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## No Simple Solutions: Housing CHA's Most Vulnerable Families

Susan J. Popkin, Ph.D.

By the late 1980s, the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA's) family developments were a disaster. Years of managerial incompetence and neglect had left the housing in an advanced state of decay. The crime and violence were overwhelming and the gang dominance nearly absolute. Thousands of vulnerable families—with tens of thousands of children—lived in these troubled communities, most because they had no other alternative. The crack epidemic swept through CHA's developments, making conditions even worse for the residents and more visible to the outside community.

The damage to the residents who endured—and sometimes contributed—to these conditions was profound. Some residents were physically harmed by lead poisoning, plagued by asthma after living in cockroach-infested buildings, or falling out of unscreened windows. But many more were victims of the overwhelming social disorganization, addicted to drugs, abused or neglected by drug-addicted parents, killed or injured in the drug wars, arrested or incarcerated, or simply traumatized by the stress of coping with the constant violence and disorder.<sup>1</sup>

For the past six years, these residents who endured the CHA's worst days have been coping with the uncertainty and changes wrought by the housing authority's

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<sup>1</sup> SUSAN J. POPKIN ET AL., *THE HIDDEN WAR: CRIME AND THE TRAGEDY OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN CHICAGO* 2-9 (2000).

ambitious effort to transform its troubled developments into model mixed-income communities. Nearly all of the CHA's troubled high-rise family communities have now been demolished and new communities are rising in their place. These changes have been challenging for all of CHA's families, even those who looked forward to the opportunity to move away. By now, most of the residents who were better able to cope with the transitions of relocation have moved on. The majority received housing choice vouchers, and some are now moving into the new, mixed-income housing.

But it is becoming increasingly clear that substantial numbers of families need more help to make a successful transition. Hundreds of these households are still living in the CHA's remaining "traditional" public housing, many having failed the screening criteria for mixed-income housing or vouchers. The remaining supply of traditional public housing is small; further, the developments are very troubled, and the CHA's long-term plans for these sites are unclear. Without innovative, intensive approaches many of these vulnerable families may end up no better off—or perhaps even worse—than they were when the transformation process began. In this paper, I review the CHA's relocation experience thus far, focusing on the issue of "hard to house" residents. I then call for a new focus on improving outcomes for the most troubled families to ensure that they are not left behind as the CHA's transformation unfolds.

### **The CHA in Transition**

In the early 1990s, the CHA, under the leadership of then-Chairman Vincent Lane, began an all-out effort to combat the problems of crime and drug trafficking in its

developments. The housing authority poured hundreds of millions of dollars—a substantial proportion of its federal operating funds—into state-of-the-art crime prevention programs, police, security guards, tenant patrols, and metal detectors. The 1990s was the era of the federal War on Drugs, and the CHA's efforts were modeled on the best thinking about community crime prevention. However, as documented in the book, *The Hidden War*,<sup>2</sup> the problems in CHA's developments were so severe that even these very costly and aggressive programs had little sustained impact. Gang conflicts and drug trafficking continued to dominate the developments—and residents' lives.

In the mid-1990s, as the CHA gradually lost its war on crime, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) took over the housing authority. The consensus from policy makers and administrators was that, like other distressed developments around the nation, the CHA's high-rise developments were impossible to reclaim.<sup>3</sup> The federal government launched a series of ambitious programs to transform public housing, to erase the image of public housing as the most visible failure of the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s and 1970s. The centerpiece of this effort was the \$6

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> NAT'L COMM'N ON SEVERELY DISTRESSED PUB. HOUS., FINAL REPORT TO CONGRESS AND THE SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (1992).

billion HOPE VI program<sup>4</sup>, under which hundreds of distressed developments were demolished and replaced with new, mixed-income housing.<sup>5</sup>

Chicago had more distressed public housing than any other city—25,000 units—and its notorious high-rise developments had come to symbolize all of the worst problems of urban blight. One of the main goals of the HUD takeover was to reverse this image and show that it was possible to reclaim these profoundly distressed communities, the strategy that would ultimately become the CHA's Plan for Transformation.<sup>6</sup> The HUD effort began with the revitalization of the Henry Horner Homes, begun in 1995. The Horner Revitalization Initiative became the first of CHA's efforts to have any sustained impact on the level of crime in disorder in that development.<sup>7</sup> It is telling that it took such a dramatic—and expensive—effort to bring about a change in conditions that was substantial enough for residents to mark a real improvement.

The Horner experience showed that it was possible to use the transformation strategy to bring about the kind of substantial change that policy makers envisioned. However, while the strategy improved physical conditions and reduced crime in the community, it was less clear how it would affect the lives of the original residents. In

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<sup>4</sup> HOPE VI stands for Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere. The program was enacted in 1992 under Section 24 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, Pub. L. No. 75-412, 50 Stat. 888 (codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §§ 1437-1437f (2000)), and amended by Section 535 of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2461.

<sup>5</sup> SUSAN J. POPKIN, BRUCE KATZ, MARY K. CUNNINGHAM, KAREN D. BROWN, JEREMY GUSTAFSON & MARGERY A. TURNER, *A DECADE OF HOPE VI: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND POLICY CHALLENGES* (2004).

<sup>6</sup> CHI. HOUS. AUTH., *FY 2000 MOVING TO WORK ANNUAL PLAN, PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION, YEAR 11* (2000).

<sup>7</sup> POPKIN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 117-120, 130-137.

particular, the many troubled families who had relied on CHA's developments as the housing of last resort appeared to be at risk of being excluded from the revitalized community. It seemed likely that many residents would benefit from the transformation, but others would not—and it was not clear how large this second group would be. Few of them would be able to succeed in meeting the screening criteria for the new mixed-income housing or be able to make a transition to using a voucher in the private market without receiving intensive assistance.<sup>8</sup>

The CHA launched its Plan for Transformation in 1999, laying out an ambitious strategy for replacing its worst high-rise developments and rehabilitating thousands more units, all within a 10-year period.<sup>9</sup> Now, at the mid-point of the CHA's plan, most of its notorious developments have been demolished and are being replaced with new, mixed-income housing—a truly dramatic transformation whose effects are being felt in the rising property values in the surrounding neighborhoods.

#### Mixed Outcomes for Residents

As noted above, CHA's transformation effort has wrought many positive changes over the past six years. Distressed high-rise developments that were blighting their communities have been demolished, and are gradually being replaced with new mixed-income housing—including market-rate homes. These “transformed” developments are helping to spark wider neighborhood revitalization, as evidenced by the real estate boom

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 174-190

<sup>9</sup> CHI. HOUS. AUTH., *supra* note 6.

in Kenwood/Oakwood, near the sites of the old Ida B. Wells, Lakefront Properties, and Stateway Gardens developments. The residents who live in the new mixed-income housing are benefiting from higher quality construction and services, the neighborhoods are benefiting from lower levels of crime and disorder, and the public housing system is benefiting from new infusions of public and private funding.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, the outcomes for the original residents—those who lived through the worst years of CHA’s decline—have been mixed. In Chicago, as in other cities, relocation has been the most challenging and least successful part of public housing transformation.<sup>11</sup> Given the scale of CHA’s transformation plans, it is not surprising that relocation has proved so difficult. Chicago faced a much tougher set of challenges than any other city: the largest number of residents overall; substantial numbers of residents with very high levels of need; and a history of problems that had led to high levels of suspicion and mistrust. As a result of this situation, relocation has generated tremendous controversy and many allege, has led to poor outcomes for residents.<sup>12</sup>

In the first stages of its transformation plan, the housing authority struggled to develop an effective relocation system. Families who received vouchers ended up in neighborhoods that were racially and economically segregated; some residents were “lost” before they could receive services to which they were entitled, and even more

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<sup>10</sup> POPKIN ET AL., *supra* note 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> THOMAS P. SULLIVAN, INDEPENDENT MONITOR’S REPORT NO. 5 TO THE CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (2003).

simply failed to move at all, ending up in “temporary” housing in other CHA buildings, some of which were also slated for demolition.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of the controversy, the CHA negotiated a formal Relocation Rights contract in 2000 with its main resident organization, the Central Advisory Council (“CAC”), that spelled out its obligations to residents during the transformation process.<sup>14</sup> The contract defines the terms for lease compliance and the steps residents can take to “cure” lease violations and remain eligible for replacement housing. Finally, the contract specifies the services that will be offered to residents during the transformation, including supportive services, relocation assistance, and mobility counseling. The CHA’s relocation efforts remained controversial and the housing authority was sued in 2004 over the resegregation of residents who had received vouchers.<sup>15</sup> However, despite—or perhaps because of—the controversy, the CHA gradually refined and improved its relocation and supportive service system and now has a very sophisticated and elaborate relocation process.<sup>16</sup>

Even with the improvements in the relocation system over time, research shows that outcomes for CHA families—and relocatees in other cities—have been mixed. The best evidence comes from The Urban Institute’s HOPE VI Panel Study and the Moving

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<sup>13</sup> SUSAN J. POPKIN & MARY K. CUNNINGHAM, URBAN INSTITUTE, CHA RELOCATION COUNSELING ASSESSMENT (2002); *see generally* PAUL FISCHER, WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC HOUSING FAMILIES GOING? AN UPDATE (2003) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with author); *see generally* SULLIVAN, *supra* note 12.

<sup>14</sup> *See* CHI. HOUS. AUTH., CHA LEASEHOLDER HOUSING CHOICE AND RELOCATION RIGHTS CONTRACT (2000).

<sup>15</sup> The case was settled in 2005. *See* Wallace v. Chi. Hous. Auth., No. 03 C 0491 (N.D. Ill. June 2, 2005)

<sup>16</sup> MARY K. CUNNINGHAM, URBAN INSTITUTE, AN IMPROVED LIVING ENVIRONMENT? RELOCATION OUTCOMES FOR HOPE VI RELOCATEES, POL’Y BRIEF NO. 1 (2004).



to Opportunity (“MTO”) Demonstration. The HOPE VI Panel Study has been tracking nearly 900 households from five HOPE VI sites around the country since 2001, including Chicago’s Ida B. Wells Homes. MTO involved randomly assigning residents from high poverty developments in five cities—including Chicago—to either receive a voucher they could only use to move to a census tract with a poverty rate of 10 percent or less; receive a regular Section 8 voucher; or remain in public housing.<sup>17</sup>

The evidence from the Panel Study and MTO shows important benefits for those residents who received vouchers and moved to housing in the private market.<sup>18</sup> These movers were living in substantially better conditions, in higher quality housing and dramatically safer neighborhoods. Movers were considerably less likely to report problems with their housing like broken plumbing, mold, and peeling paint, all of which are significant health hazards. Likewise, movers reported much lower levels of problems with drug trafficking and violent crime than they did when they lived in their original public housing developments. Still, even with these very real gains, there were reasons for concern. These safer neighborhoods were still generally very poor and extremely racially segregated. And those who remained in their original developments or simply

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<sup>17</sup>SUSAN J. POPKIN ET AL., HOPE VI PANEL STUDY: BASELINE REPORT (2002); LARRY ORR ET AL., DEPT. HOUS. AND URBAN DEV., MOVING TO OPPORTUNITY: INTERIM IMPACTS EVALUATION (2003), <http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/MTOFullReport.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup>In 2003, very few units in the mixed-income developments in the HOPE VI Panel Study had been completed, so the authors were unable to draw any conclusions about the experiences of residents who had moved to those developments.

moved to other public housing experienced no benefits, and were living in conditions that were just as poor as at the baseline.<sup>19</sup>

Further, these studies and other research on relocatees has pointed to other serious challenges facing those who are now living in the private market, particularly difficulty paying rent and utilities that were covered in public housing. Unstable housing is also a serious problem; there is evidence that some former residents have made multiple moves because of landlord problems, units failing to pass housing quality inspections, and rising housing prices in hot rental markets. And there are real costs in terms of loss of important social ties and support networks.<sup>20</sup> Finally, relatively few are living in new mixed-income housing. This low level of return is partly by design—most HOPE VI sites built back fewer public housing units than they demolished. But there are other reasons that original residents do not return, including being happy with their new housing and not wanting to move again; problems associated with the redevelopment process, especially the often lengthy stretches between demolition and completion of the new development; strict screening criteria that disqualify many original residents for new mixed-income housing; distrust in promises that the new housing will really be better; and housing authorities' failure to track original residents so they can be offered an opportunity to return.

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<sup>19</sup> JENNIFER COMEY, URBAN INSTITUTE, AN IMPROVED LIVING ENVIRONMENT? RELOCATION OUTCOMES FOR HOPE VI RELOCATEES, ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS, POL'Y BRIEF NO. 2 (2004); LARRY BURON, URBAN INSTITUTE, AN IMPROVED LIVING ENVIRONMENT? NEIGHBORHOOD OUTCOMES FOR HOPE VI RELOCATEES, ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS, POL'Y BRIEF NO. 3 (2004).

<sup>20</sup> A DECADE OF HOPE VI, *supra* note 5, at 28-31; *see generally* ORR ET AL., *supra* note 17.

Still, on balance, there is no question that most former residents who have received vouchers are better off than they were when they lived in distressed public housing. It is probably safe to assume that the relatively few who are living in new mixed-income developments are equally well-off. The reduction in fear and anxiety is particularly important, and likely has had broader impacts on former residents' overall well-being. Research evidence from MTO shows that one of the biggest impacts of moving to lower poverty neighborhoods was a significant improvement in mental health and reduction in obesity for adult women and girls.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, an early study of relocation in Chicago showed an almost immediate impact on mental health for relocatees.<sup>22</sup> We do not yet know what the long-term implications of these changes are for relocated families, but it seems likely that they may lead to effects on self-sufficiency and the overall well-being of both parents and children.

### **Many Left Behind**

While the majority of former residents who have received vouchers are at least somewhat better off than they were when they lived in public housing, those who remain in traditional developments have not realized these benefits. Some may have moved out of their original, distressed communities, to other developments that are little better. These residents still face the problems of poor housing quality and the endemic crime and drug trafficking that plague most large public housing developments. Further, these

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<sup>21</sup> ORR ET AL., *supra* note 17, at 69, 84.

<sup>22</sup> CHA RELOCATION COUNSELING, *supra* note 13.

moves can bring new threats, throwing together members of rival gangs and placing residents—especially boys and young men—at risk of violence. Indeed, evidence from the HOPE VI Panel Study suggests that relocating to another troubled public housing development may cause increases in behavior problems for children.<sup>23</sup> Finally, in Chicago, relocating to another traditional public housing development brings its own uncertainties. Current plans for these sites call for rehabilitation, but market pressures for gentrification and the success of CHA’s other efforts may eventually lead to pressure to transform these developments as well.

Generally, relocated families who have moved to other traditional public housing developments have ended up in this situation because they do not fit easily into existing relocation options—their problems are severe enough that they have failed to meet the criteria for vouchers or new, mixed-income housing. Families who fall into this “hard to house” group need special assistance that goes far beyond the typical package of services to help them succeed in moving permanently to a safe and stable housing situation.

The typical package of relocation and supportive services offered to residents affected by redevelopment is not sufficient to help these “hard to house” families circumvent the barriers that are keeping them from qualifying for better housing. In most HOPE VI sites, relocation services are focused on offering residents a limited set of options and helping them with their move. As noted above, over time CHA has developed a relocation system that offers more comprehensive services than other housing authority that has received HOPE VI funds. For example, residents are offered

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<sup>23</sup> BURON, *supra* note 19; SUSAN J. POPKIN, MICHAEL EISEMAN & ELIZABETH COVE, URBAN INSTITUTE, HOW ARE HOPE VI FAMILIES FARING? CHILDREN, ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS POL’Y BRIEF NO. 6 (2004).

more choices and must be shown units in “opportunity neighborhoods,” a community that is lower poverty (less than 25 percent poor).<sup>24</sup> However, even the CHA’s more comprehensive relocation system leaves a substantial number of families with no option other than traditional public housing—or leaving assisted housing altogether.

The Community Supportive Services (“CSS”) component of HOPE VI is supposed to provide residents with services to help them achieve self-sufficiency.<sup>25</sup> In Chicago, the Service Connector system provides those services and assists residents who have been found to be non-lease compliant. Specifically, the Service Connector program is supposed to work with the latter group to help them “cure” their lack of compliance so they can qualify for better housing options. The Service Connector model calls for providing case management, information, and referrals to residents. Services are provided by a variety of contractors serving different CHA developments. A frequent criticism of the program is that its caseloads are so high—currently they have been reduced from a high of over 100 to 55 to 1—that case managers are unable to provide effective services.<sup>26</sup>

Even with the refinements that have occurred over time, the Service Connector system is unlikely to be able to effectively meet the needs of the hard to house families who are not experiencing the benefits of the CHA’s transformation. These vulnerable

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<sup>24</sup> MARY K. CUNNINGHAM & NOAH SAWYER, URBAN INSTITUTE, MOVING TO BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS WITH MOBILITY COUNSELING, ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS POL’Y BRIEF No. 8, at n. 8 (2005).

<sup>25</sup> POPKIN ET AL., *supra* note 5.

<sup>26</sup> SULLIVAN, *supra* note 12; RITA FRY, INDEPENDENT MONITOR’S REPORT TO THE CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL REGARDING YEAR 6 OF THE CHA PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION (2005).

families have been relying on public housing as the housing of last resort and are very similar to homeless families; indeed, the major difference between the two groups is that hard to house public housing residents have had a stable place to live. Hard to house public housing residents include families with multiple barriers—long-term public housing residence (10 years or more), weak employment histories, low levels of education, substance abuse, criminal records, domestic violence, and mental health problems; very large families; elderly and disabled households who need special accommodations; “grandfamilies,” i.e. grandparents who are the primary caregivers for children<sup>27</sup>; and those with members with “one-strike problems,” i.e. drug or felony arrests or convictions, that may bar the entire family from assisted housing.<sup>28</sup>

An early national study of relocated HOPE VI residents showed that those who made successful transitions tended to have higher incomes, higher employment rates, more education, and were more likely to be married and in their prime earning years (age 35 to 49).<sup>29</sup> The implication of these findings was that the least successful and most vulnerable families were likely to be left behind.

Research on the early stages of relocation in Chicago strongly suggested that many residents were at risk for poor housing outcomes and that the problems of finding

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<sup>27</sup> ROBIN SMITH & KADIJA FERRYMAN, URBAN INSTITUTE, SAYING GOOD-BYE: RELOCATING SENIOR CITIZENS IN THE HOPE VI PANEL STUDY, ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS POL’Y BRIEF NO. 10 (2006).

<sup>28</sup> The “one-strike” law was enacted in 1996 as part of the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act, Pub. L. No. 104-120, 110 Stat. 834-846, and amended by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2461.

<sup>29</sup> LARRY BURON ET AL., THE HOPE VI RESIDENT TRACKING STUDY: A SNAPSHOT OF THE CURRENT LIVING SITUATION OF ORIGINAL RESIDENTS FROM EIGHT SITES (2002).

options for the hard to house would present a significant threat to the success of the overall transformation process. One study that tracked residents going through the relocation process found that those who had lived in public housing for more than 10 years, had large families, or had poor rent payment histories were less likely to make a successful move with a voucher.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Sudhir Venkatesh's large-scale ethnographic study identified a subgroup of tenants as "hardship cases," who were either unable to successfully leave public housing or were at high risk for instability once they entered the private market.<sup>31</sup> Finally, a 2003 study focusing specifically on the issue of residents at risk of falling out of the relocation process documented the large numbers of legal residents with problems serious enough to severely restrict their housing options. Further, the study documented large numbers of squatters, many of them with family connections to the legal tenants, still living in the sections of CHA developments that were awaiting demolition. Although not legally entitled to relocation services, these squatters have been relying on CHA's housing as a refuge of sorts and will be left with nowhere to go when the developments are finally demolished.<sup>32</sup>

Evidence from the HOPE VI Panel Study and the later "residents at risk" study indicates that as of 2003 more than two-thirds of CHA's remaining residents fell into one or another of the categories of "hard to house." This proportion has likely grown over

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<sup>30</sup> POPKIN & CUNNINGHAM, *supra* note 13.

<sup>31</sup> SUDHIR VENKATESH, THE ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES RELOCATION STUDY (2002), [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/curp/publications/robert\\_taylor.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/curp/publications/robert_taylor.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> SUSAN J. POPKIN, MARY K. CUNNINGHAM & WILLIAM T. WOODLEY, URBAN INSTITUTE, RESIDENTS AT RISK: A PROFILE OF IDA B. WELLS AND MADDEN PARK (2003), [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310824\\_residents\\_at\\_risk.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310824_residents_at_risk.pdf).

time, as better off residents qualified for mixed-income housing or opted to take a voucher and move out of public housing altogether.<sup>33</sup>

CHA, unlike smaller housing authorities, has had the advantage of having a substantial number of units remaining in buildings that it has not yet slated for redevelopment. The housing authority has been rehabilitating units in those buildings and using them as a “relocation resource” to house those who have failed to meet the criteria for vouchers or mixed-income housing and had to move because their buildings were being demolished. In addition, staged relocation plans for a few developments, including Wells, have left some buildings on the site that have been used as at least a temporary solution for households that have failed to meet the screening criteria for a move.

While this remaining housing has meant that CHA has been able to provide continuing shelter for these families, it has also created new problems. The remaining traditional family developments—the Dearborn and Ickes Homes and Altgeld Gardens—and the remaining sections of developments like Wells now have populations that are almost exclusively made up of the most troubled households. This concentration of distress without a stable, older population to balance it has made these developments increasingly dangerous and unpleasant places to live. Much as happened during the early phases of redevelopment in the mid-1990s<sup>34</sup>, members of different gangs are now living together in a small, isolated space and are contesting the territory; rival factions try to

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<sup>33</sup> Susan J. Popkin, Mary K. Cunningham & Martha Burt, *Public Housing Transformation and the Hard to House*, 16 HOUS. POL’Y DEBATE 1-24 (2005).

<sup>34</sup> POPKIN ET AL., *supra*, note 1.



control individual buildings creating “war zone” conditions that terrify other residents. The concentration of residents with serious problems—substance abuse, mental health—means there are few effective community leaders and little community cohesiveness or support. And finally, these residents know that they have failed to qualify for the better alternatives that their peers have been offered and are being offered what is now truly the housing of last resort. That knowledge can only add to the sense of despair and hopelessness in these communities.

Some argue that it is not the responsibility of the public housing program to address the complex needs of these troubled residents.<sup>35</sup> Public and assisted housing in Chicago and elsewhere is a limited resource and, from this perspective, should be targeted to families that will respect and adhere to basic rules and regulations. Many of the tenants who have failed to meet the criteria for vouchers or mixed-income housing were likely contributing to the crime, disorder, and distress in the original developments. Families which are evicted or denied housing under one-strike have someone in the household who has shown evidence of involvement in drug trafficking or criminal activity. Therefore, many policy makers and practitioners argue that these families—or individuals—are not entitled to CHA housing and should make room for the many equally poor families who are on the waiting list.

However, there are equally strong arguments in favor of policies that aim to help *all* original CHA residents make a successful transition and gain access to safe, decent,

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of these issues and the unresolved policy debates see POPKIN ET AL., *supra* note 5.

and stable housing. The majority of households in the distressed public housing that is part of the CHA transformation are families with children. New policies that exclude the most troubled families may place these children at even greater disadvantage. Further, given the role that federal policies and the housing authority's historical managerial neglect—and sometimes malfeasance—played in creating the distress that led to the need for the drastic transformation of its developments, the federal government and the CHA must accept at least some responsibility for trying to help address the problems of its most troubled residents.

As stated in the introduction, there is no question that many residents were damaged as a result of living in CHA's developments, both because of the dangerous physical conditions and because of the overwhelming social disorganization. There are no simple solutions for these families—and none that are inexpensive. But given the legacy of discrimination and segregation in Chicago that created the terrible conditions in CHA housing, we owe these most damaged families a serious and intensive effort to address their needs and help them move on to better, safer communities—especially if we hope to improve outcomes for the next generation.

### **A Model for Serving the Hard to House**

One of the things that makes addressing the needs of CHA's hundreds of "hard to house" families so challenging is that their problems are so complex and multifaceted that is difficult to know exactly where to start. Any model to serve these families must be intensive and have a long-term focus. That means ensuring very low case loads that allow case managers to have daily contact if they need it, considering options like a 24-hour crisis line, and drawing on the very best lessons on how to deal with the most troubled, disconnected families. CHA's "hard to house" families are more similar to homeless families in their level of need than they are to other public or assisted housing residents. The main difference is that, despite all of their limitations, CHA's developments have provided them with a reliable place to stay.

I am part of a group of researchers and service providers currently working to develop a demonstration program for CHA's most troubled families. This program will draw on the best models in the field, including Family Justice's La Bodega approach for

providing intensive case management to the formerly incarcerated and their families, and the best approaches for providing transitional and permanent supportive housing to homeless families.<sup>36</sup> Transitional housing is usually appropriate for households that, with sometimes-substantial amounts of support, can ultimately be expected to sustain themselves in housing without supportive services, but not necessarily without rental subsidies. Supportive services in transitional housing cover a wide range, from parenting and childcare to educational completion to budgeting and life skills to training for employment. They also frequently include assistance in achieving and maintaining recovery from substance abuse, mental health services, and case management to assure that tenants continue to work toward their stated goals and receive the assistance to which they are entitled. Permanent supportive housing means housing with no limit on length of stay and no requirement that tenants move out if their service needs change. It is usually reserved for people with a history of housing instability coupled with disabilities that make it unlikely that stable housing will be achieved or maintained without help.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the demonstration will also draw on the knowledge from efforts like Chicago's Project Match, which has long been working to help CHA residents move toward self-sufficiency.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Carol Shapiro, *The Bodega Model: A Family-Focused Approach for Returning Prisoners*, 12 THE SOURCE 13 (2003), available at [http://aia.berkeley.edu/media/pdf/source\\_vol12\\_no1.pdf](http://aia.berkeley.edu/media/pdf/source_vol12_no1.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> See generally Popkin, Cunningham & Burt, *supra* note 33.

<sup>38</sup> C.f. SUZANNE WAGNER, CHARLES CHANG & TOBY HERR, TEN YEARS OF WORKING, TWO VARIATIONS ON ADVANCEMENT: CHANGES IN ANNUAL EARNINGS FOR PROJECT MATCH PARTICIPANTS (2006), [http://www.pmatch.org/advance\\_feb\\_ohsix.pdf](http://www.pmatch.org/advance_feb_ohsix.pdf).

One of the most challenging problems in the CHA context will be the large number of these families that have at least one member who has had involvement with the criminal justice system. Under current federal regulations and CHA's lease requirements, those with histories of drug offenses or violent crimes are no longer eligible to live in public or assisted housing. But the reality is that many of these formerly incarcerated individuals have strong ties to families in CHA and often stay with their families illegally, placing the entire household at risk for eviction. Any serious attempt to address the needs of the hard to house will have to include strategies for finding viable housing options for these family members so they do not destabilize the entire household. This challenge will mean making effective linkages with agencies working to help re-entering offenders as well as helping those with lesser offenses meet the criteria to be considered "rehabilitated" and potentially eligible for housing assistance or even admission to mixed-income housing.

There is no question that these services are costly and will require considerable investment on the part of the housing authority, the City, and the philanthropic community. These agencies have already invested millions of dollars to build the existing Service Connector and relocation system, which has provided services to many residents. However, the reality is that none of the existing systems are equipped to deal with the complex, multifaceted needs of these most vulnerable families. In order to bring about better outcomes for these families, these agencies must step up to the plate once again and invest in a new and innovative set of services to ensure that as many as possible end up in safe and stable housing options and do not join the ranks of the truly homeless.