

# **Case Study of Section 8 Rental Vouchers and Rental Certificates in Alameda County, California**

## **Final Report**

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The contents of this report are the views of the contractor and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the U.S. Government.

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David Varady  
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## Foreword

In the past decade, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that a significant number of families who receive housing assistance are concentrated in high poverty inner city neighborhoods. In 1992, the Department launched the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration (MTO), a Congressionally mandated study, to evaluate the impacts of helping low-income families move from public and assisted housing developments in high-poverty inner-city neighborhoods to better housing, education, and employment opportunities in low-poverty communities throughout a metropolitan area. MTO is a five site, ten-year demonstration which uses the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to move families to better neighborhoods.

In 1997, the Department created the Regional Opportunity Counseling Program (ROC) in which sixteen public housing agencies were selected to develop and implement a five- year regional counseling program for families in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Under ROC, families are counseled to move from high-poverty neighborhoods to low-poverty neighborhoods throughout their metropolitan areas that offer high quality housing, education, and employment opportunities. Both MTO and ROC included funding for a non-profit organization to counsel families to move to low-poverty neighborhoods.

This report presents the results of a study on the movement of Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program families from the inner cities of Oakland and Berkeley, California to suburban Alameda County. The Department and the Alameda County Housing Authority observed that a relatively large number of families were using their Section 8 vouchers to move from the inner cities of Berkeley and Oakland to Alameda County where economic opportunities were potentially greater for them and their children. This movement took place between the Berkeley, Oakland and Alameda County housing agencies' normal administration of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Unlike MTO and ROC, no additional funds for a non-profit agency to counsel families were used. This study includes several positive outcomes for families who moved and discusses several factors of program administration by the three agencies, which help in allowing such moves.

I hope this report will provide other housing agencies information on how they too might administer the Section 8 voucher program to effect similar movement within the normal administration of the program.

Lawrence L. Thompson,  
General Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Policy Development and Research



# CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	vii
List of Illustrations.....	ix
Executive Summary .....	xi
Maps.....	xvii
CHAPTER 1: THE ALAMEDA STUDY .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	1
Background.....	1
Findings.....	3
Study Site .....	3
Research Methodology .....	4
Structure of the Report.....	9
CHAPTER 2: ALAMEDA COUNTY SECTION 8 FAMILIES: CHARACTERISTICS, MOBILITY PATTERNS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS .....	11
A Profile of Alameda County’s Section 8 Families.....	11
Recent Mobility Patterns.....	12
Characteristics of Movers .....	13
Neighborhoods of Suburban-Bound Families .....	14
Origin Neighborhoods .....	15
Destination Neighborhoods .....	22
Comparing Origin and Destination Neighborhoods .....	29
CHAPTER 3: THE SEARCH FOR HOUSING.....	31
Summary of Findings.....	31
Characteristics of Families by Mobility Status.....	34
Reasons for Using/Not Using Section 8 Portability .....	34
Housing Search Characteristics .....	38
Mobility and Migration Patterns.....	48
Adjustment to the New Location .....	55
CHAPTER 4: ARE FAMILIES WHO MOVE TO THE SUBURBS BETTER OFF? .....	57
Summary of Findings.....	57
Objective Measures of Housing Conditions .....	58
Residential and Neighborhood Satisfaction.....	61
Moving toward Self-Sufficiency.....	67
CHAPTER 5: ADMINISTRATION OF THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM IN ALAMEDA COUNTY .....	71
Summary of Findings.....	71
Portability: The Administrative Mechanism .....	74
History of the Section 8 Program in Alameda County .....	76
Processing Vouchers and Certificates: General Procedures .....	76
Procedures Related to Portability.....	83
Conclusion .....	93

CHAPTER 6: A CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT.....	95
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Section 8 Program.....	99
Appendix B: Methodology and Data Sources .....	103
Appendix C: Newspaper Stories about the Bay Area’s Housing Affordability Crisis .....	111
Appendix D: Supplementary Data.....	113
Bibliography .....	121



## TABLES

1.1.	Incoming and Outgoing Vouchers and Certificates, Jurisdiction of the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, 1992–1999 .....	2
2.1.	Family Characteristics: All Section 8 Families .....	11
2.2.	Mobility Patterns: Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families .....	13
2.3.	Characteristics of Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families by Mobility Pattern .....	13
2.4.	Characteristics of Origin and Destination Census Tracts of Berkeley and Oakland Suburban-Bound Movers .....	15
3.1.	Demographic Characteristics, by Mobility Status .....	35
3.2.	Reasons for Moving to Another City or Town .....	36
3.3.	Reasons Decided Not to Use Section 8 Voucher to Move Out out of the Original City .....	37
3.4.	Reasons for Not Looking for a New Home .....	37
3.5.	Reasons for Moving Back to Berkeley or Oakland .....	38
3.6.	Housing Search Characteristics, by Mobility Status .....	39
3.7.	Distance Moved by Respondents from Point of Origin to Location at the Time of the Survey .....	49
3.8.	Distance Moved, by Housing Search Characteristics .....	50
3.9.	Spatial Distribution of the Alameda County Survey Sample at Three Points in Time .....	51
3.10.	Socioeconomic Characteristics of Census Tracts at the Respondents' Three Locations .....	52
3.11.	Correlation between the Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Current Census Tract and the Distance Moved between the Original Location and the Current Location .....	54
3.12.	Cross-Tabular Results: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Current Census Tract by Distance Moved .....	55
3.13.	Adjustment to New Location: Differences between Local Movers, Suburban-Bound Movers, and Returnees .....	56
4.1.	Housing Conditions, by Mobility Status .....	59
4.2.	Residential Satisfaction Indicators, by Mobility Status .....	62
4.3.	Likelihood of Finding Specific Neighborhood Characteristics at New Location Compared with Original Location, by Mobility Status .....	67
4.4.	Changes in Employment Status and Welfare Status, by Mobility Status .....	68
B.1.	Survey Sample Frame and Number of Interviews .....	105
B.2.	Origin and Destination Neighborhoods of Suburban-Bound Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families .....	107
B.3.	Original, First Postvoucher, and Current Alameda County Neighborhoods of Surveyed Families .....	109

D.1. Alameda County Demographic Characteristics, 1990.....	113
D.2. Alameda County Crime Data.....	114
D.3. Juvenile Felony Arrests, 1988–1998: Number of Arrests for Cities with Populations over 100,000 .....	115
D.4. Alameda County School District Data.....	116
D.5. Alameda County Housing Characteristics, 1990.....	118
D.6. Alameda County Housing Authority Characteristics, 1999 .....	119
D.7. Fair Market Rents and Payment Standards by Unit Size, 1999 .....	119

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Photographs

1. A viable commercial area in the San Antonio section of Oakland, serving the Hispanic and Asian populations.....	17
2. Burned-out stores on a major commercial street in East Central Oakland.....	17
3. A residential street in the San Antonio section of Oakland, with multifamily housing, crowded on-street parking, and high chain-link fences defining front yards.....	18
4. A neighborhood and housing in the Fruitvale section of Oakland showing signs of neglect.....	19
5. Motel-style apartment units in Berkeley, built as infill, next to a small frame, bungalow-style house.....	20
6. Deteriorated housing in a flatlands neighborhood of Berkeley.....	21
7. Renovated housing in a flatlands neighborhood in Berkeley—an indication of redevelopment activity.....	21
8. The entrance to San Leandro, viewed from Oakland.....	22
9. Mixed single- and multifamily housing in Hayward.....	25
10. A single-family, Eichler-style home in Hayward.....	26
11. An example of the modest single-family housing found in San Leandro.....	26
12. Multifamily housing in San Leandro with a neighborhood crime watch warning sign nearby.....	27
13. An example of a California motel or doughnut-style apartment development in Ashland, with parking spaces in the center courtyard.....	27
14. A row of houses located on small lots with no sidewalk in a Cherryland neighborhood.....	28

### Maps

1. Study Site: Alameda County	
2. Section 8 Families: Overall Distribution, 1994	
3. Section 8 Families: Overall Distribution, 1999	
4. Suburban-Bound Families: Origins and Destinations	
5. Berkeley and Oakland Neighborhoods	
6. Census Tract Characteristics: Percent African American, 1999	
7. Census Tract Characteristics: Percent Hispanic, 1999	
8. Census Tract Characteristics: Median Household Income, 1999	
9. Census Tract Characteristics: Median House Value, 1999	
10. Surveyed Families: Locations	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a study of the movement of Section 8 families from the inner cities of Oakland and Berkeley in San Francisco's East Bay to suburban Alameda County. The research team interviewed Section 8 families about their housing search, their reasons for moving to the suburban areas of the county, the outcome of their moves, and conditions in their new housing and neighborhoods compared with conditions in their previous housing and neighborhoods. Interviews with program administrators in Alameda County provided information on how administrative procedures affected the ability of families to make various types of moves.

During the 1990s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) observed that many Section 8 families in Alameda County were taking advantage of *portability*, a feature of the Section 8 program that allows families to use their housing voucher or certificate across housing authority jurisdictions. These families moved from inner-city Oakland and Berkeley to the suburban portion of the county. In contrast, in other sections of the country, HUD has found that many Section 8 families choose to rent units in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty; they do not use their voucher or certificate to move to neighborhoods with better job opportunities, better schools, and a better quality of life. HUD encourages Section 8 families to move away from areas with high concentrations of poverty and into more affluent neighborhoods throughout metropolitan areas. The Alameda County case study sheds light on families that have already made this transition under the Section 8 program.

This study focuses on outcomes for the suburbanizing families in Alameda County in an effort to determine what can be learned from their experience. The study presents the perspectives of both the families and the program administrators, their comments on the program and its policies, and their observations about its achievements in Alameda County.

## STUDY BACKGROUND AND METHODS

The study site includes the cities of Berkeley and Oakland and the suburban portion of Alameda County, California, under the jurisdiction of the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA). Both qualitative and quantitative information was gathered from a telephone survey of 300 Alameda County Section 8 families; interviews with program administrators; databases maintained by the housing authorities that contained client demographic and locational data; and written reports and program documents. A geographic information system (GIS) analysis showed the families' movement patterns in the suburban portion of the county.

Four types of Section 8 families were the focus of the study: (1) suburban-bound movers (those who moved from Oakland and Berkeley into suburban Alameda County), the largest group of interviewees; (2) nonmovers (those who did not move but, instead, used their vouchers in their original housing); (3) local movers (families who moved to

different units but remained in Oakland or Berkeley); and (4) returnees (families who initially moved into suburban Alameda but later returned to Oakland or Berkeley).

## STUDY FINDINGS

The findings confirm that the Section 8 program in Alameda County has been effective in enabling families to move to areas offering greater opportunities. In contrast to the stereotype, families found no impregnable boundary between the city and the suburbs. Most voucher recipients who relocated to the suburbs improved their living conditions. They moved to areas with better socioeconomic conditions and greater racial and ethnic diversity. The families' new suburban neighborhoods provided better schools, less crime, more space, and better shopping. The families expressed satisfaction with their moves and with their new neighborhoods. However, suburban-bound movers were only slightly more likely to be satisfied with their new homes than were families making local moves, or to believe that they had improved their housing conditions. Nevertheless, the fact that suburban-bound movers were able to improve their neighborhood conditions was a major achievement. Finally, the study confirmed that the movement in Alameda County occurred through the standard Section 8 program administration, without special counseling services and without additional funds expended by the housing authorities to administer the program.

Specifically, the study found the following:

- *Improved living conditions for suburban-bound movers.* Compared with local movers, suburban-bound movers settled in areas with higher median household income levels and higher median house values. They were also more likely to be living in more ethnically diverse areas, with declines in the percentage of African American population and modest increases in the percentage of Hispanic population.
- *Housing satisfaction.* Most suburban-bound movers were satisfied with their new home and neighborhood; however, they were only slightly more likely than local movers to be satisfied with their home or to believe that their current home was superior to their original one. Of the three mobility groups, returnees were least likely to (1) be satisfied with their home and (2) believe that their current home was superior to their original one.
- *Neighborhood satisfaction.* Suburban-bound movers were significantly more likely than either local movers or returnees to consider their new location superior to the old one with respect to (1) accessibility to jobs and good schools and (2) the absence of social or physical problems. A significantly larger proportion said that their current location was safer than their previous one. Both suburban-bound movers and local movers were more likely than returnees to be satisfied with their new neighborhood and less likely to be interested in moving.
- *Adjustment to suburbs.* Perhaps most important, the study results contradict findings from earlier research about the difficulties experienced by Section 8 voucher

recipients when they move from the central city to the suburbs. In fact, adjusting to the suburbs was not a major issue for survey respondents. Oakland and Berkeley families who relocated to suburban Alameda County experienced little difficulty in getting along with their landlord or neighbors, either initially or after six months. Parents believed that their children “fit in” at school shortly after the move had taken place and six months later.

- *Difficulties encountered during the search for housing.* The survey results refute the notion that voucher recipients have a particularly difficult time crossing the city boundary. Suburban-bound movers and returnees did not differ from local movers in the degree of difficulty encountered in finding housing or in the problems experienced during the search. Although more than half of the respondents said that they experienced difficulty in finding a new residence, most of the difficulty was caused by the Bay Area’s tight housing market. To a lesser extent, respondents also cited problems with transportation and child care. Having access to a car did not appear to be a prerequisite for moving from Oakland or Berkeley to suburban Alameda; nevertheless, getting around was mentioned most frequently as a problem in using Section 8 assistance in the suburbs.
- *Discrimination experienced.* Respondents did not cite discrimination as a widespread problem. Families moving to suburban Alameda County were no more likely to say that they had experienced discrimination than were local movers. Those who did encounter discrimination reported that it was based on their Section 8 status; landlords either refused to accept tenants with Section 8 vouchers or stereotyped Section 8 tenants as irresponsible.
- *Ethnic preferences.* For the Alameda County families, neighborhood racial or ethnic composition did not play an important role in influencing where voucher recipients moved. When asked to indicate the proportion of neighbors who should be of their own racial or ethnic background, almost half of the respondents said that they did not care about their neighbors’ race or ethnicity.
- *Information used in the search.* Suburban-bound movers relied primarily on newspaper listings to find housing. Local movers relied primarily on friends and relatives.
- *Demographic differences.* Suburban-bound movers had higher income levels than local movers, nonmovers, or returnees.
- *Reasons for location choices.* Families who used Section 8 assistance to move to suburban Alameda County typically said they wanted to get away from crime and drug dealing in their original neighborhoods. In comparison, families who moved within Oakland or Berkeley cited strong neighborhood ties as their reason for remaining in the city. Section 8 families who did not move at all also cited strong neighborhood ties and a feeling of being settled. In fact, few nonmovers looked for a new home or apartment after receiving a voucher or certificate. Returnees moved

back to their original cities for a variety of reasons: Some returned because they were able to find more affordable housing in the city than in the suburbs, or because they liked the convenience the city offered. Others, however, returned to the city because of crime and other neighborhood problems in the suburbs.

- *Section 8 briefing.* The Section 8 briefing session appeared to have played an important role in the housing search process in Alameda County—regardless of whether recipients made short- or longer-distance moves. Nearly all respondents found the briefing session at least somewhat helpful. The lists of landlords and other information provided about the housing search process were most frequently mentioned as helpful features of the briefing sessions. The most frequently made suggestion for improving the Section 8 program was to provide longer, better lists of landlords who accept Section 8 vouchers—that is not surprising, given the area’s tight housing market.
- *Level of satisfaction with the housing search.* Despite the tight housing market, approximately 90 percent of the Section 8 movers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their search for housing. Suburban-bound movers and returnees were just as likely to express satisfaction as were local movers.
- *Objective housing conditions.* Some objective housing measures showed a decline in conditions for suburban-bound movers. For example, suburban-bound movers were more likely to shift from living in a house to living in an apartment, and suburban-bound movers were more likely to experience an increase in housing cost burden as a result of their move.
- *Changes in measures of self-sufficiency.* While the study provided some evidence that moving from the city to the suburbs helped families move toward self-sufficiency, the results were far from conclusive. Suburban-bound movers were significantly more likely to shift from unemployment to employment. Suburban-bound movers, however, were not significantly more likely than local movers to have gone off of welfare.
- *Administrative procedures.* Several factors related to the administration of the Section 8 program in Alameda County encouraged portability. These included (1) the commitment of the housing authorities to implementing portability, (2) familiarity with the program because of its long history in Alameda County, (3) a record of cooperation and trust between the authorities, (4) the good working relationships maintained by both middle- and upper-level Alameda County housing authority staff, (5) the efforts of the housing authority executive directors to meet regularly, work together, resolve conflicts, and find solutions, (6) the assignment of specific personnel to process paperwork, (7) procedures adopted by all three housing authorities that made it easier for clients to relocate to the Alameda suburbs (for example, the change in the late 1990s from billing to absorption, which eased the administrative and financial procedures for implementing portability), and (8) the support provided by

HUD's San Francisco office to the housing authorities in administering the Section 8 voucher program.

- *Factors discouraging portability.* Several factors, however, discouraged portability among the jurisdictions in Alameda County. Differences in occupancy standards, lack of counseling, and special requirements imposed on clients wishing to change jurisdictions made portability more difficult. Other factors that discouraged portability in Alameda County are associated with the Section 8 program itself and, therefore, are likely to be impediments to portability no matter where the program operates in the country. These factors included accounting complexities caused by billing, increased administrative costs to implement portability, and the adoption of the policy requiring that clients pay market-rate security deposits.

## **REPLICATION OF ALAMEDA COUNTY'S MOBILITY PATTERNS**

Despite the achievements of the Alameda County Section 8 program, it may be difficult to replicate its level of cross-jurisdictional moves in other metropolitan areas. To some extent, success in Alameda County probably is due to external factors as well as to program planning and operations.

There may be greater acceptance of racial and ethnic diversity in the East Bay Area than there is elsewhere in the United States. In addition, neighborhood attachments tend to be weaker in western cities than in the cities of the East and the Midwest. The psychological boundary between city and suburbs also is less powerful in the West. Section 8 families in Oakland and Berkeley probably are less aware of jurisdictional boundaries when they search for a new home than are similar families elsewhere.

Despite such differences, the positive experience of Alameda County's Section 8 program provides an example for programs in other regions of the country. The Alameda County example—particularly the good working relationships at all levels of housing authority management—can provide lessons for other metropolitan-area housing authorities. Finally, the evidence provided by the Section 8 suburban-bound movers demonstrates that relocating from central cities to suburbs does work, that families can move into new communities without great difficulty, and that they can adjust rapidly and become better off.





**MAPS  
(NOT AVAILABLE IN THE ELECTRONIC  
COPY)**

## **Chapter 1**

### **THE ALAMEDA STUDY**

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the mobility of families moving from the inner cities of Oakland and Berkeley to suburban Alameda County.<sup>1</sup> Its objectives are to find out more about where families search for housing, their reasons for moving to the suburban areas of the county, the outcomes for families making such moves, and the quality of their new housing and neighborhoods compared with the quality of their previous housing and neighborhoods. An additional objective is to describe and document how the three housing authorities coordinate their administration of the Section 8 program under which so many families have moved into suburban areas. The research is expected to offer important insights into why the patterns of migration have occurred and to provide valuable lessons for developing more effective mobility program models both nationally and locally.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program helps low-income families find decent, safe, and sanitary housing.<sup>2</sup> The program, the largest of its kind, provides subsidies to families in the form of housing vouchers that allow them to rent privately owned dwelling units. Over the past several years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has observed that many families participating in the program rent units in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. As a result, HUD has begun to focus on encouraging Section 8 families to move away from areas with high concentrations of poverty and into more affluent neighborhoods throughout metropolitan areas. HUD hopes that families will use the housing assistance provided to rent housing in neighborhoods with better job opportunities, better schools, and a better quality of life.

To promote residential mobility, HUD has initiated a number of demonstration programs that provide Section 8 families with extensive counseling and support services. The demonstration programs require or encourage families to select housing in low-poverty jurisdictions or metropolitan areas. In many instances, moving to low-poverty neighborhoods results in moves from inner cities to suburban areas. One of the demonstration programs, the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program (MTO), requires that families move to census tracts with less than 10 percent of the population below the poverty line. The Regional Opportunity Counseling program (ROC), a variation of the MTO program, encourages, but does not require, families to move to low-poverty neighborhoods. In both demonstration programs, funds are provided

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<sup>1</sup>The three housing authorities whose jurisdictions are included in the study met with members of the research team and provided information for the study. The contents of the report, however, are the views of the contractor and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of HUD or of the housing authorities.

<sup>2</sup>For a summary of the Section 8 program, see Appendix A.

to nonprofit organizations working in partnership with public housing authorities (HAs) to counsel Section 8 families to move to low-poverty neighborhoods.

At the same time the demonstration programs were being implemented, high levels of mobility were observed among Section 8 voucher and certificate recipients in Alameda County, California. During the 1990s, many families took advantage of portability—a feature of the Section 8 program that permits voucher and certificate recipients to move from the issuing housing authority’s jurisdiction into the jurisdiction of another authority. These families moved from inner-city Oakland and Berkeley to the suburban portion of the county administered by the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA). HACA reported that families from Oakland and Berkeley made up approximately 20 percent to 30 percent of the agency’s Section 8 program participants during the 1990s (see Table 1.1). HUD was interested in pursuing a thorough examination of how the Alameda County mobility patterns occurred.

**TABLE 1.1**  
**Incoming and Outgoing Vouchers and Certificates,**  
**Jurisdiction of the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, 1992–1999**

<b>Vouchers/Certificates</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
Total number in program	3,357	3,806	4,075	5,104	4,731	4,334	4,714	4,836
Number incoming <sup>a</sup>	576	1,109	1,263	1,058	746	838	376	264
Percentage of total	17.2%	29.1%	31.0%	20.7%	15.8%	19.3%	8.0%	5.5%
Number outgoing <sup>b</sup>	N.A. <sup>c</sup>	48	104	151	207	133	156	107
Percentage of total	N.A.	1.3%	2.6%	3.0%	4.4%	3.1%	3.3%	2.2%
Total number changing jurisdictions	N.A.	1,157	1,367	1,209	953	971	532	371
Percentage of total	N.A.	30.4%	33.5%	23.7%	20.1%	22.4%	11.3%	7.7%

*Source:* Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA), 2000.

*Note:* HACA maintains records of numbers of vouchers and certificates by fiscal year, not calendar year. For this table, the housing authority recalculated the numbers by calendar year.

<sup>a</sup>*Incoming* refers to families living in HACA’s jurisdiction who are clients of and receive housing assistance from another housing authority. HACA began absorbing incoming families in 1996; that is, the housing authority issued a HACA voucher or certificate to incoming families. By 1999, most incoming families were issued a voucher or certificate from HACA upon entry into its jurisdiction. Figures from 1996 onward do not count these families as incoming families.

<sup>b</sup>*Outgoing* refers to families living in another housing authority’s jurisdiction who are clients of and receive housing assistance from HACA. Like HACA, other housing authorities in Alameda County began issuing their own vouchers and certificates to incoming families after 1996. The number of outgoing vouchers represents the number of families that had not been given vouchers and certificates by the receiving housing authority and for whom HACA was being billed for rental payments to their landlords.

<sup>c</sup>N.A. = not available.

## FINDINGS

The research performed for this study confirms the substantial movement of Section 8 families into suburban Alameda County. The neighborhoods into which the families moved are better than those they left behind, based on a number of socioeconomic characteristics (e.g., proportion African American population, proportion Hispanic population, median household income, median house value). The families themselves express satisfaction with their move and with their new neighborhoods. And, unlike the movement that occurs under MTO and ROC, the movement in Alameda County occurred through the standard Section 8 program administration, without special counseling services or additional funds expended by the HAs to administer the program.

Given budgetary constraints on housing assistance and HUD's interest in decreasing minority concentrations and expanding economic and social opportunities for program participants, these findings offer positive support for the Section 8 program. The findings confirm the program's effectiveness in enabling families to move to areas offering greater opportunities. This report tells the story of the Section 8 families in Alameda County, their search for housing, their new neighborhoods, the administrative practices that provided the means for them to make cross-jurisdictional moves, and how the families have fared.

## STUDY SITE

The study site includes the cities of Berkeley and Oakland and the suburban portion of Alameda County under the jurisdiction of the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda. Alameda County is the seventh-largest county in California, encompassing a land area of more than 730 square miles (see Map 1). Part of the Bay Area region, Alameda County lies east of San Francisco. Its total population was estimated at 1,454,302 in 2000 (see Appendix D, Table D.1).<sup>3</sup> The cities of Berkeley and Oakland form the denser, urban core of the county; the remainder of the county is suburban.

The city of Oakland is the largest and most densely populated city in the county. Its population (estimated in 2000 to be 402,104) was 68 percent minority in 1990; the city's poverty rate, 19 percent in 1990, was the highest in the county. Berkeley's population (approximately 109,463 in 2000) also includes sizable proportions of minority and low-income residents: minorities made up 38 percent of the city's population in 1990, and the poverty rate—18 percent in 1990—was nearly as high as Oakland's rate. Until 1999, rental housing in Berkeley was regulated by rent control. The major economic and geographic divide in both of these cities—and in the county—is formed by the East Bay Hills, which run north to south. The hills, with their panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay Area, contain higher-income residential neighborhoods. The downtown sections and older, poorer neighborhoods are found in the flatland areas of the cities, where most of the population is concentrated. The large majority of the families

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<sup>3</sup> Population estimates for 2000 are from the State of California, Department of Finance (2000a).

moving from Oakland and Berkeley into suburban Alameda County originated in the flatland neighborhoods.

The southern part of the county, the area into which Section 8 families have been migrating, is suburban and more affluent. Its communities have lower proportions of minorities, higher household incomes, and lower poverty rates.<sup>4</sup> This part of the county is experiencing the greatest population growth and housing construction activity. During the early 1990s, less expensive housing was available in some of the suburban Alameda County communities. By the end of the 1990s, however, the entire San Francisco Bay Area was experiencing a crisis in housing affordability. Fueled by pressure from Silicon Valley, which was generating thousands of high-paying jobs in the computer industry, the rental market tightened and housing costs throughout the county increased rapidly.

### **Housing Authorities**

Three housing authorities provide housing assistance in the case study area: the Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA), the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA), and HACA.<sup>5</sup> BHA's and OHA's jurisdictions encompass the cities they serve; HACA's jurisdiction covers most of the smaller cities and suburban parts of the county, including the cities of Albany, Dublin, Emeryville, Fremont, Hayward, Newark, Pleasanton, and San Leandro; the unincorporated cities of Castro Valley and San Lorenzo; and the unincorporated areas of Ashland and Cherryland. OHA has the largest caseload, BHA has the smallest. In the late 1990s, OHA's Section 8 voucher program provided assistance to approximately 9,600 families, HACA's program provided assistance to 4,500 families, and BHA's program provided assistance to 1,450 families (see Appendix D, Table D.6).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Questions**

The study focused on the mobility of families in Alameda County from spring 1994 through spring 1999, but it also examined movement patterns from 1976 through 1999—the time period for which data were available.<sup>6</sup> In conducting the research, the study team asked the following questions about the mobility experiences of voucher recipients and about the administrative procedures of the three Alameda County housing authorities:

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<sup>4</sup>The 2000 census is expected to show that the proportion of Hispanics, Asians, and other minority residents increased rapidly in parts of suburban Alameda during the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup>Two other cities in Alameda County have housing authorities: Alameda City and Livermore. The research plan was to include Alameda City in the case study. However, the Alameda City Housing Authority's computerized files did not contain information on families who joined the Section 8 program before 1996. Thus, the mobility patterns of Alameda City families before 1996 could not be traced for inclusion in the study. Livermore is east of the case study area and, therefore, was not included.

<sup>6</sup>The BHA and OHA data files covered the time period from 1976 to spring 1999; the HACA's files covered the time period from 1988 to spring 1999.

1. Mobility experiences

- *Mobility categories.* Why did some families (*nonmovers*) choose to remain in their original housing when they received their housing voucher? Why did other families (*local movers*) choose to move into different housing within Berkeley and Oakland? Why did a third group of families (*suburban-bound movers*) choose to use the portability feature of Section 8 to cross housing authority jurisdictions and move to suburban Alameda County? Finally, why did some families (*returnees*) who initially conducted a cross-jurisdictional move ultimately return to Berkeley or Oakland? How do the characteristics of suburban-bound movers, local movers, returnees, and nonmovers differ?
- *Scope and length of search.* Where did suburban-bound movers, local movers, returnees, and nonmovers search for housing and why? How did members of the four groups differ with respect to the length of the housing search, the number of housing sites considered, and the sources of information used?
- *Decision-making process and difficulties encountered.* What were the destinations of the suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees? Why did each group select these locations?

What counseling or information did suburban-bound movers, local movers, returnees, and nonmovers receive from the local housing authorities as part of the regular Section 8 briefing? To what extent did the counseling or information assist families in their housing search or influence their choice of location? Do voucher recipients have suggestions for improving relocation assistance?

To what extent were suburban-bound movers and returnees more likely than local movers to encounter difficulties in searching for housing and adjusting to their new location? How were these problems overcome? Were suburban-bound movers and returnees more likely than local movers to encounter racial discrimination during their search? To what extent were suburban-bound movers and returnees more satisfied with the housing search than were local movers when they first received a housing voucher?

- *Mobility patterns.* How did suburban-bound movers differ from local movers and returnees with respect to the distance moved and the socioeconomic characteristics of their new communities (i.e., changes in the proportion of African American or Hispanic population, median household income, median house value)?
- *Outcomes for the families who moved to suburban Alameda County.* How do suburban-bound movers, local movers, returnees, and nonmovers differ with respect to housing and neighborhood satisfaction, perceptions of the adequacy of the social environment, feelings of safety, and interest in moving?

To what extent were suburban-bound movers more likely than local movers or returnees to perceive that their current location was superior to their former one? How does the quality of the families' new housing units and the families' new neighborhoods compare with that of their former housing and neighborhoods? To what extent do members of the three groups differ with respect to perceived access to jobs, public transportation, schools, shopping, health care, and other amenities? Were suburban-bound movers more likely than either local movers or returnees to move off of welfare or to shift from unemployment to employment after receiving a housing voucher?

2. The administration of Section 8 housing vouchers

- *Effect on mobility.* What housing authority administrative procedures have facilitated the movement of families between jurisdictions? What procedures might have restricted or impeded mobility?
- *Costs and other issues.* How does the mobility of Section 8 voucher recipients across housing authority jurisdictions affect administrative costs? What other administrative issues have been raised as a result of cross-jurisdictional mobility, and how have those issues been addressed?

### **The Families**

The study examines the mobility patterns and neighborhood outcomes of Alameda County's Section 8 families at two levels:

- *All Section 8 families.* Some 16,951 families who received Section 8 assistance from the three housing authorities from 1976 through spring 1999 were listed in the database records provided by the housing authorities for the study.<sup>7</sup> Of those families, 9,429 were originally Oakland clients, 3,097 were Berkeley clients, and 4,425 were Alameda County clients.
- *Surveyed families.* Three hundred families were interviewed by telephone in November and December 1999. The survey focused on the experiences of four types of Section 8 families: (1) suburban-bound movers (i.e., those who moved from Oakland and Berkeley into suburban Alameda County), the largest group of interviewees; (2) nonmovers (those who did not move but, instead, used their vouchers in their original housing); (3) local movers (families who moved to different units but remained in Oakland or Berkeley); and (4) returnees (families who initially moved into suburban Alameda but later returned to Oakland or Berkeley).

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<sup>7</sup>The OHA and BHA databases included information on all clients who received vouchers from 1976 through spring 1999, including those who had left the system. HACA files contained information on all *active* client families only.



## Data Sources

HUD sought a quantitative and qualitative examination of mobility into suburban Alameda County and the housing and neighborhood outcomes of the migrating families. To meet that objective, the research team collected data from a variety of sources.

- *Quantitative data* on the Section 8 families, their mobility patterns, and their neighborhoods were derived from the housing authority client data files; the telephone survey of 300 families; U.S. Census Bureau data; Claritas, Inc., data; and information from the State of California Department of Finance, the state's Office of the Attorney General Criminal Justice Statistics Center, and State of California Department of Education.
- *Qualitative data* on the Section 8 program, Alameda County, the county's housing market and neighborhoods, and the administrative procedures of the three housing authorities were gathered through interviews with key staff from the housing authorities and with city and county officials. Sources included planning and community development officials, real estate professionals, community leaders, and others. The telephone survey of 300 families included open-ended questions that allowed families' responses to be probed in depth. Other sources included field surveys of neighborhoods; newspaper articles; and planning reports, land-use maps, and other documents from the local planning departments.

### *Housing Authority Client Data Files*

The three housing authorities collect data on all client families on Form HUD 50058, Family Report. The information for each family includes the social security number of the head of household, the family's address, the effective date of the address, telephone number, race, ethnicity, family composition, income, source of income, and other data. The OHA and BHA data files contain information on all clients, including those who have left the system. (OHA maintains BHA files as well as its own.) Old data is retained; each new lease generates a separate record, providing a historical record of all administrative actions, leases, and addresses for each client. Thus, a client's movement patterns may be traced by following changes of address through the sequence of leases and their effective and closing dates. Moves into another housing authority's jurisdiction also can be traced in this way until the new housing authority absorbs the client; that is, the new housing authority takes in and begins providing assistance to the client. HACA's files contain records for active clients only; the records for clients leaving the jurisdiction are removed. Further, unlike the files maintained by OHA for Oakland and Berkeley, HACA's files do not maintain a historical record of a client's moves. When a new lease is generated, the computerized record for the previous address is erased. This feature of HACA's files limited the study team's ability to trace client moves.

The research team merged the files of the three housing authorities into a single master database. The master database—the Alameda County Section 8 merged

database—was used as a sample frame from which to select families who were interviewed in the telephone survey. Its data was also used for a geographic information system (GIS) analysis of the families' movement patterns. The clients' social security numbers were used as identifiers for the families, so that their movements could be traced from records in their city of origin (Oakland or Berkeley) to records in Alameda County. Moves within HACA's jurisdiction could also be traced until the client became Alameda County's client. In 1996, HACA began taking in as clients the families who had moved into its jurisdiction; thus, moves (if any) subsequent to that date were not captured in the database—only a client's current address was known.

### *The Survey of Section 8 Families*

The telephone survey of 300 Section 8 families in Berkeley, Oakland, and Alameda County was a key component of the research plan. The Alameda County Section 8 merged database was used as the sample frame.<sup>8</sup> The sample was designed so that there would be sufficient numbers of households in the following four subgroups to permit cross-tabular analysis: (1) Berkeley suburban-bound movers; (2) Berkeley families that did not move out of the city; (3) Oakland suburban-bound movers; and (4) Oakland families that did not move out of the city. The survey included questions on housing characteristics at the former location, characteristics of the housing search, patterns of adjustment at the new location, housing and neighborhood characteristics at the new location, and background demographic characteristics. Appendix B contains more detailed information on sampling and interviewing procedures.

### *Neighborhood Analysis*

The team performed a geographic information system (GIS) analysis to assess changes in the socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods surrounding suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees. The Section 8 database was used to identify the census tracts where the families lived. The distribution of all Section 8 families in the three jurisdictions was mapped at two points in time—in 1994 and in 1999. These “snapshots” enabled the team to determine the extent of mobility of the families during the five-year time period. The origins and destinations of migrating families were mapped as well. Next, through the GIS, each family's address was linked to the socioeconomic characteristics of the surrounding census tract (proportion African American population, proportion Hispanic population, median house value, median household income) so that differences between the former and the new neighborhoods of migrating families could be compared.

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<sup>8</sup>For the survey sample frame, the research team deleted from the database those families who were no longer receiving rental assistance and those who had moved out of the jurisdiction of the three housing authorities.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The report describes the experiences of families participating in Alameda County's Section 8 program and the procedures used by the three housing authorities in administering the program. Chapter 2 describes the families and shows the overall shifts in the spatial distribution of the Section 8 families between 1994 and 1999. Then, focusing on the suburban-bound families, it identifies and describes both the neighborhoods they left and those to which they moved.

Chapters 3 and 4 shift from examination of overall patterns to the experiences of individual voucher recipients, drawing on the survey results. Chapter 3 shows how suburban-bound movers differed from local movers and returnees in carrying out the housing search, in selecting a new home, and in adjusting to the new location. Chapter 4 tests whether suburban-bound movers fared better than local movers and returnees in attaining better housing and neighborhood conditions and in shifting toward greater financial self-sufficiency.

Chapter 5 examines the administration of the Section 8 program by the Alameda County housing authorities and considers how their procedures encourage or discourage families to make suburban moves. Chapter 6 highlights key conclusions and the implications of the study results for improving the effectiveness of the Section 8 program.

**Chapter 2**  
**ALAMEDA COUNTY SECTION 8 FAMILIES:**  
**CHARACTERISTICS, MOBILITY PATTERNS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

The movement of Section 8 families from Berkeley and Oakland into suburban Alameda County in the 1990s is an important trend. Even though the number of suburban-bound movers may appear small compared with the number of families who did not move or the number of families who moved within Berkeley and Oakland, the pattern stands in stark contrast to residential patterns in other areas of the United States, where movement of Section 8 families into the suburbs has been almost nonexistent.

How many Alameda County Section 8 families moved to the suburbs? How many families did not move? How many families moved within their current neighborhoods? What family characteristics were associated with above-average mobility? What neighborhoods did the suburban-bound movers favor? How do these neighborhoods differ from the neighborhoods left behind? The answers to these questions provide a necessary foundation for understanding the extent to which suburban-bound movers improve their quality of life.

**A PROFILE OF ALAMEDA COUNTY’S SECTION 8 FAMILIES**

An analysis of the merged database, composed of data from the OHA, BHA, and HACA databases, showed the general characteristics of Section 8 families living in Alameda County—in Berkeley, Oakland, and the suburbs. Women head the large majority of households. Most are African American. Family income ranges from \$11,315 to \$13,917. The average family size is 2.7 persons, while the average number of children per household is 1.2 (see Table 2.1).

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Family Characteristics: All Section 8 Families**

Characteristic	All Section 8 Families: Families by Database Listing <sup>a</sup>			
	Berkeley	Oakland	Suburban Alameda	All Families
<i>N</i> =	3,089	9,417	4,445	16,951
Mean age of household head	46.2	48.9	49.7	48.7
Female head (%)	75.9	79.6	71.4	76.8
Race/ethnicity of household head				
White (%)	14.5	6.2	64.6	23.0
African American (%)	75.8	82.3	23.5	65.7
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	2.7	10.2	10.5	8.9
Other (%)	7.0	1.3	1.5	2.4
Hispanic <sup>b</sup> (%)	4.2	2.5	16.9	6.6
Mean family size	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.7
Mean number of minors	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.2
Mean annual income	\$11,315	\$12,111	\$13,917	\$12,475

*Source:* Analysis of merged database composed of data from the OHA, BHA, and HACA databases (2000).

<sup>a</sup>For this analysis, the families were categorized according to the jurisdiction of the housing authority that carried their *original* listing in the three housing authority databases. (See Appendix B, Methodology and Data Sources.)

<sup>b</sup>Hispanic origin; may be of any race.

Within Alameda County, however, Section 8 families differ substantially from one another depending on whether they live in the suburbs or in the cities (see Table 2.1). Suburban Alameda residents are more racially and ethnically diverse than residents of Berkeley and Oakland. Nearly 65 percent of suburban Alameda Section 8 families are white; only 24 percent are African American. In contrast, 82 percent of Oakland's Section 8 families, and 76 percent of Berkeley's Section 8 families are African American. A larger percentage of suburban Alameda's Section 8 families are Hispanic—approximately 17 percent compared with 4 percent in Berkeley and 3 percent in Oakland. The average annual income of suburban Alameda Section 8 families is higher than the average annual income of Section 8 families in the two cities.

## RECENT MOBILITY PATTERNS

A widening dispersion of Section 8 families occurred within Alameda County during the five-year period from 1994 to 1999 (see Maps 2 and 3). In the two maps, each family is represented by a single dot. Map 2 shows the location of the 10,305 families who were listed as clients in the housing authorities' databases in 1994 and whose addresses could be geocoded. Map 3 provides similar information for 11,294 comparable families in 1999. As the maps make clear, between 1994 and 1999, Section 8 families spread out of the cities and into suburban Alameda County. The concentration of dots is much denser in suburban Alameda in the 1999 map than it is in the 1994 version. A different indicator of the shift in the families' locations is the change in the number of census tracts containing Section 8 families. In 1994, half of the Section 8 families lived in 33 census tracts. In 1999, half of the families were living in 46 census tracts.

The Alameda mobility patterns differ from the national pattern. In the country as a whole, most Section 8 families remain close to their original neighborhoods, moving within the jurisdiction of the housing authority granting assistance, if they move at all. Few families venture across suburban boundaries.<sup>1</sup> In Alameda County, approximately 12 percent of Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 families take that step and move into suburban Alameda. Although 2 percent of those families return to their original cities, 10 percent remain in suburban Alameda County.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the Section 8 families follow the national pattern. Approximately 29 percent of Berkeley and Oakland families move locally, and about 59 percent do not move from where they initially used their housing assistance (see Table 2.2).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to an analysis of the Multifamily Tenant Characteristics System data conducted by HUD (cited in Feins et al. 1997), more than a third of all Section 8 recipients lease in-place (i.e., they use their assistance for the units they were living in before receiving assistance).

<sup>2</sup>This figure includes all families with addresses in both Berkeley or Oakland and suburban Alameda. It also includes Berkeley and Oakland families listed as clients in the original BHA and OHA databases, but whose first address is in suburban Alameda (see Appendix B, Methodology and Data Sources).

<sup>3</sup>This number includes all families for whom there is only one address in the merged database. It therefore includes all Berkeley and Oakland families who may have moved immediately upon receiving assistance and then remained in the same unit afterward. It also includes HACA families who may have made multiple moves for which there are no records in the merged database. Thus, the proportion probably overstates the real number of nonmovers.

**TABLE 2.2**  
**Mobility Patterns: Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families**

Mobility Patterns	Number	Percentage
Nonmovers	7,118	59.1
Local movers	3,494	29.0
Suburban-bound movers	1,184	9.8
Returnees from suburban Alameda to Berkeley or Oakland	247	2.1
Total	12,043	100.0

*Source:* Analysis of merged database composed of data from the OHA, BHA, and HACA databases (2000).

*Note:* All Berkeley and Oakland families in the merged database, including those listed as BHA or OHA clients whose first address is in suburban Alameda County.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS

In general, families in Berkeley or Oakland who move—whether locally or to suburban Alameda—have younger heads of household and more children than do nonmovers (see Table 2.3). Nonmovers tend to have the oldest heads of household; they are also more likely to be families headed by men and less likely to be African American. The greatest contrast is between families who do not move at all or remain in their original communities and those who move from the two cities to suburban Alameda.

**TABLE 2.3**  
**Characteristics of Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families by Mobility Pattern**

Characteristic	Families by Mobility Pattern				
	Nonmovers	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees	All Families
<i>N</i> =	7,118	3,494	1,184	247	12,043
Mean age of household head	51.1	46.1	42.1	40.3	48.5
Female head (%)	74.3	82.1	88.1	91.9	78.2
Race/ethnicity of household head					
White (%)	9.8	5.6	7.9	2.4	8.3
African American (%)	76.8	85.4	84.5	96.8	80.4
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	9.8	7.1	6.8	0.4	8.6
Other (%)	3.6	1.9	0.8	0.4	2.7
Hispanic <sup>a</sup> (%)	3.1	2.3	4.1	0.4	2.9
Mean family size	2.5	2.9	3.1	3.2	2.7
Mean number of minors	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.2
Last annual income <sup>b</sup>	\$11,811	\$11,715	\$14,039	\$12,285	\$11,960

*Source:* Analysis of merged database composed of data from the OHA, BHA, and HACA databases (2000).

*Note:* All Berkeley and Oakland families in the merged database, including those listed as BHA or OHA clients who moved immediately into suburban Alameda County.

<sup>a</sup>Hispanic origin; may be of any race.

<sup>b</sup>Average of each family's last annual income recorded in the merged database.

The suburban-bound families are more likely to have younger heads of household, and they are more likely to be headed by women. Average family size is larger for suburban-bound movers than it is for nonmovers or local movers. The household incomes of suburban-bound movers are likely to be higher as well, which may reflect their larger average family size. The characteristics of returnees—families who first lived in Berkeley or in Oakland, moved to suburban Alameda, and then returned to their original locations—are similar to those of suburban-bound movers, however, returnee families are even more likely to be headed by younger women and to be African American.

## NEIGHBORHOODS OF SUBURBAN-BOUND FAMILIES

Where families live and whether or not they move depend on such factors as their personal circumstances, available resources, individual preferences, and also other factors that may be beyond their control. An important factor is the characteristics of the neighborhoods themselves. Do particular characteristics of the neighborhood cause families to leave? Do particular characteristics of destination neighborhoods attract families? To determine whether residents of Berkeley and Oakland improve their circumstances by moving to the suburbs, it is necessary to know about both the neighborhoods they leave and those to which they move.

Almost all suburban-bound Section 8 families (91 percent) come from Oakland; only about one family in every 10 (9 percent) comes from Berkeley, which has a much smaller client base. Map 4 shows the original Oakland and Berkeley locations of the suburban-bound families (shown with black dots) and their locations in suburban Alameda (shown with green dots). By geocoding the families' addresses, it is possible to identify the specific neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley where the suburban-bound movers first lived and where they moved (see Appendix B, GIS Analysis).

Oakland's suburban-bound movers come from several neighborhoods. The greatest proportion come from Elmhurst (27 percent), followed by Central East Oakland (20 percent), San Antonio (16 percent), and Fruitvale (14 percent) (see Appendix B, Table B.2).<sup>4</sup> (Map 5 shows the locations of the Oakland and Berkeley neighborhoods.) All but two of Berkeley's suburban-bound families come from the city's flatlands section, which comprises South Berkeley, West Berkeley, and Central Berkeley. Three communities in suburban Alameda are the primary destinations of most of the movers: Hayward, San Leandro, and Ashland (the destinations of 32 percent, 26 percent, and 11 percent of the movers, respectively). Smaller numbers of families move to Fremont, Union City, Cherryland, and San Lorenzo.

What are the origin and destination communities like? The census-tract characteristics of the communities are shown in Maps 6, 7, 8, and 9 (the families' locations are shown with dots on the maps); Table 2.4 presents the data. The census tracts where families formerly lived in Berkeley and Oakland have lower median household

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<sup>4</sup>The designations of the neighborhoods and their boundaries were defined in consultation with the planning and community development departments in Oakland and Berkeley.

incomes and lower house values than the suburban neighborhoods to which they moved, and much higher concentrations of African Americans. The proportion of Hispanics is higher in the destination communities; the proportion of Asian/Pacific Islanders, however, is the same. Based on the measures at the census-tract level, the suburban-bound families moved to more prosperous communities with different proportions of minorities, particularly African Americans. However, census-tract characteristics can obscure important community characteristics. For a more complete picture of the origin and destination communities, it is necessary to examine them more closely.

**TABLE 2.4**  
**Characteristics of Origin and Destination Census Tracts**  
**of Berkeley and Oakland Suburban-Bound Movers**

Characteristic	Census Tract	
	Origin	Destination
N =	312	312
Female head (%)	24.6	13.5
Minority/ethnic composition		
African American (%)	54.1	10.4
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	14.2	14.2
Hispanic <sup>a</sup> (%)	15.3	20.0
Median household income	\$24,553	\$33,993
Median house value	\$134,587	\$183,470

*Source:* Analysis of merged database composed of data from the OHA, BHA, and HACA databases (2000).

*Note:* The analysis compares characteristics of the origin and destination census tracts of families who moved from a location in Berkeley or Oakland to a location in suburban Alameda. The analysis does not include families who may have moved into suburban Alameda immediately after receiving a Section 8 voucher and whose original address is unknown.

<sup>a</sup>Hispanic origin; may be of any race.

## ORIGIN NEIGHBORHOODS

### Oakland

Racially and ethnically diverse, Oakland is the largest city in Alameda County. It has the most troubling socioeconomic statistics. In 1990 Oakland’s poverty rate, at more than 18 percent, was the highest in Alameda County (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). The city’s median income, \$27,095, was the county’s lowest (Appendix D, Table D.1). Approximately 23 percent of Oakland residents received public assistance (City of Oakland 1995). Single mothers headed 40 percent of all households with children under 18 (City of Oakland 1995).

Minority families in particular are likely to live in poverty. Sixty-one percent of African American households, 64 percent of Hispanic households, and 59 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander households qualified as low- or moderate-income families in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). In contrast, just 36 percent of white households had low or moderate incomes in 1990.



While the number of crimes reported in Oakland has been steadily decreasing, crime statistics still are disturbing. In 1998, reported crimes in Oakland accounted for a disproportionate 48 percent of all crimes in the county—Oakland’s population is only about 29 percent of the total population of the county (State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Criminal Justice Statistics Center 2000a). A real estate property manager noted that some neighborhoods are safe to enter only between 9:00 a.m. and noon; after noon, people who have been up all night wake up (Lieberman 1999).

In the 1990s, many manufacturing establishments closed or downsized, and Oakland’s economic base shifted from manufacturing to lower-paying service-sector and retail-sector jobs. Recent efforts to stimulate the local economy—especially since Jerry Brown became mayor in 1998—have led to major new development projects in the downtown area. Housing prices have begun to rise (see Appendix C).

At the same time, the population is becoming even more diverse. Between 1980 and 1990, the white population decreased, and the African American population increased approximately 1 percent. In contrast, the Hispanic population grew 59 percent, and the Asian/Pacific Islander population grew 81 percent (City of Oakland 1995). The 2000 census was expected to confirm that these population trends continued during the 1990s.

Oakland’s schools face many difficulties. Approximately 24 percent of the city’s students drop out of school; only about 25 percent of the students score at or above the 50th percentile in reading and mathematics, according to California Department of Education statistics for the 1999–2000 school year. The school enrollment is more than 94 percent minority, and almost 60 percent of the students are entitled to free or reduced-price meals (Appendix D, Table D.4).

Oakland’s suburban-bound families come from several neighborhoods—primarily Elmhurst, Central East Oakland, San Antonio, and Fruitvale (see Map 5). These neighborhoods are in the flatlands, and are home to virtually all Oakland Section 8 families. In general, they are distressed neighborhoods that the city has targeted for redevelopment (City of Oakland 1998).

In Oakland—in contrast to the pattern in many older urban areas—large sections of neighborhoods farther from the downtown area are more distressed than some of the neighborhoods that are closer to the downtown area. In many cities, minorities tend to concentrate near the city core. In Oakland, however, greater concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities in the flatlands are dispersed as far as the boundary with San Leandro. Approximately 46 percent of Oakland’s suburban-bound movers come from Elmhurst and Central East Oakland. These areas, which are home to many African Americans and among the most distressed neighborhoods in the county, are the neighborhoods closest to

the Alameda suburbs.<sup>5</sup> Poor living conditions and neighborhood geography play a role in the migration of Section 8 families to suburban Alameda.

Despite their deterioration, Oakland's flatland neighborhoods offer advantages to low-income families. BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) and the rest of the public transportation network provide access to jobs and other destinations throughout the Bay Area. The mix of residential areas and industries brings the possibility of nearby employment for residents of the neighborhoods. Businesses line major streets and, in the better flatland neighborhoods (Fruitvale, San Antonio, Central/Chinatown), provide convenient, viable shopping areas (Photo 1). Nevertheless, in the most distressed neighborhoods (Elmhurst, Central East Oakland), burned-out shops, vandalized buildings, and abandoned shops blight commercial arteries (Photo 2).



**Photo 1.** A viable commercial area in the San Antonio section of Oakland, serving the Hispanic and Asian populations. (Photograph by David Varady.)



<sup>5</sup> Hispanics are concentrated in Fruitvale, with clusters in other adjacent areas, and Asians live in

**Photo 2.** Burned-out stores on a major commercial street in East Central Oakland. (Photograph by David Varady.)

By the end of the 1990s, Oakland was experiencing the tightening housing market and price increases that other areas had experienced earlier. Increased demands for housing created by San Francisco and Silicon Valley workers, along with real estate speculation in residential development, were making it more difficult for Section 8 families to find housing. Rising housing prices in some areas, such as Fruitvale, were forcing people to move. The gentrification of Fruitvale was being accompanied by a change in the minority composition of the residents from African American to Hispanic (Lieberman 1999). In other areas, such as San Antonio, the minority composition was changing from African American to Hispanic to Asian (Levin 1999; Schweyer 1999).

Families began to encounter greater difficulty in finding housing that met the Section 8 program's housing quality standards. One program administrator said, "Sometimes people are coming to us [OHA] the very last day of the certificate—they bring in some extremely marginal unit so they don't lose their assistance. All that indicates a pretty tight housing market" (Euston 1998b). The cost pressures are motivating some Section 8 families to move to the suburbs—rather than trying to improve their living conditions, they are looking for affordable housing.

The residential housing stock in Oakland's flatlands consists of both detached units and a variety of other housing types constructed in different eras and styles. Victorian gems, bungalows, pre- and post-World War II houses, and apartment buildings are all present in some neighborhoods. Often, fencing surrounds the houses (Photo 3). Curbside parking is limited, forcing cars and pickup trucks to compete for space. Off-street parking is minimal and often consists of paved-over areas in front of buildings.



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Chinatown/Central or in nearby neighborhoods.

**Photo 3.** A residential street in the San Antonio section of Oakland, with multifamily housing, crowded on-street parking, and high chain-link fences defining front yards. (Photograph by David Varady.)

Oakland’s housing stock is old, particularly where compared with the housing stock of suburban Alameda. Throughout the 1990s, affordable housing could be found in Oakland, but much of the housing available to low-income families was in poor condition (Photo 4). Units that appeared to be acceptable from the outside might not be in good condition inside. As an Alameda County Housing and Community Development manager observed, “[A unit] may look okay from the outside, but you wouldn’t want to live there. . . .You can’t tell this from the outside—no heat and minimal plumbing in many of these” (Hodgett 1999).



**Photo 4.** A neighborhood and housing in the Fruitvale section of Oakland showing signs of neglect. (Photograph by David Varady.)

## Berkeley

Nearly all of Berkeley’s suburban-bound families, like those in Oakland, came from the flatlands section of the city. This predominantly residential area—particularly South Berkeley and West Berkeley—has historically consisted of African American, working-class neighborhoods formed during World War I and the 1950s (Barton 1999). In recent years, however, the area has become more diverse, ethnically and socioeconomically.

The flatlands area offers advantages to low-income families. It is easily accessible by BART and by major transportation routes that bring job opportunities within the geographic reach of residents. The western flatlands contain pockets of industry and warehouses, which also provide job opportunities. The major commercial streets are within a two-mile radius, and a few parks are scattered throughout the neighborhoods.

Overall, the South and West Berkeley neighborhoods have higher crime rates than other areas of the city, and they are considered dangerous areas. Despite declining crime rates, the neighborhoods continue to have problems. A BHA housing assistant who lives in South Berkeley commented that in that area, “You are more likely to hear gunfire, and you hear the police and fire engines all of the time” (Simmons 1998c). The police have helped organize neighborhood watch groups in an effort to control crime and drug activity (Barton 1999).

In the 1990s, it became increasingly difficult for low-income families to find housing in Berkeley because real estate speculation became intense as aging residents sold their homes and rent control ended. Released from constraints on the rents they could charge, Berkeley’s landlords increasingly rented to families who could afford to pay more. Section 8 families, who are limited by the program in the rent they can pay, have been forced to seek housing elsewhere.

Like Oakland, Berkeley faces substantial disparities by race. African American households have about half the income of white households: the 1990 census reported a mean household income for whites of \$50,323; the mean household income for African American households was \$26,297 (see Appendix D, Table D.1). Berkeley’s poverty rate is nearly 18 percent, the second highest rate in the county—only Oakland’s poverty rate is higher.

In contrast to Oakland, Berkeley’s schools are a bright spot, with achievement statistics that surpass not only those for the county as a whole, but also those for the suburbs to which Berkeley’s Section 8 residents move. Approximately 70 percent of Berkeley’s students are minorities. The student/teacher ratio in Berkeley schools is lower than it is in Oakland schools, and the dropout rate in Berkeley is much lower. In most schools, more than half of the students score above the 50th percentile in reading and mathematics, and more than half of the high school seniors (about 58 percent) take the SAT exam (see Appendix D, Table D.4).

Most of the housing in the flatlands consists of wood-frame, single-family bungalows. The most affordable housing units are post–World War II apartments and accessory units in single-family homes. Both types of housing often are marginal. The motel-style apartment buildings (Photo 5) have been described as “really crummy-type housing . . . ghastly buildings that are going to fall down in an earthquake because it has parking underneath” (Barton 1999).



**Photo 5.** Motel-style apartment units in Berkeley, built as infill, next to a small frame, bungalow-style house. (Photograph by David Varady.)

Deteriorated single-family homes are scattered throughout the flatlands, particularly in South and West Berkeley (Photo 6). An antiblight task force has tried to persuade owners of the worst properties to sell them so that they can be renovated (Barton 1999). By the end of the decade, signs of renovation were in evidence. Renovated units typically include security systems and bars on the windows (Photo 7). The revitalizing neighborhoods have become less affordable for Section 8 families.



**Photo 6.** Deteriorated housing in a flatlands neighborhood in Berkeley. (Photograph by David Varady.)



**Photo 7.** Renovated housing in a flatlands neighborhood in Berkeley—an indication of redevelopment activity. (Photograph by David Varady.)

## DESTINATION NEIGHBORHOODS

The contrast at the boundary between Oakland and San Leandro could hardly be more striking. On the Oakland side, there is a distressed neighborhood with boarded-up and abandoned buildings; on the San Leandro side, an arch and a vista of trees and plantings line a divided roadway (Photo 8).



**Photo 8.** The entrance to San Leandro, viewed from Oakland. (Photograph by David Varady.)

While the contrast may suggest that a better quality of life is in store for suburban-bound movers, the reality is more complex. The destination cities to which more than half of the suburban-bound Section 8 families moved—Hayward, San Leandro, Ashland, and Cherryland—vary greatly in socioeconomic characteristics, urban form, and governance.<sup>6</sup>

### Hayward

The choice of most suburban-bound Section 8 families (32 percent), Hayward is a sprawling suburban community that lacks clear physical boundaries. Like Oakland and Berkeley, Hayward is shaped by a topographic divide: “working-class suburbs in the flatlands and a very expensive suburb in the hills,” in the words of a housing expert (Rubin 1998).

As might be expected, the city is economically and ethnically diverse. For example, Hayward’s median household income in 1990 was higher than San Leandro’s median household income (\$36,058 compared with \$35,681), but its poverty rate was twice as high (10 percent compared with 5 percent). In 1990, 38 percent of Hayward’s residents were minorities—the same percentage found in Berkeley—compared with 26 percent of San Leandro’s residents (see Appendix D, Table D.1).

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<sup>6</sup>For other destinations, see Appendix B, Methodology and Data Sources, Table B.2.



Hayward offers a greater abundance of affordable housing than is offered in other suburban communities, making it a popular destination and, thus, a diverse community. An expert on the area housing market said, “Hayward, I would have said, is similar to San Leandro, but due to some quirk at some point in history it has become the melting pot. There are 33 languages in the school district and you have every single ethnicity landing there. Why are they going there? Is it because Hayward is the best place to live? No. It’s the cheapest place to live and so, if you come in, and especially if you are an immigrant, you try to find something that is affordable, and Hayward tends to be about the most affordable in the Inner Bay area” (Lieberman 1999).

### **San Leandro**

The destination of the second largest group of Section 8 suburban-bound movers (26 percent), San Leandro is an older suburban, working-class city that is more geographically compact than Hayward. San Leandro is primarily residential, but it contains a variety of housing types that offer affordable housing for first-time homebuyers and for renters with families. The city is a convenient location for elderly residents because shopping and services often are within walking distance.

Nevertheless, many suburban-bound Section 8 families skipped San Leandro to settle in Hayward or beyond. At one time, there appeared to be an invisible barrier at the boundary, and the city had a reputation as being “off-limits” to people moving from Oakland (Euston 1998a). In the 1990 census, only 6 percent of San Leandro’s residents were African American, while 15 percent were Hispanic and 14 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander. The situation appears to have changed since then. The barrier “is just not there any more,” a housing manager observed (Euston 1998a).

### **Ashland**

The destination of the third largest group of suburban-bound movers, Ashland is unincorporated and, as such, is governed by the county board of supervisors. Because it does not have its own city government, Ashland is served by the Alameda County Sheriff’s Department and by the Unified San Lorenzo School District. Controls over development are weak.

The area’s original use was agricultural, with small farms and Japanese nurseries. This land-use pattern has shaped Ashland’s development and defined its current conditions. As parcels of land became available, they were developed according to whatever land use was in vogue. Said an Alameda County planner, “So, you’ll see a five- or ten-acre parcel that has 1950s single-family houses, and the next block over you’ll have a 1960s box apartment, and the next 100 feet away you’ll have a 1970s condominium complex” (Andrade 1999). The street configuration consists of long roads with no intersecting streets—a pattern left over from Ashland’s years as a farming area. Because there are few cross streets, lots are deep and multiple units line up behind each other, perpendicular to the streets.

## Cherryland

Like Ashland, Cherryland is unincorporated. It also was originally a farming area, consisting mostly of chicken farms with some nurseries (Andrade 1999). Lot sizes in Cherryland were smaller than those in Ashland—one-acre parcels rather than five-acre parcels—but like Ashland, lots in Cherryland were deep, with the chicken farms located in the back of the lots.<sup>7</sup> Today, one house, usually owner-occupied, fronts on the street, with two rental units in the back replacing the chicken farms. Some larger parcels of land have become subdivisions. “It’s a mix—but, again, long streets—and a lot of streets with no sidewalks,” according to an Alameda County planner (Andrade 1999).

A large Portuguese population remains in Cherryland, but it is aging, as many in the younger generation have moved away. A Japanese community from the days of the nurseries continues to be a presence. The Hispanic population, originally attracted to Cherryland by jobs at a Hunt’s cannery, has been growing (Andrade 1999).

## Conditions in the Suburban Alameda Communities

Alameda’s suburban communities vary considerably, but they are alike in that much development occurred in each community during the 1950s and the 1960s. As a result, the housing stock is newer and more typically suburban than the housing stock in Berkeley and Oakland. In suburban Alameda, commercial strips and shopping centers generally are well maintained and have more product variety than the convenience stores that serve lower-income neighborhoods in Berkeley and Oakland.

BART extends into Hayward and beyond, providing access to the Bay Area. In fact, BART was credited by a BHA housing coordinator with enabling Berkeley families to look for housing in suburban Alameda County (Drouillard 1998).<sup>8</sup> Although bus routes serve the main arteries, automobile transportation is much more essential in suburban Alameda than it is in Berkeley and Oakland.

Like many inner suburbs in the United States, however, some sections of Alameda’s communities are experiencing increasing amounts of the violent crime, drug dealing, and juvenile delinquency associated with central cities. For example, although the overall number of reported crimes decreased in both Hayward and San Leandro in the late 1990s, the incidence of assault increased by a troubling 36 percent in Hayward.<sup>9</sup> Also, although juvenile felony arrests leveled off in Hayward in the late 1990s, they

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<sup>7</sup> Like Cherryland, parts of Hayward and Castro Valley also had deep lots with chicken farms located at the back of them (Andrade 1999).

<sup>8</sup> The offices of all three housing authorities (BHA, OHA, and HACA) are within walking distance of BART stations.

<sup>9</sup> The 1997 and 1998 figures for Hayward and San Leandro are from Table 11, State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Criminal Statistics, Criminal Justice Statistics Center 2000a; 1998 and 1999 figures for Hayward only are from “Crimes Reported for Selected California Jurisdictions, State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Criminal Justice Statistics Center 2000b.

increased by 123 percent in the decade between 1988 and 1998 (State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis 2000).

Hayward and San Leandro have their own school districts; the San Lorenzo district covers Ashland and part of Cherryland. The student population is largely minority, and statistics on educational achievement indicate achievement levels that are lower than those in Berkeley but better than those in Oakland. Compared with students in Oakland, more students in the suburban school districts score at or above the 50th percentile in reading and mathematics; the average SAT scores for suburban high school seniors are also higher. A major difference, said a resident active in local affairs, is that the suburban schools do not have the problem of gangs—a problem that does exist in Oakland.

Unlike other suburban Alameda communities farther south and closer to Silicon Valley, where housing prices are substantially higher, Hayward, San Leandro, Ashland, and Cherryland provide affordable housing. “The cheapest rents you will find are in San Leandro and Hayward. Very few of our clients can go farther south toward Silicon Valley or farther east toward Livermore or Pleasanton,” said HACA’s deputy director (Wiest 1999).

Housing in Hayward includes both multifamily units and single-family homes—sometimes in separate developments, sometimes together on the same street (Photo 9). Some families moved to neighborhoods with Eichler homes—modest one-story homes, with a slight peak in the front roof, that were built in the 1950s and 1960s by Joseph Eichler (Photo 10). Most families, however, settled in one of Hayward’s many apartment developments.



**Photo 9.** Mixed single- and multifamily housing in Hayward. (Photograph by David Varady.)



**Photo 10.** A single-family, Eichler-style home in Hayward. (Photograph by David Varady.)

San Leandro neighborhoods are stable, and modest single-family homes are available for renters with families (Photo 11). In fact, the existence of a neighborhood crime watch program attests to the city's vigilant efforts to maintain neighborhood stability and control crime (Photo 12).



**Photo 11.** An example of the modest single-family housing found in San Leandro. (Photograph by David Varady.)



**Photo 12.** Multifamily housing in San Leandro with a neighborhood crime watch warning sign nearby. (Photograph by David Varady.)

Many families moving to Ashland moved to a distinctive type of apartment development found throughout Alameda County. The “California box” or motel apartment (Photo 13)—known as “dumb boxes,” “shoeboxes,” “box apartment” developments, or “doughnut-style” apartments—dates from the 1960s. Originally built for singles, not families, most such homes are one-bedroom units. Units are stacked two stories high, like a motel, and walkways along the first and second stories provide access to individual units. The buildings, which have flat roofs, are arranged around a courtyard that sometimes has a swimming pool or space for parking (the hole in the doughnut). In some configurations, the backs of the units face the street. Only small bedroom or bathroom windows are visible. An Alameda County housing specialist said, “From the street they’re very unattractive because what you see is something that looks kind of like a shoebox with just a bunch of square windows” (Bloebaum 1999).



**Photo 13.** An example of a California motel or doughnut-style apartment development in Ashland, with parking spaces in the center courtyard. (Photograph by David Varady.)

These developments were within the economic reach of Section 8 families during the 1990s and tended to have vacancies, thus attracting many renters. In some cases, perhaps, families viewed them as stepping-stones to better housing later.

In parts of Cherryland, long narrow lots dictate intense development (Photo 14). Many properties have absentee landlords because the properties have been passed down from one generation to the next, but their current owners have chosen not to live there. Moreover, in Cherryland, a residential practice has been to fill the long lots with recreational vehicles that have become semipermanent housing. An Alameda County housing manager noted, “There are some locations where they run sort of trailer parks. Even on single-family properties . . . folks do things like let their cousin live in their RV, or they let somebody move their RV on, or they actually rent them out. There are a lot of horror stories about people renting out garages, and renting out various and sundry forms of illegal units” (Hodgett 1999).



**Photo 14.** A row of houses located on small lots with no sidewalks in a Cherryland neighborhood. (Photograph by David Varady.)

With their mixed land-use patterns and often unsightly developments, and without a municipal governing body or police force to enact or enforce regulations, both Cherryland and Ashland have experienced difficulties in their neighborhoods. For example, transitional housing and residential-care facilities for the developmentally disabled, the mentally ill, the elderly, and AIDS patients have been built on the large lots in the absence of strict zoning (Andrade 1999; Hodgett 1999). Although some facilities are managed well, others are not. Their owners appear to have little regard for the neighborhood. As one county planner described it, “They’ll put commercial dumpsters in the front, they’ll pave over the front yard, they’ll have a chain-link fence, and they’ll just operate like [an institution]” (Andrade 1999).

## COMPARING ORIGIN AND DESTINATION NEIGHBORHOODS

When asked to compare origin and destination communities, an area real estate housing manager commented, “What I can’t understand is why [people] don’t move. If you live in a rough neighborhood and you have crime and you have poverty all around you—and the rents are going up—why not look around?” (Lieberman 1999). Many of the housing experts, planning officials, and housing authority staff members interviewed believed that the age of the housing stock, crime, drug problems, and poor schools in the original communities motivated families to move to the suburbs. Families are taking the opportunity afforded by the Section 8 program to move to areas with “the better school, the shopping centers, lower crime—all the reasons that middle-class people have fled the cities” (Euston 1998a). As the analysis has shown, the families most likely to make this move have younger household heads, more children, and higher incomes. Household heads who are older and families with fewer children are less likely to make the suburban move.

Yet, some of the destination neighborhoods are experiencing the same crime and drug problems found in the communities the Section 8 families left behind. Some neighborhoods are unsightly, and some of the housing is of poor quality. In places, “it is similar to what you might find in some sections of Oakland” (Wiest 1999). Still, by making the move, families become familiar with their new communities and search for a better place. Calling it “the American way,” the HACA deputy director described the process in these words: “Individuals that come from Oakland are able to find places, and they’re willing to live in some of the dicier parts of Hayward. They are okay with that. In some cases, they use that as a jumping-off point getting them here, and, then, at some point later, keeping their eyes open for something a little bit nicer, [they move]. And, so, it is sort of a hopscotch effect” (Wiest 1999).

### Chapter 3 THE SEARCH FOR HOUSING

Given Section 8 housing assistance and the ability to use it in any housing authority's jurisdiction, why do some Oakland and Berkeley families venture into suburban Alameda County while others move only locally or do not move at all? How do suburban-bound movers conduct their housing search? What obstacles do the families encounter in finding a new place to live? How long does the process take?

To answer these and other questions about Section 8 mobility requires in-depth information from the families themselves as well as statistics about the general Section 8 population and the communities at large. Thus, the research team conducted a survey of 300 families in Alameda County. Because the study focused on suburban-bound movers, the team interviewed a disproportionate number of families who moved from Oakland and Berkeley to suburban Alameda County and undersampled families who did not move or who moved within Oakland and Berkeley (see Appendix B, Methodology and Data Sources). This chapter and chapter 4 report the findings of the sample survey.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A comparison of suburban-bound movers and nonmovers, local movers, and returnees, reveals the following:

- *Demographic differences.* Suburban-bound movers have higher income levels than local movers, nonmovers, or returnees.
- *Reasons for moving.* Families who moved to suburban Alameda County after receiving Section 8 assistance typically said they wanted to get away from crime and drug dealing in their original neighborhoods. In comparison, families who moved within Oakland or Berkeley cited strong neighborhood ties as their reason for remaining in the city. Section 8 families who did not move at all also cited strong neighborhood ties and a feeling of being settled. In fact, few had even looked for a new home or apartment after receiving a voucher or certificate. Returnees—Section 8 families who originally relocated to southern Alameda County but returned to Oakland or Berkeley—returned for a variety of reasons that reflect both *pull* and *push* factors. Some returned because they were able to find more affordable housing in the city than in the suburbs, or because they liked the convenience the city offered (a pull factor). Others, however, returned to the city because of crime and other neighborhood problems in the suburbs (push factors).
- *Duration of the search.* The three groups of movers (suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees) varied only slightly in the amount of time that passed between notification of assistance and the initiation of their search for housing. Returnees, however—in contrast to suburban-bound movers and local movers—after notification of assistance, conducted longer searches and looked at more housing units before selecting one.



- *Geographical scope of the search.* Not surprisingly, local movers were significantly more likely to conduct limited housing searches than were suburban-bound movers. Local movers looked only in the neighborhood where they were living when they first received a voucher or certificate or in nearby neighborhoods. In contrast, suburban-bound movers were more likely to look only at distant neighborhoods.
- *Information used in the search.* Suburban-bound movers and local movers appear to use different sources of information to locate housing. Suburban-bound movers and returnees relied primarily on newspaper listings, while local movers relied mostly on friends and relatives.
- *Choosing a location.* Suburban-bound movers and returnees emphasized neighborhood characteristics such as low crime rates, good schools, and convenient access to employment as features they looked for in choosing a location. Returnees, but not suburban-bound movers, were disproportionately more likely to emphasize neighborhood convenience in choosing their new location.
- *Difficulties encountered in finding housing.* The survey results refute the notion that voucher recipients have a particularly difficult time crossing the city boundary because of the resistance of suburban residents. Suburban-bound movers and returnees did not differ from local movers in the degree of difficulty encountered in finding housing or in the problems experienced during the search. Although more than half of the respondents said that they experienced difficulty in finding a new residence, most of the difficulty was caused by the Bay Area's tight housing market. To a lesser extent, respondents also cited problems with transportation and child care. In general, respondents did not cite discrimination as a widespread problem. Families moving to suburban Alameda County were no more likely to say that they had experienced discrimination than were local movers. Those who did encounter discrimination reported that it was based on their Section 8 status; landlords either refused to accept tenants with Section 8 vouchers or stereotyped Section 8 tenants as irresponsible.
- *Ethnic preferences.* Neighborhood ethnic preferences do not play an important role in influencing where housing voucher recipients move. When asked what type of neighborhood they would prefer to live in—that is, to indicate the proportion of neighbors who should be of their own ethnic background—almost half of the respondents said that they did not care about their neighbors' ethnicity. Suburban-bound movers were no more likely than either local movers or returnees to seek neighborhoods with ethnic diversity.
- *Need for a car.* Having access to a private car does not appear to be a prerequisite for moving from Oakland or Berkeley to suburban Alameda. When they received a Section 8 voucher or certificate, suburban-bound movers and returnees were no more likely to own or to have access to a car than were local movers or nonmovers.

Nevertheless, the most frequently mentioned problem in using Section 8 assistance was difficulty getting around in the suburbs.

- *Section 8 briefing.* The Section 8 briefing session appears to play an important role in the housing search process in Alameda County—regardless of whether recipients make short- or longer-distance moves. Nearly all respondents found the briefing session helpful. The lists of landlords and other information provided about the housing search process were most frequently mentioned as helpful features of the briefing sessions. The most frequently made suggestion for improving the Section 8 program was to provide longer, better lists of landlords who accept Section 8 vouchers—that is not surprising, given the area’s tight housing market.
- *Level of satisfaction with the housing search.* Despite the tight housing market, approximately 90 percent of the Section 8 movers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their search for housing. Suburban-bound movers and returnees were no more likely to express dissatisfaction than were local movers.
- *Trends in suburban moving.* The shift of Section 8 families from Oakland and Berkeley to suburban Alameda County has been gradual. Before receiving their Section 8 vouchers or certificates, 82 percent of the surveyed families lived in Oakland and 17 percent lived in Berkeley; 62 percent first used their vouchers or certificates in Oakland and 14 percent in Berkeley. At the time of the survey in late 1999, 45 percent lived in Oakland, and 12 percent lived in Berkeley. Of the families moving to suburban Alameda County, 43 percent lived in three communities: Hayward, San Leandro, and Ashland.
- *Improved living standards.* In general, Section 8 families who moved from Oakland and Berkeley to suburban Alameda County experienced improvements because of the move. Compared with local movers, suburban-bound movers settled in areas with higher median household income levels and higher median housing values, based on census data for origin and destination neighborhoods. Suburban-bound movers were also more likely to move into more ethnically diverse areas, with declines in the percentage of African American population and modest increases in the percentage of Hispanic population.
- *Adjustment to suburbs.* Perhaps most important, the study results contradict findings from earlier research about the difficulties experienced by Section 8 voucher recipients when they move from the central city to the suburbs. In fact, adjusting to the suburbs was not a major issue for survey respondents. Oakland and Berkeley families who relocated to suburban Alameda County experienced little difficulty in getting along with their landlord or neighbors, either initially or after six months. Parents believed that their children “fit in” at school shortly after the move had taken place and six months later.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES BY MOBILITY STATUS**

The survey results showed that the families who moved tended to be younger than those who did not move or those who moved locally (see Table 3.1). For example, 46 percent of suburban-bound movers are 30 to 39 years old. In comparison, about 43 percent of nonmovers are 60 years old or older.<sup>1</sup> This difference is consistent with previous research showing that older people are less likely to move than younger people.

Reflecting these differences, nonmovers surveyed had lived at their current location longer than any of the other three groups—15.5 years compared with 5.8 years for local movers, and 3.5 years for suburban-bound movers. Returnees had lived at their current locations for just 2.8 years. Their relative transience may be related to looser neighborhood ties.

Differences in age also help to account for two other findings: (1) nonmovers are more likely to be disabled or retired, and (2) nonmovers are less likely to depend on AFDC/TANF (Aid to Families with Dependent Children/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)—nonmovers are more likely to rely on social security or pension payments.

Section 8 suburban-bound movers have higher incomes than the other three groups studied—nonmovers, local movers, and returnees. Having a higher income probably makes it easier for a family to move into suburban Alameda County and remain there. The four groups did not differ significantly with respect to educational attainment.

Men are more likely to be in the local movers category (21 percent) than in the suburban-bound, returnee, or nonmover categories (5 percent, 12 percent, and 14 percent respectively). It is possible that many single men receiving Section 8 assistance are disabled or handicapped. Among these, local movers may remain close to their original location because public transportation is more readily available in Oakland and Berkeley than it is in suburban Alameda County, and social services are more concentrated in the cities.

## **REASONS FOR USING/NOT USING SECTION 8 PORTABILITY**

### **Suburban-Bound Movers**

The survey asked the following question of Oakland and Berkeley families who had relocated to suburban Alameda County and remained there: “What was the main reason you decided to use your Section 8 [voucher/certificate] to move to another town?” Their responses were coded according to seven categories (see Table 3.2).

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<sup>1</sup>Many elderly voucher recipients were part of the sample even though HUD’s efforts to promote suburban housing opportunities primarily relate to households with children. One of the research questions asked: How do Section 8 families who move differ from those who do not? To answer this question, it was necessary to draw a random sample of nonmovers—a group that included many elderly.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**Demographic Characteristics, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status				Total Sample	Significance
	Nonmovers	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Age						
20 to 29	0.0%	4.2%	5.2%	14.3%	5.0%	***
30 to 39	9.5%	22.1%	46.3%	35.7%	32.4%	
40 to 49	23.8%	26.3%	26.1%	28.6%	26.1%	
50 to 59	23.8%	22.1%	11.2%	10.7%	16.4%	
60 to 69	4.8%	14.7%	9.0%	3.6%	9.7%	
70 and above	38.1%	10.5%	2.2%	7.1%	10.4%	
N =	41	95	134	28	299	
Educational level						
Less than high school diploma	29.3%	17.9%	20.1%	25.0%	21.1%	N.S.
High school diploma	24.4%	35.8%	29.1%	35.7%	31.2%	
Post-high school education	31.7%	38.9%	32.1%	35.7%	34.6%	
Associates degree or higher	14.6%	7.4%	18.7%	3.6%	13.1%	
N =	41	95	134	28	298	
Received welfare (AFDC/TANF)						
Yes	28.6%	57.9%	61.2%	64.3%	55.9%	***
No	71.4%	42.1%	38.8%	35.7%	44.1%	
N =	42	95	134	28	299	
Employment status						
Employed	28.6%	18.8%	22.0%	21.4%	21.8%	**
Unemployed	9.5%	28.1%	25.8%	25.0%	24.2%	
Disabled or retired	47.6%	32.3%	22.7%	14.3%	28.5%	
Student or homemaker	14.3%	20.8%	29.5%	39.3%	25.5%	
N =	42	96	132	28	298	
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic	2.5%	4.3%	5.6%	0.0%	4.2%	N.S.
White (not Hispanic)	15.0%	6.4%	6.3%	0.0%	7.0%	
African American (not Hispanic)	77.5%	86.2%	84.9%	100.0%	85.7%	
Asian (not Hispanic)	5.0%	3.2%	3.2%	0.0%	3.1%	
N =	40	94	126	27	287	
Sex						
Male	14.3%	20.8%	5.2%	11.7%	11.7%	**
Female	85.7%	79.2%	94.8%	88.3%	88.3%	
N =	42	96	134	28	300	
Mean age	60.54	49.77	43.20	42.50	47.66	***
N =	42	95	134	28	299	
Mean household size	1.83	2.54	2.63	2.93	2.52	**
N =	42	96	134	28	300	
Mean number of children 17 years old or younger	.52	1.18	1.38	1.50	1.21	**
N =	42	96	134	28	300	
Mean income	\$11,436	\$10,564	\$15,017	\$12,451	\$12,851	***
N =	42	96	134	28	300	
Mean length of residence at current location (years)	15.5	5.8	3.5	2.8	5.29	***
N =	26	78	132	26	262	

Note: \* Significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level. N.S. = not significant.

**TABLE 3.2**  
**Reasons for Moving to Another City or Town**

Reason	Percentage of Suburban-Bound Movers
Drugs or crime at original location	24.5
Housing conditions (poor at old location, better at new one)	24.5
Better for the children at new location	17.0
Familiar with new neighborhood	13.8
Personal changes (e.g., something new)	9.4
Landlord at original location	7.5
Section 8 program allowed move across boundary	3.1

Note: Total N = 159.

One-quarter of the suburban-bound movers cited problems in their original neighborhood as the reason for leaving—drugs, crime, and noise—and one-quarter thought the suburbs would be a better place to raise children. Some respondents (approximately 14 percent) were familiar with the new area, often because other family members were living there.

One-fourth of the suburban-bound movers cited housing conditions as their reason for leaving their original location. Some said that they wanted a better place to live, others said that they could not find affordable housing at the original location. Others (approximately 8 percent) reported problems with their landlords at the original location (for example, the landlord did not maintain the premises or did not accept housing vouchers).<sup>2</sup> Nine percent gave personal reasons for leaving the original location, including a desire for a new environment. Only 3 percent cited the fact that the Section 8 program facilitated cross-jurisdictional moves.

### Nonmovers and Local Movers

Families who did not move to suburban Alameda County were asked about their awareness of the portability feature of the Section 8 program: “When you got your [voucher or certificate], were you aware that you could move into another city or town in the area of another housing authority? Did you think you had to stay in the same housing authority’s area, or hadn’t you really thought about it?” Fifty-nine percent of the 138 nonmovers and local movers knew that they could use their Section 8 voucher or certificate to move away; 31 percent thought that they had to remain in the same housing authority’s area; and the remaining 10 percent had not thought about it.

Respondents who had thought about using Section 8 portability and those who said that they had not thought about it were then asked, “What was the main reason you decided not to use your Section 8 [voucher or certificate] to move to another town?” The most frequently given reason—cited by more than half of the respondents (56 percent)—was neighborhood ties (nice neighbors, feel settled in, low incidence of crime).

<sup>2</sup> As can be seen from these answers, respondents sometimes did not explain why they took advantage of the portability option. Instead, they explained why they moved *from* their original location.

Respondents also cited convenience (close to public transportation, stores, schools, and churches); advantages for raising children (did not want to send the children to a new school); the difficulty of finding a new house with an affordable rent; resistant landlords (landlords who would not accept Section 8 vouchers); and unwillingness to leave a desirable house at the original location. Only 2 percent of the respondents said the time limits set by the program influenced their decision: families who could not find a place within the allotted time risked losing their vouchers. (See Table 3.3.)

**TABLE 3.3**  
**Reasons Decided Not to Use Section 8 Voucher to Move Out of the Original City**

Reason	Percentage of Respondents Not Using Section 8 Voucher to Move Out of Original City
Neighborhood ties at the original location	55.9
Original location more convenient	17.2
Original location better for raising children	9.7
Difficult to find a house outside the original city	9.7
Resistant landlords outside the original city	4.3
Time limitations of the Section 8 program	2.2
Unwilling to leave a desirable house at the original location	1.1

*Note:* N = 93. Respondents were nonmovers and local movers who had not thought about using the portability option or who had considered using portability but decided not to do so.

Why did some families not move at all after they received a Section 8 voucher or certificate? Were they settled in their original location, or would they have preferred to move but were unable to find a suitable unit? The survey asked nonmovers, “Have you ever looked for a new home or apartment since you started getting your Section 8 [voucher or certificate]?”

Three-fourths of the nonmovers had not looked for a new home. When asked why they had not looked, three-fifths cited familiarity with their current neighborhood. Far fewer cited convenience, the presence of good housing, or personal factors, such as disabilities or old age, that prevented an active housing search. (See Table 3.4.)

**TABLE 3.4**  
**Reasons for Not Looking for a New Home**

Reason	Percentage of Nonmovers Who Had Not Looked for a New Home
Familiarity with the neighborhood at the original location	60.0
Housing search obstacles (e.g., age)	13.3
Good housing at original location	10.0
Disability	13.3
Original neighborhood convenient	3.3

*Note:* N = 30. Respondents were nonmovers who had not looked for a new home.

Most of the respondents who had looked for a new home but had not moved cited the lack of affordable housing or the high cost of moving. A few mentioned positive features of their current location or disabilities that would make moving difficult.

### Returnees

The survey asked returnees to provide the main reason for moving back to Berkeley or Oakland after using Section 8 assistance to relocate to suburban Alameda County. More than half gave *pull* reasons: they were attracted to affordable, decent housing (25 percent) or by positive neighborhood characteristics such as proximity to family or employment (29 percent). Others moved back for *push* reasons: they experienced problems in the suburban neighborhood, for example, inconvenience or unfriendly neighbors (21 percent), or they could not find affordable housing in the suburbs (25 percent). (See Table 3.5).

**TABLE 3.5**  
**Reasons for Moving Back to Berkeley or Oakland**

Reason	Percentage of Families Who Moved from Suburban Alameda County to Oakland or Berkeley
Positive neighborhood characteristics at the Berkeley or Oakland location	29.2
Positive housing characteristics at the Berkeley or Oakland location	25.0
Unsuccessful housing search	25.0
Negative neighborhood characteristics at the suburban location	20.8

Note: Total number of returnees responding to the question = 24.

### HOUSING SEARCH CHARACTERISTICS

What motivates people to move after they receive a Section 8 voucher or certificate? When asked to state the “most important reason” for their move, about half of the respondents (52 percent) cited housing deficiencies, such as the need for more space, while another 7 percent cited the lack of affordable housing. Nearly one-fifth wanted to get away from neighborhood problems: crime or drug dealing (11 percent) or other neighborhood problems (7 percent). (See Table 3.6.)

Some moved because they were displaced (e.g., their landlord stopped accepting or did not accept Section 8 vouchers) (8 percent). Others stated that they were receiving housing assistance from Section 8 and, therefore, could afford to move (11 percent). A final group said that they had personal reasons (e.g., they wanted to make a fresh start) (4 percent). One might have expected that when compared with local movers, suburban-bound movers would be more likely to be motivated by a desire for better neighborhood conditions; however, there were in fact insignificant differences between the groups in the reasons given for moving from their original location. (See Table 3.6).

**TABLE 3.6**  
**Housing Search Characteristics, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Main reason for moving from original location					
Housing deficiencies	54.1%	50.7%	53.6%	52.2%	N.S.
Housing not affordable	7.1%	6.0%	7.1%	6.5%	
Crime/drugs	8.2%	14.2%	7.1%	11.3%	
Other neighborhood problems	1.2%	11.9%	3.6%	7.3%	
Displaced from original location	10.6%	7.5%	3.6%	8.1%	
Personal reasons	4.7%	3.7%	3.6%	4.0%	
Characteristics of Section 8 program	14.1%	6.0%	21.4%	10.5%	
N =	85	134	28	247	
Days waited before starting housing search					
One day	60.0%	65.3%	73.1%	64.5%	N.S.
One week or less	20.0%	19.5%	11.5%	18.7%	
More than one week	20.0%	15.3%	15.4%	16.8%	
N =	70	118	26	214	
Days needed to find an apartment					
Two weeks or less	35.6%	30.9%	34.6%	33.0%	N.S.
Less than two months	41.1%	40.0%	30.8%	39.2%	
Two months or more	23.3%	29.1%	34.6%	27.8%	
N =	73	110	26	209	
Number of units looked at					
One	35.6%	21.1%	20.0%	25.9%	**
Two to four	37.0%	34.2%	16.0%	33.0%	
Five to ten	21.9%	32.5%	36.0%	29.2%	
Eleven or more	5.5%	12.3%	28.0%	11.8%	
N =	73	114	25	212	
Main source of information					
Friends and relatives	47.0%	24.0%	12.0%	30.9%	*
Newspaper listings	24.1%	39.2%	44.0%	34.3%	
Drove or walked around	12.0%	14.4%	16.0%	13.7%	
Real estate professionals	4.8%	9.6%	12.0%	8.2%	
Housing authority or other agency staff	12.0%	12.8%	16.0%	12.9%	
N =	83	125	25	233	
Looked at original neighborhood only					
No	88.2%	97.0%	96.4%	93.9%	*
Yes	11.8%	3.0% <sup>a</sup>	3.6% <sup>a</sup>	6.1%	
N =	85	134	28	247	
Looked at close neighborhoods only (original neighborhood and nearby neighborhoods)					
No	67.1%	87.3%	75.0%	78.9%	***
Yes	32.9%	12.7%	25.0%	21.1%	
N =	85	134	28	247	
Looked at distant neighborhoods only (same city or rest of Alameda County)					
No	87.1%	73.1%	82.1%	78.9%	*
Yes	12.9%	26.9%	17.9%	21.1%	
N =	85	134	28	247	

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TABLE 3.6 continued

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Looked at neighborhoods outside of original city only					
No	97.6%	82.8%	89.3%	88.7%	**
Yes	2.4% <sup>b</sup>	17.2%	10.7%	11.3%	
N =	85	134	28	247	
Reason for looking at neighborhood(s)					
Schools	9.7%	13.8%	7.7%	11.7%	N.S.
Convenience	9.7%	14.7%	3.8%	11.7%	
Less crime	6.9%	6.9%	3.8%	6.5%	
Familiar neighborhood	51.4%	44.8%	57.7%	48.6%	
Section 8 restrictions	6.9%	9.5%	7.7%	8.4%	
Family and friends	15.3%	10.3%	19.2%	13.1%	
N =	72	116	26	214	
Had access to a car before the move					
No	50.0%	23.9%	14.3%	42.2%	*
Yes	50.0%	76.1%	85.7%	57.8%	
N =	96	134	28	258	
Had access to a car after the move					
No	36.5%	23.9%	14.3%	27.5%	*
Yes	63.5%	76.1%	85.7%	72.5%	
N =	96	134	28	258	
Change in access to a car (before vs. after the move)					
Had access to a car at both points	43.8%	52.2%	57.1%	49.6%	*
Had access to a car at neither point	30.2%	14.9%	3.6%	19.4%	
Had access to a car before the move; did not have access to one after	6.3%	9.0%	10.7%	8.1%	
Did not have access to a car before the move; did have access to one after	19.8%	23.9%	28.6%	22.9%	
N =	96	134	28	258	
Difficult to find a home					
No	51.8%	42.9%	48.1%	46.5%	N.S.
Yes	48.2%	57.1%	51.9%	53.5%	
N =	83	133	27	243	
Reason the housing search was difficult					
Transportation or day care	27.3%	16.7%	40.0%	22.0%	N.S.
Program requirements	6.1%	3.0%	10.0%	4.6%	
Illness or lack of energy	6.1%	6.1%	0.0%	5.5%	
Tight housing market	57.6%	71.2%	50.0%	65.1%	
Bad credit rating	3.0%	3.0%	0.0%	2.8%	
N =	33	66	10	109 <sup>c</sup>	
Ways respondent overcame difficulty in housing search					
Housing search technique	38.9%	40.8%	42.9%	40.5%	N.S.
Persistence	61.1%	59.2%	57.1%	59.5%	
N =	36	76	14	126 <sup>c</sup>	

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TABLE 3.6 continued

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Proportion of neighborhood population that should be like the respondent					
Two-thirds or more	17.4%	13.6%	12.5%	14.9%	N.S.
About half	39.1%	32.2%	25.0%	33.9%	
Less than half	43.5%	54.2%	62.5	51.2%	
N =	46	59	16	121 <sup>d</sup>	
Discrimination encountered during the housing search					
Yes	22.9%	33.6%	35.7%	30.2%	N.S.
No	77.1%	66.4%	64.3%	69.8%	
N =	83	131	28	242	
Type of discrimination experienced					
Section 8	52.6%	61.4%	50.0%	57.5%	N.S.
Children	5.3%	6.8%	20.0%	8.2%	
Physical appearance	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	2.7%	
Youth	0.0%	4.5%	10.0%	4.1%	
Race	15.6%	15.9%	0.0%	13.7%	
Disabilities	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	
Bad credit	10.5%	4.5%	10.0%	6.8%	
Landlord claims no vacancy	10.5%	2.3%	10.0%	5.5%	
N =	19	44	10	73 <sup>e</sup>	
Most important reason for choosing the new location after receiving a Section 8 voucher or certificate					
Better for raising children	2.4%	6.9%	0.0%	4.5%	N.S.
Convenience	14.5%	12.2%	25.0%	14.5%	
Familiar neighborhood	25.3%	16.8%	10.7%	19.0%	
Low crime	3.6%	4.6%	3.6%	4.1%	
Housing characteristics	41.0%	38.9%	46.4%	40.5%	
Limited housing search	13.3%	20.6%	14.3%	17.4%	
N =	83	131	28	242	
Briefing session was very helpful					
No	26.1%	36.5%	33.3%	32.4%	N.S.
Yes	73.9%	63.5%	66.7%	67.6%	
N =	88	126	27	241	
Reason briefing session was helpful					
Housing search assistance	51.4%	50.5%	52.2%	51.0%	N.S.
Portability advice	15.3%	14.9%	4.3%	13.8%	
Program information	11.1%	17.8%	21.7%	15.8%	
Information on tenant and landlord responsibilities	22.2%	16.8%	21.7%	19.4%	
N =	72	101	23	196 <sup>f</sup>	
Additional services that need to be provided					
Better information	8.6%	16.0%	21.4%	14.1%	N.S.
Better listings	31.4%	48.0%	28.6%	39.4%	
More financial assistance	14.3%	16.0%	7.1%	14.1%	
More client services	34.3%	12.0%	21.4%	21.2%	
Housing inspection	2.9%	0.0%	7.1%	2.0%	
Extend time limit	8.6%	8.0%	14.3%	9.1%	
N =	35	50	14	99 <sup>g</sup>	

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TABLE 3.6 continued

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Number of portability problems					
None	—	47.7%	37.0%	45.8%	N.S.
One	—	28.1%	40.7%	30.3%	
Two or more	—	24.2%	22.2%	23.9%	
N =	h	128	27	155	
Very satisfied with the housing search					
No	32.9%	40.9%	39.3%	38.0%	N.S.
Yes	67.1%	59.1%	60.7%	62.0%	
N =	82	132	28	242	
Mean number of days waited before starting the housing search	7.74	18.08	4.81	13.09	N.S.
N =	70	118	26	214	
Mean number of days needed to find an apartment	37.59	38.26	50.11	39.50	N.S.
N =	73	110	26	209	
Mean number of places looked at	4.31	7.96	9.52	6.86	*
N =	73	116	25	214	
Mean number of problems related to portability <sup>h</sup>	—	0.93	0.93	0.93	N.S.
N =	—	128	27	155	

Notes: \*Significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level. N.S. = not significant.

<sup>a</sup>Some families made local moves first before moving to suburban Alameda County. These families said they looked only in their original neighborhood when making their initial move.

<sup>b</sup>It is not clear why these householders said that they looked outside the original city only but wound up in making a local move.

<sup>c</sup>These two questions were asked only of those respondents who said that they experienced difficulty in finding a home. This accounts for the drop-off in sample size.

<sup>d</sup>The remaining respondents either said that they did not care who lived in their neighborhood, said they did not know their neighbors' ethnicity, or refused to answer the question.

<sup>e</sup>The small sample size reflects the fact that this question was asked only of those who did encounter discrimination in the housing search.

<sup>f</sup>The remaining respondents either thought that the briefing session was not helpful or provided a response that was not codable.

<sup>g</sup>The remaining respondents either said that they "didn't know" or refused to answer the question.

<sup>h</sup>Analysis limited to suburban-bound movers and returnees.

## Beginning the Search

On average, after receiving their voucher, families waited 13 days before starting the housing search.<sup>3</sup> Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the families moved immediately (i.e., within one day). Approximately one-fifth (19 percent) started their search within a week, and a little less than one-fifth (17 percent) waited more than one week. The differences among suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees in initiating the housing search were not statistically significant. (See Table 3.6.)

<sup>3</sup>As shown in Table 3.6, this analysis includes local movers, suburban-bound movers, and returnees; nonmovers are excluded.

### Duration of the Search

Returnees spent more time searching for a home than either suburban-bound movers or local movers, but the differences were not statistically significant, nor were the reasons for the differences clear.

On average, respondents as a whole looked at approximately seven housing units before deciding where to move. About one-fourth looked at only one unit; while one-third looked at two, three, or four units. Returnees looked at the most units (an average of 10); on average, suburban-bound movers looked at eight units, and local movers looked at four units. (See Table 3.6.)

### Geographical Scope of the Search

Respondents were asked six separate questions about locations that they did or did not consider in their search for housing. Taken together, the results indicate that while many respondents looked for housing nearby, others conducted more extensive searches. Some 35 percent of the respondents searched in their original neighborhood, and 60 percent looked in nearby neighborhoods of the same town. Approximately 45 percent of the respondents looked for homes in more distant neighborhoods of the same town, while 51 percent looked in neighborhoods outside the town but inside Alameda County, such as in Hayward and San Leandro. Far fewer respondents looked in other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area (7 percent), or outside the Bay Area (10 percent).

To understand the geographical scope of the families' search for housing, the study created four indices from the above-noted six questions, as follows:

- families who limited their search to their original neighborhood *and* did not consider any of the other five categories of locations;
- families who considered looking in both their original neighborhood and others nearby *but* did not consider any of the other four categories;
- families who considered looking in distant neighborhoods in the same city or in Alameda County *but* did not consider their original neighborhood or others nearby;
- families who considered looking in neighborhoods outside their original city *but* did not consider neighborhoods inside the city in which they had lived.

Table 3.6, which uses these indices, shows that as might be expected, local movers were significantly more likely than suburban-bound movers to limit their housing search to their original neighborhood or to nearby neighborhoods. Conversely, suburban-bound movers were more likely to look at distant neighborhoods only or to limit their housing search to sites outside the original city. (See Table 3.6.)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The results in Table 3.6 related to the geographical scope of the housing search are based on the indices rather than the original six separate questions dealing with locations considered or not considered.

When respondents were asked why they chose to search for housing in a particular neighborhood, nearly half—49 percent—said the area was familiar or “nice.” Others emphasized the following factors: areas where friends or relatives resided (13 percent); greater convenience (12 percent); better schools (12 percent); and less crime (7 percent). For 8 percent, Section 8 restrictions impinged on their search. Some cited the restriction that required the recipient to live for one year in the jurisdiction of the housing authority that was issuing the voucher. There is no support for the notion that in their housing search suburban-bound movers and returnees placed more of an emphasis on neighborhood characteristics, such as safety and good schools, while local movers stressed their familiarity with the area. (See Table 3.6).

### **Sources of Information**

The most frequently cited source of information used in the housing search was newspaper listings, mentioned by 34 percent of the respondents. Friends and relatives were another popular source, mentioned by 31 percent of the respondents. Three other sources also were mentioned: driving or walking around different locations (14 percent); housing authority or other governmental professionals (13 percent); and real estate agents (8 percent). (See Table 3.6.)

Suburban-bound movers relied more on newspaper listings, friends and relatives, and driving or walking around the neighborhood, while local movers relied more on friends and relatives. About two-fifths of suburban-bound movers and returnees relied on newspaper listings compared with about one-fourth of local movers. (See Table 3.6).

### **Difficulties in the Housing Search**

Forty-seven percent of the respondents said that the search for housing had not been difficult, but 53 percent said that they had experienced difficulty finding a new house or apartment after they received their voucher. Within the latter group, 30 percent said the search had been “very difficult.”

Despite the small numbers of Section 8 voucher recipients at the national level making city-to-suburban moves, and despite media reports of resistance by suburbanites to voucher recipients, the suburban-bound movers and returnees surveyed for this study were no more likely than local movers to report difficulties in the housing search. Among respondents who had experienced difficulty, the most common problem (mentioned by 65 percent of the respondents) was the tightness of the housing market, followed by problems with child care or transportation (22 percent). (See Table 3.6.)

While the differences in the types of problems faced by the three groups were not statistically significant, it is worth noting that a far higher proportion of returnees, compared with suburban-bound movers or local movers, cited transportation problems or the lack of day care. These factors might have later contributed to their decision to return from suburban Alameda to Oakland or Berkeley.

When asked how they overcame the difficulties reported, 59 percent of the respondents cited their own persistence. They kept looking, trying, and asking until they found a suitable, affordable apartment. The other 41 percent highlighted a housing search technique (see Table 3.6). For example, a friend or relative would drive the respondent to various housing units, or the respondent would make a special effort to make a good impression on landlords.

### **Discrimination**

Thirty percent of the respondents said that they had experienced discrimination in their housing search. Suburban-bound movers and returnees were no more likely to experience discrimination than were local movers. Most of the respondents who reported discrimination (58 percent) said that it was because of their Section 8 status (see Table 3.6). (There were no significant differences in this statistic by mobility status). Respondents reported either that landlords simply refused to accept tenants with vouchers or that landlords held negative stereotypes about voucher holders (for example, that Section 8 tenants damaged property, were not employed, or were unreliable about paying rent).

Far fewer respondents cited discrimination on the basis of other factors: race (14 percent), children (8 percent), bad credit (7 percent), age (the youth of the voucher recipient, 4 percent), physical appearance (3 percent), and disabilities (1 percent). Five percent of the respondents said that some landlords simply told them that there were no vacancies (with no indication of whether this reaction was based on their Section 8 status). (See Table 3.6.)

Only 4 of the 72 respondents who said that they had experienced discrimination filed a discrimination claim. This fact is not surprising, since Section 8 discrimination is not covered by antidiscrimination laws.

### **Choosing the New Location**

When asked what was the most important reason for choosing the location they moved to after receiving a voucher or certificate, more than two-fifths of the respondents said they selected their new location for neighborhood reasons, including a familiar neighborhood (19 percent), greater convenience (15 percent), a better environment for raising children (5 percent), and less crime (4 percent). Forty-one percent cited housing characteristics as an influence on their choice (a nice house, a house instead of an apartment, or spacious). Seventeen percent said that they made their choice based on a limited search (time was running out and the unit chosen was the best available). (See Table 3.6.)

It was expected that suburban-bound movers and returnees would be more likely to choose the new location to achieve improvements in neighborhood conditions, and that local movers would place greater emphasis on a familiar neighborhood environment. The results did show that local movers were more likely to stress a familiar neighborhood

environment than were suburban-bound movers and returnees. Suburban-bound movers, however, cited a variety of reasons for choosing their new place, and returnees were more likely than the other two groups to stress neighborhood convenience as an attraction.

### **Neighborhood Ethnic or Racial Preferences**

All respondents, nonmovers as well as movers, were asked: “Thinking about what you would prefer in terms of the neighborhood you live in, what percentage of your neighbors would you prefer to also be [phrase inserted to match the respondent’s race/ethnicity]?” Responses were coded into ten categories ranging from “all of them/100%” to “less than 10%.”

Almost half of the 300 survey respondents (46 percent) said that they did not care about the neighborhood’s racial or ethnic composition. Ten percent did not know or would not answer the question. The remaining 132 respondents expressed the following preferences: Fifty percent preferred a neighborhood where their neighbors shared their race or ethnic background.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-five percent preferred a neighborhood that was “half and half,” and 15 percent preferred a neighborhood where members of their race or ethnic group were in the large majority (two-thirds or more). Thus, Alameda County respondents tended to be indifferent to neighborhood racial and ethnic composition, or, if they cared at all, to prefer mixed over homogeneous neighborhoods.

While it might be assumed that suburban-bound movers and returnees would place less emphasis on living in racially and ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods than would local movers, the study found that this was not the case. In fact, the differences in ethnic and racial preferences were not statistically significant among the three mover groups. (See Table 3.6).

### **Automobile Access and the Housing Search**

Sixty percent of all survey respondents (nonmovers as well as movers) said that they had access to a car when they received their Section 8 voucher.<sup>6</sup> Of these, 22 percent owned a car, while 38 percent had access to someone else’s car. At the time of the survey, the proportion who had current access to a car had risen to 75 percent, almost wholly accounted for by the fact that car ownership had risen to 34 percent.

Fifty-one percent of all survey respondents (nonmovers and movers) had access to a car both when they received the Section 8 voucher and at the time of the survey; 18 percent lacked access at both times; 9 percent had shifted from having access to having no access; and 21 percent shifted from having no access to having access. There were significant patterns by mover group (see Table 3.6). Returnees were most likely to

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<sup>5</sup>The 132 respondents include all mobility categories; i.e., nonmovers as well as movers. Table 3.6, which excludes nonmovers, utilizes 121 respondents.

<sup>6</sup>These results differ slightly from those in Table 3.6 which are based on a sample excluding nonmovers.

have access to a car at both points in time, while local movers were most likely to lack access at both points.

Although it might be expected that access to a car would enable families to start their search sooner, to spend less time on it, to visit more units, to rely more on “driving around” as an information source, and to examine distant sites, that was not the case. On average, families with access to a car waited longer than those without access to start the search (about 18 days compared with 6 days) and spent more time on the search (44 days compared with 33 days). The differences, however, were not statistically significant.

### **Housing Relocation Services**

Almost all respondents (93 percent) in the total sample of nonmovers and movers found the Section 8 voucher or certificate briefing session to be helpful, and the majority of these found the session to be “very helpful.” Since suburban-bound movers and returnees were more likely to be conducting their housing search in unfamiliar territory, it would seem reasonable to assume that they would have been more dependent on information provided to them at the briefing session. In fact, there were no significant differences among members of the three mobility status groups with respect to satisfaction with the briefing session. (See Table 3.6.)

When asked why the briefing session was helpful, nearly half of all respondents (46 percent), nonmovers and movers, mentioned such search information as lists of landlords willing to rent to a Section 8 family and guidelines on how to conduct a housing search. Others cited information about tenant and landlord responsibilities (20 percent); advice on how to use Section 8 portability (13 percent); and program information on how Section 8 payments are determined, housing discrimination laws, and welfare-to-work programs or services (16 percent). Five percent cited other reasons.

Nonmovers and movers were asked to specify additional services that might have helped them when they first received their Section 8 voucher. The suggestion mentioned most frequently by respondents (36 percent) was to provide better listings of housing vacancies—more listings of landlords or housing developments accepting Section 8 vouchers, listings covering a wider range of cities, or more listings of larger apartments. Twenty-six percent mentioned additional client services (particularly help with transportation).

Fourteen percent of the respondents recommended additional financial assistance (help with moving expenses and with security deposits); 13 percent mentioned the need for better information about the Section 8 program (income requirements, potential problems with landlords); 9 percent suggested an extension of the time limit for the housing search; 2 percent mentioned the need for better housing inspections. Respondents in the three mobility groups did not differ in their suggestions for additional services. (See Table 3.6.)



Suburban-bound movers and returnees were asked if they had experienced any of five specific problems associated with portability. Of the five problems listed, by far the most frequently mentioned was difficulty in traveling around (42 percent). Responses to the other problems listed included the following: the new housing authority provided fewer bedrooms than the respondent had in his or her previous unit (16 percent); varying requirements among the housing authorities (14 percent); too much paperwork (11 percent); and income verification (11 percent).

### **Overall Satisfaction with the Housing Search**

The survey asked about the extent to which the families were satisfied with the process of looking for a new home. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents were satisfied and, of these, nearly two-thirds (62 percent) were “very satisfied.” Of the 11 percent who were dissatisfied, 3 percent were “very dissatisfied.” There were insignificant differences between suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees in the level of satisfaction with the process of searching for housing. (See Table 3.6.)

When respondents were asked to state their main reason for being dissatisfied, by far the most frequently mentioned reason was inadequate assistance (63 percent), a response that included both limited choice of housing and not enough help in finding housing. Other responses included the poor quality of available housing (22 percent), the deadlines imposed for finding a home (11 percent), and the substandard quality of the neighborhoods where housing was available (4 percent).

### **MOBILITY AND MIGRATION PATTERNS**

The preceding section has shown that Oakland and Berkeley Section 8 families found it relatively easy to cross the city-suburban boundary. Furthermore, most were satisfied with the housing search. This raises the following questions: First, how far did families move once they crossed the city-suburban boundary? Second, what was the spatial distribution of the families before and after they received their vouchers? Third, were the new neighborhoods better than the old ones with respect to socioeconomic indicators such as median income levels and median housing prices?

## Distance Moved

Section 8 recipients who relocated when they first received the voucher moved an average of 5.1 miles. Taking into account the three addresses provided by the survey respondents (the original address where they were living at the time they received their voucher, the first address where they used their voucher, and their current address), the average distance moved rose to 7.5 miles.

The average distances moved obscure considerable variation among the three groups of movers. When they made the first move from their point of origin to a new location, suburban-bound movers and returnees moved 6.8 miles and 5.2 miles, respectively; local movers moved just 3.6 miles. Taking into account the three addresses provided by the survey respondents, as above, suburban-bound movers moved considerably farther than the other movers—an average 11.2 miles compared with 3.9 miles for returnees, and 3.5 for local movers (see Table 3.7).

**TABLE 3.7**  
**Distance Moved by Respondents from Point of Origin**  
**to Location at the Time of the Survey**

Distance Moved	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees	
Under 2 miles	53%	8%	36%	27%
2 miles to 4.99 miles	30%	11%	39%	21%
5 miles to 10.99 miles	9%	35%	21%	25%
11 miles and over	8%	46%	4%	27%
<i>N</i> =	76	111	28	215

As might be expected, those who focused their search only on distant locations were more likely to conduct long-distance moves, both initially and to their current location. Also, movers who looked at many units when they first relocated were more likely to move farther away than those who looked at only a few units. (See Table 3.8.)

In contrast to expectations, however, those who said that the Section 8 briefing session was useful were less likely to make long-distance moves (see Table 3.8). Perhaps those who thought the sessions were not useful were already savvy about the housing market and, consequently, were already prepared to conduct long-distance searches and moves.

**TABLE 3.8**  
**Distance Moved, by Housing Search Characteristics**

Search Characteristic	Moved 2.5 Miles or More from Original Location to First Location	Moved 5 Miles or More from Original Location to Current Location
Number of days elapsed before respondent started to look for place to live		
One day	50% (119)	52% (119)
One week or less	62% (34)	57% (35)
More than one week	50% (30)	43% (30)
Number of days taken to find an apartment		
Two weeks or less	44% (59)	51% (59)
Less than two months	55% (66)	49% (66)
Two months or more	61% (51)	52% (50)
Number of units looked at		
One	33% (45)*	53% (47)
Two to four	47% (57)	50% (56)
Five to ten	62% (53)	56% (52)
Eleven or more	63% (24)	46% (24)
Difficult to find a home		
No	43% (93)	53% (92)
Yes	55% (112)	51% (113)
Considered nearby neighborhoods only		
No	53% (162)*	58% (162)**
Yes	38% (47)	32% (47)
Considered distant neighborhoods only		
No	46% (167)*	49% (168)
Yes	64% (42)	63% (41)
Main source of information		
Friends and relatives	44% (61)	43% (60)
Newspapers	54% (68)	59% (68)
Drove by or walked around	43% (30)	47% (30)
Real estate professionals	50% (14)	53% (15)
Housing officials	52% (22)	46% (22)
Proportion of neighborhood that should be like respondent		
Two-thirds or more	43% (14)	53% (15)
About half	49% (35)	58% (36)
Less than half	48% (52)	45% (53)
Briefing session was very useful		
No	57% (70)	62% (68)*
Yes	45% (131)	45% (133)
Had access to a car		
No	48% (91)	51% (92)
Yes	51% (124)	51% (123)

Notes: \*Significant at the .05 level; \*\*significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level.

This summary table highlights key differences in mobility behavior among members of the three mover groups. The table presents results for the first of the two categories of the dichotomized dependent variable; the results for the second category are implied. For example, the first set of results should be read as follows: Fifty percent of those who waited one day before starting to look for a place to live moved 2.5 miles or more. The remaining 50 percent moved less than 2.5 miles. The figures in parentheses show the number of respondents who gave a particular answer.

## Spatial Distribution of Families

As Oakland Section 8 families moved to other parts of Alameda County, the proportion of surveyed families living in Oakland decreased by 20 percent—from 82 percent to 62 percent after the first move. The decrease in Berkeley was more modest—from 17 percent to 14 percent. (See Table 3.9.)

**TABLE 3.9**  
Spatial Distribution of the Alameda County Survey Sample at Three Points in Time

	At Receipt of Section 8 Voucher	After First Move	At Time of Telephone Interview, 12/99
Alameda City	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Albany	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Ashland	0.0%	5.6%	8.4%
Berkeley	16.8%	13.5%	12.2%
Castro Valley	0.4%	1.4%	2.4%
Cherryland	0.4%	0.7%	1.0%
Emeryville	0.0%	1.0%	3.1%
Fairview	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Freemont	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
Hayward	0.0%	4.5%	11.2%
Newark	0.0%	0.3%	0.7%
Oakland	81.7%	62.2%	45.1%
Pleasanton	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
San Leandro	0.4%	6.3%	9.1%
San Lorenzo	0.0%	1.0%	1.7%
Union City	0.0%	2.1%	3.5%
Other county locations	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
<i>N</i> =	262	288	286

*Note:* The addresses of some respondents were available for only one or two out of the three points in time. Therefore, *N* varies in size.

By the time of the survey in December 1999, the proportion of respondents living in Oakland had decreased markedly, from 62 percent to 45 percent; the proportion living in Berkeley had declined only slightly, from 14 percent to 12 percent. Of the remaining respondents (43 percent), most were living in the jurisdiction of the HACA in three communities, Hayward, San Leandro, and Ashland, just to the south of Oakland. Nine percent of the respondents were scattered among several other communities, including Castro Valley (2 percent), Emeryville (3 percent), and Union City (4 percent).

These changes are detailed in Table 3.9, which compares the spatial distribution of all survey respondents (suburban-bound movers, local movers, nonmovers, and returnees) at three points in time: (1) when they first received their Section 8 voucher,<sup>7</sup> (2) at the time they first used their voucher, and (3) at the time of the December 1999 interview. Map 10 displays the spatial changes.

<sup>7</sup> At the time they first received a Section 8 voucher, four respondents were not living in Oakland or Berkeley. Instead, they were living in Alameda City, Castro Valley, Cherryland, and San Leandro.

### Comparison of Origin and Destination Neighborhoods

In general, compared with local movers, suburban-bound movers experienced greater socioeconomic improvement by moving into areas with more racial and ethnic diversity, higher incomes, and better housing values. Returnees made gains in their first move but then lost ground when they moved back to Oakland or Berkeley.

Table 3.10 compares the characteristics of the census tracts surrounding the suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees at three locations: their location at the time they first received the Section 8 voucher; their location after the first move; and their location at the time of the December 1999 telephone survey.

**TABLE 3.10**  
**Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Census Tracts at the Respondents' Three Locations**

Census-Tract Characteristics by Mobility Group	Respondents' Locations		
	<i>At Receipt of Voucher</i>	<i>After First Move</i>	<i>At Time of Telephone Survey</i>
Suburban-bound movers			
% African American	54%	33%	12%
% Hispanic	14%	17%	18%
Median household income	\$23,646	\$28,586	\$32,727
Median house value	\$125,317	\$155,061	\$178,508
<i>N</i> =	117	126	128
Local movers			
% African American	51%	48%	47%
% Hispanic	15%	14%	13%
Median household income	\$21,216	\$23,233	\$25,075
Median house value	\$130,620	\$137,726	\$147,856
<i>N</i> =	77	94	94
Returnees			
% African American	51%	42%	56%
% Hispanic	14%	16%	13%
Median household income	\$24,997	\$28,675	\$23,738
Median house value	\$133,449	\$147,867	\$127,760
<i>N</i> =	26	27	28

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990.

At the time that families first received their Section 8 vouchers, the average suburban-bound recipient lived in a neighborhood where 54 percent of the residents were African American. After relocating to suburban Alameda County, the average family (at the time of the telephone survey) lived in a neighborhood where just 12 percent of the residents were African American—a notable change from the original location.

In contrast, the destination neighborhoods of local movers differed only slightly from their original location in racial composition—that is, 51 percent of the residents in the original neighborhood were African American compared with 47 percent in the new neighborhood. Returnees initially lived in areas where 51 percent of the residents were African American. The proportion was less in the neighborhood where they first used

their voucher (42 percent). However, at the time of the survey, the proportion of African American residents in the returnees' current neighborhood (56 percent) was greater than the proportion of African American residents at their original location.

The patterns for the three mobility groups with respect to Hispanic composition are quite different from the patterns for racial composition. Suburban-bound movers experienced an increase in the proportion of Hispanics when they moved to their current neighborhood (from 14 percent in their original neighborhood to 18 percent in their current neighborhood). Local movers experienced a slight decrease in the proportion of Hispanic residents (from 15 percent in the original neighborhood to 13 percent in the current neighborhood). Returnees also experienced a slight decrease in the proportion of Hispanic residents (from 14 percent to 13 percent).

Both suburban-bound and local movers experienced increases in median household income and in the median value of the houses in the neighborhood as a result of their moves. The percentage increases for suburban-bound movers, however, (38 percent for median household income and 42 percent for median house value) far exceeded the increases for local movers (18 percent for median household income and 13 percent for median house value).

Returnees experienced increases in median household income and in the median value of the houses in the neighborhood as a result of their first move; however, they experienced decreases in both when they moved back to Oakland or Berkeley—a decrease of 5 percent in median household income and a decrease of 4 percent in median house value. Returnees generally ended up worse-off, in terms of median income and housing value, than they were before making their first move.

These findings were corroborated in a separate analysis of the census-tract data that used indices of change created for each of the census-tract variables at the respondents' original locations and at their current locations. When compared with the changes experienced by local movers, suburban-bound movers experienced far larger decreases in the proportion of African Americans in the neighborhood, modestly larger increases in the proportion of Hispanics, and larger increases in median household income and median house value.

What changes do Section 8 families who move farther away experience as a result? Making a distant move is associated with the following changes in the socioeconomic characteristics of the surrounding census tract:

- a lower proportion of African Americans and an increased likelihood of experiencing a decrease in the proportion of African Americans between the original and the current locations;<sup>8</sup>
- a higher proportion of Hispanics and an increased likelihood of experiencing an increase in the proportion of Hispanics between the original and the current locations;
- a higher median household income and an increased likelihood of experiencing an increase in the median household income;
- a higher median house value and an increased likelihood of experiencing an increase in the median house value. (See Table 3.11 and Table 3.12.)

**TABLE 3.11**  
**Correlation between the Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Current Census Tract and the Distance Moved between the Original Location and the Current Location**

Socioeconomic Characteristic	Suburban-Bound Movers (N = 111)	Local Movers (N = 76)	Returnees (N = 28)	All Mobility Groups (N = 215)
Proportion African American	-.314***	.101	-.491**	-.573***
Proportion Hispanic	.426***	-.027	.083	.379***
Median household income	.223*	.011	.249	.409***
Median house value	.228*	-.057	.392*	.352***
Change in proportion African American, current versus original location	.155	.044	-.067	-.366***
Change in proportion Hispanic, current versus original location	.447***	.065	.017	.295***
Change in median income, current versus original location	.190*	.128	-.160	.270***
Change in median house value, current versus original location	-.098	.012	.271	.252***

Note: \*Significant at the .05 level; \*\*significant at the .01 level; \*\*\*significant at the .001 level.

<sup>8</sup> For suburban-bound movers there is a weak positive correlation between change in neighborhood racial composition and distance moved; there is a strong negative correlation for the sample as a whole. It appears from the cross-tabular results that survey respondents who moved five to 10 miles experienced a large decrease in the proportion of African Americans in their new neighborhood compared with the proportion of African Americans in their original neighborhood. Those who moved 11 miles or farther did not experience much more of a decrease in the proportion of African Americans in their new neighborhood.

**TABLE 3.12**  
**Cross-Tabular Results: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Current Census Tract by Distance Moved**

Census-Tract Characteristic	Distance Moved				Significance
	Less Than 2 Miles	2 to Less Than 5 Miles	5 Miles to Less Than 11 Miles	11 Miles or More	
Current location is 51% African American or higher	55% (56)	38% (42)	12% (51)	9% (55)	***
Current location is 20% Hispanic or higher	22% (59)	22% (46)	25% (52)	47% (57)	**
Current location's median household income is \$35,000 or more	10% (59)	15% (46)	23% (52)	41% (58)	***
Current location's median house value is \$187,500 or more	22% (59)	30% (46)	19% (52)	26% (58)	
Proportion African American decreased between original and current location	47% (58)	63% (46)	86% (50)	88% (58)	***
Proportion Hispanic increased between original and current location	33% (54)	43% (42)	62% (53)	75% (57)	***
Median household income increased between original and current location	64% (59)	63% (46)	81% (53)	83% (58)	*
Median house value increased between original and current location	58% (59)	70% (46)	87% (53)	74% (58)	**

Notes: \*Significant at the .05 level; \*\*significant at the .01 level; \*\*\*significant at the .001 level. Figures in parentheses show the number of respondents.

The results for Hispanic composition reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Alameda County's southern suburbs. Increasing numbers of Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups are living there, particularly in Hayward and in San Leandro. Families moving from Berkeley or from Oakland to one of those suburban communities would experience diversity, although of a different type than they experienced in Oakland, where African Americans make up a larger proportion of the total population.

### ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW LOCATION

Some critics of housing mobility programs say that low-income renters face adjustment problems when they move into middle-class suburban areas. To learn whether suburban-bound movers and returnees experienced more adjustment problems than local movers, the survey asked questions about respondents' relationships with landlords and neighbors and their children's adjustment in their new schools, both immediately after their move and six months later.

Suburban-bound movers, local movers, and returnees did not differ significantly in their adjustment to their new locations. Regardless of their mobility status group, respondents reported few adjustment problems at the time of their move (see Table 3.13). Eighty percent of the respondents said that their relationship with their neighbors immediately after the move was "good" or "excellent"; 83 percent reported that their relationship with their landlord was "good" or "excellent"; and 86 percent of the respondents who had children said that their adjustment to their new school was "good" or "excellent." There was remarkably little change in these indicators between the time of the move and six months later.



**TABLE 3.13**  
**Adjustment to New Location: Differences between Local Movers,**  
**Suburban-Bound Movers, and Returnees**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Relations with landlord immediately after move					
Excellent/good	84.3%	82.4%	85.2%	83.4%	N.S.
Fair/poor	15.7%	17.6%	14.8%	16.6%	
<i>N</i> =	83	131	27	241	
Relations with landlord six months after move					
Excellent/good	79.8%	78.6%	74.1%	78.5%	N.S.
Fair/poor	20.2%	21.4%	25.9%	21.5%	
<i>N</i> =	84	131	27	242	
Relations with neighbors immediately after move					
Excellent/good	81.9%	79.1%	78.6%	80.0%	N.S.
Fair/poor	18.1%	20.9%	21.4%	20.0%	
<i>N</i> =	83	129	28	240	
Relations with neighbors six months after move					
Excellent/good	83.1%	80.8%	78.6%	81.3%	N.S.
Fair/poor	16.9%	19.2%	21.4%	18.7%	
<i>N</i> =	83	130	28	241	
Adjustment of children to school immediately after move					
Excellent/good	87.9%	84.9%	90.0%	86.4%	N.S.
Fair/poor	12.1%	15.1%	10.0%	13.6%	
<i>N</i> =	58	106	20	184	
Adjustment of children to school six months after move					
Excellent/good	87.9%	84.1%	90.0%	85.9%	N.S.
Fair/poor	12.1%	15.9%	10.0%	14.1%	
<i>N</i> =	58	107	20	185	
Change in relationship with landlord over first six months					
Excellent/good to excellent/good	78.3%	77.1%	74.1%	77.2%	N.S.
Excellent/good to fair/poor	6.0%	5.3%	11.1%	6.2%	
Fair/poor to excellent/good	1.2%	1.5%	0.0%	1.2%	
Fair/poor to fair/poor	14.5%	16.0%	14.8%	15.4%	
<i>N</i> =	83	131	27	241	
Change in relationship with neighbors over first six months					
Excellent/good to excellent/good	79.5%	77.5%	78.6%	78.3%	N.S.
Excellent/good to fair/poor	2.4%	1.6%	0.0%	1.7%	
Fair/poor to excellent/good	3.6%	3.1%	0.0%	2.9%	
Fair/poor to fair/poor	14.5%	17.8%	21.4%	17.1%	
<i>N</i> =	83	129	28	240	
Change in adjustment of children to school(s) over first six months					
Excellent/good to excellent/good	86.2%	82.1%	90.0%	84.2%	N.S.
Excellent/good to fair/poor	1.7%	2.8%	0.0%	2.2%	
Fair/poor to excellent/good	1.7%	1.9%	0.0%	1.6%	
Fair/poor to fair/poor	10.3%	13.2%	10.0%	12.0%	
<i>N</i> =	58	106	20	184	

Note: N.S. = not significant.

## **Chapter 4**

### **ARE FAMILIES WHO MOVE TO THE SUBURBS BETTER OFF?**

The underlying assumption of housing mobility demonstration programs is that families who move from the inner city to the suburbs will achieve improved housing and neighborhood conditions. To this end, families in the programs usually receive special counseling and, in many cases, are required to move to racially mixed neighborhoods with low poverty levels and low proportions of minorities. The Alameda County situation is unique because many families have moved from Oakland and Berkeley to the suburbs without special counseling or requirements.

This chapter explores whether families who moved from Berkeley and Oakland to suburban Alameda County achieved better conditions than other families who moved within Berkeley and Oakland, or who initially relocated to the suburbs but later returned to the city. How do the three groups fare with respect to objective measures of housing conditions, their satisfaction with housing and neighborhood conditions, and their success in achieving self-sufficiency?

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study results—although quite varied—support a general conclusion that Section 8 voucher recipients who moved to suburban Alameda County experienced greater improvements in quality of life than either families who moved within their original city of Oakland or Berkeley or families who first moved to the suburbs but then returned to the city.

#### **Housing Conditions**

Results dealing with objective measures of housing conditions did not support a conclusion that families moving to the suburbs experienced improvements as a result of the move.

- Whereas returnees were more likely to shift from living in an apartment to living in a house—an indicator of an improvement in housing conditions—suburban-bound movers were more likely to shift from living in a house to living in an apartment.
- Similarly, returnees were more likely to experience a decline in residential density (the number of people in a household per room).
- Suburban-bound movers were more likely to experience an increase in housing cost burden as a result of their move.

#### **Residential and Neighborhood Satisfaction**

While mixed, findings about residential and neighborhood satisfaction suggest that moves from the city to the suburbs lead to an improved quality of life. The strongest

support for this conclusion came from responses comparing the current neighborhood with the original one.

- Suburban-bound movers were more likely than local movers to (1) be more satisfied with their new neighborhood than with their original one, (2) feel that they fit well into their new neighborhood, (3) consider the current home safer than the original one, and (4) note fewer social and physical problems (e.g., drugs, run-down houses) and better access to good schools and jobs at their new location.
- There were modest differences at best between local and suburban-bound movers with respect to (1) ratings of their current home, (2) perceptions of improvements in housing conditions between their original location and their current location, (3) ratings of their current neighborhood, (4) perceptions of safety at their current location, and (5) interest in moving.
- The biggest differences in residential evaluations were between suburban-bound and local movers on the one hand and returnees on the other. Of the three groups of movers, returnees were most likely to rate their home or neighborhood as poor or fair, and they were least likely to believe that their current home or neighborhood was superior to their original one.

### **Self-Sufficiency**

While the study provided some evidence that moving from the city to the suburbs helped families move toward self-sufficiency, the results were far from conclusive.

- Suburban-bound movers were significantly more likely to shift from unemployment to working.
- Suburban-bound movers, however, were no more likely than local movers or returnees to go off welfare.

### **OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF HOUSING CONDITIONS**

Three objective measures were used to help assess housing conditions for the surveyed families: housing type (single-family or multifamily), residential density (the number of household members divided by the number of rooms), and the housing cost burden (the proportion of a household's income paid to rent).

#### **Housing Type**

Moving from an apartment to a house generally would be considered an improvement in housing conditions.<sup>1</sup> By this standard, housing quality worsened for the

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<sup>1</sup>This statement is, of course, not necessarily true. It would also be necessary to take into account changes in housing conditions and whether the house is shared with another family.

survey sample as a whole. Thirty-six percent of all movers lived in a house at the time that they first received a voucher. At the time of the December 1999 telephone interview, this proportion had declined to 30 percent (see Table 4.1).

**TABLE 4.1**  
**Housing Conditions, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Type of housing at original location					
House	28.7%	42.5%	29.6%	36.1%	N.S.
Apartment	71.3%	57.5%	70.4%	63.9%	
N =	94	134	27	255	
Type of housing at current location					
House	27.1%	29.1%	39.3%	29.6%	N.S.
Apartment	72.9%	70.9%	60.7%	70.4%	
N =	85	134	28	247	
Change in type of housing					
House at both points	10.8%	12.7%	7.4%	11.5%	N.S.
Apartment at both points	51.8%	41.0%	37.0%	44.3%	
House then apartment	20.5%	29.9%	22.0%	25.8%	
Apartment then house	16.9%	16.4%	33.3%	18.4%	
N =	83	134	27	244	
Mean persons per room, original location	.68	.81	1.10	.79	**
N =	95	131	28	254	
Mean persons per room, current location	.53	.53	.60	.54	N.S.
N =	84	134	28	246	
Mean change in persons-per-room ratio	-.16	-.28	-.51	-.27	*
N =	83	131	28	242	
Mean rent charged at original location	\$358.67	\$391.96	\$380.75	\$378.03	**
N =	76	101	24	201	
Mean total rent charged for current house or apartment	\$730.51	\$853.68	\$781.71	\$800.04	N.S.
N =	96	134	28	258	
Mean tenant's contribution to current rent	\$184.40	\$334.3	\$216.21	\$265.71	N.S.
N =	96	134	28	258	
Mean change in rent between original and current location	\$373.32	\$454.85	\$390.92	\$416.39	*
N =	76	101	24	201	
Mean rent-to-income ratio at current location (housing cost burden)	.20	.26	.18	.23	N.S.
N =	96	134	28	258	

Note: \* Significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level. N.S. = not significant.

The decline was greatest among suburban-bound movers (see Table 4.1). The proportion of suburban-bound movers living in a house dropped from 43 percent to 29 percent. Among local movers, the proportion living in a house declined slightly, from 29 percent to 27 percent. The proportion of returnees living in a house increased from 30 percent to 39 percent.

An index created to compare the type of housing occupied by individual families at the current location with the type of housing occupied at the original location shows

meaningful, although not statistically significant, differences between the three groups of movers. Local movers are most likely to live in apartments at both points; suburban-bound movers are most likely to shift from houses to apartments; and returnees are most likely to shift from apartments to houses (Table 4.1). These findings comport with the predominant types of affordable housing Section 8 families are most likely to rent in the origin and destination communities.

### **Residential Density**

Residential density is another objective measure of changes in living conditions. The study calculated residential density by dividing the total number of people in a household by the total number of rooms in the dwelling. For the survey sample as a whole, residential density decreased from .79 to .54 between the time respondents first received a voucher and the time of the December 1999 telephone interview (see Table 4.1).<sup>2</sup>

Returnees experienced the sharpest decrease in residential density over this period—from 1.10 to .60 (a decrease of 45 percent). Suburban-bound movers and local movers experienced more modest decreases in residential density. Residential density for suburban-bound movers decreased from .81 to .53 (a decrease of 35 percent), while residential density for local movers decreased from .68 to .53 (a decrease of 22 percent). (See Table 4.1.)

The study also computed a change-in-density index for each household by subtracting density at the original location from density at the place of residence at the time of the interview. For the sample as a whole, the number of people per room decreased by an average of .27. Returnees experienced the sharpest decrease (.51), followed by suburban-bound movers (.28), and local movers (.16). It is possible that returnees experienced a sharper decrease in density than did suburban-bound movers who remained in areas under the jurisdiction of HACA because of jurisdictional differences in the occupancy standards: OHA's occupancy standards, for example, provide separate bedrooms for children of the opposite sex, whereas HACA's standards provide one bedroom for every two children, regardless of their sex.

### **Housing Cost Burden**

One might expect that suburban movers would have moved to more expensive housing markets compared with local movers or returnees. To get the houses they wanted, suburban-bound movers might be expected to pay more than the amount of the subsidy provided by HUD, which was based on 30 percent of the family's income. Moreover, suburban-bound movers might be expected to have chosen more expensive apartments and to face a higher housing cost burden (i.e., the tenant contribution for rent divided by tenant income).

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<sup>2</sup>The results reported in this chapter (percentages and means) exclude nonmovers.

Although there were no significant differences by mobility group in the average rent charged at the original location, there were large differences after moving. The average rent paid by suburban-bound movers at the current location (\$854) and the average change in rent between their original and current locations (\$455) were significantly higher than the average figures for the other two groups (Table 4.1). Moreover, the average housing cost burden was higher for suburban-bound movers (.26) than it was for local movers (.20) or returnees (.18).

## **RESIDENTIAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD SATISFACTION**

This section discusses the surveyed families' residential satisfaction across a broad range of indicators, as follows: (1) housing satisfaction (whether the families were satisfied with their current homes); (2) a comparison of the respondents' satisfaction with their current homes and their satisfaction with their homes just before they received a voucher; (3) the respondents' desire to move from their current homes; (4) an assessment of the quality of the neighborhood; (5) a comparison of the quality of the respondents' current neighborhood and the quality of the neighborhood where they were living just before they received a voucher; (6) an assessment of the social characteristics of the respondents' neighborhood—the number of residents on welfare, the number of friends and relatives living nearby, and how well the respondents felt they fit into the neighborhood; (7) how safe respondents felt at their current location; (8) a comparison of their perception of safety at their current location and their perception of safety at their location just before receiving a voucher; and (9) a comparison of the respondents' current and original neighborhoods with respect to 12 social and physical characteristics.

### **Housing Satisfaction**

In general, the surveyed families were pleased with their current homes. Twenty-eight percent rated their home as “excellent,” and 34 percent rated their home as “good.” Thirty percent rated their home as “fair,” while only 8 percent rated their home as “poor.”

Suburban-bound movers were somewhat more likely than local movers or returnees to rate their homes highly: 70 percent of the suburban-bound movers rated their homes as “good” or “excellent,” compared with 59 percent of local movers and only 36 percent of returnees (Table 4.2). The high rate of housing dissatisfaction among returnees might reflect the fact that these families wanted to stay in suburban Alameda County but could not find affordable units.

When movers compared their current home with the home they lived in before receiving a Section 8 voucher, the majority (70 percent) were more satisfied with their current home (Table 4.2). The remainder were divided between those who were about as satisfied with their new home as with their old one (17 percent) and those who were more satisfied with their previous home (13 percent).

**TABLE 4.2**  
**Residential Satisfaction Indicators, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Rate quality and condition of home					
Poor or fair	40.6%	30.6%	64.3%	38.0%	**
Good or excellent	59.4%	69.4%	35.7%	62.0%	
N =	96	134	28	258	
Satisfaction with current home compared with original one					
More satisfied with current home	67.5%	75.4%	50.0%	69.8%	
About as satisfied with current home, or more satisfied with previous home	32.5%	24.6%	50.0%	30.2%	*
N =	83	134	28	245	
Reason more satisfied with current home than with original one					
Better housing conditions	72.2%	61.4%	76.9%	66.1%	N.S.
Better neighborhood conditions	24.1%	33.7%	23.1%	29.8%	
Convenience	3.7%	5.0%	0.0%	4.2%	
N =	54	101	13	168	
Reason less satisfied with current home than with original one					
Worse neighborhood conditions	21.4%	16.7%	66.7%	28.1%	N.S.
Worse housing conditions	64.3%	83.3%	16.7%	62.5%	
Drugs or crime	14.3%	0.0%	16.7%	9.4%	
N =	14	12	6	32	
Rate quality of present neighborhood					
Poor or fair	31.2%	30.6%	71.4%	35.3%	***
Good or excellent	68.8%	69.4%	28.6%	64.7%	
N =	96	134	28	258	
Satisfaction with current neighborhood compared with original one					
More satisfied with current neighborhood	56.6%	71.4%	42.9%	64.8%	
About as satisfied with current neighborhood, or more satisfied with original one	43.4%	28.6%	57.1%	35.2%	*
N =	83	133	28	244	
Reason more satisfied with current neighborhood					
Better for children	4.3%	11.6%	0.0%	8.3%	N.S.
Convenience	14.9%	10.5%	6.7%	11.5%	
Better neighborhood condition	59.6%	56.8%	73.3%	59.2%	
Less crime	21.3%	21.1%	20.0%	21.0%	
N =	47	95	15	157	
Reason less satisfied with current neighborhood					
Worse neighborhood conditions	30.8%	42.9%	40.0%	36.0%	N.S.
Worse housing conditions	7.7%	14.3%	0.0%	8.0%	
Drugs or crime	61.5%	42.9%	60.0%	56.0%	
N =	13	7	5	25	
Proportion of current neighborhood residents who rely on welfare					
Less than half	89.6%	91.8%	78.6%	89.5%	
More than half	10.4%	8.2%	21.4%	10.5%	
N =	96	134	28	258	

*Continued on next page*

TABLE 4.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
How well respondent fits into current neighborhood					
Not so well, or OK	51.6%	39.6%	60.7%	46.3%	*
Really well	48.4%	60.4%	39.3%	53.7%	
N =	95	134	28	257	
Current neighborhood has one or more negative social attributes (high percentage on welfare, respondent does not fit in)					
No	46.3%	57.5%	39.3%	51.4%	N.S.
Yes	53.7%	42.5%	60.7%	48.6%	
N =	95	134	28	245	
Perceived safety in current home and neighborhood					
Less than very safe	56.0%	60.0%	66.7%	59.2%	N.S.
Very safe	44.0%	40.0%	33.3%	40.8%	
N =	91	130	24	245	
Safety of current neighborhood compared with original one					
Less safe or about as safe	54.2%	31.3%	57.1%	42.0%	***
Safer	45.8%	68.7%	42.9%	58.0%	
N =	83	134	28	245	
Interested in moving					
No (not at all interested, not very interested, somewhat interested)	60.0%	64.4%	32.1%	59.2%	**
Yes	40.0%	35.6%	67.9%	40.8%	
N =	95	132	28	255	
Reason interested in moving from current location					
Housing conditions	51.9%	68.0%	45.0%	59.2%	**
Landlord	11.5%	12.0%	35.0%	15.0%	
Neighborhood characteristics	25.0%	5.3%	20.0%	14.3%	
Personal changes	9.6%	12.0%	0.0%	9.5%	
Section 8 program	1.9%	2.7%	0.0%	2.0%	
N =	52	75	20	147	

Note: \* Significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level. N.S. = not significant.

Suburban-bound movers were only slightly more likely than local movers to believe that their current home was superior to their original one: 75 percent of the suburban-bound families and 68 percent of the local movers were more satisfied with their current home than with the original one. As with housing satisfaction, the biggest difference was between suburban-bound and local movers on one side and returnees on the other. Only 50 percent of the returnees believed that their current home was superior (Table 4.2).

Of the respondents who said that their current home was better, 66 percent mentioned housing conditions—for example, more space, a newer building—30 percent cited neighborhood conditions—the current neighborhood was safer, had less drug dealing, and, in general, was more peaceful—and 4 percent mentioned convenience. When analyzed according to mobility status, families in each group gave similar reasons for being more satisfied with their new home.



Of the 32 respondents who said that they were less satisfied with their current home, 63 percent mentioned housing conditions—for instance, the current place was too small. Twenty-eight percent attributed being less satisfied to neighborhood conditions; for example, people did not keep up their property, or the neighborhood was too noisy. Nine percent mentioned crime and drug dealing.

### **Mobility Desires**

The inclination to move provides another indicator of residential satisfaction, since families who are satisfied with their housing usually are not inclined to move. Respondents were asked, “How interested are you in moving to a different house or apartment?” Forty-one percent of all movers said they were very interested in moving, while 17 percent were somewhat interested. Ten percent were not very interested in moving, and 32 percent said they were not interested at all.

Given the high level of housing dissatisfaction among returnees, it is perhaps not surprising that of the three groups of movers, they were most likely to be interested in moving (68 percent). Similarly small proportions of suburban-bound movers (36 percent) and local movers (40 percent) expressed interest in moving (Table 4.2).

Fifty-nine percent of all respondents cited housing conditions as their main reason for wanting to move—they needed more space, wanted a newer unit, or wanted to buy a house. Fifteen percent cited problems with landlords (e.g., the landlord doesn’t fix anything), while 14 percent mentioned neighborhood problems—the neighborhood was beginning to deteriorate, or they wanted to get away from drugs. Two percent cited the Section 8 program itself (e.g., the landlord is getting out of the program). The remaining 10 percent mentioned personal changes, such as having had another child (Table 4.2).

Suburban-bound movers were significantly more likely to want to move for housing reasons. It appears that many suburban movers sought to relocate not because they were dissatisfied, but because they sought to move toward their housing ideal.

### **Neighborhood Quality**

When asked to rate the quality of the present neighborhood, about two-thirds of all respondents (65 percent) rated the neighborhood as “good” or “excellent” (41 percent, good, and 24 percent, excellent). Twenty-nine percent rated the neighborhood as “fair,” and 6 percent rated it as “poor.” As with housing satisfaction, the differences between suburban-bound movers and local movers in the assessment of the quality of their current neighborhood were minimal. (Table 4.2.)

Respondents also compared their current neighborhood with the one they had lived in when they first received their voucher. Overall, 65 percent said that they were more satisfied with their current neighborhood (Table 4.2), 25 percent were as satisfied with the current neighborhood as they had been with the original one, and 10 percent

were less satisfied with the current neighborhood. Suburban-bound movers were significantly more likely than either local movers or returnees to consider their current neighborhood superior to their old one.

Explaining their response, 59 percent of all respondents who said their current neighborhood was better than their original neighborhood cited better physical or social conditions: for example, better-maintained properties, better neighbors, quieter. Twenty-one percent mentioned less crime and drug activity, 12 percent mentioned greater convenience (particularly in regard to shopping), and 8 percent said that the current neighborhood was better for raising children (frequently citing better schools) (Table 4.2).

Of the respondents who said that their current neighborhood was worse than their original neighborhood, 56 percent cited criminal and drug activity at their current location. Thirty-six percent cited negative physical and social conditions (e.g., noise, traffic, and people moving in and out), and 8 percent mentioned substandard housing conditions. Differences among the three groups of movers in these responses were not statistically significant.

### **Social Integration**

Respondents were asked to describe the social characteristics of their current neighborhood—the number of people on welfare, the number of friends and relatives who lived there, and how well the respondent felt she or he fit into the surrounding neighborhood. Almost half of all respondents (47 percent, movers and nonmovers) said that they did not know how many of their neighbors were on welfare, and 1 percent refused to answer the question. The remaining half provided a numerical response. Twenty-three percent said that none or almost none of their neighbors were on welfare, 19 percent estimated that less than half relied on welfare, and the remaining 10 percent said that more than half were on welfare.

Thus, if those who said that they didn't know or who refused to answer are combined with those who estimated that less than half of their neighbors were on welfare, for the total sample of movers and nonmovers, only 10 percent said more than half of their neighbors in their current neighborhood depended on welfare. Returnees, at 21 percent, were far more likely to report that half or more of their neighbors were on welfare than were local movers, at 10 percent, or suburban-bound movers, at 8 percent (Table 4.2). These differences were not statistically significant, however.

Nearly all respondents (98 percent, movers and nonmovers) provided numerical estimates of the proportion of their friends and relatives who lived in their current neighborhood. Eighty percent of the total sample said that none or almost none of their friends and relatives lived in the neighborhood. Sixteen percent said that less than half of their friends and relatives lived in the neighborhood, and 4 percent said the proportion was more than half. The differences in response among the three groups of movers were not statistically significant (Table 4.2).

Almost all respondents (99 percent, movers and nonmovers) thought they fit into the neighborhood—54 percent, “really well” and 38 percent, “OK.” Only 7 percent stated that they did not fit very well into their neighborhood. Suburban-bound movers appeared to fit in best in their new neighborhood. Sixty percent of suburban-bound movers said that they fit in “really well” compared with 48 percent of the local movers and 39 percent of the returnees (Table 4.2).

### **Crime**

In general, movers and nonmovers believed they were quite safe at their current locations. Forty percent of the respondents said that they felt “very safe,” and 48 percent said they felt “somewhat safe.” Nine percent felt “unsafe,” and 3 percent felt “very unsafe.” Local and suburban-bound movers were somewhat more likely than returnees to say that they felt very safe; however, the results were not statistically significant.

A majority of the movers (58 percent) felt safer at their current location than at their original location (Table 4.2). Twenty-nine percent felt as safe as at the original location, and 13 percent felt less safe. Suburban-bound movers, more likely than other types of movers to be satisfied with their new neighborhood, were also more likely to feel safer at their new location. Sixty-nine percent of suburban-bound movers felt safer at their current location, compared with 46 percent of local movers and 43 percent of returnees (Table 4.2).

### **Comparing Neighborhoods**

Respondents compared their current neighborhood with their original one with respect to 12 social and physical characteristics (Table 4.3).<sup>3</sup> More than half of all respondents said that they were more likely to find convenient shopping (61 percent) and better schools (54 percent) in their current neighborhood. Between one-third and one-half said that they were more likely to find six other characteristics in their current neighborhood—better job opportunities (39 percent); people who help each other when there is trouble (38 percent); people who know each other (31 percent); and being able to easily see friends or relatives (30 percent).

Only about one respondent in every 10 said that they were more likely to find negative neighborhood social characteristics at their current location—people using drugs (13 percent); people on welfare (13 percent); run-down houses (12 percent); and violent gangs (11 percent).

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<sup>3</sup> For each specific characteristic, respondents were asked whether that characteristic was more likely to be found in the current neighborhood (coded “3”), whether it was more likely to be found in the original neighborhood (“1”), or whether the characteristic was equally likely to be found in the original and the current neighborhood (“2”). In response to some of the comparisons, a meaningful number of respondents said “don’t know.” In order to minimize the number of cases lost due to missing information, “don’t know” responses were coded as “2’s.”

**TABLE 4.3**  
**Likelihood of Finding Specific Neighborhood Characteristics**  
**at Current Location Compared with Original Location, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
<i>Social and physical conditions</i>					
People more likely to have jobs	34% (85)	62% (133)	29% (28)	48.4% (246)	***
Better schools	29% (85)	74% (134)	32% (28)	53.8% (247)	***
People use drugs	17% (85)	8% (133)	29% (28)	13.0% (246)	**
Run-down houses	17% (85)	6% (134)	29% (28)	12.1% (247)	***
People on welfare	15% (85)	8% (134)	25% (28)	12.6% (247)	*
Violent gangs	12% (85)	11% (133)	7% (28)	10.6% (246)	N.S.
<i>Accessibility</i>					
Convenient shopping	41% (85)	77% (134)	43% (28)	60.7% (247)	***
Better job opportunities	20% (85)	56% (133)	21% (28)	39.4% (246)	***
<i>Social environment</i>					
Neighborhood people know one another	28% (85)	33% (134)	32% (28)	31.2% (247)	N.S.
People help each other	28% (85)	44% (134)	39% (28)	38.1% (247)	N.S.
People watch children	32% (85)	49% (133)	54% (28)	43.5% (246)	*
See friends or relatives	28% (85)	29% (134)	36% (28)	29.6% (247)	N.S.

Note: \* Significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level. N.S. = not significant.

As one would expect from the results presented, suburban-bound movers were more likely than local movers or returnees to cite improvements in neighborhood conditions as a result of the move (Table 4.3). The only exceptions to this pattern were for two characteristics—people watching each other’s children and being able to see friends. The differences in the assessments between suburban-bound movers and other movers were particularly great with respect to improved shopping, better access to jobs, and better schools. For example, while 74 percent of suburban-bound movers said that their current neighborhood offered better schools, only 32 percent of returnees and 29 percent of local movers said the same.

Thus, in general, suburban-bound movers were more likely than other movers to say that their current neighborhood was better in accessibility and to perceive fewer social problems. Differences among the three groups of movers were insignificant in comparing the social environments of the original and new neighborhoods.

## MOVING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

It has been assumed that families who use their vouchers to move across jurisdictional boundaries will relocate to areas where jobs are more plentiful and where employment is more likely to be the norm. The study shows that, in fact, this is the case in Alameda County. At the time families received vouchers, there were only insignificant differences by mobility status in the percentage employed. At the time the families were interviewed, however, suburban-bound movers and returnees were significantly more likely to be working than were local movers (Table 4.4).

Moreover, suburban-bound movers and returnees were significantly more likely than local movers to have shifted from being unemployed to being employed. With regard to welfare status, however, suburban-bound movers were not more likely than local movers to have gone off welfare.

Fifty percent of the respondents who had gone from being unemployed to working cited self-motivation as the reason for the shift (for example, they wanted to be more self-sufficient, or they wanted to get off welfare). Twenty-nine percent cited financial needs (they wanted to be better able to support their family), while 10 percent simply said that they had found a job or entered a training program. Eleven percent said that they had been in school before and had since found a job. The differences in response among the three groups of movers were not statistically significant.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**Changes in Employment Status and Welfare Status, by Mobility Status**

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Employment status at original location					
Employed	18.8%	22.0%	21.4%	20.7%	N.S.
Unemployed	28.1%	25.8%	25.0%	26.6%	
Disabled or retired	32.3%	22.7%	14.3%	25.4%	
In school or homemaker	20.8%	29.5%	39.3%	27.3%	
N =	96	132	28	256	
Employment status at current location					
Employed	23.2%	47.0%	50.0%	38.5%	**
Unemployed	14.7%	8.2%	10.7%	10.9%	
Disabled or retired	52.6%	35.1%	28.6%	40.9%	
In school or homemaker	9.5%	9.7%	10.7%	9.7%	
N =	95	134	28	257	
Change in employment status between original and current location					
Employed at both points	10.5%	16.7%	17.9%	14.5%	**
Not employed at both points	68.4%	47.0%	46.4%	54.9%	
Employed then not employed	8.4%	5.3%	3.6%	6.3%	
Not employed then employed	12.6%	31.1%	32.1%	24.3%	
N =	95	132	28	255	
Reason respondent shifted from not being employed to being employed					
“Just got a job” or entered a training program	5.9%	11.6%	8.3%	9.7%	N.S.
Financial need	41.2%	27.9%	16.7%	29.2%	
Felt motivated to work	47.1%	44.2%	75.0%	50.0%	
In school before	5.9%	16.3%	0.0%	11.1%	
N =	17	43	12	72	
Welfare status at original location, receive AFDC/TANF					
Yes	57.9%	61.2%	64.3%	60.3%	N.S.
No	42.1%	38.8%	35.7%	39.7%	
N =	95	134	28	257	

*Continued on next page*

TABLE 4.4 continued

Characteristic	Mobility Status			All Mobility Groups	Significance
	Local Movers	Suburban-Bound Movers	Returnees		
Welfare status at current location, receive AFDC/TANF					
Yes	26.3%	25.4%	32.1%	26.5%	N.S.
No	73.7%	74.6%	67.9%	73.5%	
N =	95	134	28	257	
Change in welfare status between original and current location					
On welfare at both points	24.5%	23.9%	32.1%	25.0%	N.S.
Off welfare at both points	40.4%	37.3%	35.7%	38.3%	
On welfare, then off welfare	33.0%	37.3%	32.1%	35.2%	
Off welfare, then on welfare	2.1%	1.5%	0.0%	1.6%	
N =	94	134	28	256	
Reason why shifted off of welfare					
Self-motivation	46.2%	70.5%	62.5%	61.5%	N.S.
Personal changes	38.5%	13.6%	25.0%	23.1%	
Went on another support program	11.5%	9.1%	0.0%	9.0%	
To improve financial condition	3.8%	6.8%	12.5%	6.4%	
N =	26	44	8	78	

Note: \*\* Significant at the .01 level. N.S. = not significant.

## Chapter 5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

For many families in Alameda County, the Section 8 program is fulfilling its intended purpose of fostering housing mobility.<sup>1</sup> These families are leaving poverty areas and moving into suburban neighborhoods. By doing so, many have attained a better quality of life. Because mobility is occurring through the regular administration of the Section 8 program, an important focus of the study was to examine the procedures of the Alameda County housing authorities. What is the “regular administration” of the program in the county? Do the housing authorities engage in particular administrative practices that help families make such moves? Do they counsel clients or encourage them to move into suburban areas? Or, are there other administrative practices that encourage mobility?

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A review of the administrative procedures used by the three Alameda County housing authorities to implement portability disclosed factors that encourage portability, but it also disclosed practices and program disincentives that would tend to discourage portability. A key element appears to be the determination of the directors of the housing authorities to honor the intent of the Section 8 portability option and the cooperation of the housing authority staffs in implementing it. The factors encouraging and discouraging portability are summarized below.

#### Factors in Alameda County That Encourage Portability

- *Attitude of the leaders and their commitment to the program.* The Alameda County housing authority directors expressed their commitment to carrying out the program. OHA’s former director said, “I don’t think that a local agency should try to put up barriers to prevent a person from achieving what the law or legislation or rules give them . . . . I don’t want to hinder people’s movements” (Davis 1998).
- *A long history with the Section 8 program and experience with portability.* Because of the long history of the Section 8 program in the area, landlords and clients have become familiar with it. “I am sure it is from word of mouth. Our programs have not doubled in volume, and our portability has,” said a housing manager at OHA. “It started as a trickle when nobody knew it was available. Now it is common knowledge. A lot of people who have never been briefed about portability are going portable. They heard about it somewhere” (Euston 1998a). In the early 1990s, the area could already point to the prevalence of portability. HACA’s deputy director noted, “As we were talking to our colleagues in the early and mid-1990s, no one was experiencing the kind of portability [that] we were” (Wiest 1999).
- *A history of working together.* The housing authority directors in the area have a history of working together in implementing programs, resolving conflicts, and

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<sup>1</sup>For a summary of the Section 8 program, see Appendix A.

looking for solutions to problems. They are able to do so because of their willingness to tackle problems and, in the words of the HACA director, “because we get along, and we talk. . . . People know each other, directors have been with the agencies a long time. We tend to be relatively cooperative with each other” (Basgal 1999). The housing authority staffs also have a history of working cooperatively. “Generally, around here the attitude would be, ‘let’s work this out because we have to work with each other tomorrow’” (Euston 1998b).

- *Authority staff trust each other.* “There is a trust level here. . . . If Alameda County or Alameda City did the paperwork, then it is good enough for us, unless we see something that is glaring” (Euston 1998a). “We made the assumption that the work had been done thoroughly by the sending housing authority” (Wiest 1999).
- *Associations are in place.* “We have an association of executive directors that meets in northern California,” said HACA’s director. “We meet about once a month. We talk about program issues; we talk about policy issues, whatever. When portability started and we had a lot of concerns and interests about it, that association contracted to do a study” (Basgal 1999).
- *Specific attention paid to the portability option of the Section 8 program.* When portability was added to the Section 8 program, the Alameda County housing authorities grasped the complexity of its implementation. In their opinion, the success of portability required the cooperation of all of the authorities. “When portability started, we tried to get a lot of the housing authorities in the area in to talk about what the procedures were and to try to get people to follow pretty much the same thing, which is: Don’t hold somebody up when they come in saying they want to exercise portability; accept the other housing authorities’ documents. . . . That’s when it started to work. Then, we also have certain people we work with. Every housing authority agreed to have a portability coordinator” (Basgal 1999). Early meetings on portability were attended by the various housing authorities in the county and were key to the program’s implementation. “What we did at those meetings was to try to figure out how to refine our procedures and how to talk the same language and how we could work together to make it more efficient and make it flow easier,” said OHA’s director of leased housing (Neville 1998).
- *Support by HUD.* HUD brought all the Bay Area housing authority directors together and listened to the concerns expressed about the procedures adopted by the BHA housing director that were inhibiting the use of the portability option by Berkeley residents. “Basically, HUD then wrote [the Berkeley director] a letter telling him what he had to do” (Neville 1998).
- *Procedural practices facilitating porting.* Certain procedures adopted by the housing authorities make it easier for clients to port. An example is the adoption by the HACA of walk-in hours for families using portability.



- *Waiting-list shopping.* This practice by residents of Alameda County may suggest that California clients are more willing than clients in other states to consider moves to areas outside the jurisdiction of the housing authority that originally approved their voucher or certificate. OHA's former director said, "I think in this particular area there may be more of a regional mentality among all levels of people. So when a person moves from Oakland to Hayward, as far as they are concerned they haven't done very much" (Davis 1998).
- *Payment standards.* It is not known if differences in payment standards attract families to suburban Alameda, which has higher payment standards. Payment standards could be a factor for the more sophisticated client who has shopped around and compared subsidies. The type of housing that families are able to obtain with the subsidy might also be a factor.
- *Widespread absorption eliminates billing.* Although processing families using portability still takes more time than processing clients who remain within the jurisdiction, absorption has greatly eased the administrative and financial burdens of housing authorities implementing portability.

#### **Factors in Alameda County That Discourage Portability**

- *Occupancy standards.* The difference in the number of bedrooms allotted to families with children of different sexes is thought to dampen interest in moving into the jurisdiction of HACA—families in Oakland with two children of the opposite sex qualify for a three-bedroom unit, but only a two-bedroom unit in suburban Alameda. Awareness that this was the case led HACA to urge area HAs to inform clients of the different standards so that they could take that into consideration before coming to the county. This concern may be somewhat offset by the OHA requirement that single-person households are entitled to studio units, even though many clients, if not most, subject to this restriction manage to find one-bedroom units in Oakland that meet the rent criteria.
- *Lack of portability counseling.* Clients are not given any specific counseling about portability in the briefing sessions, nor is portability promoted as an option that provides an opportunity to move to areas offering more advantages.
- *HA transfer briefing requirement.* BHA clients wishing to exercise portability must attend a briefing session, despite the fact that they are established clients; other housing authorities do not have this requirement. The requirement presents an extra administrative hurdle to clients, and the housing authority uses the opportunity to encourage clients to remain in the jurisdiction.
- *BHA and OHA require porters to make a scheduled appointment with a portability clerk.* This also presents an additional administrative step for clients wishing to exercise portability. OHA recognized that this might be a burden for clients with uncertain schedules and decided to allow clients to walk into the office and take their

chances that another client might have missed his or her appointment. HACA's policy of allowing walk-ins on a first-come, first-served basis is more convenient for clients.

- *Tight program management by HACA.* HACA believes that it has a reputation in the area for its no-nonsense enforcement of rules and regulations. Whether this acts as a brake on the portability of clients from other jurisdictions is unknown, but anecdotal evidence suggested that this is the case.
- *Early policies to limit portability.* The BHA director imposed time limits on the return of paperwork by other housing authorities for Berkeley's porting clients. That practice was prohibited by HUD in the early 1990s after the area housing authorities brought it to the department's attention.

### **Other Factors**

Many housing authority staff noted that there are a number of factors associated with the Section 8 program that have an effect on the use of portability, no matter where it operates in the country. Several of those factors are summarized below.

- *The structure of the program, particularly the whole practice of billing, is a disincentive for housing authorities to cooperate with portability.* All of those interviewed at the housing authorities mentioned the paperwork and the accounting complexities involved in the requirement to bill other authorities for housing assistance payments.
- *Increased costs, lack of incentives for HAs to promote portability.* HAs must split the administrative fee for porting clients, even though portability *adds* to the housing authorities' workload.
- *The effect of market-rate deposits limits mobility.* "If they are housed under the old rules, where they didn't have to pay a market deposit, we think it [the required payment of a market-rate deposit] stymies or limits the number of families who will transfer" (Neville 1998).

### **PORTABILITY: THE ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISM**

Portability is the administrative mechanism that enables Section 8 participants to move across program jurisdictional boundaries and to carry their assistance with them. Portability occurs when a voucher holder takes a voucher issued by one housing authority and uses it in the jurisdiction of another.<sup>2</sup> Changing jurisdictions does not necessarily mean that a family will encounter improved socioeconomic conditions; however, in Alameda County, conditions did improve for most of the families who changed jurisdictions. Moving into a different neighborhood within the same jurisdiction can have

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<sup>2</sup>Portability does not mean the same thing as mobility. Mobility is movement between locations with different socioeconomic conditions, specifically, the movement to low-poverty neighborhoods (Feins et al. 1997). Mobility may occur within the same jurisdiction as well as across jurisdictional boundaries.

the same effect. Nonetheless, a goal of the Section 8 program has been to increase housing choices for families and to encourage their dispersion into neighborhoods that offer greater socioeconomic opportunities. Portability helps accomplish that goal. For families seeking to improve their living situation by moving to low-poverty areas, however, moves across jurisdictional lines may be frustrated by the fragmented nature of program administration.

Section 8 portability has been a key feature of the voucher program since its inception as a demonstration program in 1984. In 1987, portability was extended to the certificate program, although restrictions limited its use by certificate holder; in 1991, portability was further expanded.<sup>3</sup> In 1995, under the Conforming Rule, both certificate and voucher holders were granted the right to use portability to move to any location in the United States under the jurisdiction of a housing authority.<sup>4</sup> The incremental expansion of the portability feature of the Section 8 program was accompanied by administrative uncertainties in its implementation. Housing authorities complained about inconsistencies in procedures and policies.

### **Administrative Issues**

The key problem in implementation is rooted in the way HUD funds Section 8 vouchers and certificates. HUD provides funds for vouchers and certificates through an annual contract with the initial housing authority (i.e., the housing authority that granted assistance to a family), but the functions it pays for (unit inspections, income verifications, lease processing, rental-payment processing, lease renewals) are carried out by the receiving housing authority (the authority into whose jurisdiction the family is moving). Thus, the initial housing authority receives the funding, but the receiving authority does much of the work. The receiving authority has a couple of options: it may “absorb” the client (i.e., take the client in as its own), or it may bill the initial housing authority for the rental payment plus a portion of the administrative fee.

With the expansion of portability, HUD issued a mandate on splitting the fee (20 percent would go to the initial housing authority; 80 percent to the receiving authority), but it also published optional billing procedures. Finally, in 1995, to address inconsistent billing procedures, HUD notified agencies that they would be required to use a standardized billing form (the Portability Information Form). The form specifies the paper flow between authorities, limits requests for additional documentation, and sets time limits for billing by the receiving housing authority—a point that was an issue in the early days of portability in Alameda County.

The 1995 Conforming Rule also specified procedures. One procedure addressed the issue of whether families could use portability immediately after receiving a voucher or a certificate. In Alameda County, families looking for the fastest assistance may

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for legislative changes that expanded portability.

<sup>4</sup> The Conforming Rule was intended to merge certificates and vouchers into one program—a merger that occurred with the enactment of the Section 8 Housing Choice Program. The summary of program changes and the overview of administrative issues related to portability is from Feins et al. 1997.

register on the waiting lists of multiple housing authorities, even though they may have no intention of living in some of the jurisdictions. Although housing authorities were not in favor of the procedure, the Conforming Rule specified that families who were legal residents of a housing authority's jurisdiction when they applied for assistance could use portability immediately; they were not required to use the assistance within the jurisdiction first. Those who were not initially residents, however, were required to rent a unit within the jurisdiction for one year, after which they could use portability to move elsewhere.

Despite initial uncertainties about procedures, the additional administrative burden imposed, and financial disincentives, portability became commonplace in Alameda County during the 1990s—the remainder of the chapter explains why that happened. Some of the administrative practices followed by the Alameda housing authorities have facilitated portability, others have impeded it. However, the housing authorities' commitment to the program has been fundamental to its success.

## **HISTORY OF THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM IN ALAMEDA COUNTY**

The Section 8 program has a long history in Alameda County. The Oakland Housing Authority had one of the first certificate programs. Its activities included major outreach efforts to promote the program to property owners and landlords. Families were limited in their searches to housing within the city of Oakland, but the opportunity to choose their own housing “was a newfound freedom for those families,” and one they exercised frequently (Neville 1998). Within the program's first two years of operation, the authority noticed that clients were participating; some families moved every year or every couple of years.

By the 1980s, all of the housing authorities in Alameda County were operating Section 8 programs. Further, there was movement among staff working at the housing authorities. The current director of HACA, for example, began her career at the Oakland Housing Authority. After two decades of program operation, the Alameda County housing authorities are therefore experienced in the administration of the Section 8 program; the staffs have worked together for years; landlords and property owners are familiar with the program; and many low-income families in the area are also aware of the program.

## **PROCESSING VOUCHERS AND CERTIFICATES: GENERAL PROCEDURES**

The three Alameda County housing authorities follow similar procedures for processing vouchers and certificates. These are described below.

### **Applicant Waiting Lists**

All three authorities maintain waiting lists of people who have applied for Section 8 rental assistance and have passed an initial screening for eligibility. It is not uncommon in the Bay Area for residents of other jurisdictions to apply for placement on the various

housing authorities' waiting lists.<sup>5</sup> The authorities are aware of this practice. "There is a certain amount of shopping that goes on [by families hoping to get assistance]," said an OHA housing manager (Euston 1998a). As certificates and vouchers become available, potential recipients are taken off the housing authorities' waiting lists and checked to verify their eligibility for assistance.

There are slight variations in this process at the different housing authorities. In Oakland and Berkeley, applicants first receive forms to fill out and a list of the documents that must be submitted with the forms (e.g., the birth certificates of family members, social security cards, and income statements). The applicants make appointments for interviews with an "eligibility technician" who reviews the paperwork and determines if they qualify for assistance. At HACA, applicants are first brought together in groups of 30 or so for a presentation by a staff member that includes instructions for filling out the forms. After the applicants assemble the documentation, a HACA staff member meets individually with each one to make sure the forms are completed correctly.<sup>6</sup>

### **Applicant Eligibility, Preferences, and Verifications**

Eligibility in terms of income is determined by HUD regulations, but local housing authorities may give preference to certain candidates (e.g., disabled applicants, veterans, or spouses of veterans). The Alameda County housing authorities give preference to their own residents and to those working in their jurisdictions. Thus, an applicant on the Berkeley waiting list who resides or works in Berkeley will be chosen from the waiting list before a nonresident. The Oakland County and Alameda County housing authorities follow the same practice.

All three housing authorities require that nonresident Section 8 recipients live in their jurisdictions for the first 12 months of receiving assistance.<sup>7</sup> Applicants are not always aware of this requirement when they apply to a waiting list in another town. "The result is that someone from San Leandro might be on the [Berkeley] list, but then they'd

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<sup>5</sup>For example, when HACA opened its waiting list in August 1999, less than half of the 15,175 applications were from residents of cities in HACA's jurisdiction (6,671, or 44 percent). Oakland residents submitted more applications (5,914, or 39 percent) than did the residents of any other single city; together, Oakland and Berkeley residents submitted 42.7 percent of all applications to the waiting list (HACA 1999). Other applicants came from cities in the Bay Area (11.6 percent) or elsewhere in California (1 percent). Some applicants were homeless (680, or 4.5 percent), and a few came from as far away as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

<sup>6</sup>HACA instituted this procedure in the fall of 1999. Before that date, potential clients received an application packet and HACA caseworkers met individually with each client. Since applicants often arrived at the meeting without the proper forms, additional meetings had to be scheduled. The housing authority found this procedure to be inefficient and began holding orientation sessions as a new first step in the process.

<sup>7</sup>Exceptions to this requirement may be granted in certain circumstances. For example, in Alameda County, a family may be allowed to exercise portability immediately if the client is disabled or is going to school outside of the jurisdiction (Wiest 1999). In Berkeley, families with many children may be allowed an exception because of the difficulty in finding housing large enough to accommodate them; some find housing in Oakland (Drouillard 1998; Euston 1998a).

have to move into Berkeley. They may not have intended that at all when they got on the list. They may have just wanted a voucher that they could take down to San Leandro, and we were not letting them, so a lot of people dropped out” (Barton 1999). Some recipients living outside a jurisdiction might initially try to find housing where the voucher is issued but fail to do so because of the tight housing market. If a voucher is not used within the specified time frame, it expires and the family loses its assistance.

One option available to families who are running out of time is to use their voucher or certificate to *lease in place*; that is, to remain in their current housing. As long as the landlord agrees to participate in the program, the rent meets HUD requirements, and the unit passes housing quality standards, the client is allowed to remain in the current unit. Once a unit is located, the prospective tenant sends in a request for lease approval and the housing authority schedules an inspection. Inspection of units can take at least a month, especially if the selected unit needs repairs and does not pass inspection the first time. Some families, of course, may want to remain in their current housing, but others stay only to avoid losing the voucher (Simmons 1998a).

### *Income Verifications*

All the housing authorities verify income to determine a family’s eligibility for assistance. They do not perform credit checks on Section 8 clients; some are now doing criminal checks.<sup>8</sup> It is up to the landlords to screen applicants by checking their credit and determining if they have criminal records.<sup>9</sup> Although screening is optional (except for the two mandated criminal checks), HACA takes a close look at its applicants. If it discovers during the eligibility verification process that the applicant has lied about income or criminal activity, the authority will deny the client Section 8 assistance. HACA’s director said, “We don’t want someone in here who we find out is . . . lying about their income; usually they’re doing other things, and so we’re not interested in beginning a relationship with someone who starts off not telling us the truth” (Basgal 1999).

### **Section 8 Briefing Session**

All three housing authorities conduct briefing sessions for families after their eligibility for Section 8 assistance is verified. Briefing sessions bring together groups of approximately 20 or 30 prospective tenants. The sessions last one to two hours. The number of sessions given each month depends on the authority’s caseload. Oakland conducts approximately three sessions a month; Berkeley and Alameda County hold fewer sessions. Consistency is maintained because the same staff members make all of the presentations. Alameda County’s staff members use a Power Point® presentation, Berkeley’s staff members use a videotape, and Oakland’s staff members use slides.

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<sup>8</sup> OHA has instituted criminal checks. All conduct HUD-mandated checks for methamphetamine convictions and for registered sex offenders.

<sup>9</sup> For tenants of public housing, where the housing authorities are the landlords, the authorities conduct credit checks on applicants and screen for criminal activities (Drouillard 1998).

### *Staff Conducting the Sessions*

The three housing authorities use staff members to conduct the briefing sessions. In Berkeley, one person conducts the sessions; in Oakland and Alameda County, two staff members rotate these duties. Until the mid-1990s, Oakland contracted with the city Office of Community Development to conduct the briefings, but the authority took on the task itself in the mid-1990s, believing it knew the Section 8 program and could explain it more thoroughly to participants (Euston 1998a).

### *Topics Covered*

The sessions cover topics mandated by HUD: an introduction to the Section 8 program, client responsibilities under the program, how the rent payment is calculated, where clients can live, and what to do if the client experiences discrimination. BHA's briefing is typical. Clients receive information on the amount of housing assistance that they are entitled to, obtaining assistance in paying for security deposits, their rights regarding eviction, and their responsibilities and obligations as tenants. For example, clients are warned that they can be terminated from the program for nonpayment of rent, for eviction by their landlord, for destruction of a unit or damage to property, or for nonpayment of utilities. The latter point (payment of utilities) is particularly emphasized because clients often do not remember it (Drouillard 1998). BHA also asks clients to initial each item on an information form to indicate that they have understood that portion of the briefing session.

How clients should present themselves to potential landlords is covered in a general way, although tips are sometimes given. For example, in an OHA briefing, clients might be warned to be careful about whom they bring with them to an interview with a prospective landlord. "Sometimes the person who drives you will be sitting at the curb with the radio going so loud that the landlord says, 'No, this looks like a good tenant, but I don't want that'" (Euston 1998a).<sup>10</sup> BHA, aware of the difficulties of finding housing in a tight market, advises clients to "be presentable," and recommends that prospective tenants prepare resumes to "sell themselves" to landlords: "I tell my clients to get a resume, get your stuff together, write down all of your past and present landlords—and I do mention church, come to think of it" (Drouillard 1998).

HACA also recommends that prospective tenants prepare a resume: "This is just like you are going to a job interview" (Wiest 1999). Clients are told to prepare a list of where they have lived, with the names and addresses of landlords, and to bring information on their credit history. "Have all of that right there with you to show the owner that you are serious" (Wiest 1999). Those with credit problems are advised to go to one of the "mom and pop" real estate companies that might be more flexible, rather than to a large apartment development with more rigid standards.

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<sup>10</sup> Toward the end of 1999, HACA was considering the addition of a session designed for clients who were unsuccessful in finding a unit. The session would offer advice to clients on presenting themselves to a landlord and conducting an effective housing search (Villarreal 1999).

### *Discrimination Complaints*

The standard packet of information on the Section 8 program distributed at the briefing session includes a leaflet describing the agencies that provide assistance in fair housing. A housing discrimination complaint form is also included. The telephone numbers of the state and federal complaint lines are given as well, and applicants are told to call the complaint lines if they have problems. OHA talks about different kinds of discrimination and how it can be subtly exercised. “We tell people . . . if a landlord tells you he can’t rent to you on the upper floor because you have children, that is discrimination. If a landlord says he can’t rent to you because you are on welfare, that is discrimination” (Euston 1998a). However, most clients are thought to be more concerned with finding a place to live than with dealing with discrimination. “Since the clock is ticking [the time limit within which they must find housing or forfeit their voucher or certificate], they don’t want to spend a great deal of time pursuing an act of illegal discrimination” (Wiest 1999).

### *Referrals*

The three housing authorities refer clients to outside agencies that provide various services. Referrals for assistance with security deposits, legal help, and assistance with moving logistics are typical. Since security deposits are high and tenants have difficulty paying them, clients are often referred to a local agency that guarantees security deposits for tenants.

### *Family Self-Sufficiency Program*

The briefing session packet also includes a brochure about the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. The program is mentioned during the briefing sessions at the three housing authorities. OHA asks clients who are interested in the program to sign up for more information; at BHA, the staff member who coordinates the program for the agency makes a presentation at the briefing session.

HACA is particularly committed to the program, viewing it as a way to bring about changes in the community and as a particularly good fit with the Section 8 program: “It is very difficult to do self-sufficiency with public housing because mobility is so important in making economic strides. You have to be mobile, and the Section 8 program offers the opportunity for participants to live closer to their jobs and to schools” (Wiest 1999). The Family Self-Sufficiency Program coordinator makes a presentation at HACA’s client briefing. In addition, throughout the year, staff members who come into contact with clients encourage them to consider enrollment in the program, saying, “You know, I notice you have been on public assistance for a long time. Have you thought about working? Here’s a program you really ought to look into that can provide some assistance to you in making some changes in your life” (Wiest 1999). The HACA Family Self-Sufficiency Program has an ample number of applicants, but staff members continue to promote it because they are enthusiastic about the opportunities the program offers to



people. At the end of each quarter, the staff member who has referred the greatest number of clients to the program is awarded a prize.

### *Housing Search Assistance*

The Alameda County housing authorities do not provide housing search counseling or special services to voucher and certificate recipients. Yet, in a number of ways, staff members do help clients conduct more effective searches. In the briefing sessions, the housing authorities distribute the standard HUD pamphlet that outlines the neighborhood characteristics families should look for when choosing a place to live. They also provide local real estate listings and the names of landlords who will rent units to Section 8 tenants. HACA also distributes a brochure that describes the cities in its jurisdiction and their characteristics (e.g., school testing scores and household income). “It’s geared towards mobility within our own area, like getting people from worse neighborhoods to better neighborhoods within our jurisdiction. We don’t normally talk about neighborhoods outside our jurisdiction” (Villarreal 1999). The brochure is given for informational purposes to families who wish to move within the jurisdiction, not for the purpose of mobility counseling.

The three housing authorities provide lists of landlords who will rent units to Section 8 clients, but both OHA and BHA tell clients not to rely on the list alone: “Get out there and look” (Drouillard 1998). OHA suggests that people walk around and look at various neighborhoods, look for rent signs in windows, or “maybe go to the laundromat or the grocery store and look for signs” (Euston 1998a). Clients are advised to determine the level of safety in each neighborhood, to take note of the kind of transportation that is offered, and to make sure there are places for children to play.

The staff at HACA does recommend that clients use the lists (assuming a list is available). “We also instruct them that when they are making calls, one thing they should never do is say, ‘Do you take Section 8?’ From our experience that is a guaranteed conversation where the owner will say ‘no’” (Wiest 1999). HACA places emphasis on how the clients will present themselves to the landlords for the first time. Clients are told that the better approach is to ask the landlord if applications are being accepted and, if the answer is yes, to go to the property and make the best impression possible on the property owner.

Housing authority staffs respond to client queries for information or advice on finding a unit. Some clients come to the office weekly to pick up housing lists; some come occasionally, and others never come to the office (Drouillard 1998). “On demand,” staff will tell clients about landlords who might take Section 8 clients, but “it’s pretty informal” (Euston 1998a). Clients are told to check *Rent Razor* and other free, privately produced fliers for unit listings. Counseling, in short, consists of responding to questions, and most staff contact is limited to processing paperwork for the clients.

### *How Portability Is Presented*

In the briefing sessions, the housing authorities tell families essentially what they are supposed to tell them about portability: Families are told that under the Section 8 program they are allowed to move into other jurisdictions, unless they were a nonresident when they applied (nonresident applicants are required to live in the issuing jurisdiction for a year after receiving a voucher). Procedures for exercising portability are explained. In the BHA briefings, portability is presented “neutrally,” but the presenter added, “I always tell them, ‘I don’t want you to leave! I want you to stay here! We need you!’” (Drouillard 1998).

The briefing session discussions do not present the idea that a family might enjoy greater opportunities if it were to move into a different jurisdiction. “They [moving to a new area and the possibility of increased opportunities] are not really connected. It is not brought up” (Drouillard 1998).

OHA clients are often already familiar with portability and are interested in pursuing it. Staff in Oakland point out that “there are very nice neighborhoods in Oakland—you don’t have to go someplace else to get better housing” (Euston 1998a). The difficulty is finding “nice” housing with rents that are within the allowable payment standards. In both Berkeley and Oakland, the lists of landlords distributed at the briefing sessions contain local listings, not listings of available units outside the housing authority’s jurisdiction.

In HACA’s sessions, portability is described in the context of mobility; changing jurisdictions is not encouraged or dwelled upon. Clients “know they can move; this is one of the things we’ve covered—what’s our jurisdiction and that they can live in any of these cities. . . . It’s more about mobility than it is portability” (Villarreal 1999). Although portability is not emphasized in the briefing sessions, one staff member at HACA commented, “We are always very free with our information about portability with the clients. We have no vested interest in keeping them here. It doesn’t matter to us whether they stay or go because there will be others coming in to replace them” (Wiest 1999).

### **Additional Service Needs Identified by the Housing Authorities**

In late 1999, HACA was considering the provision of extra help to clients who have trouble finding a unit in the area’s tight housing market. By limiting the amount of time clients had to find a unit to 60 days, the authority would be in a position to check how clients were doing and to bring them together in groups for a presentation on how to find housing. HACA was also considering a follow-up strategy: each staff member would be responsible for calling at least one client to find out how the client was doing and to “sort of push people along to keep them out there looking” (Basgal 1999). OHA has already implemented a follow-up procedure. Clients are asked to fill out a form indicating the address of each housing unit visited. That step was implemented to spur clients along in their search.

OHA staff members described the financial difficulties faced by clients in meeting the initial costs of renting a unit. Clients could be asked to pay for a credit check (\$25 or \$35, depending on where the search was conducted) as well as the tenant's share of the first month's rent.<sup>11</sup> Several officials in the housing authorities recommended providing more assistance to families, perhaps in the form of a revolving loan fund. Steep financial demands are thought to be discouraging mobility in the region. The following was cited by an OHA housing manager as a typical comment by many tenants electing to stay in place: "I can't find anything else, and I sure don't have the security deposit" (Euston 1998a).

Counseling clients on how to be more responsible tenants is handled to a certain degree through the routine administration of the various programs in which they participate. Many clients in Oakland receive multiple city services. They are assigned to a specific staff person at the housing authority and at the local social services agency with whom they discuss money problems, school problems, or other issues (Euston 1998a). The Family Self-Sufficiency Program also offers its participants credit counseling and other types of assistance (Wiest 1999). In general, however, cost limits the ability of housing authorities to offer individualized counseling to clients.

## **PROCEDURES RELATED TO PORTABILITY**

The development in 1995 by HUD of a common form specifying the documents required for families using portability has facilitated the processing of paperwork between housing authorities. In the words of one housing authority staff member, before the development of the form, "we were flying blind in terms of every housing authority doing it slightly differently. One saying, 'No, you have to send a copy of the child's birth certificate.' Some other housing authorities said, 'No, we need something else, and you have to do a re-exam before they leave,' or whatever" (Euston 1998a).

Housing authorities, however, have different rules under which they will accept a packet. In Alameda County, the housing authorities' staff members make an effort to cooperate in the exchange of paperwork and to ease problems for clients who may be trying to locate units in a tight housing market. For example, if a client has found a unit in another jurisdiction, an OHA staff member might call and ask the other housing authority, "If I fax you these forms today and then mail the packet, could you make an appointment for them?" (Euston 1998a). Or, the OHA staff member might call and ask, "I am sending [a client] over there with a sealed packet. Will you accept that?" (Euston 1998a). Euston (1998a) points out that clients who find a unit first and then begin processing their verification paperwork with the housing authority are likely to lose the unit: "The process might take two or three weeks; by that time the owner is not going to save the unit. So we have to try to make it work."

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<sup>11</sup> According to state law, the security deposit, including all deposits and fees, cannot exceed the amount paid to rent an unfurnished unit for two months or the amount paid to rent a furnished unit for three months (Barton 2000).

## Outgoing Families

Outgoing families do not receive special counseling by staff at OHA or at HACA before using portability to move into another jurisdiction. Because these clients have already been briefed and are therefore familiar with procedures and the Section 8 program, they are not rebriefed. Instead, they meet with a staff member to review their paperwork. Both HACA and OHA assign one person to work with families who want to use portability.

In Oakland, a clerk coordinates and handles the paperwork for all new Section 8 clients who are using portability to leave the jurisdiction. The clients' eligibility is verified, and the families are told to contact the new housing authority for any differences in standards; for example, fair market rent levels or number of bedrooms allowed depending on the sex and ages of the children. The Oakland portability clerk makes copies of the eligibility material and sends the assembled packet of information to the receiving housing authority. Sometimes a family has already found a unit, but most of the time, it has not (Malloy 1998). If time is an issue, the portability coordinator will fax the materials first and then mail them, or the client will carry a sealed packet by hand to the receiving authority. There has been a conscious effort to train the portability coordinator to be flexible in dealing with the clients and to understand that "if I spend five minutes making a phone call or faxing something, maybe I can keep this client moving and not have all the hassle I will have down the line" (Euston 1998a).

HACA's staff refers clients who want to exercise portability to the appropriate person in the receiving housing authority and advises them about the process and the paperwork required by that particular housing authority. "The staff knows, depending on which housing authority, because we do a lot of porting back and forth—this is what their process is; this is the paperwork you need to take there" (Basgal 1999). HACA, like OHA, has one staff person who coordinates paperwork and provides instructions to clients wishing to move into another jurisdiction.

The process works a little differently in Berkeley. BHA clients who are already in the program and want to move into a new jurisdiction must attend a briefing. These sessions are held once a month. If a family finds a unit and the next briefing is not scheduled to be held for three weeks, the housing authority will be flexible about the rule. "If a client found a place in Oakland—any place but Berkeley—and the situation is that the owner is opting out [of Section 8] at the end of the month and [the client] had tried hard to find a place, we would do a special briefing for them so that they would not lose the place" (Simmons 1998b).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, BHA does not encourage the use of portability. The transfer-briefing presenter says, "I remind the client that if they do port, they might have to move down from a one-bedroom apartment to a studio. If they are still

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<sup>12</sup> Clients who are not exercising portability and who plan to remain in Berkeley, however, must wait for a regularly scheduled session. The housing authority's position is that accelerating the process for some would not be fair to other clients who are competing for housing units in the same market (Simmons 1998b).

interested, I would ask the person to provide the needed information to the BHA eligibility staff person” (Simmons 1998c).

### **Incoming Families**

Each of the three housing authorities will allow clients wishing to exercise portability to carry their sealed packets by hand to the new housing authority. Not all housing authorities outside of Alameda County allow their clients to do so, but this accommodation has been worked out between the Alameda County housing authorities.

HACA maintains walk-in hours to meet with clients who want to move into its jurisdiction. Clients are told, “Get your stuff together, and come on down. If you have an application, you can hand-carry it rather than having to mail it in a sealed envelope” (Wiest 1999). This procedure has the effect of easing the process for both staff and clients. HACA allows families wishing to exercise portability to begin searching for housing immediately; at the same time, the authority begins the income verification process—not so much to check eligibility, since the clients are already in the program, but to calculate their contribution to the rent payment. The lease date and the recertification date will coincide, even though the clients appear with their paperwork from the initial housing authority—all of which facilitates record keeping (Basgal 1999). If unreported income is discovered, or unreported family members, HACA will not admit the client to its program.

The portability clerk at OHA schedules appointments to explain the processing procedures to people who want to port into the jurisdiction.<sup>13</sup> The coordinator reviews the clients’ paperwork, explains the housing authority’s processes, provides information about scheduling an inspection of the unit they would like to rent, and shows them the forms to be signed by the landlord. OHA checks the clients’ income information and recertifies them if their income information is not current. Once a client finds a unit, an OHA inspector checks it to verify that it meets housing quality standards. At the same time, the inspector uses the income information in the client’s packet to calculate the client’s rental payments. OHA generally does not help clients find housing; it simply provides a list of owners with current vacancies.

Similarly, at BHA, clients bring their packets to a meeting with the staff to check that the information is up to date and complete. Generally, clients have already found housing in Berkeley or they come in to check the landlord listings, which appear once a week. BHA looks at family income at the time of the home inspection to make sure the rent is attainable (Simmons 1998c). The authority is “getting tougher” on checking income and recertifying clients (Drouillard 1998). As in Oakland, recertification takes place at the time the home is inspected.

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<sup>13</sup> In the late 1990s, OHA began allowing clients wishing to port to walk in and wait to see the portability clerk on the chance that other clients might miss their scheduled appointments.

## Differences in Housing Authority Policies

In the mid-1990s, HACA noticed the surge of families moving into its jurisdiction and its effect on staff workload. In an effort to facilitate the portability process, HACA informed the Oakland and Berkeley housing authorities of its policies applying to families who want to move into the jurisdiction. OHA and BHA began to advise Section 8 families of differences in the authorities' policies. "They let people know up front before they walked out the door so it was no big surprise when they walked in our door and found out that things were operating somewhat differently" (Wiest 1999). At the end of the 1990s, occupancy standards and payment standards varied among jurisdictions. These and other differences, some of which are no longer in effect, are explained below.

### *Occupancy Standards*

Occupancy standards govern the number of bedrooms allowed the client. The standards are based on the number of family members and on the sex and ages of the children. In Oakland, a single person is entitled to a studio because of the prevalence of those units in the local market, but in Berkeley and Alameda County, a single person is entitled to a one-bedroom unit.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, families with two children of the opposite sex qualify for a three-bedroom unit in Oakland, but only a two-bedroom unit in Berkeley and in HACA's jurisdiction. Berkeley's and Alameda County's standards call for two persons per bedroom, regardless of age or sex. Single heads of household, however, are not required to share a bedroom with a child, and exceptions can also be made to accommodate disabilities. The difference in occupancy standards is thought to have a discouraging effect on families moving into the county (Basgal 1999).

### *Payment Standards*

Throughout most of the 1990s, the payment standards, set by the housing authorities and based on the fair market rents, provided adequate funds for families to rent housing in Alameda County. By the end of the decade, however, the tightening housing market in the Bay Area was making it increasingly difficult for families to find affordable units in some jurisdictions in Alameda County. Although the FMRs were higher than they had been in 1995, the payment standards were not adequate to pay the prevailing rents. Responding to these market pressures, HACA first increased the payment standards to 110 percent of the area FMRs in certain cities.<sup>15</sup> Then, both BHA and HACA asked for and received HUD approval for exception payment standards of up

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<sup>14</sup> In Oakland, single people are usually able to find a one-bedroom unit that meets rent constraints; thus, in effect, most single people live in one-bedroom units.

<sup>15</sup> The cities were Dublin, Fremont, Newark, Pleasanton, and Union. Under the provisions of the Housing Choice Voucher program, a housing authority may establish exception areas with higher payment standards within the basic 90 percent to 110 percent range. It may also request HUD approval for exception areas with payment standards above 110 percent to 120 percent of the FMR.

to 120 percent of the FMR in their jurisdictions.<sup>16</sup> The OHA payment standards remained at 100 percent of the FMR or lower, depending on the unit size. (See Appendix D, Supplementary Data, Table D.7, for the FMRs and maximum allowable payment standards in effect in 1999.)

Suburban Alameda's payment standards were higher at the end of the decade, and Berkeley's were lower. Do these differences have an impact on the use of portability? The answer is unknown. A client must first be familiar enough with the system to understand the differences, he or she must have done some comparison shopping. If the amount of the subsidy is larger in a particular location, it may be a factor in attracting clients to the jurisdiction; on the other hand, the type of housing that is available for the amount of subsidy is also a factor in whether a family will want to move there.

### *Enforcement*

HACA believes it has earned a certain reputation in the area for toughness and strict enforcement of regulations. For, example, it has a program to collect back payments from people who received subsidies for which they were not entitled; the program collects more than \$100,000 a year. The authority has the impression that its no-nonsense approach may dampen portability, citing anecdotal evidence to support this view. "They'll go back [where they came from] because they don't like us. They'll say, 'Well, they didn't ask us those questions [elsewhere], or that's none of your business, or whatever, and I'm going back'" (Basgal 1999).

### *Security Deposit Requirements*

Before 1996, a single rule governed the maximum amount that a landlord could charge a voucher recipient for a security deposit: families paid \$50 or 30 percent of their monthly adjusted income for the security deposit, depending on which amount was higher. However, a change in the ruling by HUD enabled housing authorities to adopt a policy that permitted landlords to charge tenants market-rate security deposits—which could be as much as two times the contract rent. An OHA housing manager said the security deposit can reach \$1,500 to \$2,000, although the housing authority encourages landlords to keep it as low as possible and to let tenants pay the deposit over the course of several months (Euston 1998a).

Before the change in 1996, the landlord would submit a claim to the housing authority if the family had moved and left damages. Requiring a market-rate security deposit is advantageous to the housing authorities because they are no longer responsible for damage claims. Landlords like it, too, because they believe that it gives tenants an incentive to maintain the unit (Lieberman 1999). For tenants interested in moving, however, it can be difficult to acquire the funds for such a steep security deposit for a

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<sup>16</sup> HACA was granted exception rents of up to 120 percent of the FMR for the cities that had been at 110 percent (i.e., Dublin, Fremont, Newark, Pleasanton, and Union). Payment standards in the rest of the area under HACA's jurisdiction were raised to 110 percent of the FMR.

new unit, especially since they must wait to be reimbursed for the security deposit from their current residence.

HACA was the first of the three housing authorities to institute the revised policy allowing landlords to require market-rate security deposits. The other local housing authorities continued to allow tenants to pay the higher of 30 percent of their monthly income or \$50 for their security deposits.<sup>17</sup> HACA believed the new policy would make the program more attractive to the landlords. It also did not want to be responsible for claims for damage caused by its clients; it hoped that clients would take better care of their units if they were required to pay for damages (Basgal 1999). After 1996, all of the housing authorities were required to adopt the policy requiring market-rate security deposits for tenants with vouchers. Although it would seem that the financial burden of market-rate security deposits would act as a brake on mobility—and it probably has for some families—staff at the housing authorities noted that families have been able to come up with the money required with the help of friends and relatives or community resources.

#### *Time Limits and Restrictions on Requests for Transfer Vouchers*

Participants in the Section 8 program are permitted a certain number of days within which to find housing or risk losing assistance. The basic requirement is 60 days, but housing authorities routinely extend the deadline to 120 days (Neville 1998).<sup>18</sup> About 1990, however, a former director of the BHA established a policy that restricted clients who wished to exercise portability to the 60-day time limit. He also limited requests for portable certificates or vouchers to one a year. “So, basically, what he was saying was that you could only ask for [a portable certificate or voucher] once a year, and if you didn’t find [housing] within 60 days, tough, you are stuck in our community. You can transfer within our community, but you won’t be able to exercise portability” (Neville 1998).

In contrast, other authorities allowed the tenant to request a transfer at any time, if landlords were willing to release a tenant from a unit and if the tenant was legally free to leave. Further, if a tenant was making a serious effort to find housing, most authorities in the area were willing to extend the time limit up to 120 days. The Berkeley policies may have been in part an effort to rationalize procedures, but they had the effect of keeping families from porting out. The city council was concerned that Berkeley was getting vouchers and certificates, but instead of staying in Berkeley, residents “were just walking away” (Collignon 1999). The tight housing market in Berkeley and competition from students for affordable units made it difficult for Section 8 clients to find housing in the city. “[The director] could see that his program was being cannibalized and that he wouldn’t have enough administrative fees to keep his agency alive because such a huge portion of his tenants were leaving quickly. . . . In effect, he was penalizing people and

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<sup>17</sup>HACA instituted the policy change about six months before the other housing authorities (Basgal 1999).

<sup>18</sup>These requirements apply to the old certificate and voucher programs. In the Housing Choice Voucher program, authorities may extend the time limit beyond 120 days.



holding them hostage with his policies. He was doing it to lower the number that would be successful in trying to port out” (Neville 1998).

The Berkeley policies, which had the effect of slowing down movement out of the city, were internal procedures adopted by BHA and admissible under HUD regulations. However, another policy put in place by the same Berkeley director became the concern of the other Alameda County housing authorities, particularly OHA. That policy, which was subsequently disallowed by HUD, also had a profound impact on mobility between jurisdictions. If a client found a unit in another jurisdiction, BHA required the housing authority in the receiving jurisdiction to inspect and approve the unit and return all of the paperwork to BHA within the 60-day period. If the process exceeded the time limit, BHA would not honor the bill for the unit when it was submitted by the receiving housing authority for reimbursement (Neville 1998).

In practice, the policy impeded portability. The Berkeley client would appear at OHA and present a voucher or certificate; the BHA clerk would send the income verification information; the tenant would find a unit; and OHA would inspect and approve it. “We took HUD’s portability rules and the tenant’s right to port out seriously, and we assisted them with locating and approving a unit in our community,” said OHA’s director of leased housing. “Then, when we would send the billing over there [to the Berkeley director], he would tighten the rules so tightly that he wouldn’t accept it, and he was refusing to pay us. During that era, he owed us \$200,000 in housing assistance payments for Berkeley tenants who had moved to Oakland” (Neville 1998). The area housing authorities appealed to HUD to resolve these issues. HUD held a meeting with the directors, heard the complaints, and told the Berkeley director that he must change his procedures.

### **Financial Arrangements between Authorities**

When a Section 8 client uses portability to move from one jurisdiction to another, the receiving housing authority pays the landlord the rent subsidy for the client and then bills the sending housing authority for reimbursement. The two authorities divide the administrative fee paid by HUD. (The initial, or sending, housing authority receives 20 percent of the administrative fee; the receiving authority receives 80 percent.) Because portability often requires more staff time, however, housing authorities complain that the fee does not cover the cost; the obligation to split the fee makes it more difficult to cover costs. The Berkeley housing director’s resistance to implementing portability was partially attributable to this fact. “Another reason he didn’t want you billing him is that it required a fee split . . . and it becomes an economic loser for both agencies. [Berkeley] was not making it with the fees they had, so they didn’t want to lower the fees by splitting them with us” (Neville 1998).

The rent payment made to a landlord by a housing authority on behalf of the client (the housing assistance payment, or HAP) usually changes every year, but it can take several months for the amount of the change to filter back to the initial housing authority. In the meantime, the initial housing authority continues to pay the amount it

thinks is correct, while the other housing authority is billing for a different amount. “It may only be a \$10 difference, but over time we get way out of sync” (Euston 1998a). The OHA has an automatic payment system that generates payments based on the information that has been entered into the computer system. When the authority is notified of a change, it will make a retroactive adjustment and then reconcile the account.

OHA and HACA are capable of performing this function with their computer systems, but smaller authorities that lack sophisticated computer systems perform the procedure manually (Euston 1998a). Even in the computer systems of large authorities, however, the details of moves can be lost, particularly if the housing authority writes over records instead of entering updated information as a separate line item. In addition, a family may move so often that housing authorities lose track of which authority was originally responsible for the family’s case. Other families use portability to try to leave problems behind, for example, unpaid rent. “Bureaucratically, there is nobody that is responsible for collecting debt to [the housing authority] as a result of somebody’s bad behavior in their prior housing” (Euston 1998a). Some of these people “fall through the cracks.”

Checking a single discrepancy may take from five minutes to five hours (Euston 1998a). Some housing authorities, particularly small authorities without sophisticated computer systems, will bill sporadically or delay billing the sending authority for up to a year. At that point, the billed housing authority may refuse to pay, claiming the client was absorbed. Authorities are supposed to notify each other when a client moves or when the amount of rent or a client’s income changes. If that information is not received, the initial housing authority will continue to pay the original amount and may end up owing thousands of dollars.

The imbalance between authorities in the number of clients sent or received can also be a matter of concern. Oakland sends out greater numbers of clients through portability than it receives. It still has the expense of maintaining records for those who have left, but it must reimburse the receiving authorities for the landlord payments. “It is not an even exchange when we are sending hundreds of thousands of dollars and we might be getting a couple hundred” (Davis 1998). According to Davis, OHA’s former director, it is the imbalance that is a problem, not the fact that people move.

From 1993 through 1995, representatives of the area housing authorities met periodically to discuss problems with portability, and there was unanimity on the point that “billings were just awful, a nuisance for everyone. We all understood that for a portable client you get paid less, whether you are the sending or receiving housing authority, and you have twice as much work. I think the main thing that came out of those meetings was that people got to know each other—not so much that we came up with ironclad procedures” (Euston 1998a). The exchange of information about different ways of doing things, however, offered a change in perspective for those implementing the program.

Because of the cooperation that exists, it has been possible to catch clients trying to collect assistance from more than one housing authority. An example of this, cited by an OHA housing manager, was a client who was caught renting a unit in Oakland and another one in Emeryville (under HACA's jurisdiction). "That wouldn't have happened if we didn't know each other . . . . Because we are in the same business in the same area—again, the lack of territoriality really helps" (Euston 1998). Difficulties in reimbursement, when they occur, were not viewed to be deliberate: "It's just like two people trying to use the same checkbook, and do you ever figure out how much you have in your account?" (Euston 1998a).

### **Absorption of Clients Using Portability**

In 1996, the housing authorities in Alameda began absorbing families who had exercised portability and moved into the authorities' jurisdiction. The movement was initiated by HACA. The rationale behind the change was that families who had been living in HACA's jurisdiction for a number of years could be considered permanent residents: "Anybody who has been in our jurisdiction for more than two years is our client; they're likely not going back" (Basgal 1999). When housing authorities are leased-up (that is, when their full allotment of Section 8 vouchers and certificates is being used by current clients), they cannot absorb additional clients. HACA, however, still had vouchers and certificates available: "We were only able to do that because we were underleased and able to absorb them" (Basgal 1999).

It was observed that some authorities are adamant about not absorbing: "We see that a lot with authorities out of state" (Basgal 1999). Sacramento was cited as an example of a housing authority that does not absorb clients; it bills for reimbursement. If rents are higher in the receiving authority's jurisdiction, it may be financially advantageous to collect the administrative fee, even if it is split. Generally, however, it is more advantageous not to split the fees, and the division of fees ends when absorption occurs. In fact, the BHA director who refused to reimburse other authorities for payments to landlords when the paperwork took longer than 60 days wanted the other authorities to absorb the Berkeley client. When a client was absorbed, he could keep the slot used by that client and take someone else off the Berkeley waiting list. "He was forcing you to absorb, is what he was doing" so that he would not have to split the fees (Neville 1998).

#### *Administrative Problems That Accompany Absorption*

A receiving housing authority that is forced to absorb clients can encounter a problem if it does not have room in its program for them. "If you are fully leased-up and someone sends somebody your way and then they refuse to honor the bills, you are leasing a unit that you don't have" (Neville 1998). The other Alameda County housing authorities expressed this concern about BHA policies during the early 1990s.

If the receiving housing authority suddenly absorbs large numbers of clients that have ported in from another jurisdiction, the sending housing authority may experience difficulties. For example, if 100 clients are suddenly lost through absorption by the

receiving housing authority, the sending housing authority must replace them or it will lose the administrative fee it was collecting for serving those clients. Since all of the housing authorities in Alameda County have full waiting lists, this would not seem to be an issue. However, it takes time to process applicants, and that can result in a delay in replacing the amount collected through the administrative fee. That undertaking became necessary in Alameda County in 1996 when HACA first absorbed the large number of clients that had ported into its jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup> HACA notified Oakland that it would be absorbing its clients so that OHA could take steps to refill the slots. “Obviously, that was going to take 300 units out of their program and putting them in a position where they needed to lease up” (Basgal 1999).

OHA is large and was therefore able to make the adjustment. Berkeley, however, reported problems in refilling its spots when absorption began. Refilling a waiting list with new applicants is a time-consuming process. The authority tried to fill vacancies by processing nonresidents from its waiting list, but the nonresidents had trouble finding housing in Berkeley (Drouillard 1998). Some of those people were Oakland residents who had applied to the Berkeley waiting list. They were supposed to stay in Berkeley for the first year before porting, but large families are granted an exception that allows them to port right away.<sup>20</sup> When families who do not qualify for an exception are unable to find housing locally, the authority will likely lose the voucher or certificate. “That is what is happening to a lot of jurisdictions like Berkeley where it is hard to find housing” (Simmons 1998a).

### *Advantages of Absorption*

Since the late 1990s, when the county housing authorities adopted the practice of absorbing incoming families using portability, administrative processes have been made easier for all. “It’s a win-win situation” (Neville 1998). Before instituting absorption, OHA had been billing other housing authorities for reimbursement of rental payments for more than 600 families who had moved into the city and was itself being billed for more than 1,200 families who had left Oakland (Neville 1998). Absorption ended the billing problem.

In addition, as the former OHA director pointed out, absorption takes care of a problem in the design of the portability program: “If you allocate a resource to a jurisdiction on the basis of that jurisdiction’s need, then [the jurisdiction] shouldn’t be somehow deprived of that resource because there was an oversight in the program’s construct” (Davis 1998). When clients exercise portability, the housing assistance allocated to meet a locally identified need moves out of the jurisdiction. This can be a particular problem in areas like Berkeley and Oakland because there is an imbalance there of outgoing and incoming families. “Just because people move, doesn’t mean that

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<sup>19</sup> HACA and the other county housing authorities now absorb all incoming portables.

<sup>20</sup> The impact of this policy was noted: “If they are large families, they are allowing them to move out of Berkeley because it is a hardship case. So, they may be an Oakland family who applied in Berkeley a year ago and are now offered a certificate. They come right back and rent the same unit they were living in, in Oakland, and, in effect, we get to pay Berkeley an administrative fee.” (Euston 1998a).

our needs go down because the need is not met in the first place” (Davis 1998). Oakland’s waiting list, last opened in 1997 to accommodate the number of interested applicants, still had 10,000 to 11,000 names on it in the late 1990s (Euston 1998a). Absorption, which returns the voucher or certificate to the initial housing authority, where it can be reissued, takes care of the problem.

### **Costs of Administering Portability and Impacts on Program Planning**

The costs of administering portability can be high, indeed. For example, before the initiation of absorption in 1996, OHA employed two clerks who spent most of their time working on billing other housing authorities for clients who had ported out of the jurisdiction. In addition, a higher-level person in the finance department supervised their activities. The clerks are no longer necessary; so, one position was eliminated and the other clerk was reassigned.

There is little economic incentive for an authority to promote portability. That lack of incentive acts as a brake on portability. For smaller housing authorities, it can become a severe financial hardship to have other authorities owing them large amounts of money. During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, BHA was in this position, and it was alleged that the director tried to stop portability so that he would retain enough in administrative fees to run his agency. When the BHA director adopted the policy of refusing to honor billings unless all of the paperwork was submitted by the receiving housing authority within 60 days, he was forcing the receiving housing authority to absorb the client. He did not want to be billed because that would require him to split the administrative fees with the receiving authorities.

Lack of notice about when families are going to move into their jurisdiction also inhibits a housing authority’s ability to plan for staffing and other administrative needs. HACA’s director said, “When we had all that influx coming in from Oakland, that was a real problem because you just never knew how many were going to come in and how to staff for that. . . . The biggest problem with portability when you have a lot of it is that you’re not staffed for that. You’re staffed for your program size. So, somehow, you’ve got to ratchet up to be able to deal with an increased workload that you are not able to control because you are not issuing the vouchers and you’re not choosing when people move” (Basgal 1999). To try to overcome this problem, HACA began to track the numbers of incoming and outgoing families using portability so that the housing authority could discern patterns and plan more effectively.

### **CONCLUSION**

The frequent exercise of portability has not been the norm in other parts of the country. In Alameda County, however, several factors related to the administration of the Section 8 program have encouraged portability. These include the commitment of the housing authorities to implementing portability, familiarity with the program due to its long history in Alameda County, a record of cooperation and trust among the authorities, the assignment of specific personnel to process the paperwork, and, toward the end of the

1990s, the widespread absorption of clients which eased administrative and financial burdens. Nevertheless, several factors in Alameda County discourage portability among the jurisdictions. Differences in occupancy standards, lack of counseling, and special requirements imposed on clients wishing to change jurisdictions make portability more difficult. Finally, other factors associated with the program are likely to be impediments to portability no matter where it operates in the country. These include accounting complexities caused by billing, increased administrative costs, and the adoption of the policy requiring that clients pay market-rate security deposits.

## **Chapter 6**

### **A CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT**

The achievement of the Section 8 program in Oakland and Berkeley is striking. In other U.S. cities, most Section 8 families who receive vouchers/certificates move only a short distance and remain within the central city. In the Oakland and Berkeley programs, however, one Section 8 family in every ten moved to suburban Alameda County and remained there, mostly in Hayward, San Leandro, and Ashland.

#### **Improved Living Conditions**

Most voucher recipients who relocated to the suburbs have improved their living conditions. They now live in areas with better socioeconomic conditions and greater racial and ethnic diversity. Their new suburban neighborhoods provide better schools, less crime, more space, and better shopping than their former neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley.

#### **Satisfaction with the Move**

Most suburban-bound movers were satisfied with their new homes and neighborhoods, felt that they fit into their neighborhoods, and felt safe there. An overwhelming majority of suburban-bound families said that their current neighborhood offered greater accessibility to amenities and economic opportunities (e.g., to convenient shopping, better job opportunities) and better social conditions (better schools, more people with jobs, less drug dealing, fewer run-down houses) than their original one.

#### **Few Difficulties Moving**

Most Section 8 families in Oakland and Berkeley who relocated to the suburbs did so with little difficulty. Few experienced racial discrimination, and most said they were happy with the housing search. Few faced problems in dealing with multiple housing authorities, and most said that the Section 8 briefing was useful in facilitating the move.

This is not to say that the housing search was free of problems. Suburban-bound movers, like local movers, often had difficulty finding affordable units to rent. Many complained that landlords would not accept Section 8 vouchers. Many of the families surveyed recommended that the Section 8 briefing session provide longer lists of landlords willing to rent to Section 8 voucher recipients.

Nonetheless, on balance, the experience of Section 8 families who moved from the city to the suburbs stands in striking contrast to the stereotype: They found no impregnable boundary that separated the suburbs from the cities, barring low-income families from crossing.

Section 8 families did not face serious adjustment problems after moving to Alameda's suburbs, as might have been expected. Overwhelmingly, families who moved from Oakland and Berkeley to the suburbs said they had little difficulty getting along with their landlord and neighbors. Similarly, few parents said that their children faced adjustment problems at school.

### **Explaining Returnees**

Given the relatively smooth transition of so many Section 8 suburban-bound movers, why did approximately one family in every five who moved to the suburbs according to the housing authorities' records return to the city? Households returned for a variety of reasons, but primarily because they were dissatisfied with the housing and neighborhood conditions in their suburban location, or they were able to find better conditions at a new location in Oakland or Berkeley, or they were unsuccessful in their search for housing in the suburbs.

Compared with Section 8 families who moved to suburban Alameda County and remained there, returnees were far more likely to be dissatisfied with their current home and neighborhood and to want to move out. Reducing the number of Section 8 families who move to the suburbs but feel compelled to return to the city ought to be a high priority for housing officials.

### **Making the Program Work**

The fact that so many Section 8 voucher recipients have been able to move successfully is attributable to the good working relationships maintained by Alameda County's housing authorities. Their executive directors have a history of meeting regularly, working together, resolving conflicts, and finding solutions. Middle-level staff members also work well together. The atmosphere of trust and cooperation that exists among the housing authorities has practical implications for Section 8 families. For example, if one agency certifies a voucher recipient as income-eligible, other agencies also accept that certification.

Formal administrative procedures adopted by HACA, OHA, and BHA also have made it easier for clients to relocate to the Alameda suburbs. The change by all three authorities in the late 1990s from billing to absorption has eased the administrative and financial procedures for implementing portability. HUD's San Francisco office has also supported the housing authorities in administering the Section 8 voucher program and thus has helped make the program work.

### **Can Alameda County's Success Be Replicated?**

Despite the achievements of the Alameda County Section 8 program, it may be difficult to replicate its level of cross-jurisdictional moves in other metropolitan areas. To some extent, success in Alameda County probably is due to external factors as well as to program planning and operations.



There may be greater acceptance of racial and ethnic diversity in the East Bay Area than there is elsewhere in the United States. In addition, neighborhood attachments tend to be weaker in western cities than in the cities of the East and the Midwest. The psychological boundary between city and suburbs also is less powerful in the West. Section 8 families in Oakland and Berkeley probably are less aware of jurisdictional boundaries when they search for a new home than are similar families elsewhere.

Despite such differences, the positive experience of Alameda County's Section 8 program provides an example for programs in other regions of the country. The Alameda County example—particularly the good working relations at all levels of housing authority management—can provide lessons for other metropolitan-area housing authorities. Finally, the evidence provided by the Section 8 suburban-bound movers themselves demonstrates that relocating from central cities to suburbs does work, that the families can move into new communities without great difficulty, and that they can adjust rapidly and become better off.

## **Appendix A**

### **SECTION 8 PROGRAM**

The Section 8 Housing Certificate program was enacted as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.<sup>1</sup> The program was designed to provide rental assistance to families and individuals, enabling participants to find and rent privately owned housing (single-family homes, town houses, or apartments) within the jurisdiction of the housing authority providing the assistance. Tenants contributed a share of their income toward the rent, which could not exceed a maximum level set by HUD.

The Section 8 Housing Voucher program, which began as a demonstration program in 1984, enabled tenants to exceed the rent ceiling set by the certificate program by taking on a higher rent burden. The demonstration program allowed voucher holders to move to any location in the United States that was under the jurisdiction of a housing authority that also had a program—a limited number at that time. In 1987, the voucher program became a permanent part of Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act. The Act also expanded the area in which voucher and certificate holders could use their subsidies. Voucher holders were allowed to use their subsidies anywhere in the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) of the issuing housing authority and, nationwide, within the jurisdiction of any authority operating a voucher program. Although certificate holders were still more limited in where they could use their assistance, the Act permitted certificate holders to rent housing anywhere within the MSA of the issuing housing authority.

Legislation passed in 1991 further expanded the areas in which both types of assistance could be used. Included were moves within the same metropolitan area or state, or moves to a metropolitan area across the state line but contiguous to the issuing housing authority. Voucher holders, as before, could also use the voucher anywhere an authority was operating a program. The 1995 Conforming Rule gave certificate and voucher holders the same right to use their subsidies in any jurisdiction where a housing authority offered either a certificate or a voucher program.

In 1998, the programs were merged into a single program, the Housing Choice Voucher program. The new program regulations took effect on October 1, 1999; however, the high rate of client mobility between the jurisdictions of the three housing authorities in Alameda County occurred *before* the programs were merged. The following discussion reviews program requirements for the Section 8 voucher and certificate programs; changes under the merged Housing Choice program will be noted.

### **RENTAL SUBSIDY AMOUNTS**

Under the *rental certificate program*, the total rent for a unit (including utilities) could not exceed a maximum rent level, which was set by the fair market rent (FMR) HUD

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<sup>1</sup>For a description of the evolution of the Section 8 program, see Feins et al. (1997).

has established for each metropolitan area.<sup>2</sup> FMRs vary by unit size and are adjusted once a year to keep pace with the changing cost of rent and utilities. Under the certificate program, a family's contribution to the rent was 30 percent of its monthly adjusted income, 10 percent of its monthly gross income, or its welfare rent payment, whichever was greatest. The housing authority (HA) that issued the certificate paid the remainder of the rent directly to the landlord.

Under both the *rental voucher program* and the Housing Choice Voucher program, the HA determines the payment standard used to calculate the amount of rental assistance that a family receives. The payment standard set by the HA does not, however, affect the amount of rent a landlord can charge, nor does it limit the tenant's contribution. If the tenant is willing to pay the difference, the voucher program allows a gross rent that exceeds the payment standard. The payment standard is based on the FMR (set by HUD) for each unit size.

Under the voucher program, the payment standard amount could not be less than 80 percent of the FMR in effect for the unit size when the payment standard was adopted, nor could the payment standard amount be more than the FMR or the HUD-approved, community-wide exception rent, if one existed. Under the new Housing Choice Voucher program, the amount of the subsidy is based on a payment standard set by the HA that is anywhere between 90 percent and 110 percent of the FMR established by HUD for the metropolitan area. HUD can also approve exception areas with payment standards that range from more than 110 percent to 120 percent of the FMR because of high rent burdens.

Under the rental voucher program, a family generally paid 30 percent of its monthly adjusted income for a rental unit, although it could pay more than 30 percent if it chose to do so. The Housing Choice Voucher program established a new maximum initial rent burden of 40 percent. This new requirement applies only to new participants or to already participating families that move, if the gross rent for the new unit exceeds the payment standard. The new requirement is not applicable if a family stays in the same unit for which a certificate or voucher was issued before the requirement was implemented. The Housing Choice Voucher program (like the previous Housing Voucher program) offers more flexibility than the certificate program offered. With a voucher, a family can choose to rent a more costly unit, as long as it is willing to pay the difference between the total rent and the maximum amount of rental assistance.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

The Section 8 rental housing programs are administered by local public housing authorities (HAs). In general, the administrative procedures followed under the Housing Choice Voucher program are the same as those followed under the previous voucher and certificate programs. A participant's eligibility for the program is determined by the local HA

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<sup>2</sup>The summary of Section 8 rental subsidy amounts is based on HUD's *Section 8 Rental Vouchers and Rental Certificates Fact Sheet* (HUD 1995).

based on total annual gross income and family size. The family's total income usually may not exceed 50 percent of the median income for the metropolitan area in which the family chooses to live.<sup>3</sup> During the application process, the HA collects information on family income, assets, and family composition and verifies this information with employers, banks, and other local agencies. Through this procedure, known as *income verification*, the HA determines the family's eligibility for the program and the amount of the rental assistance payment.<sup>4</sup> Once eligibility is established, the family is placed on a waiting list.

Following the issuance of a voucher, families attend a briefing session conducted by the housing authority. During the session, the families receive basic information on the Section 8 program, application procedures and completion, discrimination and the Fair Housing Act, calculating rent, housing inspections, and the like. The HAs sometimes provide lists of landlords or apartment developments that accept Section 8 families and offer helpful hints on finding housing that is in good condition.

A participant receiving assistance is responsible for finding a rental unit. Under the previous certificate and voucher programs, a participant had a maximum of 60 days to find a unit, although the HA was permitted to extend the time frame to 120 days. The Housing Choice Voucher program allows the HA to extend the voucher time limit beyond 120 days for "reasonable accommodation or other good cause" (HUD 1999a, 56900). The rental unit must meet certain minimum health and safety standards, as determined by the program regulations regarding housing quality standards (HQS), and its rent must meet a "rent reasonableness" test when compared with similar units in the area. Once a participant finds a unit, the HA inspects it to make sure it meets housing quality standards. The HA also reviews the lease before approving the unit for rental by the participant. The rent subsidy is paid directly to the landlord by the HA on behalf of the program participant, and the participant pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

## **PORTABILITY**

Portability refers to an option that allows a Section 8 participant who receives a rental subsidy from one housing authority to move to the jurisdiction of another housing authority and to retain the voucher or certificate. Over the years, portability has undergone regulatory changes. Initially restricted to voucher recipients, portability was gradually extended to certificate holders as well in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its expansion increased the amount of portability activity. As housing authorities tried to cope with the increased workload, HUD issued a number of directives to address administrative issues. At first, HUD published optional billing procedures, but it also mandated how administrative fees would be

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<sup>3</sup> Under the Housing Choice Voucher program, the HA must target 75 percent or more of its admissions to extremely low-income families (families whose incomes are below 30 percent of the area median). Some modifications are permitted when authorized by HUD (Section 982.201, Eligibility and Targeting; HUD 1999a, 56897).

<sup>4</sup> Family income and composition are checked annually to recertify a family's eligibility for the program.

split. Complaints about inconsistencies in the billing and administrative procedures followed by the different housing authorities led HUD to publish a notice requiring the use of a standardized form (the Portability Information Form) to simplify the billing process and to reduce some of the administrative burden associated with portability.

### **Procedure for Exercising Portability**

A family that wants to move to another jurisdiction first consults the HA that administers its rental assistance (the *initial* or *sending* HA) to verify its eligibility to move. The HA may require the family to remain in its jurisdiction for the first year of housing assistance. If the family is eligible to “port,” the sending HA notifies the HA in the family’s new location (the *receiving* HA) of their arrival. The sending HA also forwards the family’s income verification information. The receiving HA may conduct a reexamination, but it may not delay issuing a voucher to the family or delay approval of a unit unless recertification is necessary to determine the family’s income eligibility. The receiving HA may “absorb” the family into its own rental voucher or certificate program, or it may bill the sending HA for reimbursement of the housing assistance payments made to the landlord on behalf of the family plus a portion of the administration fee (a payment made by HUD to the housing authorities to cover the cost of administering assistance to a Section 8 client). HUD mandates that 20 percent of the fee be given to the sending authority; 80 percent of the fee is given to the receiving authority. If the receiving HA absorbs the family into its own program, it must issue a voucher or certificates funded from its own allocation. The sending HA is then free to issue a voucher or certificate to a new client.

## **Appendix B**

### **METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES**

HUD asked the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) at Rutgers University to use a case study methodology (Yin 1994) in performing a qualitative and quantitative examination of the rental housing assistance program and the mobility and portability patterns of Section 8 tenants in Alameda County. The study covered the time period from 1976 through 1999, focusing on the locations of households from spring 1994 through spring 1999.<sup>1</sup> The study covers three areas in Alameda County: Oakland, Berkeley, and the southern part of the county. Three housing authorities provide housing assistance in the case study area: the Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA), the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA), and the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA).

#### **DATA SOURCES**

The research team collected different types of data from a variety of sources. Qualitative data on the Alameda County housing market and context, the Section 8 rental assistance programs, and housing authority procedures were gathered through interviews with key staff from the housing authorities and city and county officials knowledgeable about Alameda County's housing market and neighborhoods. Those interviewed included planning and community development officials, real estate professionals, and community leaders. Quantitative data on neighborhood mobility patterns, Section 8 families, and the cities and neighborhoods were gathered from housing authority client databases, 1990 census data from the U.S. Census Bureau, and 1999 and 2000 population estimates from Claritas, Inc., the state of California, the state's Office of the Attorney General Criminal Justice Statistics Center, and the State of California Department of Education. Both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from a telephone survey of 300 Section 8 certificate and voucher recipients in Berkeley, Oakland, and jurisdictions under HACA. Other data sources included field surveys of neighborhoods; newspaper articles; photographs; and land-use maps, reports, and other documents from the local planning departments.

#### **INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

Structured interviews were conducted with housing authority officials and staff members who conduct Section 8 orientation sessions and provide other services; planning department officials and housing and community development department officials familiar with the housing market and neighborhood and housing conditions; fair-housing agency personnel; local real estate professionals; and representatives of apartment managers associations. An interview guide outlined the topic areas to be addressed in the interview. The interview guidelines also allowed flexibility in asking follow-up questions. All interviews were tape-recorded (to ensure accuracy) and transcribed. Qualitative analysis software was used to analyze and organize responses.

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<sup>1</sup>The Berkeley and Oakland housing authorities' data files covered the time period from 1976 through spring 1999; Alameda County's files covered the time period from 1988 through spring 1999.

## **HOUSING AUTHORITY CLIENT DATA FILES**

The three housing authorities (BHA, OHA, and HACA) collect data on all client families on Form HUD 50058, Family Report. OHA maintains a database of its own clients and, under contract, maintains a separate database of BHA's clients. Both databases contain complete historical records on the clients. Data items for each family include the type and amount of housing assistance the family receives, the age of the head of household, the number of children in the family, the address of each unit leased by the family, and the date the lease went into effect, the date the lease was canceled or scheduled to be renewed. Information on families leaving the jurisdiction (including their addresses) is maintained in the database for as long as the families remain clients of BHA or OHA. If the families become the clients of another housing authority (i.e., if they are absorbed), the lease cancellation date is entered, but the record remains part of the database. Database records obtained by the research team cover the time frame from 1976 to spring 1999.

HACA also maintains a database on its clients. Although it contains most of the elements found in the Oakland and Berkeley databases, the HACA database does not retain historical records. Only a client's current address appears in the database, along with the date the lease went into effect and when it is due to be renewed. When a client moves, the old address is deleted.

The families' moves were tracked by following their addresses in a new database, which was created by merging the three housing authority databases. All of the addresses of all of the clients in the merged database were geocoded and mapped by the research team. The study was primarily interested, however, in identifying suburban-bound families and comparing their origin and destination neighborhoods. The records of families who moved from Berkeley or from Oakland to the suburban part of the county and remained there were selected from the merged database and used as the sample frame for the household survey.

## **SURVEY OF SECTION 8 FAMILIES**

A key component of the research plan was a telephone household survey of 300 Section 8 certificate and voucher recipients in Berkeley, Oakland, and Alameda County. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information on (1) household demographic characteristics; (2) the housing search; (3) the types of information and other assistance provided to the family; (4) the reasons for the housing choice; and (5) perceptions of change in housing and neighborhood quality (both physical and social). Both open- and close-ended questions were included so that the reasons families made their locational choices could be explored in depth. Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI) conducted the telephone interviews and managed this component of the data collection.

The survey sample consisted of families from Berkeley and Oakland who were given Section 8 vouchers and certificates to use in the private housing market. It included both those who remained in their city of origin and those who moved into the jurisdiction

covered by HACA. The sample was drawn from two main groups: (1) Berkeley and Oakland families who remained in their city of origin (*nonmovers* and *local movers*); and (2) Berkeley and Oakland families who moved into Alameda County (*suburban-bound movers*). Also included were a small number of families who moved into Alameda County and returned to their city of origin (*returnees*). The Alameda County Section 8 merged database was used as the sample frame. Those families who were no longer receiving rental assistance and those who had moved out of the jurisdiction of the three housing authorities were deleted from the database for the survey sample frame.

The research plan called for a larger number of interviews to be conducted with suburban-bound movers because they constituted the main focus of the research. Also, a larger number of families from Oakland—the city of origin of the largest number of families moving into the county—were to be interviewed. A smaller number of interviews were to be conducted with households from Berkeley. The sample frame of families available in each category, the proposed sample distribution and the target number of interviews for each subsample, and the final number of interviews completed are shown in Table B.1.

**TABLE B.1**  
**Survey Sample Frame and Number of Interviews**

City of Origin	Sample Frame N = 7,379		Number of Interviews Initially Proposed N = 300		Number of Interviews Completed N = 300	
	Porting Households	Nonporting Households	Porting Households	Nonporting Households	Porting Households	Nonporting Households
Oakland	736	5,203	150	75	149	108
Berkeley	73	1,367	50	25	13	30
TOTAL	809	6,570	200	100	162	138

The merged database included the addresses of the Section 8 clients and phone numbers for approximately half of them. SRBI sent the sample to Telematch, which matched names and addresses against its electronic base of listed telephone numbers. SRBI sent a personalized letter to each household in the initial stratified sample, including those without telephone numbers. The letter explained the purpose of the study and informed prospective respondents of a monetary incentive for participation (\$20). SRBI requested respondents to return a postcard or to call a toll-free telephone number at which an SRBI contact person could be reached to update their telephone information and to set up an interview appointment. The SRBI contact person was also available to answer respondents’ questions about the research or to verify its authenticity. SRBI monitored the response to the introductory letter and made the subsequent mailings needed to complete the desired number of interviews. In all, 1,454 letters were mailed; 48 households responded by postcard or called the toll-free number to provide an updated address or telephone information.

SRBI was able to contact only those households that had a telephone number listed in the sample-frame data file and those respondents who used the toll-free number to contact the telephone center. In all, 225 households were not contacted because their



telephone numbers could not be obtained. Of the remaining 1,229 households, nine completed interviews when they called the toll-free number. Because the number of suburban-bound families in the merged database was not sufficient to carry out the original plan of interviewing twice as many suburban-bound movers as nonmovers or local movers, additional interviews were conducted with nonmovers so that the overall target of 300 interviews could be reached. Slightly more than half of the interviews were conducted with suburban-bound movers (see Table B.1).

## GIS ANALYSIS

The research team performed a geographic information system (GIS) analysis to determine the locations of Alameda County's Section 8 families and to assess neighborhood conditions for suburban-bound movers. The merged database was used to identify where Section 8 voucher and certificate holders lived. Through GIS, the spatial coordinates of each household's address were linked to the socioeconomic characteristics of the surrounding census tract (median housing value, median household income, and racial and ethnic composition). The origins and destinations of suburban-bound movers were mapped, and differences between the former and new neighborhoods were examined. The team analyzed the sequence of moves made by households and calculated their distance. Maps showing the distribution of all voucher and certificate holders in the three jurisdictions at two points in time—in 1994 and in 1999—were also prepared. These “snapshots” illustrated the extent of deconcentration of the families during the five-year time period.

## Tracking Mobility

### *Section 8 Families in the Merged Database*

Although the merged database was a rich source to use in tracking the mobility patterns of Alameda's Section 8 families, it had certain limitations. The merged database's record of addresses was potentially incomplete for HACA clients. The OHA and BHA databases include the address where the family first used its housing assistance and every address thereafter. This practice was maintained for OHA and BHA clients who used portability and moved to suburban Alameda; as long as they were OHA and BHA clients, every move for each family is recorded in the databases. By contrast, HACA's database contains only the clients' current addresses. Once the client is absorbed, OHA's and BHA's databases note the termination of the lease, and HACA's database picks up the client's trail—but only at the family's current address. Thus, interim moves (i.e., moves that occurred after the client was absorbed by HACA, but before the family's move to the current address) in suburban Alameda are unknown.

The major limitation of the merged database was that it did not contain clients' original addresses—that is, the address where clients were living before they received their housing assistance. For many families listed as clients of OHA or BHA, the first address recorded (i.e., the first place they used their housing assistance) was not located

within the housing authority’s jurisdiction; their first address was elsewhere. How did this happen? A reasonable assumption, given HACA’s records of incoming families (Chapter 1, Table 1.1) and information gathered from the informant interviews, is that these families were, in fact, Oakland or Berkeley clients who exercised the portability option immediately; many of these families moved into HACA’s jurisdiction.

The analysis of overall Section 8 mobility, which classifies families by mobility pattern, follows the assumption that OHA and BHA clients with first-recorded addresses outside those jurisdictions made immediate use of portability. (Even so, the number of families using portability is somewhat lower in the merged database than it is in the records kept by HACA.) Comparisons of origin and destination neighborhoods, however, could be made only for those families who had an address recorded in Berkeley or Oakland before they had an address recorded in suburban Alameda County. Therefore, the number of families for which neighborhood comparisons could be made is much more limited than the number of families in the overall mobility analysis.

The last Berkeley or Oakland address of suburban-bound families and their last available suburban Alameda address were geocoded so that the neighborhoods could be compared. This procedure made it possible to identify the specific origin neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley for suburban-bound movers and their specific destination communities in suburban Alameda (Table B.2).<sup>2</sup>

**TABLE B.2**  
**Origin and Destination Neighborhoods of Suburban-Bound**  
**Berkeley and Oakland Section 8 Families**

City/Neighborhood	Number	Percentage
<b>Origin Neighborhood</b>		
Oakland		
Central East Oakland	87	19.5
Chinatown/Central	18	4.0
Elmhurst	120	26.8
Fruitvale	63	14.1
San Antonio	71	15.9
North Oakland	39	8.7
West Oakland	20	4.5
Other Oakland	29	6.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	447	100.0
Berkeley		
Berkeley Flatlands <sup>a</sup>	40	95.2
Other Berkeley	2	4.8
<i>Subtotal</i>	42	100.0
TOTAL FAMILIES	489	100.0

*Continued on next page*

<sup>2</sup>The 489 families include families whose records begin with addresses in Berkeley or in Oakland and cover the time period between 1976 and spring 1999. It does not include families who received a voucher and moved immediately into suburban Alameda, nor does it include the several families who moved to suburban Alameda but whose addresses could not be geocoded. Destinations include Alameda City as well as communities under the jurisdiction of HACA.

TABLE B.2 continued

City/Neighborhood	Number	Percentage
<b>Destination Neighborhood</b>		
Alameda County		
Ashland	49	11.2
Castro Valley	11	2.5
Cherryland	21	4.8
Emeryville	26	5.9
Fairview	3	0.7
Fremont	24	5.5
Hayward	139	32.0
Newark	3	0.7
San Leandro	113	25.9
San Lorenzo	14	3.2
Union City	23	5.3
Other	11	2.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	437	100.2 <sup>b</sup>
Alameda City		
<i>Subtotal</i>	52	100.0
TOTAL FAMILIES	489	100.0

Source: Analysis of the merged Alameda County housing authority databases.

<sup>a</sup>Includes Central Berkeley, South Berkeley, and West Berkeley.

<sup>b</sup>Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

### The Sample Survey

The survey compensated for the limitation presented by the merged database in tracking the families' mobility from their original addresses. In the survey, the 300 families were asked for three addresses: (1) the address where the family was living at the time it was notified that it had received a voucher or certificate (original neighborhood); (2) the address where the family first used its voucher or certificate (first post-voucher neighborhood); and (3) the family's current address at the time of the interview in December 1999 (current neighborhood). The survey collected detailed information about the families' perceptions of each of their neighborhoods.

The surveyed families' addresses were geocoded and mapped to show the locations of the families at the three points in time addressed by the survey (Table B.3; see also Map 10). Seventy-one percent of the families were living in Oakland and approximately 15 percent were living in Berkeley at the time they were notified that they had received a voucher or certificate; the remainder of the families were scattered in four other cities in the county, gave incomplete addresses, or could not recall where they were living at the time they received their vouchers. After receiving their vouchers, 70 families (23 percent) used portability and moved to suburban Alameda County immediately. The proportion of families living in Oakland dropped to 60 percent and the proportion living in Berkeley dropped to 13 percent. By the time of the interview, 42 percent of the families were living in suburban Alameda County, 43 percent of the families remained in Oakland, and 12 percent remained in Berkeley.

Among Oakland families, the greatest proportion reported living in the Elmhurst section of the city at one of the three points in time addressed by the survey. Central East Oakland had the next highest proportion of recipients at all three points in time; and San Antonio was third. Most of the Berkeley families were concentrated in the Berkeley flatlands. These locations comported with those of families in the merged database (Table B.2). The destination communities with the largest numbers of families—Hayward, San Leandro, and Ashland—were also the same for both surveyed families and families in the merged database.

**TABLE B.3**  
**Original, First Postvoucher, and Current**  
**Alameda County Neighborhoods of Surveyed Families**

City/Neighborhood	Original Neighborhood		First Postvoucher Neighborhood		Current Neighborhood	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Oakland						
Central East Oakland	40	13.3	40	13.3	21	7.0
Central/Chinatown	12	4.0	8	2.7	4	1.3
Elmhurst	68	22.7	44	14.7	36	12.0
Fruitvale	16	5.3	21	7.0	11	3.7
San Antonio	27	9.0	30	10.0	23	7.7
North Oakland	23	7.7	18	6.0	16	5.3
West Oakland	19	6.3	10	3.3	9	3.0
Other Oakland	9	3.0	8	2.7	10	3.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	214	71.3	179	59.7	130	43.3
Berkeley						
Berkeley Flatlands	34	11.3	32	10.7	30	10.0
Other Berkeley	10	3.3	7	2.3	6	2.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	44	14.7	39	13.0	36	12.0
Alameda County						
Alameda City	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Ashland	0	0.0	16	5.3	24	8.0
Castro Valley	1	0.3	4	1.3	7	2.3
Cherryland	0	0.0	2	0.7	3	1.0
Emeryville	1	0.3	3	1.0	9	3.0
Fairview	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0
Fremont	0	0.0	3	1.0	5	1.7
Hayward	0	0.0	13	4.3	32	10.7
Newark	0	0.0	1	0.3	2	0.7
Pleasanton	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3
San Leandro	1	0.3	18	6.0	26	8.7
San Lorenzo	0	0.0	3	1.0	6	2.0
Union City	0	0.0	6	2.0	10	3.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	4	1.2	70	23.2	125	41.7
Unknown/no answer <sup>a</sup>	38	12.7	12	4.0	9	3.0
TOTAL <sup>b</sup>	300	99.9	300	99.9	300	100.0

Source: GIS analysis of the household survey database.

<sup>a</sup>Includes addresses that could not be geocoded due to missing data. Also includes the responses of families who had forgotten their addresses.

<sup>b</sup>Percentages may not total 100.0 because of rounding.

**Appendix C**  
**NEWSPAPER STORIES ABOUT THE BAY AREA'S**  
**HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CRISIS**

*Alameda City.* “Housing vouchers run into brick wall.” Jerilee Curry, an Alameda resident, was overjoyed when she qualified for \$1,600 in monthly Section 8 housing vouchers to pay for a four-bedroom place. Now she is worried that she will become homeless because after a two-month search she has been unable to find a landlord willing to accept a Section 8 voucher. Officials at the Alameda City Housing Authority say that this is a familiar story; that as the housing market tightens, fewer landlords are willing to deal with the hassle of Section 8 paperwork (Fulbright 1999b).

*Hayward.* “Rental costs keep working homeless in area shelters.” As a result of a high-rent, high-demand market, people in homeless shelters are having a harder time finding an affordable place to live. In early 1999, staff of the 24-bed Family Emergency Shelter Coalition were able to find two-bedroom apartments in Oakland and Hayward for homeless clients for \$700 a month. Now, two-bedroom places rent for \$850 to \$1,200 a month. Because of the difficulty of moving into affordable housing, the average shelter stay at FESCO was 22 days five years ago; in 1999, it was 44 days (Gardiner 2000).

*Oakland.* “Rising city rents push nonprofits out of downtown.” As a result of economic improvements in Oakland’s long-dormant downtown, many nonprofit agencies serving the East Bay’s low-income and disabled population are experiencing rent increases of up to 75 percent and are being forced from their locations. Jobs Consortium and Sentinel Fair Housing will leave their downtown offices because of sharply rising housing costs (Chang 2000).

*Oakland.* “Family of six asks Santa for a home.” Paulette and James and their four children have been looking for a home for six months. They had been evicted from their apartment in the Lake Merritt area of Oakland after a three-day delay in paying their rent. Paulette and James believe that their landlord was looking for any excuse for getting them out. James has had the same steady job for 15 years and consistently works five or six days a week (Fulbright 1999a).

*Oakland.* “‘Culture clash’ shifts to suburbs.” Venus Noble, a longtime Oakland resident, moved to rural Brentwood for an affordable home, better schools, and safer surroundings. After she and six other sets of black parents pulled their children from Bristow Middle School alleging racism, a series of events followed, culminating with a cross being chemically burned on the Nobles’ lawn. Noble has since returned to Oakland (Reynolds 1999).

*San Francisco.* “Bay Area: Renters’ Hell.” “This is the worst time [for people with pets],” said Samuel Sorkin, president of the Rental Solutions agency in San Francisco. “[They] lose 90 percent of the market with dogs and 75 percent of the market with cats. If you have two dogs, you might have to stay in the doghouse.” A young migrant from New York City first looked at Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco but became discouraged when

he noticed 60 people in front of him for a three-bedroom apartment at \$1,200 a month. He finally moved into a four-bedroom flat that he and his former college roommate share with two women in Berkeley (Anders and Chao 1997).

*San Francisco.* “Now they’re evicting preschoolers.” On May 10, 2000, the Montessori Children’s Center received a notice of eviction indicating that the school had until June 30 to leave the building it had occupied on the grounds of the huge Parkmerced housing development. Parkmerced was purchased in July 1999 by a real estate firm for over \$300 million. A parent asked: “We need to really look at what’s happening in San Francisco. Is this going to be a city that’s a real community? Or is it going to be friendly only to dot-commers and those with big money?” (Morse 2000).

*San Francisco.* “In San Francisco, renters are humble supplicants.” Forty people turned out for an open house in early June 2000 for a \$1,800-a-month one-bedroom apartment. Marc Lamboy, who owns three small buildings in San Francisco, listed a \$1,500-a-month one-bedroom apartment and received more than 100 calls in a week. (Nieves 2000b)

*Silicon Valley.* “Homeless on \$50,000 a year in luxuriant Silicon Valley.” The No. 22 bus in California’s Silicon Valley provides a bumpy night of sleep for some of the area’s homeless, many of whom are full-time employed. Passengers can use \$3 all-day passes for repeat runs on the No. 22 bus on its 26-mile circuit, but they are required to wait 10 to 15 minutes between trips (Nieves 2000a).

**Appendix D**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY DATA**

**TABLE D.1**  
**Alameda County Demographic Characteristics, 1990**

Characteristic	Alameda County	Origin Cities		Destination Cities	
		Berkeley	Oakland	Hayward	San Leandro
Population					
1990	1,279,182	102,724	372,242	111,498	68,223
2000 (estimated)	1,454,302	109,463	402,104	129,610	76,736
Race/ethnicity					
White	762,557 (59.6%)	64,002 (62.3%)	120,855 (32.5%)	68,922 (61.8%)	50,534 (74.1%)
African American	229,316 (17.9%)	19,309 (18.8%)	163,526 (43.9%)	10,975 (9.8%)	3,966 (5.8%)
Asian/Pacific Isl.	193,282 (15.1%)	15,219 (14.8%)	55,335 (14.9%)	17,358 (15.6%)	9,408 (13.8%)
American Indian	8,354 (0.7%)	513 (0.5%)	2,306 (0.6%)	1,228 (1.1%)	498 (0.7%)
Other	85,673 (6.7%)	3,681 (3.6%)	30,204 (8.1%)	13,015 (11.7%)	3,820 (5.6%)
Hispanic <sup>a</sup>	176,017 (13.8%)	7,989 (7.8%)	49,267 (13.2%)	26,103 (23.4%)	9,896 (14.5%)
Median household income	\$37,544	\$29,737	\$27,095	\$36,058	\$35,681
Mean household income by race/ethnicity <sup>b</sup>					
White	\$50,673	\$50,323	\$48,097	\$40,442	\$39,707
African American	\$30,687	\$26,297	\$28,439	\$39,470	\$44,100
Asian/Pacific Isl.	\$47,040	\$31,013	\$33,630	\$48,134	\$51,595
American Indian	\$41,228	\$21,727	\$36,630	\$42,045	\$46,717
Other	\$37,354	\$28,780	\$30,832	\$37,502	\$39,143
Hispanic	\$39,449	\$31,457	\$31,831	\$38,465	\$38,392
Poverty rate	10.6%	17.5%	18.8%	9.7%	5.0%

Sources: 1990 data are from the U.S. Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990); 2000 population estimates were provided by the State of California Department of Finance (2000a).

<sup>a</sup>Hispanic ethnicity includes white and African American race classifications.

<sup>b</sup>Median household income by race was not included in the census data. Mean household income by race was calculated by CUPR.

**TABLE D.2**  
**Alameda County Crime Data**

Data Item	Alameda County	Origin Cities		Destination Cities	
		Berkeley	Oakland	Hayward	San Leandro
California Crime Index <sup>a</sup>					
1998	37,829	3,352	18,309	3,145	1,873
1997	39,795	3,184	19,139	3,458	1,965
% change	-4.9	5.3	-4.3	-9.1	-4.7
FBI Crime Index <sup>b</sup>					
1998	88,559	9,310	37,182	7,170	4,467
1997	94,095	9,848	38,408	8,237	4,877
% change	-5.9	-5.5	-3.2	-13.0	-8.4
Willful homicide					
1998	107	2	72	5	4
1997	142	11	99	7	5
% change	-24.6	—	-27.3	—	—
Forcible rape					
1998	595	33	340	47	26
1997	557	31	306	50	16
% change	6.8	—	11.1	—	—
Robbery					
1998	4,622	431	2,651	368	228
1997	5,457	447	3,482	352	258
% change	-15.3	-3.6	-23.9	4.5	-11.6
Aggravated assault					
1998	6,570	472	3,945	359	290
1997	7,272	475	4,342	381	299
% change	-9.7	-0.6	-9.1	-5.8	-3.0
Burglary					
1998	14,499	1,443	6,119	1,044	715
1997	14,252	1,260	5,923	1,147	659
% change	1.7	14.5	3.3	-9.0	8.5
Motor vehicle theft					
1998	11,436	971	5,182	1,322	610
1997	12,115	959	4,987	1,521	728
% change	-5.6	1.3	3.9	-13.1	-16.2
Larceny-theft					
1998	50,131	5,922	18,554	3,977	2,583
1997	53,628	6,612	18,909	4,721	2,894
% change	-6.5	-10.4	-1.9	-15.8	-10.7
Arson					
1998	599	36	319	48	11
1997	672	52	360	58	18
% change	-10.9	—	-11.4	—	—

Source: Data for 1998 and 1997 from Table 11, Criminal Statistics, State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 2000a.

Notes: Dash (—) indicates that percent changes are not calculated when numbers are less than 50.

<sup>a</sup>The California Crime Index includes willful homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft.

<sup>b</sup>The FBI Crime Index also includes larceny-theft and arson.



**TABLE D. 3**  
**Juvenile Felony Arrests, 1988–1998:**  
**Number of Arrests for Cities with Populations over 100,000**

City	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	% Change 1988–98
Berkeley	368	424	423	404	303	272	339	266	336	213	76	-79.3
Oakland	2,106	2,202	2,519	2,261	2,159	2,165	2,065	-	2,477	1,372	1,211	-42.5
Hayward	215	301	379	402	401	381	479	480	530	484	480	123.3

*Source: Report on Juvenile Felony Arrests in California, 1998, Criminal Justice Statistics Center Report Series, State of California, Office of the Attorney General, Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis, March 2000.*

*Note: Hyphen (-) indicates missing data.*

**TABLE D.4**  
**Alameda County School District Data**

School Data	Alameda County	Origin Cities		Destination Cities		
		Berkeley <sup>a</sup>	Oakland <sup>a</sup>	Hayward	San Lorenzo <sup>a</sup>	San Leandro
Enrollment (K–12) 1999–2000	217,080	9,561	55,051	23,773	11,302	8,256
Percentage minority 1999–2000	67.8	69.2	94.4	80.3	67.8	73.3
Student/teacher ratio 1999–2000	20.0:1	17.2:1	19.0:1	20.7:1	19.4:1	19.6:1
Percentage of graduates who are: <sup>b</sup>						
UC-CSU eligible (1999)	38.4	67.9	21.7	27.6	24.8	32.2
Not UC-CSU eligible (1999)	61.6	32.1	78.3	72.4	75.2	67.8
Number of schools (1999–2000)						
Elementary schools	200	11	58	24	9	7
Middle schools	56	3	17	5	3	2
High schools	31	1	6	3	2	1
4-year dropout rate (1999–2000) <sup>c</sup>	9.4	1.4	24.1	9.0	4.4	2.4
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price meals <sup>d</sup>	32.6	32.7	59.9	44.4	31.2	28.8
Percentage CalWORKs (1999–2000) <sup>e</sup>	12.8	11.3	32.5	12.7	9.8	6.2
API Range (1999–2000) <sup>f</sup>	(State median:)					
Elementary schools	629	522–741	360–867	482–726	483–662	528–693
Middle schools	633	662–731	379–741	548–654	517–681	598–619
High schools	620	728	386–613	531–591	546–642	562
SAT-9 test scores: Percentage scoring at or above the 50th percentile in reading/mathematics (1999–2000) <sup>g</sup>						
3rd grade	51/64	56/64	28/37	37/43	39/41	48/54
6th grade	51/61	59/61	22/29	37/49	47/51	46/49
8th grade	54/56	63/56	26/26	38/38	49/41	49/58
11th grade	43/66	51/66	22/37	28/44	25/41	32/47
SAT scores (1998) <sup>h</sup>	1,012	1,120	859	913	943	998
Percentage of seniors tested	54.4	57.9	45.6	34.4	31.5	40.4

Sources: For 1999–2000 data, the source is <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. For 1998 data, the source is <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/ope/epic/sat10>.

<sup>a</sup>The geographic boundaries of the Berkeley and Oakland school districts fall within the boundaries of the cities they serve. The San Lorenzo school district includes parts of the cities of Hayward and San Leandro.

<sup>b</sup>The number of twelfth-grade graduates for the school year shown (1999) completing (with a grade of “C” or better) all the courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) and/or California State University (CSU). (This represents only a portion of the entrance requirements for UC or CSU.)

<sup>c</sup>Estimated percentage of students who will drop out during a four-year period, based on data collected for a single year. To create an actual four-year rate, individual student data would need to be collected and traced over time.

<sup>d</sup>Percentage of children enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal programs—federal programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Program participation is by application and is based on the income of the child’s parent or guardian.

<sup>e</sup>The students (ages 5–17) whose families receive payments from CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids), California’s welfare reform program, which replaced the AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) program in 1997.

<sup>f</sup>The API (Academic Performance Index), established in 1999, is a statewide ranking of schools according to their scores on the Stanford Achievement Test, Form 9 (SAT-9). The SAT-9 is a nationally normed test taken by students in grades 2 through 11). Scores range from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and progress of schools. Most schools have an API, a state ranking (by elementary, middle, or high school), a ranking in comparison to 100 similar schools, and growth/API targets for the following year. API scores are calculated for schools only, and are not calculated at the state, county, or district levels. (Statewide *median scores* are presented in the table.) A measurement of school achievement, the API can be used to compare schools.

<sup>g</sup>Percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on (1) the reading and (2) the mathematics sections of the SAT-9.

<sup>h</sup>Average total score (verbal score and math score) on the SAT I Reasoning Test (formerly called the Scholastic Aptitude Test), widely used as a college entrance examination. Scores can be compared with state and national averages of seniors graduating from any public or private school.

**TABLE D.5**  
**Alameda County Housing Characteristics, 1990**

Characteristic	Alameda County	Origin Cities		Destination Cities			
		Berkeley	Oakland	Hayward	San Leandro	Fremont	Union City
Housing units							
1990	504,109	45,735	154,737	42,216	30,189	62,400	16,259
2000 (estimated)	536,495	46,285	155,676	44,991	31,272	69,616	19,042
Occupancy status							
Occupied	479,518 (95.1%)	43,453 (95.0%)	144,521 (93.4%)	40,117 (95.0%)	29,128 (96.5%)	60,198 (96.5%)	15,701 (96.6%)
Vacant	24,591 (4.9%)	2,282 (5.0%)	10,216 (6.6%)	2,099 (5.0%)	1,061 (3.5%)	2,202 (3.5%)	558 (3.4%)
Tenure							
Owner occupied	255,459 (53.3%)	18,998 (43.7%)	60,219 (41.7%)	20,667 (51.5%)	17,044 (58.5%)	38,865 (64.6%)	10,584 (67.4%)
Renter occupied	224,059 (46.7%)	24,455 (56.3%)	84,302 (58.3%)	19,450 (48.5%)	12,084 (41.5%)	21,333 (35.4%)	5,117 (32.6%)
Median value, owner-occupied	\$225,300	\$256,500	\$172,100	\$184,500	\$193,500	\$263,400	\$228,900
Median gross rent renter-occupied	\$626	\$426	\$538	\$688	\$650	\$795	\$768
Year structure built							
1980 to March 1990	77,100 (15.3%)	1,101 (2.4%)	10,647 (6.9%)	7,941 (18.8%)	3,205 (10.6%)	19,187 (30.7%)	4,297 (26.4%)
1970 to 1979	80,353 (15.9%)	1,670 (3.7%)	13,930 (9.0%)	7,788 (18.4%)	4,229 (14.0%)	16,939 (27.1%)	7,952 (48.9%)
1960 to 1969	91,535 (18.2%)	5,751 (12.6%)	22,751 (14.7%)	7,690 (18.2%)	4,482 (14.8%)	16,149 (25.9%)	2,523 (15.5%)
1950 to 1959	83,833 (16.6%)	5,188 (11.3%)	22,041 (14.2%)	14,152 (33.5%)	7,932 (26.3%)	8,446 (13.5%)	1,036 (6.4%)
1940 to 1949	59,197 (11.7%)	6,124 (13.4%)	26,859 (17.4%)	2,954 (7.0%)	6,756 (22.4%)	674 (1.1%)	207 (1.3%)
1939 or earlier	112,091 (22.2%)	25,901 (56.6%)	58,509 (37.8%)	1,691 (4.0%)	3,585 (11.9%)	1,005 (1.6%)	244 (1.5%)
Median year structure built	1960	1939	1947	1963	1956	1973	1975

Sources: 1990 data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1999); 2000 housing unit estimates from the State of California, Department of Finance (2000a).

**TABLE D.6**  
**Alameda County Housing Authority Characteristics, 1999**

Characteristic	BHA	OHA	HACA
Date established	1966	1938	1968
Staff size	17	319	60
Budget (FY1999–2000)	\$1.8 million	\$77.4 million	\$29.3 million
Programs <sup>a</sup>			
Section 8 certificates and vouchers	1,450	9,610	4,500
Public housing units	75	3,306	380
Moderate rehabilitation units	90	879	165

<sup>a</sup>Partial list.

**TABLE D.7**  
**Fair Market Rents and Payment Standards by Unit Size, 1999**

Measure	Number of Bedrooms					
	0 BR <sup>a</sup>	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR	5 BR
Oakland PMSA <sup>b</sup> FMRs	\$607	\$734	\$921	\$1,263	\$1,509	\$1,735
HACA						
Payment standards, 110% of FMRs	\$667	\$807	\$1,013	\$1,389	\$1,659	\$1,908
Payment standards, 120% of FMRs <sup>c</sup>	\$728	\$880	\$1,105	\$1,515	\$1,810	\$2,082
BHA						
Payment standards, 120% of FMRs <sup>d</sup>	\$680	\$823	\$1,033	\$1,416	\$1,692	\$1,946
OHA						
Payment standards range from 90% to 100% of FMRs	\$607	\$734	\$921	\$1,263	\$1,434	\$1,765

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 1999c; Housing Authority of the County of Alameda 2000; Oakland Housing Authority 1999.

<sup>a</sup>Studio unit.

<sup>b</sup>The Oakland Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

<sup>c</sup>HUD approved exception payment standards of up to 120 percent of the FMR for the following cities: Dublin, Fremont, Newark, Pleasanton, and Union. The rest of the area under HACA's jurisdiction remained at 110 percent of the FMR levels.

<sup>d</sup>BHA's 1999 payment standards were based on 120 percent of the previous year's (i.e., 1998) FMRs.

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