

New Federal Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Race and Ethnicity

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## 1. I've already provided this information, why must I provide it again?

The federal government is requiring that ethnic and racial information for all students and staff be reported in a new way in order to more accurately reflect the nation's diversity. In the past, forms for reporting race and ethnicity to the federal government allowed individuals to be identified in only one racial category. The new form enables individuals to be identified in ethnic and racial classifications and in more than one racial category.

## 2. What changes have been made and why?

Since 1977, the US Department of Education, along with the other Federal agencies, has been collecting aggregated data on race and ethnicity using five categories. In 1997, the Federal Office of Management and Budget published new revised standards for the collection of data on race and ethnicity. After considering public comments, the US Department of Education aligned its policy for collecting and reporting racial and ethnic data with the revised standards. Educational agencies, including public school systems, are required to report racial and ethnic data to the Department using the new categories starting with the 2010-2011 school year.

The change in collecting and reporting racial and ethnic data allows individuals to self-identify their ethnicity and race, and permits individuals to select more than one race and/or ethnicity. This change allows individuals to more accurately reflect their racial and ethnic background by not limiting them to only one racial or ethnic category. There are four major changes in the way that ethnicity and race data will be collected—

- There is now a two-part question on ethnicity and race. This allows individuals to report their heritage more accurately.
- The term "Hispanic" has been changed to "Hispanic or Latino."
- The racial category "Asian or Pacific Islander" has been separated into two new categories—"Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander."
- Individuals will be able to select one or more races from the five racial groups.

## 3. What are the ethnicity and race categories?

**Ethnicity:** The first part of the two-part question asks whether or not the respondent is Hispanic/Latino.

**Hispanic or Latino.** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

**Race:** The second part asks the respondent to select one or more races from the following five racial groups:

**American Indian or Alaska Native:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains a tribal affiliation or community attachment.

**Asian:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**Black or African American:** A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

**White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

#### 4. When and how will the new information be gathered?

The Howard County Public School System will begin collecting data in compliance with the new federal guidelines in January 2009. The new form will be distributed to all families of newly enrolled students AND all current students. The families will be asked to complete the form and return it to the school.

#### 5. Who provides the information?

Parents will complete a brief form to identify their children's ethnic and racial identity.

#### 6. What happens if I do not fill out the form?

If a parent or guardian does not fill out the form and return it to the school, for whatever reason, the school system is still responsible for reporting the information therefore a school system staff member will fill out the form for your child. The new guidelines mandate that school staff identify any students for whom a form has not been completed as non-Hispanic/non-Latino. The staff member will fill in the question regarding race using the current process for observer identification.

#### 7. How will the information be used?

The data with the new ethnicity/race categories will be used in the same manner that racial/ethnic data are currently used. The new categories will replace the existing categories for use in all state and federally sponsored statistical data collections that include data on ethnicity or race, such as student record cards and test results.

#### 8. Where can I find more information?

More information is available on the Howard County Public School System website at [www.hcpss.org](http://www.hcpss.org).