Joint Center for Housing Studies
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Focus on Critical Rental Housing Policy Experiments: Framing the Discussion for February 13th

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Introduction

A principal finding from the Revisiting Rental Housing Symposium convened by the Joint Center for Housing Studies in November 2006 is that a great deal has been learned from recent experiments and demonstrations about how to use rental housing assistance to encourage improved labor, mental health, educational, and other social and economic outcomes. A related finding is that much more could be done to fine tune rental housing policy and make a more compelling case for its value if the government built on the promise of some recent controlled policy experiments and funded more such experiments. Although a handful of carefully designed controlled experiments point the way forward, many of the findings from previous demonstration programs are still contested because the evaluations of them were not systematic enough to produce irrefutable conclusions about whether interventions worked and if so which specific interventions led to positive outcomes.

As a follow up to this symposium, the MacArthur Foundation has asked the Joint Center to convene a group of leading scholars and practitioners to explore these principal findings and their implications. The purposes of this focus session are therefore to: 1) review the findings from recent demonstration program evaluations and controlled policy experiments, and 2) consider what kinds of controlled policy experiments hold the greatest promise to improve rental policies and build support for their worth. More specifically, the focus session will explore what policy experiments would help test and sharpen our understanding of the interventions that work best to pursue two goals: promoting economic self-sufficiency of rental aid recipients and helping rental aid recipients move to rentals in opportunity areas through relocation assistance. The hope is that this focus session will lead to a list of possible policy experiments and a clear explanation of why they are important and what can be learned from them. The larger goal is to then present this list to public officials and philanthropic organizations. The Joint Center will stop short of recommending which experiments are the most worthy, leaving that to decision makers. Instead, the goal is to synthesize and present the best thinking of the research and practitioner communities on these issues.

Both rental policy goals are broad and to some degree overlapping, but each will be examined separately. At the end of the daylong session, time will be reserved for a discussion of whether it might also make sense to consider undertaking broader experiments aimed at commingling these goals through a mix of targeted interventions.

Rental Housing Policy's "Other" Goals: Self-Sufficiency and Access to Opportunity

From its inception, federal rental housing policy was recognized for its ability to do more than just provide decent, affordable rental housing for working families and the poor. In fact, the Housing Act of 1937, which authorized the first subsidized housing in the US, was arguably more focused on creating jobs and stimulating the construction industry through the construction of public housing.[1] Still, for decades, housing policy was focused solely on rent affordability and raising the supply of units affordable to low-income renters.[2] Beginning in the early 1980s, however, there has emerged a new emphasis on using federal rental assistance as part of a coordinated, multi-faceted approach to help achieve lasting improvements in other areas of the lives of rental-aid recipients. Sparked by Reagan-era federal cutbacks and a direct fiscal need for government programs to deliver more for less, housing assistance programs have since focused more consciously on coordinating with other aid programs, particularly work support programs, to offer self-sufficiency interventions that encourage housing aid recipients to rise up and out of government subsidy so that more families can be helped on fewer resources. At the same time, rental policy makers have aimed to address a widespread, though some would argue not fully proven, belief that concentrated poverty and poor neighborhood conditions lead to a wide range of negative outcomes such as lower educational attainment, increased criminal behavior, increased teen sexual activity, and decreased employment, and increased health and stress (Wilson 1987; Ellen & Turner 1997; Quercia & Galster, 1997; Popkin 2000) Policy has also been driven by a similarly held belief that helping low-income families find and afford housing in low-poverty areas can lead to more positive outcomes both because they are less exposed to the purported ill effects of concentrated poverty and because they are closer to areas of social and economic opportunity.[3]

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[1] Bratt 1997, "A Whithering Commitment". Shelterforce. http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/94/bratt.html (Accessed on October 17, 2007)

[2] These new units would also improve housing conditions for low income renters, therein following the directive of the Housing Act of 1949 to provide "a decent home and suitable living environment" for all Americans. Up to the 1980s, rental policy remained within the confines of providing public housing, project-based, or tenant-based subsidies each aimed to limit the amount of rent low-income renters had to pay.

[3] These parallel goals are exemplified by the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, which calls for "provid[ing] families living in public housing with better access to educational and employment opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency and independence" (US House of Representatives 1990, from Shlay, 1993). The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA) has also detailed a core goal for housing policy going forward as "creating incentives and economic opportunities for residents of dwelling units assisted by public housing agencies to work, become self-sufficient, and transition out of public housing and federally assisted

The Programs

To understand what works to advance goals of self sufficiency and mobility, it is helpful to look at past programs in terms of the common levers, or methods, of intervention used by them. Although there is considerable variation in the way in which programs have implemented them, there are four basic types of intervention: 1) training/employment services; 2) rent-rule based work incentives, 3) simple provision of tenant-based subsidy vouchers that recipients may be able to use to find accommodations in a higher socioeconomic status area without relocation assistance; and 4) relocation assistance programs to encourage mobility to opportunity areas.

Self-sufficiency interventions have attempted to address two significant barriers faced by working-age rental-aid recipients. Job training and employment services aim to raise skill and education levels and help rental aid recipients find and retain better jobs; and rent-based work incentives aim to combat possible disincentives to work attached to income-based rent levels. HUDs early self-sufficiency programs, Project Self-Sufficiency and Operation Bootstrap, involved just employment supports without rent-rule changes. In targeting Section 8 *applicants*, and not current aid recipients, the interventions introduce both housing aid vouchers and employment supports concurrently. Similarly, the more recent Welfare to Work Voucher program also intended to offer new vouchers and employment supports to welfare-eligible applicants, but the employment supports part of the intervention failed to materialize.

Hope VI's Community Supportive Services introduced employment supports to *current* rental aid recipients, so there was no adjustment to housing subsidy, but participants did move and therefore had to adjust to new units or neighborhoods. Within Hope VI, Community Supportive Services were spotty and, where offered, varied significantly from site to site, in all affecting just a subset of a subset of the original residents of the development.

Following PSS and Operation Bootstrap, several programs added on rent-based incentives to hopefully improve results of employment support interventions. The Gateway Transitional Families Program, a local program created under Project Self Sufficiency by the Charlotte Housing Authority, was the first to use such rent incentives and led to the creation of HUD's Family Self-

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dwelling units," although "deregulation and decontrolling public housing agencies" was clearly specified as the primary purpose of the act.[3]

Sufficiency program, which shared many of Gateway's characteristics.[4] Being created prior to Congress authorizing Moving to Work, these two programs did not have the flexibility to alter rent-rules, rather they deposited mandatory rent increases incurred from additional work effort into escrow savings accounts for the tenant. These funds could then be redeemed by participants upon successful completion of a multi-year goals contract that guided tenants through job-training, employment services and eventual employment, and were a positive source of asset building.

It was not until the Moving to Work Demonstration program that PHAs with HUD waivers were allowed to actually change rent-rules to allow tenants to keep more of their additional earnings. With this freedom, PHAs enacted a wide variety of rent-rule based carrots and sticks for employment such as setting flat rents, setting flat subsidies, allowing deductions for certain household costs, establishing ceiling rents, minimum rents, minimum work or training requirements, delaying rent increases, timed rent step-ups set for predetermined intervals, and exclusions of certain portions of income from rent (Abravanel 2004). Jobs-Plus, an experimental off-shoot of Moving to Work, had employment supports that included a unique set of community supports whereby agencies facilitated tenant exchange of information on job opportunities and employment service. It also offered flat rents to encourage increased work, but maintained income-based rents as a safety net for the lowest income residents who lose their jobs or go to school. Aside from being the only experimental program, it also differed from previous interventions in that it was applied to whole public housing sites, not to individuals, and therefore tested a saturation of services across the development.

Mobility programs intervene through providing flexible, tenant-based rent subsidy vouchers and relocation assistance services for rental-aid recipients to encourage moves to more stable, higher-opportunity neighborhoods.[5] Though these look to reduce concentrated poverty and provide opportunities, many of these programs hold the additional though indirect, goal of increasing incomes and ultimately fostering self-sufficiency. Except for the Hope VI program, participation in these interventions has been voluntary. Tenant-based vouchers are the primary

[4] The Gateway program was unique in dedicating two years to remediation during which participants focused on job training and education services, followed by a transition stage lasting up to 5 years in which participants were given a chance to increase earnings and self-sufficiency. Rents were frozen in the remediation stage and then set back up to 30 percent of incomes in the transition stage, with any amount over operating costs put into an escrow account. These accounts were redeemable upon successful graduation from the 5-year program and were intended for recipients to put towards a down payment on a new home (Rohe & Kleit 1997)

[5] Neighborhood improvement programs have used large-scale residential development and rehabilitation interventions as a tool to help turnaround distressed neighborhoods.

means of increasing the neighborhood choices for housing-aid recipients. Though intended to be much more, the Welfare to Work Voucher program emerged as such a program that could evaluate the impact of a voucher-only intervention targeted to welfare-eligible families. But simply providing a household with a voucher is different from permitting them only to use them in certain areas or providing them help in finding rental opportunities in higher socioeconomic status neighborhoods. While housing choice vouchers have increased mobility of housing aid recipients into slightly better neighborhoods, there has been a tendency for many voucher holders to fail to find housing, to remain within or relocate to high-poverty neighborhoods, to cluster in high-poverty sections of lower-poverty areas, or to quickly return to high-poverty neighborhoods (Briggs 1997; Fisher 1999; Pendall 2000; Devine et. al 2003; Bosolo 2005; Mills et. al. 2006).[6] More narrowly focused research has also suggested that without special counseling, households receiving vouchers make short-distance moves, remaining near their original neighborhoods and therefore see little improvement in their housing or neighborhood conditions.(Varady et.al 1999, Goering et. al 1995).

Most mobility demonstration programs, therefore, have offered relocation assistance services in addition to vouchers. These services help voucher holders find and/or negotiate for privately owned rental units, and in some cases line up willing landlords and direct participants towards opportunity neighborhoods, which in the strict Moving to Opportunities treatment, were the neighborhoods to which voucher use was restricted.

The set of programs offering relocation services include Gautreaux, Moving to Opportunity, the CHAC Housing Opportunities program, and the HUD Regional Opportunities Counseling program.[7] Historically, mobility programs have both implicitly and explicitly been concerned with racial segregation and discrimination, thus, these interventions have involved both race-based and poverty-based criteria, and issues of poverty and race have been intertwined (Basolo 2005, and O'Connor 2001 from Basolo, 2005). Gautreaux and the Yonkers Scattered Site public housing development are both explicit examples of court-ordered race-based desegregation programs.

[6] Similarly, transportation-based mobility programs to connect workers in high-poverty neighborhoods to suburban jobs have proven to be complicated, underutilized, and costly (Pugh 1998).
[7] See Turner and Williams (1998) for a look at other smaller-scale relocation programs across the country.

Design of the Programs

Apart from Jobs-Plus, which assigned entire housing projects, and Moving to Opportunity (MTO) and the Welfare to Work Voucher program (WTWV), which assigned individual households, self-sufficiency and mobility demonstration programs did not make random assignments into treatment groups and un-treated control groups for comparison. Without such an experimental research design, program evaluations can measure participant outcomes, but stop short of measuring program impacts because they were not initially set up as randomized experiments. Even the few programs that did incorporate a randomized research design suffered from inconsistent application and administration of the treatments across program sites. This clouds the findings somewhat. Nevertheless, evaluations of the majority of programs without a careful, pre-planned research design led to much suggestive evidence of program impacts, some more convincing than others.

To measure impacts more definitively, evaluations need a randomized design of control and treatment groups, and as tight control over the administration of treatments as possible. For example, protocols on how to provide relocation or employment assistance services should be developed and followed as closely as possible at all sites. Jobs-Plus succeeded in obtaining a randomized sample of public housing projects for treatment, and MTO and WTWV succeeded in randomly assigning individuals to different treatment and control groups, but none could assure a consistent administration of the treatment among the treated, nor consistent lack of treatment for the untreated. Other programs did not start with random assignment, though some were evaluated using proxy control groups. Most did not have very strict controls over the quality and intensity of the treatments provided, and many mixed different treatments. In an ideal world, evaluations would also have a broad enough geographic sample to draw conclusions about the influence of market factors such as employment conditions, tightness of the housing market, racial segregation, and income segregation that matter most to testing the treatments applied. Also, evaluations would have a large enough sample to explore how different segments of the population may be influenced by these treatments, such as by race, ethnicity, income, and family type. Lastly, evaluations would be conducted over a long enough period of time to test for possible lags in the appearance of outcomes. Each of these is costly, and most of the evaluations discussed below fall short of the ideal. MTO and WTWV were both designed to allow for subgroup analysis and program impacts

over a long time frame, but neither made any attempt to control for geographic characteristics that would measure the effect of the intervention on a national scale.

What Has Been Learned from Past Programs

Non-experimental findings from employment-services programs provide suggestive evidence that employment interventions combined with housing assistance may lead to improved work outcomes. Rates of employment increased for PSS, Bootstrap, and HOPE VI participants, and effects on wages were also positive but not enough to raise families out of housing subsidy (Clegg and Associates 2000, from Popkin 2004; Popkin 2004). They also indicate that effects may be lagged when resident moves or training is involved (Bogdon 1999). Effects on welfare supports were mixed even for similar interventions, with significant reductions among PSS residents, slight increases for Bootstrap participants, and significant decreases through HOPE VI, though without control for effects of concurrent welfare reforms (Widener University 2003, from Popkin 2004; Popkin 2004). The impact of market-wide employment growth in the study areas are not controlled and so also limit the strength of the findings (Bogdon 1999; Milwaukee Housing Authority 2000, from Popkin 2004). According to Popkin (2004), "All of these sites show promising results; however, without a systematic national evaluation or collection of uniform performance measures, there is no way of knowing how effective the strategy of marrying supportive services and housing assistance has been." Once again, the lack of an experimental design with control groups has resulted in uncertainty about the program's effects.

While previous evaluations were unable to draw firm conclusions, recent evaluations of the Welfare to Work Voucher program support the theory that the employment services provided by the PSS and Bootstrap programs played a role in combating the negative influence of new vouchers on work outcomes. Initiated in 1999, the WTWV program was the first experimentally designed program that could rigorously test the impact of Section 8 vouchers on families eligible for both welfare and rent-aid assistance. Though conceived as a self-sufficiency experiment, evaluations concluded that the WtWV employment supports provided were not substantially different from those received by all rent-aid recipients anyway, and therefore the effective treatment was considered the provision of a voucher, which has multiple objectives attached to it

such as reducing rent burdens and increasing housing quality.[8] But the emphasis on self-sufficiency within the program limited the ability to make firm conclusions on certain mobility outcomes. For example, unlike other mobility experiments, WTWV did not target residents living in poor housing or neighborhood conditions to track moves to opportunity neighborhoods, nor did it offer relocation assistance, or track other health or child outcomes. The final evaluation of WTWV found definitively that the negative work influences of voucher use leads to negative work outcomes and lower levels of self-sufficiency, but only in the short term. Participants in the treatment group experienced a significant decrease in employment and earnings after being provided a voucher. They also increased their TANF and food stamp utilization. The evaluation concludes that "the entire [early, negative] impact on earnings for the sample as a whole was attributable to reduced work effort among the 15 percent of the sample who said at baseline that they desired to move for employment-related purposes....not only did the voucher not assist their job search, it actually hindered it—probably by diverting time and energy from job search to a search for new housing and, if successful, to moving...." (p.128) Additional results show the voucher's significant impact on out-of-tract mobility, and significant favorable impacts on neighborhood quality indicators of poverty rate, employment rate, and welfare concentration, and minority concentration within the neighborhoods. In terms of magnitude, large impacts were found on housing affordability, impacts on neighborhood conditions were modest, and impacts on quality of housing were negligible relative to the control group. Perhaps the most positive finding from the program was that homelessness and housing security were both greatly improved for voucher recipients.

Moving on from vouchers and employment supports, another set of self-sufficiency interventions, escrow-building rent-based work incentives, have been shown to have the potential to raise earned income and assets, increase educational and employment outcomes, and reduce welfare dependency among recipients of housing assistance, though none of this evidence has been confirmed through rigorously designed experiments. (William Rohe, 1995; Anne Shlay, 1993; William Rohe and Rachel Kleit, 1997, 1999; Bogdon, 1999; Barbara Sard, 2001; Gibson

[8] Though the program originally intended that the voucher be combined with job training, childcare, and other services, these services for the most part did not materialize in a way that differentiated them from services non WtWV participants received anyway, so program evaluations consider the treatment to be the voucher itself (Patterson et. el 2004).

2004).[9] The 2004 full evaluation of FSS reported that compared to non-participants participants saw greater increases in median incomes, higher shares of income from employment, and much lower reliance on welfare benefits across the 1996-2000 program period.[10] Empirical studies incorporating various controls have also found that participation in FSS led to significantly greater earnings, but acknowledge overstated results due to the selection bias of the non-experimental data (Olsen 2005). The Gateway program evaluations also found successful completion of the program led to significantly higher levels of all self-sufficiency measures of full-time work, hours, earnings, and wages relative to those experienced by the constructed control group, as well as less reliance on public assistance, and higher homeownership levels (Rohe & Kleit 1997; Bogdon 1999). But while self-sufficiency gains in Gateway were dramatic, with 90 percent of graduates off of welfare and just under 75 percent of graduates off of housing aid subsidy, only 32 percent of entrants successfully graduated the program, and given the small sample size, this means there were only 41 graduates from which results were obtained. This leads to questions about the scalability of the results and overall effectiveness (not to mention cost-effectiveness) of the program if it were brought to scale. Similarities in the design of the Gateway and FSS and the similarly low rates of participation and successful completion of these programs call into question the attractiveness and cost-effectiveness of voluntary, sanctioned, contract-based employment supports and incentive interventions.

According the 2004 Urban Institute evaluation of Moving to Work, housing authorities that adjusted rent rules experienced increased average incomes among participants, and the majority reported residents working more continuously for more hours. But there were also other factors involved in MTW interventions in addition to rent-rule changes, including employment services, which the program design did not allow evaluators to test for. This prohibited their ability to make determinations about what types of rent rules work and how much of an impact they have. The most dramatic, but inconclusive finding is that while different housing authorities offered various degrees of penalties and incentives, the magnitude of the gains in employment did not appear to correspond to the stringency of the penalties nor to the generosity of the rewards. Both carrot-only and stick-only policies saw employment increases. Furthermore, evaluators could identify "no

[9] Reviews of the FSS evaluations have noted that the "lack of experimental design and the limited availability of comparative data make it difficult to assess the effects" of these programs themselves (Bogdon 1999).
[10] Another study of 19 FSS programs around the country found asset growth of $6,000 per FSS graduate, doubling of earnings or better among FSS graduates, and about 30 percent attainment of homeownership among graduates (Cramer 2004).

connection between the type of policy changes that authorities made and the extent of employment increases" because it was so "difficult to disentangle the impact of MTW from TANF and other factors—such as the strong economic climate that prevailed in most of the MTW communities over much of the early part of the demonstration period." (Abravanel 2004) This confusion was underscored by an audit of the design and implementation of the MTW demonstration which concluded "HUD lacks the tenant information needed to evaluate Public Housing/Section 8 Moving to Work Demonstration housing authority accomplishments." (HUD 2004) As a result, MTW has provided little conclusive evidence as to the impact of rent-based work incentives and the best approach to enacting them.

Table 1: Self-Sufficiency Programs

Program	Eligibility	Intervention	Results	Limitations
Project Self-Sufficiency (1984)	Voluntary for single mothers on Section 8 waiting list	- Job training / supports - New vouchers	+Increased Employment/Wages/Incomes +Less Reliance on Welfare +/-Incomes increased to twice welfare cut-off, but only half rent-aid cutoff	Not a randomized experiment No control group No data collection requirements Significant pre-screening for job history, education, and motivation Lack of diversity among participants
Operation Bootstrap (1989)	Voluntary for all families w/children on Section 8 waiting list	- Job training / supports - New vouchers	+Increased Employment/Job Retention +Larger shares earning above min wage -Increased Reliance on Welfare (AFDC) -Increased Use of Food Stamps -Most positive indicators only significant for those in program over 25 months	Not a randomized experiment No control group No data collection requirements Screening for job history, education, motivation Lack of diversity among participants Small Sample Size (158)
HOPE VI Community Social Services (1992-)	Voluntary for HOPE VI Residents	- Job training / supports (Usually on-site at the new development)	+ employment/earnings increases for users (Milwaukee) + greater increases in reported assets than non-users (Chester, PA) + greater decreased reliance on welfare than non-users (Chester, PA) +/- Program participation building, but few goals reached (Tuscon)	Not a randomized experiment No control groups Highly variable sets of services No standard performance/data measures
Family Self-Sufficiency (1991-)	Voluntary for Current rent-aid recipients	- Job training / supports - Escrow savings accounts - Sanctioned goals contracts	+ FSS Income increases significantly higher + Greater decreases in reliance on welfare - Difficulty recruiting participants & staffing	Not a randomized experiment No control group No specific services required/outlined Lack of diversity among participants Pre-screening for motivation
Gateway Transitional Families Program(1988)	Voluntary for rent-aid recipients or those on the waiting list	- Job training / supports - Escrow accounts - Sanctioned goals contracts - 2 year remediation /training phase	+ Significant job/wage/income increases + Significant decreases in reliance on welfare - High dropout rate (Only 32% completion)	Not a randomized experiment No control group Small sample size, few graduates Wait-list participants biased relative to current rent-aid participants
Moving to Work Demonstration Program (1998)	Mostly mandatory for current rent-aid recipients	HUD regulations waivers leading to: -Rent-rule changes (various alternatives) -Most included job training / supports -Some included work requirements	+ Some evidence of employment & job retention gains + Most sites saw increases in average incomes +/- Magnitude of penalties/incentives unrelated to outcomes +/- Mixed results on PHA finances from rent changes - Increased administrative complexity, staff costs, & confusion	Not a randomized experiment No control group Highly variable sets of interventions No standard data collection required/outlined Concurrent welfare reforms cloud findings

JobsPlus (1998)	Voluntary for residents of Select public housing sites	- Rent-rule changes (flat rent) - Community work supports - Control sites with no changes	+ Significant increases in earnings + Positive impacts widespread among diverse sub-groups +/- Increases in employment rates, though not significant overall +/- positive development impacts only where move-out rates low	Inconsistent implementation across sites Few sites (only 6 total, only 3 'strong' sites) Results clouded by concurrent welfare reforms Results clouded by overall economic boom Move-out rates high
Welfare to Work Voucher (1999)	- Current/ Former/ Eligible TANF recipients - not receiving but eligible for voucher - could have other housing assistance	- New Voucher	+ Increased housing affordability and housing security, reduced homelessness and crowding + Significant neighborhood improvements (safety, less graffiti, lower poverty rates & % unemployed) + Lower use of SSI + significant, but modestly better rates of moves out-of-tract +/- no difference in housing quality - Increased use of TANF/welfare for treatment group - Significant reductions in rates of employment and earnings - Negative employment outcomes are reduced, but remain for several years.	15 month interim, 4-5 year final evaluation Random assignment into treated/control Non-diverse & predominantly female (91.8%) Eligibility criteria differed among PHAs Intervention differed (eg FSS required in Fresno) Geographically limited to 6 cities No controls for housing/labor market

Evaluations of Jobs-Plus provide the most dramatic and conclusive evidence to date on the combined impact of saturated site provision of employment services and rent-rule incentives on self-sufficiency. In sites where it was 'strongly implemented', the program significantly increased residents' earnings, with residents in Jobs-Plus developments earning over $1,100 more per year than they would have earned without the program (Riccio 2006). Jobs-Plus participants also experienced significantly lower unemployment, and those that worked did so more consistently and for more hours than those in the control group. However, findings do not support significant impacts on incidence of welfare payments, because control-group welfare use plummeted as fast as the treatment groups'. At the same time, increases in income were not so dramatic as to disqualify participants from rent-aid, though many participants did make subsequent moves out of public housing. Jobs-Plus, even with its experimental design, suffered from several shortcomings that impacted results. First, application of treatments were not applied equally, specifically the rent-rule changes, which due to a lag in HUD approvals, were not enacted at every site until two years into the program. Community supports similarly took time to set up, and were not even offered by every participating site (Riccio 2006). Additionally, individual Jobs-Plus data were collected on a point-in-time basis at each site, and therefore participants who moved in and out of the sites received treatments for various lengths of time but were all grouped together. Lastly, the program was not designed to test for singular impact of employment services or rent-rule changes on their own, so the relative strength of these two interventions upon resident outcomes cannot be determined, and it may be the case that one is largely responsible and the other irrelevant.

In summary, evaluations of self-sufficiency demonstrations have provided a wealth of suggestive findings on the effect of employment supports and rent-rule incentives on work outcomes of rent-aid recipients. As shown in table 2, non-experimental findings suggest employment supports combat the negative influence of new voucher assistance on work outcomes, known to exist at least in the short term, leading to increased employment and enough income growth to reduce their dependency on welfare but enough to eliminate the need for housing assistance itself. However, experimental findings support this only by showing that when employment supports are not provided with a new voucher, there are significant, though modest, negative impacts on self-sufficiency in the short term. Attaching escrow-based savings accounts does provide incentive for tenants to build skills and grow incomes and be less reliant on welfare, but recruitment and retention has been difficult, implementation expensive, and results are clouded by a non-experimental program design. Finally, non-experimental programs have found rent rule changes and employment supports together

have the potential to positively affect participant work outcomes, but it is unclear as to what types of changes are effective and why. Experimental findings have shown that flat-rents with employment supports do lead to significant income increases when implemented across public housing sites, but also show that even when such a program is put in place, the strength and quality of implementation at each site is crucial to having any effect.

Table 2: Summary Results from Self-Sufficiency Interventions Evaluations:

Job training / supports& new vouchers	Areas of Agreement:	Increased employment/job retention among participants Increased incomes Results are limited by lack of controlled evaluation
	Disagreement:	Reliance on welfare supports is mixed Some increases in assets, but largely untested
New vouchers alone	Areas of Agreement:	Vouchers help increase housing security and lower homelessness and crowding No evidence of employment and earnings benefits Short-term negative impacts on earnings
	Areas of Disagreement	Voucher use leads to increased use of welfare supports Do better neighborhood characteristics mean better housing? Housing quality differences negligible
Job training / supports & escrow savings accounts	Areas of Agreement:	Initial decreases for training are followed by increases in employment , wages and earnings Participation increases assets. Decreases in reliance on welfare Knowledge is limited due to lack of controlled evaluation Difficult to recruit participants High dropout rates among participants
	Disagreement:	Relative effectiveness of training vs. incentives within program Long-term effects of these programs post-graduation
Job training / supports & Rent-rule Incentives	Areas of Agreement:	Increased earnings of workers
	Disagreement:	Indeterminate effects on employment rates & job retention Magnitude of work incentive effect on employment outcomes Impacts of rent rule changes on PHA finances

Mobility Programs

Evaluations of Project Self-Sufficiency and Operation Bootstrap, which included provision of a new voucher with employment services, found that the most dramatic changes were not in employment outcomes at all but instead in improved housing and neighborhood conditions stemming from the new neighborhoods in which recipients settled using the voucher. Past research, however, has suggested that provision of vouchers without relocation assistance has had less than hoped for changes in housing and neighborhood conditions and negligible changes in self-sufficiency outcomes (Briggs 1997; Fisher 1999; Pendall 2000; Devine et. al 2003; Basolo 2005).

Several non-experimental mobility programs, however, have provided suggestive evidence that counseling helps voucher holders move to areas of greater opportunity. Evaluation of mobility assistance programs report the majority of counseled voucher users relocate to lower poverty areas. Participants of the Chicago Housing Assistance Counseling program (CHAC), in particular, were 52 percent more likely to move to low-poverty areas than non-participant voucher movers. Tenant outcomes resulting from moves under this and other programs have been mixed. The most positive outcomes resulting from these moves were seen in the Gautreaux program, whose major finding was that, compared to those who remained within the central-city, Black families who moved into the suburbs had significantly better housing and neighborhoods and greater long-term improvements in the employment outcomes of adults and dramatic improvements in the educational prospects of their children (Rosenbaum 1991, 1995; Mendenhall et. al 2006).[11] No other mobility programs report improvements in work outcomes (Turner, 2007, Levy and Woolley 2007). As for neighborhood outcomes, evaluation of CHAC reports largely positive, but mixed findings, citing that although most moves were to low-poverty neighborhoods, the overwhelming majority of movers remained within high-minority neighborhoods. This was also the case for HOPE VI, which has very little relocation assistance. Residents relocated outside of redeveloped HOPE VI public housing lived in substantially better housing in much safer neighborhoods and their children were faring better for it, mostly because it was hard to get any worse off than the severely distressed areas the program targeted (Comey 2007; Gallagher and Bajaj 2007). But many HOPE VI movers were having difficulty making ends meet (Buron, Levy, and Gallagher 2007), and even more disturbingly, health outcomes for those relocated involuntarily became significantly worse with higher mortality rates (Manjarrez, Popkin, and Guernsey 2007). CHAC participants saw only slightly better housing and neighborhood conditions for movers to low-poverty neighborhoods than high-poverty neighborhoods (Cunningham & Sawyer 2005). Evaluators have suggested that this is because pockets of voucher use may appear in less desirable areas of low-poverty tracts that do not share the same characteristics of the overall tract (Cunningham & Popkin 2002). Furthermore, successful moves to low-poverty neighborhoods were uneven and least likely for the most vulnerable households who could potentially benefit most from the new environment, as well as

[11] In particular, children of families who moved to suburban neighborhoods were much more likely to complete high school, take college-track courses, attend college, and enter the workforce than children from similar families who moved to neighborhoods within the central city (Rosenbaum 1991, 1995).

Blacks, who were 62 percent less likely than whites or Hispanics to relocate to a low-poverty neighborhood through CHAC.

The most conclusive evidence on the impact of mobility assistance comes from the rigorously designed Moving to Opportunities program. Unlike Gautreaux, HOPE VI, and CHAC mobility, MTO was a rigorously designed experiment to explore whether the neighborhood characteristics of the areas in which rental aid recipients live has a measurable influence on a range of different individual outcomes. While there remained differences in implementation of relocation services across MTO sites[12], as a result of the strength of the initial design, interim evaluations of the Moving to Opportunity program provide strong evidence of some of the merits of moving from high poverty to low poverty neighborhoods over the short to mid-term (1-6 yrs) and some of the potential neutral or negative impacts (Turner & Rawlings 2005). Positive MTO findings include dramatic improvements in housing and neighborhood conditions, significant improvements in both mental and physical health of adults; significant mental health improvements and less risky behavior in girl children; significant but small effects on the characteristics of the schools children attended, (although most families remained within the same, central-city school district). However, several less than desirable impacts were found as well, including: no significant impacts on educational performance, no significant impacts on employment, earnings, or welfare receipt; and worse mental and behavioral outcomes in boy children. Additionally, overall lease up rates were lower for the treatment group with the restricted voucher than the comparison group [although those that did lease ended up in low-poverty areas more often] (Goering et. al. 2002). And lastly, un-counseled subsequent moves were more likely for the treatment group, and these moves were more likely to be returns back to high-poverty areas than for subsequent moves of the comparison or control groups (Orr et. al 2004).

An entirely different approach to mobility, the Yonkers program in New York, was another court-ordered race-based desegregation program. The Yonkers intervention did not involve relocation assistance but rather actual scattered-site public housing development in mostly white neighborhoods to counter the previous concentration of public housing in poor minority neighborhoods. Comparisons between movers and non-movers demonstrated that movers experienced less stress due to living in safer neighborhoods, but few additional social

[12] MTO evaluations have noted that "differences in the experience and capabilities of these nonprofit organizations led to considerable variation across the five demonstration sites in the quality and intensity of MTO counseling services"(Turner & Rawlings 2005).

benefits (Popkin et. al. 2004, Briggs 1997). Briggs (1997) specifically found little evidence that locating public housing in white, low-poverty neighborhoods led to increased community interaction or greater access to social capital for public housing residents, questioning whether these neighborhoods were truly areas of opportunity for rental-aid recipients.

Table 3: Mobility Programs

Program	Eligibility	Intervention	Results	Limitations
Gautreaux (1976)	Voluntary for Black public housing residents	- Relocation assistance - Housing voucher	Compared to City-movers, Suburban movers had: + Safer, more affluent neighborhoods + Mostly improved adult employment outcomes + Greatest employment results for those previously unemployed + Higher levels of job-retention, lower unemployment + Children had higher graduation, college attendance, & job rates - Initial declines in child educational performance - Lower wages and hours worked - All post-move work outcomes worse for several years, except if previously unemployed	Not a randomized experiment No control group Single subset of population Many families moved to neighborhoods with high rates of Blacks, Crime, and Low Incomes
Moving to Opportunity (1994)	Voluntary for very low income families in public or subsidized housing in high-poverty (>40%) neighborhoods.	- Relocation assistance - Voucher (restricted to low-poverty area) Also Included: - Comparison group (unrestricted voucher, no assistance) - Control group (given no intervention)	+ dramatic improvements in housing/neighborhood conditions + significant improvements in both mental/physical health of adults + mental health improvements/less risky behavior in girl children + significant but small effects on the characteristics of the schools (although most remained within the same school district). +/- no significant impacts in educational performance +/- no significant impacts on employment, earnings, or welfare - worse mental and behavioral outcomes in boy children - Lease up rates lower for treatment group than comparison group [but treatment tenents ended up in low-poverty areas more often] - High instance of return to poverty area for assisted movers	High variation in quality/intensity of treatment Geographically limited to just 5 cities Control group could have moved Control group could have gotten other help Treated didn't all remain in low-poverty areas No evaluation of long-term effects yet
CHAC Mobility Counseling (1998)	Voluntary for current voucher recipients who intend to move	- Relocation assistance	+ Participant moves 52% more likely to be to opportunity areas +/- Little difference in housing/neighborhood quality - Majority of paricipant moves were to high-minority areas - Low-poverty area moves least likely for most vulnerable movers - Assited movers more likely to move again & back to poverty areas	Not a randomized experiment No control group Geographically limited to Chicago Neighborhood data old (1990 census) to define opportunity
Regional Opportunity Counseling (1997)	Voluntary for current voucher recipients	- Relocation assistance - Landlord outreach/recruitment - Parnership between agencies/nonprofits	No evaluations of resident outcomes	Not a randomized experiment No control group Inconsistently funded, implemented, and prioritized Inconsistent definition of 'opportunity' area.

Hope VI Relocation (1992)	Mandatory for residents of distressed public housing slated for redevelopment	- Housing voucher - Some relocation assistance	+ Voucher recipients move to much better neighborhoods + Children faring better than those relocating to public housing - Movers remain highly segregated by race - No change in employment (after 2 years) - More financial difficulties - Increased physical health problems/mortality for previously infirm.	Not a randomized experiment No control group No specific assistance/counseling mandated High variation in quality/intensity of assistance Treatment Intensity not tracked to results
Yonkers Scattered Site Public Housing Development (1990)	Current and Waiting List Public Housing Residents	- Public housing construction in low-minority areas	+ Full-time job holding twice as likely, all else held constant + Improved crime rates, feelings of safety, reductions in stress - Little social interaction or access to social capital	

In summary, past relocation assistance programs offer valuable lessons about how to design and implement effective mobility strategies and under what conditions these strategies are likely to produce benefits for particular kinds of participants (Briggs & Turner 2006). We have learned that relocation is possible and desired by many low-income minorities in impoverished neighborhoods. We've also learned that mobility assistance has an impact on the moves of low-income families; as those who receive vouchers without mobility assistance are not as successful in moving to low-poverty neighborhoods. But there are also challenges to the sustainability of these efforts, as many movers in the MTO experimental group had moved again after a few years (in some cases more than once)—and typically back to poorer communities. While this may be problematic from the standpoint of the initial hopes and intentions of the program, it raises questions about why households make these choices and whether there choices express revealed preferences or become constrained again after initial relocation assistance is provided.

Table 4: Summary Results from Mobility Interventions Evaluations:

Vouchers with Relocation Assistance	Areas of Agreement:	Assistance increases moves to opportunity areas Without relocation assistance, voucher moves are local, and many are in-place Feelings of safety and security improve for low-poverty movers Minority movers remain within high-minority areas Some assisted movers return to high-poverty areas Work outcomes are negative, at least initially
	Disagreement:	Housing/neighborhood conditions range from much better (MTO) to unchanged (CHAC) School quality and child education outcomes mixed Health outcomes of movers range from good(MTO) to extremely poor (HOPE VI) Extent of social interactions within new neighborhood mixed A reverse in negative work outcomes appears over time

Common Limitations of the Results

While parallel goals of encouraging self-sufficiency and enhanced access to opportunity have been intentions of federal housing policy for years, there is limited consensus among researchers and policy makers as to how to advance these goals through policy interventions. The lack of consensus can be attributed to the lack of careful evaluation of the specific impact that past interventions have had on resident outcomes, and lack of information on the balance of costs and benefits. With affordability concerns growing and resources for housing assistance increasingly limited, advocates and policy makers alike have recognized the importance of developing policies that use what little resources are available in an effective and efficient

manner. Although previous demonstration programs have been the subject of intensive evaluation and review, meaningful evaluation is not possible in many cases due to the design and implementation of these programs. There is much to be learned from carefully constructed, targeted demonstration programs that are designed to have some means of effective evaluation from the start, including randomized samplings and control groups whose outcomes may be used to measure program impacts.

Few housing assistance demonstration programs have been able to prove that their interventions actually added value to self-sufficiency or other social and health outcomes (Riccio 2007). But the few programs that have been able to prove or disprove their effect have not only given researchers information on types of interventions that work, but also a template for how to design effective demonstration programs that add to the foundation of knowledge of what works. The major difference between programs that learn and advance policy and those from which little knowledge is gained is the existence of an effective research design.

Infrequent Use of Randomized Experimental Design

The greatest barrier to drawing firm conclusions from housing assistance demonstration programs is that most of them were not crafted to produce unambiguous findings about the impacts of treatments. Specifically, few programs possess a randomized experimental design with tight controls over interventions (or what scientists often call treatments). Without randomly assigned control and treatment groups, it is impossible to isolate the impact of the treatment from other influences that may drive apparent positive or negative program outcomes (Riccio 2006, Lubell & Baron 2007). Though several evaluations of non-experimental programs have tried, after the fact, to manufacture a control group using data from accepted applicants who chose not to participate, selection bias and other outside influences cannot be ruled out (Ficke & Piesse 2004). Lack of randomized control groups has severely limited the ability to claim any program impacts, and led to all too-common disclaimers found within official evaluations of these programs.

Lack of a randomized experimental research design in both the FSS and MTW programs has hindered the ability of evaluators to discern the true impacts of several self-sufficiency interventions. For example, the HUD final evaluation of the Family Self-Sufficiency program states:

> *"…it is important to view [these differences] with caution. This was not a controlled experimental design with random assignment of equally motivated individuals to each group. Such factors as the propensity to participate in the FSS program and the willingness to pursue the employment and earnings goals in the contract of participation are unknown for the comparison group and may lead to biased results."* (Ficke& Piesse 2004)

Similarly, the Urban Institutes evaluation of Moving to Work states:

> *"MTW was not designed with a research plan in mind. [Housing Authorities] were not selected randomly or in a fashion that facilitates comparison with non-selected HAs, and controls were not established to separate MTW-specific activities, policies, or strategies—one from another, or from those not involving waivers of federal requirements. It is virtually impossible, therefore, to untangle the impacts of any particular portion of a HA's MTW initiative from any other portion."* (Abravanel 2004)

Each of these statements underscores limitations in the ability to learn from self-sufficiency programs. Evaluations of HOPE VI, as a geographically fixed intervention, have also had difficulties in isolating program impacts from outside influences:

> *"…it must be noted that the data from the studies are not sufficient to reliably estimate the degree to which HOPE VI, as opposed to other factors, caused these changes." (Popkin et. al. 2004)*

> *"The neighborhoods in which 1996 HOPE VI sites are located generally have experienced improvements in indicators such as education, income, and housing, although GAO could not determine the extent to which the HOPE VI program contributed to these changes."* (United States General Accounting Office 2003)

> *"It is important to acknowledge that no rigorous evaluation of the costs and benefits of HOPE VI redevelopment has yet been conducted, that the availability of empirical evidence about the likely trajectory of both distressed properties and redeveloped properties is severely limited, and that the future of both market and policy environments is uncertain. The analysis presented here focuses on costs and benefits for which the research evidence is strongest and makes generally conservative assumptions about the likely impacts of public housing redevelopment. Nonetheless, the estimates are by necessity somewhat speculative and should be viewed as approximate."*
> (Turner et. al. 2007)

The Gautreaux program was similarly plagued by the inability to detach selection bias from outcome improvements related to moving to lower-poverty suburbs, which took away from gaining conclusive evidence of treatment effects:

> *"The Gautreaux research excited great interest in both social scientific and policy circles because it seemed to suggest that there were remedies to the damaging effects of life in*

> *concentrated poverty neighborhoods. Yet the Gautreaux findings were limited by the fact that the causal link between the new residential locations and the improvements was not certain: The observed differences might reflect differences between the kinds of people who moved to the suburbs through Gautreaux and those who moved within the city rather than reflecting the effects of the different residential locations. Because this was a nonexperimental comparison of families who moved to different types of neighborhoods, there was a serious risk of selection bias in drawing conclusions from such a comparison." (Orr et. al. 2003)*

While the shortcomings of these programs have been well documented, other programs have looked to address them. Moving to Opportunities benefited from lessons learned from the lack of control groups in evaluations of the Gautreaux program in Chicago and did indeed have a research design, with random assignments into program and control groups which eliminated the bias inherent to the other non-experimental studies. According to the official interim program evaluation:

> *"MTO was designed to be the experiment that directly and rigorously tests whether moves to low-poverty areas can bring about positive changes in the lives of poor families. Because families in MTO were randomly assigned, the three groups started out comparable by definition. And as long as comparisons made thereafter are based on the three groups as a whole (all their members, not just movers), the risk of selection bias is eliminated." (Orr et.al. 2003)*

While it is possible to extract a control group from a program not exclusively designed for experimentation, such as the Gateway Transitional Families Program, selection bias on the results cannot be avoided.

> *"In our comparison group, we control for the individual's interest in the program by including those who applied for but for one reason or another did not enter the program. However, we do not differentiate in the comparison group between those who were accepted but elected not to participate and those who did not complete the application process. Therefore, using our comparison group may overestimate the program effects to a greater extent than if it only included 'no-shows.'"* (Rohe & Kleit, 1997)

MTO was a controlled experiment, but demonstrates that the type of control in place is important when interpreting results. MTO design allowed for testing the outcomes of those receiving program supports versus not achieving program supports, but did not test location-restricted housing vouchers or relocation assistance versus constant residence in public housing because those not receiving program supports could have received other types of support or counseling or could have themselves relocated, which indeed was the case for some. In experimental design studies of people there may always be some degree of control group

contamination which dilutes the ability to detect any single intervention's potential effect. The ability to minimize such contamination may be desirable. More significant to these experiments, however, is not contamination of the control group, but variation in the amount and type of assistance provided, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Jobs-Plus, ascended from the Moving to Work demonstration program as a separate demonstration that incorporated research design with rigorous controls and systematic data collection that allowed for systematic evaluation of their implementation and effects. (Turner & Rawlings 2005) Like the MTO did for location opportunity programs, Jobs-Plus has offered new insights on self-sufficiency programs to a greater degree than previous efforts. The results of Jobs-Plus suggest that subjecting other self-sufficiency interventions such as FSS to such rigorous controls and testing could "add substantially to the evidence on employment interventions in the assisted housing field." (Riccio 2006)

Inconsistency in treatments and program administration

After lack of experimental controls, lack of consistency in defining and implementing the specific intervention across housing authorities is the other major barrier to conclusive evidence of whether or not that intervention is effective. Perhaps the greatest example of this shortcoming is in the Moving to Work demonstration program, which offers a great test of local innovation but fails to provide a consistent framework from which marginal successes and failures of various approaches may be recognized for future generalization or reproduction. Created to emphasize local innovation, MTW was set up in a way that made it extremely difficult to compare results across agencies because in setting up their local MTW programs, every agency changed many different rules at the same time. Therefore while each housing authority had a different combination of carrots and sticks, the baseline data collected were different as well. As stated in a recent Urban Institute evaluation of MTW, which was then underscored by a review by the National Housing Conference: "The lack of consistent data on resident characteristics, incomes and rent payments have meant that there is no way to determine with certainty whether individual programs have achieved the goal of work and self-sufficiency" (Lubell & Baron 2007). "The failure to collect rigorous data on outcomes and the lack of a research design in the original Moving to Work demonstration severely limited the lessons that could be drawn through evaluation" (Ibid, 2007).

While Moving to Work was an extreme example, lack of consistency is apparent, and perhaps somewhat unavoidable within assistance programs offering personalized social services, such as employment training and relocation counseling. These programs depend not only on the specific networks of local social service providers set up by each housing authority, but also the resident's knowledge of what's available, and the quality or intensiveness of these services. Even the motivation and aptitude of a specific counselor play a role in determining the success or failure of certain families within these programs. In the example of MTO several studies observe that differences in counseling affected lease-up rates, and may also have impacted how families adapted to their neighborhoods and how long they remained in there (Feins,et.al 1997, Schroder 2002b, Goering et. al. 2002). These differences are perhaps inherent in personalized service provision and assistance programs. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish more rigorous treatment protocols so that the types of assistance provided are more comparable and resident access to these services more similar.

Small, Sample Sizes and Limited Sites Affect the Ability to Make General Conclusions

Many studies attempt to glean information on federal policy from relatively small demonstrations or small samples of participants in large demonstrations and therefore are subject to a difficulty generalizing findings (in the case of few sites) and large standard errors of measurement (in the case of few sampled participants). For example, studies of the Gateway Transitional Families Program provided valuable insights about federal self-sufficiency programs, but were conducted on a sample of just 153 program participants (Rohe & Kleit 1997). Gateway is also similar to many other demonstration programs in that it was restricted to a small number of cities. Some are restricted to even a single metropolitan area. Either way, findings from these limited sites may not be representative of the rest of the country. The other demonstration programs that incorporated rigorous design involved up to six cities each, which allows for some more conclusive findings, but the influence of demographic, economic, and other idiosyncrasies influenced outcomes in unknown ways. However, the cost of overcoming site-specific biases is steep. With resources for randomized experiments limited, policy makers often face a choice between testing a single intervention at multiple sites to increase the confidence in generalizing the findings, on the one hand, and testing multiple different interventions at different sites to test more interventions.

Where should we go from here?

Knowledge on the impacts of current and past demonstration programs offers several potential avenues for focused, multi-dimensional approaches to housing policy that may answer questions and potentially have an impact on the lives of housing assistance recipients going forward. Past efforts have also demonstrated the potential for experimentation within both voucher and project-based assistance. Some feel that greater emphasis can and should be placed on voucher programs, as it constitutes a much larger portion of the assisted housing system, the vouchers are portable and flexible, and voucher programs have garnered more attention and favor than the shrinking supply of public housing. Whether voucher or project-based, some important questions that could serve as the basis of future interventions and which could be answered through targeted research demonstrations with randomized controls include the following:

Self-Sufficiency

Are rent-based work incentive strategies more effective than employment-focused services, or are both necessary to have positive impacts on work outcomes? What combinations have the greatest impact? How do impacts of different designs compare to costs? How do outcomes differ across places and market conditions such as area-wide unemployment rates by race and ethnicity? Jobs-Plus saturated public housing with employment-related services and rent-based work incentives which together resulted in significant increases in work outcomes. Questions remain as to whether both interventions were necessary, whether the two interventions benefited from each other, or whether rent-based incentives or employment-related services alone played a dominant role with the other just tagging along. Programs that de-couple the services from the rent-based incentives may prove one more necessary and effective and therefore enable focus on the more effective intervention.

What type of alternative rent-based work incentive strategies best increase work effort, incomes, and possibly also assets? Are lower cost strategies materially better or worse than higher cost strategies? As suggested by Riccio (2006), a limited, randomized control trial comparing current Family Self Sufficiency program recipients with a group given some alternative incentive plan would be beneficial. Alternatives include testing control groups

against groups receiving a flat rent versus other rent-setting strategies, and can be applied to either vouchers or site-based housing assistance.

Does a place-based "saturation" targeting strategy as was used in Jobs-Plus work better than more diffuse strategies? Jobs-Plus was implemented across entire buildings, but what if the same set of services was given on an individual basis attached to vouchers or across several sites that were not saturated with services? Do participants fare better with saturation? Do the environments change for the better? How do the costs/benefits differ? Are there any spillover effects on non-participants?

Would an asset-building incentives strategy, such as that of an enhanced FSS, be more effective on a site level rather than an individual level, and would it work in a broader range of public housing developments than were included in the Jobs-Plus trial? Jobs-Plus was evaluated to have increased work effort and wages for public housing sites through flat rents and employment supports. It did not involve individual development accounts or contractual training and improvement programs that were part of FSS. While flat rents encourage work for residents who receive rent-aid, assets and work skills have the potential to enhance self-sufficiency and encourage transitions out of rent-aid programs. Combination of the strong elements of FSS and Jobs-Plus may lead to more positive outcomes, but has not yet been tested rigorously individually or on a site-specific scale.

Does neighbor outreach and support improve participation and standing in the labor market? In addition to rent-based incentives and employment-focused services, the third element of the Jobs-Plus intervention was community supports, which could be isolated and tested for their impact on employment interventions attached to project- or voucher-based assistance.

Relocation and Mobility to Opportunity Areas

Would adding rent-based work incentive strategies or employment-focused services to an MTO-type relocation program increase work outcomes? (Riccio 2006) The MTO demonstration program significantly improved the neighborhoods as well as the mental and

physical health of participants, but had no impact on their employment, earnings, or welfare dependence (Turner & Rawlings 2005). Some research suggests that such effects take time to appear, but do not report them as yet (Orr et al. 2003). Therefore, it would be beneficial for a demonstration program to test more explicitly whether, and if so, by how much – a self-sufficiency intervention packaged with a voucher program would counteract any negative effects on employment outcomes that vouchers alone might have. Additionally, other studies have suggested that moves to low-poverty neighborhoods may not move residents any closer to opportunity (Briggs 1997), and may even move them into greater economic isolation (Burby & Rohe, 1989). For this reason it may be useful to have relocation assistance that specifically focuses on access to jobs services in the process of identifying low-poverty neighborhoods. *In other words, must a housing voucher come with other services and incentives designed specifically with employment-related outcomes in mind to have an effect on employment outcomes (Riccio 2006)?*

Would adding education-focused services that connect housing assistance with relocation to and enrollment of children in top performing school systems be beneficial to an MTO-type relocation program for increasing child educational outcomes? While the MTO program showed significant improvement to the quality of neighborhoods of participants, it also showed little impact on the characteristics of schools attended, mainly because children remained in their current schools after moving (Turner & Rawlings 2005). Therefore, we could learn from a demonstration program that would test whether counseling services dedicated to helping participants find and place their children in better schools – as part of their MTO-like relocation assistance - would have an impact on educational outcomes. (i.e. *Must a housing voucher come with other services and incentives designed specifically with education-related outcomes in mind to have an effect on educational outcomes?*)

How to improve success rates on interventions of relocation to opportunity areas? To date there has been little systematic examination of how mobility programs operate, what makes them effective, and what components need to be strengthened (Cunningham & Popkin, 2002; Riccio 2006, p36). The MTO program outcomes were limited due to the low number of voucher recipients who were able to relocate to sufficiently low poverty areas. Similarly, in the HOPE VI

program, most voucher holders found housing without assistance and ended up living in mid- to high-poverty neighborhoods with low-quality housing (Devine et al. 2003). Furthermore, for HOPE VI, only a slightly higher proportion of households that received mobility assistance moved to opportunity areas than voucher households that did not receive mobility assistance, and over time, those that received relocation assistance actually were more likely to move back to high-poverty neighborhoods (Cunningham and Sawyer, 2005). Given positive mental and physical health outcomes and better housing quality resulting from moves to opportunity neighborhoods, more detail on how to actually get families into opportunity neighborhoods successfully would be valuable.

Can health services or counseling improve health outcomes of HOPE VI relocatees? One of the troubling findings from HOPE VI tracking studies is that health outcomes for HOPE VI relocatees differed from those of residents volunteering to relocate through MTO. The deteriorated health outcomes and higher mortality rates seen in residents after they moved from HOPE VI sites, even when the move resulted in better housing in a safer neighborhood, suggests that additional work is needed to determine how to address these potentially avoidable outcomes. There has been no way to determine the reason for this difference, and whether the involuntary nature of HOPE VI relocation is the major factor, or whether there are health counseling or other services offered that could avoid these outcomes.

Joint Interventions

What types of interventions are complimentary and would benefit from being combined with others? Many past housing assistance programs have had multiple goals and intentions, but with few exceptions, results have proven to be limited only to that which was directly targeted by any respective specific intervention, with little evidence of indirect or secondary impacts on desired outcomes. For example, evaluations of the welfare to work voucher program conclude that provision of a voucher does indeed improve mobility to better neighborhoods, but little evidence that these moves in turn have a favorable impact on work outcomes in the short run. However, instead of offering a single intervention to achieve multiple outcomes directly and indirectly, it may be desirable to offer a set of direct interventions each aimed at achieving specific outcomes,

with controls to compare impact of sets of interventions with singular applications. These could include various combinations of interventions aimed at improving health, education, neighborhood quality, housing quality, and work outcomes.

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