

# Participation in a Residential Mobility Program from the Client's Perspective: Findings from Gautreaux Two

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## *Abstract*

In 2002, the Gautreaux Two housing mobility program provided low-income families living in Chicago public housing with the opportunity to move to more affluent, less racially isolated communities. This article presents findings on their complex search and moving process. Only about one-third of enrolled families actually moved through the program (“leased-up”). In-depth interviews with a randomly chosen sample of 71 families and an additional 20 “likely mover” families showed that movers fell into four groups distinguished by personal characteristics that made it easier for them to move or by residence on Chicago’s North Side.

Nonmovers faced a variety of obstacles, both external (a tight rental market, discrimination, and bureaucratic delays) and internal (limited experience and program comprehension, large household size, and health problems). Also, some nonmovers were too busy with work or school to engage in what proved to be an onerous process of identifying a suitable unit and moving.

**Keywords:** Low-income housing; Minorities; Mobility

## **Introduction**

With the shift in U.S. housing policy from development-based public housing to tenant-based rental housing assistance, interest has grown in how tenant-based voucher programs might be designed to best meet client needs while at the same time not altering substantially the character of the neighborhoods into which residents move (Devine et al. 2003; Galster, Tatian, and Smith 1999;

Newman and Schnare 1997; Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham 1999; Varady and Walker 2000, 2003). Living in high-crime, high-poverty areas, the same areas in which most public housing developments are located, has a negative association with employment opportunities, education, safety, health, and mortality (Allard and Danzinger 2003; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Aber 1997; Massey and Denton 1983; Peterson and Krivo 1993; Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999; Wilson 1986, 1997). Given the potential for housing vouchers to enable low-income families to escape from such neighborhoods, it may seem surprising that not all families that can move through these programs choose to do so.

Residential mobility programs are often evaluated by looking at how many participants successfully “lease-up,” that is, how many move through the program. Finkel and Buron (2001) estimate that only 69 percent of families offered a voucher in 2000 actually succeeded in using it. In the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) experiment, the lease-up rate was only 62 percent for those offered a standard Section 8 voucher. Furthermore, despite housing counseling from nonprofit organizations, the lease-up rate for the MTO experimental group—those who received vouchers that could be used only in low-poverty census tracts—averaged just 47 percent (Orr et al. 2003). These figures are well below the 87 percent lease-up rate estimated by Kennedy and Finkel (1994) in a national study of the Section 8 program conducted in the early 1990s.

This article examines the many steps involved in the housing search and lease-up process for families enrolled in the Gautreaux Two program. In 2001, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), as a result of ongoing litigation, contracted with the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities to implement a new round of the Gautreaux residential mobility program. Like the original Gautreaux program (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000), Gautreaux Two provides opportunities for low-income families living in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in the United States to move to neighborhoods with safer streets, better schools, and more access to employment. We draw our information from in-depth qualitative interviews with 91 of the 549 families that enrolled in the Gautreaux Two program.

We begin with a brief review of the literature on participation in housing mobility programs, followed by a summary of the methods we used in this study. We present findings on the ultimate outcome of lease-up through the program, along with findings on those factors associated with participation and attrition at various stages in the process. We then present typologies of successful and unsuccessful movers and close with a summary and discussion of the policy implications of our findings.

## Background

Economic models of residential mobility programs presume that participants weigh the likely payoffs of searching for a new unit against the benefits of staying where they are (Kennedy and Finkel 1994; Shroder 2002). Since the search process itself is costly, particularly in terms of time, a family will search only if the likely gain outweighs the cost. The attractions of searching are presumed to be enhanced by factors that increase the chances that it will be successful: for example, a higher vacancy rate in the local housing market, familiarity with other neighborhoods, a smaller family size that matches the more readily available two- and three-bedroom rental apartments, and racial/ethnic and other characteristics that evoke less landlord discrimination. Current residence in public housing and use of a housing voucher may be perceived negatively by prospective landlords and thus decrease participation.

Ties to the original neighborhood in the form of family and close friends, trusted local institutions such as churches and schools, and established child care will reduce the attractions of the search. Neighborhood resources such as after-school programs, job-training centers, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes, public transportation, and social service centers may also make relocation less attractive.

Relocation assistance lessens the cost of the search to the participant (Cunningham and Popkin 2002; Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001; Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2002; Shroder 2002). In the case of a housing mobility program such as Gautreaux Two, assistance from nonprofit housing counselors, family, and friends can reduce the time and cost of the search. For participants who work or go to school, the time costs of searching without assistance may be quite high. For those who earn a very low hourly wage or are not in the labor force, the time costs are lower than they would be for somewhat higher-wage workers.

The difficulties poor blacks face in relocating to nonminority neighborhoods are well documented (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). Even for minority families with higher incomes and more resources, relocation can be difficult and the choices limited (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Crowder 2001; DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2003; Logan, Alba, and Leung 1996; Pendall 2000; Rosenbaum 1994; South and Crowder 1997). When variables such as income and education are controlled for, black families are still less likely than white families to move in any given year. The Gautreaux Two program specifically aims to relocate a group of low-income, predominantly black families from public housing to areas with less poverty and greater racial diversity, a difficult proposition under the best of circumstances. In light of these potential problems, the Gautreaux Two program offers clients counseling, advocacy, and assistance.

### *Quantitative studies*

Most quantitative studies of program lease-up employ regression-based methods to estimate the marginal contribution of variables indicating the likely costs and benefits of the search. By and large, they confirm many of the predictions from the economic model. For example, Kennedy and Finkel (1994) found that lease-up is more likely for younger, smaller, healthier, and more motivated families and for families that manage to locate a unit with a landlord who has previous experience with Section 8 tenants. Shroder's (2002) analysis showed that Section 8 lease-up in the MTO experiment was higher among families that were smaller, younger, less connected to the original neighborhood, and more motivated to move.

Feins, McInnis, and Popkin (1997) studied the effects of program implementation on lease-up rates. They found a large variation in participation across the five MTO cities and showed that some of this variation can be explained by large discrepancies in the implementation of the housing counseling piece of the program: The amount of assistance that participants received in terms of locating and visiting suitable units was tied to increased participation and ultimate lease-up. However, there are those who question the efficacy of intensive housing counseling in successfully placing low-income families in low-poverty neighborhoods (Varady and Walker 2000).

### *Qualitative studies*

Gibson and Weisner (2002) examined the more general issue of assistance take-up in an ethnographic study of a random sample of participants in the New Hope Program, an antipoverty initiative that offered wage and child care subsidies, health insurance, and, if needed, a community-service job to participants who were willing to work 30 or more hours per week. Despite the unusual generosity of this program, take-up was far from universal and, moreover, few members of the treatment group used all of the benefits during the entire 36-month period. Evaluation data revealed that New Hope take-up varied by type of assistance: 72 percent used earnings supplements, 23 percent used child care, 38 percent used health care services, and 24 percent took the community service job for at least one day (Brock et al. 1997). Ethnographic interviews revealed that nonparticipants and partial participants could be divided into four groups: those who lacked adequate information about all aspects of the program, those who had persistent personal troubles and household instability, those who concluded that the economic costs of participation would outweigh the gain, and those who felt that the program would not help them meet family goals.

Popkin and Cunningham (1999) used a different qualitative approach to study Section 8 use in Chicago. Drawing from lists of eligible families that failed to lease-up, they organized six focus groups with a total of 39 individuals. Participants provided background information and then engaged in an open-ended discussion of issues related to their experiences with standard Housing Choice Vouchers, formerly called Section 8 certificates. Unlike the vouchers issued to the MTO experimental group, Housing Choice Vouchers do not require holders to move to low-poverty neighborhoods. An analysis of session transcripts raised many of the themes that will appear in our own analysis of participation and lease-up through the Gautreaux Two program.

Popkin and Cunningham (1999) found that participants were often bewildered by the brief orientation sessions offered by the organization charged with implementing the program and complained of the inaccessibility of program staff during the search. Barriers to successful lease-up included transportation, difficulties with rent and security deposits, time constraints for working families, large family size, and both racial and voucher discrimination by landlords. Popkin et al. (2000) presented similar findings based on additional focus groups with all voucher recipients, both movers and nonmovers, from one public housing project undergoing redevelopment.

The qualitative approach we took differs from that of Popkin and Cunningham (1999). Our sample is larger and includes families with both unsuccessful and successful lease-up experiences. Thus, we can identify barriers to participation as well as factors related to participation at various stages in the process. Also, we provide findings on how many families engaged in successive phases of the search, including the final lease-up stage. This enabled us to estimate the prevalence of various barriers to participation, as well as those factors associated with participation at each stage. Finally, the inclusion of movers in our sample allowed us to construct profiles of successful program mover and unsuccessful nonmover types, along with illustrative case studies and contextual data.

## Methods

### *The Gautreaux Two program*

When the CHA contracted with the Leadership Council in 2001 to implement a new round of the Gautreaux program, residents who were current lease-holders in good standing in CHA public housing were eligible to sign up for a Housing Choice Voucher through the Gautreaux Two program. Since both Gautreaux and Gautreaux Two were the result of litigation alleging housing segregation policies on the part of CHA and the U.S. Department of Hous-

ing and Urban Development (HUD), the Gautreaux voucher was restricted to use in certain “opportunity areas.”

These were determined on the census tract level and were defined as those neighborhoods with no more than 23.49 percent of residents living in poverty and no more than 30 percent black residents. At the start of the Gautreaux Two program, participants were told that they had 180 days from the date of their orientation briefing to use the voucher.<sup>1</sup> Lease-up with the Gautreaux Two voucher meant that residents had to waive all rights to return to CHA housing. For those looking to move out of public housing, this could be a quick solution, much quicker than spending years on the lists for scattered-site public housing in more desirable areas or a standard Housing Choice Voucher. During this time, residents in certain developments slated to undergo demolition or renovation were also able to weigh the Gautreaux Two voucher against other mobility options offered to them under the CHA’s Plan for Transformation. Also, after one year in an opportunity area, participants would be free to move and use their voucher anywhere they chose, regardless of the racial or poverty composition of the neighborhood.

In October 2001, the CHA sent letters inviting all tenants to participate in a one-day, phone-in registration for the Gautreaux Two program. Some 1,120 people called the Leadership Council to register (see table 1). The CHA deemed 683 of these individuals eligible for the program based on their fulfillment of the following criteria: They were current legal CHA lease-holders who were not behind on their rent, had not damaged their unit, and had no misdemeanor convictions in the past two years. (Felons are not allowed to live in CHA housing at any time.) Beginning in the spring of 2002, the Leadership Council invited between 20 and 40 of these families at a time to an orientation session. Leadership Council records show that 549 of the 683 attended 1 of the 48 orientation sessions offered over the next 10 months. Orientation attendance was the necessary first step to securing a Gautreaux Two voucher.

Orientation sessions were held in the downtown offices of the Leadership Council. Sessions typically lasted three and a half hours and covered a range of topics, including program and neighborhood requirements, search strategies, rent limits, tips on presenting one’s family to a landlord, a question-and-answer period, and a pep talk on how to stay focused during what could be a difficult process. Attendees were also shown a video showcasing one woman who had moved to an opportunity area and illustrating how her life had changed.

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<sup>1</sup> However, the 180-day requirement was waived in most cases and extended indefinitely after initial lease-up proved much lower than anticipated. As of December 2003, 18 months into the program, several dozen residents continue to search with their Gautreaux Two vouchers.

**Table 1.** Participation throughout the Gautreaux Two Program

	All Gautreaux Two Participants	Qualitative Study Sample (%)
Families	1,120	
Called to register for the program	683	
Received preliminary approval to participate and were invited to the briefing session	549	
Attended a briefing session	450	
Completed the necessary paperwork and received preliminary approval for a Housing Choice Voucher		85
Engaged in a housing search		70
Visited at least one unit in a qualifying opportunity area		54
Successfully leased-up through the program through December 2003	200 (200/549 = 36%)	

*Note:* Data in the first column are based on administrative data compiled by the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. Percentages in the second column are based on the randomly selected sample of participants who attended briefing sessions and took part in our qualitative interviews.

Clients were encouraged to consider suburban moves, with the exception of many near-south and near-west suburbs that did not qualify as opportunity areas.

In briefings, clients received little specific information about which city neighborhoods were eligible for the program. However, in the 2000 census, 48 percent of all tracts in the city of Chicago qualified as opportunity areas. Qualifying tracts were primarily clustered on the city's North and Southwest Sides, but many city neighborhoods were in fact a checkerboard of qualifying and nonqualifying tracts. Thus, clients who wished to move within the city had to employ a trial-and-error approach, often locating several units before finding one that qualified. In addition, many opportunity areas on the Northwest and Southwest Sides have lower proportions of rental housing than most nonopportunity areas, with a greater mix of industrial areas and single-family homes.

The orientation sessions were followed by one-on-one sessions with a housing counselor from the Leadership Council. Some of these sessions immediately followed the orientation session, and others took place later by appointment. After orientation, participants also had to return program paperwork, including copies of birth certificates for all household members, pay stubs, a benefits survey, and other documents. Only participants who attended the one-on-one sessions and returned all paperwork were able to continue. All told, 450 of the 549 individuals who attended the orientation completed these steps. After the assessment was done, clients were responsible for conducting the housing search on their own. When they identified an available unit, they were

required to call Leadership Council staff to ensure that the unit was located in an opportunity area. After viewing the unit and speaking with the landlord, participants again phoned their counselor to set up an inspection and lease negotiation. Vouchers were held by the Leadership Council until a lease was signed under its supervision.

Over the course of the evaluation, we had repeated, extensive conversations with program staff and administrators. We also attended almost all briefing sessions and staff meetings, although for this article, we focus on the experiences clients had and the difficulties they perceived in conducting a housing search and moving through the program. This focus is useful because of the complexity of the search and lease-up process and the diverse range of client experiences.

### *Data collection*

Our recruitment of a sample of mover and nonmover<sup>2</sup> families used a two-pronged approach. First, we recruited a randomly selected 20 percent of the 549 Gautreaux Two clients who attended the orientation sessions held between May and October for a series of in-depth interviews. Some of the families that consented moved forward with the program, while others never completed the necessary paperwork.

In all, 71 of the 84 randomly sampled families agreed to participate in the study. After six months of program briefings, less than 20 percent of them had leased a unit in an opportunity area. In the late fall of 2002, to compensate for this unexpectedly low rate, we drew a second sample of 23 program enrollees, all of whom appeared likely to move as part of the program. These families were drawn from the Leadership Council's transmittal list, which included individuals who had already located units and begun the inspection and moving process. A total of 20 of these 23 families agreed to participate in the study. Thus our pooled set of 91 families contained roughly equal numbers of movers and nonmovers. Our overall response rate was 85 percent,<sup>3</sup> very high for a qualitative study of this kind. Since completing our baseline interviews with these families, we have visited them every three to six months (depending on their stage in the program) and have maintained ongoing phone contact. All

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<sup>2</sup> We use "nonmover" here for participants who did not move through the Gautreaux Two program. During the study, many of these families were able to move to a different unit, but they did so through other programs or independently.

<sup>3</sup> Response rates were similar for both the randomly selected (85 percent) and the added "likely mover" group (87 percent).

names have been changed to ensure confidentiality and protect respondents' privacy.

The data provided here come from in-depth, focused, qualitative interviews with respondents in their homes and are occasionally supplemented with data gathered by observing participants at orientation sessions. This article presents findings from the first two waves of a series of four in-depth interviews that we are conducting with all 91 participants over a three-year period. The initial interviews were conducted within three months of participants' orientation sessions, with second interviews following some six to nine months later. Using these two waves of interview data in combination with mobility results from December 2003 (18 months after the orientation sessions began and at least 12 months after all of our participants had completed their orientation), we discuss how their personal characteristics, experiences, program understanding, and housing search strategies at baseline correlate with participation and eventual lease-up.

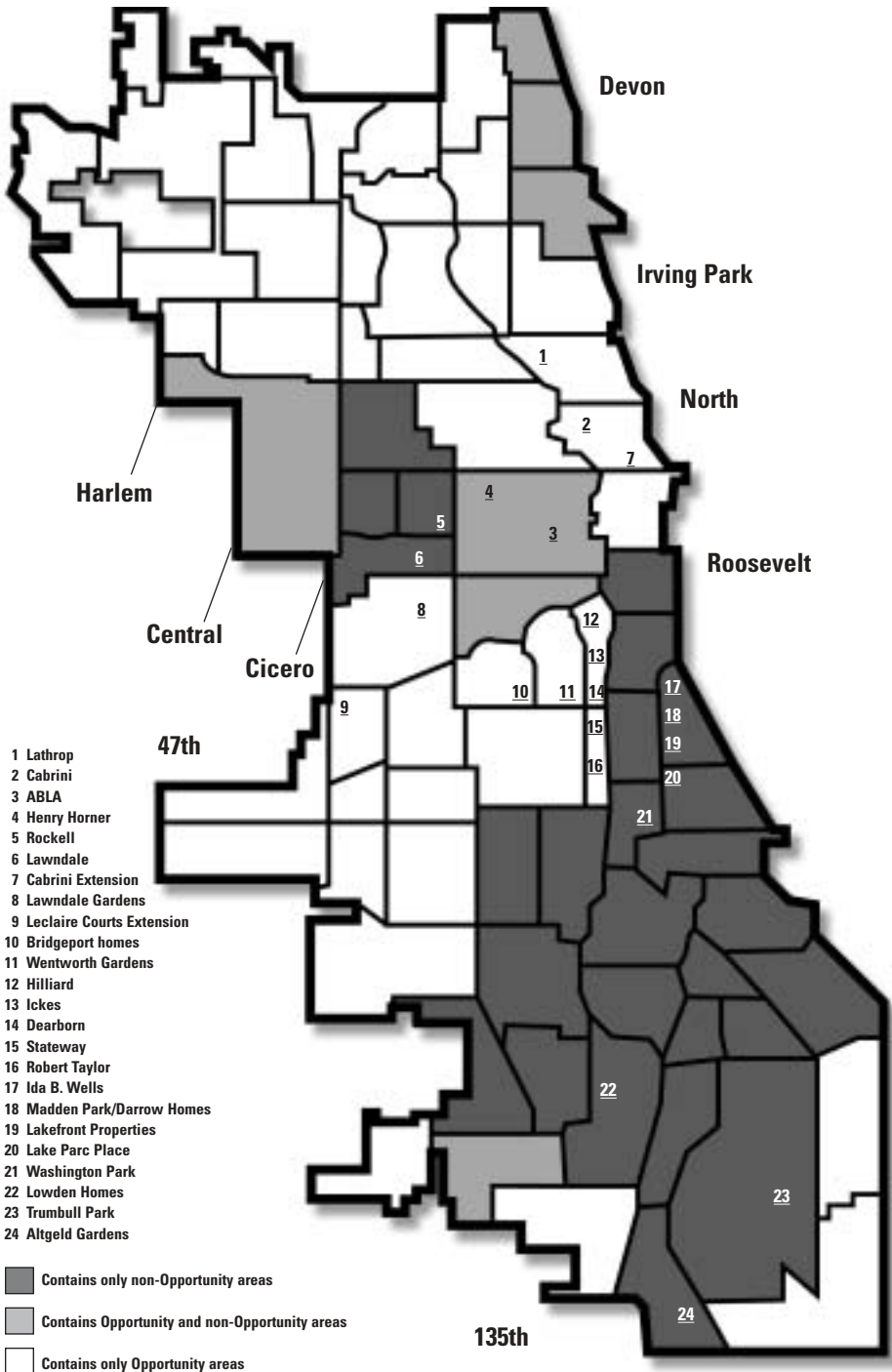
Each of our semistructured, in-depth, qualitative interviews lasted between two and four hours and elicited rich narrative detail on a number of topics related to participation. Topics included enrollment, needs assessment, housing counseling, identification of a willing landlord and a suitable unit, experiences with various administrative agencies, and the amount and timing of paperwork completion. Verbatim interview transcripts were coded by topic and electronically sorted into fields (akin to variables except that they involve text rather than numbers and can run from a single sentence to several pages) in a case-by-field format in which the family was the case.

### *Characteristics of participants*

All participants lived in CHA housing at the time of enrollment. Figure 1 shows opportunity areas in Chicago by community area and their location relative to CHA developments. While Chicago and most of Cook County were a mixture of opportunity and nonopportunity areas, most of the suburbs, especially those a little farther out from the city in Lake, Kane, DuPage, and McHenry Counties, met the definition of an opportunity area.

Residents from scattered-site developments composed 21 percent of our sample. Given the ongoing renovation and demolition of CHA developments, we were surprised that so few of the participants in our pool (about one-third) came from developments slated for demolition. Interview data suggest that residents in these developments weighed the Gautreaux Two program against their relocation options under the CHA's Plan for Transformation, including regular Housing Choice Vouchers and possible relocation to a newly built or

**Figure 1.** Opportunity Areas and Public Housing in Chicago



renovated unit. As noted earlier, upon acceptance of the Gautreaux Two voucher, all participants had to surrender their right to return to public housing, including new or redeveloped housing. In addition, it appears that some developments were overrepresented in the program because property managers distributed flyers that caught the attention of residents as they came to the office to pay their rent. Property managers at most other developments simply included the flyer with the monthly rent statement.

Virtually all of our respondents were female heads of household. The size of the household averaged four members, and the vast majority except for the leaseholder were children. Our adult respondents averaged 32 years of age at baseline and had lived in their current development for an average of 8.5 years. More than half lacked a high school diploma, and household incomes averaged \$924 a month. Half of the families reported work income, and slightly less than 40 percent received some sort of cash assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or supplemental security income. Only about one-tenth received child support through the formal enforcement system. Almost all were black, although a few were Caribbean or Puerto Rican.

## Results

We organize our analysis using categories of successful and unsuccessful lease-up, although we will also discuss levels of participation in the housing search even for those who did not manage to lease-up. Some 18 months after orientation sessions began, only one-third of all Gautreaux Two participants had leased-up. Categories of successful movers include unusually advantaged families, North Side families that lived close to many opportunity areas, older families, and those who succeeded through luck or sheer force of will despite many obstacles and disadvantages. All movers encountered external obstacles such as discrimination on the part of landlords, program problems, and the tight housing market. Unsuccessful movers faced personal obstacles, including insularity, poor understanding of program rules, large household size, time constraints, unrealistic expectations, and health issues. In some cases, families did not pursue a move because they rejected the opportunity area constraints that the program imposed or because they chose another relocation program. In all cases, we attempt to estimate the fraction of our one-in-five random sample gleaned during orientation sessions (71 of the 91 families in the study) that fell into each group.

In baseline interviews, respondents offered several primary reasons for wanting to move, including safer neighborhoods, better schools for their children, and higher-quality housing. For example, Betty, a 31-year-old mother of

five who was working and going to college, eventually moved to the suburbs. She explained:

I'm looking for [a certain] type of atmosphere, peaceful, friendly, tranquility, something for peace of mind, a better education system, a better school system for my kids. Because...the future's nothing but technology and they need a better, a challenging school system. Because right now they're just competing against these kids out here. [H]alf of them can't read. So they need something better than what I had.

Mary, a 30-year-old mother of three who had lived in a South Side development for 12 years, expressed outrage at the conditions in her building.

It should be *condemned*. I have a hole now in my bedroom wall....It's 'cause the wall was leaking and the plaster got soaked. They haven't come and fixed it. It's filthy. Constant gangbangin', constant drug sellin'. Constant police harassment. I just recently got rid of a rat....I had to go to sleep in a hotel.

### *Successful movers*

According to the Leadership Council's transmittal list of December 2003, 36 percent of all participants successfully moved under the conditions of the program. The lease-up rate in our randomly selected group was substantially higher—54 percent. However, when we look only at those families that were randomly selected to participate in the study but declined, the lease-up rate is comparable to the program group as a whole at 38 percent. This may indicate that we were not able to recruit those families least likely to lease-up. It is also possible that our interviewing process increased the likelihood of lease-up. The intensive nature of our contact with participants, the social support that may have ensued, and our in-depth discussion of program requirements and search strategies may all have contributed to the increased rate.

Except for one woman who was granted an exemption from opportunity area requirements because of her exceptionally large family, all of the movers in our sample participated in a housing search and visited at least one unit in a qualifying opportunity area. Housing search is defined here as looking in any media source for rental listings, talking to friends about possible units, hiring a rental broker, or looking for "For Rent" signs in buildings, and then making at least one phone call to check on availability. All Gautreaux participants, both movers and nonmovers, used a variety of local newspapers, rental circulars, and Internet sites to search for housing.

Families successfully moving as part of the Gautreaux Two program fall into four general categories (see table 2).<sup>4</sup> Membership in these groups sometimes overlaps, but we assigned each family to the group that best fits its characteristics. The largest group, 37 percent of all movers, consists of families that are relatively young and have no more than three children (obviating the need to find scarce four-bedroom or larger units). Half of those in this group had lived in public housing for less than six years at the time of their orientation session. Many also had some college experience or a professional certification, such as a Certified Nurse's Assistant or a phlebotomist license. We call this group our "relatively advantaged" movers. They were more likely to find apartments quickly and move in the earlier stages of the program. These families generally began their search within days of their orientation.

**Table 2.** Lease-Up in the Gautreaux Two Program<sup>a</sup>

	Percentage of Program Total <sup>b</sup>	Percentage of Total	Percentage of Subgroup <sup>c</sup>
Movers	36		
Relatively advantaged		13	37
North Siders		8	21
Luck or pluck		8	21
Mature		6	18
Granted a program exemption		1	3
Nonmovers <sup>d</sup>	64		
Lack of exposure to opportunity areas and/or poor understanding of program requirements		21	33
Large households		15	24
Highly functioning/Too busy		12	18
Rejection of program		10	15
Health		6	9
Total	100		

*Note:* Percentages for the nonmover subgroup do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

<sup>a</sup> Program total rates were calculated according to data gathered from the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. Classification by mover or nonmover types is based on our interview data.

<sup>b</sup> Lease-up is calculated as of December 1, 2003.

<sup>c</sup> Subgroup rates are based on the randomly sampled respondent group.

<sup>d</sup> All Gautreaux Two participants, both movers and nonmovers, faced external obstacles to mobility including discrimination, program problems, and housing market restrictions. We have therefore classified each nonmover household according to a primary personal obstacle. Some households may experience more than one obstacle, but were assigned to a primary category based on the interview transcript.

<sup>4</sup> We use the findings from our random sample only to generate group percentages and mover/nonmover types.

The second group of movers, one-fifth of our mover pool, is distinguished by where they lived at the time of their orientation. We call them “North Siders” since they came from the two large developments on Chicago’s North Side or from scattered-site public housing in that area. These locations provided them with access and exposure to the North Side’s 275 census tracts that qualify as opportunity areas, some of them directly across the street from their current dwellings. Although Chicago’s North Side is half as big as the South Side, it held two-thirds of the city’s opportunity areas in 2000.

One North Sider, Dee-Dee, is a 47-year-old mother of two who was living in a development when she enrolled in the program. She has her GED and is studying to be a radiology technician. She located several units in qualifying census tracts merely by noting “For Rent” signs on the buildings she passed each day during her bus ride to work. For this group, proximity to opportunity areas translated into a host of advantages, including greater odds that a client would identify a unit located in an opportunity area by chance, less travel time to visit qualified units, and a pre-existing familiarity and comfort with some of the neighborhoods that met program requirements. Proximity also meant that residents who moved nearby could still quickly and easily access social networks already in place.

Others in our study had very few advantages but made a program move anyway. We refer to this one-fifth of the mover sample as the “luck-or-pluck” group. It includes both those who exhibit an intense drive and determination and those who had unusually good fortune in searching for a unit. Some of the latter relied on network connections to direct them to available units in opportunity areas, while many of the former report calling in hundreds of units during their search. One of the unusually tenacious participants is Jeanetta, a young woman in her 20s who spent most of her life living in a South Side development. She moved into a three-bedroom apartment in an opportunity area on the far North Side, apparently because of her sheer determination to experience life outside the CHA. “I’ve been there all my life, in the projects. I want to get *out* and see what the real world is like out there.” All luck-or-pluck movers fit a nonmover profile, too, but were able to move anyway. (This will be discussed in more detail later.)

A few participants reported locating units solely because of a tip from their housing counselor, although this was rare. Such tips were extraordinarily useful, since every participant who reported hearing about an available unit from staff made a program move. Annette is a 29-year-old mother of five who has bipolar disorder. She was pursuing her GED and was frustrated with the gang activity in her neighborhood when she enrolled in the Gautreaux Two program. She was discouraged and frustrated with the program and considered

quitting. Before giving up, she called her housing counselor one last time. Luckily, another participant had just turned down a three-bedroom apartment located nearby, and she was able to move there, thus overcoming both health obstacles and the difficulty of locating a unit that could accommodate a large household.

The fourth mover group is composed of what we call “mature” households. A little less than one-fifth of all movers fell into this group. Most are over 45 and have been CHA residents for many years. Families in this group have few of the personal characteristics that confer advantages on other movers, but most have neither minor nor adult children in the household and thus qualify for the more readily available one-bedroom units. Many in the mature group received substantial search assistance from family—often their own adult children living outside CHA—and friends. Ellen, a long-time resident of a far South Side development, spent most of her 63 years as a homemaker. She raised six children and lives with one of her adult grandchildren. Her daughter, a woman in her 40s who happened to be a participant in the original Gautreaux program, is a suburban homeowner. She aided Ellen in her search, viewing 15 to 20 potential units on her mother's behalf before locating the unit Ellen eventually secured.

### *Nonmovers*

After 18 months of program implementation, almost two-thirds of all Gautreaux Two families had not yet made a program move, although, as we pointed out earlier, the rate was substantially lower among our randomly selected participant group. Families faced many difficulties—external and personal obstacles—in their housing search. External obstacles exist outside the individual, affect all program participants, and include discrimination, landlord problems, program implementation problems, and the state of the housing market. Personal obstacles include individual characteristics such as lack of exposure to opportunity areas, the location of the development or scattered-site unit from which the family was moving, expectations, large household size, and health issues (see table 2). We assigned a primary personal obstacle to mobility for each nonmover. Since all participants faced the same external obstacles to mobility, we did not assign a primary external obstacle.

### *External obstacles to mobility*

*Discrimination and other landlord problems.* Chicago's Human Rights ordinance prohibits discrimination on “source of income,” which includes all

Housing Choice Vouchers. Few Chicago suburbs have similar laws. Conversations with participants confirmed that discriminatory practices are common, even in the city.

Renee, 28, is a mother of two and has completed one year of college. She lived in a North Side development before her move and works as a clerk in the criminal justice system. She told us,

[The landlord] asked me, Did I have Section 8 [Housing Choice Voucher]....She was like, she don't rent to Section 8 [voucher holders] at all....And I was like, "Okay, thank you." And then, before I could hang up, she said it was that she just had a bad experience with Section 8 tenants. And I said, "Just because a person has a...voucher, that doesn't make the person mean or unorganized...or an unclean person!"

More common, however, were landlords' concerns about the administration of the program or unwillingness to make the repairs necessary to qualify the unit for a voucher. Respondents reported that landlords complained about how extraordinarily long it took for a unit to be inspected and approved, as well as delays in receiving security deposits and rent payments. Currently, landlords receive no compensation for lost income while waiting for the unit to be inspected and the certification process to be completed. Respondents and counselors told us that some landlords of older buildings would rather forgo the opportunity to rent to a voucher holder than pay the cost of modifying a unit so that it passes inspection, especially when it comes to requirements such as removing lead paint. Clearly, many Gautreaux Two participants can find willing landlords in opportunity areas, so while discrimination may be encountered frequently, it is not the case for every landlord. Illinois law also allows landlords of owner-occupied buildings of less than five units to refuse to modify a unit so that it can pass a voucher inspection, as long as the unit meets local safety standards.

Tina is a 30-year-old mother of one and was working as a health outreach caseworker when she got a voucher for a unit with exterior lead paint. CHAC, the private company charged with ensuring that the unit met inspection standards, allowed the move because she had no children under the age of six. However, before she moved, she found out she was pregnant: "They said 'Well, [Tina], since there's lead paint on the back porch you can't move in the unit.'...So that's when they let *him* [the landlord] know that he needs to write a letter saying that he's going to release me from [the lease]." The landlord refused to let her out of the lease and collected the full rent from CHA for the vacant unit for six months. During this time, the respondent could not continue

her search because there was already an active voucher issued in her name. “And if he was to fix it right now, today, I wouldn’t take it, because he wasn’t thinking about me and my children at the time when he could have been fixing it.” Tina was ultimately granted a program exemption and moved with a regular Housing Choice Voucher to a nonopportunity area.

Beyond discrimination against the voucher itself, some respondents reported being rejected by landlords who were reluctant to rent to families with children. This type of discrimination is also illegal in the city of Chicago for buildings with more than five units and for smaller buildings that are not owner occupied, yet when participants call landlords to view a prospective unit, they often face the question, “How many children?” The preference for smaller buildings and the two- and three-flat housing stock available in many opportunity areas often puts Gautreaux Two participants in the tough position of dealing with owner-occupied buildings where landlords legally have more freedom to choose tenants as long as they do not discriminate on the basis of race. In one case, a Gautreaux Two participant was surprised to find that the unit she went to view was really a three-bedroom apartment, not a two-bedroom as advertised. The landlord explained that he had listed it as a smaller unit to discourage families with children from calling.

Although the Leadership Council actively encouraged participants to report discrimination and record interaction details, only a few of our respondents did so. They told us that maintaining logs and calling counselors yet again, this time to report a violation of the law, only added more time and labor to the search while not getting them any closer to a unit. They also expressed the belief that it was better not to go where they were not wanted. One woman told us, “I have no time for ignorance.” Adding to the complexity of the issue is the suspicion that in many cases, landlord discrimination against housing vouchers and original neighborhood masks racial discrimination.

*Program implementation problems.* Specific aspects of program implementation also impeded moving. We have already described how the Leadership Council deployed its resources for group orientation sessions, followed by an individual counseling session and then limited follow-up counseling. Participants were expected to find their own units. Our interviews confirmed that only a few families received any assistance in locating units from a housing counselor and none was accompanied by a counselor when visiting a unit unless it was being inspected. Many clients claimed that this was not what they had been led to expect from the briefings. In the briefings we observed, clients were told that they would receive leads on suitable units and that a housing counselor would escort each client to visit three units. Clients took this to mean

that the counselor would take them to visit three units that were available and met program requirements and that they could then choose one of them if they liked it and begin the moving process. Many clients felt that they had been misled when this assistance did not materialize. After further discussions with staff, we were told that the Leadership Council interpreted “visits” to mean the inspection and lease negotiation visits that they conducted once the client had located a qualified unit and visited it independently.

Sandra is a 39-year-old mother of five living in scattered-site public housing on the North Side. She was working full-time at a hotel and completing a bachelor’s degree when she began the program. Her search was particularly difficult because she needed a four-bedroom unit. When we asked whether her housing counselor had provided her with any leads or taken her to any apartments, she said,

Not one. They told us in the briefings that they were working with a real estate company or a mortgage company. That fell through. They told us, “Well it’s not happening,” you know, “We’re sorry, don’t give up. Just keep looking.” I said, “You know, in my case, looking for four bedrooms is even harder.”

Although most participants felt that staff were well intentioned and tried to help when called on, many had difficulty reaching counselors by phone when they had questions or problems, especially in the early stages when calling to assess whether a unit was located at an acceptable address. Since few clients understood the program rules very well after the orientation session, this situation presented a considerable obstacle to mobility and increased the time spent on the housing search. Though some participants were granted extensions and their vouchers were not, in the end, time limited, these early difficulties often led to a lack of confidence in the process and loss of hope for eventual success. Other participants who had been less ardent in the search process were not granted extensions and were subsequently dropped from the program after the initial 180-day period elapsed.

Participants had to work with several agencies and organizations once they identified a qualified unit, and bureaucratic delays made the waiting period between identification and move-in quite long. After identifying an appropriate unit in a qualified area, the housing counselor had to conduct a preliminary inspection. The file was then passed on to CHAC, which administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program for the CHA, or the appropriate local housing agency if the unit was outside the city limits. CHAC or the other municipality’s agency then conducted a more thorough inspection. If the unit passed, the participant worked with the Leadership Council, the landlord, CHAC, or

another municipality's inspection agency to negotiate the rent, sign a lease, and finally issue the voucher. During the whole process, participants had to comply with their CHA lease or the voucher could be rescinded. At the start of program implementation, respondents reported that it took at least six weeks from the date they saw a unit to the day they signed a lease. As the program progressed, this timeline accelerated slightly, but still often took a minimum of three or more weeks.

Tierra, 25, has one son and two years of college. She moved from a far South Side development to a southern suburb. Before securing her unit, she recalled having to take her paperwork from the Leadership Council to various offices in Chicago and the suburbs, a process that took about two months. The landlord became frustrated and nearly pulled out of the agreement because of the delays in processing paperwork and because the participant couldn't determine which agency was responsible for paying her security deposit. She said, "I had a headache every day. Every day. Then I have the landlord constantly callin' me: 'Well, you need, you know, I wanna give it to somebody else, you know, you're taking too long.'... You know, 'I'm doin' the best I can.'" She claimed that the landlord did not receive his security deposit for more than a month after she moved in.

*Housing market.* A third structural obstacle to mobility was the housing market itself. The vacancy rate in the Chicago metropolitan area in 2000 (6.9 percent) was lower than the U.S. average (7.7 percent) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). Although some participants found units within one or two months, most of the movers we interviewed spent at least three months searching. Some still had not located units after eight or more months of actively searching. Thus, even renters who did not encounter discrimination could still have difficulty finding satisfactory units in the tight rental market. The CHA pointed out that rental units were often readily available in privately owned high-rise apartment buildings in opportunity areas. However, many participants, especially those with children, found such units undesirable because of limited space, lack of access to the outdoors where children could play, limited parking, and a desire to move away from the congestion and lack of privacy associated with high-rise housing. Most families preferred to rent a single-family home, a town home, or a unit in a small two- or three-unit building.

By design, the Gautreaux Two program's race and poverty requirements further limited unit choice. Fair market rent (FMR) limits were another consideration. Units renting for more than the FMR are not eligible for the program, even if the participant is willing to make up the difference between what the CHA will pay and what the landlord is asking. Although some landlords

privately asked participants for payments “on the side,” few accepted such terms. The bedroom requirements imposed by the CHA and HUD further complicated the housing search. Each person over 18, except for married couples, must have a separate bedroom, and no more than two children of the same sex under 18 may share a bedroom.

These requirements meant that roughly 20 percent of our respondent pool required units with four or more bedrooms. Such very large units are scarce in the Chicago rental market, vacancy rates for units of this size are low, and they tend to be located in South Side neighborhoods that do not qualify as opportunity areas. It is hardly surprising that only a handful of these large families moved. Although the bedroom-size requirements are meant to promote healthy living arrangements, they may prove insurmountable to movers in relatively tight markets, especially when they are conducting a geographically restricted housing search without much assistance.

### *Personal obstacles to mobility*

Nonmovers faced an assortment of personal obstacles: lack of exposure to opportunity areas, lack of familiarity with the private housing market, poor knowledge of program rules, large household size, and mental and physical health problems. In addition, for a select group of participants, their only obstacle to program uptake was lack of time due to employment and educational commitments. Finally, a small group of households made a conscious choice to not participate, either because they did not like the race and poverty requirements for opportunity areas or because they preferred to relocate through another program. Among nonmovers, 73 percent nonetheless actively engaged in a housing search at some point, and 36 percent visited at least one unit in a qualifying opportunity area with a counselor.

*Exposure, expectations, and understanding of program rules.* One-third of the nonmovers had virtually no exposure to the city’s North Side, where opportunity areas are plentiful and clustered. Most had spent their entire lives in the highly racially and economically segregated neighborhoods on the South or West Sides. Elaine, a 25-year-old mother of two, lived in a development on the city’s extreme South Side for over 20 years. She talked about how she and her children had no future there. But when the interviewer asked whether she had considered opportunity areas on the North Side, Elaine said that she did not want to move too far away from her current location. Our interviewer noted that the development is almost completely isolated from the rest of Chicago and asked, “Far from what?...What are you close to?” She responded, “Nothin’. But I need to stay close to what I know.”

Respondents' racially and economically segregated public housing developments were usually surrounded by other racially and economically segregated neighborhoods, providing little exposure to low-poverty, more racially heterogeneous areas. Their friends, jobs, schools, churches, social groups, day care, and after-school programs all tended to be located in similar nearby areas. Thus, they lived their daily lives in parts of the city that are both socially and geographically distant from the areas of the city and suburbs with many opportunity tracts.

For those on the city's South and West Sides, a move required families to do far more than switch apartments. They were forced to remake each family member's daily routine in countless ways. Many of those unfamiliar with other areas of the city expressed considerable anxiety about leaving an environment they knew well and could navigate comfortably. Although many participants wanted safer streets and better schools for their children, they believed that they could find such qualities closer to their current homes in neighborhoods that did not qualify as opportunity areas. Some worried that longer commutes to see family and friends would weaken valued social ties.

A South Side development resident, LaTanya, is in her early 30s, has no children, and works as a Certified Nursing Assistant. She was eager to move to a less racially and economically segregated neighborhood but wanted to maintain her pattern of daily visits with her mother, who lives on the Southwest Side: "It's all about my mom, I don't care what area, but I just don't want to move too far away from [her]." She thus confined her search to that area, a strategy that resulted in repeated disappointments since none of the units she identified was in an opportunity tract.

Janine, another young mother living on the far South Side, said that she was willing to live in a more racially mixed area, but worried that all of these neighborhoods are too far from her family.

I wouldn't mind moving into a mixed area because I would want my kids to learn about blacks, white[s], Mexican[s], Puerto Ricans....I want them to, you know, get out and experiment and learn....And I want them to get out and experiment of being they friends, not only black friends. I mean I want them to learn about different races, but I also don't want...[to] move far, far away.

Many with little exposure to opportunity areas had had a lengthy tenure in the CHA. They lacked exposure to the private housing market and were anxious and fearful about trying to navigate it. Even when these participants expressed a willingness to move, they had little notion of how to conduct a successful search for a private market unit. Their speech patterns, phone

manners, and interviewing skills were often viewed dismissively by landlords. Credit problems were common, and participants did not know how to correct them or present them in a more positive light. Furthermore, their lack of familiarity with the private market created unrealistic expectations about what kind of unit their voucher would permit them to secure. For example, some said they hoped to find single-family homes or large units with basements, yards, and other amenities. These unmet expectations sometimes produced frustration and disappointment.

A few participants were highly invested in their community and did not want to leave. Opal, one North Side resident, had lived in her development for all most of her 40-plus years and raised all six of her children there. She volunteered full-time as an officer in her building's Resident Management Corporation, was very involved in the local schools, volunteered with a variety of other community groups, and participated in the development's Local Advisory Council. Opal realized that the slated demolition of her building would eventually force her to move and said she was willing to relocate to a suburb. However, she did not want to leave her building until CHA relocated the last remaining residents just before it was demolished:

It was 26 people eligible for the [Gautreaux Two program in my development]. And the only one I heard that didn't go through [the program] was me....I still have 'til November. [But] I'm going to [stay until they demolish the building]. The reason why is because of my obligation to this building. I am the representative. Because they're going to take the building next year, I don't want to bail out.

Unfamiliarity with opportunity areas and private market housing were highly correlated with poor understanding of program rules and opportunity area requirements. We estimate that for at least half of the families with little exposure to opportunity areas, as well as a small additional group, poor understanding of program rules was a primary factor in failed housing searches and inability to locate a suitable unit. When we interviewed respondents at baseline, soon after their orientation session, about two-thirds could not correctly tell us the program's neighborhood race and poverty requirements. Some believed that they could move only to the suburbs. Others had the poverty and race percentages confused. An alarming minority did not know that there *were* race and poverty requirements. Although our observations confirmed the reiteration of these requirements by Leadership Council staff at briefing sessions, a good number of participants left the session without comprehending this element of the program.

In orientation and needs-assessment sessions, clients were told they could use their voucher in most suburbs and that some city neighborhoods qualified as well. However, few received specific information about which neighborhoods these were. Most expressed a strong preference for moving within the city, but those who planned city moves often found themselves engaged in a seemingly endless process of searching real estate listings and calling program staff to see whether the units qualified. Many did not call in apartment addresses before visiting them, wasted weeks identifying and viewing units in clearly ineligible areas, and became frustrated and disappointed in the process. Some participants overcame this obstacle simply by calling in dozens or even hundreds of addresses until they found a few that were acceptable. However, others simply gave up because an opportunity area ultimately seemed too foreign and unattainable.

Just as some of the movers fit nonmover types, close to half of the nonmovers fit mover profiles but were unable to move through Gautreaux Two. Half of those who had little exposure to opportunity areas and who had lived in public housing in disadvantaged areas for many years fit either the relatively advantaged or mature mover profiles but were unable to lease-up. Among this group, less than one-third actually ever made it to viewing a unit in an opportunity area, although over 75 percent engaged in a housing search of some kind. The lack of experience with visiting or living in opportunity areas strongly limited participants' ability to search effectively.

*Large households.* About one-quarter of the nonmovers in our random sample were unable to find suitable housing because they had large families and needed units with four or more bedrooms. As we discussed earlier, the number of children may be less important than the age and sex of household members, since this is what determines bedroom requirements, but the two are, of course, highly correlated. Large households faced many challenges when searching for housing: Landlords routinely discriminate against families with children, units with four or more bedrooms are difficult to locate in opportunity areas, and the FMRs for such units often fall short of actual market rents. Large households were also the most adversely affected when interagency communication failed or paperwork was delayed; a large unit often leased very quickly, and any delay translated into losing it. Competition for qualifying large units among Gautreaux Two families was also intense. When listings for such units appeared in the paper, Gautreaux families would often see each other at the property viewing, all vying for the unit. Although some large households did move through Gautreaux Two, they often had to relocate far outside the city.

*Highly functioning nonmovers.* Approximately one-fifth of our nonmovers faced none of these barriers, but their employment and educational commitments restricted the time they had to engage in an intensive search. What should have been advantages in the search process translated into disadvantages. These women held stable jobs, often positions they wanted to maintain after they moved. Several were enrolled in college as well, working on their bachelor's or associate's degree, and most held at least one form of professional certification. They had been able to secure these jobs because they had more education and work experience than others in the program. Participants in this group appeared to have the skills and motivation to become successful movers, but found it difficult to find the time to mount the onerous search required while also balancing work, school, and parenting. Most could search only on vacations or days off. Lost units, failed inspections, and paperwork delays also affected this group more than the others since time is such a precious commodity for them. Half of the highly functioning group of nonmovers also fit the relatively advantaged or mature mover profiles, and while two-thirds engaged in an active housing search at some point, only one-third ever visited a unit in an opportunity area.

We have already mentioned Sandra who worked full-time at a hotel in a northern suburb while pursuing her bachelor's degree. She began the program with high hopes, but she was clearly frustrated by the search. Her goal was to move to the suburbs, in part to be closer to her job and school. However, finding a unit large enough to house her family, scheduling a viewing, and having to work through a number of city and suburban public agencies to complete the move proved overwhelming. She began her search immediately after her orientation during the summer when school was not in session. By the time of the baseline interview, she had already lost two qualified units to the slow processing of needed paperwork and had postponed her search until spring, when the school year would be completed. Women such as Sandra have the skills to negotiate a new community very different from their own, they are appealing to landlords, and for many the move would provide better employment and educational opportunities, but time is in short supply.

*Rejection of program rules.* Some who understood the rules of the program questioned its goals, believing that they were being unfairly pushed into areas where they did not want to live. Many participants did not understand that the program was established to alleviate racial segregation, even though counselors briefly explained this at the beginning of the orientation sessions. They applied for the program because they were interested in a voucher and the chance to move to a better area, although not necessarily the predominantly white oppor-

tunity areas defined by the program. Some believed that “Leadership”—the colloquial shorthand for the agency—provided a shortcut to a standard Housing Choice Voucher, and the more restrictive requirements of the Gautreaux Two voucher surprised them.

For those living in the two North Side developments, their immediate surroundings were gentrifying quickly. Although some would have liked to remain in these areas, their voucher could not cover a unit in these hot property markets. Thus, they found that that they would have to move to less expensive areas somewhat farther to the north or northwest. Finally, almost all participants expected more direct counseling and assistance in locating and securing a unit. They anticipated a list of potential units or more direction from counselors on where and how to conduct their search. Many like Eva, a 68-year-old resident of a South Side development and the mother of 11 children, were frustrated that they were expected to undertake their own search: “You got to be introduced by somebody. You just can’t go on your own an’ get no apartment.... The other thing about it, I thought that they...when I went down there, I thought that they would get me an apartment on they own, but they wanted me to look for it.”

Participants who rejected the program for these reasons did so early in the process, after orientation but before beginning to search. One looked at a few ads and made a handful of phone calls before deciding to quit, but the rest simply decided after the orientation that the program was not for them. None of them visited a unit in an opportunity area.

*Health.* Health concerns were the primary barrier to mobility for less than 10 percent of our sample. Depression was the sole obstacle for about 6 percent of the nonmovers. However, half of our group, both movers and nonmovers, either scored in the clinical range on the 18-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale or reported serious struggles with depression, yet remained functional. Many talked at length about the stress inherent in their daily lives—stress stemming from the lack of social support, poverty, and a life in public housing. Still others have experienced traumatic life events such as child abuse, domestic violence, or the death or imprisonment of someone close to them. Pre-existing depression or acute anxiety sometimes meant that the inevitable disappointments and frustrations of the housing search quickly proved overwhelming.

The physical health needs of participants and their children were a prohibitive barrier for only 3 percent of the nonmover sample. However, illness, including asthma, cancer, and skin disorders, was especially common

among those in one South Side development. A few households also required wheel chair accessibility.

## Conclusion

The Gautreaux Two program is ambitious and difficult to implement. We organize our discussion of policy implications by focusing on barriers to mobility in three domains: the program side, the client side, and the external barriers that are outside the scope of the program and unrelated to client characteristics.

Program barriers to mobility were considerable. Our analysis showed that completing the program placed a considerable burden on even the ablest participants. Despite attending a briefing and needs assessment where requirements were discussed at length, few clients had a clear idea of which city or suburban addresses qualified for the Gautreaux Two program. Thus, many called in address after address, only to learn that the particular unit was in a census tract that was too poor or too heavily black to qualify. Participants were given the information, but it often took time to process. In addition, participants who called program staff to clarify the status of an address said that they did not always receive a timely or accurate response. Although some participants were able to persevere, others simply gave up.

Very little ongoing guidance about where to look for housing was provided through the program, nor were units identified for clients (with a few notable exceptions, as discussed). Thus, clients had to mount their search independently. After a careful review of all of the cases in our evaluation, we estimate that more than half of the nonmovers would likely have moved if offered additional search assistance and guidance on opportunity areas in the city and suburbs. To arrive at this estimate, we evaluated each case and took into account the head of household's willingness to move, commitment to the search, search strategies if she came close to a move but lost the unit, assistance needs, health, exposure to opportunity areas, and current life events. When residents exhibited a determination and commitment to the program despite obstacles and setbacks, we deemed them to be "movable" if given additional search and moving assistance. When families expressed a clear unwillingness to relocate to an opportunity area even under the best of circumstances, we deemed them "unlikely movers" even if they received additional assistance.

The Leadership Council's position is that requiring clients to search on their own is the first of many difficult steps required for a family to relocate and make the transition to a new and very different neighborhood—an adjustment that could take years. Staff see it as a policy that selects the ablest fami-

lies for success. However, we found that this was not always the case, since a substantial minority of the nonmover group—the highly functioning nonmovers—had characteristics that were virtually identical to the relatively advantaged mover group, but were simply too busy to devote enough time to the search. Since this article presents data only on the initial stage of program implementation, we cannot fairly judge the long-term outcomes associated with various personal characteristics or program strategies. We will also note that our preliminary findings were presented to the Leadership Council and discussed. Staff acknowledge the difficulty of relaying requirements and assisting families that may not have enough time, transportation, child care, or interest in opportunity areas. A subsequent contract between the CHA and the Leadership Council for a Gautreaux-like relocation program includes specific requirements for unit visits, search assistance, and guidance to opportunity areas.

The lack of interagency coordination created another important barrier to mobility on the program side. Poor communication and bureaucratic delays reduced successful lease-up substantially, in addition to increasing the burden on participants. These problems not only frustrated clients, but presumably landlords as well, since a month or more of rental income was often lost in the process. Late security deposits were also a problem. Recent improvements in interagency cooperation have helped, but they occurred too late for most of our participants.

On the client side, we identified three primary barriers to mobility: a lack of familiarity with opportunity areas in the city (the North Side) and the suburbs, large family size, and serious mental and physical problems. The first of these barriers could be ameliorated if the program offered tours of opportunity areas and transportation for clients wishing to search for housing there or if counselors worked on identifying opportunity areas in the neighborhoods and suburbs closer to the South Side.

As to the second barrier, large family size could be managed in a variety of ways:

1. Adjusting the FMR for large units
2. Authorizing household splits if some members are adults and capable of heading a separate household
3. Relaxing the race and poverty requirements if a unit can be located in a neighborhood that is not an opportunity area but may still provide more racial diversity and less poverty than the original neighborhood

4. Possibly granting limited exceptions to bedroom number and size requirements if the unit is deemed large enough and safe<sup>5</sup>

Splits are especially appropriate in large, multigenerational households where a second head of household could be granted lease-holder status and allowed to search separately for a smaller unit.

For the third barrier, health problems, housing counselors could be trained to make appropriate referrals to mental health agencies, counseling centers, and crisis lines for participants with serious mental or physical problems. Although this may not immediately raise placement rates, it would greatly help participants in their daily lives and in adjusting to their new surroundings over time.

However, even if program and client problems were addressed, significant barriers would remain. First, Chicago's vacancy rate during the implementation of the Gautreaux Two program was lower than that of most major metropolitan areas. In housing markets not officially deemed tight, the number of rental units at or below the FMR can still be problematic, particularly in neighborhoods affluent enough to be designated opportunity areas. Over the years, several programs have been created to increase the availability of affordable housing, including set-aside programs that offered financial incentives to landlords and developers who agreed to keep a certain number of their units as affordable housing. Conversations with Leadership Council staff suggest that such set-aside programs provided a more readily available, identifiable supply of units during the first Gautreaux program. In the current housing climate, however, special efforts may be needed to retain landlords as these contracts expire, particularly in areas where condominium conversions or rent increases prove lucrative.

Second, if participant reports are accurate, discrimination by landlords against voucher holders, families with children, blacks, and those who live in the projects constitutes a significant barrier both in the suburbs and in the city. However, not all landlords discriminate, since many program participants found suitable units in opportunity areas. In some cases, discrimination is legal: When a building of less than five units is owner occupied, a landlord can discriminate on the basis of family status, but not race. Enforcement of laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of family status, race, and, within Chicago, voucher status could help alleviate the problem. Those who experience discrimination should be encouraged to report it and cooperate in legal action against landlords.

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<sup>5</sup> The Leadership Council opposes granting any waivers on bedroom requirements, which they see as being in the best interest of the client's health and safety.

However, the frequent problems our participants reported with bureaucratic delays suggest that discrimination against voucher holders may arise in part from negative past experiences with voucher programs and that participation can sometimes be both costly and burdensome for landlords. Incentives to compensate for lost rent or to reward cooperative landlords in opportunity areas may be warranted.

Although external obstacles to mobility can challenge individuals engaged in a Gautreaux Two housing search, they did not thwart all who encountered them. Many successful movers encountered discrimination, rent restrictions, and a low supply of available units, but were still able to move through the program. However, for those who are struggling to maintain jobs or attend school or those who are experiencing depression or poor health, these obstacles can quickly prove overwhelming and make a program move seem hopeless. The role of housing counseling and assistance becomes especially important when participants encounter obstacles and become mired in the search process. For those who are unusually determined or who have significant resources at hand—such as a car or a family member able to help them identify units—these obstacles can be overcome. For those without such resources, more assistance is clearly needed or the search will fail and the opportunity to relocate a family will be lost. It is important to emphasize here that very few of the families were unwilling to move to the largely white and more affluent neighborhoods their Gautreaux Two voucher required; they simply could not complete the housing search on their own.

Although a few of these improvements can be implemented at low cost, most would require more resources in general and certainly more resources than are typically available to the Leadership Council and other organizations that run mobility programs. Our analysis leads us to believe that improvements in housing counseling and interagency cooperation, combined with granting splits for very large households or relaxing certain program requirements for large families, could have doubled the Gautreaux Two program's ultimate lease-up rate.

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