

This letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The Census Bureau plans to conduct telephone cognitive interviews on newly-proposed questions for the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey - Insurance Component (MEPS-IC). The MEPS-IC -- a self-administered mail out/mail return survey (with telephone follow-up) conducted annually by the Census Bureau for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) -- is used to collect information from employers who provide health insurance to their employees. Data collected include employment characteristics, business characteristics, number and type of health insurance plans offered and information about health insurance coverage, which are used to measure State and National levels of health insurance spending and provide data for analyzing the effects of current and proposed healthcare reforms.

The purpose of these cognitive interviews is to discover how respondents react to the new questions. The proposed questions will address some of the upcoming changes due to the mandated healthcare reform and the new healthcare exchanges. Specifically, we intend to address the following questions: Is the requested information available in respondent's records? Do respondents have issues with comprehending the terminology used in the questions? How burdensome are the questions? The results will be recorded and tabulated and a report produced that assesses the viability of the proposed questions. Findings will be used to determine whether these questions will be added to the 2012 MEPS-IC survey.

Starting in July and continuing into September, 2011, staff from the Census Bureau's Health and Training Surveys Branch (HTSB) will conduct a maximum of 100 telephone interviews.

Cases to be selected for debriefing will vary by geographic region and industry and will be focused on employers with less than 100 employees, with special emphasis on firms in the 25-50 employee size category. This is because there is special interest in employers who offer health insurance and will most likely be eligible for the tax credit. The sample will be drawn from a subset of respondents who said "yes" to a question in the 2011 survey asking about whether their company currently offers health insurance.

Respondents will be told that their participation is voluntary. If the interview is scheduled for a later time, Census staff will provide follow-up reminders and a copy of the test questions by fax. In these cases, respondents will be able to look at the questions in hard copy form while discussing their reactions to them. Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

We plan to record some interviews with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations. We also will inform the participants that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with anyone not directly involved in this research project.

Enclosed are a copy of the current MEPS-IC questionnaires, the proposed questions, and a draft cognitive interview protocol.

We expect that each interview will last no more than 30 minutes. Thus, the total estimated reporting burden for this research is approximately 50 hours (0.5 hours X 100 interviews).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and analysis of the respondent debriefing is listed below:

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