

About the Census

Counting the Homeless and Transitory Populations

The U.S. Census is designed to count everyone at their “usual residence,” or the place where they live and sleep most of the time. However, for the thousands in America experiencing homelessness, this place may not exist. Common characteristics of these groups, such as high mobility and mistrust of government, as well as an unwillingness to admit they are without a home, lead homeless individuals to be among those most often missed by the decennial census. To address these populations, the Census Bureau has devised a special enumeration called the Service-Based Enumeration (SBE).

When will the Service-Based Enumeration be conducted?

The Census Bureau has designated:

- **March 29** as the one day to enumerate **shelters** for people experiencing homelessness
- **March 30** to enumerate **soup kitchens** and **mobile food vans**
- **March 31** to enumerate targeted **outdoor locations**.

What other programs will help to count those experiencing homelessness?

In addition to the Service-Based Enumeration, the Census Bureau expects to reach homeless individuals during several of its key operations.

- **Be Counted Sites** will have forms for people in transition if they can provide an address of “usual residence” and believe they were not counted in the special count.
- **Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs)** will provide everyone the assistance they need to fill out questionnaires or get counted.
- **Other Living Arrangements** counts conducted during 2010 Census operations will provide more opportunities to enumerate people experiencing homelessness who were missed in the service based enumeration. That includes people living temporarily with friends or family in a traditional housing unit, at emergency shelters or temporarily in halfway houses, jails, group homes, or worker dormitories.

What about other “transitory” populations at campgrounds or motels?

- **The Enumeration at Transitory Locations** field operation (March 22nd - April 16th) enumerates individuals at occupied units at transitory locations who do not have a Usual Residence. These include parks, campgrounds, hotels, motels, racetracks, circuses, carnivals and other transitory locations that may not have a house number or street name address.

Sources

U.S. Census Bureau 2010. <http://2010.census.gov/2010>

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness: “Counting People Experiencing Homelessness.” <http://www.usich.gov>

National Coalition for the Homeless: “Census 2010: Service-Based Enumeration (SBE) Operation.” <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>