th, how much of an impact will that have on other deadlines, including getting information to Congress by the end of the year?

Tim Olson: Yeah, so Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. Let me first address your question about the pause on the hiring and onboarding that's going on. So we've pretty much job-offered and people have accepted virtually almost all of the jobs that are planned for 2020. The job offers have already been made and people have accepted them. There's a phase following accepting a job where people schedule themselves for fingerprints, they go through a background clearance process, they fill out some limited additional forms to become an employee and then they would begin their training.

Tim Olson: Between now and April 1st, we have suspended that onboarding process, particularly when it comes to people going to a vendor for fingerprints. Those are on hold until at least April 1st, and we will continue evaluating the situation.

Al Fontenot: If I can, this is Al Fontenot, Associate Director of Decennial Programs. If I can just sort of underscore what Tim is saying that yes, we have suspended all of our processes for hiring. However, knowing that we will have a need for people who decide maybe they don't want this job, eventually they may have been in our selection pool, we are maintaining our online applicant application. So people can continue to apply. They can continue to take the assessment test, and they can continue to queue-up for when we open up our fingerprinting and processing operations again.

Al Fontenot: They will then step into that process. So they can pretend to go online and apply for census positions right now. And we are leaving that application open because that does not require any personal interface. It's an online application and an online assessment.

Michael Cook: Thanks for those lines of questions. Operator, do we have our next caller?

Operator: Yes. Our next question comes from Crystal Delsatina from KPRA News in Phoenix. Your line is now open.

Crystal Delsatina: Yes, thank you. So I have a question about the processing center in Phoenix. How many people are working there? And also are they able to practice social distancing as recommended by the CDC, the workers there?

Tim Olson: This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. So in both, in the Phoenix paper data capture center, there's approximately 900 employees and they're still functioning. So we're evaluating actively on how we continue in that facility, as well as in the Jeffersonville facility. They are practicing social distancing to the extent possible, but we are actively monitoring what is happening in Phoenix and so forth. I hope that answered your question.

Crystal Delsatina: So right now they are continuing to work there, correct?

Tim Olson: That is correct.

Crystal Delsatina: And you're monitoring, are you planning to maybe send some people home or make any changes in the next days or so?

Tim Olson: We're actively monitoring it, but they're still open.

Michael Cook: Thank you for your lines of questions. Operator, next caller.

Operator: Yes. And our next question comes from Michael Kelly from the Marietta, Ohio, Times. Your line is now open.

Michael Kelly: Oh, thank you, and thanks for taking this question. Marietta College here, like many of the colleges and universities has suspended classes, and many of the, well if not all, of the out of town, out of state and international students have left the campus and they won't be coming back until September. Could you tell me a little bit about how the Bureau is going to get an accurate count in this state?

Al Fontenot: Well this is Al Fontenot, Associate Director of the Decennial Programs.

Al Fontenot: The way colleges currently, the way we work with colleges currently to get the counts of the students are three methods. One, we have the college provide us with a roster-based accounting for people living in the dorms or in university-owned housing. Second, we do a drop off for forms. Students then fill them out, and we come by and pick up the forms we've dropped off. And the third method is to go around and knock on the doors.

Al Fontenot: Right now, when we started the process, before we've started these contingency operations, 46 percent of the colleges and universities wanted to provide us with an electronic roster. 36 percent wanted us to do a drop off and

pick up. And a small percentage wanted to allow us to come in and knock on the doors. We have been reaching out to the universities, to administration, encouraging all those that had chosen any option other than the electronic response option to move towards the electronic response option to give us count of the students that are living within those dorms and living within university-owned housing. Without having the students have to interface or without having us having to interface with large groups of people.

Al Fontenot: The other methods that we count college students is college students who live in rental housing, or privately owned housing in the city and towns around the university. That operation is one that we call early NRFU, which Tim mentioned in his assessment of what dates got moved.

Al Fontenot: One of the things we're looking to do there is communicate and work with the Department of Education and the universities, and with a number of social media communications to let students know that even though you may not be in your college town at this point in time when you fill out the census online. We're encouraging them to go online and fill out the census. When you fill out the census online, you are to use the address that you usually stay or live as of April 1st, which would have been your university town that you lived in around the university.

Al Fontenot: So we're working very hard to get that message out to students so they can respond in a self-response mode, which is how that group of students normally would've responded anyway. They would have been part of our self-response universe.

Michael Cook: Thank you for those questions. Operator, next caller?

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Mike Snyder from Associated Press. Your line is now open.

Mike Snyder: Hi, thanks for having this call. I was wondering if I could just follow up on the deadline question. As of today, do you have confidence that the Bureau will meet the December 31st deadline? And then I was also wondering how many extra people, beyond the half a million we've been talking about, do you think is in the possibility of being hired? And how much, I guess beyond the \$15.6 billion that are currently budgeted for the census, do you think you all will have to go beyond for either the extra hires or the extra effort because of coronavirus? And then, finally, I was just wondering if you guys could kind of reflect on the fact that the Bureau has been planning on the 2020 Census for a decade. Outreach groups have been making their plans for years, and I was just wondering if you could speak to the frustration that having this unexpected pandemic has had on these best laid plans? Thank you.

Al Fontenot: I'll start with that if you don't mind. This is Al Fontenot, Associate Director of the Decennial Operations.

Al Fontenot: Our people are amazingly dedicated to the accomplishment of our mission to conduct a complete and accurate census. And because of that level of dedication, they have been totally focused on ways that they can modify operations, adjust operations to still get a complete and accurate count.

Al Fontenot: In the original design of the census, the reason we designed online, on paper and phone ways for people to self-respond was so that anyone who wanted to in the country, had an easy, safe, secure and quick way that they could respond to the census.

Al Fontenot: We are pushing our 300,000-plus partner organizations that you reference, to talk to their population about going online, responding to the census, taking their paper form, mailing it in, picking up the phone, calling one of our call centers and responding to the census and self-responding. So we're focused highly on making sure people know that this is the easiest way to respond and the safest way to respond, especially in light of this virus condition.

Al Fontenot: This was not anything any of us could have anticipated or planned. Of all of our worst nightmares of things that could have gone wrong with the census, we did not anticipate this set of actions. But our staff has been extremely resilient about looking for solutions and ways that we can still be very effective in terms of reaching out to get the response from every person in the United States. A hundred percent count where people are, a right count and get it on time. So we're working very hard to do that, and I will turn it back over to Michael in case you want to add something to that.

Michael Cook: One thing that I just want to mention and to note, and it's been mentioned before, and we've talked about this publicly, as we go through our modifications and adaptations during this time, this current situation, there's two things that we are constantly keeping top of mind, and know that we have to do. We have to protect the health and the wellness of our staff, as well as the public. That means that we must listen to and lean on the guidance that we get from the national and the local public health authorities.

Michael Cook: But then we all know that there's an obligation in the law that says that the census has to turn over a population count of all residents by December 31st to the Congress and the President, and we're laser focused on that. So Operator, next caller.

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Paul Overberk from Wall Street Journal. Your line is now open.

Paul Overberk: Hi, thanks for taking the call and for all of [inaudible 00:49:11]. My question is in what share of the update leave form distribution was actually completed before the suspension happened this week?

Tim Olson: I'm Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. We actually completed about 12 percent of the drop off of questionnaires in update leave areas. And just to put it in context, the entirety of the update leave address universe, it's a little bit less than 5 percent of the entire nation's housing unit addresses.

Michael Cook: Any follow-up questions, Paul?

Paul Overberk: Yeah. On a different topic. Is one of the contingency plans to request to Congress to extend the legal deadlines to produce the results from the census?

Al Fontenot: This is Al Fontenot. At this time, we have not made that request. We are working our plans to achieve a complete census within the current legal and statutory guidelines.

Michael Cook: Thank you for those lines of questions, Paul. Operator, next caller?

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Esther Kang from WBEZ Chicago. Your line is now open.

Esther Kang: Thanks so much for taking this call. This is kind of a bleak question, but has the Bureau discussed plans for how to make sure the current count that's happening reflects any changes in population given the coronavirus deaths? And also wanted to ask about the Post-Enumeration Survey, and what changes will be made there because that begins in the summer. Thank you.

Al Fontenot: Yeah, this is Al Fontenot the Associate Director of the Decennial Census Programs. As far as the Post-Enumeration Survey, we're looking at equivalent push-backs in time to start that with the, right now we have this push back of approximately two weeks of the operations. If that changes, we'll also be looking at the Post-Enumeration Survey, pushing it back approximately the same amount of time. Because one of the things we want to do is maintain a good connection with people's actual response so they still remember what they responded. We're able to get more accuracy in Post-Enumeration Survey by doing that.

Al Fontenot: I'm sorry, the first part of your question, if you could restate it?

Esther Kang: The first part was has the Bureau discussed how to ensure the accuracy of the count that's happening now to reflect any deaths that happen in this outbreak?

Al Fontenot: Yes. Thank you. Our demographic directorate has been analyzing all our prior survey data, our population estimates data, and they assess the output of a census after we've completed taking every, each decennial census, and they note any aberrations, any things that need to be adjusted, and they will be actively performing that same function at the end of this census.

Al Fontenot: They've already started to make assessments of what type of areas they would need to focus on and concentrate on to ensure that there's accuracy in the locations and in the counts.

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from Elvia Malagon from Chicago Tribune. Your line is now open.

Elvia Malagon: Hi, this is Elvia Malagon from the Chicago Tribune. My question was, I was wondering if you could give us more detail regarding the count of the homeless population? Some groups here in Chicago were worried that the burden was going to fall completely on these service organizations that, like everyone else, is working on really small staffs, and has some of the same concerns that the whole country's dealing with. Thank you.

Tim Olson: This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations. In terms of what we call service-based enumeration, which is conducting the count at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, etc., we have delayed that operation from what would have been March 30th to April 1st, to April 29th through May 1st. So we are reaching out to the providers, making sure that they know of the change in the dates. And we're also reaching out to say if they have administrative records of who their clients are, that's actually one of the best ways for us to conduct the enumeration with them. But we're evaluating the timing, obviously, as far as when we go forward on that. Currently it would be end of April through May 1st.

Elvia Malagon: And just a quick follow-up question, so just to make sure, in late April, census workers will be going out and helping the local organizations count this population?

Tim Olson: That is, yeah. The plan of the method of enumeration has not changed. What has shifted is the currently delayed date by a month. So we're still planning to do that within one month.

Michael Cook: Thank you for those lines of questions. Operator, next caller? And just to remember everyone that as we continue to make our adaptations and modifications on operations for the 2020 Census, we will always lean and listen to the guidance given from public health authorities at the local level and the national level.

Michael Cook: Operator, next caller?

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Katie Burns. Your line is now open.

Katie Burns: Hi there, thanks for your time. Just wanted to get clarity on this. I heard at the beginning of the call, I think it was Mr. Cook, said that 18.6 million people already responded. I know that in the press release that I received a couple of

days ago, it said more than 11 million households. Is that something different? The people versus households or is that 18.6 million>

- Michael Cook: Thank you, Katie. I'll clarify that. That is 18.6 million responses. 18.6 million households. It is households that have responded thus far.
- Michael Cook: Remember that when you look at the census, the census count that we're taking is based on a master address file of households, so they are responding for the household.
- Katie Burns: Thank you.
- Michael Cook: Do you have a follow-up question or another question for AI or Tim?
- Katie Burns: A quick question about the one thing you guys noted about the 600,000 people that have already accepted jobs with census, and are going through, or have gone through the onboarding process. Those 600,000 people, are their jobs impacted at all by the suspension?
- Tim Olson: This is the Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. So the onboarding process, it's roughly a seven- to eight-week process. So out of the 600,000 I referenced, almost all of them have not started working yet. They're in that onboarding process. So there's not been a direct impact on people becoming employees yet because most of that will occur at a future date.
- Michael Cook: Thank you, Katie. Operator, do I have a next caller?
- Operator: Thank you and our next question comes from Shar Waggle from the Hudson Independent. Your line is now open.
- Shar Waggle: Hi, thank you for taking my questions. I have one and then a follow-up, please. I did just want to clarify your statements about the off-campus students. Should they be going onto the website and using the process that says if you do not have the census ID click here because they will not have received their invitation?
- AI Fontenot: Yeah, this is AI Fontenot, Associate Director of the Census. Yes, they should be using, if they have not received their invitation, which they were not home to get, they should go on and use, "I do not have a census ID" and we will be able to process them in what we call our non-ID processing methodology.
- Shar Waggle: Okay, thank you. And then, the follow-up question is will you actually be notifying law enforcement when we get to the point of going from house to house. So law enforcement will know that census enumerators will be in a neighborhood at a specific time.

Tim Olson: This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. When we begin the largest operation, nonresponse follow-up. We will be in literally every neighborhood, every community during that roughly eight- to nine-week period. And yes, we do notify law enforcement. We've got a process to do that. It is very specific that during this time period expect an increased amount of interaction, or work I should say, between census workers in every community.

Shar Waggle: If I could just follow up on that. I live in an area where a lot of questions have been coming in because of people without legal status. So is it a general statement that this is the eight- to nine-week period, or is it such that we will be in this block tomorrow or something like that?

Tim Olson: No, it's a general statement because literally, during nonresponse follow-up, there is not a single community that will not have temporary census employees following up with individual addresses, so it's a broad, now it's happening nationwide. Be aware that there are census workers in every community.

Michael Cook: Thank you for those line of questions. Operator, do we have another caller?

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Britt Kinnerly from Florida Today. Your line is now open.

Britt Kinnerly: Hi, thanks for having us together today. I'm Britt Kinnerly from Florida Today and I have gotten a lot of good information here. The only thing I'm [inaudible 01:00:14] on is I was looking on the site, when will the newest response rates be out? You said later today?

Michael Cook: Yes. We have a response rate map that we are looking to put up this evening on our <2020census.gov> site.

Al Fontenot: And this is Al Fontenot, I'd just like to add the numbers that we gave you will be the basic response number that will be reflected on that site.

Britt Kinnerly: Okay, but the state-by-state and county and federal will be up later tonight.

Michael Cook: Yes, this is Michael Cook, yes.

Britt Kinnerly: Okay, thank you.

Michael Cook: Thank you. Operator, next caller.

Operator: Yes. And our next caller comes from Edward Blant from Canton Repository News for Ohio. Their line is now open.

Ed Blant: Hi. Thank you very much for holding the press conference and taking my question. This is Ed Blant with the Canton Repository Newspaper in Ohio. And my question involves the hiring of the temporary workers, the census counters.

I know you've said that there's been a robust hiring effort, or at least applications, employing 600,000 more than you even needed. But I know from talking to a local supervisor involved with the census, kind of someone on the ground, he said that he believes he still need about 1,000 to 2,000 census workers in Stark County, which is the Canton, Ohio, area. And I just wondered if you could comment on that. Will the coronavirus and concerns over that and the public health present a challenge in some communities, some areas, even though your applications have been really coming in overall in the country?

Tim Olson: Yeah, this is a Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations. If I could, I'd like to just clarify the numbers that we've got 2.8 million applicants nationwide that have applied to be considered for temporary census jobs. To date, we have job offers and people have accepted more than 600,000 positions and those individuals are in the onboarding process. Now in each localized area, these job offers are made from our local area census offices. Some are right on track and there's a few that are still working to complete that job offer process. But we're far enough along that I don't have concerns.

Tim Olson: Specific to your area, I'm not sure how that area is going, but I think it's probably pretty good. Keep in mind too that the job offers for the majority of these positions just began a week and a half ago, so depending when you spoke to this individual, it could have been earlier on, I'm not sure, but generally everybody is right on track.

Tim Olson: You did ask another question, will this coronavirus affect our ability for people to, I guess, want to work for us, etc.? We're evaluating that. We're monitoring that very closely. It's very possible, if not likely, that when it comes time to actually onboarding somebody into a job where they're attending training and then beginning their work, there could be a greater loss of individuals out of fear or various reasons. We're monitoring that very closely. We will be over hiring in all areas once we resume the hiring process, really to accommodate for an expected greater attrition. We're still analyzing and crunching the numbers to see what that should be as far as the numbers of extra people to be hired.

Michael Cook: Thanks for those lines of questions. Operator, do you have our next call?

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Roxanne Scott from WABE, your line is now open.

Roxanne Scott: Hi. Thank you for taking my call. I just want to get clarification from the previous question. Is it a general statement that students who live on campus, they fill out their census form online and use their dorm address as there the place where they live and sleep?

Al Fontenot: This is Al Fontenot, no, that's really not kind of what I said. That's for students who live in nonuniversity housing. Generally, students who live in university-owned housing, in the dorms, on campus will be their information will provided

by the university, not them individually. We're asking universities to provide that information roster form. All those who live outside of university-owned housing would respond online and use their local address in the town around their university. If students do respond using their university dorm address, we will go in our backend processes and put them in the group they belong in, but that's not the ideal way for them to do it.

Roxanne Scott: Okay, got it. And I have a follow-up on the 18.6 million households who have responded so far. Are those households that have all responded online or is there a breakdown of how folks who have responded online versus phone?

Al Fontenot: There is a breakdown of those who responded online. Approximately, I'm going to give you some really rough numbers about this, 18.2 million households have responded online, about 200,000 have responded by paper and about 100,000 or so by telephone. Now I will say this, the response by paper is really understated because people just started mailing those back and the postal process will get them to us in the coming days. But we've only counted those that we received back, totally processed that have complete responses [inaudible 00:09:39].

Michael Cook: Thank you for your lines of questions. Operator, I think we have one last caller.

Operator: Thank you. And that question comes from David Rodriguez from The Reveal, your line is now open.

David Rodriguez: Hi, thank you for taking my question. So I know that a lot of folks like partners and community-based organizations were really looking at doing outreach efforts around these days in the next month. So I'm wondering what's the role with being in contact with them, and what's the role with partners specialists at this time?

Tim Olson: This is Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field. I'm glad you asked the question. I forgot to bring this up earlier in the briefing. Our professional partnership staff, there's about 1,500 of them throughout the country. We are having them essentially work virtually. They are continuing their jobs. Absolutely. They're working from home and what they are doing right now is they are making contact with what is over 335,000 organizations that have partnered with us to date. They're reaching out to them. They are providing additional materials to them and working with them to recraft a campaign in their local communities. That really is more based on social media. Other tools they have that don't require the in-person outreach.

Tim Olson: I think it's fair to say that not only has the Bureau very much scaled-back our in-person operations, our partners, the 335,000 organizations, they are doing or have had to already do the same thing, where this in-person rallies and canvassing on doors remind people to self-respond, etc. Everybody together is actively really changing how we conduct outreach for 2020.

David Rodriguez: And just a quick follow-up, is there a guide or a post, anything that's written down that is being provided to them or is it really just, I'm wondering what is following, what is the information given to these partner orgs?

Tim Olson: So right now, these are conversations and discussions with the partners, and I believe very shortly we are going to have some publicly available materials that will kind of guide all of our partners in things they can consider, as far as an alternative local campaign that they are conducting with their communities. But, so that's kind of where we're at on that right now.

Michael Cook: I appreciate that line of questioning. I appreciate those calls. This is Michael Cook. We have extended our time. I have a couple of short reminders as we close out, especially when we talk about our partners. We have currently provided and will continue to provide information to our partners, any partners or anyone in communities across the country that want to help us get out the count, we can please direct them to <2020census.gov/partners>. Additionally, we've made a couple of references today to our response rate map for 2020 Census. That map should be posted on our website. Please watch it and stay tuned around 5:00 p.m. tonight. Then we'll publish it daily at 3:00 p.m., seven days a week. And just a reminder, that map will show the 2020 Census rates comparable to the 2010 Census rates for each geography, and that is state, county and city across the nation. The 2010 Census rates are currently up on a map now for you to view if you'd like to look at that and to prepare your stories.

Michael Cook: Lastly, I'd like to remind anyone who didn't get a chance to ask your question or needs further assistance from the Public Information Office to please contact <pio@census.gov>.

Michael Cook: I appreciate your time, and I appreciate your efforts, and I appreciate you logging on today and dealing with and packing your patience around us moving the times. This concludes our call today.