HOUSING MOBILITY: REALIZING THE PROMISE

Second National Conference
on Assisted Housing Mobility

by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction

On September 18 and 19, 1997, representatives from fifty local housing mobility programs came together in Washington, DC for the second national conference on assisted housing mobility. They met to share information and learn from one another about how to use portable housing subsidies to help low-income households move from high poverty or racially segregated neighborhoods to low poverty or racially diverse neighborhoods. This volume describes the various programs they administer and reports on the substance of their discussions.

History

The first national housing mobility conference, held in October, 1994, reviewed the experience of a much smaller number of programs, most of them part of the relief in adjudication or settlements of complaints of racial discrimination against HUD and local housing authorities. A smaller number of unit-based programs -- some spawned in litigation, some adopted voluntarily by local governments -- were also a part of that conference.[1]   At that time, social science research had identified positive outcomes in employment and, particularly, education for families who moved to locations with more jobs and more effective schools.[2] This triggered interest in housing mobility programs as a promising approach to alleviating the concentrations of poverty and segregation in many cities. Expanded research, in the form of the Congressionally-mandated Moving to Opportunity demonstration, was on the drawing board, but its findings would be years in coming.

Without waiting for the results of the Moving to Opportunity research, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) adopted the concept for further implementation, first under Secretary Kemp and then in expanded form by Secretary Cisneros. The result has been a rapid growth of tenant-based mobility programs, combining Section 8 certificates and vouchers with the tenant counseling and landlord outreach features of earlier litigation-based programs. Litigation-based programs have increased in number, too, as HUD moved to settle pending complaints and provide additional Section 8 and administrative resources. Today, five major categories of mobility initiatives bring the total number of assisted mobility programs to 52 in 30 metropolitan regions, compared to only nine at the time of the first conference. These

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[1] Polikoff, Alexander (1995), *Housing Mobility: Promise or Illusion?* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

[2] James E. Rosenbaum (1995), "Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program" *Housing Policy Debate* vol 6. Also see James Rosenbaum (1992), "Black Pioneers -- Do Their Moves to the Suburbs Increase Economic Opportunity for Mothers and Children?" *Housing Policy Debate* vol 2.

initiatives include:

1) ***Litigation*** -- programs established and funded as part of the settlement of litigation against HUD and housing authorities for past discrimination and segregation in public and assisted housing programs.

2) ***Moving to Opportunity*** -- programs funded and supervised by HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research as part of a systematic research demonstration on the effects of moving to a low-poverty neighborhood.

3) ***Vacancy Consolidation*** -- programs funded by HUD to assist public housing residents who must move because their buildings are being demolished.

4) ***Regional Opportunity Counseling Initiative*** -- programs funded by HUD to promote regional collaboration and access to opportunity in the operation of the Section 8 program as a whole.

5) ***Voluntary*** -- programs operated by local housing authorities without special funding or oversight from HUD.

Exhibit 1 provides a listing of current programs and locations for each of these categories; more complete descriptions of each program follow in the next section of this volume.

Exhibit 1: Today's Assisted Housing Mobility Programs

Litigation	Vacancy Consolidation	Regional Opportunity Counseling	Moving to Opportunity
Allegheny Cnty PA	Atlanta GA	Baltimore MD	Baltimore MD
Baltimore MD	Boston MA	Boston MA	Boston MA
Boston MA	Chester PA	Cincinnati OH	Chicago IL
Chicago IL	Columbus OH	Dallas TX	Los Angeles CA
Cincinnati OH	Dade Cnty FL	Grand Rapids MI	New York NY
Dade Cnty FL	Detroit MI	Hartford CT	
Dallas TX	Hartford CT	New Jersey	**Other**
Indianapolis IN	Indianapolis IN	Milwaukee WI	
Minneapolis/St Paul MN	Jacksonville FL	Minneapolis/St Paul MN	Alameda Cnty CA
New Haven CT	Jersey City NJ	New Orleans LA	Baltimore MD
Omaha NE	Kansas City MO	Philadelphia PA	Chicago IL
Rochester NY	new Orleans LA	Riverside CA	Cook County IL
	Philadelphia PA	Rochester NY	Hartford CT
	San Antonio TX	Sand Diego CA	
	Washington DC	Springfield MA	
		Washington DC	

Goals

Because of the multiple origins of housing mobility programs, program designs and even local program goals vary considerably. Some practitioners see the proper goal of housing mobility initiatives to be choice -- choice informed by counseling and housing search coaching. These practitioners generally accept the outcome of families' choices, whether or not the new neighborhoods offer significantly greater opportunities. Others argue, however, that the weight of past Section 8 experience and real estate market practices is so great that stronger measures are needed to initiate change in housing patterns for poor families. They propose that some certificates and vouchers should be set aside for use only by families who choose a high-opportunity neighborhood.

Both litigation-based and Moving to Opportunity programs set aside certificates (or vouchers) for families who are willing to make dramatic changes in their neighborhood circumstances. All litigation-based programs are remedies for illegal racial discrimination and segregation, and their primary goal is to offer minority households who receive federal housing assistance the opportunity to live in racially diverse or predominantly white neighborhoods. They offer special-purpose certificates (or vouchers) to members of the plaintiff class, and either require or strongly encourage

recipients to use their assistance in non-minority neighborhoods. Moving to
Opportunity programs do not explicitly take race into account, but rather are designed
to help families move from high-poverty public and assisted housing developments to
low-poverty neighborhoods. Families who receive MTO certificates (or vouchers) can
only use their assistance in neighborhoods with poverty rates below 10 percent.[3]

In contrast, the Vacancy Consolidation and Regional Opportunity Counseling
Initiatives do not impose any restrictions on where families can use their housing
certificates (or vouchers). Instead, they seek to expand the choices available to
participating families through landlord outreach, counseling, and housing search
assistance. Most of these programs encourage families to move to low-poverty areas
(defined differently in different jurisdictions) but leave the decision to the family.
Similarly, voluntary programs promote choice and mobility within the regular Section 8
program, offering assistance and encouragement, but not restricting where participating
families can use their certificates (or vouchers). Because these programs are all
relatively new, evidence is not yet available on the mix of neighborhoods these families
choose. Thus, we cannot yet compare the effectiveness of programs that restrict the
locations where families can use their housing assistance with those offering
unrestricted certificates or vouchers along with counseling and search assistance.

Policy Implications

The importance of assisted housing mobility programs today is heightened by
HUD's growing reliance on certificates and vouchers as the primary mechanism for
providing housing assistance to low-income renters. Before 1980, tenant-based
assistance constituted only a small share of HUD rental assistance. Since then,
certificates and vouchers have accounted for an increasing share of each year's
incremental assistance. By the first four years of the 1990s, 4.75 new vouchers and
certificates were issued by the federal government for every one incremental unit of
project-based public or subsidized housing committed.[4] Today, of the approximately
4.8 million renter households nationwide that receive HUD rental assistance, 32
percent receive certificates and vouchers, 28 percent live in public housing, and 40

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[3] Because MTO is a research demonstration, it divides eligible applicants into three "treatment"
groups, only one of which receives mobility assistance to move to low-poverty neighborhoods. In this
volume, all discussions of MTO refer to this experimental group, not to the control or comparison groups
in the MTO demonstration. For more information on MTO, see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development, (1996) *Expanding Housing Choices for HUD-Assisted Families: Moving to Opportunity*,
Washington, D.C.

[4] John M. Hartung and Jeffrey R. Henig (1997), "Housing Vouchers and Certificates as a Vehicle
for Deconcentrating the Poor: Evidence from the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area," *Urban Affairs
Review*, 32:3. 403-419. Their data also show that the total volume of incremental assistance has
dropped precipitously since the 1970s.

percent live in privately-owned subsidized projects.[5]

Many advocates and practitioners of assisted housing mobility argue that the Section 8 program as a whole should incorporate the goals of racial desegregation, poverty deconcentration, and access to economic opportunity. In other words, the experience and lessons of assisted housing mobility should be transferred to the operation of the Section 8 programs nationwide. However, some local housing officials and low-income housing advocates question whether such an expansion is practical or even consistent with federal law. There is some justification for housing mobility efforts in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 that initiated the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program. The preamble of that Act, but not the section establishing Section 8, calls for the avoidance of "undue concentrations of assisted households."[6] Advocates for the poor were optimistic that this Act, in conjunction with the Fair Housing Act, could enable poor families to leave racially segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods and choose neighborhoods with greater opportunities. But experience has not borne out these high hopes.

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[5]G. Thomas Kingsley and Peter Tatian, "Housing and Welfare Reform: Geography Matters," paper presented at a Policy Research Round table on the Implications of Welfare Reform for Housing, July 22, 1997.

[6] I need to check this quote and get the citation for it. KW

Without mobility counseling and search assistance, tenant-based housing assistance is less likely than project-based programs to concentrate needy households in high poverty or segregated neighborhoods, but it still too often reinforces existing patterns of economic and racial segregation. Data assembled by HUD indicate that only about 15 percent of Section 8 recipients live in high poverty neighborhoods (greater than 30 percent poor), compared to 54 percent of public housing residents and 23 percent of households living in privately owned, HUD-subsidized projects.[7] However, in many metro areas, certificate and voucher recipients do not yet have access to the full range of neighborhoods in which moderate-cost rental housing is available. Geographically-based Section 8 submarkets have emerged, where assisted families tend to concentrate. And minority recipients, particularly those who live in central cities, are considerably less likely than whites to risk discrimination or move to unfamiliar surroundings in order to use their certificates and vouchers in low-poverty or low-minority neighborhoods.[8]

Despite their differing objectives and programmatic approaches, most mobility practitioners today believe that the existing Section 8 program can and should be improved to provide better choice for participating families, and that greater access to low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods should, at the least, be encouraged. Housing mobility programs certainly do not and cannot represent the only solution for the persistent concentrations of minority poverty in America's central cities, but they can be a part of the solution by providing an alternative for some families. Another part of the solution involve the revitalization of distressed neighborhoods. Housing mobility and neighborhood revitalization are not incompatible, but can both be seen as essential parts of a larger strategy for healthier neighborhoods throughout metropolitan regions.

Organization of the Report

This report summarizes the discussion and debate that occurred during the September housing mobility conference, and attempts to capture the diversity of perspectives and opinions that were expressed. The remainder of this volume consists of three sections. The first section provides brief descriptions of the assisted housing mobility programs in operation today for which we could obtain information. These descriptions were assembled from responses to a questionnaire mailed out to all the local agencies (housing authorities, non-profit counseling agencies, lawyers, and fair

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[7]Sandra Newman and Ann Schnare," Do Housing Assistance Programs Deliver on Neighborhood Quality?" paper presented at the Annual Research Meeting of the Association for Public Policy and Management, October, 1996.

[8] John Goering et al, *Promoting Housing Choice in HUD's Rental Assistance Programs: A Report to Congress.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1995.

housing organizations) known to be involved in mobility programs. Although they are too short to provide a complete picture of each local program, they do offer a starting point for understanding the diversity of local program designs and accomplishments.

The second section of this volume reviews five major issues that were discussed in depth by conference participants:

1) *Alternative Mobility Counseling Strategies* -- strengths and limitations of alternative approaches to mobility counseling, including differences in the scope, intensity, and duration of assistance.

2) *Housing Markets and Landlord Recruitment* -- availability of suitable rental units in low-poverty or non-minority-concentrated communities that offer access to jobs and other opportunities.

3) *Building Community Support and Overcoming Opposition* -- strategies for avoiding or overcoming damaging opposition to assisted housing mobility from both "sending" and "receiving" communities.

4) *Partnerships Among Institutions* -- challenges of building and sustaining effective partnerships to deliver mobility assistance.

5) *Performance Measurement and Accountability* -- methods for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of assisted housing mobility programs, and holding them accountable for results.

All five of these issues are relevant to mobility programs of different types and in different locations. And all five are critical to the future of assisted housing mobility, both locally and nationally.

The report concludes with a summary of the conference discussion about the changing federal role in low-income housing and the future prospects for housing mobility programs.

PART I: PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

LITIGATION SETTLEMENTS

The earliest assisted housing mobility programs, beginning with Gautreaux, were designed as part of the relief in the settlement or adjudication of complaints of racial discrimination against the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and local housing authorities. From 1993 to 1996, when Henry Cisneros was Secretary, HUD settled an unprecedented number of similar lawsuits, incorporating mobility remedies into most of them.

The complaints charged HUD and local housing authorities with systematic racial discrimination and segregation. As a consequence the remedies have generally provided families with opportunities to live in predominantly white or racially diverse neighborhoods. That goal is distinct from, but not at odds with, the goals of later programs that emphasize moves to low-poverty or high-opportunity neighborhoods.[9] Consonant with this remedial goal, most litigation programs require recipients of special-purpose certificates to use them in predominantly white or racially mixed neighborhoods, defined differently from program to program.

Nine programs are included here, four of which are just beginning. In general, litigation programs include a special allocation of certificates and/or vouchers as well as funding for mobility counseling and housing search assistance. Eligibility is restricted to African American or other minority households living in public housing or eligible for low-income housing assistance. In all but one of the litigation programs, mobility counseling and housing search assistance are provided by a non-profit organization, working in partnership with one or more local housing authorities. Exhibit 2 summarizes the performance of five litigation programs with sufficient experience to report (Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Minneapolis and Omaha).

The largest of these programs is, of course, Chicago's Gautreaux program, which (at the time these data were assembled) had counseled roughly 25,000 families and placed almost 7,000 in racially mixed or predominantly white neighborhoods. More recent litigation programs involve much smaller set-asides of certificates and vouchers. Placement rates and costs vary substantially across programs, reflecting variations in market conditions and in programmatic activities. On average, however, approximately 40 percent of families who receive counseling in these programs are successful in moving to housing in the target neighborhoods. And program costs average roughly $1,500 for every family successfully placed.

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[9] There is a high correlation between high rates of racial segregation and high rates of poverty at the neighborhood level and a similar correlation between low-poverty and predominantly white neighborhoods.

Exhibit 2: Litigation Program Performance

	min	max	mean
Overall # Certificates	100	6,900	**1,780**
Overall # Families Counseled	443	25,000	**6,381**
Overall # Families Placed	159	6,536	**1,845**
1996 Average Placement Rates	23%	59%	**40%**
1996 Cost per Family Counseled	$200	$1,407	**$641**
1996 Cost per Family Placed	$659	$3,366	**$1,532**

MOVING TO OPPORTUNITY DEMONSTRATION

Moving to Opportunity (MTO) is an experimental demonstration and research project enacted by Congress and designed by HUD to evaluate the impacts of helping low-income families move from public and assisted housing in high-poverty inner-city neighborhoods to better housing, education, and employment opportunities in low-poverty communities throughout a metropolitan area. HUD implemented a carefully controlled experimental design for MTO, including random assignment of families to receive mobility counseling, and will be monitoring and evaluating outcomes for families and children over a ten-year period.

Five demonstration sites (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York) received special allocations of certificates and/or vouchers, along with funding for mobility counseling services. Eligibility is limited to families with children under 18 years of age who live in public or assisted housing projects in high-poverty central city neighborhoods (with poverty rates above 40 percent). The MTO certificates and vouchers can be used only in low-poverty neighborhoods -- where the poverty rate is below 10 percent. Participants who are unable or unwilling to find units in low-poverty neighborhoods lose their certificate or voucher, and remain in their original public or assisted housing development. The racial composition of destination neighborhoods is not a factor in the design or implementation of MTO.

All of the MTO programs involve partnerships between central city local housing authorities and non-profit counseling organizations. Typically, the PHAs administer the certificates and vouchers, while the non-profit partners -- which receive funding directly from HUD -- provide housing search assistance and counseling. Because of MTO's emphasis on long-term educational and employment outcomes, the non-profits provide considerable supportive services and self-sufficiency counseling in conjunction with housing search assistance. However, the scope, design, and intensity of these services varies considerably across sites.

All five MTO programs have been underway since mid- to late-1994, and Exhibit 3 summarizes their performance to date. Note that the data presented here (and in the program descriptions that follow) apply only to the MTO certificates and vouchers, not to the unrestricted certificates and vouchers issued to a control group of comparable families as part of the demonstration's experimental design.

Exhibit 3: MTO Program Performance

		max	*mean*
	125	150	
Overall # Families Counseled	58		**194**
Overall # Families Placed		146	**96**
Rates	33%		**53%**
1996 Cost per Family	$1,000	$2,200	
1996 Cost per Family Placed	$1,303		**$2,070**

Although the five MTO programs all serve the same types of clients and conform

substantially. These variations probably reflect differences in market conditions as well as differences in the extent to which MTO programs provide self-sufficiency counseling

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When housing authorities demolish severely distressed public housing projects (other than those in the HOPE VI program), HUD provides special allocations of

1996, these certificates and vouchers were accompanied by modest funding to support mobility counseling and housing search assistance. HUD has announced its intention

1997, 17 PHAs had received Vacancy Consolidation funding for a total of 9,548 certificates and vouchers.

activities, and are included here. All of these programs limit eligibility to public housing residents living in projects scheduled for demolition. Participants are encouraged but

neighborhoods. However, the definitions of low-poverty and low-minority neighborhoods vary significantly from one PHA to another and are generally not as

the time pressures of demolition, combined with the characteristics of long-term public housing residents, make dramatic changes in neighborhood characteristics particularly

In three of the programs described here, housing authorities have entered into partnerships with non-profit counseling organizations. But in the other three, the

summarizes the performance to date of four Vacancy Consolidation programs with sufficient experience to report (Atlanta, Chester, Hartford, and Indianapolis).

	min	*max*	
Overall # Certificates	96		**272**
Overall # Families Counseled		470	**247**
	50	415	
1996 Average Placement Rates		100%	**85%**
Counseled	$117		**$589**
1996 Cost per Family Placed		$1,000	**$867**

Average costs for these programs are relatively low, because HUD has provided
$1,000 per certificate or voucher, and PHAs have not raised or contributed additional
funds. At the same time, placement rates are high, largely because residents of
projects scheduled for demolition *have* to be relocated, and because vacancy
consolidation programs do not require families to find units in low-poverty or low-
minority neighborhoods. Vacancy Consolidation programs generally offer very little
counseling or supportive services beyond the housing search assistance, and their
follow-up with families after their move is limited.

REGIONAL PPORTUNITY C INITIATIVE

late in 1996, to promote greater mobility and choice and to encourage regional collaboration in the implementation of the Section 8 program in urban areas. Sixteen

authority in each of these metro areas has received funding to support five years of mobility counseling services. No special allocations of certificates or vouchers are

Section 8 recipients or to existing recipients who are interested in moving.

All sixteen ROC sites are just getting underway. They are all required to form

non-profit counseling organization, but suburban housing authorities as well. Sites have tremendous flexibility in deciding how to target their mobility counseling services.

Self Sufficiency program. One targets families with an immediate need to move, due to crime in their current neighborhood, lack of adequate health care for a disabled

Section 8 recipients. Recipients of ROC counseling may be encouraged to move to low-poverty or low-minority neighborhoods, but ultimately they can use their certificates

Because of ROC's emphasis on opportunities for upward mobility, many of these programs are actively reaching out to local social service programs (including the

mobility counseling with a wider range of support and assistance. In addition, several programs are planning quite extensive packages of post-move services, including

serious commitment on the part of PHAs to regional collaboration and coordination. City and suburban housing authorities are struggling with administrative and political

families and landlords region wide.

OTHER MOBILITY PROGRAMS

Six housing authorities have launched assisted housing mobility programs without a lawsuit or special funding from HUD. Like the Regional Opportunity Counseling initiative, these programs promote mobility and choice in the standard Section 8 program. Services and supports are available to encourage and assist families who want to use their Section 8 certificates or vouchers to move out of the central city or into a low-poverty, or low-minority neighborhood. Three voluntary mobility programs are operated solely by local housing authorities; three involve partnerships with non-profits. Exhibit 5 summarizes the performance of four voluntary programs with sufficient experience to report (Baltimore BNI, Chicago, Cook County, and Hartford).

Exhibit 5: Other Mobility Program Performance

	min	max	mean
Overall # Families Counseled	158	1,226	**485**
Overall # Families Placed	62	221	**130**
1996 Average Placement Rates	17%	70%	**41%**
1996 Cost per Family Counseled	$153	$742	**$521**
1996 Cost per Family Placed	$500	$4,028	**$1,643**

PART II: PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

ALTERNATIVE MOBILITY COUNSELING STRATEGIES

*What are the key components of a successful mobility program? What
services should it provide, and how should these services be delivered?
How much help and support do families need to make a successful
move? Should programs offer support and counseling that extends long
past a family's move-in date? Is there a basic package of activities that
every mobility program should include?*

The scope, content, and intensity of housing mobility counseling vary
dramatically across local programs. Some programs focus almost exclusively on
helping families find an affordable housing unit in a low-poverty or racially diverse
neighborhood. Others link mobility to intensive case management and self-sufficiency
counseling, helping families address health, education, and employment issues at the
same time that they move. Still others stress motivational counseling and housing
search coaching to enable families to find housing on their own.   Many programs
provide ongoing support and problem-solving assistance to families (and landlords) for
several months after the move. A few provide such services for several years. And
some offer "second move" counseling and even home ownership assistance, to help
families make successive moves to better neighborhoods and housing circumstances.

Mobility counseling strategies also differ with regard to restrictions on where
certificates and vouchers can be used. In the Moving to Opportunity program and in
many litigation settlements, families who receive counseling can only use their
certificates in a low-poverty or racially diverse neighborhood. If they are unable or
unwilling to make such a move, the certificate (with more counseling) goes to another
family. In the Regional Opportunity Counseling and Vacancy Consolidation initiatives,
on the other hand, families who receive counseling may merely be *encouraged* to move
out of high poverty or racially segregated neighborhoods. If they decide not to, they
can use their certificates anywhere.

To a large extent, differences between programs in the extent and intensity of
mobility counseling mirror differences in program origins and goals. For example,
programs which originated to address long-standing patterns of racial segregation tend
to focus primarily on helping families move to non-minority neighborhoods. These
programs are more likely to limit the locations where families can use their special-
purpose certificates and to use the bulk of their resource to help families find a suitable
unit in a qualifying neighborhood. In contrast, many Regional Opportunity Counseling
programs see family empowerment and self-sufficiency as a motivating goal. These
programs do not involve special-purpose certificates and cannot limit the locations to
which families move. As a consequence, many ROC programs are exploring linkages
between mobility counseling and longer-term self-sufficiency services.

Despite these important variations in goals and design, all mobility programs appear to include three basic components -- 1) initial briefings and assessments; 2) direct assistance with housing search, and 3) post-move follow-up services. All conference participants agreed that an effective mobility program must go beyond the move itself, and address at least some of the other barriers to successful mobility and self-sufficiency that families face. And they agreed that some follow-up contact and assistance must be provided for at least a few months after participating families move to a new neighborhood. The remainder of this section explores the range of approaches and strategies that local programs have adopted for each of these three essential program components.

Initial Briefings and Assessments

All programs provide an initial briefing for potential participants that provides basic information about eligibility, services, and obligations and describes the benefits of moving to a low-poverty or non-minority neighborhood. Most programs also provide information about Section 8 certificates and vouchers, or at least review the information already provided by the housing authorities. This information must be presented as clearly as possible, in terms that low-income families can understand and absorb. Briefings in which too much information is provided at once are ineffective. Several programs invite successful program participants to conduct all or part of the briefing, or show a video in which successful participants describe their experience. Most find that these presentations are more understandable and effective for new participants; the success stories inspire new families to believe that mobility has something to offer them, and helps overcome their fears.

A few programs are able to identify and contact potential participants several months *before* they become eligible for mobility assistance. These programs may provide some individual counseling *prior* to a group briefing session. For example, some programs contact families on the waiting list approximately six months prior to the time they will receive a Section 8 certificate. Other programs contact existing Section 8 recipients several months prior to their lease renewal dates. Although not all programs are able to reliably identify potential participants this far in advance, those that do find it useful to begin providing information and encouragement about mobility at the earliest possible date.

Most programs follow up the initial briefing session with one-on-one interviews, in which the priorities, resources, and needs of an individual family are assessed. Some programs provide this kind of individual assessment for all potential participants; others work only with families who opt for mobility assistance on the basis of the group briefing. In the individual assessment interview, counselors assess a family's needs and capacity, describe the range of services available, and help the family develop a plan of action -- or "family service plan." As discussed earlier, some programs provide

services that focus primarily on the housing search and move, while others offer more wide-ranging "self-sufficiency" services. All of the conference participants agreed, however, that the needs of individual families vary dramatically, and that it does not make sense to provide them all with the same package of services and activities. Some people need a lot of help, while others have much more specific and limited problems to solve. Therefore, many programs offer a "menu" of services and activities from which families (and counselors) can select the assistance they need.

As part of the assessment process, almost all programs conduct home visits with participating families. However, these visits are rarely used as a mechanism for disqualifying families on the basis of their housekeeping skills. Instead, families whose homes are dirty and disorganized are told that this is something private landlords care about, and receive training and assistance with housekeeping skills. Home visits also provide counselors with the opportunity to learn more about a family and its circumstances, and may encourage participants to say more about their aspirations and concerns.

Several programs have created a series of "hurdles" or "tests" that participating families must pass in order to qualify for a certificate or for more intensive housing search assistance. For example, one program requires families to progress through a multi-stage process in order to remain in the program. At each stage, a small task is assigned, such as bringing in certain documentation. Families must complete these tasks and show up for their next meeting, or they drop out of the program. Other programs require families to attend a certain number of workshops or counseling sessions in order to receive their Section 8 certificate and receive housing search assistance. Many conference participants agreed that creating hurdles of this kind is an effective strategy for determining whether families have the commitment, the reliability, and the basic skills to obtain housing in the private market. However, vacancy consolidation programs -- in which participants *must* move quickly because their building is being demolished -- felt that they might not have enough time to implement this kind of process. Several experienced mobility practitioners argued that it would be preferable to slow down demolition schedules than to rush the relocation of ill-prepared families.

Direct Assistance with Housing Search

As discussed earlier, the philosophy and scope of housing search assistance varies substantially across programs. Some practitioners argue that families must ultimately take responsibility for finding their own housing units. These programs typically coach families about how to search for housing and provide motivational counseling. A few practitioners see it as *their* responsibility to find suitable units for families; counselors work closely with their clients throughout the search process,

helping them identify potential units, preparing them to meet with landlords, and

however, operate between these two extremes, providing a mix of motivational counseling and hands-on search assistance, depending upon the needs and capacities

intensive and hands-on assistance with the housing search, while greater reliance upon participating families to find their own units generally comes later, after more

Many programs provide transportation for participating families during the housing search process. They see transportation as a critical component of the

for clients to get to where the units are. In addition, trips to unfamiliar neighborhoods can help overcome clients' fear about moving, and expose them to neighborhoods they

extended car or van trip is a great opportunity to learn more about clients' needs and priorities, and to provide information and advice in an informal and friendly way. Some

unless transportation was provided, both because these are unfamiliar areas and because the travel time involved in visiting units and meeting landlords would be too

large vans or buses may attract attention and risk the anonymity that is one of the virtues of the Section 8 program.

already moved to a target neighborhood -- in their search assistance program. Some hire successful participants back as mobility counselors. Some include a scheduled

neighborhoods. And some incorporate group "rap sessions", in which clients who are in the process of searching for housing meet with successful past participants and with

A challenge facing many mobility programs is that families run out of time during their housing search, particularly if the certificates or vouchers are restricted to very

Therefore, several programs delay the actual issuance of the certificate or voucher until after a family has received considerable counseling. Some do not issue the certificate

strategies effectively extend the search period without changing the basic rules of the Section 8 program.

well as direct assistance to client families. Most programs hire outreach workers who

use a wide variety of information sources -- including the Internet -- to identify potential landlords with good quality housing units in target neighborhoods. Staff typically explain the Section 8 program to these landlords, and describe the goals and services of the mobility program. In some sites, the program director has gone out to meet with representatives of the largest property management companies, and in others, landlords already participating in the program have contacted colleagues and told them about their positive experiences. Many conference participants indicated that first-time landlords often need some intensive hand-holding through the process of inspection and lease approval; one program has retained a pro bono attorney who is available to answer questions and assist landlords through the Section 8 process. Several programs also find that their commitment to provide post-move support -- to the landlord as well as the family -- plays a role in convincing landlords to participate.

A small number of mobility programs have offered "holding payments" to landlords who accept Section 8 families, to compensate them for the delay (and lost rent revenue) caused by the housing inspection and lease approval process. This practice is quite controversial among practitioners. Supporters argue that some delays are inevitable in a government program and that a half-month's rent convinces landlords with good units in desirable locations to tolerate these delays. Thus "holding payments" or "incentive payments" are seen as a mechanism for widening the housing and neighborhood options available to participating families. But critics argue that if a landlord likes a tenant, he will tolerate a small delay, and that the Section 8 program already provides sufficient incentives for landlord participation by ensuring a steady stream of rent revenue. Moreover, one practitioner pointed out that landlords themselves can sometimes be the source of delays. In addition, many conference participants expressed doubts about their capacity to raise funding for incentive payments. Programs that have used this device have raised money from local foundations and from local governments' Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. But these sources may not be forthcoming in all communities. In particular, local governments, who may not be particularly enthusiastic about assisted housing mobility, may be unwilling to contribute scarce CDBG funding for this purpose.

Similarly, practitioners differ quite vehemently in their views on incentive payments to families who move to target neighborhoods. Most acknowledge that moving to a low-poverty or non-minority neighborhood can be very intimidating for poor families, and that incentives may help increase success rates, particularly for programs in which the certificates and vouchers are not restricted to target neighborhoods. However, many practitioners argue that families have to want to move in order to be successful -- they have to take full responsibility for their location choice. Otherwise, many feel that families will take the bonus payment but move back to the old neighborhood after a year. One practitioner suggested that rather than bonus payments, mobility programs could provide resources to compensate families for some of the higher costs involved in moving to low-poverty or non-minority neighborhoods,

including security deposits, utility hook-ups, or some moving costs.

Finally, many programs that help families move to low-poverty or low-minority neighborhoods also try to avoid clustering too many participants in one place. Efforts to prevent new concentrations of assisted families raise difficult issues about freedom of choice and the availability of social support networks. Some conference participants argued that they could not prevent clustering without "steering" families' or violating their right to choose. Other practitioners, however, emphasized the importance of continually developing new landlords and housing opportunities, and informing clients about the widest possible range of neighborhoods and units available. Some programs may even drop a property from their list of available units after a certain number of assisted families have moved in.

Post-Move Follow-Up Services

All of the conference participants agreed that mobility programs should provide some follow-up services -- that helping a family move to a new neighborhood is not the end of the process. However, the intensity and duration of post-move services vary tremendously across sites, based in part upon program goals but also on the availability of resources. Some practitioners argue that offering a full array of self-sufficiency counseling and referrals goes beyond the mission of housing mobility, while others argue that their ultimate mission is helping families achieve self-sufficiency -- not simply helping them move. Moreover, follow-up services can become extremely costly, and many sites are grappling with the trade-off between helping more families and providing more extensive support and follow-up services.

Some programs simply make follow-up services available to clients -- on an as-needed or problem-solving basis -- for 30, 60, or 90 days after the move, while others offer more intensive counseling and referral services and a few offer services for much longer periods. Many programs provide packets of information about services and supports available in a family's new community, and provide referrals to these services as needed. One program continues to invite recent movers to the workshops, counseling sessions, and support groups that they offer for families who are in the process of moving; others establish support groups specifically for recent movers. Because the needs and capacities of individual families vary tremendously, some may not need any help once they have moved into their new homes, while others may experience unanticipated problems -- with the landlord, with transportation, with schools, or with other public services. Thus, a considerable range of follow-up services must be available, even though many families may need very little help.

Recently, a few programs have begun to offer "second-move" counseling, contacting families a month or two before their lease expires to offer help in making

another move. These services can help families who have had problems with their first unit or landlord make another successful move in a low-poverty or non-minority area, rather than moving back to their original neighborhood. In addition, second move counseling can help families move to progressively better neighborhoods over time, especially if their first move did not dramatically change their neighborhood conditions. Many (though not all) practitioners believe that mobility counseling can be more effective for families making their second move than for families leaving public housing for the first time. This may be particularly applicable for vacancy consolidation programs, which are helping long-term public housing residents enter the private rental market for the first time. For these families, moving to a low-poverty neighborhood or to a community that is far away from friends and family may be too daunting at first. Therefore, at least one vacancy consolidation program is very explicit in its strategy to help families make successive moves to better neighborhoods.

Several local mobility programs are beginning to explore linkages to Family Self Sufficiency programs, in which local housing authorities provide long-term counseling and referral services to public housing and Section 8 families. Although the federal government does not provide funding for Family Self-Sufficiency, HUD does require that local housing authorities administer the program. The total number of households participating in a local FSS program is determined by the number of certificates and vouchers, but local housing authorities have considerable flexibility in determining which assisted families participate in FSS. Thus, there are real opportunities to link mobility counseling with Family Self-Sufficiency, helping a family move to a neighborhood in which their access to opportunity is maximized and providing ongoing support services as they work toward long-term independence. Finally, a few Regional Opportunity Counseling (ROC) programs are also offering homeownership counseling to their clients, with the goal of helping them make a long-term transition from assisted renters to homeowners.

HOUSING MARKETS AND LANDLORD RECRUITMENT

Is there an adequate supply of rental housing in neighborhoods that offer education and employment opportunities for lower income families? What proportion of those rental units fall within established Fair Market Rents? To what extent are rental property owners and managers familiar with the Section 8 program and receptive to it? Does the performance of the local housing authority encourage or discourage landlord participation in the Section 8 program?

Because Section 8 does not produce new housing for low-income families, the success of housing mobility programs depends upon the availability of rental housing in the private market and the willingness of private landlords to accept subsidized families. Markets vary significantly within metropolitan regions and from region to region. Program administrators need to learn as much as possible about the rental housing market in their metropolitan areas, particularly about the sub-regional housing markets in areas with low poverty rates, racial diversity, or significant educational and employment opportunities. A detailed knowledge of target sub-markets -- including numbers of rental units, the mix of bedroom sizes, vacancy rates, rents and Fair Market Rents, characteristics and attitudes of private landlords, and the ways in which rental housing is advertised -- is essential for a successful housing mobility program.

Availability of Rental Housing

It is important to separate the issue of whether rental housing is available in target housing markets from the question of whether the owners or managers of these units are willing to participate in the Section 8 program. In many housing markets around the country the supply of decent quality rental housing is more than adequate, even in low-poverty and racially diverse neighborhoods outside the central city. Of course, other mobility programs face much tighter markets, with fewer rental units and lower vacancy rates. To illustrate, vacancy rates reported by agencies currently administering housing mobility programs range from a low of 2 percent to a high of 20 per cent.

Privately owned rental housing that receives subsidies from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and some state or municipal housing development agencies carry an obligation to accept Section 8 recipients. Owners of these properties do not have to accept *any* Section 8 recipient; they are always authorized to impose their normal screening criteria. However, owners of subsidized properties may be prohibited from refusing to participate in Section 8 altogether. Therefore, mobility practitioners should find out about the location of

subsidized properties and the regulations that govern them. Owners and managers may need to be reminded of their obligations. However, some of this housing may be located in high-poverty or racially segregated areas, or may already have a concentration of assisted families. If so, these units may not serve the purposes of assisted housing mobility.

In some areas, fair housing testing and enforcement have resulted in additional units being made available to mobility participants through settlement or court orders. Some agencies have managed to combine this enforcement activity with administering the mobility program; they demonstrate that litigation can be conducted without creating permanent enemies. Others have found it desirable or necessary to have enforcement issues handled by a separate agency. All of the programs inform participants of their fair housing rights and provide resources for correcting any violations, directly or by referral.

If the supply of rental housing in desirable neighborhoods is inadequate, mobility practitioners may consider forming coalitions with non-profit housing development organizations, community development corporations, and other advocates of low-income housing. Together, these organizations may be able to increase local funding for affordable housing production. Possible mechanisms include grants and loans from local housing and community development agencies, inclusionary zoning regulations that require private developers to incorporate moderate-cost units in all new housing developments, and federal allocations from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME, and Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs.

Fair Market Rents

HUD-established Fair Market Rents (FMRs) play a critical role in determining the availability of units for mobility program participants in desirable neighborhoods. FMRs are calculated to be higher than 40 percent of all recently occupied, decent quality rental units in a metropolitan area. And they are used to calculate the amount of subsidy that the federal government will provide for a Section 8 participant. If FMRs are low relative to prevailing rent levels in a target neighborhood, Section 8 participants will not be able to obtain housing there, because their share of the total rent payment would be unaffordable. Thus, mobility program administrators need to know how rent levels in targeted areas compare to the applicable FMRs, and be prepared to advocate for adjustments to local FMRs if necessary.

Section 8 rules permit PHAs to apply to HUD field offices for approval of exception rents above the established Fair Market Rents (FMRs). The Section 8 conforming rule will make important changes to the existing rules for obtaining these exception rents. HUD expects the conforming rule to become effective in Fall 1997.

Currently, the procedure is in flux as HUD moves closer to integrating the certificate and voucher programs and field offices attempt to be more responsive to PHA requests for exception rents. Not much formal (published) policy governs this process and field offices have real discretion in deciding whether to grant PHA requests.

Until the conforming rule becomes effective, for requests of increases up to 110 percent of FMR, the PHA has the discretion to grant exception rents on a unit-by-unit basis without HUD approval for up to 20 percent of recipient households. The conforming rule eliminates this discretion. To obtain exception rents up to 120 percent of FMR, the PHA must demonstrate to HUD the need for the higher rent and show that it does not exceed the 40th percentile rent of units occupied by recent movers (households that moved to their present residence within the past 15 months). Acceptable examples of the need for a higher FMR are PHA efforts to move Section 8 holders into segregated or higher rental priced neighborhoods where it is difficult for Section 8 holders to find housing. Based on these data, HUD may grant an exception rent up to 120 percent of the established FMR for a specific geographic area. These exceptions are limited to 50 percent of an FMR area.

In most cases, the geographic area for which a PHA seeks an exception rent is not large enough for HUD to require that the PHA submit formal survey data documenting rent levels. In these cases, HUD field economists will accept data from newspaper listings, real estate brokers, and like sources. However, when a PHA seeks an exception rent for a large geographic area (for example, an entire county or a quarter of a city) HUD will require that the PHA present data collected through a statistically valid survey. There is no rule which establishes a geographic threshold size for determining when a formal survey is required. Data from a statistically valid survey may come from the 1990 Census or a PHA may conduct its own survey. HUD has recently begun actively encouraging PHAs to use 1990 Census data as the basis for an exception rent request because it is much simpler and less costly than conducting a survey. The conforming rule will emphasize that PHAs should use this approach when applying for exception rents.

There may be circumstances where a PHA feels that rents reported by the 1990 Census data are significantly lower than current rents in an area and decides to conduct a survey to collect current rent data. The form of the survey may differ depending upon the size and resources of the PHA. Large PHAs will generally conduct full-scale, sophisticated surveys using a methodology known as a random digit dialing survey (RDD).[10]   HUD allows smaller PHAs to collect data through less costly and

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[10] An RDD involves collecting data by telephone from a statistically significant number of households that have recently moved into the area for which the exception rent is requested. The details of how to conduct a RDD are contained in a HUD manual entitled "Random Digit Dialing Surveys: A Guide to Assist Larger Public Housing Agencies in Preparing Fair Market Rent Comments." This manual

sophisticated methods, such as list-assisted telephone surveys and mail or interview surveys.[11]

When HUD approves an exception rent based on data from a statistically significant survey (1990 Census or new survey), the exception rent also becomes the FMR for the voucher program.   This is not true if HUD approves an exception rent based on data collected from newspaper listing, brokers' assessments, etc. However, under the conforming rule, in all cases exception rents will become the Section 8 voucher FMR.

Applications for exception rents are submitted to HUD field offices for approval. The HUD Washington headquarters plays a monitoring role and field offices are required to send information to headquarters on all approved exception rents. However, HUD headquarters approval is not required. There is no procedure governing the amount of time within which field offices must respond. In practice, requests can be processed in as little as several days and should not take longer than 30 days. For PHAs that wish to use Census data as the basis for their exception rent request, the field office can provide this data to the PHA, further expediting the application process.

There is no formal appeal process if HUD denies a PHA request. Requests are often denied because the data to support the request is deficient in some way. In these cases, the PHA may submit new data and submit another request. In cases where the data is reliable but HUD does not feel is justifies the PHA request, the PHA has no alternative to appeal the request short of soliciting HUD headquarters to put pressure on the field office to reverse its decision.

The Section 8 conforming rule will make three important changes to the process for obtaining exception rents. These changes are summarized in Exhibit 6. Under the conforming rule all exception rents up to 120 percent of the FMR are handled through a single process that requires submission of the request to the HUD field office. Regardless of the method used to collect data to support the exception rent request, the exception rent becomes the new FMR for the certificate and voucher program. And finally, an exception rent request may be based on 1990 Census data or a PHA may conduct a new survey. Under the current process the PHA has the option to use 1990

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is available from HudUser (on the Internet: http://www.huduser.org), HUD field offices, or HUD Headquarters, Office of Policy Development and Research.

[11] Details of how to collect data using these methods are contained in the HUD publication "Rental Housing Surveys: A Guide to Assist Smaller Public Housing Agencies in Preparing Fair Market Rent Comments." Available from HudUser (on the Internet: http://www.huduser.org), HUD field offices, or HUD Headquarters, Office of Policy Development and Research.

Census data, but this approach will be more actively encouraged under the conforming rule.

Exhibit 6 : Section 8 Conforming Rule Changes to Exception Rents Procedure

	Current procedure	Conforming rule
110% exception rents	PHA may grant without HUD approval for up to 20% of families in program.	PHA no longer has authority to grant without HUD approval. Must follow procedure for 120% of FMR exception rent.
120% exception rents	PHA generally submits survey data as basis for exception rent request. 1990 Census data not widely used.	PHA encouraged to use 1990 Census data as basis for exception rent request.
	Exception rents based on data from statistically valid surveys become FMR for voucher program.	All exception rents become FMR for voucher program.

Landlord Participation

Most rental owners and managers, particularly those in opportunity-rich areas, have choices. They typically do not have problems finding tenants and often choose not to participate in the Section 8 program. Some consider the added paper work, the delays -- from rental decision to inspection to PHA approval to actual move-in -- or the need to receive and account for two checks each month, to be uneconomic. The requirement that security deposits equal one month's rent may be an impediment in markets where two months' is the standard. Add the prevalence of stereotypes that characterize low-income, minority households as unworthy or unreliable tenants, and it is clear that high performance in counseling tenant applicants and in administering the Section 8 contracts is essential to overcome landlord resistance or reluctance.

An essential condition for a high level of landlord participation is a program that consistently refers households who are reliable, desirable tenants. No landlord recruitment strategy will succeed if the mobility program gains a reputation for referring tenants who do not meet their responsibilities. A second major factor in securing and retaining landlord participation is the performance of the public housing authority in completing initial inspections and paperwork promptly, making rent payments on time,

and handling damage claims fairly and with dispatch.   In other words, the basic Section 8 program is not administered effectively by one or more major PHAs in the area, landlords with units in desirable neighborhoods will be unlikely to participate. A third factor stressed in many programs is the availability of the administering agency to smooth the process for landlords by providing pre-inspections or assistance in Section 8 paperwork and consultation and intervention if problems arise during the tenancy of participating families.

Recruiting landlords requires approaches that match the target housing market. Where the market includes large rental complexes or multiple complexes under single management, visits to corporate officers and to investors can result in obtaining numbers of units. In some programs it has helped to find one such company that will take the lead; successful experience with one can be persuasive with others. A variation of this is to recruit an individual owner or broker whose satisfactory experience and personal commitment to renting to the program's participants will help recruit others. One program calls such a person its real estate "guru." Other programs have found an advisory committee of supportive landlords to be helpful. Real estate trade associations, present in most large cities, also provide venues for marketing housing mobility programs to landlords. Where the endorsement of the trade association can be obtained, it clearly lends credibility to the program. Finally, some programs have sponsored or participated in trade fairs that provide a variety of information and services to landlords.

In markets with many smaller properties and few large-scale landlords, group approaches may not be feasible. These landlords must be found through advertisements in local and metropolitan newspapers and by driving through neighborhoods to look for "For Rent" signs. Enlisting religious congregations in target communities for general support of the mobility program can be helpful, since those congregations are likely to include real estate professionals. In some areas, the Internet may provide a useful source of listings.

A useful tool in all markets is a brochure that describes the program and makes the case for landlords to participate. Describing Section 8 and the mobility program -- the nature of counseling and preparation provided to tenants and the continuing services the agency can provide to both tenant and landlord -- and answering in advance typical questions about the program can be an important complement to the primary outreach method, personal contact. A newsletter can serve the same purpose and keep participating landlords abreast of program developments. Some owners and managers may not be familiar with Section 8 requirements and procedures. For example, an earlier regulation, not popular with landlords, held that if one Section 8 certificate or voucher was accepted, others could not be refused. That requirement has been repealed, but some landlords may not know it yet.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND OVERCOMING OPPOSITION

What strategies should be adopted in the preparatory stages of a housing mobility initiative that build support or lessen opposition? How can program administrators and supporters assess whether early information will build support or engender opposition? When concerted vocal or political opposition arises, what strategies have helped to build support? What types of organizations can be mobilized as allies if opposition arises?

Attitudes of residents, housing providers and officials within both "sending" and "receiving" communities have the potential to be helpful or damaging to housing mobility efforts. Any program must take community attitudes into account; some these attitudes, and actions that flow from them, have been critical. Building community support and overcoming opposition to housing mobility programs shares a long and honorable tradition of citizen action to persuade fellow citizens that programs which first seemed threatening really advance the common good. That so many programs are succeeding in winning this support is a tribute to the program participants who are on the front lines of that effort and to the program administrators and their numerous allies.

Building Community Support

In receiving communities, support is always helpful. But in the absence of overt opposition, it is not essential. In tenant-based mobility programs, families move, one by one, into existing houses and apartments. Only the landlord and the tenant need know that the family is receiving a subsidy. Support from within receiving communities can take many forms, from simple gestures of welcome by neighbors or religious congregations, to letters of support from local officials, to comprehensive support akin to that provided by sponsors of new immigrants. Families are moving into a new situation, perhaps at some distance from family and friends. Most are resourceful in adjusting to the new neighborhood, but some may not be. For these families, the availability of local churches or civic organizations can be a great help. These general arrangements should be made in advance and referrals provided to the family if requested. Help provided in some programs includes introduction to local services, referrals for employment, furniture and transportation.

Overcoming Community Opposition

Given the character of the Section 8 program, the vocal opposition that has challenged many project-based subsidized developments need not arise. Still,

opposition has arisen in some situations. Understanding the issues typically raised in opposition and the experience of those who have responded successfully can help avoid serious impediments to a program's success. Issues typically raised in opposition from receiving communities include:

•   Racism and classism--opposition to people of color, to poor people, to single mothers, or to welfare recipients as new residents;

•   Opposition to all subsidized housing for low income households;

•   Fears that new residents will increase crime rates;

•   Fears that property values will decline, because of racial change, crime, or poor program management by the local housing authority;

•   Fears that assisted or minority families will be overly concentrated.

When opposition is anticipated -- at the beginning of a program or prior to its expansion to a new area -- the advice of trusted local leaders can be invaluable. Sometimes, it is desirable to inform a larger circle of community leaders and try to win their support. In other circumstances, however, the advice will be to wait until the program is underway before drawing attention to it. Early disclosure may help leaders feel comfortable with the effort or, at least, pleased about being informed. But early disclosure may also alert opposition and give time for them to organize. Trusted local leaders are in the best position to anticipate whether or not an early outreach and education effort will be helpful.

        If opposition arises, it should be addressed quickly. Small meetings where direct communication can take place have proved best. When opposing forces arrange large meetings, it is usually better to attend, in order to respond to misperceptions and to argue the case for the mobility program, even in the face of hostility and high emotions. If possible, organize community supporters to attend large meetings of this kind, so that it is not only the voices of opposition that are heard. Similarly, misrepresentation of the program in the media should receive a prompt and factual response.

        The lessons to be drawn from the experience of mobility programs in responding to community opposition are not new. Providing accurate information to correct misperceptions or rumors is the starting point. Seeking allies among religious, union and civic leaders and encouraging them to respond to opposition is a common tactic. Encouraging participating families to take an active role in the schools, churches and civic groups of their new community has had some success. It is the almost universal experience that opposition is based on misinformation and stereotypes and does not persist after families move in. When those who were opposed encounter a real person

and a real family, rather than their stereotype of a poor, minority family, overt opposition generally fades.

A Case Study in Community Opposition

Concerted, high-visibility, politically damaging opposition to mobility programs has been rare. The most serious example occurred in Baltimore, Maryland when the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program there was announced. In this instance, unique among mobility programs, opposition formed quickly, beginning in working class suburban neighborhoods that were not likely to receive program participants, and became highly visible with large mass meetings and extensive media coverage. Hate groups joined the opposition. MTO became an issue in local, state and national political campaigns.

Several factors contributed to the intensity of the opposition in Baltimore. First, the announcement was premature. Baltimore's MTO program was not yet fully developed and answers to some questions were not available. No advance briefings for suburban public officials had been provided by the mobility program administrators. In addition, the announcement of MTO coincided with publicity about the demolition of high-rise public housing. Even though the MTO demonstration was small, many people associated it with the several thousand families who might eventually be displaced from public housing. Moreover, the announcement coincided with the early stages of the 1994 election campaign and was used as a wedge issue to advance their campaigns. Finally, politicians were able to exploit genuine feelings of economic and social insecurity in working class neighborhoods surrounding the city of Baltimore.

Despite the severity of the opposition to MTO that arose in Baltimore, supporters were ultimately successful in responding. Their efforts included:

• Unpublicized meetings with public officials and with key print and media journalists to provide accurate information.

• Similar meetings with civic, union and religious leaders; the last resulted in an open letter initiated by the Roman Catholic Archbishop and signed by other prominent clergy.

• Attendance by proponents at mass meetings to attempt, often with great difficulty, to dispel rumors and provide correct information.

• Appearances on broadcast talk shows and letters and op ed pieces in newspapers.

Ultimately, Baltimore's Moving to Opportunity program went forward and is now completing its agreed upon number of placements. Other mobility programs are beginning in Baltimore and facing similar but less intense public opposition. MTO and housing mobility continue to have negative connotations in parts of the community; this has affected landlord recruitment. The most serious consequence was the action of Maryland Senator Mikulski to divert funding originally intended for expansion of the MTO program.

Although the most vocal and potentially damaging opposition to assisted housing mobility has come from the potential "receiving" communities, opposition from "sending" communities can also be a problem. Opposition in the neighborhoods or

public housing developments from which mobility participants come usually takes the form of fear of the loss of talented individuals when leadership may be sorely needed. Community organizations, political leaders, churches, businesses all may feel that mobility opportunities weaken their base in the community. Mobility practitioners should recognize and respect these concerns, but argue that providing choice of neighborhoods for residents is important in itself, in line with American values and a net good for the society. Support or encouragement for revitalization in poor neighborhoods as an essential element of providing choice for low-income families strengthens the argument, if the mobility agency is in a position to provide such support.

Publicity

Most mobility programs have found it best to operate with a low profile, in keeping with the nature of the Section 8 program's advantages of using existing housing and anonymity of the participants. Publicity can be an asset if it presents an accurate portrayal of the program; misinformation can be very damaging. Experienced practitioners recommend against seeking publicity until there is a story to tell, usually after a program has been in operation for some time. Always be prepared to answer media questions straightforwardly, and cultivate journalists who will take the time to obtain a thorough understanding of the program. In some situations, it may be helpful -- or necessary -- to invite program participants to tell their stories to the media, without pressure to do so, and with recognition that there are risks to their privacy. However, it is critical never to release specific addresses of participating families, and always to obtain a family's permission before releasing their name to a media person. Section 8 participants are protected by the federal Privacy Act. In several instances, television coverage that lets participating families tell their own stories has helped increase public understanding and support for mobility programs. Video tapes of these programs can be used in community settings to increase understanding of the program.

Discrimination and Harassment

Some mobility programs explicitly prepare families to recognize and deal with discrimination in the housing search process, and provide referrals to appropriate enforcement agencies in cases of racial or ethnic discrimination or, where the law provides, discrimination based on the source of income. Some of the non-profit partners in local mobility programs are fair housing groups, with a sophisticated understanding of the forms discrimination can take and the protections offered by federal, state, and local law. Other programs, however, may be less familiar with fair housing issues, and may not recognize or respond to all the instances of discrimination that their clients experience. Moreover, some practitioners expressed concern that if

mobility counseling is too closely associated with fair housing enforcement in the minds of local landlords, their programs will have more difficulty getting landlords to participate. However, as families receive assistance in searching for housing in non-traditional neighborhoods, illegal discrimination by landlords and real estate agents should not be tolerated.

Participating families in some programs have encountered harassment in the form of racial epithets in school yards or unwarranted police attention to African American teenagers, for example. Threats, persistent harassment or outright discrimination have been less frequent, but must be considered seriously. Mobility participants should be encouraged to report any instances of harassment, threats or discrimination to responsible authorities, and to the mobility program staff. The participants should be encouraged to handle the situation themselves if they feel comfortable in doing so and offered assistance if not. Serious threats or vandalism should be reported to law enforcement authorities and followed to insure that they are taken seriously. In some jurisdictions, the U. S. Attorney has asked to be informed early of racial harassment or threats so that investigation may prevent more serious violence.

PARTNERSHIPS AMONG INSTITUTIONS

*What does it take to build an effective partnership between local housing
authorities and non-profit counseling organizations? Is this partnership
essential, or could one institution do it all? What are the barriers to
collaboration between PHAs and non-profits or among PHAs in a region?
What strategies can be employed to overcome these barriers? What
types of organizations should be involved -- formally or informally -- in a
local mobility counseling initiative?   What should supporters and
advocates of assisted housing mobility be doing to build capacity in
individual metropolitan areas and at the national level?*

To date, most housing mobility initiatives have required partnerships between
local public housing authorities (PHAs) and non-profit counseling agencies. Partner
organizations often have quite different histories, perspectives, missions, and
constraints, and collaboration is often difficult to build and maintain. Sometimes the
goals of PHAs and non-profits differ; they may fail to share essential information; they
may not follow consistent procedures for housing inspections or other fundamental
Section 8 activities; and accountability for program outcomes may be unclear. In some
instances, particularly in the context of litigation settlements, housing authorities have
been required to partner with non-profits, creating involuntary partnerships.   Over time,
many of these involuntary partnerships appear to be evolving into effective
collaborations. More recently, a few housing authorities have chosen to implement
mobility counseling in their vacancy consolidation programs without a formal, non-profit
partner. These housing authorities are performing the functions of mobility counseling
agencies internally, either by hiring new staff or by reassigning existing staff.

An increasing number of mobility programs, particularly those funded by HUD's
Regional Opportunity Counseling initiative, involve formal partnership agreements
among PHAs in a region. Conference participants cited a wide range of barriers that
make these partnerships difficult to create and sustain. Waiting list preferences,
occupancy standards, and subsidy calculations often vary across PHAs within the
same region. Some PHAs may be hostile to mobility, either because they do not want
to lose the fees associated with recipients who move to another jurisdiction, or because
inmigration of central city families creates political opposition in their communities.
Delays in inspections and lease approvals, in billing, and in payments from one PHA to
another can derail collaboration across agencies, making the Section 8 program more
burdensome for both recipients and landlords.

PHAs in several regions are now experimenting with strategies for overcoming
these barriers to collaboration. Examples include regular meetings among Section 8
directors to address problems, sharing of forms and procedures, formal Memoranda of

Understanding detailing obligations and commitments of each PHA in a regional partnership, and adoption of common forms and procedures among all PHAs in a metropolitan region. Conference participants indicated that HUD could encourage these efforts by actively encouraging mobility initiatives, by recognizing and rewarding PHAs that enter into regional partnerships, and by establishing consistent portability procedures.

State agencies have had little involvement in mobility programs, despite the fact that many states administer the Section 8 program, and some serve metropolitan regions as well as rural areas.[12] This may change as federal legislation places greater responsibility on state governments for administering low-income assistance. During the 1980s, Massachusetts incorporated many features of housing mobility programs into its efforts to use Section 8 (and the state's own tenant-based assistance program) to house homeless families and individuals. Today, in New Jersey's Regional Opportunity Counseling Initiative the statewide housing authority has assumed a leadership role in promoting assisted housing mobility and regional administration of Section 8 certificates and vouchers.

In addition to formal partnership arrangements -- between PHAs and non-profits and among PHAs -- many mobility programs form informal partnerships with a wide variety of public- and private-sector organizations region wide. Conference participants identified a remarkably wide range of potential partners at the local level, and described some of the benefits these partnerships have generated:

- ▸ *Landlords and property managers* -- assist with landlord outreach and identification of rental opportunities in target communities; provide access to database of apartment listings.

- ▸ *Local businesses* -- provide funding or in-kind support (rental car companies in one community have provided low-cost cars to participants moving to areas where public transportation is not available); offer employment opportunities for program participants.

- ▸ *Local government agencies and officials* -- provide funding (some programs receive allocations from local CDBG funds); provide political support in the face of opposition to mobility efforts; source of information about services in receiving communities.

- ▸ *Public and private social service agencies* -- provide key supports and services (beyond mobility counseling) to participating families; help families get training,

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[12] Cite recent HUD report here on state and regional administration of Section 8.

jobs, child care, and transportation so that they can become more self-sufficient.

▸   *Media* -- support mobility initiatives in the face of local opposition; provide positive coverage (one conference participant recommends including representatives of the local media on the non-profit's board of directors).

▸   *Schools* -- help children adapt to new community and academic requirements; provide tutoring and remedial assistance of needed; anticipate and avoid offensive behavior by other students.

▸   *Community colleges and universities* -- offer educational and training opportunities for program participants; provide student interns to assist in program operations; conduct data collection and analysis of program performance.

▸   *Police* -- anticipate and avoid opposition from receiving communities based on fear of crime (several programs have formed alliances with local police in order to prevent police from allying with mobility opponents).

▸   *Legal services organizations* -- assist in enforcing fair housing and other laws, teach tenants their rights; file complaints against landlords who violate tenant protections.

▸   *Foundations* -- provide supplemental funding; create revolving loan funds to help participants with security deposits and other moving costs (foundations with a regional scope or focus may be particularly supportive of housing mobility initiatives).

▸   *Faith institutions* -- welcome families to new communities; offer mentoring or other supports; help obtain support from public officials and the media in receiving communities (in one community a local church created and distributed a video in support of the mobility program).

▸   *Transportation providers* -- modify routes and schedules so that participants who do not have cars can get to work and school from their new neighborhoods.

No single mobility program has formed partnerships that encompass *all* of these potential collaborators, and not all conference participants agreed that all of these partnerships would be fruitful. Clearly, however, many local mobility programs are reaching out to a very wide range of potential partners, either to garner services and

supports for participants or to head off potential opposition to their activities.[13]

There are, of course significant costs and risks involved in building these wide-ranging partnerships in support of assisted housing mobility. First, it requires a significant investment of time and effort to establish and maintain effective partnerships. For example, some conference participants argued that there are too many public schools in their regions to contact and enlist support. In addition, if a mobility program is trying to avoid local controversy and opposition by quietly helping families exercise their mobility rights, extensive outreach to partners can be risky. One or more of the potential partners may decide to go public creating unwanted attention and opposition. Finally, even if a program is not pursuing a low-publicity approach to assisted housing mobility, outreach to schools, police, and service providers in receiving communities may threaten the privacy of participating families. Several conference participants argued against alerting local police and teachers to the arrival of assisted families except in cases where there are credible threats of concerted or potentially violent opposition.

Moreover, some partnerships may create conflicts of interest for participating organizations. For example, if a fair housing or legal services organization enters into a partnership with the local housing authority, and receives funding for its activities, questions may arise about the organization's continued ability to represent clients with complaints against the PHA. Experienced practitioners argue that partners can and should establish clear and explicit conflict of interest policies, that enable them to effectively pursue their individual missions at the same time that they work together on common goals.

Conference participants agreed that mobility practitioners need to build partnerships with one another, as well as with other organizations at the local level. They expressed strong interest in creating mechanisms for sharing information and program materials (such as videos, forms, descriptive brochures), exchanging ideas, and learning from one another's experience. Possibilities include a central clearinghouse that would collect, catalog, and distribute information and materials, an internet listserve or home page, and a regular newsletter.

Despite the challenges involved in forming and maintaining partnerships, they can yield strategies and solutions that are more comprehensive, effective, and enduring than individual organizations can accomplish on their own. And there can be no question that partnerships among neighboring PHAs is a prerequisite for portability across jurisdictional boundaries. As assisted housing mobility programs are launched

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[13] See the preceding section -- "Building Community Support and Overcoming Opposition" -- for more discussion of this issue.

in more and more communities, and as existing initiatives struggle to sustain their efforts, it makes sense to think systematically not only about the challenges involved in building effective partnerships, but about strategies for building capacity -- both locally and nationally -- to sustain effective housing mobility programs.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

*How do we know whether an assisted housing mobility program is
working? How can we determine whether it is accomplishing its goals,
and whether its costs are justified by its performance? Should all housing
mobility programs be held accountable to a common set of performance
standards or should performance measures and benchmarks be
established locally? What resources and assistance do local programs
need to monitor and measure their own performance more effectively?*

Increasingly, local mobility initiatives will be held accountable for accomplishing
measurable results, and will be called upon to develop and maintain performance
measures. For example, under the Regional Opportunity Counseling Initiative, HUD
provides quite wide discretion in the design of local programs, but requires sites to
maintain data on the characteristics of participating families, and on their origins and
destinations, for purposes of ongoing performance monitoring and long-term program
evaluation. Other sources of funding for mobility counseling may impose different
monitoring or performance measurement requirements. But it seems inevitable that
performance measurement will become a reality for most local mobility programs in the
years ahead.

Benefits of Performance Measurement

Performance measurement has great potential as a tool for local program
administrators. By systematically measuring and monitoring their own performance,
mobility programs can assess the effectiveness of their efforts, abandoning ideas that
do not work, refining and expanding those that do. Many programs now involve
multiple partners, and administrators are beginning to recognize that performance
measures can provide a much-needed mechanism for holding partners accountable for
their contribution to the overall effort. For example, one mobility program coordinator
indicated that she is building numerical performance targets into the subcontracts she
negotiates with providers of counseling and other supportive services.

Moreover, efforts to mobilize support for mobility counseling, whether from
government, foundations, or private businesses, are much more likely to succeed when
there is real evidence of results. Some sites have conducted surveys to assess the
satisfaction of landlords with the families who participate in a local mobility program.
Results from these surveys have then been extremely useful tools in marketing the
program to new landlords. Other performance measures could substantially enhance
outreach and education efforts by objectively documenting that mobility participants are

reliable tenants, that they are getting jobs, and that they are not causing problems in their new communities.

Finally, without performance measurement, there is little objective basis for identifying best practices or for delivering technical assistance to newcomers in the field. As growing numbers of local mobility programs experiment with new strategies, they need to be able to learn from one another about what works and what doesn't under differing circumstances. Funders -- local as well as federal, and private as well as public -- need consistent and reliable information about strategies that are worth supporting and about the costs of implementing an effective mobility program.

Defining Useful Performance Measures

The fundamental goals of mobility counseling -- reversing residential segregation and poverty concentration, promoting upward mobility and self-sufficiency, and improving educational outcomes for children -- will only be accomplished over the long-term. Progress toward these goals probably will not be observable in the short-term. Therefore, while it is important to monitor measures of long-term *outcome* goals, these do not represent the best measures for monitoring today's performance or for holding programs accountable for results.

Most assisted housing mobility practitioners are accustomed to measuring and tracking program *inputs*, such as the number of staff delivering housing search assistance, or the cost of conducting van tours of target neighborhoods. These measures provide useful information about what it takes to deliver mobility counseling, but not about the results. Therefore, this discussion of performance measurement focuses primarily on the *outputs* of mobility counseling.

Output measures should reflect tangible results of mobility counseling that advance the long-term outcome objectives of the program. Exhibit 7 identifies possible performance measures for each of five key dimensions of assisted housing mobility. In effect, these measures assess how well a program performs on each dimension:

1) Helping families move to better or more desirable neighborhoods;

2) Empowering families to make progress toward greater opportunity and self-sufficiency;

3) Reaching out to new landlords and expanding available housing choices;

4) Build support in receiving communities; and

5) Promoting collaboration and coordination among local housing authorities in the region.

Not all of the measures suggested in Exhibit 6 are necessarily relevant to all local mobility programs. But most programs are likely to find that all five dimensions are relevant to their overall success, and that they can monitor their own performance more effectively by tracking at least one measure in each category.

Different mobility programs use different criteria to define the types of neighborhoods to which they encourage or require participating families to move. Because the origins and goals of local programs vary, it would not be reasonable to expect a common definition of target neighborhoods for performance measurement purposes. However, programs should be explicit in reporting the poverty rate and racial composition for the neighborhoods they target as well as for the neighborhoods where participating families ultimately move. Moreover, Census tracts should generally be used as the geographic unit for determining poverty rate and racial composition, in order to promote data reliability and comparability.

Ideally, program administrators would like to be able to monitor outcomes for participating families over several years, because they feel that one-time changes in housing or neighborhood circumstances do not fully reflect the impact of their programs. For example, one-time measures may fail to show whether families who move to target neighborhoods stay there for several years, move on to other low-poverty or low-minority neighborhoods, or return to high-poverty, high-minority neighborhoods. Similarly, one-time measures do not indicate whether counseled families are able to keep their new jobs or progress to higher paying employment. Many practitioners also believe that one-time measures overlook cases in which mobility counseling "plants a seed" that flowers much later. For example, a family who receives mobility counseling may decide not to move right away, or may choose not to move to a target neighborhood. Next year, or the year after, however, the same family may finally act on the information and assistance they received, and make a move, even without additional counseling. Similarly, a family may initially move to a neighborhood with only a slightly lower poverty rate or minority concentration. But in subsequent moves, the family may gradually make the transition to dramatically different neighborhood circumstances. Thus, as programs build and refine their management information systems, they would like to be able to monitor outcomes for participating families over time in order to record incremental progress toward program goals.

Whether or not mobility programs can monitor counseled families over time, performance measures should account for families who make small improvements in their housing and neighborhood circumstances as well as for families who move to the types of low-poverty or low-minority that the program targets. For example, suppose a

Regional Opportunity Counseling program's goal is to increase the number of Section 8 recipients who move to neighborhoods with poverty rates below 10 percent. Clearly, the number (or percent) of participants crossing this threshold should be one performance measure. In addition, however, the number of participants who move to a neighborhood with a lower poverty rate than the one in which they previously lived is also a legitimate

Exhibit 7: Suggested Performance Measures
1) Families move to better or more desirable neighborhoods
number and percent of counseled families who are successful in finding a unit
number and percent of counseled families who move to the program's target type of neighborhood
number and percent of families who stay in the target type of neighborhood (for 1 year, 2 years...)
number and percent of families who move to a "better" neighborhood (lower poverty and segregation)
average poverty rate and racial composition of destination neighborhoods
number and percent of families who move to a better housing unit
satisfaction of participating families with counseling they received
satisfaction of participating families with their neighborhood
2) Families make progress toward greater opportunity and self-sufficiency
number and percent of adults who complete self-sufficiency counseling or training
number and percent of adults who are employed or in school
number and percent of adults who earn more income than before they moved
number and percent of children achieving at grade level in school
number and percent of children graduating from high school
number and percent of children going on to college
satisfaction of participants with self-sufficiency counseling or training they received

Exhibit 7: Suggested Performance Measures
3) New landlords accept Section 8 families and available housing choices are expanded
number of new landlords who agree to accept Section 8 families (by target and non-target neighborhoods)
number of new rental properties open to Section 8 families (by target and non-target neighborhoods)
number of low-poverty (and low-minority) neighborhoods to which counseled families move
number of counseled families per receiving neighborhood
satisfaction of landlords with the families they accept and services they receive
4) Receiving communities accept new families and support the mobility program
families' assessment of the extent and quality of interaction with their neighbors
families' participation in neighborhood religious, school, and civic activities
families' assessment of their experiences with local schools, police, and public officials
families' assessment of safety and acceptance in their neighborhood
number of complaints from neighbors or landlords about participating families
5) Local housing authorities coordinate and cooperate regionally
number of PHAs agreeing to expedite processing for portability
number of PHAs adopting consistent forms and procedures
number of PHAs sharing or consolidating lists of landlords
number of PHAs consolidating waiting lists
average processing time (and cost) per family among participating PHAs

measure of progress and performance. Similarly, many local practitioners include the number (or percent) of participants who move to a better housing unit as an important measure of performance.

For some local programs, the goal of empowering families to make an informed choice about where to live assumes greater importance than increasing the number of families who move to a particular type of neighborhood. Thus, some practitioners argue that even if families do not move to a lower poverty or less racially segregated neighborhood, the counseling they received may have been effective in empowering them to make an unconstrained choice. Measures of individual empowerment, however, are difficult to operationalize. And if counseling has little or no impact on the location choices of participating families, it may not qualify as an effective mobility program, even if participants feel that they have made and empowered and informed choice about where to live. Despite considerable ambivalence about the notion of empowerment as a measurable output, most practitioners do see great value in measures of participant satisfaction with the mobility and self-sufficiency counseling they receive.

Comparing Performance Across Programs

Although most of the *measures* suggested in Exhibit 7 are applicable across program categories and under a variety of local circumstances, practitioners are unanimous in their view that *standards* or *targets* for these measures must be set locally. Variations across sites in the target population, in program goals, and in housing market conditions make it impossible to hold all programs accountable for achieving the same level of performance. For example, many practitioners feel that one-time success rates will be quite low for families living in public housing, higher for new Section 8 recipients, and highest for existing Section 8 recipients. Programs attempting to increase the number of families who move to very low poverty neighborhoods or neighborhoods with very low minority representation may have lower success rates than programs which define their target neighborhoods more broadly. Similarly, programs operating in housing markets where Fair Market Rents (FMRs) are low, decent rental housing is in short supply, or community opposition is a problem are likely to achieve lower levels of performance than programs operating in more hospitable circumstances.[14]   Given these important variations, performance comparisons across sites must be made with great care.

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[14] Note that placement rates for mobility programs may improve over time, as families in the community become more aware of the types of moves that are encouraged, and as successful families demonstrate to both new participants and potential landlords that the goals of the program are achievable.

Cost comparisons across local programs are particularly dangerous. Measures of the cost per successful placement, or the cost per family moving to a target neighborhood may appear to be comparable across programs and localities. However, given the enormous variation between programs in families served, target neighborhoods, and market conditions, cost comparisons may be completely misleading. The field of mobility counseling is so new that we lack sufficient experience to recognize and control for important factors that affect costs. In other words, we do not yet know enough to adjust for differences between sites and make meaningful cost comparisons. This does not mean that local programs should ignore cost measures, or that funders and evaluators should not ask questions about cost effectiveness. However, until we learn more about the performance of programs under varying conditions, cost comparisons should be made with great caution.

Collecting Performance Data

Many of the performance measures suggested in Exhibit 6 can be constructed from data in HUD's Multifamily Tenant Characteristics System (MTCS) combined with the basic tracking forms of a mobility program. MTCS provides a rich source of information on all families who receive certificates and vouchers, including all the information called for at certification and recertification. It does not include information on a family's pre-program address, nor does it include a field to identify families who participate in mobility counseling programs. However, mobility programs should be able to keep a master list of the unique identification numbers for all participating families, and to gain access (through the public housing authority) to MTCS data on a regular basis. These data would enable programs to keep track of families' subsequent moves (as long as they remain in the Section 8 program) as well as changes in employment and income. When participating families leave the Section 8 program (possibly because they no longer need housing assistance), mobility programs should attempt to maintain contact, by asking families to keep in touch, by building lasting rapport, by offering ongoing support services, and by getting the name and address of family contacts. Although none of this measures is 100 percent effective, a tremendous amount of useful information can be gained about families' longer term well-being.

Some measures suggested in Exhibit 6 require surveys of participants or landlords to determine their assessments of the quality of the program. Local programs have devised a number of low-cost strategies for conducting surveys of this type. Some routinely ask a few simple "satisfaction" questions when they make follow-up calls or visits to families and landlords. Some have used student interns to conduct one-time surveys at virtually no cost. Some have conducted focus groups with participating families and/or landlords to assess service quality and to anticipate potential problems or concerns without conducting a costly mail or telephone survey. Program administrators should look for opportunities to enter into partnerships with

local colleges and universities, who may provide help with survey data collection and analysis.

Finally, local mobility practitioners need support and encouragement from HUD to build performance measurement into their program operations. Obviously, money for trained staff and computers would be welcome. But in the absence of more resources, HUD's most important contribution would be to improve the completeness, accuracy, and accessibility of its Multifamily Tenant Characteristics System (MTCS) so that programs can use the data to monitor their own performance. In addition, HUD could encourage housing authorities and non-profits to invest in performance measurement by recognizing high performers and publicizing their (measured) accomplishments. Several practitioners suggested that if HUD announced (with appropriate fanfare) that one or more mobility programs was achieving a high level of performance, other programs would develop the capability to monitor and report their own performance, and would seek similar recognition. Sites also expressed a strong interest in sharing performance measurement ideas and methods with one another, and in developing a clearinghouse of survey instruments.

PART III: NEXT STEPS

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Fifty mobility programs in 32 metropolitan areas constitute a significant and growing body of experience in helping low-income families gain access to low-poverty and racially diverse neighborhoods that offer better schools and expanding job opportunities. In regions where more than one mobility program operates, some sharing of information and strategies is beginning to occur. But most mobility practitioners have had few opportunities to learn from colleagues in other parts of the country about what works and what does not.

Information Sharing

The Second National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility provided a much-needed and greatly appreciated opportunity for programs to exchange ideas, share experience, and debate the pros and cons of alternative strategies. Conference participants agreed that they need more frequent opportunities for communication and mutual learning across mobility programs. The Urban Institute agreed to establish an Internet listserve for agencies and individuals involved in mobility programs. This listserve makes it easy to ask for information or exchange ideas by sending a single email message to all the other members of the listserve.[15] The Housing Mobility Information Exchange listserve will be available for a six-month trial period, and will be continued if it proves useful for practitioners.

In addition to the listserve, conference participants expressed interest in a centralized clearinghouse for articles, videos, forms, surveys, and training materials that would enable newer mobility programs to take advantage of work that has already been done and to begin at a higher level of competence. Even experienced mobility programs can benefit from materials developed by their counterparts in other parts of the country. Given the rate at which new materials are being developed, however, it probably does not make sense to develop a bibliography unless it can be continuously revised and updated.

Joint Action

Conference participants identified three cross-cutting issues that they consider important to the long-term success of their programs, and several individuals volunteered for work groups to pursue these issues collectively:

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[15] Instructions on how to register for the listserve -- (housingmix@ui.urban.org)

▸   How can multiple mobility programs located within a single metropolitan area minimize competition and confusion and maximize the chances for success of each program, given different standards of eligibility and different placement goals, but similar needs for landlord participation?

▸   Can HUD's current or proposed regulations regarding adjustments to Fair Market Rents by modified so that sufficient rental units are available in desirable neighborhoods and communities for mobility program participants?

▸   What actions are needed to increase access by mobility programs to housing developments subsidized by HUD or the Low Income Housing Tax Credit?

The ad hoc groups formed to explore these three issues are expected to share their conclusions and recommendations through the housing mobility listserve.

Future of the Section 8 Program

In the final session of the September conference, participants looked ahead at the prospects for tenant-based housing subsidies and for expanded housing mobility efforts. Two speakers -- MaryAnn Russ of Abt Associates and Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institute -- raised serious concerns about the future of the federal Section 8 program. Many housing authorities are beginning to see their costs of administering Section 8 approaching or even exceeding the fees they receive from HUD. As a result, some may become less enthusiastic about operating the program, and may even discontinue it. Many resist any suggestion that the goals of the program should be expanded in any way, or that they should be held accountable for locational patterns of subsidy recipients.

At the same time, reliance on the Section 8 program in many metropolitan areas is likely to increase, due to the demolition of distressed and deteriorated public housing developments. Not all of these units will be replaced with new public housing construction. Instead, a significant share of the families who lived in public housing will be receiving tenant-based assistance. In some metro areas, large numbers of new Section 8 recipients may enter the private rental market all at once, putting considerable pressure on local program administrators, testing the capacity of the local housing market, and possibly resulting in new concentrations of poorly prepared families.

Despite the growing importance of Section 8 as a source of housing assistance for the poor, administration remains fractured in most urban areas. Increasingly, the metropolitan region is the effective market for housing and for employment. But Section 8 is administered by housing authorities whose scope is defined by

jurisdictional boundaries. The balkanized administration of tenant-based assistance creates burdens for participating families, for landlords, and for housing authorities.

Finally, the Section 8 program faces the threat of severe budget pressures at the national policy level. With the costs of renewing certificates and vouchers rising substantially, and Congress continuing to search for budget savings, tenant-based Section 8 will come under increasing scrutiny. And while most other affordable housing programs have substantial constituencies -- including both for profit and non-profit housing developers -- to fight for their continuation, Section 8 has almost none.

Bruce Katz argued that coalitions matter. Housing mobility advocates can and should be joining and building coalitions to defend tenant-based assistance -- as well as other forms of housing subsidies -- at local, state, and national levels. These coalitions should be as broad as possible, potentially including welfare advocates, religious organizations, other affordable housing advocates, civil rights organizations, and metropolitan planning advocates. Such coalitions can be far more effective than housing mobility practitioners and Section 8 administrators standing alone. But they require compromise and a willingness to work toward shared goals.

Building broader coalitions may also require housing mobility practitioners to modify their language. Articulating goals such as market choice, individual responsibility, and empowerment may prove to be more effective than talking about poverty deconcentration or racial desegregation. Clearly, mobility practitioners should not sacrifice these goals, but it may not be necessary to make them explicit. Advocates of assisted housing mobility can give greater emphasis to fairness in access to opportunities, a goal that builds upon the achievements of other citizens' movements for fairness in access to housing, mortgage loans, and community reinvestment.

Success also matters. In order to build broader support for assisted housing mobility, practitioners need to provide evidence that it works -- to the media and to policy makers. Evidence can take the form of success stories of individual participants, of performance measures showing a pattern of success for many participating families, or even formal evaluations showing that families who receive mobility assistance are better off than they would otherwise have been. Thus, mobility programs need to invest in data collection, performance measurement, and evaluations in order to build credible evidence of their accomplishments and impacts.

Housing mobility practitioners and advocates can do more than simply improve the performance of their existing local programs, important as this is. They should also attend to the federal policy debate, participating in coalitions to sustain, improve, and expand tenant-based Section 8, the fundamental tool for housing mobility initiatives.