

Statement from Alan Guttmacher, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, April 19 2012:

The National Children's Study is in a period of design evaluation. The Senate briefing document and the white paper on sampling are consistent in the central message that the national probability sample with door to door household recruitment is not a feasible model for a study with the goals and the scale and scope of the National Children's Study. Based on the data, which are summarized in the white paper, we are proposing a recruitment strategy based on health care providers. The sampling frame for provider based recruitment has not been decided. As these documents point out, several alternative sampling strategies based on prenatal care providers are currently being evaluated. Several of the proposed provider-based designs include a probability based component. We also propose a supplemental recruitment method to augment any gaps in the enrolled population and/or to sample particular populations or exposures.

The Senate briefing document was only part of an hour long verbal briefing that ranged over many topics and provided more detailed information about these issues than could be summarized in a three-page document. The Senate briefing included discussion that the Main Study design is still being finalized; input regarding it from the Advisory Committee and other stakeholders will help determine the final design.

The white paper on sampling is more detailed; it summarizes the data that led to the preference for a provider based recruitment model and it proposes several scenarios for constructing a sampling frame. The white paper is technical and targeted to a scientifically and statistically oriented audience to stimulate discussion and input. We have scheduled a series of consultations with various stakeholders over the coming months to solicit input, including the Advisory Committee meeting on April 24th.

As we presented in the Senate briefing discussion but not in the handout, the NCS realized substantial costs savings through improved operations such as using non-proprietary software, employing a federated IRB model and using the Program Office to perform many coordinating center functions. These savings and others allow cost reductions through lower overhead and a greater proportion of resources to be directed to the science.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this critical issue.