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1. INTRODUCTION

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Relocation and Mobility Counseling Assessment intends to examine neighborhood outcomes for Housing Choice Voucher holders and to assess CHAC's efforts in providing mobility counseling to voucher holders interested in moving to opportunity neighborhoods. The study also aims to provide ongoing feedback to the CHA and CHAC—the organization that administers the Housing Choice Voucher program and operates the Mobility Program—and other actors concerned about the Housing Choice Voucher Program, such as the Mayor's Office; Chicago Department of Human Services; and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The study is funded by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and is being conducted by the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization based in Washington, D.C., and its partner, the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The purpose of this interim report is to provide *preliminary* feedback on the impact of CHAC's Mobility Program as seen through data collected during the first two waves of our study. The study tracks the moving experiences of a cohort of Housing Choice Voucher holders (who have been receiving Housing Choice Voucher assistance for at least one year) as they proceed through the process of making a move with their voucher. This report presents a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of the respondents in our sample and examines neighborhood outcomes for voucher holders who moved.

Background

In recent years, the emphasis of federal housing policy has shifted from project-based housing subsidies to tenant-based subsidies, increasing the importance of the Housing Choice Voucher Program in providing housing assistance to low-income families. Congress established the Housing Choice Voucher Program in 1974.¹ The program has grown tremendously since its inception and today it currently serves approximately 1.4 million households (Schussheim 1996). The original goal of the program—to provide affordable housing options to low-income households—has expanded over time and now includes “deconcentration” of low-income households.

The program is administered by state and local governments and funded by the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Participants in the program typically pay 30 to 40 percent of their monthly income toward rent (plus utilities) and

¹ The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 merged the Section 8 certificate and Section 8 voucher program into one to create the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This program is referred to throughout this report as the “Housing Choice Voucher Program,” the “voucher program,” or “vouchers.”



the Housing Choice Voucher Program makes up the difference. Vouchers are tenant-based, which means that, unlike residents of public housing, voucher families have the option to move anywhere in the United States.

With approximately 26,000 vouchers, the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA's) Housing Choice Voucher Program is one of the largest in the country. The CHA's program is expected to continue to grow substantially over the next five years. The expiration of Section 8 project-based subsidy contracts with private developers has already shifted a significant number of families from project-based assistance to tenant-based assistance. In addition, changes in Chicago public housing are expected to add thousands of families to the Housing Choice Voucher Program rolls.²

Policy analysts, practitioners, and housing advocates disagree about whether the shift from project-based subsidies to tenant-based subsidies represents a positive change in housing policy. In some cities, the Housing Choice Voucher Program has shown promising results in increasing choice and expanding housing opportunities for low-income families (Turner 1998). However, in Chicago, the results of this shift are not as clear. A majority of Housing Choice Voucher recipients are located on the south side of Chicago and in the southern suburbs, and the "clustering" of voucher holders appears to be a substantial problem both inside the city and in the bordering suburbs (Fischer 1999).

Chicago has a long history of mobility programs intended to reduce economic and racial segregation in its public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. The most famous of these is the Gautreaux program, created in 1976 as the result of a desegregation settlement.³ The settlement called for 7,100 housing certificates to be provided to current and former CHA residents for use in neighborhoods that were less than 30 percent African American. The Gautreaux program, which ran until 1998, provided counseling and support to families who chose to move to these nonminority areas (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). The certificates were administered by the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, which has since been one of the contractors involved in relocating CHA residents. In 2001, the agency was commissioned to create a new Gautreaux-type program for volunteers who wish to make

² See the *CHA Transformation Plan* (October 2001) for more details regarding demolition and relocation. Most of these demolitions are covered by a 1996 federal law calling for the conversion to vouchers of certain severely distressed public housing developments.

³ In the landmark *Gautreaux* case the courts found that the CHA and HUD had discriminated against black tenants, concentrating them in large-scale developments located in poor black neighborhoods. The decision against the CHA in 1969 called for the creation of new public housing at "scattered sites" in nonminority communities. The case against HUD eventually moved to the Supreme Court and was settled in 1976 (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000).



mobility moves.⁴ In addition to Gautreaux, Housing Choice Partners administers a mobility program in the Cook County suburbs.

CHAC Inc., the private corporation that administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Chicago, has run several mobility initiatives since taking control of the voucher program in September 1995. The agency first initiated a small mobility program in 1995 as part of its contract, then administered the Chicago Moving to Opportunity Demonstration from 1996 to 1998. In 1999, CHAC dramatically expanded its mobility efforts, requesting a waiver from HUD to convert funds from 250 vouchers in order to create an expanded mobility program. The result of this increased effort is CHAC's Mobility Program.

The Mobility Program, geared to current Housing Choice Voucher recipients who are moving with their vouchers, is one of the only mobility programs in the country that is run directly by the same agency that administers the voucher program rather than by a nonprofit contractor.⁵ The program offers a variety of services, including one-on-one counseling, life-skills training, landlord negotiation seminars, neighborhood tours, and the Security Deposit Loan Program to foster moves to opportunity areas.

Research Questions and Methods

A number of studies have examined how neighborhood poverty levels influence outcomes for families with vouchers.⁶ However, to date, there has been no systematic examination of how mobility programs operate, what makes them effective, and what components need to be strengthened. The Relocation and Mobility Counseling Assessment⁷ study attempts to fill this gap by providing meaningful data that draw on a three-wave panel survey, program observations, and interviews with administrative staff.

⁴ For a full discussion of the Leadership Council's role in relocation, see S.J. Popkin and M.K. Cunningham (2001) *CHA Relocation Counseling Assessment—Interim Report*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

⁵ The only other large-scale program is the Housing Opportunities Program administered by the Dallas Housing Authority as part of its obligations under the *Walker* decree.

⁶ See, for example, HUD's Moving To Opportunity Demonstration. For a full description of the Moving To Opportunity Program see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Policy Development and Research Division. *Expanding Housing Choices for HUD-Assisted Families: Moving to Opportunity*. Washington, DC, April 1996.

⁷ The Relocation and Mobility Counseling Assessment has two components: an assessment of the counseling and relocation services provided to CHA relocatees and an assessment of services provided to participants in CHAC's Mobility Program. In July 2001, the Urban Institute released a report that focused on results from the first component of this study—counseling and relocation services to CHA relocatees. This report focuses on the second component—assessing CHAC's Mobility Program. See Popkin and Cunningham "CHA Relocation Counseling Assessment: Interim Report" July 2001.



The overall purpose of the study is to provide a systematic examination CHAC's Mobility Program and how it influences neighborhood outcomes. More specifically, the objectives of the study are to (1) understand the barriers faced by Housing Choice Voucher searchers while they look for housing in Chicago; (2) examine the services offered to participants in CHAC's Mobility Program; and (3) identify short-term outcomes for participants in the program. Further, the study is meant to provide feedback to CHAC as it implements its Mobility Program and continues to grapple with the challenges of serving a rapidly changing population. Exhibit 1.1 outlines our specific research questions.

EXHIBIT 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What problems and challenges do Housing Choice Voucher recipients face in locating housing and leasing up?▪ What proportion of the population has multiple problems; what proportion requires intensive counseling before attempting a move; and what proportion will need long-term support in order to maintain their Housing Choice Voucher assistance?
Services and Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Do participants search in low-poverty areas?▪ What factors affect families' willingness to consider unfamiliar areas, including families' preferences for particular communities, fears of moving to unfamiliar areas, concerns about encountering discrimination, and the limited availability of appropriate units (e.g., affordable units, units with a large number of large bedroom units)?▪ Are there other services that they feel they need?▪ What are the characteristics of those participants who move to low-poverty areas?▪ What types of services do these participants receive?
Locational Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What proportion of Housing Choice Voucher holders move to low-poverty neighborhoods?▪ How do these participants compare with successful movers?▪ What are the relocation outcomes for participants (i.e., the characteristics of the neighborhoods they move from and to)?▪ How satisfied are movers with their new units and neighborhoods?▪ Do they feel they have received adequate follow-up support?▪ Are there any early impacts on employment or quality-of-life outcomes for participants?▪ What are the early outcomes for those who fail to find units?



To answer these questions, our study uses a variety of methods, including a three-wave panel survey, interviews with administrative staff at CHAC, and observation of program activities.⁸ These methods are described below.⁹

Three-Wave Panel Survey. The survey sampled 203 CHAC voucher holders who had been on the Housing Choice Voucher Program for at least one year and were moving voluntarily, being evicted from their apartment by their landlord, or required to move because their unit failed Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection. Data collection took place at CHAC directly following transfer briefings, which all movers are required to attend. All eligible participants were interviewed in separate areas of the briefing room. Baseline data collection took place from April through June 2000. The baseline survey lasted approximately 20 minutes, and each participant was paid \$10 for completing the interview. We conducted the first follow-up wave of data collection with the same respondents between November 2000 and January 2001. The third and final survey wave began in May 2001 and was completed in September 2001.

Process Study. A process study of the counseling and mobility services provided by CHAC's Mobility Program was conducted in order to answer research questions related to program operations. Research staff conducted group interviews with CHAC staff in January 2000 and held interviews and program observations from April through August 2000. They observed briefings and other program activities, such as van tours and workshops for tenants, and also conducted one-on-one interviews with program administrators and individual counselors. Finally, they conducted follow-up interviews with program administrators in January and March 2001. In addition to qualitative data collected during our process study, we collected summarized administrative data on program outcomes from 5/01/99-4/30/01. These data are presented along with our description of CHAC's mobility program.

It is important to note that there are a number of limitations inherent in our research design. Our sample was selected from second movers who attended a transfer briefing between April and June 2000. Only the Housing Choice Voucher holders interested in participating in our study were surveyed at the end of the transfer briefing. This study design has several implications for the population our sample represents. In order to address this issue, descriptive statistics available from CHAC administrative data were examined. There appear to be several differences between our sample of movers and the population of voucher holders. CHAC administrative data that were examined showed that the respondents in our sample have slightly lower incomes but are slightly more likely to be employed. Further,

⁸ In-depth interviews with CHAC Mobility Program participants may be conducted during the last wave of this study (November 2001–January 2002).

⁹ Please see appendix A for a complete description of our methods.



Hispanic and elderly households are likely underrepresented in our sample, which likely represents two groups: Housing Choice Voucher holders who are moving voluntarily—and thus are likely to be more motivated—and voucher holders who have to move as a result of an eviction or failed inspection (involuntary movers).

Scope of the Report

This report presents a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of our respondents, their reasons for moving, the barriers they confronted during their search, and, for the respondents who moved, their neighborhood outcomes. Throughout this report, we focus is on several important questions:

- Who among our Housing Choice Voucher sample moved?
- What are the characteristics of movers, and how are they different from non-movers?
- What are the neighborhood outcomes for the respondents who moved?

Answering these questions is the first step toward understanding how to target specific populations for mobility efforts.

One of the main objectives of our study is to examine the types of neighborhoods to which families on the Housing Choice Voucher Program move and how mobility counseling relates to neighborhood outcomes. To do so, we are studying Housing Choice Voucher movers, most of whom are moving voluntarily and thus can choose not to move and instead remain in their current apartment. Therefore, not all of our respondents will have moved by the end our study, limiting our sample size for certain types of analysis. Because of the limitations of our sample size, however, it is still too early to completely assess the effectiveness of mobility assistance for our sample of respondents.

For the final report (expected March 2002), we expect that more of our respondents will have moved and we will be able to conduct a multivariate analysis that examines whether participation in the Mobility Program increases the likelihood of moves to low-poverty neighborhoods. Further, we will examine if there are other “predictors,” such as income, education level, and so on, of moving to low-poverty neighborhoods.

It is important to note that CHAC’s Mobility Program is very much a work in progress. Therefore, this report highlights some of the changes CHAC has implemented in order to strengthen the program during the course of our study. Since our survey sample was first interviewed in May 1999, during the early phases of the program, those respondents who moved quickly were likely not affected by later changes to the program. However, our ongoing process study has documented many of the implementation challenges facing the program and has taken note of CHAC’s responses during the study period. Thus, in addition to a snapshot of



program outcomes, our report offers important lessons for CHAC's ongoing efforts to improve and expand its mobility counseling services.

The remainder of this report consists of five sections. *Section 2* provides a description of CHAC's Mobility Program, including program outcomes to date (CHAC administrative data), how participants move through the Mobility Program, and major program components. *Section 3*, drawing on data from the first two waves of our survey, describes the respondents in our sample. *Section 4* provides a descriptive analysis of neighborhood outcomes and housing quality, specifically examining differences between movers to opportunity neighborhoods and movers to high-poverty neighborhoods. *Section 5* presents outcomes from our process study, highlighting some of the recent changes CHAC has made in order to strengthen the Mobility Program and, drawing on lessons learned to date, presents our recommendations for continued improvement. The report concludes with *Section 6*.



2. CHAC'S MOBILITY PROGRAM

Across the country, a number of innovative housing agencies are operating mobility programs that help voucher holders move to better neighborhoods. Although programs vary widely, the fundamental goal of mobility programs is to open access to better neighborhoods and promote upward mobility.¹⁰ Some mobility programs arise out of litigation that addresses issues of segregation; others, such as the Regional Opportunity Counseling Program, are funded by HUD.

As mentioned in the introduction, CHAC initiated a small mobility program when the organization took over the Housing Choice Voucher Program in 1995 and subsequently administered the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration from 1996 through 1998. In 1999, the agency requested a waiver from HUD to convert funds from 250 vouchers to create an expanded mobility program. This funding supports the Mobility Program, counseling for disabled households provided by Access Living, counseling for Latino families provided by Latinos United, and CHAC's Security Deposit Loan Program. The Mobility Program targets voucher holders who have been receiving voucher assistance for at least one year and are willing to consider moving to a low-poverty census tract.¹¹

The overall goal of CHAC's Mobility Program is to help families move to "opportunity neighborhoods."¹² As required by HUD, CHAC defines an opportunity neighborhood as one in which the poverty rate is less than 23.49 percent.¹³ Although many mobility programs across the country consider race or percentage minority when defining opportunity neighborhoods, CHAC does not include this measure in its definition.¹⁴ Throughout the report when we refer to opportunity neighborhoods we are referring to neighborhoods with poverty levels of less than 23.49 percent.

¹⁰ See Turner and Williams, "Housing Mobility: Realizing the Promise," January 1998, for a broad overview of mobility programs operating across the country.

¹¹ With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, CHAC provided housing search assistance and some mobility counseling to Welfare to Work voucher holders who were searching for housing in May 2001.

¹² Staff often refer to low-poverty neighborhoods as "opportunity neighborhoods" because the term "low-poverty" is an academic term commonly used by the research community but not in everyday conversation.

¹³ It should be noted that 23.49 percent is higher than most definitions of low poverty. For example, the Moving To Opportunity Demonstration defines low poverty as less than 10 percent, as does HUD's Regional Opportunity Counseling Program.

¹⁴ Typically, mobility programs that use race in their definition of low-poverty or "opportunity neighborhoods" are required to under consent decrees resulting from desegregation lawsuits.



CHAC's program is unusually large compared with other programs across the country. The program is managed by a program manager and staffed by five mobility counselors, two landlord outreach specialists, a follow-up counselor, a workshop leader, and a program assistant. The program has an annual budget of \$995,000 and currently serves 2,000 households.

The Mobility Program is a voluntary program; therefore, participants must sign up if they are interested. Typically, Housing Choice Voucher holders are introduced to the Mobility Program at transfer briefings, when they get their "moving papers" to move with their voucher. At the briefing, Mobility Program staff provide information about the program and encourage participants to enroll in it. The briefings usually last about two hours. Along with information about the moving process, staff provide specific information about CHAC's Mobility Program. This component of the briefing includes an introduction to the portability options offered through the Housing Choice Voucher Program, highlighting the benefits of moving to an opportunity neighborhood. In addition to staff presentations, CHAC shows a video on mobility featuring real participants who have moved to low-poverty neighborhoods. Recently, CHAC created separate briefings for Spanish-speaking households, and these are conducted twice a month.

After a participant enrolls in the Mobility Program (usually at the transfer briefing or by contacting a mobility counselor), a mobility counselor contacts the household and schedules an initial assessment interview. The initial assessment is used to gauge the level of services the participant will need. In addition, all participants have their credit checked and must pass a criminal background check. With the information gathered during the assessment, participants are placed into either Track 1 or Track 2, depending on their needs.¹⁵ The tracking system was developed so that mobility counselors could delineate between households that need assistance with only basic services, such as search assistance, and households that may need more services. The goal is for the tracking system to allow counselors to allocate the time they spend with mobility participants more effectively, which in turn will allow them to serve more households.

Track 1 households typically receive mobility services (housing search assistance, van tours, access to the resource room, and so on). Track 2 participants are offered the same services and are referred to additional supportive services—for example, substance abuse counseling, legal aid, or domestic violence counselors—before their housing search or, less ideally, during their housing search. To date, a majority of program participants have been placed in Track 1 (63 percent); only 19 percent have been placed in Track 2. The remaining 18 percent have not been assigned to a track. The tracking system was adopted after the program was in operation; therefore, some participants were not assigned to a track.

¹⁵ CHAC developed a point system to assign participants to one of the two tracks.



After a participant is assigned to a track, counselors work with program participants one-on-one to make referrals to social service agencies. However, with caseloads of 150 to 400 clients, counselors are able to provide services only to those who actively request continued assistance.

Program Components

The program offers a wide range of services, including workshops, a resource room with information about different communities, van tours, unit referrals, follow-up services, and the Security Deposit Loan Fund. All participants who enroll in the program receive access to the resource room. Exhibit 2.1 presents a diagram of the major program elements, which are described in detail below.

- **Unit Referrals.** Program participants are encouraged to conduct their own housing searches; however, in many cases, mobility counselors provide unit listings to searchers. Counselors try to match available units (usually based on bedroom size and neighborhood preference) to Mobility Program participants.
- **Workshops.** A number of workshops on housekeeping, budgeting, credit repair, parenting, and other life-skills topics are offered to participants who enroll in the Mobility Program. Although most of these workshops are not required, all participants must attend a half-day workshop on budgeting and tenant rights before they can receive unit referrals.
- **Supportive Service Referrals.** A number of participants who enroll in the program must address other personal barriers before moving to a low-poverty neighborhood. For example, some households may have problems with drug addiction or legal issues, or may be victims of domestic violence. Counselors work with program participants to identify these problems and then provide them with supportive service referrals to local nonprofits.
- **Van Tours.** CHAC offers van tours for participants to view neighborhoods and specific units. These tours are meant to assist program participants who do not have access to transportation or who would otherwise not search in unfamiliar communities. The van is rented for one week out of the month and is available to mobility counselors and landlord outreach specialists.
- **Resource Room.** The resource room provides a wealth of information about how to search for an apartment. A staff person is available in the room at all times to assist searchers. Resources include citywide and local newspapers, information on different communities, and online housing search sources. In addition, the resource room



provides information on supportive services (e.g., how to apply for food stamps). The room is available to all participants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

- ***Expedited Inspections.*** Mobility counselors are now certified inspectors, so program participants are often able to get their units inspected more quickly.¹⁶
- ***Security Deposit Loan Fund.*** The Security Deposit Loan Fund is offered only to program participants who lease up in opportunity neighborhoods. Participants who borrow money from the loan fund sign a payment plan agreeing to pay back the loan in monthly installments at zero interest.
- ***Landlord Outreach.*** Currently, two staff persons are dedicated to conducting outreach to landlords with units in low-poverty neighborhoods. Typically, staff will scan the local community newspapers and call new landlords to see if they are interested in participating in the program. Landlord specialists also find new landlords by driving around and identifying units for rent in opportunity neighborhoods. Most important, landlord specialists focus on developing long-term relationships with landlords so the landlords will continue to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Program administrators have developed a packet to send to landlords who are interested in the program. This packet highlights some of the advantages of participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. If landlords want to list their apartments with CHAC, the landlord specialist enters their contact information into a program database. Information on these landlords is then provided to searchers through their mobility counselors.

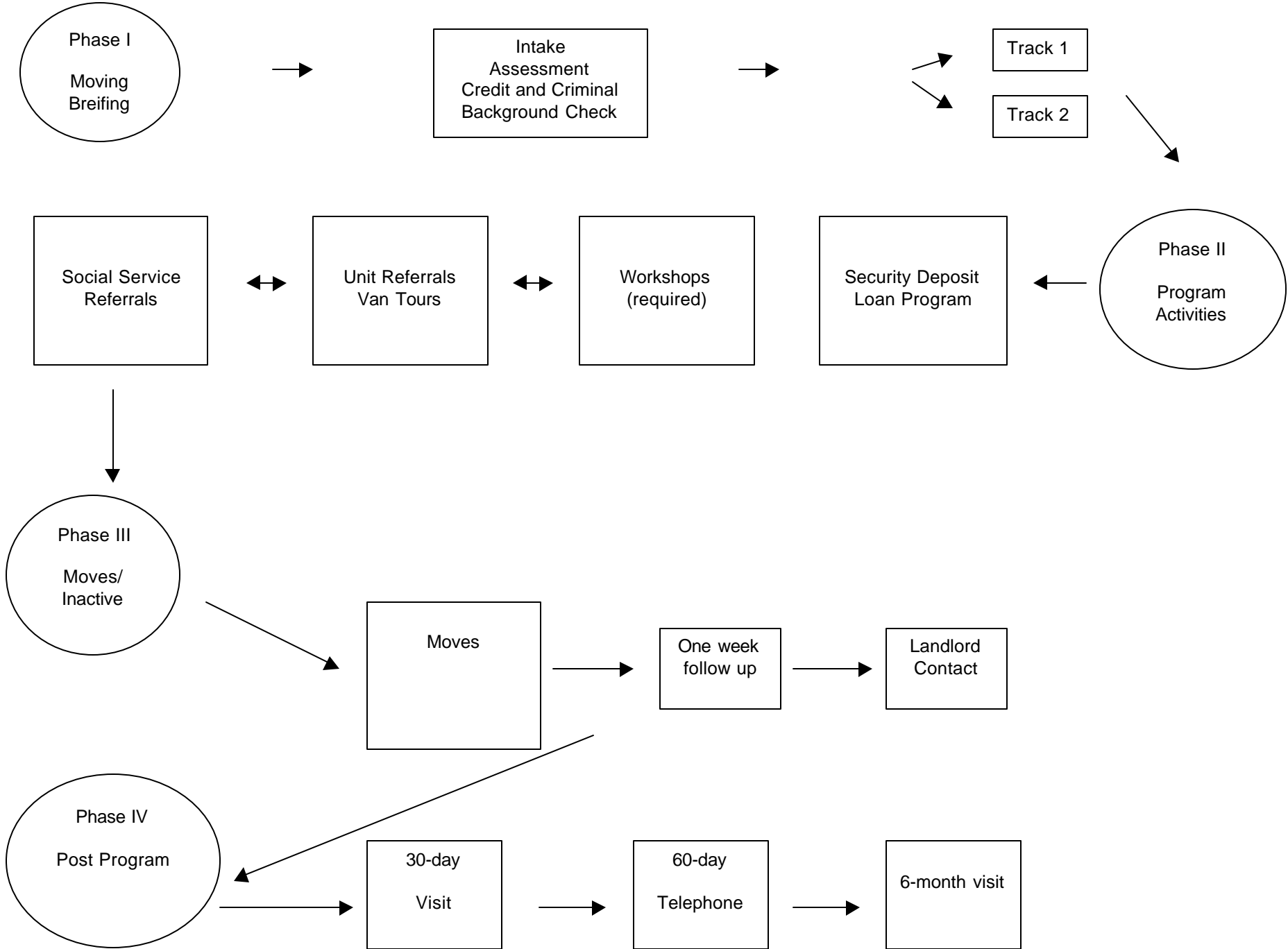
- ***Follow-up Services.*** In the past, mobility counselors were required to provide follow-up services to the program participants they assisted during a housing search. Recently, CHAC created a separate counselor position to conduct follow-up services after the participant moves. Postmove follow-up is provided for up to one year after the move.

Program Outcomes

CHAC administrative data were analyzed in order to examine outcomes for all households that have participated in CHAC's Mobility Program to date (administrative data cover the period May 1, 1999, to April 30, 2001). These data are useful because they provide a full picture of program outcomes overall. The data are used to examine how neighborhood outcomes for the respondents in our sample compare with other participants in the Mobility Program (see section 3).

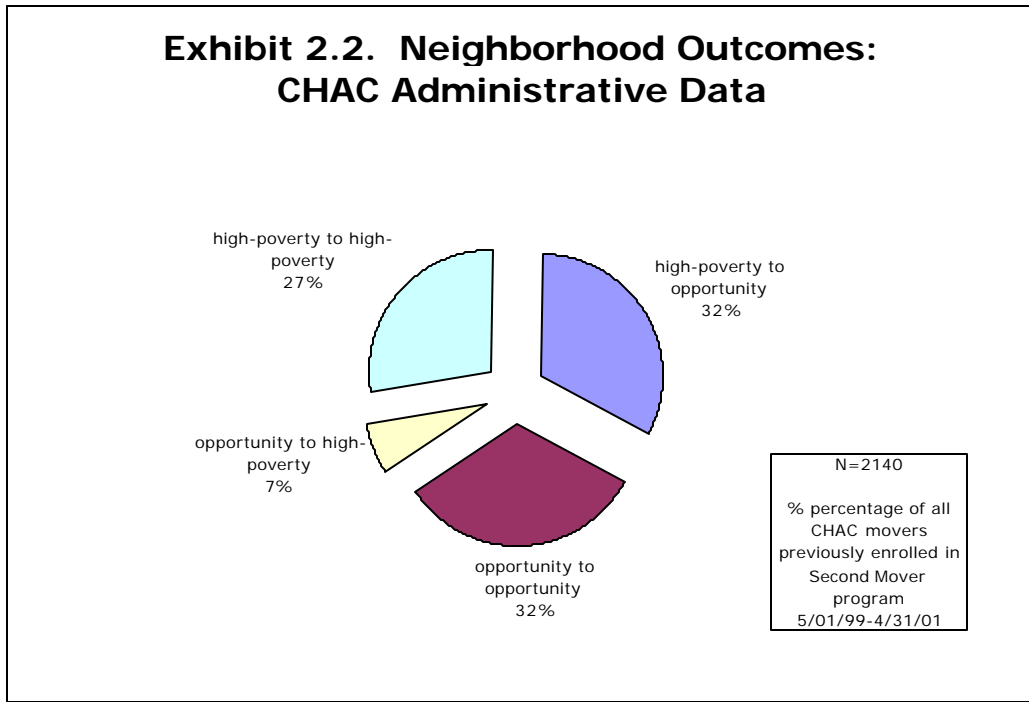
¹⁶ Although mobility counselors are certified inspectors, union rules prevent counselors from conducting inspections during their regularly scheduled hours; instead, they must conduct inspections during overtime.

Exhibit 2.1. Mobility Program





Approximately 4,280 Housing Choice Voucher recipients have enrolled in the Mobility Program. Of that total, 38 percent (1,638) were forced moves—meaning that the unit in question failed HQS inspection repeatedly and the household had to find another unit—and 51 percent (2,199) were voluntary moves.¹⁷ Approximately 50 percent (2140) of the households that enrolled in the Mobility Program have subsequently moved.¹⁸ Of this 50 percent, approximately 32 percent moved from high-poverty neighborhoods to opportunity neighborhoods, and 31.9 percent moved from opportunity neighborhoods to new opportunity neighborhoods. Adding these two groups together, almost 64 percent of the people who moved leased units in opportunity neighborhoods. About one-quarter (26.7 percent) of movers remained in high-poverty neighborhoods (moved from high-poverty to high-poverty), and a very small percentage (6.7 percent) moved from opportunity neighborhoods to high-poverty neighborhoods (exhibit 2.2).



¹⁷ The remaining 443 enrolled participants are “not specified.”

¹⁸ It should be noted that participants who voluntarily enrolled in the Mobility Program can decide not to move at any time; therefore, this percentage is not an indicator of success or failure.



3. RESPONDENTS AT BASELINE

This section begins by describing the characteristics of our survey sample at baseline. Next, it presents neighborhood outcomes for our sample after one year. Finally, it presents neighborhood and housing quality outcomes for those respondents who moved with their vouchers between April 2000 and January 2001.

Reasons for Moving, Respondent Characteristics, and Services Needed

Our sample includes CHAC Housing Choice Voucher recipients who have been in the program for at least one year and are (1) moving voluntarily, (2) being evicted from their apartment by their landlord, or (3) required to move because their unit failed HQS inspection. In interviews with the heads of household—that is, the voucher holders—most (58 percent) of the respondents were found to be moving voluntarily, about 24 percent were moving because their apartment failed inspection, and approximately 10 percent were being evicted (exhibit 3.1).¹⁹ The three main reasons voluntary movers had an interest in moving were “to get a bigger or better apartment” (37 percent), “to get away from drugs and gangs” (20 percent), and because of “problems with landlord” (15 percent). Most of our respondents have experience moving with Housing Choice Vouchers. More than a third (32 percent) have moved at least twice, about 16 percent have moved three times, and about 5 percent have moved four times (exhibit 3.2).

An average household in our sample is an African-American family with one or two children living on \$10,000 or less per year. Less than half (40 percent) are currently employed, and approximately 43 percent did not graduate from high school. About 42 percent of our sample are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); 42 percent are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). Most of our sample (56 percent) are ages 36 to 49; only a small number (3 percent) are elderly (exhibit 3.3). A comparison of the typical Housing Choice Voucher recipient in our sample with the CHA public housing relocatees in our sample from the first component of this study finds that Housing Choice Voucher recipients are more likely to be employed, have slightly higher incomes, and have higher education levels.²⁰

¹⁹ It is important to note that these were self-reported reasons for moving.

²⁰ See Popkin and Cunningham, “CHA Relocation Counseling Assessment: Interim Report,” July 2001 for a detailed description of the characteristics of CHA public housing relocatees.



Exhibit 3.1. Reasons for Moving

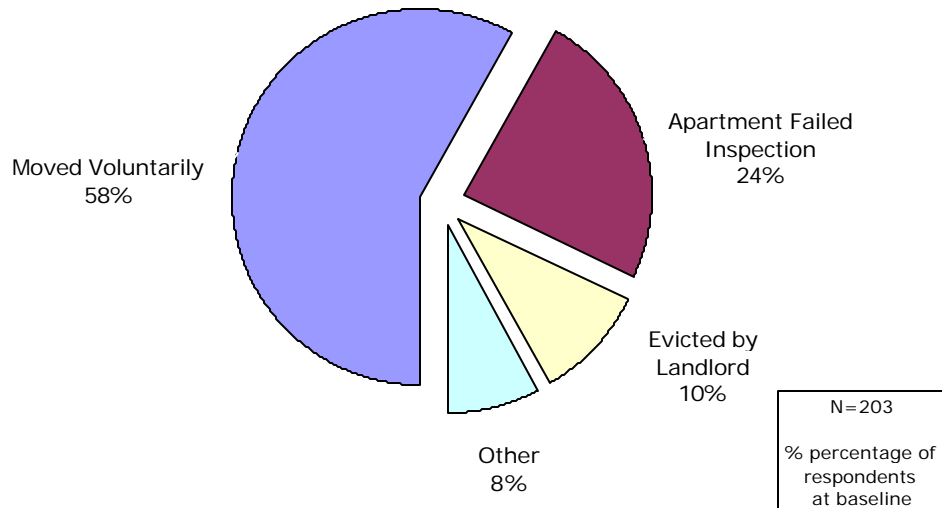


Exhibit 3.2. Reasons For Voluntary Moves

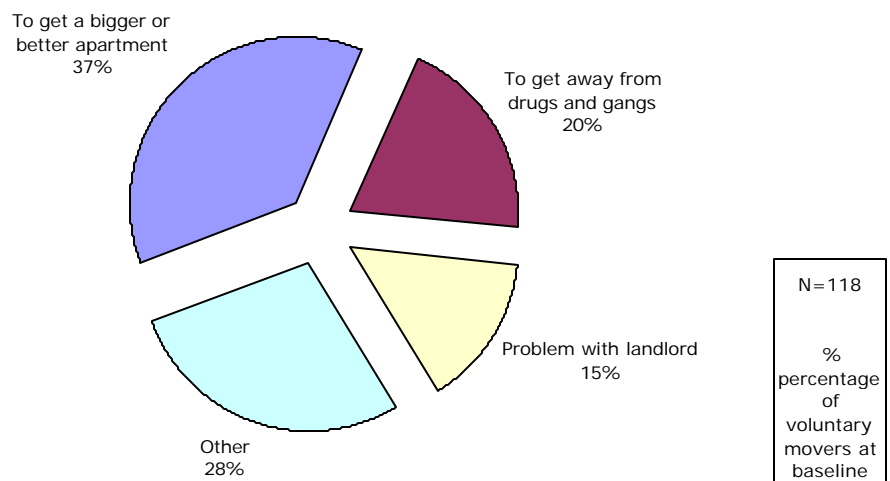


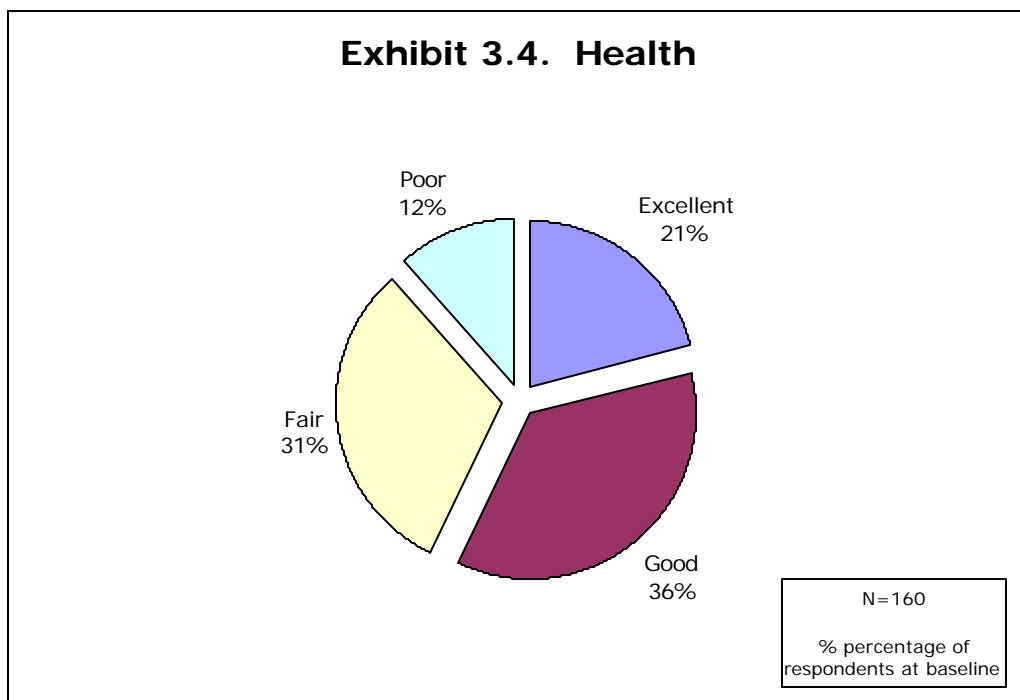


Exhibit 3.3
Wave I: CHAC Respondents

	CHAC N=203
Gender	
Female	92%
Male	8%
Age	
25 or younger	7%
26-35	18%
36-49	56%
50-59	15%
60 or older	3%
Number of children	
1-2 children	55%
3 or more children	45%
Education	
No high school	4%
Some high school	39%
HS grad (no college)	35%
HS grad (college)	22%
Length of time in CHA (n=117)	
Less than 5 years	38%
More than 5 years	62%
Income	
\$10,000 or less	70%
\$10,001 to \$20,000	22%
\$20,001 to \$30,000	6.6%
Over \$30,000	1%
Currently Employed	40%
20 or more hours	90%
Less than 20 hours	10%
Receiving public aid or TANF	42%
Receiving SSI or SSDI	42%
Have a valid drivers license	42%
Have access to a car that runs	38%



Most respondents rated their health as either “fair” or “good” (exhibit 3.4). However, it appears that the incidence of asthma is high among households in our sample. Almost half (48 percent) of respondents have been told by a doctor that they have asthma, and about a quarter (23 percent) have visited the emergency room in the past six months because of asthma (exhibit 3.5). These rates of asthma appear dramatically different from the incidence among the general population, where roughly 7 percent of people younger than 18 years old report they have asthma.²¹ It should be noted that self-reported incidence of asthma is similar (around 50 percent) in our CHA public housing relocatee sample (Popkin and Cunningham 2001).

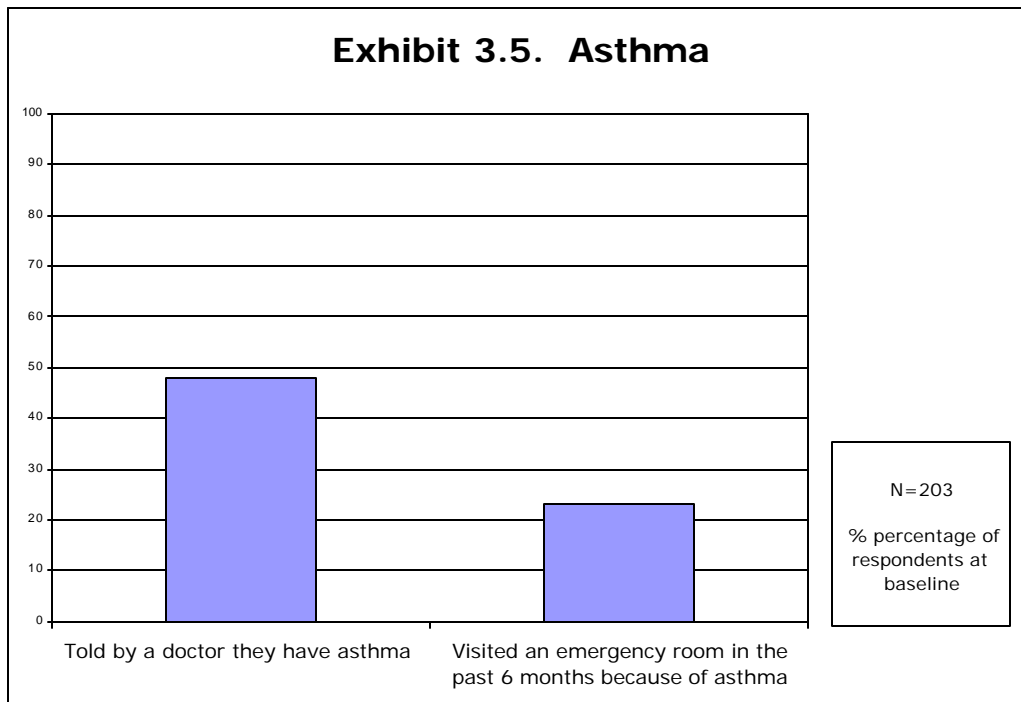


Levels of motivation for making a mobility move were expected to vary, depending on a respondent’s situation, past experience, and current circumstances. In order to capture how movers felt when they started their search, the baseline included a measure of self-efficacy, which indicates how much control people believe they have over their lives and is associated with depression and other characteristics such as long-term welfare reciprocity (c.f. Popkin 1990). Almost all of our respondents (90 percent) believe that “when I make plans, I can usually carry them out.” Only one-third (33 percent) believe that “good luck is more important than hard work for success.” However, baseline did reveal that more than half (60 percent) agree with the

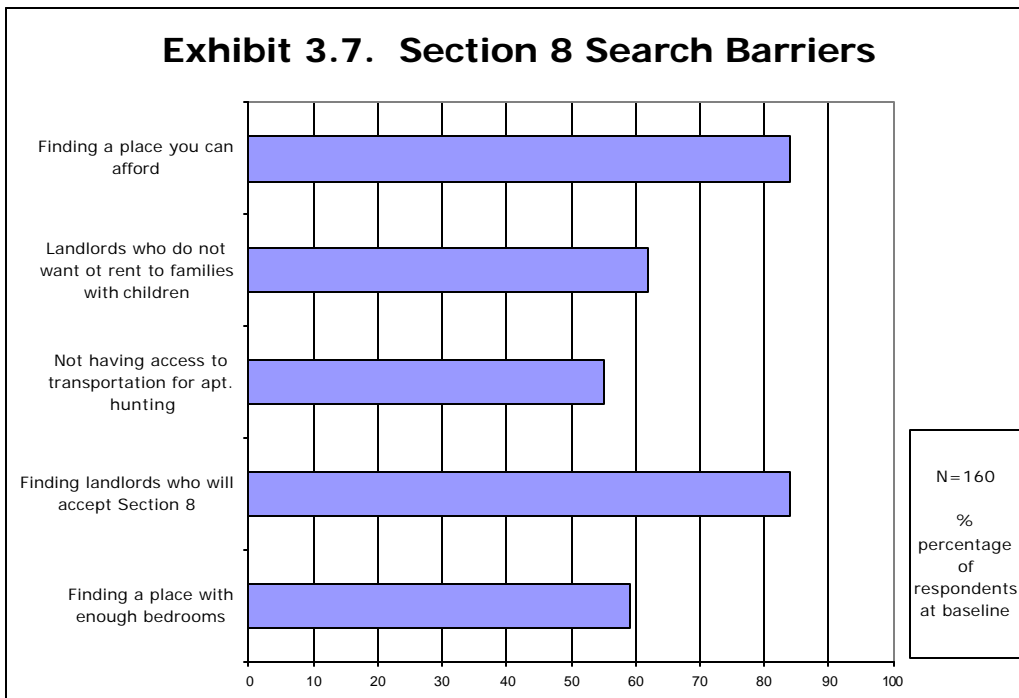
²¹ According to the National Center for Environmental Health, 1994.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/asthma/speakit/epi.htm>. (Accessed September 13, 2001.)



statement “every time I try to get ahead, something stops me,” and approximately half (48 percent) agree that “planning only makes people unhappy because plans hardly ever work out anyway” (exhibit 3.6). While these respondents appear to have relatively low self-efficacy, a larger proportion of CHAC respondents score higher than respondents in our CHA sample (Popkin and Cunningham 2001).

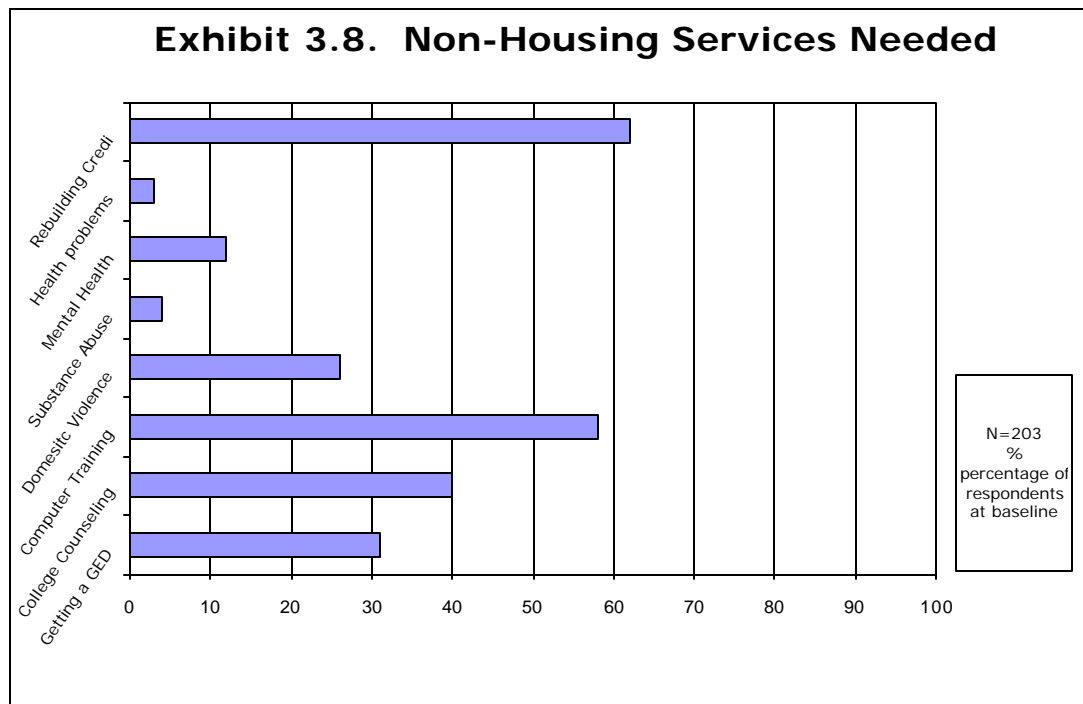


The factors respondents were most likely to cite as barriers to finding an apartment with Housing Choice Vouchers were “finding a place you like” (84 percent) and “finding landlords who will accept Section 8” (84 percent). More than half (62 percent) believe that “landlords who do not want to rent to families with children” will be a “big problem” or “some problem,” and more than half identify “not having access to transportation for apartment hunting” as a major barrier (exhibit 3.7). The problems in these reports are similar to those reported by CHA public housing relocatees and suggest that, in many cases, CHAC movers have low expectations for finding new housing with their vouchers. This finding could be due to previous experience searching for housing with Housing Choice Vouchers.





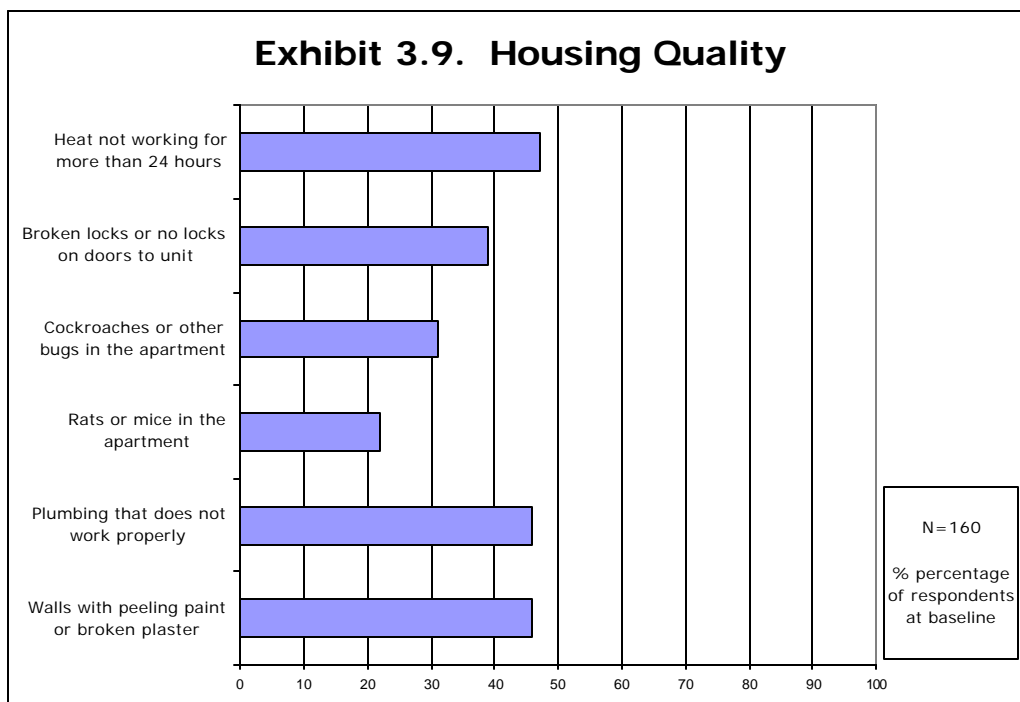
More of our respondents reported needing assistance with services related to long-term self-sufficiency than assistance with immediate or “crisis” problems. For example, about a third (31 percent) reported needing assistance in obtaining a GED, almost 40 percent reported needing assistance with college counseling, and about 58 percent reported needing assistance with computer training. Less than 5 percent of respondents reported needing help with domestic violence or substance abuse. About a quarter (26 percent) of respondents reported needing assistance with health problems, and about 12 percent reported needing help with mental health problems. Most notable, however, is the high percentage (62 percent) of respondents who reported needing assistance in rebuilding their credit (exhibit 3.8).





Baseline: Housing and Neighborhood Conditions

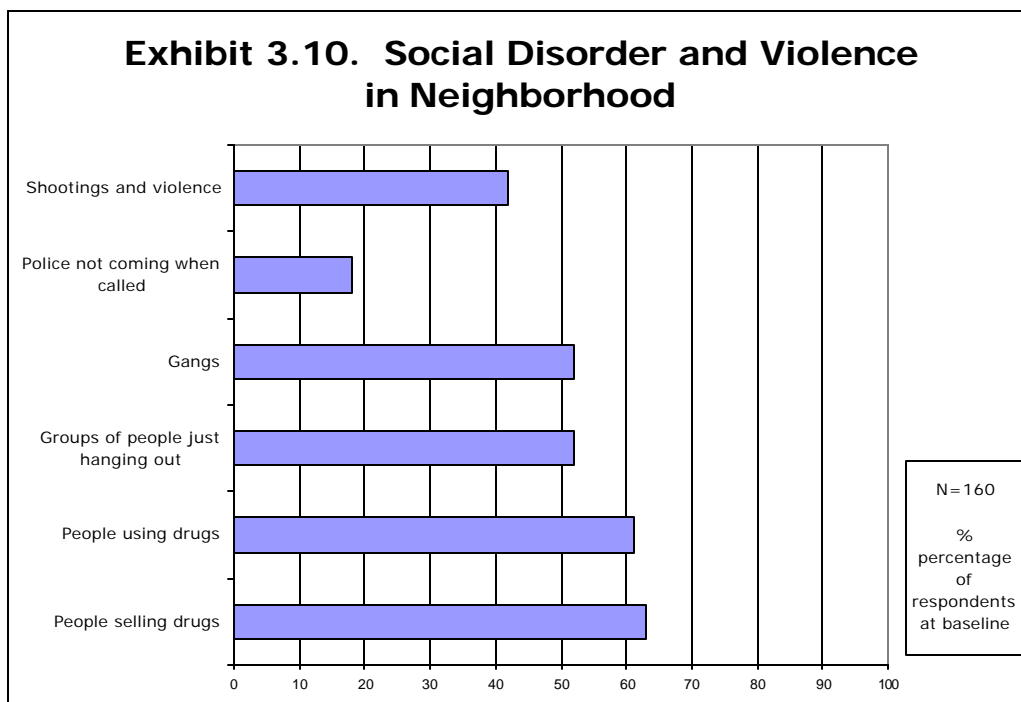
Respondents reported varying levels of problems with their housing before they moved. The three measures respondents reported “big problems” or “some problems” with were walls with peeling paint or broken plaster (46 percent), plumbing that does not work properly (46 percent), and broken locks or no locks on unit doors (39 percent). Less than a third of respondents reported “big problems” or “some problems” with the remaining measures (rats or mice, cockroaches or other bugs, heat not working) (exhibit 3.9)²².



²² It is important to note that all units that receive Housing Choice Voucher subsidies are inspected to ensure that they meet HUD’s Housing Quality Standards. The respondents in our sample who had to move because their unit failed HQS inspections are likely to report more problems with housing conditions.



Most of our respondents reported problems with neighborhood quality, in terms of social disorder, physical disorder, and violence. More than half of our respondents reported problems with people selling drugs (63 percent), people using drugs (61 percent), gangs (52 percent), and groups of people just hanging out (52 percent) in their neighborhood. Further, almost a third (29 percent) reported problems with people being attacked or robbed, and 42 percent reported problems with shootings or violence in their neighborhood (exhibit 3.10). Reports of problems with safety, drugs, and gangs are consistent with respondents' reasons for moving.





4. MOBILITY ASSISTANCE AND NEIGHBORHOOD OUTCOMES

One of the main objectives of our study is to examine the types of neighborhoods that families in the Housing Choice Voucher Program move to and how mobility counseling relates to neighborhood outcomes. As indicated earlier, this report focuses on several important questions: Who among our Housing Choice Voucher participants moved? What are the characteristics of the movers? How are they different from non-movers? Our analysis shows the following:

More than half of the respondents in our sample moved to new units. By the time our six-month follow-up began in November 2000, more than half of our sample of CHAC Housing Choice Voucher holders had moved. As exhibit 4.1 shows, our survey team was able to contact 160 (79 percent) of the original respondents at follow-up.²³ Of these 160 respondents, 96 (60 percent) had moved since they were first interviewed at baseline (exhibit 4.2). It is interesting that, although more involuntary movers might be expected to move, about the same proportion of participants who had to move because of a failed HQS inspection or eviction moved by our six-month follow-up, as did voluntary movers (59 percent and 61 percent, respectively).

Exhibit 4.1. Survey Response and Relocation Status

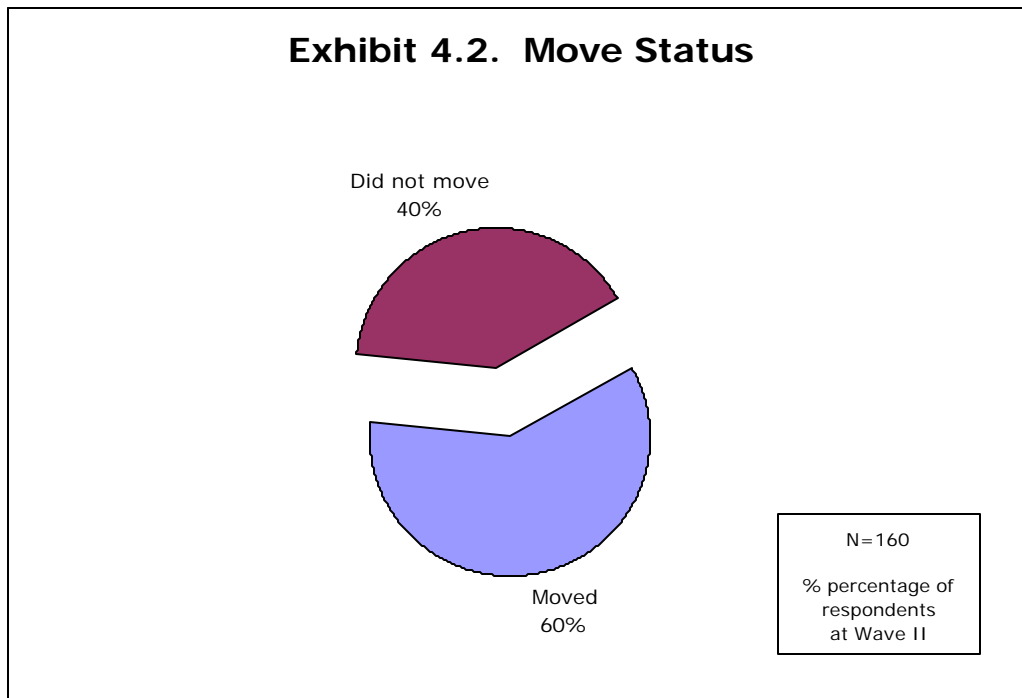
Number Of Respondents

Total Baseline Sample	203
Total Respondents at 6-month follow-up	160
Respondents not contacted	43
<i>Response Rate</i>	<i>78.8%</i>

Moving Status of those Contacted

Movers	64
Nonmovers	96

²³ Our nonresponse analysis shows that there are not many statistically significant differences between the respondents that we could not contact and the respondents we interviewed for Wave II, who thus remained in our sample. See Appendix A for a full description of our nonresponse analysis.



Almost half of movers moved to opportunity neighborhoods. About 20 percent of movers moved from high-poverty neighborhoods to opportunity neighborhoods, and 23 percent of movers who originated in opportunity neighborhoods moved to another unit in a opportunity neighborhood. Adding these two groups together, a total of 43 percent of our respondents who moved are now living in opportunity neighborhoods. The remainder of our respondents moved to high-poverty neighborhoods: 38 percent moved from high-poverty to high-poverty neighborhoods, and 19 percent moved from opportunity to high-poverty (exhibit 4.3).²⁴

If we break down the poverty ranges further we find that 13 percent of households who moved relocated in neighborhoods where less than 10 percent of the households are living below the poverty rate. Four of those households moved from very high-poverty neighborhoods to neighborhoods with poverty rates of less than 10 percent (See exhibit 4.4 for further breakdowns). Map 1 illustrates the neighborhood outcomes for CHAC respondents and displays relative changes in poverty rates between original and destination addresses.

²⁴ It is important to note here that our poverty rate data are from the 1990 census. Detailed income information from the 2000 census will not be available until 2002. Given the current housing market in Chicago and the effects of the CHA relocation effort, many previously poor neighborhoods have begun to gentrify. It is possible that some of the CHAC respondents who appear to be moving to high-poverty areas are actually moving to gentrifying neighborhoods. Similarly, it is possible that CHAC respondents who appear to be moving to low-poverty neighborhoods may have moved to high-poverty neighborhoods.



Exhibit 4.3. Neighborhood Outcomes for Movers

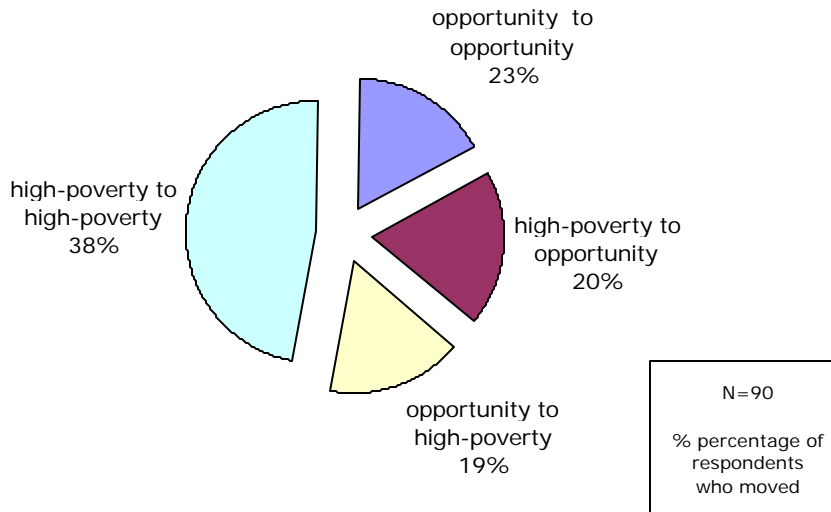
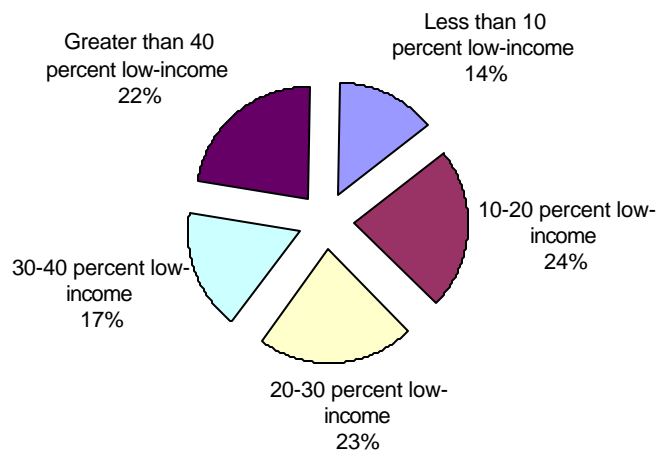


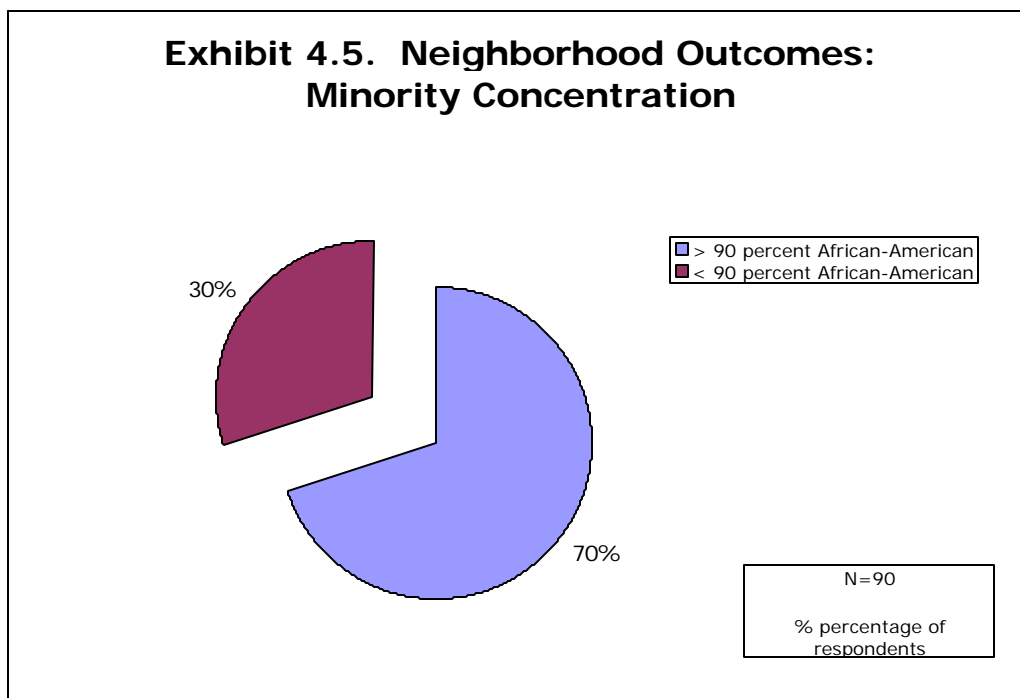
Exhibit 4.4. Neighborhood Outcomes by Poverty Categories





When we compared the survey data above to the CHAC administrative data (see section 2), we found that our data show lower percentages of moves to opportunity neighborhoods and more respondents moving from opportunity neighborhoods to high-poverty neighborhoods. These differences are likely the result of several factors: (1) the timing of the study (i.e., the fact that our sample was drawn during the early phases of the Mobility Program implementation); (2) the study time frame (i.e., this report provides data only on respondents' experiences during a six-month period); and (3) the small sample size. Despite the limitations of the survey data, they are still useful because they track outcomes for voucher holders as they move through the moving process.

A majority of respondents in our sample moved to segregated neighborhoods. As shown in exhibit 4.5 and map 2, although some of our respondents moved to lower-poverty tracts, these neighborhoods are still highly segregated—70 percent of all households have moved to areas that are more than 90 percent African American. While it is true that segregative moves could be attributed to household choice, data from our survey and from our in-depth interviews reveal that families are interested in living in diverse neighborhoods. More than half of our respondents indicated that they would like to live in a neighborhood where there is a “mix of African-American, Hispanic, and white” residents. Only 11 percent of our respondents reported that they would like to live in a neighborhood where the residents are all African American





[INSERT MAP 2 HERE]



There are no significant differences in personal characteristics between respondents in our sample who moved and those who remained in their current unit. At baseline, and again at the six-month follow-up, a large amount of information was captured about our respondents, including demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and indicators of health and self-efficacy. These characteristics of the participants who moved were compared with the characteristics of participants who did not move to determine whether any participant characteristics make participants more likely to move. Overall, few statistically significant differences were found between movers and non-movers (see appendix C for tables).

It is difficult to isolate program effects. The vast majority of respondents (76 percent) had enrolled in CHAC's Mobility Program, which provides participants with extra services aimed at relocation to lower poverty areas. Enrollment in the program, however, did not make a statistically significant difference in whether the respondent moved to an opportunity neighborhood. These findings do not necessarily mean that the Mobility Program has no effect on neighborhood outcomes; it is likely that our sample size is too small to uncover statistically significant differences. It is also likely that this finding reflects programmatic rules that allow participants to remain enrolled in the Mobility Program even if they are not actively participating. Some of the respondents in our sample are listed as "enrolled" in the program but may not have received mobility services before they moved. Finally, our data did include information on the extent of services each participant received. As noted earlier, it is anticipated that, for our final report, data limitations will be overcome by merging CHAC administrative data (on who is participating in the program and the services they received) with our survey data. With the combined data, multivariate analyses will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of CHAC's Mobility Program in assisting moves to opportunity neighborhoods.

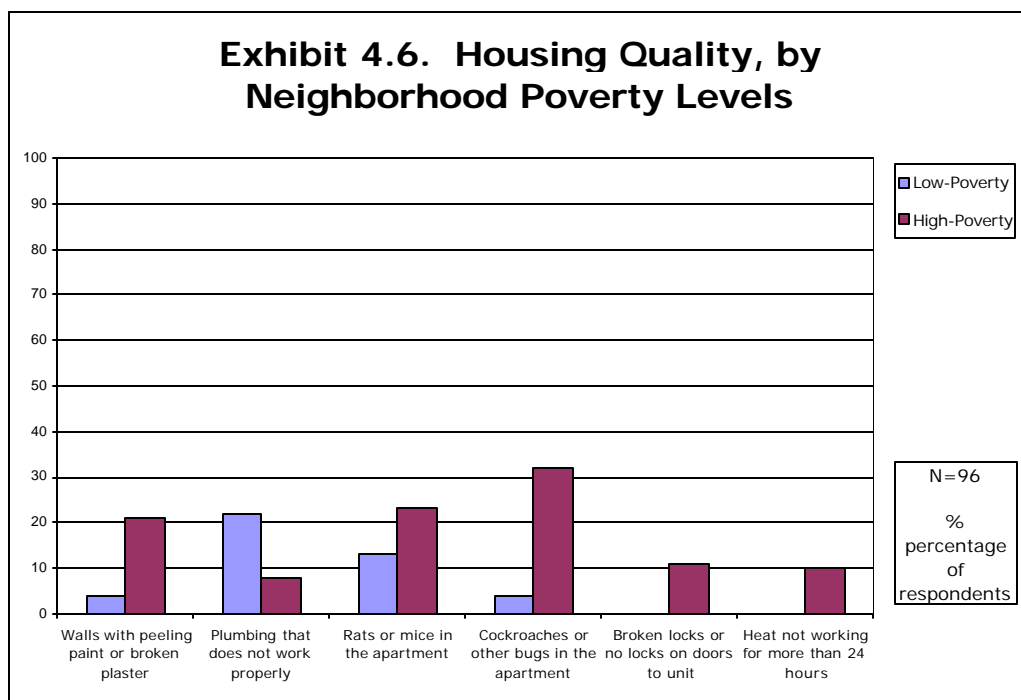
Housing Quality and Perceived Changes in Neighborhood Quality

Improvements in neighborhood quality and housing conditions are difficult to quantify. Researchers commonly look to attributes of census tracts—like what was done with poverty rates and percentage minority. While these measures allow us to objectively define and classify "types" of neighborhoods—for example, opportunity or high-poverty—they have numerous limitations. Most notably, the census tract data currently available are severely outdated. For this reason, participants were asked a number of questions intended to gauge conditions in their neighborhoods. Below, a snapshot of respondents was taken after they moved in order to compare neighborhood and housing conditions for opportunity movers versus high-poverty movers.²⁵ Our analysis revealed the following findings:

²⁵ It is important to note that this analysis does not compare pre-move housing and neighborhood conditions to post-move conditions; instead we take a snapshot at one point in time. We plan to analyze improvements over time in the final report.



Movers to opportunity neighborhoods report better housing conditions. Overall, movers to opportunity neighborhoods were less likely to report “big problems” or “some problems” with five aspects of building maintenance: peeling paint, rats or mice, roaches, broken locks, and heat that does not work. It is interesting that more opportunity movers report “big” or “some” problems with plumbing in their units (see exhibit 4.6).

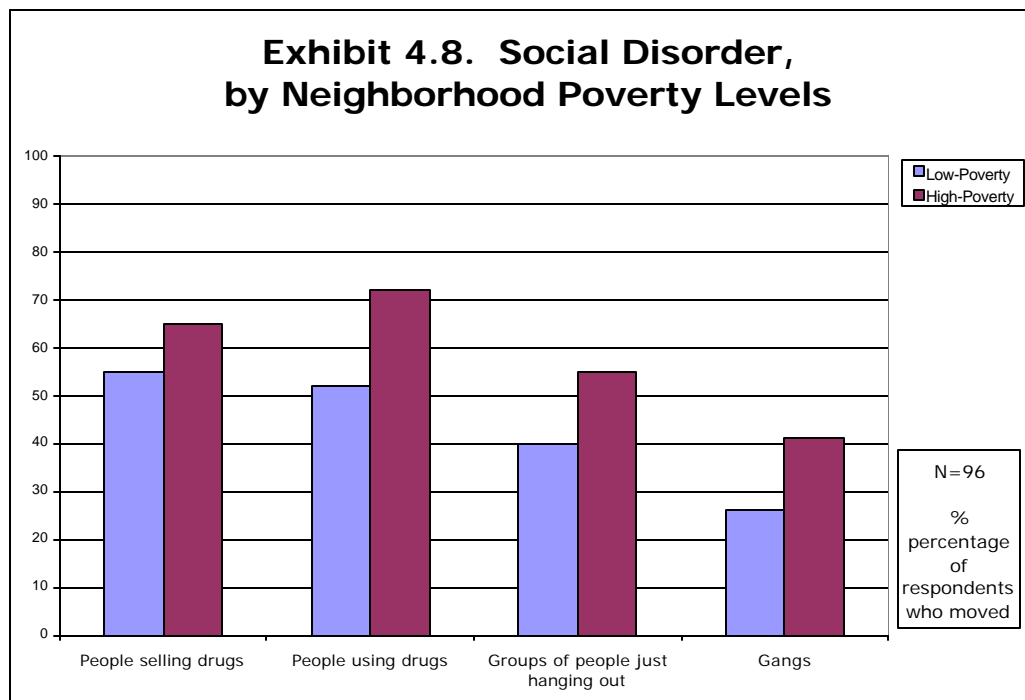
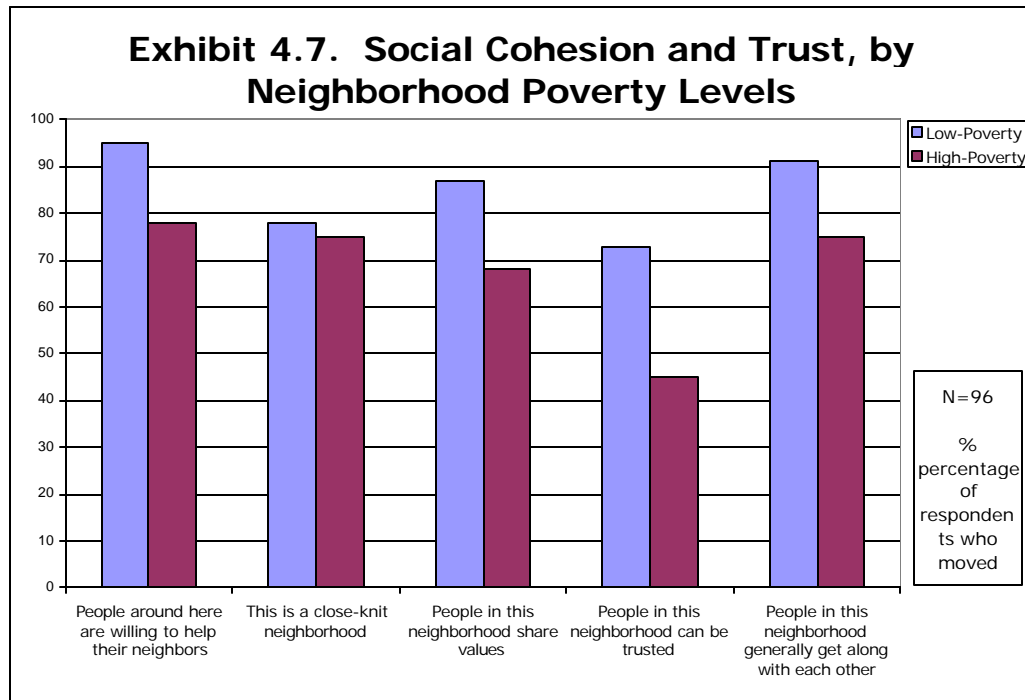


Movers to opportunity neighborhoods report higher levels of social cohesion among their neighbors. The six-month follow-up also shows statistically significant differences between movers to high- and opportunity areas in their perceptions of social cohesion in their communities. Approximately 23 percent more movers to low-poverty areas than movers to high-poverty areas report that “neighborhoods are close-knit” and that “people in the neighborhood can be trusted.” High scores on these measures indicate a stronger, more cohesive community and are associated with low crime rates (Sampson et al. 1997) (exhibit 4.7).

Movers to opportunity neighborhoods report lower levels of problems with crime and social disorder. Consistently, more movers to high-poverty areas reported “big problems” or “some problems” on each individual element of social disorder. Approximately 14 percent more movers to high-poverty neighborhoods report problems with people selling drugs; 24



percent more report problems with people using drugs; 20 percent more report problems with gangs; and 11 percent more report the police not coming when called (exhibit 4.8).





5. RECENT CHANGES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

In addition to the collection of quantitative data through our survey, a process study allowed the collection of data about key features of CHAC's Mobility Program, including how program participants move through the program, key program elements, and programmatic challenges that may hinder moves to opportunity neighborhoods. Our study also documented incremental changes that CHAC program administrators made in response to problems encountered during the early phases of implementation.

The next section summarizes the data that were collected through our process study, and highlights our major findings about programmatic implementation. The section presents recent changes CHAC administrators have implemented and some of the key areas CHAC should continue to address.

During our study, CHAC continued to implement new policies that seek to strengthen the program. We found several key reforms:

- C **Monitoring and tracking.** CHAC mobility staff have made substantial efforts to track second movers as they come through the program. This monitoring process needs to continue so that CHAC can continue to make changes as needed.
- C **Housing Choice Voucher briefings.** Earlier research conducted by the Urban Institute (Popkin and Cunningham 1999) suggests that the Housing Choice Voucher briefings were confusing and covered a lot of information in a poorly organized format. Further, the mobility component of the briefing was often passed through too quickly during the last few minutes of the briefings, instead of being a common thread throughout the briefing. Since that time, CHAC has worked with a communication consultant and has completely revamped its briefings and briefing materials to make them easier to understand. In addition, CHAC created separate briefings for Spanish-speaking households, and these are conducted twice a month.
- C **Inspections.** A common complaint from both housing counselors and program participants who are searching for housing is that inspections often take too long and result in lost units, particularly for participants interested in moving to opportunity neighborhoods. Our process study has documented slow inspections as an ongoing problem. Recently, CHAC took steps to train all mobility inspectors so that they can perform expedited inspections for families enrolled in the Mobility Program.
- C **Security Deposit Loan Program.** One of the major barriers to moving to opportunity neighborhoods is being able to afford a security deposit (Popkin and Cunningham 1998, Cunningham, Sylvester, and Turner 2000). To address this issue, CHAC created a Security Deposit Loan Program that offers zero-interest loans to participants in the



Mobility Program who move to opportunity neighborhoods. Initially, CHAC had some problems with participants not repaying their security deposit loans. In January 2001, CHAC initiated a process to improve payback rates. If a loan is more than 90 days late, CHAC issues an “intent to terminate” notice, which means participants are at risk of losing their voucher. Participants can pay half of what they owe or renegotiate their loan if they need to, but at this point, they must continue to pay their loan on time.

- C **Follow-up services.** Moving to an unfamiliar neighborhood is not easy, and the provision of follow-up services may make a difference in how families who move to opportunity neighborhoods adjust and choose to remain in their new neighborhood. In the past, CHAC housing search counselors had trouble providing comprehensive follow-up services to the participants who moved to opportunity neighborhoods because they focused their time on assisting families with moving. To overcome this problem, CHAC recently created a separate counselor position to conduct follow-up services after the participant moving.

There are still a number of areas in which the program could be strengthened. Some of these concerns and continuing challenges are highlighted below:

- On average, **caseloads** continue to be relatively high, although they vary by month and how quickly or slowly people lease up. At times, counselors reported that their caseloads are as high as 400 participants. Counselors also report that they spend most of their time on the phone and sometimes have as many as 60 messages from clients in a day. CHAC may want to consider limiting the number of households in the program at any given time or increasing the program’s resources so that it can increase the quality of services for the households enrolled in the program.
- **Consistent briefings** also appear to be a continuing challenge. CHAC has invested considerable time and funds in overhauling the mobility briefings to ensure that the materials are interesting, visually attractive, and easy to read. Still, there is variability in how particular items are presented at briefings, mostly due to the style or knowledge of the presenter. Further, more than half of our respondents reported not being shown the video on making a mobility move, and 18 percent of the respondents did not enroll in the Mobility Program because they “did not understand it.” These data suggest that briefing staff may not be reaching all potential mobility participants.
- **Discrimination against voucher holders** is a widely reported problem (this was heard from both counselors and program participants). During the briefings, mobility counselors emphasize that in the city of Chicago, landlords cannot discriminate against voucher holders. Program participants are told to contact Fair Housing and file a complaint if they believe they have been discriminated against. While this is good advice, program participants typically view filing a complaint as a difficult, lengthy



process. Further, program participants are not protected in suburban jurisdictions. CHAC mobility staff should consider partnering with a fair housing agency to develop a strategic plan to address the issue of discrimination against voucher holders within the city of Chicago, where it is illegal to discriminate against voucher holders. Suburban jurisdictions, which do not have protections for voucher recipients, should be lobbied to adopt local ordinances.

- ***Lack of meaningful and up-to-date information about poverty levels in neighborhoods.*** As indicated previously, CHAC, like all mobility programs, relies on census data to guide participants to opportunity neighborhoods. In many cases, census data may be so outdated that households are moving to neighborhoods that have “tipped” and are no longer low-poverty. Similarly, lack of up-to-date data may prevent movers from moving to opportunity neighborhoods. Also, neighborhoods that were once considered high-poverty may have improved; however, 1990 census data do not reflect these improvements.
- ***Improve and focus the content of follow-up services.*** Almost a quarter of our respondents “moved back” from opportunity neighborhoods to high-poverty neighborhoods. Further, a number of participants report “problems with landlords” as a main reason for wanting to move. These data suggest that follow-up services should focus on helping families to become stable in their new neighborhoods and develop better relationships with their landlords. The families who are ready for long-term self-sufficiency services should be referred to the CHAC's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program.
- ***Improve the connection between the FSS and Mobility programs.*** Our survey data show that high percentages of our respondents reported needing assistance with self-sufficiency-related services (education, job training, and so on), suggesting that there are a number of families who are participating in the Mobility Program who are also likely targets for the FSS Program. These families should be targeted during follow-up and encouraged to enroll in the FSS Program. Similarly, staff should recruit mobility participants, particularly those who have escrow accounts, from the FSS Program. Forging a strong connection between mobility follow-up services and enrollment in FSS may help more households remain in opportunity neighborhoods and become self-sufficient over the long term.
- ***Take active steps to alleviate discrimination against voucher holders.*** Our survey respondents and in-depth interview respondents consistently report problems with finding landlords who will accept Housing Choice Vouchers. CHAC mobility staff should consider partnering with a fair housing agency to develop a strategic plan to address the issue of discrimination against voucher holders within the city of Chicago, where it is



illegal to discriminate against voucher holders. Suburban jurisdictions, which do not have protections for voucher recipients, should be lobbied to adopt local ordinances.



6. CONCLUSION

CHAC has made significant progress in transforming a small mobility program into one of the largest programs in the country. Approximately 1,500 families who participated in CHAC's Mobility Program now live in opportunity neighborhoods (CHAC 2001). Overall, the number of voucher holders living in low-poverty neighborhoods has increased from 29 percent in 1995 to 42 percent in 2001. Despite the program's substantial progress, however, a majority of households receiving Housing Choice Vouchers still live in high-poverty, segregated neighborhoods.

Policymakers, local housing administrators, and researchers continue to express concern about the consequences of having large clusters of Housing Choice Voucher holders in high-poverty neighborhoods. Although some progress has been made toward encouraging Housing Choice Voucher holders to consider other, low-poverty neighborhoods, much more remains to be done.

Addressing challenges highlighted above is increasingly more important as housing assistance shifts from project-based to tenant-based assistance. The large influx of CHA residents with little experience in the private market is likely to have a major impact on the program and it appears that additional resources may be needed to address their needs within the current structure of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Changes in the welfare system and the current economic downturn are also likely to place new demands on the program and increase the need for housing search assistance.



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