

Mixed-Income Development Study

University of Chicago

Research Brief #5: Chicago's Public Housing Transformation: What Happened to the Residents?¹

February 2012

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall Question:

Are there differences among households that were relocated to different housing contexts through the Plan for Transformation, and are those in some housing contexts (e.g., mixed income, voucher, traditional developments, scattered-site) doing better than those in others?

Research Overview:

More than 16,000 families were in CHA housing at the start of the Plan for Transformation, and 9,980 remained according to 2008 administrative data from the CHA. We examine the household characteristics, labor force participation, public assistance, and youth-based systems involvement of this population at both points in time.

Findings:

Resident Relocation

- The majority of voucher holders have relocated to predominantly poor and racially segregated neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city.
- Scattered-site households are more likely to be located on the north side in relatively less poor, less segregated neighborhoods.
- Residents of mixed-income developments are in less poor, less segregated areas than those who remain in traditional public housing.

Employment and Earnings

- Voucher holders were the most likely to be employed but earned less at the start of the Transformation; they were the only group that did not experience gains in employment by 2008.
- Despite a work requirement in mixed-income developments, these households worked at about the same rate and for about the same average earnings as households in traditional public housing.
- The amount of time residents had spent in the new mixed-income developments had no effect on employment and earnings.

TANF and Food Stamp Receipt

- Over the course of the Transformation, TANF receipt has dropped drastically among all CHA households.
- Voucher holders had the highest rate of TANF and food stamp receipt at the start of the Transformation and were the most likely to receive food stamps in 2008.

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Involvement

- Voucher holders were most likely to be involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems at the start of the Transformation; there were no differences between housing types by 2008.

Implications for Consideration:

- Voucher holders appear more vulnerable than other households on a number of indicators. How might services be tailored to meet the special circumstances of this hard-to-reach population?
- Despite stringent screening processes, households in mixed-income developments are largely indistinguishable from those in traditional public housing and experiencing limited gains over time. What is the plan for long-term support of this population?

¹ This brief is based on a longer paper, "Public Housing Transformation and Resident Relocation: Comparing Destinations and Household Characteristics in Chicago" (Chaskin, Joseph, Voelker, and Dworsky, forthcoming, *Cityscape*). For more information about the Mixed-Income Development Study at the University of Chicago, please contact Sara Voelker at svoelker@uchicago.edu. This study is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, with additional support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.