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NEW CHOICES

for all  
families & children

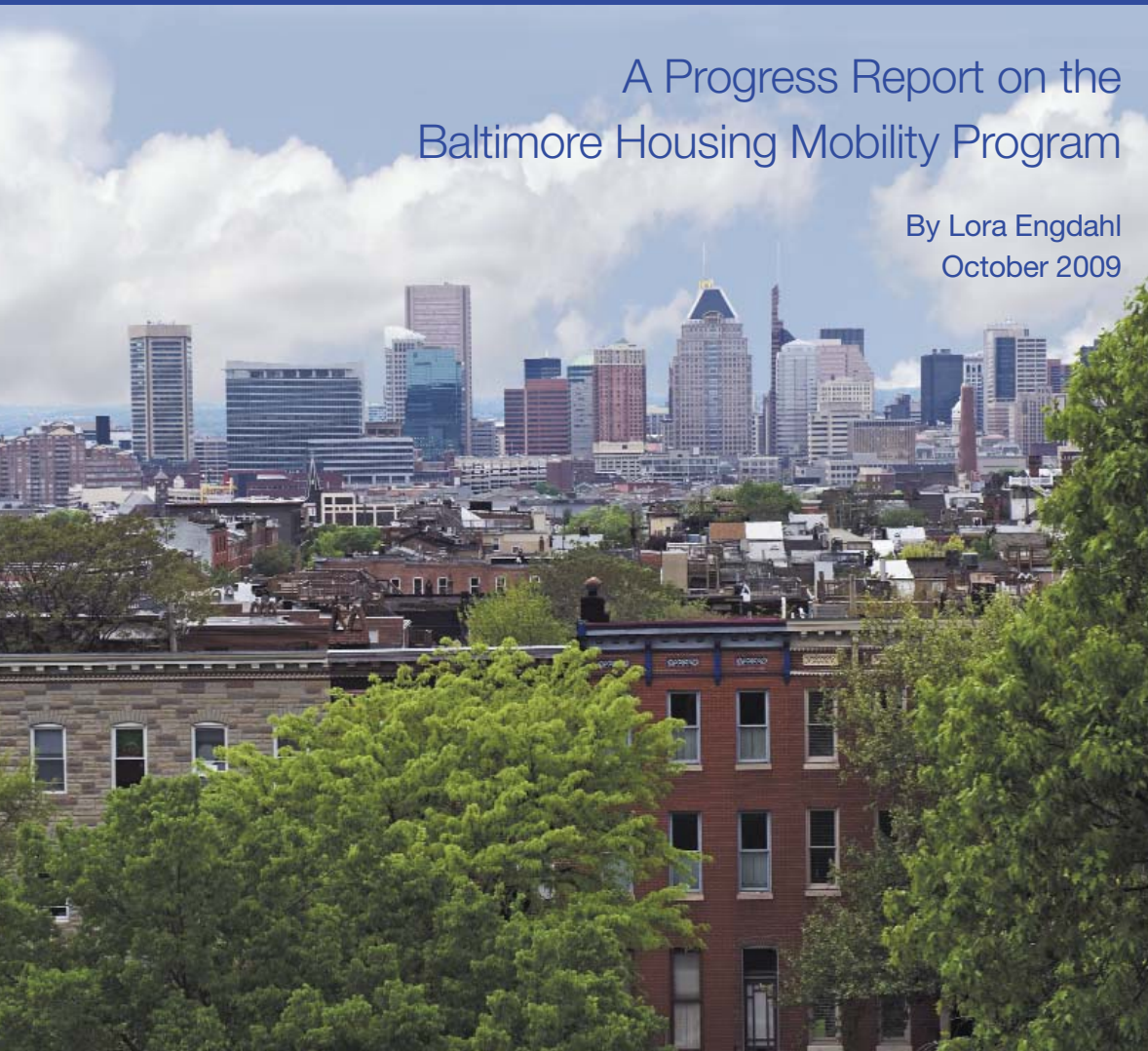
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Research Action Council

# New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools:

A Progress Report on the  
Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

By Lora Engdahl  
October 2009





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## A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

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Published by  
Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) and  
The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign

The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (BRHC) is a coalition of local and national civil rights and housing policy organizations that works to ensure that public policies and private investments are aligned to overcome historic divisions by race and class.

To learn more about the BRHC, visit: **[www.cphabaltimore.org](http://www.cphabaltimore.org)**

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The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign is a coalition of local and national civil rights and housing policy organizations that works to ensure that public policies and private investments are aligned to overcome historic divisions by race and class. The BRHC envisions a Baltimore region where all families have the right and the means to live in high opportunity communities with excellent schools, economic prosperity, and low rates of poverty.

Support for the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign has come from a wide range of sources, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Abell Foundation, the Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation, the Krieger Fund, the William G. Baker Jr. Memorial Fund, the Ford Foundation, and the Baltimore Community Foundation.

~ the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign:

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Cover Photo Credits: Top, MBQ participant, by Andy Cook. Second from top, High opportunity home, by Barbara Samuels. Third from top: Children of participating family in new neighborhood, by Andy Cook. Bottom, Suburban shopping plaza, by Barbara Samuels.



Program participant. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

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Children of participating family. Photo: Andy Cook.

## Executive Summary

### New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: Offering New Life Opportunities through the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

In the Baltimore region, a successful housing mobility program is providing families living in very disadvantaged inner city communities with a new home and a chance for a new life. Minority voucher holders in the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly titled Section 8) have often been limited to living in “voucher submarkets” where racial and economic segregation is high and opportunities are limited. The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, a specialized regional voucher program operating with deliberate attention to expanding fair housing choice, has overcome some of the biggest barriers to using vouchers in suburban and city neighborhoods where opportunities are abundant. The program’s results-oriented approach has produced a replicable set of best practices for mobility programs while presenting an important model for reform of the national Housing Choice Voucher Program. This report, *New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New*

*Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program*, provides the first-ever comprehensive description of the program.

#### The Origins of the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

Housing mobility emerged decades ago as a legal and policy response to the recognition that the nation’s deeply segregated housing markets deprive low-income African American families of the same level of opportunity available to whites. Beginning in the 1960s, public housing desegregation lawsuits filed on behalf of public housing residents sought to end the historical confinement of African Americans to high-poverty central city neighborhoods and public housing projects. The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program originated as a partial settlement of *Thompson v. HUD*, a public housing desegregation case filed in 1995. The program was

fully launched in 2003. Initially, two organizations were responsible for different facets of the settlement. Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ) administered all of the vouchers in the program and provided mobility counseling to families receiving tenant-based vouchers. Innovative Housing Institute (IHI) handled mobility counseling for the smaller project-based voucher program and a homeownership component. In 2007, all facets of the program were consolidated under MBQ's administration.

Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ) currently administers the program under contract with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) and under the oversight of HABC, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Maryland ACLU. MBQ has a critical partner in the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (BRHC), a coalition of local and national civil rights and housing policy organizations formed in the wake of *Thompson* to ensure that public policies and private investments are aligned to overcome historic divisions by race and class. Since 2005, the BRHC has supported innovative strategies to increase housing choice; promoted inclusive, mobility-friendly policies throughout the region; and attracted philanthropic investment in enhancements of the mobility program.

## Keys to Program Success

The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program helps current and former public housing families and families on the waiting list for public housing or Housing Choice Vouchers gain access to private

market housing in low poverty and predominantly white neighborhoods. Applicants who pass background checks and meet other eligibility criteria enroll in MBQ's counseling program, where they are prepared to succeed as tenants in more competitive housing markets.

Participants are taken through budgeting and financial education and are guided by counselors who serve as motivational coaches. Bus tours introduce participants to the myriad of employment, education, and health-related amenities in high-opportunity neighborhoods. Participants save for a security deposit and, when they are ready to move, work with their counselor to find a house or apartment that suits their needs. A federal Housing Choice Voucher covers a portion of their rent. While the vouchers can be used throughout the Baltimore region, they are specifically targeted to housing units in neighborhoods where less than 10 percent of the residents are in poverty, less than 30 percent of the residents are minority, and less than five percent of all housing units are public housing or in HUD-assisted housing complexes.

Families receive two-plus years of *post-move counseling* to help them adjust to their new homes and communities and *second-move counseling* to minimize disruptive and unwanted moves out of opportunity neighborhoods due to market barriers. They also receive *employment and transportation assistance* to access the rich employment resources of suburban areas—access that could otherwise be limited by the region's relatively weak public transit systems.

*Racial segregation separates lower income African-American and Latino families from opportunity in metropolitan areas, which predictably leads to depressed outcomes in education, employment, health, and other measures.*

"The Future of Fair Housing: Report of the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity" former HUD Secretaries Henry Cisneros and Jack Kemp, Co-Chairs, December 2008.

*This is the best housing program I've ever experienced. When I have any concern about the smallest thing my housing counselor is right on it. I appreciate her and all the effort she put into making my transition go so smoothly.*

—Program participant



## A SUMMARY OF PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

### Many Families and Children Helped

- 1,522 families moved to low-poverty, racially integrated suburban and city neighborhoods.
- 88 percent of families moved from the inner city to suburban counties.
- 1,277 children are now living in suburban school districts.

### Dramatic Changes in Environment

- Neighborhoods moved *from* were 80 percent black and 33 percent poor; those moved *to* were 21 percent black and 7.5 percent poor.
- Median household income in old neighborhoods was \$24,182 and in new was \$48,318.
- Eighty-three percent of settled participants (those who have been in their homes for at least 14 months) say their neighborhood is better or much better than their old neighborhood.
- Upwards of 70 percent of settled participants say schools; safety and less crime and drugs; friendly neighbors and people; and a mix of different races and cultures; are the most positive features of their new neighborhood.

### Significant Improvements in School Quality

- In schools in the new neighborhoods an average of 33 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch compared with 83 percent in original neighborhoods' schools.
- Almost a quarter of participating families moved to neighborhoods served by elementary schools with less than 10 percent of students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.
- In the new neighborhoods' elementary schools, 69 and 76 percent of students scored proficient or higher on state math and reading tests, compared with 44 percent and 54 percent in the original city schools.
- 88 percent of settled participants say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the schools in their new community.
- 89 percent of settled parents say their children appear to be learning better or much better in their new schools.

### Enhanced Quality of Life

- Nearly 80 percent of participants, surveyed after they moved, say they feel safer, more peaceful, and less stressed.
- Sixty percent of participants say they feel more motivated.
- Nearly 40 percent of participants say they feel healthier.

### Housing Stability

- Most families (62 percent) stayed in their original unit instead of moving when they became eligible to move from their initial unit.
- Only 19 percent of families who became eligible to leave their original unit moved from the suburbs back to the city.
- Families who made a second move went to neighborhoods that were less segregated and significantly less poor than the neighborhoods in which they lived before they joined the program.

Sources: MBQ administrative data (families affected); articles in preparation using MBQ and demographic data by Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt of Johns Hopkins University (Data for changes in neighborhood conditions, test scores in elementary schools, and housing stability, is as of 2007 and does not include families who were forced to move when apartment complexes were sold; see DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2009a and 2009b, endnote 4), a 2007 ACLU of Maryland survey of participants who lived in their new neighborhoods for at least 14 months (families perceptions of their neighborhoods and improvement in children's performance in school); and a 2008 ACLU of Maryland survey of families who recently moved for the first time under the program (quality of life perceptions). Full details on the source documents and findings are provided later in this report.

## Children Dream of a New Future

When Tamika Edwards, who grew up in Baltimore's now-demolished Flag House Courts public housing high-rise, arrived at the top of the waiting list for a slot in one of Baltimore's public housing projects, she turned the opportunity down. Though she disliked her distressed Upton neighborhood, she didn't want to jump "from the frying pan to the fire," she said. But when her oldest son, now 16, entered his early teens, she feared that he was starting to conform to the negative influence of peers in their troubled inner-city neighborhood. So she applied for the mobility program and moved her family to Elkridge, Md., even though the commute to her job as a medical technician in the city would be difficult.

"It did not bother me at all to move out here" she says. "I just wanted better and was willing to go just about anywhere. I was not sure what to expect but it has been all good."

She loves her family's new home and the diverse community of whites, blacks, Asians and Hispanics in which they live. Now with a car, work is just a 20 minute drive away. And at the suggestion of her closest neighbor, a nurse, she has enrolled in Howard Community College to pursue a nursing degree. Her children, now 16, 12, 10, and 5, have made friends in the neighborhood and at school. The curriculum in Howard County schools was challenging for them, Edwards says, but they have improved their grades from "C" to "A" and "B" averages and expanded their vocabulary, and now dream about their future. One child wants to be a teacher, another a nurse, another a lawyer. "Their schools and neighborhoods have shown them a different life and now they are different," says Edwards, adding that she too now wants more for herself.

"[The program] has given me a chance of a lifetime ... I am motivated to finish school ... and I want to buy a house like the one I have. I got a taste of something good and I want more." ■

MBQ not only provides counseling to families participating in the program, it administers the vouchers metropolitan-wide. To ensure the program's success on the ground, MBQ continually markets the program to landlords and monitors the placement of voucher holders to avoid "clustering" tenants. Because participation in the program is voluntary, assisted, and gradual, families are moving when they are ready and eager for a better life, and successfully transitioning into stable communities throughout the Baltimore region.

### Outcomes: Improved Quality of Life for Children and Families

Through the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, more than 1,500 poor African American families have voluntarily moved from racially isolated high-poverty neighborhoods in Baltimore to low-poverty racially integrated suburban and city

neighborhoods with lower unemployment, fewer recipients of public assistance, a lower percentage of high school drop outs, and better resourced and higher performing schools.

***Families seeking a new beginning find a dramatic change in environment.*** The most common reason why participants volunteer for the program is to escape crime and to find a better and safer neighborhood, as cited by 86 percent of recent movers surveyed in 2007. A significant number of recent movers also cited "better and safer schools" as motivating factors in their moves. Overwhelmingly, participants reported finding these desired environments in their new neighborhood (summarized in the chart on p.5). This is largely due to the fact that almost nine out of 10 families have used their initial voucher to move to suburban counties. More than 95 percent of new movers surveyed in 2008 said their new neighbor-

hood is better or much better than their old neighborhood and families consistently report high levels of satisfaction with both their new neighborhood and their home. Counter to some fears, the suburbs have not been a hostile environment. A high percentage of new movers describe their neighborhood as friendly, and longer-term movers cite the mix of people of different backgrounds, race, and ethnicity as the most positive aspect of their neighborhood.

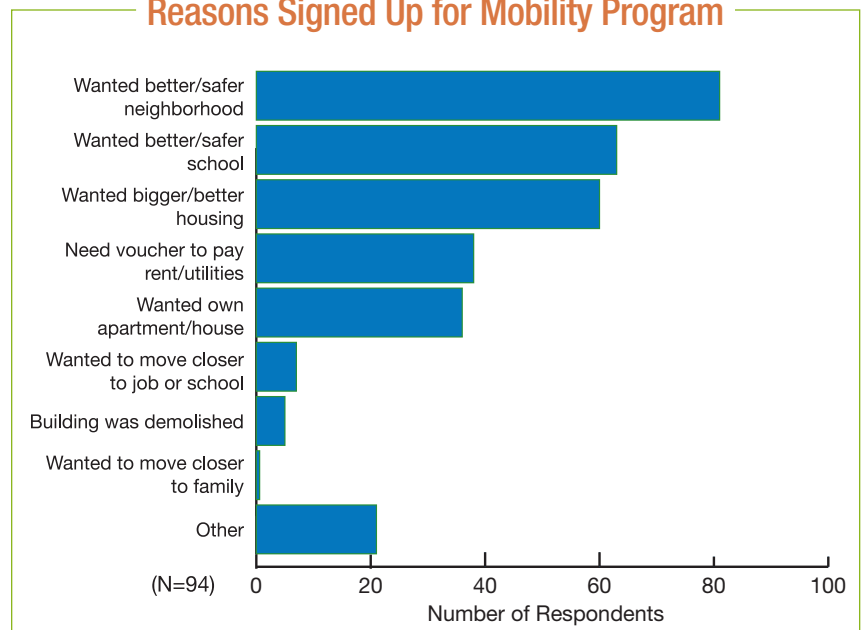
***The benefits of the program go beyond the basic goal of accessing better housing in a safe environment.*** Positive outcomes for participants include an increase in *quality of life, health, and educational opportunities*, and potentially, employment. In their new, high-opportunity neighborhoods, participants say they feel safer, healthier, less stressed, more motivated, and more confident in the future facing their children. Parents also report that their children are doing better in school. Ninety-three percent of recent movers responding to a 2007 survey said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the schools in their new community. Nearly as many longer-term residents (89 percent) said that their children appeared to be learning better or much better in their new schools.

***Stability and retention are providing the foundation for success.*** By helping adults and children remain in opportunity neighborhoods, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is positioning families for long-term gains in educational attainment, health, and self-sufficiency. As of September 2007—four and a half years after the Baltimore mobility program’s inception and before the implementation of program-wide “second-



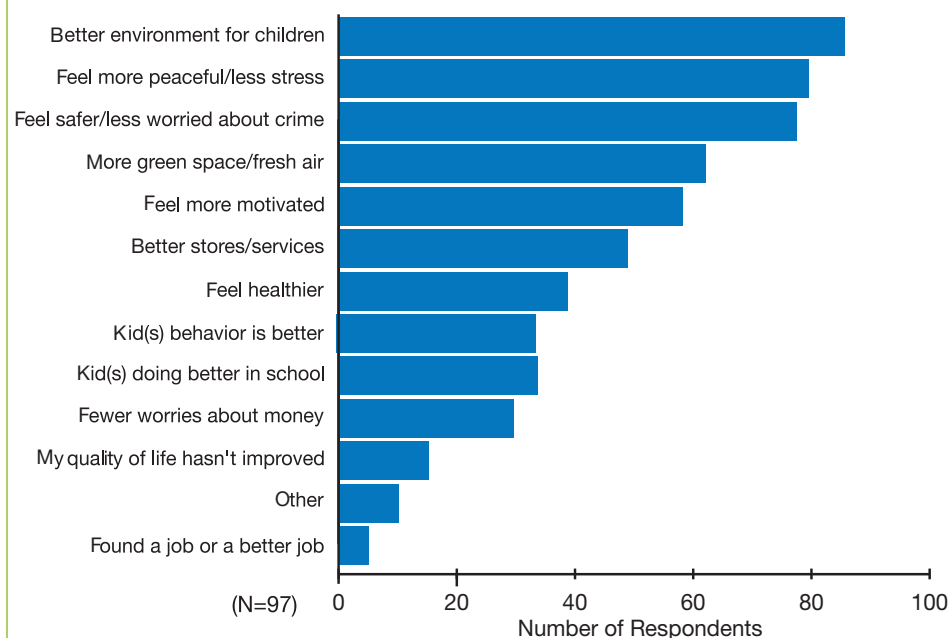
Suburban elementary school. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

### 2007 New Mover Survey Reasons Signed Up for Mobility Program



move” counseling—most families (62 percent) who had been in their initial unit for a year and were eligible to make a second move were still in their initial unit. Most of the families who left their original units were not moving back to their old neighborhoods<sup>1</sup>. According to this research, performed by Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt of Johns Hopkins University, only 19 percent of all of the families who could have moved at some point after the end of their first lease moved from the suburbs

## Quality of Life Improvement (2008 New Mover Survey)



back to Baltimore. When families do move from an initial suburban placement back to the city, surveys indicate that the primary reason is the need or desire for a larger unit—to “move up” from an apartment to a house.

## Next Steps for the Program and Mobility Policy Nationwide

After six years, MBQ is still working to create a better program. Next steps for enhancing program administration include reducing large caseloads; expanding and strengthening post-move supports for families; streamlining processes for landlords; enhancing education, health, employment and transportation supports; and increasing development of housing units receiving project-based subsidies.

At the same time, MBQ’s partners and fair housing advocates are hoping to use the early and promising results of the program to expand housing mobility programs in the region and in the nation.

The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is proving that poor African American families are able and willing to make it beyond the confines of traditional public housing neighborhoods and that low poverty and predominantly white neighborhoods are able and willing to enfold the new families into the fabric of the community. Bringing the benefits to more families and neighborhoods requires broader mobility reforms pushed by fair housing advocates including those promoted by the coalition members of the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign. BRHC is work-

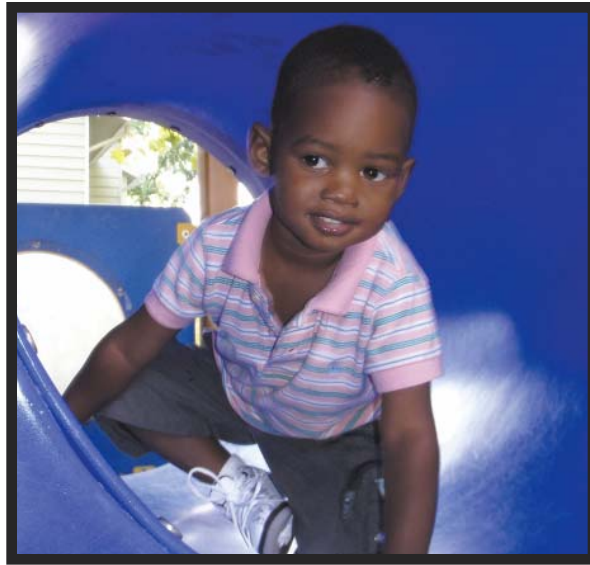
ing to eliminate local barriers to affirmatively further fair housing, such as Maryland’s stringent policy requiring local approval of housing developments financed through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

On a national level, the lessons learned through the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program argue for extending mobility more broadly in the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. The program

provides a blueprint for using vouchers as a tool for strengthening disadvantaged minority families by connecting them to the educational and economic vitality of low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods. When families move out of distressed neighborhoods and children do better in school and break out of the cycle

of poverty, the benefits are significant and accrue to the whole of society.

*I am grateful and so happy to be a part of the program. It has truly made a big difference in my life as well as my children.*  
—Program participant



Child of participating family. Photo: Maurice Gadsden.

*“Only a very small percentage of white children live in high poverty neighborhoods throughout childhood, while a majority of black children do.”*

Pew Charitable Trust, Neighborhoods and the Black-White Mobility Gap (2009)

## Introduction

### A New Chance for Striving Baltimore Families

In the nation’s imagination, Baltimore City represents quintessential urban America — its glossy tourist and business districts shadowed by gritty neighborhoods where families struggle to survive, raise their children, and maybe even get ahead. But in the real Baltimore, an effort that is helping disadvantaged families change their life circumstances has a storyline as compelling as any fictional narrative.

This true-life story is populated with people like Tamika Edwards. She and her four children lived in subsidized housing in Baltimore’s Upton neighborhood before joining a program that helped them move to Elkridge in Howard County. Edwards didn’t uproot her family to move merely 10 miles out of the inner city in order to change the world. She just wanted to give her children a better place to grow up than a neighborhood with high rates of poverty, crime, and failing schools.

Edwards spent her youth in Baltimore’s now-demolished Flag House Courts public housing complex. She knew instinctively what social science research has proven — to decrease her children’s chances of becoming teenage parents or victims of crime, and increase their chances of completing high school, maybe college, and getting decent-paying jobs, she needed to raise them somewhere else.<sup>2</sup> She needed a safe place to live with good schools, decent and affordable grocery stores, and employment opportunities for her family. She hoped change would come to her city neighborhood, but sensed it would not come soon enough to benefit her children, particularly her eldest son, who was becoming a teenager.

“I did not want him to become a statistic,” she said.

The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program<sup>3</sup> provides families like Edwards’s with a federally



funded voucher and counseling assistance to rent homes or apartments in suburban and city neighborhoods that differ dramatically from where they lived. Through the program, 1,522 poor African American families have voluntarily moved from racially isolated high-poverty neighborhoods in Baltimore to low-poverty racially integrated suburban and city neighborhoods with lower unemployment, less use of public assistance, fewer high school drop outs, and better resourced and higher performing schools.<sup>4</sup>

Most families are staying in their new more opportunity-affording neighborhoods, where they say they feel safer, healthier, less stressed, more motivated and more confident in the future facing their children. Parents also report that their children are doing better in school.<sup>5</sup>

The average family that has moved under the program is headed by a 29 year old female with an annual income of just over \$15,000 prior to their first move.<sup>6</sup> More than three-fourths of participating families have children, usually one or two children, although almost a quarter have three or more kids.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to the public perception that voucher households are welfare recipients, only about one-third of the mobility program heads of household were receiving welfare income when they moved. Just under half were earning some income from employment.<sup>8</sup>

While it is too early for a longitudinal analysis of improvements in educational attainment and other outcomes for these families, Edwards and the other participants surveyed by the ACLU of Maryland over the last three years report their lives are changing. Some, like Michelle Starks, who is now working as a cashier in a “big box” retail store less

than a mile from her new home in Bel Air, Harford County, were not working before moving and now have jobs. Others, such as Lenora Jones, also found new jobs close to their new homes. Jones, who drives a bus for the Howard County school district, lives in the county, giving her two daughters the chance to live in the same community where their mom works.

Still others are working on their education, with paths similar to Candice Nelson, who moved from Upton in West Baltimore to Perry Hall in Baltimore County and subsequently to Columbia in Howard County. Ending a 10-year break from school, Nelson received her GED and then enrolled in Baltimore City Community College where she is currently pursuing an associate degree in nursing. She plans to work full time at a local hospital while

using a scholarship from the Maryland Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies to complete her bachelor’s in pediatric nursing at Coppin State University. Many of Nelson’s peers in the program have also pursued GED, nursing, cosmetology, phlebotomy and other certifications. Others are taking more preliminary steps to better health or self-sufficiency, like going to the library and using the Internet, learning to drive, joining the PTA or exercising at a local fitness center.

As parents’ lives are changing, so are the lives of their children. Under the program, 1,277 children have relocated to suburban school districts, where, according to their parents, they are doing better in school. Some, including nine-year old Antwone Brown and his older brother Anthony, 15, left behind specific troubles. Antwone had difficulties



Program participant. Photo: Andy Cook.

in his city school, complaining that teachers singled him out and treated him differently. Now he's in the 4th grade in Howard County, doing well in more rigorous classes and singing in the school choir. In their old neighborhood, Anthony was beginning to exhibit behavioral problems and was starting to hang out with "the wrong type of kids." Now he is adjusting to his new high school, says their mother. Other children, such as Edwards's three eldest, 10, 12, and 16, struggled when they first transferred to their new schools because their peers grew up with a more demanding curriculum. The new schools worked with the Edwards children and their grades steadily improved from C averages to A's and B's. Equally impressive, they are already talking about the professional careers they want to pursue after high school.

Though these parents and their children each have different experiences, they are all benefitting from the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program's comprehensive approach to housing mobility. The early but promising results from the program could pave the way for expanding mobility throughout the region and extending mobility more broadly in the federal Housing Choice Voucher (formerly Section 8) program, which subsidizes rental costs for approximately 1.4 million families nationwide.<sup>9</sup> While the Housing Choice Voucher program has been shown to be a cost-effective means of providing stable housing for low-income families, it has been criticized for falling far short of the promise with which it was launched in the 1970s—to provide true housing choice.

### School Bus Driver Gets to Raise Her Kids in the Community Where She Works

Lenora Jones is enthusiastic about her new neighborhood in Columbia and the promise it brings. When Jones learned about the housing mobility program, she was living in a west Baltimore neighborhood she describes as "nothing but boarded up houses" and "drug addicts partying every night"—not the setting she wanted for her daughters, one of whom has special needs. She moved her family to a house in Columbia in Howard County, in a neighborhood with a pool, playgrounds, a lake, and a skate park. She responded to an ad seeking bus drivers for Howard County schools. They trained her, helped her get a commercial driver's license, and hired her as a school bus driver, a position which works well with her daughters' school schedules and gives them more time together. Although the "life changing" move was at first difficult for her younger daughter, who had done well in her city school but was having trouble keeping up with her peers in the more challenging suburban school, she moved fast so her daughter would not have to repeat a grade. Jones enrolled her in summer school math classes and worked with her at home. ■



Child in public housing, Baltimore City.  
Photo: Barbara Samuels.

*“Today, we have a better understanding of the relationship between poverty and housing policy in the United States, and the neighborhoods of concentrated poverty that resulted not in spite of government policies — but in many cases because of them.”*

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, “Giving Families a Choice,” *Huffington Post*, July 22, 2009.

## The Origins of the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

**H**istorically, it has been difficult if not impossible for disadvantaged inner city families receiving housing assistance to locate in the Baltimore metropolitan area’s more affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods, many of which were officially off-limits to African Americans before the advent of fair housing laws.<sup>10</sup> While the Baltimore region is highly segregated (14th in the nation among large metro areas<sup>11</sup>) generally, what goes for Baltimore goes for the nation.<sup>12</sup>

Understanding how Tamika Edwards and other mobility program participants made an improbable journey to life in suburbia requires a quick trip through the history of public housing desegregation lawsuits.

Housing mobility emerged decades ago as a legal and policy response to the recognition that the nation’s deeply segregated housing markets deprive

African Americans of the same level of opportunity available to whites. Where a family lives goes a long way toward determining whether children will benefit from high performing schools and have access to well stocked libraries and recreation programs, whether parents will be able to access the jobs that decentralized to the suburban malls and business parks, and whether fresh food and fresh air will be available to sustain health and well being.

In a nation where African Americans have historically been confined to high poverty inner city neighborhoods and housing projects, residential segregation means being segregated *away* from society’s opportunity structures. Life outcomes can often be projected on the basis of zip codes, and the lowest-income African Americans suffer from spatial disadvantages acute enough to lock many into poverty for generations.

When President Kennedy's 1962 Executive Order and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed "separate but equal" institutions for blacks and whites, civil rights attorneys working on behalf of brave tenants took aim at the extremely segregated public housing system. For decades, official policies of racial segregation and efforts to keep black public housing residents out of white neighborhoods had created inner city black public housing ghettos in cities across the country. The first major public housing desegregation lawsuit was filed during the Chicago "Freedom Movement" in 1966 and reached the Supreme Court in 1976. *Hills v. Gautreaux* "established the proposition that HUD shared responsibility with local defendants for intentional housing segregation, and could be required to promote regional housing integration as part of a comprehensive court remedy."<sup>13</sup>



Baltimore City public housing. Photo: Tonika Garibaldi.

The court-ordered remedy in *Gautreaux* was a 20-year HUD-funded program that gave more than 7,000 low-income black families counseling and financial assistance to rent privately owned housing in neighborhoods that were no more than 30 percent black. More than half moved to predominantly white, middle-class suburbs, where they flourished compared with the families who also moved but stayed within the city.<sup>14</sup>

*Gautreaux's* template of HUD liability, to be remedied with metropolitan-wide housing desegregation efforts, was followed in a number of housing desegregation lawsuits filed in the 1980s and 1990s, spawning many more mobility programs using Housing Choice Vouchers (then called Section 8 vouchers) as a mobility vehicle.<sup>15</sup> While this rental subsidy voucher program was created in the 1970s in part to provide an alternative to highly segregated public housing complexes, barriers in

the program and in suburban rental markets had effectively limited minority voucher holders to "voucher submarkets". The racial and economic segregation in these submarkets was only somewhat less intense than in public housing neighborhoods.<sup>16</sup> However, the court-decreed status of some mobility programs required HUD and public housing authorities to use the discretion already available under the rental voucher program—rarely used in a deliberate way—to open or expand housing opportunities for minorities beyond the traditional inner city neighborhoods.

At the same time, the growing body of research documenting the detriments of living in distressed, high-poverty neighborhoods and the benefits experienced by *Gautreaux* families escaping those neighborhoods prompted Congress in the early 1990s to enact Moving To Opportunity,

a demonstration program operating in five cities that aimed to test the impact of neighborhood environment on family outcomes.<sup>17</sup> Also in the 1990s, HUD launched the Regional Opportunity Counseling Program, a five-year program providing 16 metro regions with grants for mobility counseling for Housing Choice Voucher holders. While these federally funded efforts were expanding, private foundations and local and state governments also increased support of mobility efforts. At one point, government and private activity produced more than 30 housing mobility programs around the country.<sup>18</sup>

In 1995, amid this era of expanding focus on mobility, the ACLU of Maryland filed a public housing desegregation lawsuit on behalf of more than 14,000 former and current African American public housing families in Baltimore. *Thompson v. HUD* was larger than most such cases and had a



## Assisted Mobility Programs

	<b>GAUTREAUX</b>	<b>MTO</b>	<b>THOMPSON</b>
Site	Chicago, 1970s-1980s	Chicago, NY, Boston, LA, Baltimore, 1990s	<i>Baltimore, 2000s</i>
Origin	Lawsuit	Federally funded demonstration	<i>Lawsuit</i>
Number	7000	1729 Experimental; 1209 Section 8; 1310 Controls=4248	<i>2000 vouchers 13000 applicants 1000 moves to date</i>
Criteria and Moves	<=30% African American residents in tract  ASSIGNED UNIT	<=10% poverty rate  CHOICE WITHIN TRACT	<i>&lt;=10% Poverty &lt;=30% Af-Am &lt;=5% sub hous. CHOICE WITHIN TRACT</i>
Design	Quasi-experimental	Experimental	<i>Quasi-experimental</i>
Follow Up	Up to 20 years	4-7 Years	<i>1-4 years</i>

DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009 (see endnote 4)

complexity of claims. However, the impending demolition of some of Baltimore's family public housing high rise developments under HUD's new HOPE VI redevelopment program prompted the parties to quickly reach a partial settlement. The 1996 partial consent decree sought to allow the redevelopments to go forward without simultaneously perpetuating the city's longstanding pattern of public housing segregation. The case's larger claims awaited future legal resolution.

Specifically, under the partial consent decree, each of the more than 3,000 public housing units to be demolished were to be replaced with new housing opportunities, one-third of which would be new public housing units in mixed-income communities built on the sites of the demolished high rises. The remaining two-thirds would be newly developed or acquired hard units as well as units newly leased under the Housing Choice Voucher program in "non-impacted areas," defined as those areas where the percent of African American and poor residents was no greater than the Baltimore metropolitan average (i.e. where African Americans and poor families were under-represented.) The replacement package included a housing mobility program with

three components including 1,342 vouchers for families to rent private market housing in non-impacted areas (so-called tenant-based housing vouchers); 646 subsidies to be attached to specific units (known as project-based vouchers) in non-impacted areas reserved for mobility clients; and 168 vouchers subsidizing mortgage payments made by clients buying homes in non-impacted areas.

Families who had lived or were living in public housing, and those who were on waiting lists for public housing or Housing Choice Vouchers, would be eligible. Funding would come largely from HUD through the Housing Authority of Baltimore City.

The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program was launched in 2003 and is run by Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ), a subsidiary of the national consulting firm, Quadel Consulting Corporation.<sup>19</sup> MBQ administers the program under contract with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) and under the oversight of counsel for the plaintiffs in *Thompson v. HUD*, HABC, and HUD.





Suburban county homes. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

*“Many households make their residential choices based on very limited information and consider only a small set of alternatives...Experience in other policy areas suggests that changing the default option for choices can lead to profoundly different outcomes. Thus, why not reform the Section 8 voucher program so it is administered at a regional level? Why not introduce more widespread counseling? And why not incorporate a default option that voucher holders use their vouchers in low-poverty neighborhoods?”*

Ingrid Gould Ellen, “Supporting Integrative Choices,” in *Poverty & Race* (Sept-Oct 2008)

## Keys to Program Success

**T**he Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is an outcomes oriented, results-driven intervention that uses the lessons of the past as a starting point for further, continuous improvements. Staff at Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel (MBQ) constantly monitor the program through administrative data, maps of participant location and neighborhood demographics, periodic special data reviews (such as comparative school performance) and, of course, formal and informal staff feedback. The plaintiffs’ counsel at the ACLU of Maryland augment this monitoring with regular client surveys and interviews, with those who have recently moved and longer-term participants; client focus groups; and a Client Advisory Council. This ongoing scrutiny allows MBQ and parties to the

*Thompson* case to identify and address any weaknesses in the program.

Additionally, MBQ has a critical partner in the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (BRHC), a coalition of local and national civil rights and housing policy organizations which formed in the wake of *Thompson* to support the mobility program and promote principles of housing mobility and racial and economic integration. In their refinement of the mobility program, the BRHC has helped bring in critical philanthropic investment. Foundations including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Abell Foundation, and the Krieger Fund have contributed funds for enhanced counseling, employment, education, and transportation services for

program families.<sup>20</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation also provided funding for the independent study of the outcomes of the *Thompson* families, conducted by Stefanie DeLuca at Johns Hopkins University.

By continuously monitoring and feeding results back into the system along with outside ideas and philanthropic resources, the partners have produced a model of best practices for mobility programs. Following are detailed descriptions of the elements critical to the program's success.

***Creating fair housing opportunities with race- and poverty-based geographic targeting.*** Rather than taking the path of least resistance and referring clients to landlords in the high-poverty, predominantly African American housing “voucher submarkets”, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program furthers fair housing goals through an “opportunity approach” to placing families. While joining the program is voluntary, the pool of *Thompson* vouchers are specifically targeted to rent units in neighborhoods where less than 10 percent of the residents are in poverty, less than 30 percent of the residents are minority, and less than five percent of all housing units are public housing or in HUD-assisted housing complexes. Eligible areas are spread throughout a six-county area, the center of which is Baltimore City. (See map p.15)

The focus on targeting low-poverty, low-minority neighborhoods throughout the region derives from the history and research showing that black communities are uniquely disadvantaged, with even affluent African American neighborhoods suffering “from significant deficits in both public and private

investment” compared to similar white neighborhoods.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, job growth has been highest in the suburbs, which have historically been far less integrated than the cities. Some experts even say that disproportionate black poverty is due in part to the fact that African Americans in highly segregated metropolitan areas such as Baltimore live further from job rich areas than any other racial group, partly because of “job sprawl” to the suburbs.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, as a result of the geographic accessibility offered under the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, participating families not only move out of their neighborhood but often move to a new county, school system, and job market.

The geographic targeting of opportunity neighborhoods also recognizes the benefit of mobility counseling to sustaining strong neighborhoods. According to HUD-sponsored research conducted in Baltimore County, voucher-leased homes increased property values in

higher-valued, appreciating predominantly white neighborhoods (such as those sought by MBQ for its voucher families).<sup>23</sup> Reductions in property values were found only when voucher leased homes were clustered in a small area, or were located in economically declining or minority areas—outcomes that geographic targeting and mobility counseling help to avoid.<sup>24</sup>

***Regional voucher administration.*** Rather than just providing mobility counseling to families receiving vouchers, MBQ essentially administers a regional voucher mobility program. As such it avoids the considerable barriers in the regular Housing Choice Voucher program that dissuade voucher holders from moving from one jurisdic-

### Best Practices of the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program

- Race- and poverty-based geographic targeting
- Regional voucher administration
- Financial literacy, credit repair and life counseling to create competitive rental applicants and successful tenants
- Housing search assistance and motivational support
- Outreach to both owners of individual rental residences and apartment management companies
- Monitored placements to avoid over-concentration
- Two-plus years of post-move counseling
- Second-move counseling
- Employment and transportation assistance

## Divorced Mom Seeks Safety and Good Schools For Her Talented Daughter

As soon as her daughter finished the 6th grade at a Baltimore City middle school, Nicole McDonald moved her from their apartment in the Gilmor Homes public housing development to a townhome in the College Parkway area of Arnold, Anne Arundel County. McDonald had heard of the mobility program even before moving into Gilmor Homes, but wasn't sure she wanted to apply. Then one day, she got a call from her daughter's school saying she had been in a fight, started by some other girls.

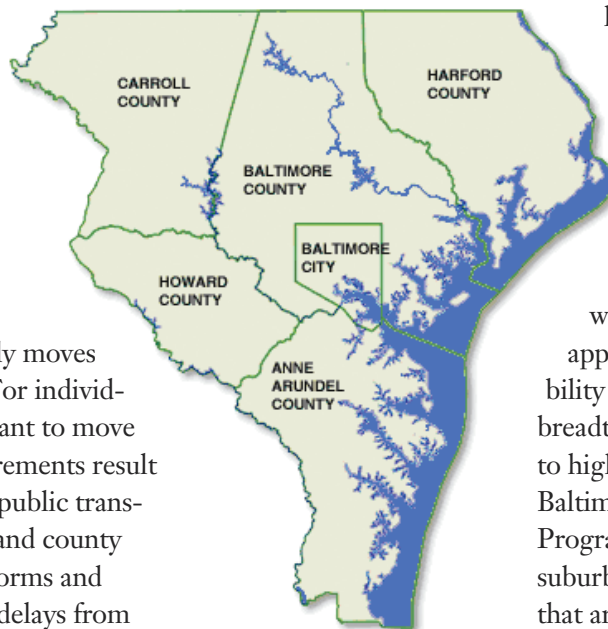
"They picked on her and said she had to build up her 'street cred.' I knew right away I had to get her up out of there," McDonald says.

McDonald, who has only been in her new home a short time, reports that the transition has been easy for her and her daughter. McDonald, who was unemployed when she moved, has a job interview in a retail store in Severna Park. Her daughter, an honor roll student, quickly made friends in the neighborhood, and is attending one of the best middle schools in Anne Arundel County, where she signed up for the band and other activities.

McDonald says she feels less safer, less stressed and healthier, mostly because she no longer has to worry so much about her daughter's safety. When they lived in the city, Ms. McDonald would not let her daughter go outside to play.

"I was stressed before—every day, all day. It is especially stressful when you have to confine your child to the house because you're terrified. She's the most important thing in my life....She didn't understand why she had to be inside all day, everyday. She would say 'You don't want me to be a kid!' When I told her she could go outside here, her face lit up. That was worth it right there." ■

tion to another. Under conventional voucher programs, such moves require voucher program administrators in the "sending" and "accepting" jurisdictions to enter into a complicated series of transactions that can also increase outlays if the family moves to a more expensive area. For individual voucher holders who want to move out of their area, the requirements result in multiple visits, often on public transportation, to multiple city and county voucher offices to submit forms and applications that all differ; delays from snafus or lost paperwork; and frustration when desired units are leased to someone else because of the delays. Meanwhile the clock keeps ticking on the limited search time allotted voucher



holders to 'use or lose' their long awaited voucher.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, participants in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program can scout units in many jurisdictions and work with one program, one application, and one set of eligibility criteria. Further, the breadth of potential units extends to higher rent areas because the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is permitted to lease suburban units with rental rates that are higher than normally permitted.<sup>26</sup>

**Communication with county officials.** Because the counties are still operating their own Housing

Choice Voucher programs, the mobility program works to keep the lines of communication open with the counties and synchronize their Housing Choice Voucher requirements not only with HUD but local standards. For example, in alignment with the counties' practices, MBQ conducts criminal background checks and excludes any household with a live-in family member who has committed a violent or drug-related crime in the last five years. MBQ keeps local housing offices informed of its activities but beyond that, program officials quietly go about their work.

***Tours and visioning workshops to expand participants' view of the possible.***

For many inner city families, the suburban counties and towns exist beyond the realm of consciousness. There is a good chance they've never visited suburban neighborhoods and don't know firsthand that these areas have plenty of shops and other amenities. When applicants entering the program come to MBQ's office in downtown Baltimore for their orientation, one of the first things they do is board a charter bus for a tour of some of these communities.

On these tours, MBQ housing counselors ask riders to notice how the streets with closely packed

homes and small yards and corner grocers and liquor stores give way to strip malls with an array of stores and townhouses with bigger yards and driveways not alleys. Guides also point out schools, doctor's offices, businesses, bus and metro stops, and other notable amenities.

"Well before the end of the tour, participants start asking how soon they can get their vouchers," says Darlene Brailsford, MBQ counseling team leader.

Nicole McDonald, who recently moved from Baltimore's Gilmore Homes public housing development to Arnold in Anne Arundel County, says the tour helped to dispel some of her preconceptions and worries about living in the suburbs. "You think if you

live in the county nothing is near you, but we found malls. They showed us where the shopping was, the schools. They pointed out 'we have tenants living over here.'" McDonald also found the tour to be motivational: "It was beautiful. It encouraged me to get going through the process."

***Pre-move credit counseling and other preparations for successful tenancy.*** When participants on the initial tour see where they can relocate, many want to move right away. "Not quite so fast," warn staff, who now must sustain that excitement through what can be a long counseling and housing search process. Unlike the so-called "voucher submarkets" in the city and lower-income areas of the older suburbs, the rental markets in these suburban communities are much more competitive. Participants must be attractive to landlords in these areas, which often requires patching up their credit and otherwise working on their presentation. Staff conduct home visits to identify any housekeeping issues that could give rise to landlord complaints over conditions in units; hold "readiness workshops" on tenant rights and good neighbor responsibilities; and provide financial and credit counseling, including lessons on maintaining budgets.

*I would recommend this program to anyone seeking better housing assistance. This program has been very helpful to me with the informational workshops and very helpful housing counselor. The move to my new neighborhood has been a great success!*

—Program participant



MBQ outreach meeting, Baltimore City. Photo: Barbara Samuels.



Because the program seeks to create successful tenants, participants are counseled that they should raise their credit score to at least 550 and save approximately \$1,000 for a security deposit and moving costs before they get their voucher and begin their housing search. To help them reach this goal, and because successful tenancy is seen as just one step in a broader journey to opportunity, each family works with their counselor to create an individualized family plan. The plan encompasses actions such as sticking to a budget, paying down debt, opening a savings account, enrolling in educational programs, and pursuing employment. Although all families are very low-income, some are more ready than others to make an “opportunity move.” Families are not turned away if they have large debts and little income, health problems, and other barriers. Instead, they move at their own pace through this process of getting “voucher-ready.” Once they have addressed credit barriers and accumulated savings, the program will pay a portion of the security deposit needed to rent a home in higher rent suburban areas, up to \$1,000. For some the process takes only a few months, while for others it can take two years (the average is about 12 months).

The overwhelming response to the program, and the large caseloads it generates, makes it difficult for counselors to give each person as much individualized counseling as they would like. As of August 2009, 19,286 families have applied to the program. Of those, approximately 6,000 have been determined *Thompson* eligible (i.e. they are a present or former resident of public housing or joined the Baltimore Housing Authority’s waiting list for housing assistance before 2002), cleared a criminal background check, attended an initial workshop outlining program requirements, and are enrolled in counseling. Currently, there are 2,280 families in the pre-placement caseload, for an average caseload of 190 families for each of the 12 program counselors.

*The staff really wants you to achieve more and to accomplish a happy move for you and your family.*

—Program participant

Still, even with the limitations imposed by high caseloads, the program provides much more support for families than voucher holders typically experience. “I had never seen or heard of a program that helped so much,” says Tamika Edwards of her experience moving with her four children from Baltimore’s Upton neighborhood to ElkrIDGE in Howard County. “I felt like my counselor cared about me and my family. We were not just a number on a list.”

**Housing search assistance with escorted unit visits.** Once participants receive their voucher, apartment and house hunting begins in earnest. Counselors help participants think through such issues as “What neighborhood has a bus stop so I can get to my job?” or “Which area has a medical

clinic where I can transfer my kids’ records?” With its extensive landlord outreach, the program has a network of prescreened rental units that participants are encouraged but not required to consider. Of course, all units must meet the minimum housing quality and habitability standards

established by HUD regulations and rents must be reasonable and fit within the financial parameters of the program.

**Marketing to landlords and landlord education.** HUD rules require all voucher programs to conduct outreach to landlords with units in low poverty and non-minority areas, but this is rarely a focus of the typical big city voucher program. Unfortunately, poorly run Housing Choice Voucher programs in some cities have given the Housing Choice Voucher program a bad name with landlords. Many property owners and managers do not accept vouchers, and this discrimination against voucher holders has been well documented.<sup>27</sup> To counter these negative biases, MBQ’s homeownership and project development manager, Tom Gunn, stresses the many positive and unique aspects of the Baltimore Housing Mobility program. Participating families volunteering for the program are highly motivated and



## Settling Down Helps Mom Get Job

Adele Ullman learned about the mobility program from a neighbor at the Perkins Homes public housing complex and didn't care that it might mean moving far from the neighborhood. In fact, "the further away, the better," Ullman says. She moved to an apartment in Bel Air before settling into a townhouse in Abingdon in Harford County. After taking classes in a training program, she now works as a medical billing clerk. She says her neighbors are "fantastic" and that they sometimes mow one another's lawns. Her two children have made friends in the neighborhood and are doing well in school. ■

highly prepared to move; counselors provide two years of post-placement assistance, serving as a valuable contact for the landlord if problems arise; and MBQ's landlords get the rental subsidy payments like clockwork.

"The counseling aspect really sells the program," Gunn says. "Landlords tell you that many problems that arise with tenants are beyond the ability or scope of the landlord to address or resolve. They like the security of knowing that if a problem comes up, a counselor from MBQ can assist the tenant and landlord," says Gunn.

MBQ operates from the understanding that landlord participation in the program is a business proposition. This is the message Gunn conveys when he talks to individual landlords, meets with realtors who work with rental property owners, holds landlord outreach sessions, and gives presentations to real estate investment groups and rental and homeownership associations. Landlords are assured that they can screen and select program tenants just like they would screen any potential tenant; that they can use, and enforce, their standard lease; and

that MBQ is not going to act as advocates for tenants who violate the terms of their lease.

Beyond deflecting misconceptions about operations, program officials must contend with one of the major barriers to Housing Choice Voucher use in low poverty suburban neighborhoods and a factor that has hurt the voucher program—a lack of affordable apartments with three or more bedrooms. (It is a deficiency some housing experts attribute to local zoning laws aimed at excluding poor minority families). This is why MBQ conducts extensive outreach to owners of single-family properties (including detached homes and attached townhomes). In fact, some "mom and pop" owners of single-family properties are so satisfied with the program that they have referred other landlords to MBQ. As in any rental program, late rental payments from tenants and other problems do occur on occasion and the landlords, tenants, and counselors work out the problem and moved forward.

***Setting aside existing units in the suburbs.*** In addition to building a network of landlords, the program secures some units for program families by entering into contracts with property owners who commit federal voucher payments to the unit for a set period of time. Most of these project-based voucher (PBV) units are existing units rather than newly constructed or rehabilitated units, and therefore do not physically expand the housing stock. They do guarantee access to units for a certain number of years and ameliorate some of the burden of finding willing landlords and affordable units that meet quality standards. Families who find it difficult to search on their own, including disabled or elderly households, and families who work long hours, can especially benefit from referrals to owners and units that are already under contract with the program. The program is also able to exert a greater degree of control over the location of PBV units than is possible in a tenant-based program, deliberately seeking areas with stronger schools or few county voucher holders.

### ***Counselors serving as motivational coaches.***

Even with the removal of some structural barriers and with a mobility counseling agency to help pave the way, moving is still a big challenge for families who are pushing the boundaries of their comfort zone. This is where the counselors contribute critical albeit incalculable value, coaching participants through their doubts and fears.

Participating families are moving into areas where they never envisioned living and it helps to remind them that it is possible and others have already led the way. Nicole McDonald, who earlier spoke of her positive experiences with the bus tour of the suburbs, said she doesn't think she could have succeeded in finding her unit in the suburbs without the help of her counselor.

"Without my counselor, I probably would have given up. When she thought I was getting discouraged, she said 'It's going to be okay. Call me every day, that's my job.'"

Although success rates for mobility programs are expected to be lower due to the difficulties of securing housing in low poverty areas,<sup>28</sup> MBQ's "success rate" in 2008 was 80 percent, above the national average for regular voucher programs, which was 69 percent according to the most recent study.<sup>29</sup> MBQ's 80 percent success rate is also well above the 58 percent rate posted by Baltimore MTO voucher holders in the mid-1990s.<sup>30</sup>

***Monitoring placements to avoid "clustering" tenants in any one neighborhood.*** While many people are likely to endorse the idea of welcoming in their midst a single mom who is working hard to

make life better for her kids, the presence of large numbers of poor families moving into stable neighborhoods may spark a more fearful reaction. Recognizing that, MBQ regularly reviews maps and charts showing where program families are going. If certain areas start to receive a lot of par-

ticipants or already have a large number of voucher families from the regular local Housing Choice Voucher programs, they step up recruitment in other areas. This is in contrast with the *laissez faire* approach the regular voucher program which frequently results in clusters of voucher holders in identifiable "voucher submarkets."

***Avoiding too many placements in any one development.*** In late 2005 and early 2006, five large apartment com-

plexes, which had been housing mobility clients under short-term project-based voucher contracts, were sold. Roughly 200 families, most of whom had lived in their units an average of 14 months, were forced to relocate. MBQ counselors were flooded with families needing new units all at once. As a result, many of these families moved to Housing Choice "voucher submarkets" in the city. Learning from this experience, program officials try to avoid having a significant number of clients lease units in any one complex. They keep the number of project-based units leased in any single apartment complex well below the 25 percent permitted by the PBV program and focus on recruiting owners of single-family properties for PBV five-year contract minimums.

***Two-plus years of post-move counseling to help families adjust and connect.*** Learning from the past, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program



Home in suburban county. Photo: Tom Gunn.

does not “discharge” families from the program once they have successfully found a new home. While MTO and other early mobility programs focused on housing search and pre-placement counseling, growing recognition that families often need assistance adjusting to their new communities has given post-move counseling a much more prominent role in today’s generation of housing mobility programs. At the suggestion of the suburban counties, HUD added funds earmarked specifically for post-placement supports to the *Thompson* partial consent decree. Within three weeks after a family in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program moves into their new home, their counselor pays a visit to see how things are going and make sure the children are registered for school.

Counselors follow up with at least four more visits over the next two years and clients are encouraged to contact counselors if needs or problems arise, whether it involves transferring Medicaid benefits, filing taxes or resolving disputes with landlords. At the end of two years, counselors don’t put the family’s file away but rather encourage families to continue using them as a resource.

Before January 2008, the post-move assistance described above lasted only one year.<sup>31</sup> The extension of post-move assistance to two years was a direct outgrowth of a pilot program launched by MBQ with contributions from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Casey “enhanced mobility program” began in 2006 and initially involved 75 families (with an additional 35 families enrolled in 2009 as other families cycled out of the program). The families received a second year of post-move counseling, which included specialized “second move” counseling for families considering relocating to a second home, and employment services. The high stability of the “enhanced caseload” helped demonstrate the benefits of a second year of post-move support, as well as second-move assistance to the entire caseload.

**Second-move counseling.** Generally, Housing Choice Voucher families sign an initial lease for one year and are not permitted to break the lease and

move during that first year. However, after the first year, in accordance with regular voucher program rules, families have the ability to move wherever they can find a willing landlord and an affordable unit that meets inspection standards. Program administrators have observed that like other renters, voucher holders tend to move frequently, perhaps as often as every three years and in some cases every year.<sup>32</sup> While moves are not necessarily bad—ie., families can move to better housing or to areas with better schools—researchers caution that children who transfer schools too frequently can suffer academically and that schools with a high number of transferring children (common in some city schools) suffer declines in performance.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, frequent moves can be a special challenge for mobility programs because each move raises the potential that a family can be drawn back into a voucher submarket or other high poverty area. Experience and data suggests that although family ties or obligations undoubtedly pull some families closer to their original neighborhoods, secondary moves by mobility program participants are most often prompted by landlord issues and the need or desire for a larger unit.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, second-movers may find it difficult to find a unit in their new high opportunity community, while landlords in “voucher submarkets” actively seek voucher holders.<sup>35</sup>

A couple of years ago, staff noticed that some families were moving after their initial lease year. They dedicated resources to working with those families who expressed a desire to move again so that their decisions are as much as possible influenced by the family’s preferences, rather than by market limitations and other external factors. Now, a family’s request for a new voucher to move automatically triggers a telephone call from their counselor. This “second move counseling,” which had been successfully piloted among a small group of program participants, includes counseling on the pros and cons of moving, help identifying neighborhoods that meet individuals’ needs, and referrals to hard-to-find units in high opportunity areas. As part of the process, counselors encourage families who still

want to move to relocate during a break in the school year to minimize disruption to their children's education.

"We know that the average market renter stays in a unit two years, so we try to encourage our participants to stay there at least that long," says Jim Evans, managing director of MBQ. "When you look at the data, it looks like we are getting stability. Now, even when families have made a second move, they tend to stay nearby."

**Employment counseling.** Housing programs generally are not expected to boost employment or income, but housing mobility programs now are held to a higher standard and evaluated for their employment outcomes. Not surprisingly, MTO, HOPE VI and other demonstration programs of the 1990s, taught that better employment outcomes can be expected only if services and incentives proven to yield better employment results are provided along with stable housing.<sup>36</sup> The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign secured supplemental funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation for employment services for the subset of families participating in the enhanced mobility program.<sup>37</sup> The employment services include updating customized family assessments and family spending plans to pursue and track career progress, offering referrals to educational and career development resources to increase participants' ability to compete in the job market, and providing transportation assistance, including assistance to travel to one stop job centers. Additionally, the Greater Baltimore Urban League recruited "champion employers" willing to consider mobility clients for job openings.

The number of employed participants in the "Casey caseload" more than doubled, from 26 in late 2006 to 52 in June 2008. Furthermore, by mid 2008, 25 of the 26 clients who already had a job when first participating in the program obtained a

promotion, merit pay increase or better job with a new employer. On average, employed clients in the enhanced caseload were earning \$12 an hour.

These outcomes led MBQ to incorporate some of the employment interventions deployed in the Casey caseload program-wide. Now when families entering the program meet with their counselor to create their family plans, they complete an employment assessment form that helps identify the kind of employment supports they need, whether it is GED tutoring, job training, child care or transportation. If appropriate, counselors make referrals

to the one stop career centers in their current and future neighborhoods. Employment issues are also discussed when counselors make their site visits.

#### **Transportation assistance.**

From the outset, the *Thompson* decree anticipated that the relatively weak public transit system

in the Baltimore region would be a barrier to fair housing choice for mobility families. To tackle this barrier, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has connected with an existing nonprofit car ownership program serving Maryland and Virginia communities called "Vehicles for Change," which offers low-cost financing to purchase used cars, with monthly payments ranging from \$70-\$98 for a 15-month loan. (Vehicles for Change is one of many such programs in the country.) The Abell Foundation is providing funds, matched by *Thompson* decree funds, so that working families in the mobility program can obtain used cars through Vehicles for Change. Funding from the Abell Foundation is also paying for 75 percent of the driving school tuition costs for mobility program participants who request assistance. Driving school assistance is critical in Maryland, because it is one of the few states that requires adults to take a formal drivers' education course in order to obtain a license.<sup>38</sup> Many families cannot spare the \$300-\$400 cost for drivers' education.

*MBQ is definitely dedicated professionals helping... people not only to receive housing but to achieve life goals.*

—Program participant





Participating family playing in new neighborhood.  
Photo: Andy Cook.

*“When a family chooses a place to live, they are choosing a foundation from which to build their lives. They are not just choosing a home, they are choosing a school for their kids, they are choosing transportation options and public services.”*

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, prepared remarks at the Urban Land Institute Annual Forum, April 23, 2009.

## Outcomes:

### Improved Quality of Life for Children and Families

**T**he Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is helping families from very disadvantaged communities seek a better future. More than 1,500 families have experienced a dramatic change in environment, moving from highly segregated, poor city neighborhoods to low-poverty racially integrated suburban and city neighborhoods. More than a thousand children are now living in suburban school districts with significantly better schools. Their neighborhoods have low unemployment, fewer people on public assistance, and fewer high school drop outs. The new, more opportunity-affording neighborhoods have instilled new confidence and motivation in program participants whose former neighborhoods left them feeling stressed, unsafe, and unhealthy.

#### **Families Seek and Find a Dramatic Change in Environment**

Before receiving their vouchers and moving, mobility program participants were predominantly living in communities with public housing complexes or high concentrations of other subsidized housing or vouchers, typically in East and West Baltimore and Cherry Hill. About one quarter of the families were current or former public housing residents while the remainder were on the waiting list for public housing and/or housing vouchers,<sup>39</sup> including some who were in public housing previously and/or were living in other types of HUD subsidized housing.<sup>40</sup> These families sought, achieved, and embraced dramatic changes in their living environments with resiliency and optimism.



***Families apply for the mobility vouchers in search of better and safer neighborhoods and schools, not just to find affordable housing.***

Participating families—some of who were commuting long distances to jobs in the suburbs—share a common desire to move to a safer neighborhood with better schools. Surveys and interviews with program participants who recently moved, consistently reveal that safety and the desire to escape drug-related criminal activity are the primary reasons families apply to the program. For example, 86 percent of recent movers surveyed in 2007 said they applied to the program to gain access to better and safer neighborhoods. Families with children are also motivated by the desire to obtain educational opportunities for their children. In the same survey, two-thirds (67 percent) cited the desire for better and safer schools as a reason they applied to the program (among respondents with children, an even higher percentage sought better schools).<sup>41</sup> Housing related reasons are usually secondary to these factors, although the need or desire for bigger or better housing ascended to first in importance, slightly eclipsing better schools, in the 2008 survey of recent movers.

***Families move throughout the Baltimore metropolitan area.*** According to MBQ administrative data as of June 2009, 11 percent of families who had made initial moves under the program used their voucher to stay within Baltimore City, and move to lower poverty, racially integrated neighborhoods. The remaining 89 percent moved to suburban counties, almost evenly split between Baltimore County and the outer suburbs. Baltimore County, the metro region's largest county, virtually surrounding the city, received 43 percent of first-time movers. Howard County was next with 23 percent. Also receiving a significant portion of moving families were Anne Arundel County (12 percent) and Harford County (11 percent). One family moved to exurban Carroll County.

***Families move to dramatically different neighborhoods.*** Mobility program participants do not



Suburban county neighborhood. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

### Origin and First Move Neighborhood Characteristics

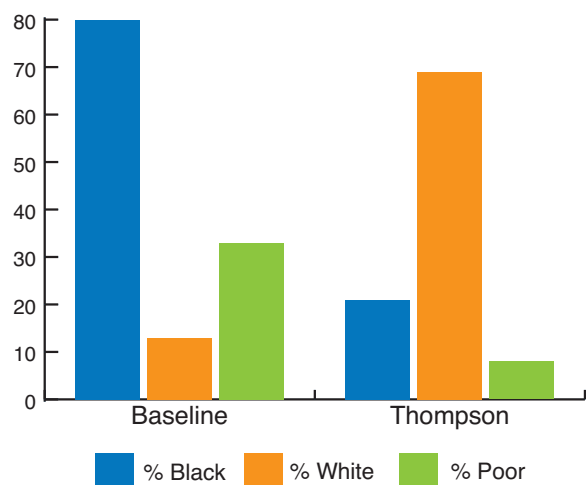
	Origin NH	First Move NH
<b>2000 Census</b>		
%White***	16.0	68.7
% Black***	80.0	21.1
% w/ HS Diploma***	61.3	85.2
% w/ BA***	6.3	19.1
Median HH income***	\$24,182.00	\$48,318.00
% HH with Public Assist. ***	11.9	1.6
% individuals below poverty***	32.8	7.5
% Renter Occupied Housing***	59.5	41.0
Median Rent***	\$532	\$640
% Unemployed***	17.0	4.4
% Jobless***	55.0	32.2

Means significantly different: \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001  
N=1018.

DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009

experience small changes in a neighborhood environment with a move. They experience a dramatic change across a whole host of indicators. In the

## Baseline and Thompson Move Neighborhoods



DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009

words of one participant, the program “gives you the chance to see another side of the world.”

On average, the neighborhoods that these families left were among the most highly segregated and disadvantaged in the metropolitan area where on average, 80 percent of residents were African American, 17 percent were unemployed, 33 percent were living in poverty, and the median household income was \$24,182. More than one in eight residents (12 percent) were on public assistance. Only 61 percent of adults had a high school diploma and only 6.3 percent had a bachelor’s degree.

When they moved, mobility program participants went to neighborhoods that, on average, were 21 percent black and 69 percent white, had an unemployment rate of just 4.4 percent, a poverty rate of just 7.5 percent, and a median household income of \$48,318. Only 1.6 percent of the households were receiving public assistance. Eighty-five percent of the neighborhood’s residents graduated from high school and 19 percent graduated from college.<sup>42</sup>

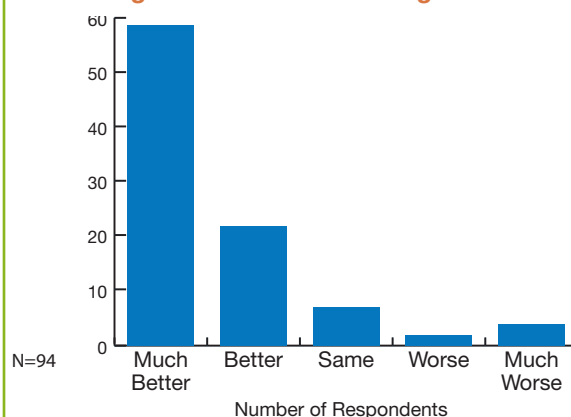
*The areas are nicer, clean and you don’t have to worry about crimes being done around your children.*

—Program participant

**Participating families find the better and safer neighborhoods they desired when they signed up for the program.** Program participants view the differences in their new neighborhoods as a marked improvement. A 2007 survey of program participants who recently moved found that 86 percent said their new neighborhood is better or much better than the neighborhood from which they moved, with 63 percent saying much better. More than 95 percent of new movers surveyed in 2008 said their new neighborhood is better or much better, with 72 percent saying much better. Sixty-three percent of respondents to this survey rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to raise children. Further, a 2007 survey found no appreciable decline in perception of environmental improvement among participants who had been in their new communities for 14 months or more.<sup>43</sup>

**Participants report that they are satisfied with their new homes and neighborhoods.** Traditionally, the success of any affordable housing program is determined by whether it is providing decent housing in a safe and healthy environment. From a fair housing perspective, it is also critical to ask whether a housing program goes beyond that basic goal by enabling minority clients to exercise the same breadth of housing

## 2007 New Mover Survey Comparison of Old Neighborhood to New Neighborhood



choices and attain the same level of neighborhood satisfaction as white assisted-households.<sup>44</sup> In annual surveys and follow-up interviews, participants in the Baltimore housing mobility program consistently report high levels of satisfaction with their new homes and neighborhoods. For example, surveys of program participants who recently moved found that 85 percent of 2007 respondents and 90 percent of 2008 respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their new neighborhood, with most saying very satisfied. Similarly 81 percent of 2007 respondents and 84 percent of 2008 respondents reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their house or apartment.

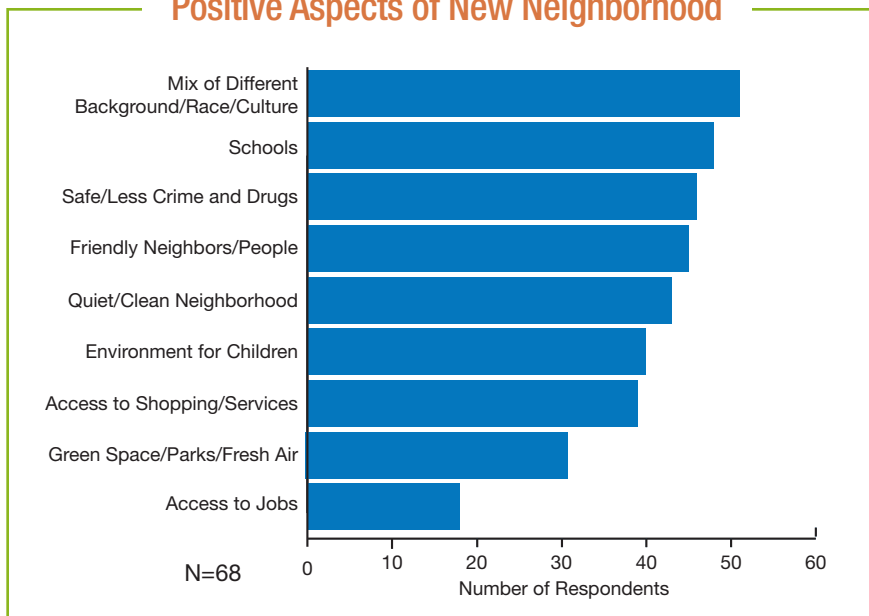
***Participants value the diversity of their new neighbors and community.***

One might expect participants to be satisfied with their new neighborhoods because of the improved public safety, better schools, or richer array of amenities offered by more affluent communities. Indeed, when participants who were still in their initial program placement for 14 months or more were asked in 2007 what aspects of their neighborhood they found to be positive, these factors are cited by large majorities of respondents. But perhaps surprisingly, neighborhood diversity ranked the highest. Eighty percent of respondents cited a different mix of races and cultures as a positive aspect of their neighborhood, slightly more than the percentage of respondents who cited neighborhood safety and schools.<sup>45</sup>

Even participants who subsequently moved valued the diversity of their initial program neighborhood. The mix of different backgrounds, races, and cultures was cited as a positive characteristic of the initial program neighborhood by 73 percent of respondents to a 2007 survey of second movers,

ranking close behind safety, quiet and cleanliness cited by 75 percent.<sup>46</sup>

**2007 Post Placement Survey  
Positive Aspects of New Neighborhood**



*Yes, it is much better than regular public housing & section 8. They give you a choice to live in better neighborhoods.*

—Program participant

Although this may have been the first time participants lived in a diverse community, the 2007 survey results suggest that participants may seek out diversity in future moves. When asked to identify important aspects of a neighborhood when choosing a place to live, 68 percent of longer-term stayers and 52 percent of second movers cited a mix of different races and cultures.<sup>47</sup>

Only a small minority in each group said it was important that most people in the neighborhood be of their same background, race or culture.

***For the most part, the suburbs have not been the hostile environment that families feared***

***and opponents predicted.*** Most participants describe their neighborhood as friendly and appreciate this as one of the most positive aspects of their new neighborhood. Reports of racial harassment have been isolated and rare. In 2007 surveys, nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of respondents who had been in their new neighborhoods for 14

months or more, and more than a half (52 percent) of those who had made a second move, cited the friendliness of people and neighbors as a positive aspect of their initial placement neighborhood.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, when asked to describe what they found difficult about their initial program neighborhood, only six percent of longer-term stayers and 26 percent of second movers cited problems with neighbors. Only nine percent of stayers and 33 percent of movers cited unfriendly or prejudiced people.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Participants overcome challenges of a new environment.***

While participants are satisfied with their new neighborhoods overall, their moves to neighborhoods that are so dramatically different from familiar surroundings, and distant from family and friends, inevitably present challenges. However, the survey data suggests that the respondents are more resilient, and that their transition less daunting, than predicted.

When asked to describe the difficult aspects of their new neighborhood, 34 percent of longer-term participants surveyed in 2007 failed to answer the question or wrote in nothing. Distance from family and friends, the difficulty most often identified, was cited by only 35 percent of respondents. Similarly, less than one-third of respondents (31 percent) said that being near family and friends was important in choosing a place to live.<sup>50</sup> The social networks of family and friends maintained by low-income families are often assumed to be unequivocally supportive and sustaining. But as noted by MIT professor Xavier

de Souza Briggs, these social networks can function in both positive and negative ways.<sup>51</sup> The survey results seem to bear out Briggs's more nuanced picture.

*Howard County has so much to offer. We love living here.*

*The community and neighborhood is great and we feel safe here.*

—Program participant

The region's transportation system was expected to present a significant structural challenge for people without cars. Just under half of respondents to the ACLU's 2007 new mover survey reported owning a car, and over half said they have a driver's license.



High school in suburban community. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

As expected, survey respondents also report that they are least satisfied with the transportation options in their new neighborhoods. For example, 32 percent of recent movers surveyed in 2007 said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the transportation options in their neighborhood, declining

to 23 percent in 2008. Unsurprisingly, those with cars register higher levels of satisfaction with their transportation options than those without. Having a driver's license and living in a county with a more developed local bus system also contributes to higher satisfaction with transportation options.<sup>52</sup> This suggests that participants are resourceful in solving transportation challenges, whether through borrowing a car or taking the bus. Indeed, when asked to identify the difficulties they have experienced in their new neighborhood, only 25 percent of longer-term participants, and 28 percent of second movers, cited difficulties finding adequate public transportation. Nineteen percent of longer-term participants and 41 percent of second movers cited the lack of a car or driver's license as a difficulty.



## Benefits Go Beyond the Basic Goals of Better Housing in a Safe Environment

For participating families, their moves have numerous, significant benefits. While it is too early for longitudinal studies to track changes in outcome measures, participants report improvements, large and small, to their lives. These benefits go beyond the basic goals of better housing in a safe environment to include other improvements in families' quality of life, health, and educational and employment opportunities.

**Participants report improvements in quality of life.** Eighty-five percent of recent movers surveyed in 2008 said that their quality of life improved following their move to a new neighborhood. As examples of such quality of life improvements, 86 percent said their new neighborhood offers a better environment for children and 62 percent said it offers more green space and fresh air. Nearly 80 percent said they feel safer, more peaceful, and less stressed. Nearly 60 percent of program participants surveyed said they feel more motivated. Participants' comments link the change in environment to this sense of motivation. As described by one survey respondent, the program "gives you a great change to a new and better environment and more motivation with a better neighborhood."

**Families report health gains.** For many families, improved feelings of physical and mental health are an important quality of life improvement. Families in disadvantaged neighborhoods are at higher risk for disease and earlier death likely due to direct physical influences (such as exposure to toxins), the cumulative stress arising from living in unsafe neighborhoods with limited resources, and the difficulty of sustaining healthy habits with little

*Research increasingly suggests that exposure to crime and violence has far reaching consequences, such as persistent anxiety and emotional trauma.*

Margery Austin Turner, Lynette A. Rawlings, "Promoting Neighborhood Diversity: Benefits, Barriers, and Strategies," Urban Institute (August 2009) at p. 2.



Participating family. Photo: Andy Cook.

access to good grocery stores and few safe places to exercise.<sup>53</sup> In Baltimore the incidence of asthma among children living in public housing and other poor neighborhoods is very high. There are also wide variations in life expectancy and health out-

comes between Baltimore's poor neighborhoods—including the origin neighborhoods of most mobility participants—and the more affluent areas of the city. The Baltimore City Health Department reports that for every \$10,000 more in neighborhood income, residents live 3.4 years longer.<sup>54</sup> In the neighborhoods with the shortest life expectancy, home to a large concentration of public and subsidized housing, residents died more than 20 years earlier than residents of the afflu-

ent white neighborhoods of North Baltimore.<sup>55</sup> Research shows that health gains are an immediate benefit of leaving disadvantaged neighborhoods behind. Although the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign is planning a health improvement program for the Baltimore housing mobility program families, many families are already reporting health gains.



## New Optimism for Her Kids Motivates Mom to Find Work

Michelle Starks doesn't need a statistician to tell her things have changed for her and her family since they left their former public housing complex in Baltimore's Cherry Hill Homes, a sprawling complex of more than 1,500 public housing units, for a home in Harford County's Bel Air community. She joined the mobility program because she "wanted more for my kids," who are ages 9, 8, and 3 years old. Now that she has moved, she says she feels more motivated, noting that although she was unemployed when she lived in Cherry Hill, she has obtained a job as a cashier in a "big box" retail store less than a mile from her new home. She is involved in the PTA at her children's new school in Bel Air and says she is optimistic for her children, who are doing better in school.

"Living in the projects you feel like you're stuck," she explains. "You do what you gotta do for your kids regardless. I wanted to get out so bad, I just couldn't do it by myself." ■

Consistent with research findings, nearly 40 percent of recent movers responding to surveys in 2007 and 2008 said they feel healthier. Among 2007 survey respondents who had lived in their new homes for a longer period of time (14 months to four years), 40 percent said their children's health was better or much better, with most saying much better.<sup>56</sup> In interviews, parents frequently cite a dramatic reduction in their children's asthma attacks after moving to a suburban area with more open space and better air quality.

The 2008 survey responses describing improvements to quality of life suggest improvements to mental health. Eighty percent of respondents reported feeling more peaceful and less stressed

and 78 percent said that they feel safer and are less worried about crime. In particular, parents pointed to the relief they feel at moving their children to a safer environment, in contrast with the anxiety they experienced trying to protect their children from the violence and negative peer influences in their former neighborhoods. "I was stressed before—every day, all day" says Nicole McDonald. "It is especially stressful when you have to confine your child to...the house because you're terrified."

As cited earlier, more than half (58 percent) of recent movers responding to the 2008 survey reported feeling more motivated after moving to what they described as a new and better environment. In the words of one respondent, the program "motivates a person to want more out of life and do better." These feelings of greater motivation are consistent with findings of reduced depression among adults (and teenage girls) that moved to lower poverty neighborhoods under MTO.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to enhancing quality of life, health improvements have been found to be a critical prerequisite to increasing family self-sufficiency. For example, a national study of families who were relocated when their public housing complexes were redeveloped under HOPE VI found that poor health (such as severe mobility problems, depression, and asthma) was the biggest obstacle to obtaining and keeping a job.<sup>58</sup>

**Families are accessing better schools.** School improvement is an important marker for the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program. Under the program, families are moving to better resourced and higher performing suburban school districts; 1,277 children of program families are now living in suburban school districts.<sup>59</sup>

According to a Johns Hopkins analysis of families who first moved as of September 2007, elementary schools in the new neighborhoods had 25 percent more students who were scoring proficient or higher in state achievement tests than the schools serving the families' original city neighborhoods.

## Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible Students in Local Elementary School

### Average Percent Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible students in the school

	Average % FRLE students	N
Origin Elementary School	83.7	1021
First Move Elementary School	33.2	1037

FRLE data from 2004. Differences in number of families due to inability to geocode some addresses.

### Distribution of Families by Percent Poor Children in the School

<i>Percent Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible Students in Local Elementary School</i>	<i>Percent of All Families at Origin (n=1021)</i>	<i>Percent of All Families at First Move (n=1037)</i>
More than 80%	78.0	5.9
50-80%	20.3	27.7
30-50%	1.1	7.5
10-30%	0.7	34.8
Less than 10%	0.0	24.1
Total	100.1	100

Percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding differences. Differences in number of families due to inability to geocode some addresses.

DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009

These suburban schools also had fewer poor students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program; before moving, an average of 84 percent of the student body was eligible for free or reduced lunch; after moving, this average dropped to 33 percent.<sup>60</sup>

**Parents report high levels of satisfaction with their childrens' schools.** As noted earlier, the quest for better and safer schools is one of the primary reasons participants sign up for the mobility program. Ninety-three percent of recent movers responding to a 2007 survey, and 84 percent of 2008 survey respondents, said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the schools in their new community. These high levels of school satisfaction appear to endure over the long term. Eighty-nine percent of parents surveyed in 2007, who had been in their placement neighborhood for 14 or more months, said their children appear to be learning

better or much better in their new schools, with 55 percent reporting much better school performance.<sup>61</sup>

**Children are reported to be doing better in school.** Research shows that attending lower poverty schools benefits low-income and minority children, suggesting that children who attend suburban school districts under the mobility program can do better in school, graduate at higher rates, and have better access to jobs than their inner city peers.<sup>62</sup> While it is too early to trace changes in participating families' educational attainment, Baltimore's mobility families are already reporting that their children are doing better in school. Nine out of ten parents surveyed in 2007, who had been in their placement neighborhood for 14 or more months, said their children appear to be learning better or much better in their new schools, and 55 percent of surveyed parents, who had been in their

## Elementary School Reading and Math Performance

### Mean Percent of student body scoring proficient or better in math and reading

	Math	Reading	N
Origin Elementary School	44.4%	53.6%	1021
First Move Elementary School	68.6%	75.8%	1037

Test score data from 2004. Differences in number of families due to inability to geocode some addresses.

### Distribution of families by percent of math and reading proficient peers in the local elementary school

	Percent of All Families at Origin (n=1021)	Percent of All Families at First Move (n=1037)
% Student body proficient in MATH		
More than 80%	1.2	32.9
60-80%	10.7	39.8
40-60%	48.5	26.3
20-40%	38.7	1.0
Less than 20%	1.0	0.0
Total	100.1	100
% Student body proficient in READING		
More than 80%	2.8	44.7
60-80%	22.9	37.3
40-60%	62.4	17.9
20-40%	11.9	0.1
Less than 20%	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100

Test score data from 2004. Percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding differences. Differences in number of families due to inability to geocode some addresses.

DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009

placement neighborhood for at least 14 months, reported an increase in school performance. Even those with adolescent children reported that their teenagers seemed to be adjusting to their new school (72 percent) and neighborhood (82 percent).<sup>63</sup> While these gains are self-reported and based on the parent's perception of how their children are faring, they are still notable, given the docu-

*I feel like they have helped me give my kids a better life.*

*This program has changed my life. My future is brighter, my surroundings are peaceful & beautiful.*

—Program participant

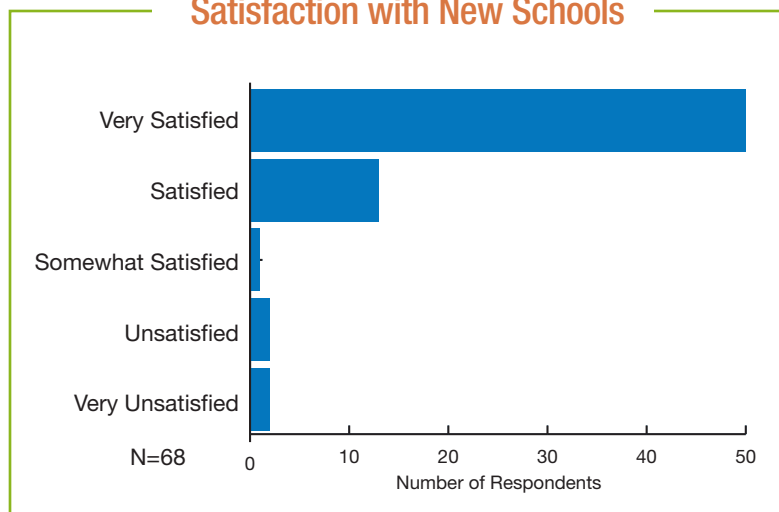
mented evidence that many children moving to lower poverty, integrated schools need time to adjust.<sup>64</sup>

**Families are starting to tap their new neighborhoods' social resources.** Baltimore's mobility families are also reporting increasing engagement in community amenities. As part of the initial and post-move follow up visits, MBQ provides families

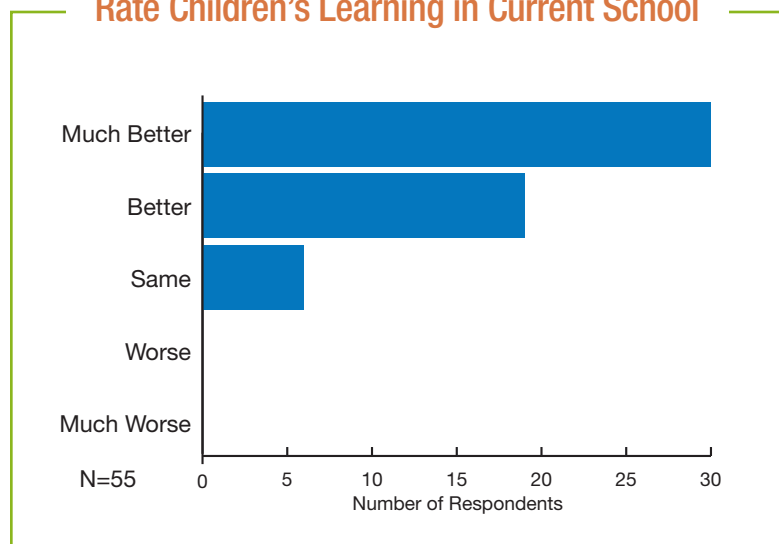
with orientation to their new community and information and referrals to community resources. While 19 percent of recent movers say they are involved in community activities (most commonly volunteering at their child's school or joining the PTA or a church), 27 percent of respondents to a 2007 survey of those who had lived in their community for 14 months or more reported involvement in community activities, usually church or the PTA at their child's school, and 23 percent said they were involved in an adult education or training program. Fifty-three percent of longer-term residents surveyed in 2007 also said that their teenage children were involved in after school or community activities, most commonly sports or church.<sup>65</sup>

**Families show preliminary signs of attaching to suburban job markets.** For years, jobs have been growing more rapidly in the nation's suburbs than its cities, with many of those suburban jobs in the service sector and unskilled categories suitable for people without higher education.<sup>66</sup> Some inner-city families had managed to find entry-level and service sector jobs in the suburbs but, prior to their move were forced to make long commutes because they couldn't afford to live where they worked. Others never had access to the suburban job market. The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is providing early evidence that as movers live in opportunity areas they are starting to access the suburban job market. Fifty-three percent of recent movers surveyed in 2007 said that they were employed, with half of those employed reporting working in the suburbs. In contrast, 61 percent of longer-term participants said they were employed,

### 2007 New Mover Survey Satisfaction with New Schools



### 2007 Post Placement Survey Rate Children's Learning in Current School

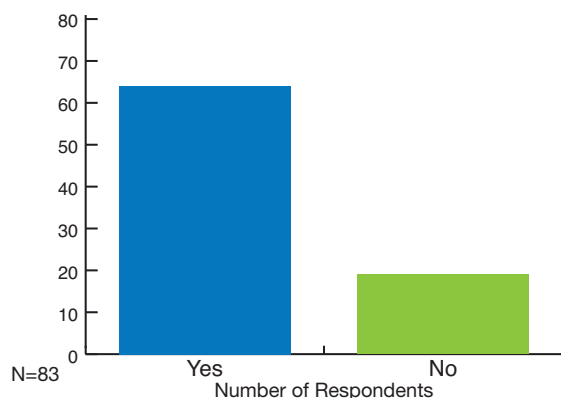


with 61 percent of those identifying a suburban job location.<sup>67</sup> Undoubtedly, the employment prospects of program participants have suffered during the current recession. However, program officials expect to build on these early outcomes as the economy improves and services broaden beyond a focus on housing counseling to include nascent efforts to more deliberately connect families to the employment, education, transportation and child care resources in their communities. As highlighted earlier, employment doubled among the small set of clients receiving employment services as part of a package of enhanced services.

## Family of Four Boys Reach Their Potential in Suburban Schools

Candice Brown may have moved her family to Columbia in Howard County just in time. Brown's second eldest was doing well academically in his city middle school but had begun to misbehave and to hang out with "the wrong type of kids," she says. When they moved and he had to start high school in a new community, he had a hard time, but Brown found him a counselor and a tutor and now, age 15 and in the 10th grade, he is doing well, she says. Her two youngest boys, one of whom had problems in his city elementary school, are both doing well and in higher level classes in their Columbia elementary school. Her youngest, who is 9, is in the school choir, and her other boy, 10, plays drums in the band. Her oldest son, who failed 9th grade in a city high school, is on track to graduate from high school and wants to go to college. Brown, who works as a retail clerk at a big box store in Columbia did not attend college herself but is determined to help him reach that goal. ■

## 2007 New Mover Survey Plan to Remain in New Home



## Participants appreciate their opportunities.

Participants responding to the ACLU's client surveys show a deep appreciation for the services offered to help them change their lives. "This program is one of the best things that ever happened to my family and me," one participant said. "We could be no happier... This was a blessing and I appreciate the help."<sup>68</sup> Another explained, "I have a better relationship with my children because I am providing them with a better life."<sup>69</sup> One person said simply, "I am proof that this program works." A quote from a participant surveyed recently perhaps sums it up best: "This program ... gives those [in] poverty a chance to see and experience a measure of pride and dignity in self and environment."

## Stability and Retention Provide Foundation for Success

By helping adults and children remain in opportunity neighborhoods, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is helping set the foundation for their long-term success. Families who are stably housed in high-opportunity neighborhoods for longer periods of time are more likely to attain long-term gains in educational attainment, health, and self-sufficiency.

## Most families are either staying in their original units or moving to other opportunity areas.

Given the high neighborhood satisfaction and the growing array of post-placement services offered under the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, it is not surprising that an increasing number of families are remaining stably housed in opportunity communities for longer periods of time.

Renters in general and Housing Choice Voucher holders in particular are much more mobile, with as many as half moving every year, says MBQ's Jim Evans.<sup>70</sup> In comparison, as of September 2007—four and a half years after the Baltimore Mobility Program's inception and before the implementation of "second-move" counseling program-wide—62 percent of families that had



initially moved more than a year previously were still in their original unit.<sup>71</sup> Of all of the families who could have moved at some point after the end of their first-year's lease, only 19 percent moved from the suburbs back to the city. Even then, participants weren't moving back to their original city neighborhoods. On average, families who made a second move relocated to neighborhoods with higher African American populations than their first move neighborhood.

These second move neighborhoods were still less segregated and significantly less poor than the neighborhoods in which the family lived before they joined the program.<sup>72</sup> Even though these second move neighborhood areas were slightly higher in poverty and less integrated, they were just as safe as their initial program neighborhood. The upshot is that even without second move counseling, participating families were still living in neighborhoods that look far different—far more racially integrated, far less poor—than the neighborhood in which they lived before they began their journey.<sup>73</sup>

The launch of program-wide second move counseling in January 2008 appears to be helping even more families stay in, or return to, high opportunity areas. According to MBQ administrative data, before January 2008, most second (or third) moves were from high opportunity to low opportunity areas. Between January and August 2009 that



MBQ participant at home. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

number dropped to less than a third of moves were from high opportunity to low opportunity areas.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the families most prone to recurrent moves are those that previously made second moves to low opportunity areas of the city of Baltimore. Program officials now see increasing numbers of these families take advantage of second move counseling to return to higher opportunity areas, a trend they hope will continue.<sup>75</sup>

*The quality of neighborhood conditions — and their role in accessing or denying opportunity — affects the life chances of all families.*

john powell, et al. "Communities of Opportunity: A Framework for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future for All," Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University (2007).

***Second moves are prompted by ordinary housing and landlord issues.***

Insight on the reasons behind second moves is fueling optimism that second move counseling will continue to increase opportunity moves. Data from the Moving to Opportunity program of the 1990s led some observers to speculate that mobility programs won't have a lasting impact because some families are motivated to move back to their original neighborhoods to be closer to family, support networks, and

familiar surroundings. But the notion that participants are fleeing suburban areas because they feel uncomfortable or want to rejoin family and friends is not supported by the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program administrative data or ACLU surveys. Both sources indicate that the primary reason families decide to move is the need or desire for a larger unit, or to move up from an apartment to a house.<sup>76</sup> Fifty-three percent of ordinary course second movers (those who moved by choice rather than because they were in build-

ings that were sold) surveyed cited wanting a better/bigger house or apartment as one of their three main reasons for moving. No other factor was cited by more than 30 percent of survey respondents. This data, which is consistent with findings from the interim report of the MTO program likely reflects in part the dearth of affordable units with two or more bedrooms in suburban areas.<sup>77</sup> Only a small percentage of movers stated a desire to move due to discomfort with the neighborhood, and anecdotal reports from program officials suggest that most of those were families living in Baltimore City's higher-opportunity neighborhoods who said they wanted to move away from crime and drug activity.

As discussed earlier in this report, families who made second moves and those who stayed in their initial placement residence expressed high levels of satisfaction with their initial program neighborhoods and similarly describe its positive attributes. While second movers are less likely to describe their initial neighborhood as friendly, and are more likely to report problems with neighbors; only 14 percent of second movers surveyed said this was one of the main reasons for their move. While distance from family and friends topped the list of the most difficult aspects of the new neighborhood, among both groups, it was cited by fewer than half of respondents in each group. A few respondents in both groups cite being "near to family and



Child of MBQ participant at play.  
Photo: Andy Cook.

*Segregated housing patterns not only separate white and minority neighborhoods... [R]esidential segregation distances minority jobseekers (particularly blacks) from areas of employment growth.*

Margery Austin Turner and Karin Fortuny, Residential Segregation and Low-Income Working Families, Urban Institute, February 2009

Compared to families moving to or within the suburbs, second movers who moved from the suburbs to the city were much less likely to say that they are very satisfied with their second move

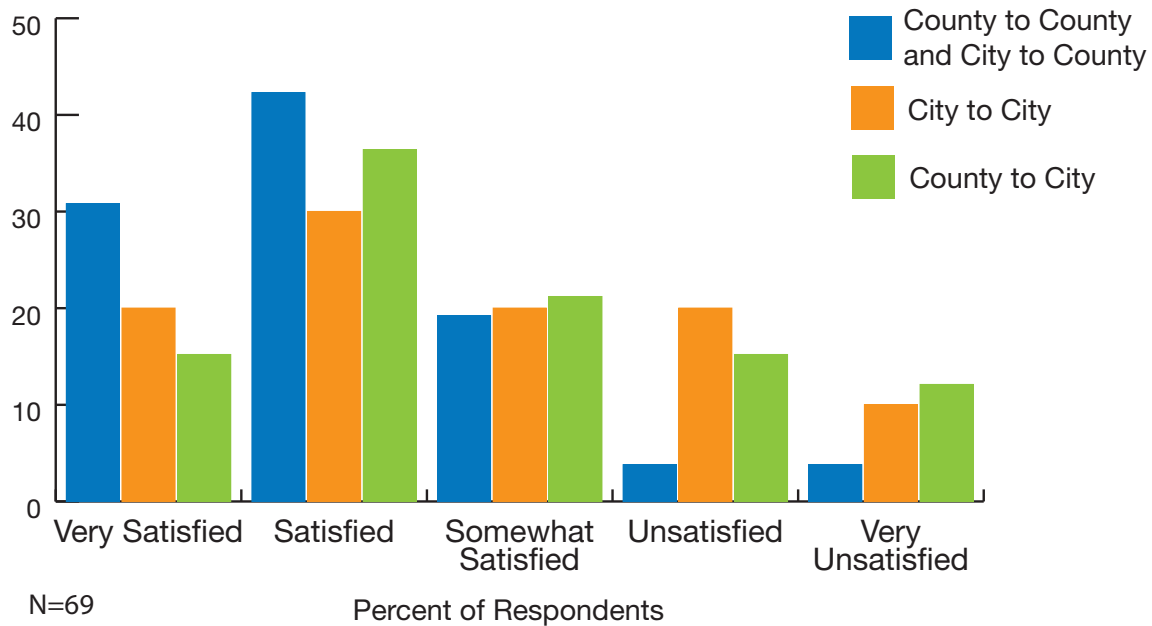
friends" as an important factor in choosing a neighborhood.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Second moves away from high opportunity areas reflect market challenges and influences.***

Surveys and data on second movers and their attitudes towards their initial and current neighborhoods, suggest that moves from initial suburban placements are more often driven by housing-related factors, like unit size. This issue can conceivably be addressed, in contrast to addressing social factors beyond a mobility program's control. Once a family embarks on a move, they are then subject to market factors and other structural constraints that impact their ability to find a desirable unit in a higher opportunity area, especially if they do not have the benefit of housing search assistance with the second move.

Therefore, the location of a second move may reflect less a voucher holder's choice or preference than the trade-offs factored in searching for housing. Indeed, in a 2007 survey, only 17 percent of second movers who made a suburb-to-city move before second move services were offered program wide said they moved to the neighborhood that was their first choice, compared with 67 percent of families who made a second move to or within a suburban county.<sup>79</sup>

### 2007 2nd Mover Survey Satisfaction with Current Neighborhood by Direction of Move



### 2007 2nd Mover Survey Rate Neighborhood as a Place to Raise Children by Direction of Move



neighborhood.<sup>80</sup> Fifty-two percent of suburb-to-city movers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their second move neighborhood, compared with 72 percent of suburb-to-suburb movers. Similarly, only 13 percent of suburb-to-city-movers say their current neighborhood is better than their initial program neighborhood and 47 percent say it is worse or much worse. In contrast, 41 percent of suburb-to-suburb second movers say their second neighborhood is better or much better than their initial program neighborhood.<sup>81</sup> Survey respondents who left the suburbs and made second moves to Baltimore City (as well as participants whose initial placement neighborhood was in the city)

*It is a challenge for low-income families to find affordable housing outside neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. If they seek housing near better jobs, better schools, and a better living environment, they will be hard pressed to find it.*

Bart Harvey, John T. Dunlop Lecture, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, October 3, 2006, p. 20.

express troubling views of their current neighborhood as a place to raise children. Fifty-three percent of suburb-to-city (and 40 percent of city-to-city) second movers rated their neighborhood as a fair or poor place to raise children. In contrast, 59 percent of respondents moving within the suburbs rate their neighborhood as excellent or very good for children, and only 23 percent rate it fair or poor.

Whether a second move location reflects a participant's choice or market factors, this survey data suggests that many suburb-to-city second movers are not satisfied with their current neighborhood.



Affordable units in North Baltimore. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

*“...Supply side strategies, which expand the stock of housing that remains affordable over time...are an important structural solution, especially since many suburbs have little or no history of developing affordable housing.”*

Margery Austin Turner and Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Assisted Housing Mobility and the Success of Low-Income Minority Families: Lessons for Policy, Practice, and Future Research,” Urban Institute, (March 2008), p. 4.

## Next Steps for Enhancing Program Administration

**D**eveloping the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has involved “a series of overcomings,” says Barbara Samuels of the ACLU of Maryland. “The bureaucratic barriers and hassles of portability were overcome with regional administration, the inadequacies of fair market rents were overcome with exception payment standards ... There is a whole series of tweaks, large and small, that are needed by the regular Housing Choice Voucher program in order to make it function as some people say it was always intended to function.”

Applying these “tweaks” to the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has resulted in a program that showcases “what housing mobility is supposed to be,” says Phil Tegeler, executive director of the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, a key

partner in the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign. “It gives families more information about their choices and encourages them to take a little bit of a leap of faith. And it provides hands-on help to get them into a stronger position to actually get into these more selective markets.”

The program works, in part because MBQ’s staff and their outside partners have viewed problems as learning opportunities, not reasons to quit, Tegeler adds. While obstacles faced and answered have spurred many of the program features discussed earlier, program officials still consider the program a work in progress that continues to face new challenges and generate new lessons. Following are some of the actions on the agenda for program officials.



**Reduce large caseloads.** The huge number of applicants and large pre-placement caseloads (190 families per counselor) are far from optimal, making intensive one-on-one counseling for all impossible. Essentially, MBQ deals with this by giving the bulk of the counselors' time and attention to families who are nearing readiness for a voucher and/or are engaged in housing search. The counselor may be talking daily with families involved in the housing search, providing those new to the program with guidance in how to clear up credit, budget, and save up for their security deposit, as well as making assessments and referrals. These interactions with the counselor are only every couple of months (or more frequently if the client initiates calls). Program partners are seeking to reduce caseloads with additional funding support.

**Expand and strengthen post-move supports for families.** Smaller pre-placement caseloads would enable counselors to give more individual attention to help families transitioning to new communities get better access to resources and opportunities in those new communities. In addition, MBQ plans to institute other enhancements, including establishing an 800 number so families great distances from MBQ's office in downtown Baltimore can call counselors without incurring high phone bills. Still, budgeting issues are likely to continue to be a challenge because, even with employment, wages are low in service sector jobs, and almost 30 percent of whatever additional income a family with a Housing Choice Voucher is able to earn is "taxed" in the form of a rent increase. Program partners are discussing the need for client rental payment structures with work incentives (i.e., the Jobs Plus demonstration), along with a greater emphasis on education programs that will allow people to climb up a notch on the career ladder.<sup>82</sup>

*Me and my children live in a beautiful house that is in a mixed ethnic community. They have an opportunity to become productive citizens, a product of a good environment.*

—Program participant

**Help more families remain in, or return to, high opportunity communities.** While the program's post-move and second-move services are helping families remain in opportunity communities, there are still a small number of families who make subsequent moves to lower opportunity neighborhoods in the city (about one in five families, as of September, 2007).<sup>83</sup> While most of these moves are to communities with lower poverty rates than the family's original city neighborhood, they usually involve a decline in economic opportunity and a change of school district. Program partners must continue to provide second move counseling to help families

explore the pros and cons of moving, and to make sure that families who do move are able to find housing in locations that will be good for their families, not just places where landlords are willing to rent to voucher holders.

"The goal must be to ensure that, if families do move, they are doing so willingly and not out of frustration when faced with barriers that can be addressed," says Tegeler.

**Find more ways to tackle the transportation barrier.** Survey data comparing transportation frustrations of "stayers" versus "movers" suggests that access to a driver's license and, or, car is one potentially addressable factor in housing stability and retention of participants in higher opportunity areas. Only 19 percent of longer-term stayers surveyed in 2007 identified the lack of a car or license as a difficult aspect of their neighborhood (likely because 53 percent of those surveyed reported having a car). In comparison, second movers surveyed were less likely to have a car (32 percent) and more likely to identify the lack of a driver's license or car as a difficulty, not only in their initial program neighborhood (41 percent), but also in their current (i.e. second move) neighborhood (35 percent). Participants with driver's licenses, but not a car,

were less likely to say they were dissatisfied with their transportation options than those who had neither a car nor a license. This may mean that participants with a driver's license are able to occasionally borrow a car or can plan to purchase a car. Whether one lives in Baltimore City or a suburb, it is hard to get to work, to carry out basic household tasks such as grocery shopping or taking children to childcare and extra-curricular activities if one does not have a car.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, in the Baltimore region, the lack of a car or driver's license is not only a barrier to housing mobility, but to economic mobility as well.<sup>85</sup>

***Streamline processes for landlords.*** MBQ is instituting a number of changes to be more responsive to landlords. In the last quarter of 2009, in conformance with standard real estate practices, MBQ will begin offering direct deposit to landlords. MBQ is also revamping its website to allow landlords to submit information about available properties online. Additionally program officials plan to conduct a landlord satisfaction survey.

***Continue employment services and enhance education and health supports.*** Recognizing that taking the program to the next level requires more concerted efforts to connect families to the “opportunity” in their opportunity communities, BRHC convened experts, funders, and advocates at the Annie E. Casey Foundation to start designing interventions for families experiencing education, health, and employment challenges.

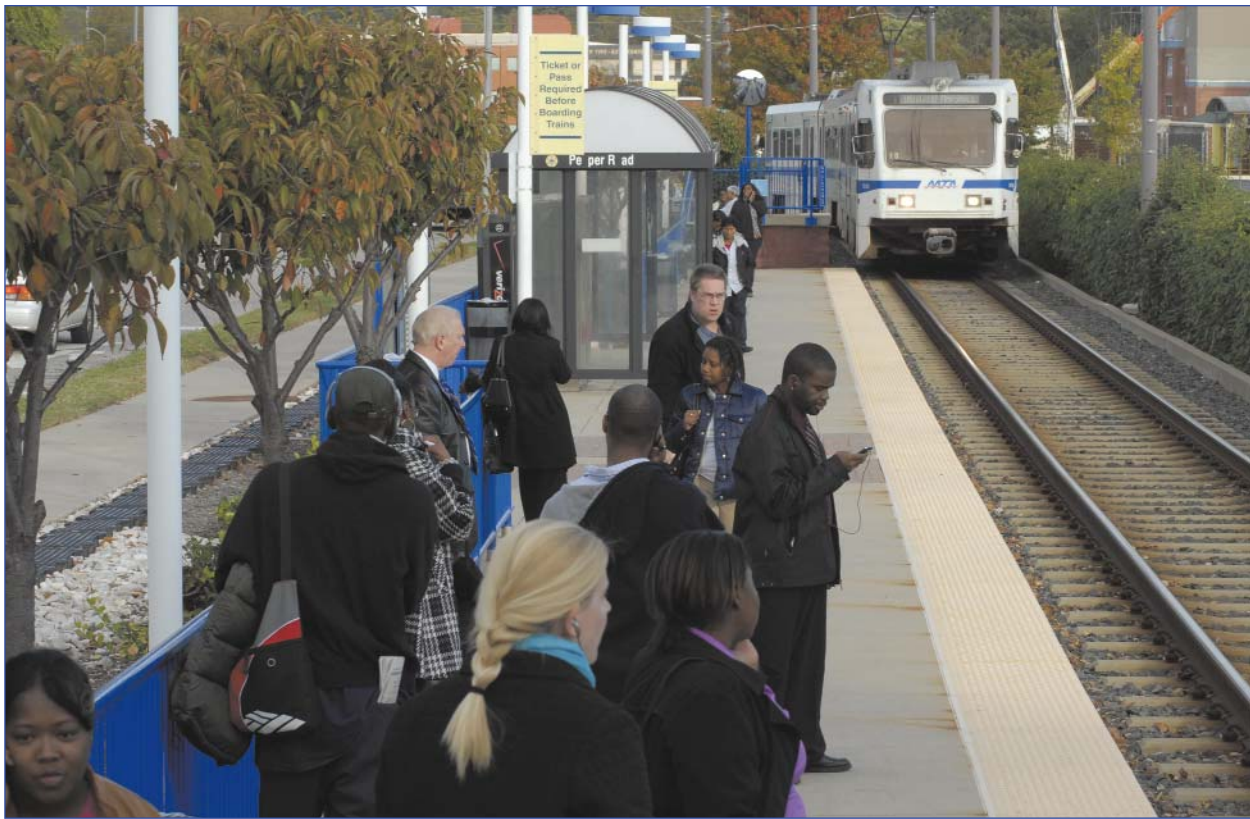
As cited earlier in the report, MBQ and its partners have extended the employment services originally only offered to a subset of families, to families program-wide. Now, thanks to seed funding from the Krieger Fund, PRRAC and the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign have launched a “housing mobility and education project.” It is being piloted in Howard and Baltimore counties, with hopes for expansion to other counties. Driving program design are two conclusions, well-documented by social science research, 1) that low-income inner-city parents often don't have the

same information that enable middle-class parents to choose the best schools for their children, and 2) that many children transitioning from lower to higher opportunity schools benefit from extra support to help them catch up academically and adapt socially.<sup>86</sup>

### Stable Housing Paves Path to Nursing School

After moving under the mobility program (from Upton to Perry Hall in Baltimore County and subsequently to Columbia in Howard County), Candice Nelson ended a 10-year break from school. She completed her high school education and enrolled in Baltimore City Community College, where she is pursuing an associate degree in nursing. After she attains her associate degree, she plans to work full time at a local hospital while completing a bachelor's program in nursing at Coppin State University, specializing in pediatrics. Nelson, who won a \$500 scholarship from the Maryland Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies toward her bachelor's program, has further ambitions: to work towards buying her first home. ■

To overcome parental “information poverty,” project consultants have developed a new intake referral sheet that MBQ counselors use to build an education component into each family's individual plan including a chart that breaks down the region by school zone so that counselors and parents can determine which schools serve which residential areas; profiles of all receiving schools in the counties, including information about racial composition, test scores, free and reduced lunch participation, and other data; and an inventory of key resources such as jobs programs, academic support programs, and scholarship opportunities. MBQ counselors are now training to recognize



MTA light rail station in high opportunity community. Photo: Andy Cook.

students' educational issues as they arise and participating families will be trained to assess school performance. The program will provide ongoing educational counseling, guidance to families and, over time, develop relationships with principals and guidance counselors. The program is currently seeking funding to continue past 2009.

In the area of health, some informal health counseling already occurs during the natural course of business. For example, an MBQ counselor may observe a health issue such as asthma during intake and provide advice on reducing home allergens. Counselors have also been trained to help families transfer their Medicaid and children's health benefits. To build on this base, PRRAC and BRHC are seeking funding for a health intervention program that would incorporate more intensive health planning in the mobility program.

Under this health mobility proposal, all families entering the program would complete a health

intake form that counselors could use to plan improvements. Health information would be provided in housekeeping and family budgeting sessions. Families who need help finding health care would be connected to suburban primary care providers. Program staff would actively recruit suburban health providers, and counselors would get more training on Maryland Medicaid managed care and S-Chip systems, including transferring benefits between counties. For a small number of uninsured families, alternative health insurance coverage would be sought. This proposal derives from extensive research on mobility and health. Studies suggest that the marked improvement in health exhibited by families who leave the, standard housing conditions and other "health burdens" of segregated inner-city neighborhoods (improvements that include declines in obesity and depression) could be even more significant with specific health interventions.<sup>87</sup>

**Increase development of housing units receiving project-based subsidies.** The mobility program, like the voucher program more generally, has relied largely on short term contracts and leases with private profit-motivated owners. To function effectively through various housing cycles the program must assure that participants will have access to units even when housing markets are at their tightest and most competitive. The development (via acquisition or new construction) of affordable housing units receiving project-based subsidies is necessary to assure that a stable pool of units, especially harder to find three bedroom units, will remain available to participants through the ups and downs of market cycles. Development also gives the program more control over the location of units, preventing clusters and assuring a wide distribution of units, even in affluent areas.

To date, the program has entered into contracts and leased just over 300 project-based voucher (PBV) units compared to the 646 units called for within the *Thompson* decree. All were existing housing units with short term (one to five year) contracts. None of the units are new construction or acquisition/rehabilitation units, and only 103 remain under contract. The development of PBV units contemplated by the *Thompson* decree has been delayed and is only now beginning as MBQ works out financing issues common to affordable housing development. Barriers to financing and development of affordable housing are always an

### Working Mom Moves Her Boys out of the Shadow of the City Jail

For seven years, Andrea Preston lived with her family in East Baltimore's Latrobe Homes public housing complex, literally in the shadow of the state penitentiary and Baltimore City Jail. Preston, who works as a shift supervisor, says she wanted better housing, but also a safer neighborhood for her two boys, now ages 6 and 11.

"I didn't want to stay in public housing forever," she says.

Through the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, Preston moved her family to Hampden, a former industrial area of north Baltimore that is being reborn as a trendy neighborhood with art galleries, shops and restaurants. She plans to stay.

"I like the area and my boys are happier now," she says. "I believe everyone deserves a chance at a better living environment." ■

issue; however, these barriers are more formidable when operating in higher opportunity areas of the city and suburbs that have traditionally excluded affordable housing.





HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims and MBQ program staff and participants, 2009. Photo: Amy DeHuff.

*"A key equitable development goal for Baltimore is to stimulate the real estate market in the central city in a manner that brings new investment but that also secures and stabilizes existing residents...At the same time, Baltimore needs housing strategies that will create more affordable housing options in more advantageous communities in the region so that lower-income residents are better connected to a web of vital services and supports."*

Angela Glover Blackwell and Judith Bell, "Equitable Development for a Stronger Nation: Lessons from the Field," in *The Geography of Opportunity*, Xavier de Souza Briggs, editor, Brookings Institution Press 2005.

## Baltimore and Beyond: the Future of Housing Mobility Policy

**T**oday, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is proving that poor African American families are able and willing to make it beyond the confines of the inner-city and that programs that help families move from distressed areas to better neighborhoods do not inevitably reshuffle pockets of poverty. Because participation in the program is voluntary, assisted, and gradual, families are moving when they are ready and eager for a better life. Because the program focuses on low poverty and predominantly white neighborhoods, operates regionally and is monitored, families are not clustering in a few struggling neighborhoods.

The lessons of the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program come at an important time. While the housing mobility programs created in the 1990s to remedy systemic, government-sponsored concentration of poor black families in failing neighborhoods were ended after 2000 or have largely been scaled down, the experience gained through these programs has generated greater consensus around the elements of success. Building on that knowledge base, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has overcome some of the issues that bedeviled programs such as the federally sponsored Moving to Opportunity program, whose well-publicized shortcomings overshadowed its successes in the public eye.



Among other things, MTO's failure to move families to racially integrated neighborhoods contributed to the false assumption that inner city families can't or won't move to more affluent, white communities and that if they do they soon "give up" and flock back to their old neighborhoods. MTO, which focused solely on moves to low-poverty areas, provided families with significant improvements in neighborhood safety and mental and physical health (no small deal for the families involved). But most MTO families never left their original urban school district, and thus were never provided access to higher performing suburban school districts.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program's use of both poverty and race-based criteria is getting children into new, higher performing school districts.



Program participant and children. Photo: Andy Cook

Advocates hope that the example of this well-run mobility program in Baltimore will encourage more support for desegregation as a co-equal strategy with revitalization of inner city neighborhoods. They point to the work of experts such as Bruce Katz and Margery Austin Turner, who argue that large disparities in access to opportunity, along with distressed neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, weaken the economic competitiveness of the nation's metropolitan regions.<sup>89</sup> MBQ's partners and fair housing advocates are working at the regional, state and federal level to advance mobility policy. Following are some of the actions they are pursuing.

***Continue coalition work in Baltimore region to increase supply of affordable rental housing in high opportunity areas.*** There is a critical lack of affordable rental housing in low poverty areas. Nationally, low poverty neighborhoods contain only 39 percent of the rental housing in the nation and only 28 percent of the rental units offered at or

*A new national housing mobility voucher program should be established for the express purpose of providing desegregated housing options to families in the most segregated metropolitan areas.*

"The Future of Fair Housing: Report of the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity" former HUD Secretaries Henry Cisneros and Jack Kemp, Co-Chairs, December 2008.

below HUD's Fair Market Rent levels (and therefore accessible to voucher holders).<sup>90</sup> The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program cannot undo decades of government supported segregation

alone or overnight. "All the region's participants in housing development and finance, transportation, planning, zoning, and community development need to be working together with residents over a period of many years toward a common goal of an equitable and desegregated region," according to an article by Phil Tegeler and Michael Sarbanes in *The Next American City*.<sup>91</sup> BRHC member organizations such as Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) are not only supporting enhancements to the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program; it

views the mobility program and the continuing litigation of *Thompson v. HUD* as a catalyst for a comprehensive strategy to promote housing opportunity, desegregation, and equitable growth throughout the Baltimore region. For example, toward the goal of increasing affordable housing

opportunities, CPHA spearheaded and BRHC supported a successful effort to enact Baltimore city's first "inclusionary zoning law," a 2007 statute requiring new housing developments to include a percentage of units for low-income families. BRHC continues to implement innovative strategies to increase housing choice and opportunity for low-income families in the region.

***Eliminate state and local barriers to affirmatively furthering fair housing.***

According to program partners, one of the most vexing impediments to affordable housing development in high opportunity areas is a requirement imposed by the State of Maryland on the allocation of state housing funds and on the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC). Maryland is one of only six states that require developers to obtain local government approval of LIHTC project applications.<sup>92</sup> The Maryland Qualified Allocation Plan, governing the award of tax credits, requires three levels of local government approval before the LIHTC application will even be *considered* for funding, and is considered the most burdensome in the nation. Because it does not require local governments to articulate any legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons for withholding approval, the Maryland requirement gives local governments an absolute "pocket veto," advocates say.

Both nonprofit and for-profit developers have repeatedly informed MBQ and housing advocates that this is one of the primary impediments to the development of affordable housing in Maryland,

and that they do not even attempt to expend the resources necessary to develop family housing in suburban locations (especially Baltimore County), knowing that it will be difficult or impossible to secure a resolution of local approval for LIHTC funding if community opposition arises (or even if local officials merely fear community opposition). Action to address this impediment to fair housing is one of the priorities of the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign and of affordable and fair housing advocates in Maryland. They are seeking to ensure that state and local agencies receiving federal resources live up to the requirement to affirmatively further fair housing.

*Federal [housing] production resources should also be allocated so as to ensure that affordable housing is built in the right places — in communities of choice and opportunity that can boast of good schools and quality jobs.*

Bruce Katz and Margery Austin Turner, "Rethinking U.S. Rental Housing Policy," Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, at p. 33 (November 2006)

*The federal government's three largest federal housing programs ....do very little to further fair housing and, in some cases, work to create and/or maintain segregated housing patterns. These programs must be reoriented to focus, in part, on helping families move to less racially and economically segregated communities.*

"The Future of Fair Housing: Report of the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity" former HUD Secretaries Henry Cisneros and Jack Kemp, Co-Chairs, December 2008.

***Pursue reform of federal Housing Choice Voucher policy.***

Minority families using Housing Choice Vouchers have historically been confined to areas that are only somewhat more racially and economically integrated than the highly segregated public housing neighborhoods. As a sort of specialized Housing Choice Voucher program operating with deliberate attention to expanding fair housing choice, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has found ways around some of the biggest barriers to using Housing Choice Vouchers in opportunity areas. Were those solutions applied more broadly within the Housing Choice Voucher program, experts say, vouchers could be a tool for

strengthening disadvantaged families by connecting them to the educational and economic vitality of low-poverty suburban neighborhoods.

Advocates say the current, more favorable political climate for housing voucher reform makes now a good time to apply the mobility practices used successfully in the Baltimore program more generally to the Housing Choice Voucher program. According to advocates, the first order of business is to reinstate the regulatory enhancements made to the housing voucher program in the 1990s but reversed or discontinued after 2001.<sup>93</sup>

Mobility proponents also propose a new national “Opportunity Voucher” program that would set aside a minimum of 50,000 vouchers annually to help low-income families in high poverty, segregated neighborhoods in the 30 most segregated metropolitan areas move to communities with low poverty and high performing schools. The vouchers could be administered by regional agencies authorized to provide exception rents up to at least 120 percent of the FMR and come with a full complement of mobility counseling services similar to those offered by mobility programs in Baltimore, Chicago, and Dallas. Opportunity vouchers would be targeted for use in receiving communities with schools that have low rates of student poverty and are below the regional average minority population. Assuming a carve-out of existing voucher appropriations, the program would cost about \$248 million annually, which includes start-up costs.<sup>94</sup>



High school in suburban community. Photo: Barbara Samuels.

According to Tegeler, the return on investment from mobility counseling—at a marginal additional cost of \$4,000 to \$5,000 per family making an opportunity move—can’t be calculated by a simple formula measuring only the costs and benefits to HUD or housing authorities.<sup>95</sup> If more people like Michelle Starks become employed, then the amount HUD pays out per voucher goes down. But more importantly, if Starks’ three children do better in school, and you multiply that by the number of families who successfully move out of distressed neighborhoods those benefits accrue to society as a whole.

*The author visited MBQ’s office in Baltimore in July 2009 to interview MBQ and BRHC representatives, and review program outreach, marketing, planning and evaluation documents. This report is based on that visit, additional phone interviews with program partners, and online research. The stories in this report are real and come from surveys and interviews conducted by the ACLU of Maryland during the period 2005– 2009, but the names of the participants have been changed to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of the sources.*



Child of program participants in new neighborhood.  
Photo: Barbara Samuels.

## Appendix:

### A Note on the ACLU Client Feedback Project and Survey Methodology

**T**his report makes use of data gathered by the ACLU of Maryland, counsel for the plaintiffs in *Thompson v. HUD*. During the course of the *Thompson* case, the ACLU of Maryland conducted surveys to communicate with and gather information from members of the *Thompson* class about their experiences in public housing. The challenges of communicating with a class consisting of more than 14,000 families are formidable, and were only magnified as clients began moving from relatively small geographic enclaves to new homes spread over a large metropolitan area.

To meet this challenge, the ACLU of Maryland developed a multi-faceted system for obtaining client feedback using a variety of methods, including surveys, telephone interviews, in-home interviews and focus groups. As implementation of the Thompson remedial programs began, these

became an important tool to monitor the services being provided to families and how families were faring.

The surveys administered by the ACLU are in the nature of “customer satisfaction surveys” used to gauge client satisfaction with program services and with participants’ homes and neighborhoods. They are also designed to engage the clients in evaluating and improving the program. The surveys are not intended as a social science research project, or to serve as a substitute for a longitudinal analysis of outcomes for the families that participate in the mobility program. For that purpose, Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel is providing administrative data that is gathered and maintained in the ordinary course of operation of the program to Stefanie DeLuca, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University.



The survey data referenced in this report is taken from four surveys administered by the ACLU, three in 2007 and one in 2008. For consistency, the graphs used in the report, with one exception, portray responses to the 2007 surveys.

**2007 and 2008 New Mover Survey:** The ACLU has administered “New Mover” surveys every summer since 2005. Each year, *all* families who have received a voucher and moved through the Special Mobility Housing Choice Voucher Program during the preceding twelve months receive a New Mover survey. These surveys contain questions asking participants to evaluate their satisfaction with their new home and neighborhood and with the services they received from the mobility counseling agency, Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel. The 2007 New Mover survey was administered to 183 persons and 96 responses were received, a 53% response rate. In 2008, a New Mover survey was sent to 215 persons, with 106 responses, a 49% response rate.

**2007 Post-Placement Survey:** To gain a deeper understanding of participant experiences, from time to time the ACLU supplements the New Mover surveys with more in-depth surveys of particular subsets of participants in the Special Mobility Housing Choice Voucher Program. In 2007, a “Post-Placement Survey” was administered to a randomly selected sample of 150 participants who had stayed in their initial program unit for a period ranging from 14 months to four years. Sixty-eight responses were received, a 45% response rate.

**2007 Second Mover Survey:** Participants who moved from their initial program unit were also surveyed in 2007. This “Second Mover” survey was sent to 204 Second Movers, evenly divided between a sample of involuntary movers who were forced to move when their apartment complexes were sold to new owners, and a sample of 104 participants who had moved in the “ordinary course,” (i.e. due to an individual lease termination initiated by a landlord or by the participant during the ordi-

nary course of a tenancy). The samples were randomly selected, except that suburb-to- suburb movers were slightly overrepresented in the sample to ensure an adequate number and geographic distribution of responses from this subgroup to analyze their experiences.

**Survey Methodology:** Although the surveys are not intended as social science, the survey instruments have been reviewed by Professors Pam Bennett PhD, and/or Stefanie DeLuca, PhD both of the Johns Hopkins Department of Sociology, who have submitted useful guidance which was incorporated into the design where possible. The surveys all include an open-ended question that asks participants to comment on their move and the services they received, and to explain why they would or would not recommend the program to a friend.

Dr. DeLuca has confirmed that the survey respondents are representative of program participants generally, with few statistically significant differences across a host of neighborhood and individual characteristics. Participants who responded to the surveys did tend to be slightly older and less likely to have been in public housing at origin than families who did not participate in the surveys. Their program neighborhoods were not significantly different on any of the census characteristics Dr. DeLuca has measured.

The surveys were mailed first class with a return stamped envelope enclosed. Respondents were assured that the surveys are confidential and that responses will not be linked to individual participants. As an incentive to return the survey, participants were offered the chance to be included in a drawing for one or two gift certificates to a home furnishing store, but they were not otherwise offered any compensation for completing and returning the survey. ACLU staff compiled the responses and entered them into separate File Maker Pro databases that also contain certain administrative information maintained by MBQ.

## Endnotes

- 1 Data excludes families who were forced to move when four apartment complexes were sold and new property owners ceased participation in the program.
- 2 A vast body of research has confirmed the effects of neighborhood conditions on the life chances of children and adults. For a summary of key research on these findings, see 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), pp. 9-24; Retrieved on October 20, 2009 from: [www.prrac.org/pdf/Keeping-Promise.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/Keeping-Promise.pdf).
- 3 Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel has also used the program title "Special Mobility Housing Choice Voucher Program".
- 4 According to MBQ, as of August 31, 2009, 1,522 families had successfully moved into areas of opportunity with the assistance offered through the mobility program (the total includes 27 families who had bought homes with program assistance). The characteristics of the neighborhoods to which these families moved comes from two articles using MBQ administrative data and public records and written by Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt of Johns Hopkins University. These are: Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt (2009a), "Walking Away From The Wire: Residential Mobility and Opportunity in Baltimore" (Paper presented at the American Sociological Association, San Francisco 2009); and Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt (2009b), "Changing Neighborhoods, Changing Opportunities: A First Look at Baltimore's Thompson Housing Mobility Program" (Paper in progress for publication).
- 5 In 2007, 2008 and 2009, the ACLU of Maryland conducted written and telephone surveys of mobility program clients who had recently moved under the program. 2007 surveys include those who had first moved 14 months or more before.
- 6 An analysis of families just after they moved (with families who moved as of September 2007 constituting the analyzed population) found that almost all heads-of-household were African American (98.8 percent) and female (97.7 percent). See DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2009a and 2009b, cited in endnote 4, for details.
- 7 According to the DeLuca and Rosenblatt analysis cited above, 76.4 percent of families had children, and 23.3 percent had three or more children.
- 8 MBQ administrative data from August 2008 showed the following sources of income for leased families: 47 percent had employment income; 40 percent had SSI, Social Security or pension income; and 34 percent had TANF or other welfare income. Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because a household may have more than once source of income.
- 9 See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Seventh Annual Report to Congress on Public Housing and Rental Assistance Programs: Demographics, Income and Work and Rent," 2008, pp. 9, 11.
- 10 Plaintiffs' Pre-Trial Memorandum, United States District Court for the District of Maryland, Carmen Thompson, et al., Plaintiffs, v. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, et al., Defendants, pp. 13-14, 23; [http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/thompson/Thompson\\_v.\\_HUD\\_Pretial\\_Memorandum.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/thompson/Thompson_v._HUD_Pretial_Memorandum.pdf).
- 11 John Powell, "Remedial Phase Expert Report of John Powell In Thompson v. HUD," August 19, 2005, p. 16. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [www.PRRAC.org/projects/baltimore.php](http://www.PRRAC.org/projects/baltimore.php)
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 "An Analysis of the *Thompson v. HUD* Decision," Poverty & Race Research Action Council, February 2005, <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/ThompsonAnalysis.pdf>
- 14 See James E. Rosenbaum, "Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program," *Housing Policy Debate* 6(1) 1995, pp. 231-269.
- 15 In addition to *Gautreaux-like* claims of intentional discrimination in violation of the constitutional guarantee of equal protection, the cases also often included claims alleging violations of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Some of the cases, including *Walker v. HUD* covering Dallas and *NAACP V. City of Yonkers*, were fully litigated. Many others were settled in the 1990s. Among the cities that have had court-ordered mobility programs as a result of litigation are Buffalo, N.Y.; Chicago; Dallas; Kansas City; Minneapolis; New Haven, Conn.; and Pittsburgh. See Florence Wagman Roisman, "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing in Regional Housing Markets: The Baltimore Public Housing Desegregation Litigation," 42 *Wake Forest L. Rev.* 333 (Summer 2007); Margery Austin Turner and Kale Williams, *Housing Mobility: Realizing the Promise* (Report of the Second National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility, December 1997) Retrieved on October 20, 2009 from: [www.prrac.org/pdf/RealizingPromise1997.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/RealizingPromise1997.pdf)
- 16 Source: Rachel G. Bratt, "A Withering Commitment," *Shelterforce*, July/August 1997.
- 17 MTO was launched in 1994 in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York city. Under MTO, families were randomly assigned to one of three groups: an "experimental group" receiving mobility counseling and using vouchers in census tracts with poverty rates below 10 percent, a "Section 8" group receiving regular Section 8 vouchers but no mobility counseling, and a control group. See Larry Orr and others, "Moving to Opportunity Interim Impacts Evaluation," prepared by Abt Associates and National Bureau of Economic Research for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, September, 2003, pp. 2, 12. Retrieved on

- October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/2003302754569\\_71451.pdf](http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/2003302754569_71451.pdf)
- 18 For a list of mobility programs see Margery Austin Turner and Kale Williams, *Housing Mobility: Realizing the Promise*, (Report of the Second National Conference on Assisted Housing Mobility, December 1997), p. 3. Retrieved on October 23, 2009 from: [www.prrac.org/pdf/RealizingPromise1997.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/RealizingPromise1997.pdf).
  - 19 From 2003 to late 2007, a different, nonprofit group (the Innovative Housing Institute) was responsible for providing units with project-based vouchers and serving mobility clients interested in Section 8 homeownership. In late 2007 Metropolitan Baltimore Quadel assumed full responsibility for the counseling and production aspects of the Section 8 homeownership and project-based voucher programs as well as administration of vouchers in those programs. Now, all programs are under one roof.
  - 20 The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided contributions for enhanced counseling services for a subset of the caseload to receive second move counseling (an enhancement that was later extended program wide) and employment services. The Abell Foundation has provided contributions for security deposit assistance and is subsidizing low-cost car purchases by program participants who need a car to get to a job. The Krieger Fund has provided seed funding for a set of educational supports for program families.
  - 21 Margery Austin Turner, "HOPE VI, Neighborhood Recovery, and the Health of Cities," in *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America's Cities*, Henry G. Cisneros and Lora Engdahl, editors, Brookings Institution Press, 2009, p. 182.
  - 22 Michael Stoll, "Job Sprawl and the Spatial Mismatch Between Blacks and Jobs," Brookings Institution Survey Series, 2005.
  - 23 George Galster and others, *Assessing Property Value Impacts of Dispersed Housing Subsidy Programs*, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (March 1999), Ch. 7-2. Retrieved on October 14, 2009 from: [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/assess\\_1.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/assess_1.pdf) Also cited in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Section 8 Tenant-Based Assistance: A Look Back After 20 Years*, (March 2000) at p. 21. Retrieved on September 16, 2009 from: <http://www.huduser.org/publications/doc/look.doc>.
  - 24 Ibid.
  - 25 Philip D. Tegeler, Michael L. Hanley, and Judith Liben, "Transforming Section 8 Using Federal Housing Subsidies to Promote Individual Housing Choice and Desegregation," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, Summer 1995: 30 Harv. C.R.-C.L.L. Rev 451.
  - 26 Generally, vouchers can be used to access units with rents falling within 90 to 110 percent of the HUD-determined Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the metro area. To access units in healthier suburban rental submarkets, public housing authorities can request permission for a payment standard exceeding 110 percent of FMR. The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program has set payment standards ranging from 110 percent of FMR up to 130 percent in some areas.
  - 27 See Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, "Locked Out: Barriers to Choice for Housing Voucher Holders," (Chicago, 2002). Retrieved October 11, 2009 from: <http://lcbh.org/images/2008/10/housing-voucher-barriers.pdf>. Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, "Housing Choice in Crisis: An Audit Report on Discrimination against Housing Choice Voucher Holders in the Greater New Orleans Rental Housing Market," (New Orleans, 2009). Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.gnofairhousing.org/pdfs/HousingChoiceInCrisis2009.pdf>.
  - 28 See a comparison of MTO and regular Section 8 lease-up rates in Mark Shroder, "Moving to Opportunity: An Experiment in Social and Geographic Mobility," *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2001, pp. 57-67. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.huduser.org/Periodicals/CITYSCPE/VOL5NUM2/shroder.pdf>.
  - 29 See Meryl Finkel and Larry Buron, "Study on Section 8 Voucher Success Rates, Volume 1, Quantitative Study of Success Rates in Metropolitan Areas," prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2001, p. 2-3 (chapter 2, page 3). Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/sec8success.pdf>.
  - 30 See Mark Shroder, "Moving to Opportunity: An Experiment in Social and Geographic Mobility," p. 62.
  - 31 The Thompson partial consent decree called for two years of post-move assistance, but the second year was not included in MBQ's initial contract.
  - 32 Surprisingly, there does not appear to be any national data or published studies on frequency of moves by Housing Choice Voucher families. MBQ Managing Director Jim Evans, who has administered voucher programs for large urban agencies in Indiana and Texas, observes that approximately half of the voucher families in those programs tended to move every year.
  - 33 See Lynora Williams, *Fragmented: Improving Education for Mobile Students*, Washington, D.C.: Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 2004. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.prrac.org/pubs\\_fiems.php](http://www.prrac.org/pubs_fiems.php)
  - 34 See Larry Orr and others, "Moving to Opportunity Interim Impacts Evaluation," p. 34. The data on reasons for second moves in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program is provided in the Outcomes section of this report.
  - 35 Some landlords actively recruit mobility program participants. For example, advertisements from landlords in Section 8 submarkets seeking Section 8 and second-year MBQ participants have appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* and on Craig's List.

- 36 See Edward G. Goetz, testimony before House Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, *Academic Perspectives on the Future of Public Housing*, 111th Cong., 1st sess., July 29, 2009; retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.house.gov/apps/list/hearing/financialsvcs\\_dem/goetz.pdf](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/hearing/financialsvcs_dem/goetz.pdf). Also see Gregory Mills and others, “Effects of Housing Vouchers on Welfare Families,” prepared by Abt Associates, Amy Jones & Associates, Cloudburst Consulting and the QED Group for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, September 2006; retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/hsgvouchers\\_1.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/hsgvouchers_1.pdf); and Margery Austin Turner and Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Assisted Housing Mobility and the Success of Low-Income Minority Families: Lessons for Policy, Practice, and Future Research,” Urban Institute Brief no. 5, March 2008; retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411638\\_assisted\\_housing.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411638_assisted_housing.pdf).
- 37 The *Thompson* partial consent decree did not include funding for specialized employment services. The enhanced employment services have been funded through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Casey enhanced employment program initially covered 75 participants. Fifteen of the original participants continue to receive the services, along with an additional 35 participants.
- 38 Job Opportunities Task Force, “The 60-Hour Practice Driving Law: Unintended Consequences for Maryland’s Economy.” (July 2007).
- 39 The distribution description comes from MBQ’s June 2009 report which lists 1,263 families in the post-placement caseload, 352 of which were previously in public housing and 911 on the wait list.
- 40 These numbers likely undercount the number of public housing families participating in the program because families coded by the intake system as coming from a waiting list may very well have been in public housing previously or even still living in public housing but as a dependant.
- 41 ACLU 2007 New Mover Survey.
- 42 DeLuca and Rosenblatt articles, 2009a and 2009b (end-note 4). Data is as of September 2007.
- 43 ACLU 2007 New Mover Survey and 2007 Post-Placement Survey.
- 44 For a recent analysis see Elizabeth Julian and Michael M. Daniel, “HUD-Assisted Low-Income Housing: Is It Working and for Whom?” *Poverty & Race* (July/August 2009).
- 45 ACLU 2007 Post-Placement survey.
- 46 ACLU 2007 Second Mover Survey.
- 47 ACLU 2007 Post-Placement Survey and 2007 Second Mover Survey.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 ACLU 2007 Second Mover survey.
- 51 Xavier de Souza Briggs, “Strengthening Housing Opportunity through the Housing Choice Voucher Program,” testimony before the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, September 22, 2008. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.prrac.org/projects/fair\\_housing\\_commission/boston/de-souza-briggs.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/projects/fair_housing_commission/boston/de-souza-briggs.pdf)
- 52 Respondents who had a driver’s license but not a car were less likely to report dissatisfaction with transportation than those who had neither a license nor a car and more likely to say they were “somewhat satisfied.” This underscores the value of the assistance that the program provides to help participants pay for driver’s education so that they can obtain a license. Additionally, participants living in Howard County are more satisfied with their transit options than those living in Harford County.
- 53 See *Unequal Health Outcomes* in the United States, report submitted by the CERD Working Group on Health and Environmental Health to the U.N. Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/CERD-healthEnvironmentReport.pdf>.
- 54 Baltimore City Health Department, 2008 Neighborhood Health Profiles, Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from [www.baltimorehealth.org/neighborhood.html](http://www.baltimorehealth.org/neighborhood.html)
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 The percentage of parents in this survey reporting better health was 31.3 percent, somewhat lower than similar surveys of recent movers.
- 57 Larry Orr and others, “Moving to Opportunity Interim Impacts Evaluation,” pp. 69-84. See also Dolores Acevedo-Garcia. “Does Housing Mobility Policy Improve Health?” 5 *Housing Policy Debate* 49, 76 (2004).
- 58 Susan J. Popkin and Mary K. Cunningham, “Has HOPE VI Transformed Residents’ Lives?” in *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America’s Cities*, Henry G. Cisneros and Lora Engdahl, editors, Brookings Institution Press, 2009, p. 198.
- 59 Almost all are transferring their children to take advantage of schools in their new district. Seventy-four percent of recent movers and 92 percent of longer-term participants surveyed in 2007 said they had transferred their children to schools in the new district. This is in contrast with MTO findings, including those from the Baltimore site. Most MTO experimental movers generally did not move to suburban areas and hence did not change school districts. Even when parents did move beyond the center city school district, some did not transfer their children to schools in their new neighborhoods. Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt, forthcoming, 2010, “Does Moving To Better Neighborhoods Lead to Better Schooling Opportunities? Parental School Choice in an Experimental Housing Voucher Program.” *Teachers College Record* 112 (5).
- 60 DeLuca and Rosenblatt (2009a and 2009b).
- 61 ACLU 2007 Post-Placement Survey.



- 62 See Kami Kruckenberg and others, *Connecting Families to Opportunity: a Resource Guide for Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrators*, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, July 2009, pp. 15-18. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.prrac.org/pdf/connecting\\_families.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/connecting_families.pdf).
- 63 ACLU 2007 Post-Placement Survey.
- 64 See Rosenbaum, "Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program," pp. 239-244.
- 65 ACLU 2007 New Mover Survey; ACLU 2007 Post-Placement Survey.
- 66 See Philip Tegeler and Michael Sarbanes "Lawyers & Social Change: Taking the Long View in Baltimore," *The Next American City*. September 2005, p. 27; and Memorandum from Heather Brome, policy analyst, New England Public Policy Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, to Jeffrey Blodgett, vice president of research, CERC, "Urban vs. suburban job growth," October 20, 2006.
- 67 ACLU 2007 New Mover and Post-Placement Surveys. This data should be viewed with the caveat that the sample sizes were relatively small because some respondents did not answer some or all of the questions regarding employment.
- 68 ACLU New Mover Survey 2008.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Although researchers know of no national or local data on the percent of Housing Choice Voucher families who move after their first year of occupancy, MBQ project director Jim Evans, who has administered voucher programs for large urban agencies in Indiana and Texas, observes that approximately half of the voucher families in those programs tended to move every year.
- 71 DeLuca and Rosenblatt, (2009a and 2009b), note 4. This figure excludes the approximately 200 families forced to move when the large apartment complexes within which they lived were sold, almost all of whom had already stayed beyond one year.
- 72 DeLuca and Rosenblatt, (2009a and 2009b), note 4. As cited earlier, the average neighborhood of origin was 80 percent black with a poverty rate of 32.8 percent, while the average "first move neighborhood" was 21.1 percent black with a poverty rate of 7.5 percent. In comparison, the average second move neighborhood was 59.8 percent black and had a poverty rate of 16 percent. However, these averages for second-move neighborhoods obscure the fact that there is broad variation in second move locations because these moves are not subject to targeting requirements.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 MBQ Administrative Data.
- 75 Ibid. Additionally, data from recent movers surveyed by the ACLU of Maryland in 2008 shows a similar pattern of stability post second-move counseling, with 66 percent of respondents reporting that they planned to stay in their new home at the end of their first year's lease, and 76 percent saying that they would like to stay in the same neighborhood.
- 76 ACLU 2007 Second Mover Survey; MBQ administrative data analyzed in DeLuca and Rosenblatt (2009a, 2009b)
- 77 See Larry Orr and others, "Moving to Opportunity Interim Impacts Evaluation," p. 34.
- 78 Only 11 percent of Second Movers surveyed said being near to family and friends was an important factor in selecting a neighborhood in which to live. ACLU 2007 Second Mover Survey. Perhaps surprisingly, this was cited as important by a larger percentage of longer-term stayers, 31 percent, but still a minority. ACLU 2007 Post-Placement Survey.
- 79 ACLU 2007 Second Mover Survey. (Data includes families moving in the "ordinary course" i.e. does not include participants forced to move when large apartment complexes were sold and the new owners did not continue participation in the program). For a HUD sponsored study of how the short term housing choices of individuals, housing outcomes, and workforce consequences are conditioned by regulatory barriers and long term patterns of development and transportation infrastructure, see Carliner, et al., *A Review of Regulatory Barriers to Employer Ability to Recruit and Retain Employees: Workforce Housing Final Report*, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (2008) at p. 85. Retrieved on October 12, 2009 from [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/review\\_regbarrier.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/review_regbarrier.pdf)
- 80 ACLU 2007 Second Mover survey.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Jobs-Plus was a federal demonstration program of the 1990s aimed at helping public housing residents find and keep jobs in part by changing rent rules so that participants who increased earnings through work were not penalized with a concurrent increase in rent.
- 83 MBQ administrative data analyzed in DeLuca and Rosenblatt (2009a, 2009b), note 4.
- 84 Job Opportunities Task Force, "The 60-Hour Practice Driving Law: Unintended Consequences for Maryland's Economy," (July 2007).
- 85 Ibid. JOTF reports that participants in "Ways to Work," a program similar to Vehicles for Change that helps low-income workers obtain cars, increase their salaries by an average of 41 percent once they have a car.
- 86 See Kami Kruckenberg and others, *Connecting Families to Opportunity: a Resource Guide for Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrators*, pp. 15-18. Among the sources cited are Briggs et al, "Why Did the Moving to Opportunity Experiment Not Get Young People into Better Schools?"; Richard Rothstein, "Even the Best Schools Can't Close the Achievement Gap," *Poverty & Race* (Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Washington, D.C.) September/October 2004; and Susan Popkin,

- Tama Leventhal, and Gretchen Weismann, *Girls in the 'hood: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment*, (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2006). For details on how poor parents face challenges negotiating the housing and school link in the absence of supports, see DeLuca and Rosenblatt, "Does Moving To Better Neighborhoods Lead to Better Schooling Opportunities? Parental School Choice in an Experimental Housing Voucher Program," *Teachers College Record* 112(5).
- 87 See Kruckenberg and others, *Connecting Families to Opportunity*, pp. 5-14, which reviews the research on neighborhood impacts on health.
  - 88 Briggs and others, "Why Did the Moving to Opportunity Experiment Not Get Young People into Better Schools?" *Housing Policy Debate*, vol. 19, issue 1, 2008, pp. 53-91. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.mi.vt.edu/data/files/hpd%2019.1/briggs\\_article.pdf](http://www.mi.vt.edu/data/files/hpd%2019.1/briggs_article.pdf); DeLuca and Rosenblatt. "Does Moving To Better Neighborhoods Lead to Better Schooling Opportunities? Parental School Choice in an Experimental Housing Voucher Program," *Teachers College Record* 112(5).
  - 89 See Bruce Katz and Margery Austin Turner, "Rethinking U.S. Rental Housing Policy," Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, March 2007; retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/revisiting\\_rental\\_symposium/papers/rr07-10\\_turner\\_katz.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/revisiting_rental_symposium/papers/rr07-10_turner_katz.pdf); and Bruce Katz, "Neighborhoods of Choice and Connection: The Evolution of American Neighborhood Policy and What it Means for the United Kingdom," The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program research brief, July 2004; retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2004/07metropolitanpolicy\\_katz/20040713\\_katz.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2004/07metropolitanpolicy_katz/20040713_katz.pdf).
  - 90 Kirk McClure, 2009. Housing Choice Voucher Marketing Opportunity Index: Analysis of Data at the Tract and Block Group Level, Report to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research.
  - 91 Tegeler and Sarbanes, "Lawyers & Social Change: Taking the Long View in Baltimore," p. 27.
  - 92 The federal law governing of the LIHTC program, 26 U.S.C. § 42(m)(1)(A)(ii), requires only that local governments be given notice and an opportunity for comment on LIHTC applications submitted by private developers. Only Arkansas, Kansas, Maryland, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Dakota impose additional mandatory requirements for local approval. See Sarah Bookbinder and others, *Building Opportunity: Civil Rights Best Practices in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program*, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, December 2008, pp. 10-12. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/2008-Best-Practices-final.pdf>.
  - 93 See Kruckenberg and others, *Connecting Families to Opportunity: a Resource Guide for Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrators*, p. 2.
  - 94 Poverty & Race Research Action Council, "A National Opportunity Voucher Program: A bridge to quality, integrated education for low-income children," July 2009. Retrieved on October 11, 2009 from: <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/opportunityvouchers.pdf>.
  - 95 The cost range encompasses counseling costs. Higher rental subsidies going to costlier units in more affluent suburbs are covered by housing assistance payments and not factored into the overall mobility counseling costs.



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