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Connecting Families to Opportunity:

a Resource Guide for Housing Choice
Voucher Program Administrators

**Ideas for improving family health, access to better schools,
and links to employment**

Kami Kruckenberg, Jason Small, Philip Tegeler, and Mariana Arcaya

July 2009

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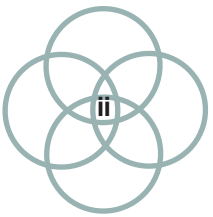
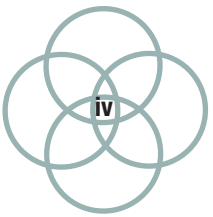


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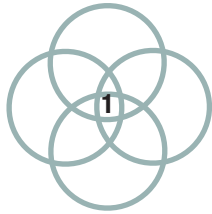




I.

A Pivotal Moment for Housing Mobility Programs

Access to improved opportunities in employment, education, and even health are greatly influenced by housing location. Today, we are at a critical moment in housing mobility policy. Though more research is necessary, we now know a good deal about the benefits of mobility for families who choose to move to lower poverty, higher opportunity communities. We also know more about what is needed to make housing mobility programs work even better for families who move.¹ This resource guide seeks to highlight some best practices for incorporating health, education, and employment supports into the voucher process to help families connect more effectively to opportunities in their new communities. It is our observation that such connections can assist families to withstand initial difficulties of a move to a new community, and remain in the community (and new school) for a long time, through high school graduation and beyond.



The right to move to a new neighborhood or community is a valuable end in itself, particularly where a family has been confined to a high poverty, segregated neighborhood through no real choice of its own.² However, neighborhood conditions also can have significant effects on the well-being and life chances of children and adults, and a growing body of research on mobility initiatives demonstrates that moving to low poverty, high opportunity neighborhoods can lead to improvements in families' quality of life.³ But in order for families to fully reap the more tangible

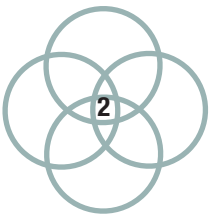
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- 1 Xavier de Souza Briggs & Margery Austin Turner, *Assisted Housing Mobility and the Success of Low-Income Minority Families: Lessons for Policy, Practice and Future Research*, 1 NW J.L. & Soc. Pol'y 25, at www.law.northwestern.edu/journals/nlsp (2006).
 - 2 Elizabeth Julian and Demetria McCain, "Housing Mobility: A Civil Right," in Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, eds., *The Integration Debate: Competing Futures for American Cities* (Routledge, July 2009).
 - 3 Margery Austin Turner and Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, "The Benefits of Housing Mobility: A Review of the Research Evidence" in Philip Tegeler, Mary Cunningham, and Margery Austin Turner, eds., *Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* (Poverty & Race Research Action Council 2005).

benefits of moving, “it is not enough to simply move a family – services must follow.”⁴ While many families successfully transition to new communities, some families may “move on again and again, often from poor neighborhood to poor neighborhood or from non-poor ones back to poor ones.”⁵ All voucher programs, and certainly housing mobility programs, should aim to improve retention of families in new neighborhoods by providing services that help movers adjust and encourage them to make connections to the resources and services in their new communities. When new residents know how to access the benefits of higher opportunity areas, they will be much more likely to succeed in staying in those neighborhoods and connecting to the economic and social mainstream. Helping families stay in their initial placements will also save money over the long run.

This guide assumes many core elements of a high functioning housing mobility program, with program supports to encourage housing mobility. These include, but are not limited to:

- * Participant recruitment that attracts eligible participants and minimizes applications from ineligible participants;
- * Recruitment and retention of landlords;
- * Pre-move counseling, as well as intake proceedings and briefing potential participants;
- * Housing search assistance;
- * Post-move counseling;
- * Second move assistance; and
- * A holistic approach to client assistance, engaging all family members instead of just the head of household, and ensuring participants have sufficient counselor contact through maintenance of high counselor-client ratios.⁶

In the 1990s, HUD made several regulatory enhancements to the housing voucher program that began to fulfill the program’s potential to assist families in moving out of poverty. These additions included deconcentration scoring for public housing agencies (PHAs); housing mobility counseling support in many metropolitan area; higher payment standards to help access more expensive communities; and a reimbursement system that did not discourage PHAs from paying more for families



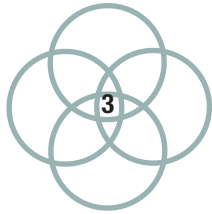
4 Elizabeth Julian and Demetria McCain, “Housing Mobility: A Civil Right,” in Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, eds., *The Integration Debate: Competing Futures for American Cities* (Routledge, forthcoming July 2009).

5 Xavier de Souza Briggs, “The Power and Limits of Place: New Directions for Housing Mobility and Research on Neighborhoods” in Philip Tegeler, Mary Cunningham, and Margery Austin Turner, eds., *Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* (Poverty & Race Research Action Council 2005).

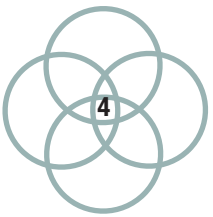
6 Gene Rizer, “Essential Elements of Successful Mobility Programs” in Philip Tegeler, Mary Cunningham, and Margery Austin Turner, eds., *Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* (Poverty & Race Research Action Council 2005).

seeking to move to higher opportunity neighborhoods.⁷ Virtually all of these programmatic improvements were reversed or discontinued after 2001, and it is likely that the program has become more geographically concentrated as a result, although research on this topic has not yet been undertaken.

Today, the new presidential administration makes this a particularly pivotal moment for housing mobility programs since policy change is doubtlessly on the horizon. It seems possible that we are on the cusp of the reinstatement of many of these policies that give tenants a wider range of housing choices in lower poverty and less segregated neighborhoods. Enhancing voucher programs now to provide more post- move counseling and other support services after a family moves will keep these programs ahead of the curve, as HUD moves toward a broader metropolitan vision of housing opportunity.



⁷ *Id.* at 55. It should be pointed out, however, that not all of the changes to the voucher program in the 1990s promoted housing mobility. For example, the regulatory change that allowed landlords to charge the full contract rent (or more) as a security deposit created a huge financial barrier for voucher holders to overcome in order to move to a better, higher rent neighborhood and largely negated the beneficial impact of exception rents. Repeal of the good cause eviction requirement may have made it easier, in theory, for landlords to accept voucher holders (although this has not been documented), but it also made it easier for landlords to opt out of the program, making the tenancies of voucher holders much less stable and increasing unit turnover and instability.



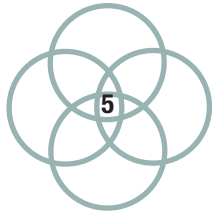
II. Incorporating a Health Perspective into the Voucher Placement Process

A. What the Research Says

“Of the 10 families I met, 9 had at least one member who suffered from a serious health problem before the move that required either medication or hospitalization. Of the 16 people in these families who had health problems, 12 told me that they felt better in significant ways — either their symptoms were less severe so that they no longer required hospitalization, or they were taking less medication. Their health problems included severe asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, liver cirrhosis and eczema. Emergency-room visits for the asthmatic kids virtually stopped, and some adults with high blood pressure or diabetes reduced the doses of their medications. This was hardly a rigorous scientific experiment. There was no control group, and I was not able to check medical records. Nevertheless, I was stunned by what people told me. These people felt better, and moving appeared to have made all the difference. If moving out of southwest Yonkers were a drug, I would bottle it, patent it and go on cable TV and sell it.”

—Helen Epstein, “GHETTO MIASMA: Enough To Make You Sick?”⁸

Public health researchers have long studied the links between living environments and health outcomes. Many low income, segregated neighborhoods have significant health risks, including sub-standard housing (often polluted with lead paint, mold, vermin, or insecticide residue); an overflow



8 Helen Epstein. “GHETTO MIASMA: Enough To Make You Sick?” [New York Times Magazine](#), 12 October 2003.

of fast food and liquor stores; high violence rates; low performing schools; high unemployment rates; and a scarcity of health care resources.⁹ The combined effects of such problems result in dramatic geographic disparities in health, with disadvantaged communities experiencing surplus health burdens.¹⁰

Recent research from a national five-city experimental housing mobility program (“Moving to Opportunity” or “MTO”) shows that many participating low income families experienced improved physical and mental health outcomes when they moved to substantially lower poverty communities. In particular, adult obesity was significantly lower among those who moved. Participants also experienced marked declines in psychological distress and depression.¹¹

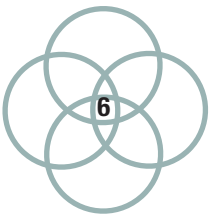
It is especially important to note that the positive health results experienced by these “MTO” families were not related to any specific health interventions. MTO families received no pre-move health assessment, no health counseling, and no assistance in accessing health resources in their new communities.¹² We can only imagine how much stronger the health outcomes could be for these families if a health intervention – to augment the benefits of the move itself – had been implemented.

For some families, personal health and health system issues present barriers to successful mobility. Some families are reluctant to leave the medical providers with whom they are familiar, and some suburban medical providers are unwilling to serve families on Medicaid. Physical disabilities and depression can present obstacles to housing and employment.¹³ The dynamics of these relationships among chronic disease, health care access, nutrition, and exercise, and the impacts on employment, education, and child development need to be fully explored. In doing so, we can design interventions that will more quickly and effectively lead to improved health and other positive outcomes for families and children who are moving to safer neighborhoods and better schools.

There are five “targets of opportunity” in housing mobility programs, areas in which health factors can be addressed in the context of housing mobility:

* The unit;

-
- 9 For a summary of these well documented neighborhood effects, see *Unequal Health Outcomes in the United States: A Report to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (submitted to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, January 2008), available at <http://www.prrac.org>.
 - 10 Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Theresa L. Osypuk, Nancy McArdle, and David R. Williams, “Toward A Policy-Relevant Analysis Of Geographic And Racial/Ethnic Disparities In Child Health,” 27 *Health Affairs* 321 (Vol. 2, March 2008).
 - 11 Margery Austin Turner, “Why Housing Mobility? The Research Evidence Today,” *Poverty and Race*, (January/February 2005); Larry Orr et al., “Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration : Interim Impacts Evaluation” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, September 2003). For a collection of resources on housing and health, see Center for Housing Policy and Enterprise Community Partners, “The Positive Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education,” at <http://www.nhc/housing/intersections>.
 - 12 Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Theresa L. Osypuk, Nancy McArdle, and David R. Williams, “Toward A Policy-Relevant Analysis Of Geographic And Racial/Ethnic Disparities In Child Health,” 27 *Health Affairs* 321, 330 (Vol. 2, March 2008); Dolores Acevedo-Garcia et al., “Does Housing Mobility Policy Improve Health?,” *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol. 15 No.1 (2004).
 - 13 See Margery Austin Turner, “Why Housing Mobility? The Research Evidence Today,” *Poverty and Race*, (January/February 2005).

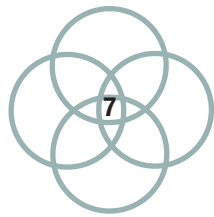


- * The neighborhood;
- * Health behavior and awareness;
- * Social connectedness; and
- * Access to health services.



After families take part in mobility programs they will certainly be living in a new housing unit in a new neighborhood, probably with changes to their social ties and health service resources, possibly influenced by new health behaviors and levels of health awareness. For each of these changes, there are opportunities to maximize families' health. Some mobility programs are already taking steps to incorporate health interventions into their programs. While many of the practices outlined below were not implemented with health in mind, they nonetheless act upon the five 'targets of opportunity.'

B. Working with Voucher Recipients to Improve Family Health Outcomes in Baltimore, Chicago, Bridgeport, and New Haven



Baltimore, MD: The Special Mobility Housing Choice Voucher Program – Thompson v. HUD

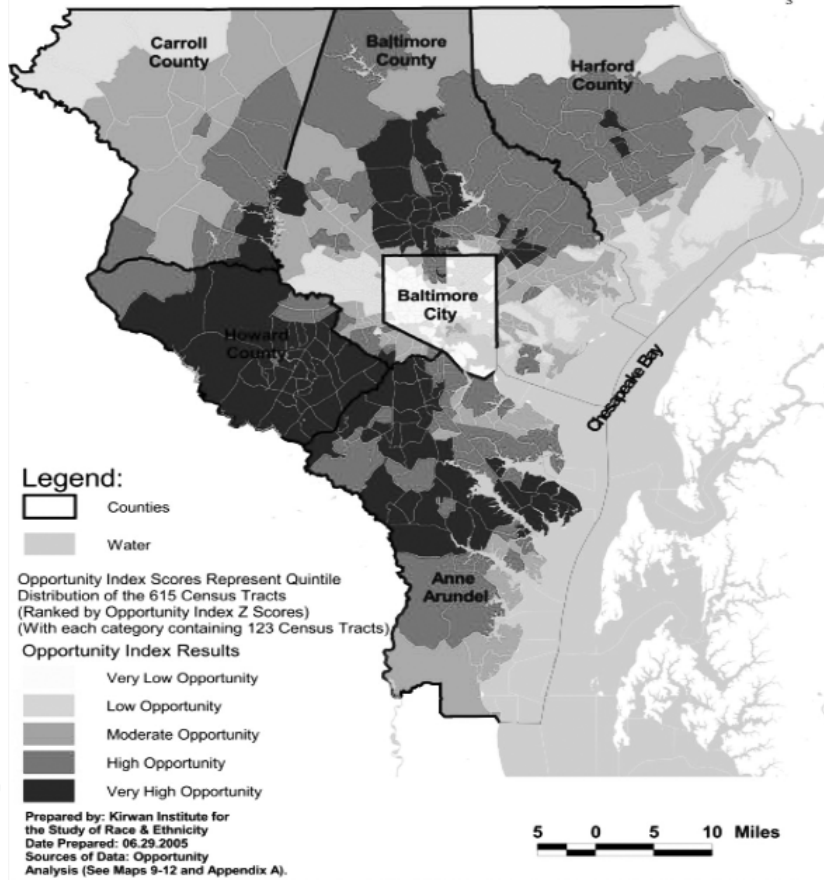
Background

Baltimore's Special Voucher Program came from a partial settlement of *Thompson v. HUD*, a 1994 Baltimore public housing desegregation class action lawsuit. Six families in public housing, represented by the Maryland ACLU, filed the suit, alleging that HUD, the Baltimore City Housing Authority, and the City of Baltimore had promoted residential segregation through their housing policies. A 1996 partial consent decree resolved some but not all of the plaintiffs' claims, providing funding for vouchers to move families to low poverty, racially integrated neighborhoods.¹⁴

In 2002, Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ) was contracted to administer the mobility program, introducing a host of new supports and services aimed at reducing barriers to low poverty

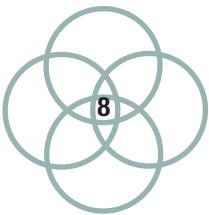
14 This included 1,342 tenant-based vouchers, 646 project-based (in the sense that they were assigned to specific neighborhoods) vouchers, and 163 homeownership vouchers.

Map 12: Comprehensive Opportunity Index for the Baltimore Region



neighborhoods for families using public housing assistance.¹⁵ Since MBQ became involved in 2002, over 1,300 families have moved to “opportunity areas” through the *Thompson* program.¹⁶ These opportunity areas are defined as areas with poverty rates, black population, and assisted housing below metropolitan average.

In 2003, *Thompson v. HUD* was brought to trial, concluding in a 2005 ruling, again in favor of the plaintiffs. The parties are still awaiting a remedy order, which could include funding for the continuation and expansion of the mobility program.



Health Supports

Intake:

MBQ’s Special Voucher Program provides several supports that influence health from the very first meeting onward. MBQ starts working with families up to a year before a move, conducting “readiness workshops” on tenant rights and responsibilities; leading community tours of suburban neighborhoods; and providing budgeting and credit repair assistance, housing search assistance with escorted apartment visits, and security deposit assistance. During this time, mobility counselors may observe or be informed of untreated mental or physical health problems as they begin working closely with families to find housing, creating a potential space for help and intervention, if appropriate. Program staff find that they often learn of conditions such as asthma, lead poisoning, and pregnancy during the initial intake.¹⁷

15 MBQ is a subsidiary of the Quadel Consulting Corporation, a national, private consulting firm specializing in affordable housing. Quadel manages voucher programs in a number of cities, as a contractor.

16 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Jim Evans, February 8, 2008.

17 *Id.*

Home Visits:

MBQ stays involved with clients after relocation, conducting at least five home visits in two years. The first home visit generally takes place within one week of relocation and consists of a neighborhood orientation and a battery of administrative tasks, including making sure all children are registered in their new school district.

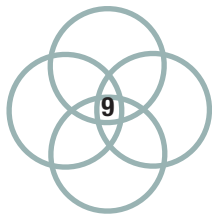
During the second home visit, usually about four months later, counselors check on how the family is adjusting and make referrals for particular services a family may need. At this time, counselors remind families of housekeeping and budgeting tips, if needed. MBQ uses the opportunity of assisting families with budgeting and improving credit to offer advice that can improve client health. For example, housing counselors encourage clients to replace expensive recreational outings to the movies or aquarium with walking on the suburban greenways, or going to the playground. They also encourage clients to save money by cutting back on “candy/snacks/soda,” fast food meals, cigarettes, beer, “wine/liquor,” pizza, take-out, and restaurant dinners, with some success.¹⁸ One MBQ counselor reported that her clients react well to the budgeting tool and seem not to feel judged discussing their consumption habits in a financial rather than moral or health-related context.¹⁹ In addition to the exercise and nutritional impact of these types of budgeting tools, helping families economize can help them free up more household resources for medical or other healthful spending.

Neighborhood Connections:

MBQ also makes a strong effort to help families connect to their new neighborhoods. In partnership with the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign and MBQ, *Thompson* families have attended “neighbor to neighbor” dinners to get to know some of their neighbors. The Baltimore Regional Initiative Developing Genuine Equality (BRIDGE), a faith-based social justice organization, plans to help welcome *Thompson* families to Baltimore’s suburban areas. MBQ provides movers with a binder of information about resources in their new communities. Families receive at least two years of active post-move counseling visits and support. After two years, there are no additional planned home visits; however, the families continue to receive monthly housing assistance payments as well as counseling support on an as-needed basis.²⁰ In addition, housing counseling, referrals and search assistance are available to families who express interest in moving again. These services are intended in the first instance to help families make good decisions about whether to move. If the family needs or decides to make a subsequent move, referrals to units in high opportunity areas and housing search assistance are available to help families stay in these opportunity areas if they desire to do so.

Health Service Counseling:

When MBQ discovered that families were having difficulty transferring their Medicaid benefits after making opportunity moves, the program director invited a speaker from the State of Maryland Department of Health to train counselors in how to help families navigate the bureaucratic health systems in both the City of Baltimore and surrounding counties in order to transfer health benefits and records across jurisdictional lines.



18 From MBQ’s “Paycheck Power Booster Calculator,” a budgeting tool distributed to all *Thompson* families.

19 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Jim Evans, February 8, 2008.

20 *Id.*

Chicago, IL: CHAC's Housing Opportunity Program

Background

Chicago's Housing Choice Voucher Program, one of the largest of its kind in the country,²¹ has been administered by the Chicago-based company CHAC since 1995. CHAC is, like Baltimore's MBQ, a subsidiary of the affordable housing consulting firm Quadel. In addition to administering Chicago Housing Authority Housing Choice Vouchers, CHAC managed the Chicago Moving to Opportunity demonstration from 1996 to 1998, and currently runs an expanded voluntary mobility program founded in 1998. Today, CHAC continues to run its award-winning *Housing Opportunities Program*, with 3,344 families having moved from high to low poverty neighborhoods from 2000 through 2006.²²

Health Supports

CHAC's eight opportunity counselors offer workshops on tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, community tours, housing search assistance and transportation to view available units, zero-interest loans towards security deposits, and budgeting and credit repair counseling. During initial home visits, CHAC counselors first discover any health issues serious enough to hinder a move, potentially identifying health needs that may have gone previously unaddressed in a family. Upon entering the program, families also get a copy of CHAC's guide to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which includes information on Fair Housing law and other tenant protections, descriptions of a range of CHAC and social services, and educational materials about lead poisoning.²³

CHAC directly works to help clients with access to necessary health services. According to Jennifer O'Neil, Deputy Director of CHAC, the program at times combines its Moving to Work money with mobility counseling and family self-sufficiency resources to help job seeking mobility clients get optical and dental care. This creative practice not only has obvious health benefits; it also makes CHAC's clients more attractive to employers. According to O'Neil, dental problems can cause embarrassment and sometimes shyness on the part of jobseekers and may elicit discrimination from employers, and poor vision and squinting can hinder job performance.²⁴ CHAC was able to find an innovative way to address several needs of its clients at once with this initiative.

CHAC also maintains an innovative partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health, offering free vaccinations and lead screening for any child less than six years of age—all as part of its voucher program.²⁵

Finally, CHAC's opportunity counselors provide post-move support that is overwhelmingly focused on helping families make connections in their new neighborhoods. Counselors, for example, have introduced families to neighbors over coffee and have attended community meetings with clients to help them establish ties in the new neighborhood.

21 Mary K. Cunningham and Noah Sawyer, "Moving to Better Neighborhoods with Mobility Counseling," *Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center Brief*, No. 8, (2005), 28 April 2008, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311146_Roof_8.pdf.

22 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Jennifer O'Neil, January 25, 2008.

23 *Id.*

24 *Id.*

25 *Id.*

Bridgeport, CT: State-Funded Mobility Counseling and Search Assistance Program

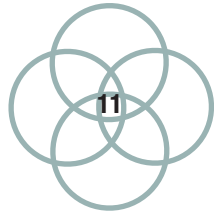
Background

Family Services Woodfield (FSW), which has operated in Bridgeport for over 100 years, administers a housing mobility program called the Mobility Counseling and Search Assistance Program. With in-house welfare to work programs, financial education and credit repair debt services programs, youth services, services for persons infected by HIV/AIDS, literacy volunteers, and a walk-in clinic providing psychological and counseling services, among other programs, FSW is a multi-service non-profit with an eight year history of providing mobility counseling. FSW first began offering mobility counseling in 2000 as part of Bridgeport's Pequonnock Replacement Housing Program.²⁶

Health Supports

FSW is currently looking at centralizing intake so that everyone coming in for services will complete the same intake questionnaire that is currently used in its "Empowering People" program, which provides counselors an overall picture of individuals' health, financial health, and literacy. This shift would help counselors better understand what else FSW could offer clients, beyond mobility counseling, and then connect them to those resources.

FSW currently provides clients a low pressure way to inform staff of substance dependency issues; the intake form asks what might present "barriers" to a successful move and includes "substance abuse" as a check box option.²⁷



New Haven, CT: Housing Counseling and Regional Mobility Programs at HOME

Background

New Haven area residents holding Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) Housing Choice Vouchers administered by J. D'Amelia & Associates may elect to access mobility counseling through Housing Operation Management Enterprises, Inc. (HOME). The program, funded by the State of Connecticut, is available to all interested voucher holders who have completed a "generic" intake form and attended a two hour educational workshop. Although counselors educate clients about the option to make opportunity moves, HOME also provides services to families staying in the city in addition to those moving to the suburbs.²⁸

Health Supports

Intake provides an opportunity for HOME counselors to learn about clients' health needs. According to Shella Runlett of HOME, the program's intake forms offer an initial clue as to whether a client is living with a disability.

26 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Michelle Walker, March 13, 2008.

27 Id.

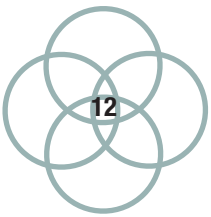
28 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Shella Runlett, March 4, 2008.

Clients work one-on-one with a housing counselor to address specific needs, which often include credit repair and budgeting assistance. Runlett notes that experienced counselors may “pick up through verbal and non-verbal clues the possibility of underlying issues, such as mental health or substance abuse,” during one-on-one intake or the Tenant Education Workshop: “A client may disclose an important issue they have been trying to deal with” through “sensitive and open-ended questions and conversations with counselors.”²⁹ Counselors can then “pursue the topic, including discussing the various services available and providing appropriate referrals.”³⁰

HOME also provides all participants with a book on resources in their new communities (including schools, churches, and medical services) and copies of relevant printed material produced by Legal Aid. Families also receive apartment listings in their desired areas and may attend tours of opportunity neighborhoods, with transportation provided.³¹

C. Six Ways to Incorporate Health into Housing Mobility

- * **Make the most of the work you are already doing.** First and foremost, Section 8 Administrators should congratulate themselves for taking the first steps towards improving residents’ health outcomes. By deliberately helping families to relocate to healthier areas, assisted housing mobility programs are inherently health-related operations. Housing mobility program staff should utilize this opportunity to maximize the participants’ health benefits.



Unit

- * **Check on housing unit healthfulness.** Currently, no programs we surveyed investigate housing unit healthfulness beyond HUD’s initial Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections (even for families with histories of asthma or other medical problems), despite the fact that stronger guidance is available. Many programs do work with disabled clients to locate or modify housing units appropriately; however, other families with unique health needs may be missing out. Going beyond the basic HUD standards can only help maximize overall client health.



29 *Id.*

30 *Id.*

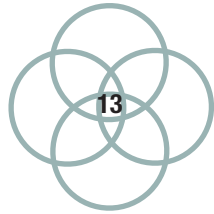
31 *Id.*

Neighborhood

- * **Use health as a standard for determining opportunity neighborhoods.** Determining opportunity neighborhoods by poverty rates alone would be a missed opportunity. Improving how programs target neighborhoods, which would entail considering crime and violence, access to and quality of goods and services, school quality, and job opportunity, among other factors, would be an important health-promoting step.

Education/Behavior

- * **Incorporate health into current life skills programs.** Many programs already offer client training workshops that could be used as part of a more thorough health education program for participants. Life skills and readiness training can promote healthy activities like basic hygiene, housekeeping, and nutrition. Housekeeping and hygiene advice, while generally aimed at preventing landlord complaints over conditions in units, is health relevant and can be part of an effort to make homes healthier. For instance, housekeeping advice on how and how often to vacuum, control pests, and change and wash linens and curtains, aligns well with advice on how to reduce indoor allergen loads and prevent asthma symptoms. Additional instructions on preventing household odors (by cleaning out the refrigerator and storing food properly) and the safe use of indoor household cleaners could also easily reinforce good public health advice on food safety and indoor environmental exposures. At the very least, program administrators should make sure their housekeeping tips do not encourage unsafe behaviors. For example, administrators ought to be cautious about advising the use of products like oven cleaner, pesticides, insect traps, and bleach cleaners, all of which might be inadvisable to use, especially around young children.



Social ties

- * **Help families connect to their new neighborhoods, promoting health and overall well being.** Some programs make active attempts to help families make connections in their new neighborhoods. These important efforts promote positive health behavior and social ties, which can improve mental health. For instance, community tours can be an opportunity for mobility programs to connect families to healthful assets in their new neighborhoods. Mere proximity to parks and grocery stores, for example, does not guarantee that families will actually take advantage of these resources; rather, it is necessary to actively connect people with these new resources. Both CHAC and MBQ offer community tours that highlight grocery stores and outdoor recreation facilities.³² Emphasizing physical



32 Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Jim Evans, February 8, 2008; Mariana Arcaya, Interview with Jennifer O'Neil, January 25, 2008.

activity opportunities, such as safe walking routes to school and healthier food options, are a good start toward fostering healthy neighborhood connections.

Access to Health Services

- * **Ensure that the move doesn't negatively impact resident health.** It is important to recognize, and act to mitigate, potential disruptions to health care access that residents may experience when moving. MBQ's workshop for counselors on transferring benefits is a great example of how programs could better help families protect their health and access the resources that currently support positive health outcomes.

III.

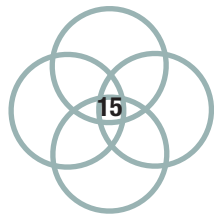
Educational Support for Children Moving to New Schools

A. What the Research Says

Research suggests that low income, inner city families could benefit greatly from the coupling of educational counseling with housing counseling in mobility programs. In the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) mobility experiment in the 1990s, low income families were placed in lower poverty neighborhoods in five different metropolitan areas, yet two-thirds did not leave their original urban school district.³³ Researchers studying MTO found that it was parental “information poverty” about school quality, as well as a tendency to focus on school safety and security rather than academic performance, that led to children’s continued attendance at underperforming schools.³⁴ One key solution to the “information poverty” problem is to help parents make informed choices through the addition of well-designed educational counseling as part of the initial briefing that moving families already receive.³⁵

Academics

Attendance at lower poverty, racially integrated schools tends to improve children’s critical thinking skills and academic achievement; promote cross-racial understanding and reduce prejudice; prepare students for an integrated workforce; bring about more integrated residential choices later in life; and



33 Briggs et al., *Why Did the Moving to Opportunity Experiment Not Get Young People into Better Schools*, 19 HOUSING POL. DEBATE (Issue 1, 2008).

34 *Id.* at 83.

35 *Id.* at 86.



lead to higher graduation rates and better access to employment networks after graduation.³⁶ Children transitioning from lower to higher opportunity schools cannot be expected to have had the same educational training as their new classmates, and they may need extra support in order to catch up. Racially identifiable schools and classrooms (which often include a higher percent of poor children) correlate to significant negative academic outcomes for both black and white students.³⁷ The longer that students spend in segregated, lower opportunity schools, the lower are their standardized test scores.³⁸

Even within higher opportunity schools and communities, children from lower opportunity neighborhoods face greater challenges in achieving academic and social success than their peers.³⁹ From the very start, children's social class affects how they learn.

For example, in a recent study of social class and language acquisition, researchers found that professional parents spoke over 2,000 words per hour to their toddlers, working class parents spoke around

36 For a recent summary of the research on school integration, see Harvard Civil Rights Project, "Statement of American Social Scientists of Research on School Desegregation," filed in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, et al., Crystal D. Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education, et al* (pending, U.S. Supreme Court, Nos. 05-908 and 05-915) (2006). For a collection of resources on how housing impacts education, see Center for Housing Policy and Enterprise Community Partners, "The Positive Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education," at <http://www.nhc/housing/intersections>.

37 Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, *The Academic Consequences of Desegregation and Segregation: Evidence from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools*, 81 N.C.L.REV. 1513, 1560 (2003).

38 *Id.* at 1546.

39 See Richard Rothstein, *Even the Best Schools Can't Close the Achievement Gap*, POVERTY & RACE (Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Washington D.C.), Sept./Oct. 2004.

1,300, and parents on welfare spoke approximately 600.⁴⁰ By age three, then, there is a major vocabulary gap: children of professionals have vocabularies that are almost 50% larger than working class children, and twice as large as those of a child in a welfare family.⁴¹

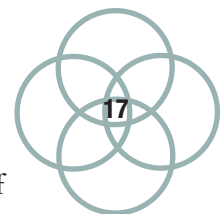
Children with more educated parents receive other benefits: “Most children whose parents have college degrees are read to daily before they begin kindergarten; few children whose parents have only a high school diploma or less benefit from reading. White children are more likely than blacks to be read to in pre-kindergarten years.”⁴² All of these factors lead to a gap in achievement between children.

The gap continues to grow during schooling and is exacerbated by school turnover and absenteeism. A 1994 government report found that 30% of the poorest children had attended three or more schools by third grade, compared to 10% of middle class children.⁴³ Black children were more than two times as likely as whites to change schools this frequently.⁴⁴ Additionally, “homework exacerbates academic differences between middle- and working class children because middle-class parents are more likely to assist with homework.”⁴⁵ For many reasons (including health and dental issues), low income students tend to have more absences than higher income students.⁴⁶ Regular attendance in school is necessary for students to achieve academically.⁴⁷

Physical and Mental Health

Low income students need more than academic help to succeed; and school-based programs must provide support for an array of other social, psychological and behavioral needs.

“Adolescents growing up in neighborhoods marked by concentrated poverty are at risk for a range of problems, including poor physical and mental health, risky sexual behavior, and delinquency.”⁴⁸ Girls in all types of communities experience at least some verbal and physical harassment, but in the “socially isolated world of distressed public housing, the pressures for sexual activity are much greater,



40 Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, *The Early Catastrophe. The 30 Million Word Gap*, 27 *American Educator* (Spring 2003), available at http://www.aft.org/pubsreports/American_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html.

41 *Id.*

42 Richard Rothstein, *Even the Best Schools Can't Close the Achievement Gap*, POVERTY & RACE. 7 (Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Washington D.C.), Sept./Oct. 2004. Lower income children are more likely to have poorer vision because of prenatal conditions and higher television-viewing rates, leading to extra difficulty in reading. Scholars note that such reading issues may be partly responsible for the discriminatory over-identification of learning disabilities among lower-class children.

43 *Id.*

44 *Id.* at 2; See Lynora Williams, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, *Fragmented: Improving Education for Mobile Students*, 11 (2003).

45 Richard Rothstein, *Even the Best Schools Can't Close the Achievement Gap*, POVERTY & RACE. 7 (Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Washington D.C.), Sept./Oct. 2004..

46 *Id.* at 8.

47 See Rhonda Tsoi-A-Fatt, Center for Law and Social Policy, *A Collective Responsibility, A Collective Work: Supporting the Path to Positive Life Outcomes for Youth in Economically Distressed Communities*, 4 (May 2008).

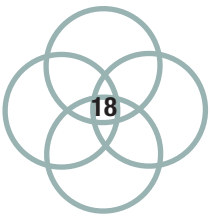
48 Susan Popkin, Tama Leventhal, and Gretchen Weismann. *Girls in the 'Hood: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2006).

the threats more blatant, and the risk of rape and assault very real.”⁴⁹ Sexual violence and coerced sex are common experiences for girls living in high-poverty neighborhoods; even if they themselves are not victims, they usually know others who are.⁵⁰

Nelba Márquez-Greene, Intervention Specialist for the Hartford, Connecticut Project Choice Program, a school integration program that helps inner-city children move to suburban schools, says that children’s behavioral problems are to be expected when they have experienced such stress. She notes that she has assisted approximately three children in the last six months dealing with the pressures of having an incarcerated parent “leading to instability in school.”⁵¹ Because of cultural differences, many of the families Ms. Márquez-Greene sees do not feel comfortable seeking psychological or therapeutic help for their problems and need active support to encourage getting help.

The adjustment to new environments itself can sometimes be daunting for students moving to higher opportunity areas. Some boys moving to higher opportunity areas may struggle with making friends, particularly friends in school.⁵² During the transition, low income students can face challenges to their self-esteem. Some low income students in classes with those of higher socioeconomic status may view themselves as less competent, intelligent, and deserving than their peers.⁵³

Parents benefit from assistance when helping their children transition into new schools. Parents would benefit from additional information and counseling to make school choice decisions, since many are unaware of the quality of various schools in their new neighborhoods. Parents also need support in dealing with individual problems related to special education, suspensions and discipline, or enrollment requirements that may delay the transfer of students to new schools.⁵⁴



49 Susan Popkin, Victoria Gwiasda, Lynn Olson, Dennis Rosenbaum, and Larry Buron, *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago* (2000).

50 Susan Popkin, Tama Leventhal, and Gretchen Weismann. *Girls in the ‘Hood: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2006).

51 Interview with Nelba Márquez-Greene, June 16, 2008.

52 Susan Clampet-Lundquist, et al., *Moving At-Risk Teenagers Out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: Why Girls Fare Better Than Boys*, (Princeton IRS, Working Paper No. 509, March 2006), available at <http://www.irs.princeton.edu/pubs/pdfs/509.pdf>.

53 See Ellen Brantlinger, Low income Adolescents’ Perceptions of School, Intelligence, and Themselves as Students, 20 CURRICULUM INQUIRY, 305 (Autumn, 1990).

54 For example, the Baltimore County, Maryland school district that surrounds Baltimore City requires parents to present five forms of proof of residency before allowing their children to enroll. While intended to deter Baltimore City residents from enrolling their children in higher performing suburban schools, these requirements also impose a burden on families that move to Baltimore County and become bona fide residents. The requirements imposed on renters can be particularly onerous. Tenants renting from a private landlord must present not only a copy of their lease, but also a copy of the landlord’s deed, tax bill, or mortgage coupon book.

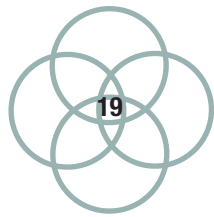
B. Supporting Children in Their New Schools in Dallas and Hartford

Dallas, TX: Inclusive Communities Project

Background

The Inclusive Communities Project (ICP) is a nonprofit organization that works for the creation and maintenance of thriving, racially and economically inclusive communities; expansion of fair and affordable housing opportunities for low income families; and redress for policies and practices that perpetuate the harmful effects of discrimination and segregation. Prior to April 28, 2004, ICP was called The Walker Project, Inc. (WPI), which was established in 1990 pursuant to the Consent Decree in the *Walker v. HUD* housing desegregation litigation to promote fair housing and provide support to Walker class members. In December of 2004, ICP was appointed the Housing Fund Administrator of the Walker Housing Charitable Trust Fund, funds made available as one of the remedies in the case's consent decree. ICP's Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) is one of several ways that ICP carries out this duty.

MAP and its counselors serve low income families who participate in the Dallas Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program. Since 2005, ICP has assisted over 1,000 voucher families while working to insure that families are made aware of and have access to high quality rental housing in lower poverty, higher opportunity areas throughout the Dallas region. ICP is committed to providing families with a wide range of services, including housing search assistance, landlord negotiations, fair housing counseling, move-related financial assistance, and helping connect families with opportunities in their new neighborhoods. ICP also assists approximately 90 households who live in 3 suburban complexes (collectively, Walker Apartments) with special subsidized set-aside units.



Educational Supports

Because approximately 89% of all ICP voucher households have been families with children, the ICP has made educational assistance a priority. As of May 2007, 90% of ICP voucher families declared themselves completely satisfied with their new school experience post-relocation. ICP provides a number of educational supports at the beginning of a move, such as encouraging families to consider schools when making housing choices and providing them with state-assessed school ratings. Additionally, ICP offers beginning of the year enrollment assistance and help for parents in identifying summer programs for their children.

Once the move has been successfully completed, ICP continues to provide help with the transition, identifying resources that help students participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities (e.g. funding for a band instrument or cheerleading uniform). Additionally, ICP counselors assist parents with individual school issues, providing support when disciplinary issues arise or attending school meetings for special needs children.

The respective owners of the Walker Apartments offer other assistance, such as onsite after school programs, staffed by the property or through Boys & Girls Clubs located onsite.

Hartford, CT: Project Choice

Background

Another helpful model for this type of support system comes from a city-suburban school transfer program in Hartford, Connecticut, “where support services for inner city children have sometimes proved crucial to their success.” Hartford’s Project Choice program’s staff of nine, including five program workers, facilitates the interaction between the suburban schools and the parents of the 1,100 urban children participating in the program.⁵⁵

Hartford’s Project Choice, like other city to suburban school transfer programs, has several interventions that exist to help create a positive experience for inner-city students attending suburban schools. Program workers from Project Choice communicate with suburban schools and teach them how to work with urban parents and about the issues that might arise with Choice students and their parents.⁵⁶ These program workers have backgrounds in therapy or specialize in a field that is relevant to a subset of Choice students, like special education.⁵⁷ These workers counsel suburban schools on how to deal with issues ranging from transportation to academics.⁵⁸ They act as emissaries between families and schools, for instance, encouraging suburban school administrators to contact representatives for Project Choice at the beginning of the process of considering a Choice student for special education.⁵⁹ In addition, Project Choice staffers work to encourage schools to deal positively with race and cultural issues, including recognizing Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, in order to prevent racial/cultural issues from leading to self-esteem problems for inner-city students.⁶⁰

Project Choice program workers serve their clients – Choice students and their parents – by raising awareness of available resources, increasing knowledge about options, and decreasing the stigma associated with seeking help for psychological and behavioral problems.⁶¹ They serve as advocates for Choice students and ensure that they are treated equally as students in the school district they are enrolled in.⁶² Within suburban schools, Project Choice program workers spend time once a month conducting sessions on issues such as conflict resolution, self-esteem building, and anger management.⁶³ They also are available to attend meetings for students who Project Choice has identified as having behavioral or academic problems.⁶⁴ Project Choice monitors progress reports and report cards for special education students in an effort to spot problems early on.⁶⁵

55 Interview with Nelba Márquez-Greene, June 16, 2008.

56 *Id.*

57 *Id.*

58 *Id.*

59 Interview with Rudolph Thomas, June 24, 2008.

60 *Id.*

61 Kami Kruckenberg, Interview with Nelba Márquez-Greene, June 16, 2008.

62 Kami Kruckenberg, Interview with Rudolph Thomas, June 24, 2008.

63 *Id.*

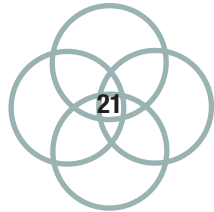
64 *Id.*

65 *Id.*

The program also maintains an afterschool center to which a school can refer a student upon parental approval. Students stay at the center from 3:30 to 6:30 pm, and the center provides snacks and academic support from part-time teachers.⁶⁶ The center provides a valuable academic resource for struggling students and provides an incentive for the students to do better, since improved academic performance means that they will no longer have to attend.⁶⁷

C. Six Ways to Incorporate Education Support into Housing Mobility

- * **Use school quality to help determine high opportunity neighborhoods.** Families need to be informed about school performance and given the choice of moving to a higher performing school district. Dallas' Inclusive Communities Project is directly linking its landlord recruitment efforts to Texas school accountability standards, mapping potential neighborhoods based on the Texas Education Agency's ranking system, in which schools are identified as Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, or Low- Performing. A similar approach, using state-by-state school rankings under No Child Left Behind, making data on school poverty concentrations available to parents, would be good practice for housing mobility policy.⁶⁸
- * **Provide parents and students with information about the resources available in their new schools.** Families cannot utilize the many resources available in their new high opportunity neighborhoods unless they know about them and how to access them. Offering guidance to parents about available resources such as community-wide sports leagues or other after school activities maximizes the benefits of their moves to new neighborhoods. Supporting extracurricular activities, either financially or through assistance locating financial support is another important way to connect children to their new schools and communities.
- * **Help families connect with academic opportunities.** Creating academic centers for after school study, facilitating tutoring and mentoring programs and placing children in integrated, high quality summer programs are all beneficial. Providing resources—financial and informational about available programs can help students bridge the academic divide that many face when entering new schools. Summer academic programs, like the Hartford, CT Choice Summer Academy, can provide remedial education to students and one-on-one assistance, as well as encouraging the “positive social skills” of participants. The Lincoln school district in Massachusetts provides a pre-enrollment summer camp for Boston METCO students (kindergarten through second grade), to help them adjust to suburban schools. Additionally, scholarship programs for other summer camps can be a good way of meeting students' needs. Besides providing the finan-



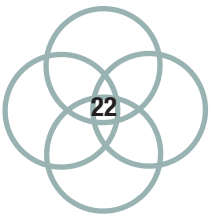
66 Capitol Region Education Council, Choice Program, Student Support Center, <http://www.crec.org/choice/program/other/support.php>.

67 Kami Kruckenberg, Interview with Rudolph Thomas, June 24, 2008.

68 Philip Tegeler, “Connecting Families to Opportunity: The Next Generation of Housing Mobility Policy” in *All Things Being Equal: Instigating Opportunity in an Inequitable Time* (Brian Smedley and Alan Jenkins, Eds.), The New Press, November 2007.

cial resources to make such academic opportunities possible, housing programs can do an important service by connecting families to pre-existing funding sources for academic support.

- * **Act as a liaison between schools and families and help bridge cultural differences.** Transitioning to a new neighborhood and school district can be difficult for families, and so having assistance when academic and behavioral issues arise can ease the stress on parents. Acting to make school administrators and teachers aware of cultural differences and putting on programs that help students socially adjust to their school, encourage pride in their heritage, and improve academic performance are all ways to address these issues.
- * **Provide support and assistance for students with college preparation and placement.** Many parents lack the time, resources, and experience to be able to offer their children maximum support for necessary college preparation steps. Providing information on resources to students can help fill this gap. Trips to colleges, additional guidance counseling, and help finding scholarships would all be helpful. Project Choice offers a college incentive award intended participating students who are going on to two- or four- year colleges or universities. The scholarship is meant to help to cover the cost of college textbooks.
- * **Promote parental involvement.** Encouraging parental involvement is an important way of helping families connect with their communities and promoting participating students' educational needs. ICP's director, Betsy Julian, has observed, "The schools are the best initial point of contact with the community for our families." For parents who have decided to move, largely for the benefit of their children, involvement in the schools is a natural step, helps them connect socially with other families, and leads easily to other community connections.⁶⁹ It also helps the parents play a more dynamic role in ensuring their children's academic success. One easy step towards this is the creation of a newsletter to give parents a way to connect with one another and stay up-to-date on important events and resources.



IV. Bringing Employment Considerations into the Voucher Placement Process

A. What the Research Says

The documented employment success of the Gautreaux housing mobility program in Chicago was one of the bases for establishing the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration in the early 1990s. Children moving to low poverty, suburban areas under Gautreaux “were less likely to drop out of high school, had greater chances of being on college track and were more likely to attend college,”⁷⁰ and those who did not attend college were more likely to be employed and have jobs with benefits.⁷¹ Similarly, movers to suburban areas were about 14% more likely to have jobs than movers to city neighborhoods.⁷²

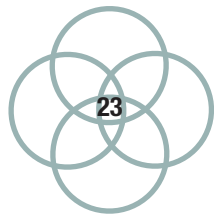
Of course, the MTO results (at least through the initial implementation phase) did not bear out these positive employment outcomes.⁷³ There has been much speculation about the reasons for the

70 Mary Cunningham and Noah Sawyer (2005) “Moving to Better Neighborhoods with Mobility Counseling” Washington D.C.: Urban Institute, brief no. 8, referencing James Rosenbaum (1991) “Black Pioneers: Do Their Moves to the Suburbs Increase Economic Opportunity for Mothers and Children?” *Housing Policy Debate* 2(4):1179-1213; and James Rosenbaum (1995) “Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program,” *Housing Policy Debate* 6(1): 231-70.

71 James Rosenbaum (1995) “Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program,” *Housing Policy Debate* 6(1): 244.

72 *Id.*, p. 237.

73 At the time of the interim cross-site evaluation, the overall program data showed “virtually no significant effects on the employment or earnings of either adults or youth...” (L. Orr et al. (2003) *Moving to Opportunity, Interim Impacts Evaluation Final Report* (Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Washington D.C.) It also did not have an effect on welfare receipt in the three years after random assignment. (John Goering and Judith D. Feins and Todd M. Richardson (2002) “A Cross-Site Analysis of Initial Moving to Opportunity Results,” *Journal of Housing Research* 13: 1). Note however that the data did show some positive employment results in individual cities.

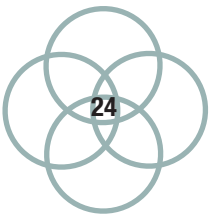


less impressive employment outcomes in MTO, including, primarily, the weak mobility guidelines in the MTO program,⁷⁴ which did not encourage moves to job rich suburban areas, and the absence of post move support for families that had been provided through the Gautreaux program. The lack of conclusive employment results for the MTO program may have also been related to the lack of any employment training or referral function.⁷⁵ Without such assistance, it was uncertain whether new movers were able to take advantage of the job related benefits after the move.⁷⁶ Similarly, the MTO program did not consider transportation barriers until the problem presented itself.⁷⁷

Whatever the reasons for the differences in measurable employment outcomes for Gautreaux families versus MTO families, the policy implication is clear: employable adults moving from high poverty neighborhoods into employment-rich communities have the potential to move up the employment ladder – and will likely need additional assistance to help them connect more quickly and effectively to these opportunities.

In their 2008 report, “Employment and Housing Mobility: Promising Practices in the Twenty-First Century Economy,” the Mobility Agenda summarized some of these challenges facing families after their moves:

[A]fter any move, residents can find it challenging to reestablish a routine in a new neighborhood. Opportunity moves frequently require workers and families to leave neighborhoods containing friends, relatives, and familiar services, such as child care and public transit. Workers generally access those services through in-person visits to providers, and must add the visits to daily commutes between home, work, and other household errands. Many service agencies are location-specific and less mobile than the populations they serve, and thus agency employees find it challenging to adequately respond to their clients’ geographic shifts. In addition, child care is a critical issue. Parents need access to child-care options and weigh a number of factors in their choice: location, quality, convenience, cost, scheduling, and availability.⁷⁸



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- 74 “Unfortunately, while MTO was a stronger study, it was a weaker ‘neighborhood change treatment’ in some respects. The Gautreaux program moved families an average of 25 miles away from their original neighborhood, to radically different labor markets, where nearly all children attended schools with above-average achievement and were too far away to interact with prior friends. In comparison, most MTO families moved less than 10 miles away in mostly city neighborhoods, most children attended schools with very low achievement, and many children continued interacting with old friends. In addition, MTO occurred in the hot labor market of the late 1990s, and large numbers of families in the control group moved out of high-rise housing projects through the federal HOPE VI program, so the control group was experiencing unusual benefits and atypical circumstances which may not generalize to more ordinary times.” James E. Rosenbaum and Stefanie DeLuca (2008) “Does Changing Neighborhoods Change Lives? The Chicago Gautreaux Housing Program,” in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. David B. Grusky (Philadelphia: Westview Press), 393-9.
- 75 John Goering et al. (September 1999) “Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program: Current Status and Initial Findings,” Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research: 3-5 to 7.
- 76 *Id.*
- 77 See Elizabeth Cove et al. (March 2008) “Can Escaping from Poor Neighborhoods Increase Employment and Earnings?” Washington D.C.: Urban Institute, brief no. 4, figure 1.
- 78 Martha Ross and Sarah Sattelmeyer and Margy Waller (December 2008) “Employment and Housing Mobility: Promising Practices for the Twenty-First Century Economy,” Washington D.C.: The Mobility Agenda, referencing Scott W. Allard (June 2007) “Mismatched and Unmet Need: Access to Social Services in Urban and Rural America,” National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, no. 07-14. The Mobility Agenda was a co-sponsor with PRRAC of the July 2007 conference on Housing Mobility and Employment.

Going forward, housing mobility programs need to anticipate these barriers in a constructive way. Initial efforts in the *Thompson* housing mobility program in Baltimore, discussed below, provide some insights into possible program enhancements to increase employment success.

B. Linking Housing Mobility and Employment

Based on a partial consent decree in the *Thompson v. HUD* public housing desegregation litigation, the *Thompson* mobility program now serves over 1,300 families who have moved from high poverty neighborhoods in Baltimore city into low poverty, non-racially isolated areas of the Baltimore region. The basic *Thompson* mobility program has recently been supplemented with a pilot employment program supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Under this program, every participant receives a basic employment assessment from the program administrator, Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ). This leads to a referral to the appropriate services within the system, be they GED services, post education training, or other counseling. All 1,300 families placed by the program receive pre-placement counseling.

Clients are also given assistance in contacting the “One Stop” employment and training services offices in both the initial neighborhood and the new community. Employment is also one of the issues addressed in MBQ’s post move counseling program, which includes five visits over two years.

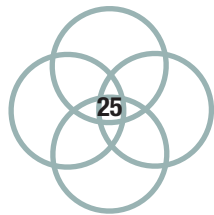


In addition to these general employment related services to mobility clients, 75 families from the *Thompson* mobility program are eligible for participation in an “Enhanced Mobility Counseling Pilot Program.” In 2008, the program conducted the following services for the 75 families in their enhanced mobility program: 1) customized family assessments; 2) budget development including spending plans; 3) educational resources; 4) career development and 5) transportation assistance. These were all used in conjunction with direct linkage to community resources, including churches, government agencies, and non-profit organizations operating within the movement area.⁷⁹

Families in the enhanced program receive individualized assistance, including transportation help from MBQ to participate in One Stop services. MBQ and the Greater Baltimore Urban League also recruit “champion employers” who agree to interview *Thompson* clients and hire if appropriate. Through contacts both regional and national, these employers create a networking opportunity for the enhanced mobility program that would not otherwise exist. Additionally, both an individualized Transportation Plan and the “Vehicles for Change” program, which provides access to a low cost automobile, seek to alleviate transportation concerns. The Transportation Plan provides private transportation solutions for individuals and—when possible—seeks to alter existing transit routes and schedules (commuter bus, MTA, local bus) to make better connections between jobs and *Thompson* homes in high opportunity areas.⁸⁰

79 BRHC report to Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008, on file at PRRAC.

80 *Id.*



C. Six Ways to Incorporate Employment Enhancements into Housing Mobility

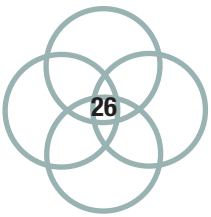
Based on the history of Gautreaux, MTO, and programs like MBQ's *Thompson* program, several factors should be considered in developing employment assistance for clients in Section 8 housing mobility programs:

* **Provide applicants with resources responsive to the client needs.** All clients of a mobility program should be individually assessed as to what sort of training, transportation or family day care services are needed to participate in employment. While the necessity of such a needs assessment seems obvious, often assumptions concerning these needs posit them as static, one time concerns. The reality of American life requires an organic assessment of obstacles to employment that takes into account the unpredictability of providing for a family today. For example, transportation to and from employment is crucial in creating work habits, as is assistance for families in avoiding a spatial mismatch between the locations of jobs and the neighborhoods and communities in which workers live.

* **Such an assessment should include a thorough inventory of factors that could impact employment, such as:**

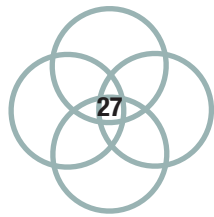
- Participant's age, as well as that of the age of any residents in the household.
- The number of school age children in the home.
- Elderly or special needs adults in the home.
- After school programs or activities attended by members of the household.
- The religious schedule of program participants if it might conflict with employment.
- The availability of a car for the participant, or analysis of possible forms of transportation used by client.

* **Determine the best route to self-sufficiency for each household by comparing educational options versus vocational training in considering opportunity for each household.** Long-term employment planning for some families may require a first look at education rather than job readiness programs. "A disproportionate number of low-income workers are under age 30, but half the low-income workers in low-income families with children are in their prime earnings years (30 to 59)...Clearly there is room for myriad interventions aimed at increasing the general and job-specific skills of low income workers. These options include grants to pursue higher education (e.g., Pell Grants), expanded community college systems, and efforts to train individuals to work in growing sectors of the economy (e.g., health care)."⁸¹



81 Gregory Acs and Austin Nichols (2007) *Low-Income Workers and their Employers: Characteristics and Challenges*, Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, 4:10.

- * **Target destination neighborhoods that offer access to suitable job opportunities, and consider linking transportation assistance with housing vouchers.** It is of central importance that housing mobility programs analyze the spatial distribution of low skill jobs in metropolitan markets, with particular focus on job openings and growth in sectors where their clients are most likely to be employed: retail trade, transportation and warehousing, healthcare and social assistance, accommodations and food services. Clients that are not located close to these job centers or easily accessible transit should have priority in accessing automobile programs.
- * **Help clients stay in better neighborhoods by extending counseling and support services beyond the first year.** Mobility programs should look beyond the first move, helping participants negotiate with landlords at the end of the lease or locate new resource-rich neighborhoods when a move is necessary. Sustained counseling could also help participants overcome barriers to work as they arise and change over time, and it may allow more participants to realize the long term benefits of living closer to job centers or training services. “By putting together a package of supports and services [skillful intermediaries] can also help address some of the problems (such as lack of child care and transportation) that lead to retention problems for many low-wage workers.”⁸²
- * **Help families connect to neighbors, services, and institutions in their new neighborhoods that can link them to jobs with potential upward mobility.** It can be difficult for some families to connect with their neighbors or neighborhood institutions that might provide jobs or job support leads. Frequent involuntary moves only undermine local connections and result in isolation. Helping families stay in their communities longer gives counselors time to connect clients to neighborhood resources, churches, community centers, or schools that provide deeper ties to the new neighborhood.



82 Harry J. Holzer (December 2007) *Better Workers for Better Jobs: Improving Worker Advancement in the Low-Wage Labor Market*, The Hamilton Project, Discussion Paper 2007-15, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution: 13.



APPENDIX A

The Baltimore Health Mobility Project

A coalition of organizations, including the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), the Medical-Legal Partnership for Children/Boston Medical Center, the ACLU of Maryland, and the Harvard School of Public Health, have come together to propose a new health intervention specific to the needs of public housing residents moving to higher opportunity neighborhoods in Baltimore.

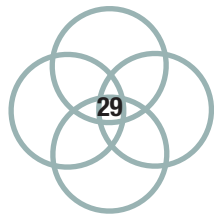
Building on the efforts of MBQ, the project would incorporate health planning into the overall Baltimore housing mobility program, and would also implement and assess a more intensive pilot health intervention for up to 100 families moving from high to low poverty neighborhoods. The program would include:

Health assessment of participating families

- * Creation of a health intake form to be used with all families coming into the *Thompson* mobility program.

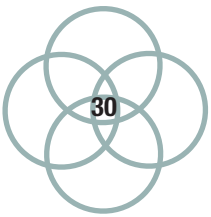
Incorporating health-related resources into the housing mobility program

- * Additional integration of health information into the existing components of housing mobility counseling, e.g. housekeeping and family budgeting.
- * Training of housing mobility program staff to communicate health-related information to new clients.
- * Educating housing mobility program staff about the Maryland Medicaid managed care and S-Chip systems, including transferring health care coverage from county to county.
- * Undertaking targeted outreach to identify suburban primary care providers for families that need help finding health care in their new neighborhoods



Medical/Legal Partnership Intervention and assessment of selected families

- * Create and administer a follow-up participant health survey to track changes in families' health status. The Urban Institute will contribute its vast expertise conducting surveys among low-income families on housing assistance.
- * Provide a voluntary ongoing intensive family health improvement intervention – provided by a trained public health specialist—to assess family needs, develop a plan for the families to benefit from health resources available in their new communities and conduct regular follow-up to assess progress.
- * Per the Medical-Legal Partnership model, a health specialist will work in tandem with a trained legal specialist to assist clients with specific problems related to health (e.g., access to providers and social determinants of health (e.g. food insecurity). Families in this pilot will have a comprehensive legal needs intake, which will cover analysis of all basic needs, including food, income supports, education or childcare needs, family stability and safety needs.
- * A team of housing and public health researchers would be selected to provide scientific guidance to the project, and be responsible for designing, monitoring and evaluating the intervention.



Appendix B

The Baltimore Education Project

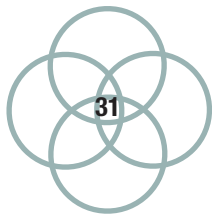
A coalition of organizations, including the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), the ACLU of Maryland, and the BHRC have collaborated to design and implement a new educational intervention targeted to low income families with school-aged children who have recently moved into the Baltimore area suburbs as part of a housing mobility program.¹

An education professional will work with the suburban schools and the staff of Metro Baltimore Quadel (MBQ) to help children make stronger and more rapid connections with their new schools and communities, and help children who are having adjustment difficulties. The goal is to help solidify families' connections to their new community so that they are able to stabilize after their move; remain in the community; and enjoy the long term benefits of living in a safer community with strong schools, rich employment opportunities and good transit, recreation, shopping, and other community amenities. Some key components of the program will include:

A full time Lead Educational Coordinator who will

- * Compile a chart that breaks down the region by school zone, allowing housing counselors, landlord recruiters, and participating families to see how housing choice determines which schools students will attend, thereby giving parents an opportunity to make a more informed choice about their housing options
- * Provide information on schools at the voucher briefing that families attend when they are ready to receive their vouchers, and train families to research school performance, as well as reinforce the availability of the educational counselor as a resource
- * Assist with records transfer and school enrollment, helping families navigate difficulties with enrollment as needed

1 Thanks to initial funding from the Kreeger Fund, an educational support program for the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program was started in June 2009. Not all program elements listed here are in place, pending additional funding.



- * Provide on-going training on education issues to the 12 housing counselors who currently assist participating families
- * Develop additional questions for both the initial and post-placement needs assessment (grade level, prior school, special education) to enable housing counselors to include an education component in each family's needs assessment and individualized family plan
- * Train housing counselors to recognize students' educational issues as they arise and serve as resource for counselors to help resolve individual problems
- * Serve as a resource for families in transition

Development of relationships with key staff, including principals and guidance counselors, in the suburban districts

- * Work with staff to identify students in the program who may need additional assistance
- * Communicate with schools about unique needs of students making the transition from urban to suburban schools and communities.

Identification and development of resources targeted to mobility program families

- * Create an inventory of key resources available to participating families in their new neighborhoods, such as counseling resources from county departments of mental health, local tutors, and recreation opportunities
- * Provide assistance for participating students who encounter barriers to extra-curricular athletic participation because of "pay-to-play" rules
- * Assist with transportation to support after school sports and extracurricular activities and serve as a liaison with town sports leagues, local churches, and other community activity providers
- * Identify opportunities like college scholarships and awards programs, drivers' education courses; summer and after school job opportunities, and help connect participating families to such resources
- * Develop occasional group field trips and provide transportation to special regional events

Academic support outside of school

- * Raise awareness of Saturday academies and summer programs for participating students who need additional academic support
- * Identify existing summer and academic support programs, tracking deadlines and available scholarships to help mobility program students attend



Communication with families

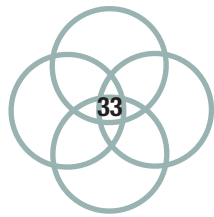
- * Utilize existing communications tools with mobility families to keep in touch and provide information about educational options
- * Create an education-oriented newsletter to maintain contact with mobility program families

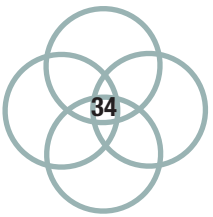
Research and monitoring

- * Track whether students are receiving appropriate services in their new schools
- * Ensure that students in the program are not targeted by schools for inappropriate discipline

School personnel and student training

- * Provide training for teachers and staff on diversity and cultural competency, particularly on the development of culturally responsive curriculum
- * Develop and present program sessions to help students cope with the transition on topics such as conflict resolution, or self-esteem building





APPENDIX C

Meeting deconcentration performance requirements

HUD regulations encourage PHAs to help Section 8 program participants to move to lower poverty, less racially segregated neighborhoods. While these regulations have not been strongly enforced by HUD in recent years, they are binding on PHAs and it is expected that they will be more strictly applied by a new HUD administration that is committed to fair housing and equal access to opportunity. These regulatory provisions are summarized below.

A. 24 CFR § 982 (2009). Section 8 Tenant Based Housing Assistance

At the time of enrollment in the voucher program, PHAs must provide basic information regarding the leasing process and must inform families of their ability to move outside of the PHA jurisdiction. Information must be provided, both orally and in written packets, and must include a discussion of portability procedures.

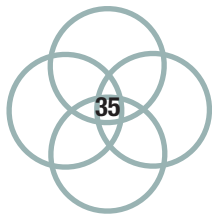
§ 982.301(a) *PHA briefing of family.*

(1) When the PHA selects a family to participate in a tenant-based program, the PHA must give the family an oral briefing. The briefing must include information on the following subjects:

(iii) Where the family may lease a unit, including renting a dwelling unit inside or outside the PHA jurisdiction.

(2) For a family that qualifies to lease a unit outside the PHA jurisdiction under portability procedures, the briefing must include an explanation of how portability works. **The PHA may not discourage the family from choosing to live anywhere in the PHA jurisdiction, or outside the PHA jurisdiction under portability procedures.**

(3) **If the family is currently living in a high poverty census tract in the PHA's jurisdiction, the briefing must also explain the advantages of moving to an area that does not have a high concentration of poor families.**



§ 982.301(b) *Information packet.* When a family is selected to participate in the program, the PHA must give the family a packet that includes information on the following subjects:

- (4) Where the family may lease a unit. For a family that qualifies to lease a unit outside the PHA jurisdiction under portability procedures, the information packet must include an explanation of how portability works;
- (11) A list of landlords or other parties known to the PHA who may be willing to lease a unit to the family, or help the family find a unit;

By regulation, although Housing Choice voucher holders can use their vouchers nationwide, HUD may restrict families’ ability to choose where they will live within a particular jurisdiction if doing so is required to meet the goals set by court order or consent decree, but HUD is not otherwise able to outright restrict the voucher holders’ choice (except through the enforcement of Housing Quality Standards - see below).

§ 982.353 *Where family can lease a unit with tenant-based assistance.*

(a) Assistance in the initial PHA jurisdiction. *The family may receive tenant-based assistance to lease a unit located anywhere in the jurisdiction (as determined by State and local law) of the initial PHA. HUD may nevertheless restrict the family’s right to lease such a unit anywhere in such jurisdiction if HUD determines that limitations on a family’s opportunity to select among available units in that jurisdiction are appropriate to achieve desegregation goals in accordance with obligations generated by a court order or consent decree.*

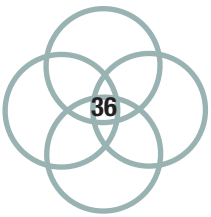
(b) *Portability: Assistance outside the initial PHA jurisdiction.* Subject to paragraph (c) of this section, and to §982.552 and §982.553, a voucher-holder or participant family has the right to receive tenant-based voucher assistance in accordance with requirements of this part to lease a unit outside the initial PHA jurisdiction, anywhere in the United States, in the jurisdiction of a PHA with a tenant-based program under this part.

(f) *Freedom of choice.* The PHA may not directly or indirectly reduce the family’s opportunity to select among available units except as provided in paragraph (a) of this section, or elsewhere in this part 982 (e.g. prohibition on use of ineligible housing, housing not meeting HQS, or housing for which the rent to owner exceeds a reasonable rent).

Receiving PHAs must provide assistance to the families porting into their jurisdictions. Initial PHAs, however, retain the responsibility of providing families with the preliminary information needed to establish a relationship with the receiving PHA. See below:

§ 982.355 *Portability: Administration by receiving PHA.*

(a) When a family moves under portability (in accordance with §982.353(b)) to an area outside the initial PHA jurisdiction, another PHA (the “receiving PHA”) must administer assistance for the family if a PHA with a tenant-based program has jurisdiction in the area where the unit is located.



(c) *Portability procedures.* (1) The receiving PHA does not redetermine eligibility for a portable family that was already receiving assistance in the initial PHA Section 8 tenant-based program (either the PHA voucher program or certificate program). However, for a portable family that was not already receiving assistance in the PHA tenant-based program, the initial PHA must determine whether the family is eligible for admission to the receiving PHA voucher program.

(2) The initial PHA must advise the family how to contact and request assistance from the receiving PHA. The initial PHA must promptly notify the receiving PHA to expect the family.

(3) The family must promptly contact the receiving PHA, and comply with receiving PHA procedures for incoming portable families.

(f) *Portability funding.* (1) HUD may transfer funds for assistance to portable families to the receiving PHA from funds available under the initial PHA ACC.

(2) HUD may provide additional funding (e.g., funds for incremental units) to the initial PHA for funds transferred to a receiving PHA for portability purposes.

(3) HUD may provide additional funding (e.g., funds for incremental units) to the receiving PHA for absorption of portable families.

(4) HUD may require the receiving PHA to absorb portable families.

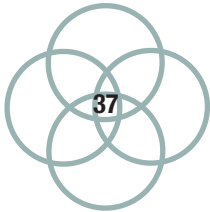
Housing rented by voucher holders must meet minimum housing quality and habitability standards, as defined by HUD regulation. In addition, any rental units approved by a PHA must pass basic levels of environmental safety—both for the unit itself and for its surrounding neighborhood. Assisted housing thus should carry the imprimatur of being healthy, safe, and decent places to live. See below:

§ 982.401 Housing quality standards (HQS).

(1) *Site and Neighborhood* —

(1) *Performance requirement.* The site and neighborhood **must be reasonably free from disturbing noises and reverberations and other dangers to the health, safety, and general welfare of the occupants.**

(2) *Acceptability criteria.* The site and neighborhood **may not be subject to serious adverse environmental conditions**, natural or manmade, such as dangerous walks or steps; instability; flooding, poor drainage, septic tank back-ups or sewage hazards; mudslides; abnormal air pollution, **smoke or dust; excessive noise, vibration or vehicular traffic; excessive accumulations of trash; vermin or rodent infestation;** or fire hazards.



HUD is tasked with approving exceptions to the FMR payment standards in order to aid families in locating housing outside of areas of concentrated poverty. See below:

§ 982.503 Voucher tenancy: Payment standard amount and schedule.

(c)(4) *Program justification.* (i) HUD will only approve an exception payment standard amount (pursuant to paragraph (c)(2) or paragraph (c)(3) of this section) if HUD determines that approval of such higher amount is needed either:

(A) **To help families find housing outside areas of high poverty**, or

(B) Because voucher holders have trouble finding housing for lease under the program within the term of the voucher.

B. 42 CFR § 985 (2009). Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP)

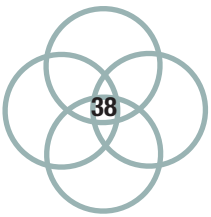
The Section 8 Management Assessment Program is meant to evaluate whether the Section 8 tenant-based assistance programs achieve the goal of helping families lease rental units at the appropriate cost. SEMAP also establishes a system for HUD to measure PHA performance in key Section 8 program areas and to assign performance ratings. Using SEMAP performance indicators, HUD is able to create a profile for each evaluated PHA.

SEMAP draws on 16 indicators, which may assign an estimated possible total of 231 points. PHAs with at least a 90% score are given a “high performer rating” while PHAs with scores of 60-89% are considered “standard.” *See* 24 § 985.103(a)-(b). PHAs scoring less than 60% are rated as “troubled.” *Id.* at § 985.1039(c). **A total of five points** are awarded to those PHAs which have policies to recruit owners in low-minority/low-poverty areas, provide written information and maps to encourage the rental of units outside of high poverty areas, and have systems in place to make requests for payment exceptions to HUD when necessary. (g) *Expanding housing opportunities.* (1) This indicator applies only to PHAs with jurisdiction in metropolitan FMR areas. The indicator shows whether the PHA has adopted and implemented a written policy to encourage participation by owners of units located outside areas of poverty or minority concentration; informs rental voucher holders of the full range of areas where they may lease units both inside and outside the PHA’s jurisdiction; and supplies a list of landlords or other parties who are willing to lease units or help families find units, including units outside areas of poverty or minority concentration. (24 CFR 982.54(d)(5), 982.301(a) and 982.301(b)(4) and 982.301(b)(12))

(3) Rating: (i) The PHA’s SEMAP certification states that:

(A) The PHA has a written policy in its administrative plan which includes actions the PHA will take to encourage participation by owners of units located outside areas of poverty or minority concentration, and which clearly delineates areas in its jurisdiction that the PHA considers areas of poverty or minority concentration;

(B) PHA documentation shows that the PHA has taken actions indicated in its written policy to encourage participation by



owners of units located outside areas of poverty or minority concentration;

(C) The PHA has prepared maps that show various areas with housing opportunities outside areas of poverty or minority concentration both within its jurisdiction and neighboring its jurisdiction; has assembled information about the characteristics of those areas which may include information about job opportunities, schools, transportation and other services in these areas; and can demonstrate that it uses the maps and area characteristics information when briefing rental voucher holders about the full range of areas where they may look for housing;

(D) The PHA's information packet for rental voucher holders contains either a list of owners who are willing to lease (or properties available for lease) under the rental voucher program; or a current list of other organizations that will help families find units and the PHA can demonstrate that the list(s) includes properties or organizations that operate outside areas of poverty or minority concentration;

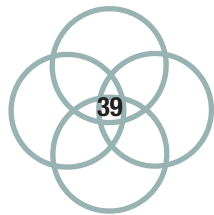
(E) The PHA's information packet includes an explanation of how portability works and includes a list of portability contact persons for neighboring housing agencies, with the name, address and telephone number of each, for use by families who move under portability; and

(F) PHA documentation shows that the PHA has analyzed whether rental voucher holders have experienced difficulties in finding housing outside areas of poverty or minority concentration and, if such difficulties have been found, PHA documentation shows that the PHA has analyzed whether it is appropriate to seek approval of exception payment standard amounts in any part of its jurisdiction and has sought HUD approval of exception payment standard amounts when necessary. 5 points.

(ii) The PHA's SEMAP certification does not support the statement in paragraph (g)(3)(i) of this section. 0 points.

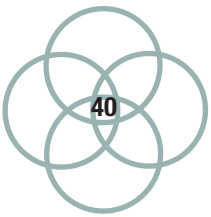
PHAs may choose to seek up to 5 optional bonus points if the PHA meets specified goals for increasing the number of assisted families within its jurisdiction who live in low poverty areas.

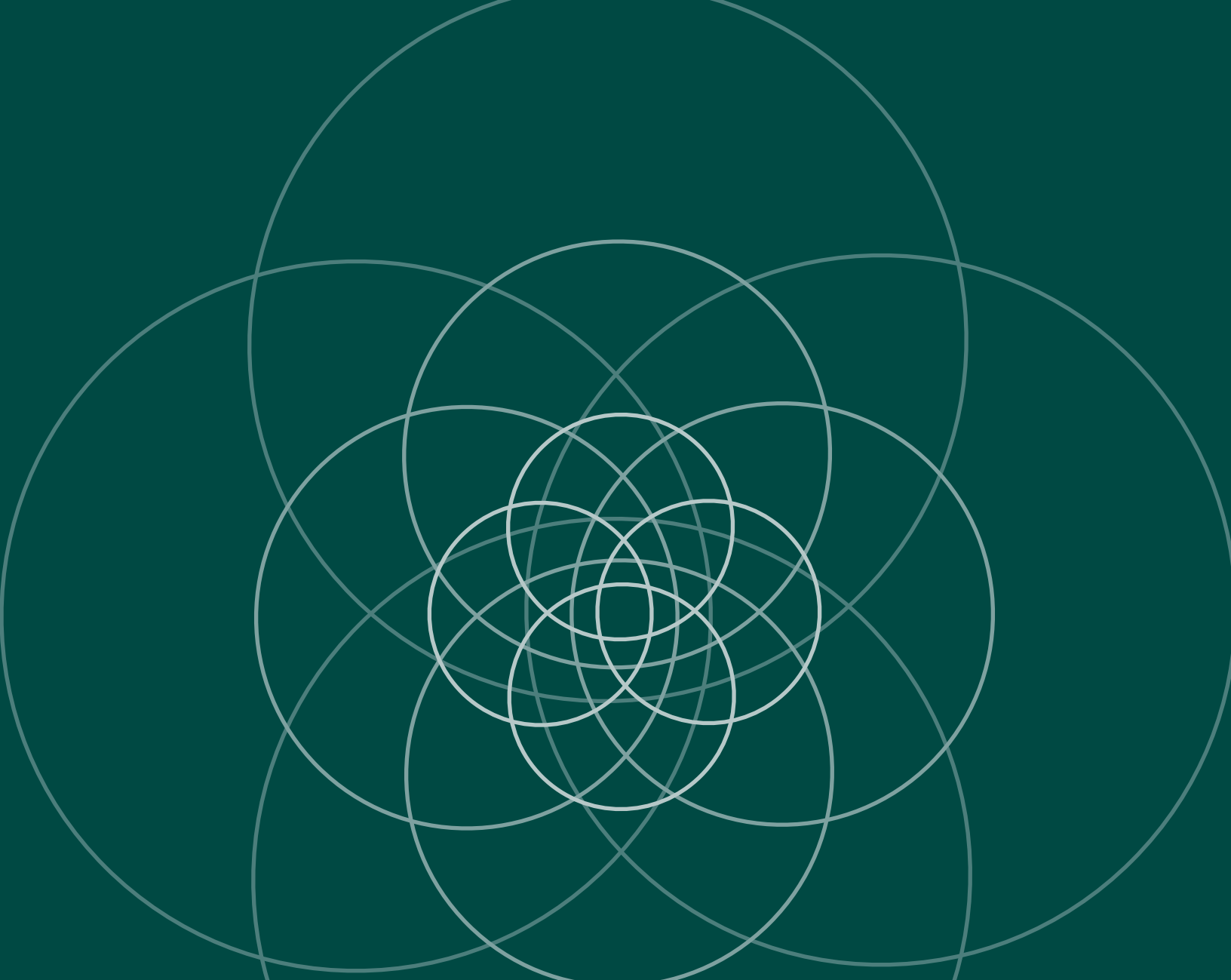
(h) *Deconcentration bonus.* (1) Submission of deconcentration data in the HUD-prescribed format for this indicator is mandatory for a PHA using one or more payment standard amount(s) that exceed(s) 100 percent of the published FMR set at the 50th percentile rent to provide access to a broad range of housing opportunities throughout a metropolitan area in accordance with §888.113(c) of this title, starting with the second full PHA fiscal year following initial use of payment standard amounts based on



the FMR set at the 50th percentile rent. Submission of deconcentration data for this indicator is optional for all other PHAs. Additional SEMAP points are available to PHAs that have jurisdiction in metropolitan FMR areas and that choose to submit with their SEMAP certifications certain data, in a HUD-prescribed format, on the percent of their tenant-based Section 8 families with children who live in, and who have moved during the PHA fiscal year to, low poverty census tracts in the PHA's principal operating area. For purposes of this indicator, the PHA's principal operating area is the geographic entity for which the Census tabulates data that most closely matches the PHA's geographic jurisdiction under State or local law (e.g., city, county, metropolitan statistical area) as determined by the PHA, subject to HUD review. A low poverty census tract is defined as a census tract where the poverty rate of the tract is at or below 10 percent, or at or below the overall poverty rate for the principal operating area of the PHA, whichever is greater. The PHA determines the overall poverty rate for its principal operating area using the most recent available decennial Census data. Family data used for the PHA's analysis must be the same information as reported to MTCS for the PHA's tenant-based Section 8 families with children. If HUD determines that the quantity of MTCS data is insufficient for adequate analysis, HUD will not award points under this bonus indicator. Bonus points will be awarded if:

- (i) Half or more of all Section 8 families with children assisted by the PHA in its principal operating area at the end of the last completed PHA fiscal year reside in low poverty census tracts;
- (ii) The percent of Section 8 mover families with children who moved to low poverty census tracts in the PHA's principal operating area during the last completed PHA fiscal year is at least 2 percentage points higher than the percent of all Section 8 families with children who reside in low poverty census tracts at the end of the last completed PHA fiscal year; or
- (iii) The percent of Section 8 families with children who moved to low-poverty census tracts in the PHA's principal operating area over the last two completed PHA fiscal years is at least 2 percentage points higher than the percent of all Section 8 families with children who resided in low poverty census tracts at the end of the second to last completed PHA fiscal year.
- (iv) State and regional PHAs that provide Section 8 rental assistance in more than one metropolitan area within a State or region make these determinations separately for each metropolitan area or portion of a metropolitan area where the PHA has assisted at least 20 Section 8 families with children in the last completed PHA fiscal year.





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