

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
FR-5415-N-23

Notice of Public Interest (NOPI) for Fiscal Year 2010 Transformation Initiative:
Homeless Families Demonstration Small Grant Research Program

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This summary provides an overview of a study currently being funded by the Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) entitled *The Impact of Various Housing and Service Interventions on Homeless Families*. The research funded under this program must be related to, complement, and enhance the study, should be state-of-the-art, and result in substantive contributions to scientific theory.

The Impact of Various Housing and Services Interventions on Homeless Families

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is conducting a study to learn more about the effects of housing and services interventions for homeless families. Previous research has described the characteristics and needs of homeless families and explored the effectiveness of different interventions, but none of the past work has explicitly compared the results of different interventions using a rigorous methodology. Thus, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the best strategies to address homelessness among families.

This study will provide evidence to help federal policymakers, community planners, and local practitioners make sound decisions about how to prioritize the use of resources and structure local homeless assistance systems for families. The study will compare several combinations of housing assistance and services in a multi-site experiment, to determine which interventions work best to promote housing stability, family preservation, child well-being, adult well-being, and self-sufficiency. HUD has contracted with a team of researchers, led by Abt Associates, Inc., to design and carry out this study. To provide the strongest possible evidence of the effects of the housing and services interventions, the study is using an experimental research design, with eligible families assigned at random to one of the designated housing and services interventions.

Research Questions

The study has been designed to answer five questions: 1) What is the relative effectiveness of homeless interventions in ensuring housing stability of homeless families? 2) Are the same interventions that are effective for short-term stability of homeless families effective for longer-term stability as well? 3) What is the relative effectiveness of homeless interventions in ensuring the well-being of homeless parents and self-sufficiency of homeless families? 4) Do some interventions promote family preservation and benefit children's well-being, in particular, more than other interventions? 5) Are various homeless interventions more effective for some categories of homeless families than for others?

Enrollment in the Study and Housing and Services Interventions being Tested

Families who seek assistance from an emergency shelter and remain in the shelter for at least seven days will be invited to enroll in the study. For this study, a family is defined as at least one adult and one child under the age of 15. Families eligible for permanent supportive housing are not expected to be targeted for the study. Participation in the study is voluntary. Families who agree to participate will provide

written informed consent, complete a survey, and will be assigned at random to one of the study interventions. Random assignment is a process that works like a lottery, giving all families an equal chance of being assigned to one of the interventions for which they are eligible. No one can control the outcome of random assignment and it is not based on any personal characteristics of families who agree to participate.

The types of housing and services interventions will include: 1) **Subsidy only**, which is a permanent housing subsidy (typically in the form of a Housing Choice Voucher) without supportive services; 2) **Project-Based Transitional Housing**, featuring temporary housing assistance offered for up to 24 months (with average expected lengths of stay of 6 to 12 months) in transitional housing facilities combined with supportive services (PBTH) 3); **Community-Based Rapid Re-housing**, which is expected to provide temporary rental assistance for 2 to 6 months (potentially renewable for periods up to 18 months) in conventional, private-market housing, with limited, housing-focused services (CBRR), and 4) **Usual Care**, which represents the services that people would normally access on their own from shelter in the absence of these other interventions. Usual Care is likely to include continued support from emergency shelters and may include short-term shallow rental subsidies funded through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) with or without supportive services. The supportive service package included in the PBTH intervention will include, at a minimum, assessment of family needs, case management, and provision of or referral for services to meet identified needs. Services will most likely include areas such as employment; child care; transportation; entitlements; medical; behavioral health; trauma; safety; emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs of children; child welfare and family preservation and reunification.

Number of Sites, Sample Size, Research Method

Eleven communities across the U.S. have committed to participate in this study thus far. The research team and HUD have selected sites based on criteria such as the number of homeless families currently served, the availability of the study interventions, and willingness of local stakeholders to participate. Local stakeholders include the Continuum of Care, homeless assistance providers, local public housing agencies, and other providers of housing assistance. The research team has worked closely with each community to develop study procedures that minimize burden on local providers and that are well coordinated with current homeless assistance practices. Altogether, the study will enroll between 2,400 and 3,000 families and will follow them for at least 18 months after they enroll to conduct follow-up interviews to measure outcomes and to determine the effects of the housing and services interventions. To the extent possible, the study participants are expected to be selected in roughly equal numbers from each of the eleven sites, and evenly assigned to the four interventions.

Schedule

The design phase of the study was completed in spring 2009 and sites were recruited beginning in the fall of 2009 and ending in the winter of 2011. As of January 2011, enrollment of families, random assignment, and baseline data collection has begun in eight of the eleven participating sites, and is expected to continue for roughly twelve to eighteen months. Tracking families, collecting follow-up surveys and conducting other data collection about the communities and the housing and services

interventions will continue for at least 18 months after enrollment in the study. Preliminary analysis will be completed in early 2013, with longer-term results reported in later 2013 and early 2014.

Requirements for Local Communities

In each participating community, service providers and other stakeholders need to comply with several requirements to ensure that the experiment is implemented correctly.

- ***Emergency Shelters or the Central Intake system*** will need to keep track of the date each family enters the emergency shelter system. They also will need to coordinate closely with the research team to identify, at regular intervals, which families have been in emergency shelter for at least seven days. Importantly, until all families are enrolled in the study, staff in the emergency shelter must agree to use random assignment as the mechanism for determining which services and assistance families who have agreed to participate in the study will receive after emergency shelter.
- ***Transitional Housing (PBTH) and Rapid Re-housing (CBRR) providers*** who agree to participate in the study must agree to serve families who meet their eligibility criteria and who are randomly assigned to receive the intervention to the extent they have vacancies. Ideally, programs participating in the study will give priority to study participants. Emergency shelter, PBTH and CBRR Housing providers will also need to provide data to the research team about families who enroll in the study such as enrollment dates and services received.
- The ***Subsidy Only intervention*** will involve a deep, permanent housing subsidy for families assigned to that intervention in each site. Subsidies will preferably be in the form of Housing Choice Vouchers, but may come from other sources such as project-based vouchers or public housing. As a result, communities in the study must have a public housing agency (PHA) or other rental assistance program administrator willing to provide a set-aside of vouchers or slots of assisted housing for the study. To encourage participation among PHAs, HUD is offering an incentive fee for every unit of permanent housing that is made available to families enrolled in the study.

The research team will manage all aspects of the study's implementation including intake, enrollment, tracking, and data collection from families.

Role of Public Housing Agencies (PHAs)

HUD has not provided funds for the housing interventions for this study, rather sites have been selected based on the availability of programs operating within the community that match the descriptions of our selected interventions. Therefore, in order to provide the subsidy-only intervention, communities must secure the commitment of the local PHA to set aside housing vouchers for the study. Housing agencies participating in this study will be provided with an incentive fee for *each* permanent housing subsidy that is issued to a family that has been randomly assigned to the subsidy-only intervention. The value of the incentive fee will vary based on the type of permanent housing subsidy that is offered. Specifically, issuance of a Housing Choice Voucher will have a value of \$1,000; issuance of a Project-Based Voucher will have a value of \$750; and issuance of a public housing unit will have a value of \$500. HUD has entered into a formal agreement with each PHA that has agreed to participate in the study, and the agreement outlines the terms and conditions by which a PHA would be eligible to receive incentive fees.

In order to support a study size of up to 3,000 families equally distributed to four interventions, a total of up to 750 permanent housing subsidies will be required, preferably with each of the eleven participating communities identifying approximately 60-65 permanent housing subsidies. Within the eleven communities, HUD expects to actively enter into agreements with approximately twenty public housing agencies in the study. Participation in the study will not require any data collection, participant tracking, or special effort on the part of the PHA. The research team will be responsible for all aspects of the study including participant enrollment, random assignment, data collection, participant tracking, and analysis of outcomes, and they will work closely with local Continuum of Care leaders to conduct the study.

Next Steps

Enrollment has begun in eight of the eleven study communities, and it is expected that by March of 2011, all eleven sites will be actively enrolling families into the study. The addition of a twelfth site is being considered, and a final determination will be made regarding the participation of the twelfth site by early February 2011. Participant tracking has begun in communities where enrollment has begun, and will continue for at least 18 months.

The study will allow stakeholders in participating communities to learn more about the families they serve and to participate in a national study that will yield strong evidence about the most effective ways to address family homelessness.

**APPENDIX A: Participating Communities, Programs, and PHAs in the HUD-Funded Study of
The Impact of Various Housing and Services Interventions on Homeless Families, as of January 6,
2011.**

ARIZONA- Phoenix/Mesa/Maricopa County Regional Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 250 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Labor's Community Service Agency Transitional Housing
UMOM-TH
Save the Family TLP
Homeward Bound
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Phoenix
Mesa, in conjunction with the State of Arizona
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
City of Phoenix Housing Department
Housing Authority of Maricopa County
City of Mesa Housing Authority
CALIFORNIA- Oakland/Alameda County Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 260 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Abode Services Transitional Housing
Berkeley Food & Housing- Independence House
Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS)- McKinley House
Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS)- Sankofa House
Alameda Point Collaborative
Building Futures with Women and Children- Bessie Coleman
FESCO- 3 rd Street Transitional Apartments
FESCO- Banyon House
East Oakland Community Project- Matilda Cleveland
Henry Robinson Multiservice
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Alameda County
Alameda
Berkeley
Freemont
Hayward
Oakland
California State Program
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Oakland Housing Authority
Berkeley Housing Authority
Housing Authority of the County of Alameda
COLORADO- Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative**

<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 210 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Warren Village
The Family Tree- Brookview House
Colorado Coalition
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Denver
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Denver Housing Authority
Lakewood DbA metro Housing Authority
CONNECTICUT- New Haven Continuum of Care & Bridgeport/Stratford/Fairfield Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 200 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
CCYMCA-Alpha Community Services- Jean Wallace TLP
St. Luke's Lifeworks- New Beginnings
Christian Community Action- Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Bridgeport
New Haven
Connecticut State Program
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
The Housing Authority of the City of Bridgeport
Housing Authority of New Haven
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services
GEORGIA- Atlanta/DeKalb, Fulton Counties Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 300 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Achor Center Transitional Housing Program
City of Refuge- Eden Village Transitional Housing
HOPE Atlanta- SHP Transitional Housing Program
Odyssey III- Family Transitional Housing Program
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Atlanta
State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Atlanta Housing Authority
HAWAII- Honolulu Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 250 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
ASI- Ohana Ola
ASI- Village of Ma'ili
Catholic Charities- Ma'ili Land
HSI- Loliana

HSI- Vancouver House
KOHOW Transitional Shelter
Onemalu Transitional Housing- Holomuana Na ‘Ohana
Weinberg Village- Holomua Na ‘Ohana
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Honolulu
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
City & County of Honolulu
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
KENTUCKY- Louisville/Jefferson County Continuum of Care***
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 190 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
New Directions
Salvation Army
St Vincent de Paul
Volunteers of America
Wayside Christian Mission
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Louisville Metro Housing Authority
MASSACHUSETTS- Boston Continuum of Care****
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 180 Families</i>
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Boston
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Boston Housing Authority
MINNESOTA- Minneapolis/Hennepin County Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 200 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Passage Community- Simpson Housing
Perspectives
Elim Transitional Housing
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Minneapolis
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Minneapolis Public Housing Authority
MISSOURI- Kansas City/Jackson County/Independence/Lee's Summit Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 250 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
Community LINC
Sheffield Place
Transitional Living, reStart, Inc.
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Kansas City
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>

Housing Authority of Kansas City, Missouri
UTAH- Salt Lake City & County Continuum of Care
<i>Estimated Enrollment Target: 175 Families</i>
<i>Project-Based Transitional Housing Providers</i>
The Road Home- TH Program
Jacob Apartments
<i>Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing Providers*</i>
Salt Lake City
Salt Lake County
Utah State Program
<i>Public Housing Agencies</i>
Housing Authority of Salt Lake City
Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake City

* The community-based rapid re-housing (CBRR) intervention is being funded in all communities through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), and thus all CBRR providers are HPRP grantees

** Denver has not yet begun enrolling families, but it is expected to begin recruiting and enrolling families in January 2011.

*** The Louisville/Jefferson County Continuum of Care recently committed to the study and family enrollment is expected to begin in February 2011. Because there is no rapid re-housing currently being funded in Louisville, this site will support a three-arm intervention (subsidy only, project-based transitional housing, and usual care).

**** Boston has not yet begun enrolling families, and it is unclear if they will be able to participate in the study due to lack of project-based transitional housing that will meet the criteria for the study and limited supply of community-based rapid re-housing. If Boston proceeds, the site will support a three-arm intervention comparison (subsidy only, community-based rapid re-housing, and usual care).

APPENDIX B: Family Participation Agreement (Informed Consent)

Impact of Various Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families Participation Agreement

[NAME of Community] is part of a study about the kinds of housing and services that help families who are homeless. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (or HUD) is sponsoring the study which is authorized by Senate Report 109-109 for The FY2006 Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, HUD, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Abt Associates, an independent research company, is helping HUD with the study.

I invite you to participate in this study to help HUD and [Name of Community] learn more about the kind of assistance that is most helpful for families.

Participating in this study is voluntary—you do not have to participate. If you decide to participate, I will ask you a number of questions about your housing, your work experience, people who are part of your family, and about your health. The interview will take about 40 minutes. Some of the questions I will ask you will help us to determine if you are eligible for some kinds of housing programs. At the end of the interview, you may be selected to receive one of the kinds of housing that you are eligible for. A computer lottery will determine which type of housing each person will receive, I don't know what you will get, but some of the families who decide to participate will get a housing voucher or subsidy that helps to pay the rent and others will receive other types of help with rent. About a quarter of families will get temporary housing in a transitional housing program with social services to help them get their own housing later. About a quarter will not get any special offer. However, they can continue to use other services and assistance that aren't part of the special programs. If you don't get a special offer, you can stay here and continue to look for housing on your own. Of course, you don't have to take any offer that you don't want. It is also possible that the housing program that we offer you will not accept you. You can help to minimize that possibility by answering all the questions honestly, so that the computer only looks for housing for which you are eligible.

If you decide not to participate in this study, you will be able to look for other assistance in [Name of Community]. If you decide not to join, you won't be able to receive one of the special programs that are part of the study, but it will **not** affect your eligibility for other housing or services that may be available in [Name of Community].

What do I need to do to participate in this study?

To join the study, you will need to sign this Participation Agreement. It explains more about the study and what is required of participants.

What happens once I agree to participate?

Once you have agreed to participate I will ask you to complete the interview and will ask you questions. The interview session will take about 40 minutes. The interviewer will ask you questions about your experiences with housing and work, your health, and who is part of your family. You will be given \$35 as a way of thanking you for the time needed to complete the interview.

After you complete this interview, your name will be placed into one of the four program groups that you are eligible for, through a process called random assignment, which is like a lottery. A special computer program will be used to determine randomly each person's group assignment. Every person who agrees to join the study has the same chance of receiving the participating housing programs for which they are eligible. These programs include a housing subsidy; a housing subsidy with social services; transitional housing with a temporary subsidy and social services, or no special services. If you are assigned to the fourth group, you will continue to be eligible to apply for any other assistance or housing available in the community, just as you are now.

If I sign the participation agreement, what else am I agreeing to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you also will be asked to answer questions for other surveys in the future. We will contact you again about every six months or so for the next couple of years to ask about your experiences. The surveys are voluntary and you can refuse to answer any question. Agreeing to participate also means that you give the program staff and researchers permission to get other types of information about you from other government programs while the study is going on. That means that everyone in the study, no matter which group they are assigned to, gives permission to the researchers to collect information about you and your family such as:

- The dates of your participation in housing or services programs
- Data about earnings from jobs from unemployment insurance wage records or other earnings data
- Data about receipt of public assistance
- Child welfare records
- Information about new addresses from any of these sources

Who will see the information I provide?

Any and all information you provide is confidential and will be protected under the Privacy Act¹. Only the interviewer and authorized project staff and researchers evaluating the new program will see your survey responses. No one at the shelter or at the housing program to which you may be assigned will see your information (although they will be told that you met the criteria for eligibility for their program.) Any information that the researchers collect about you from other programs will also be kept confidential. Your name will never be used in any report. Reports for this study will only show summaries, no names or individual identifying information will ever be used in any research report.

Are there any costs to me to participate in this new program?

No, there are no financial costs to you for participating in this new program. Any services you receive from the new program will be provided to you at no cost.

Questions About Participation

If you have questions regarding this new program please contact the Abt Associates Inc. Project Director, Ms. Michelle Wood at (301) 634-1777. You may also contact Ms. Anne Fletcher at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at (202) 402-4347.

Consent by Participant

By signing this participation agreement, I confirm that I have read and understand the information presented in it. The information in this form has also been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can ask to be withdrawn from the study at any time. I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form to keep. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study of programs for homeless families.

Participant's Name – PLEASE PRINT

Participant's Signature

Date

Street, City, State, Zip Code

(____)____-____
Telephone

Participant Study ID#¹ _____

¹ This ID will be generated at the time of random assignment and is not the participant's SSN. The site liaison will note the ID on the consent form after random assignment is completed. This will be the ID used to link between consent form and the random assignment record.

Privacy Act Statement: HUD's authoritative and principle purpose, conditions of uses, and impacts, if any, for not participating in the survey are referenced within the participant agreement.