OMB Decision on
Race and Ethnicity Data

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently released a final decision that revises the standards used to classify federal data on race and ethnicity. These revisions replace and supersede Statistical Policy Directive No. 15. The new standards will be used by the Bureau of the Census in the 2000 decennial census. Other Federal programs have been instructed to adopt these standards as soon as possible, but not later than January 1, 2003. In addition, OMB has approved the use of these standards by the Bureau of the Census in the Address Rehearsal for Census 2000 scheduled to be conducted in March 1998.

The new standards retain a minimum set of race and ethnicity categories, and at the same time make it possible to collect data that reflects the diversity of our Nation's population. OMB has specified five minimum categories for collecting data on race, and two categories for collecting data on ethnicity. The minimum race and ethnicity categories are defined as follows:

**Race**

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

- **Black or African American.** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as Haitian® or Negro® can be used in addition to Black or African American®.

- **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.

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

- **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 tribal affiliation or community attachment.

**Ethnicity**

- **Hispanic or Latino.** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, Hispanic or Latino®, can be used in addition to Hispanic or Latino.

- **Not Hispanic or Latino.** A person who is not Hispanic or Latino.

For the first time, respondents will have the opportunity to identify themselves by selecting more than one race category. OMB has recommended that agencies use two separate questions for collecting data on race and ethnicity. The first question should give respondents the option of selecting one ethnic designation, and a separate question should give respondents the option of selecting one or more racial designations.