



MEMORANDUM FOR Distribution

From: Cynthia Clark
 Associate Director for Methodology and Standards

Subject: Acquisition of Targeted State and Local Administrative Files

I am pleased to present the executive summary of one of the evaluation studies for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The dress rehearsal was conducted in three sites — Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California. The evaluation studies cover detailed aspects of eight broad areas related to the census dress rehearsal — census questionnaire, address list, coverage measurement, coverage improvement, promotion activities, procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting, field operations, and technology.

The executive summary for each evaluation study is also available on the Census Bureau Internet site (<http://www.census.gov/census2000> and click on the link to “Evaluation”). Copies of the complete report may be obtained by contacting Carnelle Sligh at (301) 457-3525 or by e-mail at carnelle.e.sligh@ccmail.census.gov. Please note that the complete copy of the following reports will not be publically released: reports regarding procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting and the Evaluation of Housing Unit Coverage on the Master Address File.

The evaluations are distributed broadly to promote the open and thorough review of census processes and procedures. The primary purpose of the dress rehearsal is to simulate portions of the environment we anticipate for Census 2000, so we can identify and correct potential problems in the processes. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation studies is to provide analysis to support time critical review and possible refinements of Census 2000 operations and procedures.

The analysis and recommendations in the evaluation study reports are those of staff working on specific evaluations and, thus, do not represent the official position of the Census Bureau. They represent the results of an evaluation of a component of the census plan. They will be used to analyze and improve processes and procedures for Census 2000. The individual evaluation recommendations have not all yet been reviewed for incorporation in the official plan for Census 2000. These evaluation study reports will be used as input to the decision making process to refine the plans for Census 2000.

The Census Bureau will issue a report that synthesizes the recommendations from all the evaluation studies and provides the Census Bureau review of the dress rehearsal operation. This report will also indicate the Census Bureau’s official position on the utilization of these results the Census in 2000 operation. This report will be available July 30th.

Acquisition of Targeted State and Local Administrative Files

September 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Census Bureau was required to develop two approaches for conducting Census 2000 prior to the final decision made in February 1999. The first approach involved the use of sampling and estimation, while the second census design was geared to a traditional, nonsampling census that included the possible use of administrative records. As part of ongoing research to determine the feasibility of using these files, the Census Bureau mounted an extensive effort to acquire targeted state and local files.

The Census Bureau considered the use of administrative records in Census 2000, and planned evaluations of this program. Although administrative records are not in the final plan for Census 2000, results of this evaluation provide insight for future uses.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of the file acquisition process. It addresses the issues associated with obtaining files and some of the problems encountered.

The test sites for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal included Sacramento, California, Columbia, South Carolina and eleven surrounding counties, and Menominee County, Wisconsin including the Menominee American Indian Reservation. Five different state or local administrative record source files were targeted in these sites and are listed below. The following variables were requested, recognizing that some of these may not be on the file, or not accessible to us: name, address, ZIP Code, state, race, date of birth, gender, ethnicity, social security number (SSN), and telephone number. Due to the time constraints associated with meeting the schedule for file processing and the field follow-up for the Coverage Improvement Follow-up, we started the acquisition effort on July 6, 1998, and established a cutoff date of October 31, 1998 for receipt of the files. We received a total of 16 files in addition to federal files that had already been acquired preprocessed and geocoded. All these files are listed below.

STATE AND LOCAL FILES

- \$ Driver's License
- \$ Parolee\Probation
- \$ School Enrollment
- \$ Voter Registration
- \$ Medicaid

FEDERAL

- \$ Department of Housing and Urban Development - 1997 Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System (TRACS)
- \$ Internal Revenue Service - Tax Year 1996 - Individual Master Return File
- \$ Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service - 1997 Indian Health Service, Patient Registration File
- \$ Selective Service System - 1997 Registration File

The following summarizes the state and local file acquisition results by Dress Rehearsal sites:

Sacramento, California

\$ We attempted to obtain five files; we received the voter registration and two probation files (youth and adult authorities). Acquisition time ranged from one week to three months. The total cost of two files was \$785. The file from the youth authority was free.

State of South Carolina

\$ We attempted to obtain five files and received all five files. The school enrollment file contained two files from school districts in Columbia, South Carolina, and five files from the surrounding eleven counties. Two files were received for parolee/probation and one Medicaid file. Acquisition time ranged from two weeks to two months. The total cost of the driver's license and voter registration files was \$6,975. The others were free.

Menominee County, Wisconsin

\$ We attempted to obtain five files and received the school enrollment and driver's license files. Acquisition time was two weeks to two months. The driver's license file cost \$27 for computer time. The school enrollment file was free.

Our objective was to acquire as many administrative files as we could within a short time frame. We did not think we could acquire every file, but we wanted to learn which files we could obtain, and for those we couldn't, why we couldn't. We learned that not only between sites, but within sites, willingness to cooperate varied. The major barriers that were encountered were the time constraints, and legal issues, particularly with the Medicaid files.

Sometimes documentation was missing or did not match the file we received. Several phone calls were made or faxes sent during this process. Most issues and problems with files were discussed over the telephone and resolved. In general, acquisition of state and local files is a labor intensive and time-consuming process with no guarantee of success in acquiring all files sought.

Four recommendations are offered for acquiring state/local administrative record files for future application:

High level support within the Census Bureau and the Department of Commerce is needed in order to maximize the success of acquiring state and local administrative records. For the dress rehearsal, staff level contacts were not always successful in encouraging state or local governments to cooperate.

If administrative records are used in a future decennial census, the acquisition process should be a critical and early part of census planning.

Identify select state/local files that offer the greatest return in terms of coverage improvement.

At this time, administrative records are not being used in Census 2000. The recommendations will be considered in future census planning.