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**Counseling in the
Moving to
Opportunity
Demonstration
Program**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes and analyzes the counseling taking place under the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program. Delivered by local nonprofit organizations, the counseling assists some MTO families to move to private rental housing in low-poverty communities, with Section 8 tenant-based rental assistance.

Background

Inspired by the Gautreaux housing mobility program in Chicago, Moving to Opportunity (MTO) is an experimental demonstration and research project designed to evaluate the impacts of helping low-income families move from public and assisted housing in high-poverty inner-city neighborhoods to better housing, education, and employment opportunities in low-poverty communities throughout a metropolitan area.

The MTO demonstration was authorized in Section 152 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. Section 152 provides tenant-based rental assistance and supportive counseling services to test and evaluate the effectiveness of metropolitan-wide efforts to:

...assist very low-income families with children who reside in public housing or housing receiving project-based assistance under Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1937 to move out of areas with high concentrations of persons living in poverty to areas with low concentrations of such persons.

Section 8 rental assistance for the MTO demonstration was appropriated at \$20 million for Fiscal Year 1992 and \$50 million for Fiscal Year 1993. In addition, up to \$1 million was allocated to nonprofit counseling agencies, to provide partial support for their housing search and mobility counseling efforts. These funds are assisting approximately 1,300 low-income families at five HUD-selected demonstration sites—Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

HUD has implemented a carefully controlled experimental design for MTO, in order to answer definitively questions about the immediate effectiveness of mobility counseling and about the long-term impacts for families who move to low-poverty communities. Eligible participants in the demonstration are randomly assigned to three groups:

- 1) an MTO TREATMENT GROUP, which receives Section 8 certificates or vouchers useable only in areas with less than 10 percent poverty, along with counseling assistance in finding a private rental unit;
- 2) a SECTION 8 COMPARISON GROUP, which receives regular Section 8 certificates or vouchers with no special geographic restrictions or counseling; and
- 3) an IN-PLACE CONTROL GROUP, which continues to receive their current project-based assistance.

This random assignment experimental design is essential to achieve the statutory goals of MTO. Outcomes for all three groups will be systematically monitored and evaluated over a ten-year period, in order to assess fully the impacts of housing mobility assistance on families and children.

Purpose of This Report

This report describes the MTO demonstration design for counseling families about making low-poverty moves, and it analyzes the design variations created by the local nonprofit counseling agencies implementing the program in the five demonstration sites. Differences in the "counseling models" adopted by the agencies, as well as differences in the local housing markets and client populations, all contributed to the varied experiences described here. By mid-1997, the nonprofit agencies—operating in partnership with PHAs in the five sites—had already provided assistance to more than 1,500 MTO treatment group families.

Set by the provisions of the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and Program Guidelines for the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program, the responsibilities of the counseling agencies include: helping families set goals and sustain motivation for moving to new homes; guiding families on the requirements of landlords and selection of units; recruiting landlords in low-poverty areas to participate in the Section 8 rental assistance program; providing counseling on housing search; assisting the families with background credit reviews, providing transportation to inspect units, helping to negotiate rents; and providing information and follow-up counseling after clients move.

The MTO *Program Operations Manual (POM)* offers guidance about ways to meet the

Federal Register, Volume 58, Number 156 (August 16, 1993), pp. 43458-43470.

NOFA requirements and otherwise adhere to a common set of demonstration requirements, including record-keeping and data collection. The *POM* includes four general ground rules for providing counseling:

- First, the level of assistance should be reasonable, using group as well as individual activities and relying in part on providing information and referral rather than direct service.
- Second, any counseling approach should seek to "empower" participating families or build their capacity to become more independent and survive on their own in a location and dwelling unit of their choosing.
- Third, the services offered must fit within program budgets; and
- Fourth, MTO's basic demonstration requirements should be adapted to local needs and situations, subject to HUD's review and approval.

Counseling Research Findings

This report draws on different types of data from several sources. Qualitative data on counseling services were gathered through structured interviews with MTO counselors and managers, through in-depth review with the counselors of a small sample of each agency's client files, through observation of nonprofit organization (NPO) activities during multiple visits to the five sites, and through ongoing telephone site monitoring.

Quantitative data on counseling were drawn from the participant tracking logs maintained by the NPOs and PHAs, and additional information was abstracted from counseling logs and case files for a subsample of MTO treatment group clients. These quantitative data have been linked to data from the baseline survey that families complete at the time of their enrollment in MTO. The research here draws on all these sources to make some summary observations about MTO counseling services over the first two years of demonstration operations.

The MTO counseling agencies have, by and large, helped to design and administer well-run and effective counseling programs for their clients. These programs vary from site to site, as a result of variations in housing markets and client populations as well as differences in agency

Moving to Opportunity Program Operations Manual (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., September 1994; revised July 1996).

philosophy and organizational background.

Exhibit ES-1
Areas of Assistance Provided in MTO Counseling

Housing-Related Assistance

Housing-Related Counseling Areas (Except Search)	Search-Related Services
Rent calculations, savings required, assistance with budgeting for rent and utilities Fair housing rights, handling fair housing issues Self-presentation to owners and managers Information sources and other search preparation Location options Choosing a new neighborhood Preparing to move	Showing potential neighborhoods to clients Finding possible units for clients Showing actual units to clients Contacting landlords or managers for clients Pre-inspecting units with clients Handling possible discrimination situations for clients Assistance with obtaining inspections and lease approvals Assistance with other Section 8 requirements

Non-Housing Assistance

Employment and Education	Supportive Services	Special Assistance
Job development services/seminars Job training referrals (for adults and older children) Education (GED, ESL, Literacy) referrals (for adults and older children) College counseling/financial aid referrals	Family and individual counseling Crisis intervention Budget management Household management Parenting education Welfare and legal advocacy Transportation assistance Referrals for mental health and health care Assistance in obtaining child care	Basic furnishings and household items Financial assistance with security deposits and utility hook-ups Assistance with moving expenses/locating movers

Follow-Up Support

Areas of Support Provided to the Family	Areas of Intervention Beyond the Family
Adjustment to new neighborhood or community Transportation issues Child care issues Health care referrals Employment/training referrals Networking with other MTO families	Landlord-tenant relations and mediation Problems with housing units Public assistance benefits problems Discrimination Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment problems School problems

The nonprofit organizations provide three categories of assistance to their MTO clients: ***housing-related assistance; non-housing assistance; and follow-up support.*** As Exhibit ES-1 shows, in each of these three general categories the MTO counseling agencies may offer a wide range of different types of assistance. For example, as part of housing-related counseling, search assistance can include teaching search skills, doing home visits, taking clients on tours of low-poverty areas, and negotiating with brokers and landlords. Home visits illustrate some of the variations across the five sites. While the NOFA describes home visits as a means of reviewing client housekeeping, counselors see their primary value in helping develop client trust. Such visits could not even be undertaken in one site, because of the high levels of gang activity and violence in the public housing developments from which the MTO families wanted to move.

The NPOs have varied even more in the types of non-housing assistance they provide. While all sites have done at least some crisis intervention, their basic task is to provide information and referrals. Some NPOs have also provided such services as case management, budget and household management, job development and parenting classes, and advocacy with other agencies (such as public assistance, schools, and health care providers). The type and extent of follow-up services for movers has varied, too, ranging from intensive post-move supportive services to educational and employment services and crisis intervention.

Because of this variety and complexity, it is helpful to have a framework that allows a clear categorization and analysis of information about the counseling services offered at each site and that supports comparison across sites. The framework organizes information, derived from both qualitative and quantitative sources, on the three categories of services along each of three dimensions: ***breadth*** (the substantive range of counseling content), ***intensity*** (the amount of staff time and resources devoted to delivering the services), and ***degree of client intervention*** (the extent to which counseling staff intervene on behalf of the MTO families to bring about desired results).

The framework is shown in Exhibit ES-2; in each chapter of this report, the counseling provided by the nonprofit agencies in the MTO sites is analyzed according to its dimensions. A summary description of the NPO services is found in Chapter 1, and they are discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 through 4.

**Exhibit ES-2
Counseling Analysis Framework**

Site	Housing			Non-Housing			Follow-Up		
	Breadth	Intensity	Client Intervention	Breadth	Intensity	Client Intervention	Breadth	Intensity	Client Intervention
Baltimore									
Boston									
Chicago									
Los Angeles									
New York									

In general, we have found ample provision of the core, required housing-related counseling assistance. In addition, the NPOs provide varied levels of non-housing services. Several sites were not yet giving enough emphasis to stabilization and follow-up support for clients in their new locations. This limitation is being addressed operationally, as the MTO program continues to counsel families throughout the remainder of the demonstration.

Efficacy of MTO Counseling

In the MTO demonstration, the clear goal of the counseling process is to help the client move with Section 8 assistance to a low-poverty area. Most clients have come to the counseling agencies with a relatively high level of motivation to move out of public housing to a better apartment and neighborhood. A small number of families appear, however, to be less motivated and to be uncertain about whether they should move from their public housing units into private rental housing. Some families are not well-equipped to meet the requirements for dealing with a private-market apartment and the apartment's owner or manager. Although a small number of clients have had problems that led the counselors to advise against moving, it appears that most families who joined the program and were assigned to the MTO treatment group have been appropriately motivated for a low-poverty move.

The true impact or degree of success of these moves cannot, of course, be measured until much more time has passed. Later evaluations of MTO will examine whether the families adjust to their new environments and will determine the long-term effects of the moves on

education, employment, and family well-being.

As part of the present assessment of counseling efficacy, a quantitative analysis was carried out using data on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the client families, their background conditions and experiences at the time they joined MTO, and their utilization of counseling services. By examining the relationship of these variables to families' success in leasing up (moving with Section 8 assistance to low-poverty areas), it is possible to develop some preliminary insights on how various factors influence whether a family is able to make use of the Section 8 certificate or voucher with assistance from the NPO.

This analysis does not constitute a formal evaluation of the impacts of counseling but rather examines what factors help explain which families are more likely to lease a unit under the low-poverty restrictions of the demonstration. The preliminary results indicate that:

- Three measures of counseling utilization (the number of searches, the number of search units found by the NPO, and the client's completion of the NPO counseling program) all make highly significant, positive contributions to a family's ability to lease-up.
- Counseling utilization is influenced by certain family characteristics. But the separate impact of counseling on leasing up remains significant even when these characteristics are taken into account.
- Some of the families' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics influenced whether they were able to move with MTO counseling. For example, combining data from all the sites, families with one child (rather than more than one) were more likely to move, as were families with lower incomes; in contrast, Hispanic families and those with higher incomes were less likely to move.
- The families' background conditions also influence whether the families lease up with MTO counseling. Again combining data from all the sites, families with the head of the household in school and those dissatisfied with their neighborhoods were more likely to move.

Research currently underway, but not completed at the time of this report, will provide evidence as to how client families perceived and evaluated the services offered by some of the NPOs. This research will provide a clearer set of measures as to how clients assess the efficacy of counseling.

The analysis is also necessarily limited by the fact that there are only five sites in the MTO research. Further, the present analysis looks only at the MTO treatment group (the counseled group) and does not make use of the experiences of the Section 8 comparison group or in-place control group in examining mobility behavior.

- Site and housing market conditions also significantly affected a family's chance of leasing up through MTO. Taking the New York site as the basis for comparison, families in Baltimore, Boston, and Los Angeles had a greater chance of success, while those in Chicago had a lower chance. These site effects clearly represent some combination of program features and local markets, so they should be interpreted with care.

Thus, insofar as our three measures—number of search units, number found by the NPO, and completion of the counseling program—are reasonable representations of counseling use, the quantitative analysis shows clearly that, apart from client characteristics and market factors, counseling utilization does increase the probability that a family will lease up. This finding indicates that the NPO counseling being provided through the MTO demonstration is effective in helping clients find their housing and move to low-poverty areas.

Importance of Partnerships with PHAs

Although this research focuses on the nature of MTO counseling services, its scope is not restricted to the nonprofit counseling agencies. The PHAs that are partner agencies in operating the MTO demonstration play an important role in facilitating counseling service delivery and moves to low-poverty locations.

The joint efforts required of PHAs and NPOs in the MTO demonstration go well beyond typical contracting or consulting relationships. The partner agencies not only needed to plan and prepare for the demonstration together, they also must continue to coordinate efforts and monitor progress over the course of program operations. In almost all cases, the local PHAs have played a critical role in assisting the NPOs to learn about the Section 8 program and in facilitating the prompt processing of client lease-ups. Among the key contributions the site PHAs have made to the efficacy of MTO counseling are these:

- PHAs have assigned competent and committed staff from their Section 8 departments to focus on the demonstration, to be sure that the performance of Section 8 administrative functions supports the efforts of the NPOs to help client families. In particular, MTO leasing officers have played an important role in making the moves happen and in tracking families through the demonstration.
- Most of the PHAs have invested considerable effort in establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation with the NPOs. The demonstration has operated most effectively where there have been regular conversations and meetings about the program, as well as cross-training of NPO staff (so they are clear on how Section 8 works and how their efforts will connect with the program).

- PHAs have made special efforts for the MTO program, involving prompt inspections and reduced delay in the start-up of landlord payments for lease-ups. These actions help prevent landlords from changing their minds about the tenant in the intervening time or deciding against getting involved in Section 8's rules and paperwork. Affordable units in good locations are usually scarce, so the NPO and PHA staff have, at their best, worked together to keep the deals intact.

These observations about the PHA role are based on both positive and negative examples. Problems at the Chicago Housing Authority, before the Section 8 program was privatized, meant that most of these conditions were not met, and as a result the demonstration's progress was significantly impeded.

Implications of this Research for Mobility Counseling

Mobility counseling appears to be a key component of the future HUD envisions for the Section 8 program. If the agencies operating the Section 8 program nationwide are to foster movement among clients and to eliminate and prevent concentrations of assisted families, mobility counseling is one demonstrated tool for achieving these goals.

This research suggests that MTO already offers a variety of potentially useful lessons for other mobility and opportunity counseling efforts. Because of the particular requirements of the research demonstration and the small number of sites, we should not take the lessons as prescriptive; instead, they must be adapted to local situations. Here are the key suggestions:

On counseling and follow-up support—

- An *assessment of client needs* is a useful tool for identifying issues that might prevent a successful move (such as drug abuse, health problems, or family conflict) and serves as the basis for offering a range of non-housing and follow-up services.
- A *contract between client and counselor* can be used to define their mutual responsibilities and to set requirements for participation.
- Mobility counseling inevitably focuses on housing search, but mobility programs must decide *whether to offer non-housing assistance, and of what types*, to clients.
- Early indications suggest that *follow-up support* is important to many families but essential for those families who required more vigorous housing and non-housing services pre-move. However, it is too soon to determine the true effects of follow-up support on a client's ability to become self-sufficient.
- *Counseling is most critical at both ends of the process.* Reinforcing motivation and

encouraging self-help are vital as families consider making moves away from familiar neighborhoods. Follow-up support is critical to help the families become comfortable with their new communities.

On the value of a nonprofit counseling agency—

- Nonprofit organizations bring *skills* for assisting Section 8 clients that differ from (and, ideally, complement) the skills of housing authorities. These skills include educating and motivating clients, assisting clients while also encouraging self-reliance, supporting clients facing significant changes in their lives, and linking clients to a variety of services.
- The NPO needs to have *staff* experienced in working with similar clients and in providing similar types of counseling. This includes both housing search assistance and—ideally—other supportive services.
- Within the NPO and PHA, there must be *strong organizational support* for the goals of mobility or opportunity counseling and a commitment to make this work an integral part of the organization's operations.

On PHA-NPO partnerships—

- *PHAs and NPOs are different kinds of organizations*, and their staff may even speak different client and programmatic languages. Thus, it takes effort and good will to establish and maintain the communication necessary for an effective counseling program.
- PHAs must provide effective *monitoring and support* for the NPOs that counsel Section 8 program clients.
- *Good record-keeping* about clients and their progress is essential for understanding how to measure counseling performance and how to improve it.

Closing Thoughts on Lessons Learned from MTO Counseling

Moving to Opportunity is a relatively small demonstration, with just five sites and a dozen participating agencies. It will affect the lives of fewer than 5,000 families, and only about 2,000 of these families will receive counseling to assist in making low-poverty moves. Further, it will be several years before the longer-term outcomes of greatest interest to the Congress and HUD can be meaningfully measured and analyzed.

Yet MTO has already proven to be a useful testing ground for ways to encourage

mobility among Section 8 recipients. While it has been difficult to obtain good data about the quantity of counseling services delivered to MTO clients, the qualitative data on counseling—combined with sustained observation of the agencies carrying out the demonstration—indicate that this model of PHA-NPO partnership and the types of counseling provided to the participating families are positive models for future mobility efforts.

CHAPTER ONE
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF
MTO COUNSELING AGENCIES AND SERVICES

The purpose of this report is to describe the different ways in which the nonprofit organizations (NPOs) operating the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) Demonstration have designed their mobility counseling programs. The report presents the lessons they have learned as they have helped public and assisted housing residents to move to areas that offer better housing and greater educational and employment opportunities.

This chapter introduces the MTO Demonstration Program and the counseling services that are a key component of the demonstration. Section 1.1 provides an introduction to the demonstration; Section 1.2 reviews MTO program requirements as defined in the Notice of Funding Availability and the *MTO Program Operations Manual*, and Section 1.3 gives an overview of the eight organizations that have provided counseling to families in the demonstration. Section 1.4 compares these agencies' models of MTO counseling. The final section of this chapter summarizes the structure of the report as a whole.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF THE MTO DEMONSTRATION

MTO is modeled on remedial programs of the past two decades, particularly the Gautreaux housing mobility program in Chicago. In these cases, federal courts have required HUD to provide funding for rental assistance and housing counseling services in order to reduce racial segregation in publicly assisted housing.¹ Jurisdictions in which court-ordered programs have been established include Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Dallas. MTO differs from these court-ordered programs in that it focuses on the poverty rate of sending and destination neighborhoods rather than on their racial composition.

¹ The principal objective of MTO is to offer families living in high-poverty areas the opportunity to move to low-poverty areas. It is expected that, given the characteristics of households living in high-poverty areas of the selected demonstration sites, some degree of racial dispersion will be another outcome of the MTO demonstration.

MTO is a Congressionally authorized initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to examine carefully the impacts of assisting families living in public housing or project-based Section 8 housing to move out of the high-poverty areas of large central cities. The public and assisted housing developments from which participants are drawn must be located in neighborhoods where at least 40 percent of the population is poor, and recipients of MTO assistance must move to neighborhoods where no more than 10 percent of the population is poor.

The MTO demonstration was authorized in Section 152 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. In accordance with Section 152, HUD issued a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) in August 1993, which established eligibility criteria for the selection of both demonstration sites and program participants.

- The demonstration was restricted to no more than six *very large cities* with populations of at least 400,000 in metropolitan areas of at least 1.5 million people. Of the 21 cities eligible to participate in MTO, five cities were selected by competitive procurement for the demonstration. They are ***Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.***
- ***Eligible families*** are very low-income families with children now living in public housing or project-based Section 8-assisted housing located in areas with ***high concentrations of poverty*** (where 40 percent or more of people in the census tract have incomes below the official poverty level).
- Local programs were created via grants between the Secretary of HUD and ***nonprofit organizations (NPOs)***, which provide counseling and services in connection with the demonstration. Congress appropriated funding for the necessary Section 8 vouchers and certificates, which are administered by the five ***public housing agencies (PHAs)*** under contracts with HUD. The NOFA required that the PHAs form partnerships with the NPOs to administer the program jointly. The NPOs receive funding to help pay for the costs associated with counseling participating families, assisting them in finding appropriate units, and working with landlords to encourage their participation in the MTO program. Local programs initially matched federal counseling funds with funds from state or local public or private sources. PHAs receive administrative fees for the increased number of Section 8 certificates and vouchers made available through the MTO program.
- ***In the short term***, the demonstration is designed to compare the general costs and service provided under the MTO program and the regular Section 8 tenant-based

To be eligible for MTO, a family must have a child under the age of 18 at the time of Section 8 eligibility determination.

rental assistance program, especially with regard to the additional counseling and housing search assistance offered to participants in the demonstration. HUD also reports to Congress biennially on the effectiveness of the demonstration, including who is served, the level of counseling and types of services provided, and updates on the employment records of families assisted under the program.

- *In the long term*, the demonstration is designed to assess the housing, educational, and employment effects for the adults and children who have participated in MTO. Congress requested a final report on the social and economic outcomes of MTO in 2004. Due to the slower rate of lease-ups in the five sites and the expanded programs in Los Angeles and Boston, the final lease-ups are expected to occur in late 1998. The final report to Congress will therefore be delivered in 2006, to permit the final participants sufficient time to take full advantage of their moves to opportunity.

MTO Policy Questions and Research Design

Research on the Gautreaux program comparing participants who moved to the suburbs to those who remained in the city suggested that moving to higher-income communities had positive economic benefits for participating families. The studies suggested that the mothers were more likely to get jobs and that children were more likely to stay in school, attend college, and be employed. However, the Gautreaux research has many weaknesses, most significantly the lack of a true control group.

In contrast, the MTO demonstration is a research experiment, designed to answer rigorously three sets of questions about the impact of neighborhood on social and economic opportunity for very low-income families:

- What are the impacts of MTO on families' locational choices, and on the housing and neighborhood conditions of families moving to low-poverty neighborhoods?
- What are the impacts of moves to low-poverty neighborhoods on employment, income, education, and social well-being?
- What is the long-term effect of MTO counseling services, coupled with low-poverty moves, on improving the social and economic well-being of MTO

See, for example, James Rosenbaum, "Black Pioneers—Do their Moves to the Suburbs Increase Economic Opportunity for Mothers and Children?" *Housing Policy Debate*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1992.

families?

In order to ensure that all of the research questions can be answered, the MTO demonstration is built around an experimental research design. Families who volunteer for the program are randomly assigned to one of three groups:

- the **MTO TREATMENT GROUP**, which receives Section 8 certificates or vouchers useable only in low-poverty areas (areas with less than 10 percent of the population below the poverty line in 1989), along with counseling and assistance in finding a private rental unit;
- the **SECTION 8 COMPARISON GROUP**, which receives regular Section 8 certificates or vouchers (geographically unrestricted) and regular briefings and assistance from the PHA; and
- the **IN-PLACE CONTROL GROUP**, which receives no certificates or vouchers but continues to receive project-based assistance.

Over a ten-year period, the participants assigned to these three groups will be followed and periodically surveyed to determine their current residence and any early effects of the demonstration. There will be a final summary evaluation to determine the effects of moving to low poverty communities on the employment, education, and other life chances of families. The experience of families receiving the special MTO assistance can be compared with that of families who receive the "regular" Section 8 treatment. The in-place control group is essential in order to estimate correctly the separate impacts of Section 8 rental assistance by itself and MTO assistance with counseling, providing a benchmark against which the outcomes of the two other groups can be measured.

Program Resources

Congress appropriated \$20 million in Section 8 rental assistance for the MTO demonstration in FY92 and \$500,000 for counseling grants to the NPOs. Subsequent funding allocated by HUD for MTO counseling now totals \$1,182,571.

The PHAs in Los Angeles and Boston have decided to set aside certificates and vouchers from their own Section 8 programs for a second round of MTO. Support for NPO activities to assist these additional families is being provided by the housing authorities and HUD.

The Role of Abt Associates in the Demonstration

HUD contracted with Abt Associates in September 1993 to assist with the MTO demonstration design, including development of data collection forms and procedures to help answer the core research questions. Abt Associates also provided training and implementation assistance to HUD and the participating PHAs and NPOs. Abt Associates is currently providing ongoing data collection assistance, technical assistance, and monitoring to local sites, to ensure that the demonstration continues to be implemented in an effective and standardized manner. In a separate procurement, Abt Associates was selected by HUD to design and maintain an MTO data system and to track participating families.

1.2 MTO PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NONPROFIT COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS

The NOFA and Program Guidelines for the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program require the joint participation of a local Public Housing Authority (PHA) and a nonprofit organization (NPO) at each of the demonstration sites. The responsibilities of these NPOs are listed below:

- To **recruit landlords** willing to provide housing to MTO families in low-poverty census tracts;
- To help **MTO TREATMENT GROUP** families set goals and develop or sustain the **motivation for moving** to new homes;
- To conduct a **group briefing**, to provide information about landlords, and hold role-playing sessions to help families learn effective ways to present themselves to landlords;
- To give **guidance to families** on the requirements of landlords and the selection of units;
- To perform **credit checks** (to facilitate landlord acceptance) and conduct **home visits** to observe their treatment of the property and provide individual counseling on relocation to low-poverty neighborhoods;
- To provide **individual counseling on housing search** in low-poverty census tracts;

Abt's contract for these activities runs through February 1999.

Federal Register, vol. 58, no. 156 (August 16, 1993), pp. 43458-43470.

- To help families in their search for housing by *assisting families in inspecting a minimum of three possible units* and by providing *transportation assistance* to low-poverty census tracts;
- To *negotiate rents* with landlords and share favorable information about MTO families with landlords;
- To provide *information and follow-up counseling* to families as they adjust to their new homes, including visiting each family within 90 days of a move and holding meetings with groups of families who have moved to the same area; and
- To collect *participant, program, and cost data* in support of the demonstration and periodically report to HUD about the MTO program.

The PHA brings families into the MTO program and conducts the basic Section 8 functions needed to establish program eligibility and enable families to rent units with Section 8 rental assistance. The NPO recruits landlords in low-poverty areas and provides a variety of types of assistance so that families in the MTO treatment group can locate and rent units in those areas.

Additional guidance for the PHAs and NPOs on implementing the MTO demonstration is provided by the *MTO Program Operations Manual (POM)*, which further defines these responsibilities and offers suggestions about ways to meet the NOFA requirements. The *POM* emphasizes these four essential elements of NPO participation in local MTO programs: motivating families; supporting family mobility; providing appropriate levels of service; and working as a team with the PHA.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE NONPROFIT COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS

While the MTO NOFA and *Program Operations Manual* define a set of core requirements with respect to MTO counseling, they leave considerable room for the NPOs to develop their own approaches to the task of assisting the MTO treatment group families. The actual range of approaches to MTO counseling reflects site differences (related to the local housing markets and to the relationships between PHAs and NPOs) but also important organizational differences. Among the eight groups that have provided MTO counseling are

Moving to Opportunity Program Operations Manual (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., September 1994; revised July 1996).

agencies with different program histories, missions, and other characteristics. This section introduces the counseling agencies and serves as background for the examination of counseling practices in subsequent chapters.

Baltimore: The Community Assistance Network

The Community Assistance Network (CAN) is the lead nonprofit group in Baltimore that provides counseling to MTO treatment group families. In operation for over 30 years, CAN is a community action agency that offers housing services—such as eviction prevention, rental relocation, and money management—as well as emergency food and fuel services, weatherization assistance, and day care programs. CAN's mission is "... to develop, operate, and support programs that reduce vulnerability and promote personal growth, stability, and self-sufficiency among low-income residents of Baltimore County."

CAN brings a particular perspective to the MTO program in Baltimore. From the outset, CAN staff structured the program based on the belief that most MTO clients would require wide-ranging case management and in-depth support if they were to succeed in moving from public to private rental housing. As a result, the Baltimore program delays issuance of the Section 8 certificates and vouchers so that the MTO treatment group clients can complete a series of workshops on budget management, household management, housing search, and landlord/tenant relations *before* they begin searching for housing. These workshops are provided by the Baltimore Urban League and Baltimore Neighbors Inc. under subcontract to CAN.

Once clients have successfully completed these workshops, they are expected to do their own house or apartment searching. The counselors provide support and transportation assistance during the search period but they do not do the searching for the client.

In addition to helping develop skills through the workshops, CAN believes that clients are likely to have other problems that need to be addressed before a move to a low-poverty community. Before a client begins searching, staff conduct a needs assessment during the initial home visit and determine the family's needs. Depending on the client, these may include job

The NPOs are described in the alphabetical order of their cities.

Community Assistance Network *1994 Annual Report*.

training, employment counseling, credit counseling, family counseling, and assistance with housekeeping and medical problems. If there are serious problems, counselors begin to address these issues before the family begins searching for housing. CAN staff generally provide the family counseling themselves but frequently make referrals for other types of services. Staff describe their counseling approach as "holistic," in that they help the families in whatever way they can to achieve a positive transition into the private rental market and into a new community. CAN's approach of providing intensive non-housing counseling before a client moves is unique among the five sites.

Because CAN has traditionally served the residents of Baltimore County, the agency's involvement with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) in the MTO program represents a unique cross-jurisdictional partnership. As a county community action agency, CAN brings a special perspective and know-how that have helped shape the MTO program in Baltimore. Staff familiarity with the county and its housing markets, the agency's ability to obtain private foundation funding to help with client's needs, and CAN's contacts with community action agencies in the other counties of the metropolitan area have all been very helpful to clients who choose to search for housing and live outside of Baltimore City. As clients enter the MTO program, they are encouraged to explore areas in the suburban counties, and also to become familiar with the low-poverty areas of the city. CAN conducts neighborhood tours so that clients can see the variety of communities in all the surrounding counties and the housing options they offer. When clients move outside CAN's service area, staff work to put them in touch with services they may need, through CAN's network of community action and other social service agencies.

As part of the MTO program, CAN staff initially worked directly with landlords,

As these two agencies planned for the MTO program, they agreed that CAN would need a downtown location, if counseling staff were to be easily accessible to MTO clients. HABC provided space to CAN in the same building that houses the Section 8 offices. This greatly facilitated communications between HABC and CAN staff working on the program and proved very convenient for MTO clients.

Baltimore County encircles Baltimore City and contains many low-poverty communities. However, CAN's clients have also searched in (and moved to) other counties in the metropolitan area.

particularly small landlords, to educate them about Section 8 and Moving to Opportunity. As in Chicago's Gautreaux program, CAN staff now believe that they have performed enough landlord outreach so that their time is better spent helping clients to present themselves positively to landlords. They also assist clients in negotiating with individual landlords. An optional workshop is available to clients to help them present a positive image. CAN encourages clients to develop a "portfolio" for landlords, which may include pictures of family members, a recent credit report, and even a list of the client's goals.

CAN began working with clients from the MTO treatment group in October 1994 and achieved its first lease-up in February 1995. After more than two years of operation, a total of 146 MTO treatment group families have moved with CAN's assistance. In order to achieve this number of lease-ups, CAN staff worked with about 250 MTO families.

Due to the breadth and intensity of the assistance offered, the CAN counseling program has proven to be one of the more expensive to operate. During the height of the MTO effort, CAN operated MTO with a program manager, four full-time counselors, and an administrative aide—more staff than any of the other NPOs. A total of \$485,581 in funding has supported this effort, 54 percent from HUD and the remainder from HABC and a local foundation. Excluding start-up costs, CAN's net cost per lease-up was approximately \$3,200; the net cost per family counseled was about \$1,800. CAN was the first nonprofit in the MTO program to achieve the HUD target of moving 143 low-income families to homes in low-poverty neighborhoods, reaching this goal in February 1997.

Boston: The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP) is the nonprofit agency responsible for counseling MTO treatment group families in Boston. Established in 1983 as the Boston Housing Partnership, the agency name was changed to Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership after merging with Metropolitan Housing, Inc. in 1991. MBHP conducts a wide

Estimated at \$20,000. Start-up costs were defined as costs incurred (e.g., for outreach or staff training) before work with clients began.

The net cost to HUD per lease-up was about \$1,700; the net cost to HUD per family counseled was about \$1,000.

range of housing and homeless assistance programs. As a subcontractor to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the agency administers state and federal rental assistance programs in metropolitan Boston and also operates a Family Self-Sufficiency program.

MBHP's administration of Section 8 certificates and vouchers in the Boston area has two benefits for MTO. First, it is the basis for a pre-existing working relationship between the Boston Housing Authority and MBHP (since they both administer Section 8 in the City of Boston). The Boston application to HUD for MTO grew out of that relationship. Second, MBHP acts as the receiving agency for portability, when MTO families move from Boston to other cities and towns covered by MBHP's Section 8 program. It carries out inspections, negotiates rents, approves leases, and makes landlord payments, just as the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) does within the city. MBHP's ability to act as the receiving agency for Section 8 is unique among MTO sites and eases some portability issues, such as the need for cooperation and communication by the receiving PHAs. When participants move to other areas of the state beyond MBHP's jurisdiction, the nonprofit agencies administering Section 8 for the state serve as the receiving agencies. Both BHA and MBHP already have established relationships with these agencies, as well.

The Boston NPO had experience with Section 8 mobility prior to MTO. In its regular Section 8 program, MBHP emphasized wider housing opportunities in the Boston metropolitan area. The agency had already established a Resource Room with community newspapers from city and suburban areas and a computer listing of available rental units by location and size, before the MTO program was initiated. Notebooks for each neighborhood and suburban community contain maps, information about public transportation and facilities (such as schools and parks), and comments from Section 8 families living in the area. A housing search

The organization administers about 3,000 Section 8 subsidies and almost 2,000 vouchers under the state's rental assistance program (which is separate from Section 8). Both programs cover 34 cities and towns in metropolitan Boston, including the city itself.

Portability refers to the right of Section 8 certificate- and voucher-holders to use their housing assistance outside the jurisdiction of the housing agency that originally issued the certificate or voucher. Families exercise portability when they move to a different jurisdiction.

Under portability, MBHP bills the BHA for Housing Assistance Payments and administrative funds for the MTO families leasing up in its territory outside Boston.

coordinator works in the Resource Room to assist families in housing search. MBHP also operates the Skinner Housing Opportunity Pilot Program, which was designed to encourage mobility among 100 families that received Section 8 certificates in court-ordered compensation for discriminatory treatment by the BHA. The counseling and support services provided by MBHP for Skinner formed the basis for those offered under MTO.

When MTO began, the program was part of the rental assistance division of MBHP, which manages the Section 8 and state rental assistance operations. A program coordinator (who reported to the director of rental assistance) supervised two counselors and an administrative assistant, at the same time carrying a partial counseling caseload. During this period, the MTO program flourished. Staff motivation was high, there were enough clients to keep the counselors busy, there were administrative staff to help with the record-keeping, and there was strong agency support for the program.

However, beginning in late 1995, MBHP's MTO program underwent major staffing changes. The director of rental assistance left MBHP to assist in the new private management of the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA's) Section 8 program. In early 1996, the program coordinator also left MBHP to work at CHAC, the organization that had taken over Section 8 from the CHA. In response to the loss of the two managers, MBHP moved the MTO program from the rental assistance division to the community development and resident services division. There was a noticeable loss of support and supervision for MTO in its new division, when the transition first occurred. In addition, the counselors were without administrative support for several months in 1996. However, since the fall of 1996, agency support for the program seems to have increased again, and efforts have been made—both within MBHP and between the NPO and PHA—to bring the program back up to speed.

The first Boston families began to receive counseling services from MBHP in November 1994. Since the first MTO treatment family lease-up in December 1994, 135 families

Although MBHP was interested in MTO from the very start, the agency went through a serious decision-making process regarding participation in the demonstration. Because of its commitment to strengthening Boston's neighborhoods, the agency's Board had some concerns about whether the goals of MTO—to help families leave such neighborhoods—were consistent with MBHP's overall mission. In the end, their belief in expanding choices for inner-city families persuaded the Board members to apply with the BHA for demonstration funding.

have moved with the agency's assistance, and the agency has worked with 294 families. It is anticipated that MBHP will complete lease-up of the initial 143 MTO certificates and vouchers by October 1997.

Some \$499,604 has supported MBHP's MTO work, of which 78 percent came from HUD and the rest from state and local agencies. Based on 143 lease-ups, the final net cost per lease-up will be about \$3,300, excluding start-up costs. To place this number of families, MBHP will likely need to counsel about 300 families, at a net cost per family of roughly \$1,500.

Chicago: The Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities

The nonprofit organization initially providing counseling services to MTO treatment group families in Chicago was the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, which had developed and operated the Gautreaux Program for 17 years at the time MTO began. Through the Gautreaux Program, the Leadership Council had assisted over 5,000 families to find decent housing outside the racially segregated areas of the City of Chicago.

This nationally recognized civil rights and fair housing organization was organized as a result of a campaign for open housing led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1966. Its mission is to end racial discrimination and segregation in housing. To this end, the Leadership Council is active in public policy, enforcement and litigation, community relations, and housing industry initiatives; it also offers client service programs, including housing information and legal action.

To a considerable degree, the mandated counseling services in MTO were modeled after the early days of the Gautreaux Program, when applicants were closely screened and when counselors provided considerable individual assistance to families accepted into the program, including finding them housing units. However, in more recent years, Gautreaux had

Since the award of MTO, MBHP has also sought and won additional financial support for the program, in the form of a Fair Housing Improvement Program grant (with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights) and two \$10,000 foundation grants to assist clients with moving costs.

Estimated at about \$31,000.

The net cost to HUD per lease-up will be about \$2,500; the net cost to HUD per family counseled will be about \$1,200.

increasingly emphasized self-help, leaving to the families the main responsibility for locating and leasing eligible housing. As a result, it appears that motivated and resourceful clients found housing, while others may not have been as successful. There were sufficient numbers of applicants each year for Gautreaux to make steady progress toward the court-ordered goal of assisting 7,100 families to move to non-segregated census tracts in the Chicago Metropolitan area.

The Leadership Council staffed its MTO program with a manager from the Gautreaux Program, two counselors, and an administrative assistant. Staff were located in a separate office several blocks from Leadership Council headquarters, in part because HUD had urged the nonprofit to maintain a strict separation between its Gautreaux and MTO efforts, in order to maintain the integrity of each program.

From the start, the MTO staff emphasized client initiative—using the independent search model that had been followed in the later years of the Gautreaux program—rather than providing intensive housing search assistance. Nor did they conduct any comprehensive assessment of the client's situation or needs (which would be necessary for a case-management approach). However, they quickly noticed that the families coming out of Chicago public housing seemed different from the typical Gautreaux applicant, many of whom either were living in private rental housing or knew other Gautreaux participants. The MTO participants were less familiar with outlying city neighborhoods and suburban areas, more fearful of looking in non-traditional neighborhoods, more likely to have serious personal or family problems, and were apparently less motivated to move.

At the same time, the Leadership Council's partner agency, the Chicago Housing Authority, was encountering severe managerial and staffing problems in its overall and Section 8 programs, which led to many delays and inefficiencies in the ordinary Section 8 operations necessary for MTO. Missed inspection appointments and delayed paperwork meant that the

Note that there has never been a careful process evaluation of the Gautreaux program, so that it is difficult to ascertain exactly what types of counseling services were offered to what types of clients, for what length of time, why they were discontinued, and what effects they had.

In the Gautreaux Program, the Section 8 certificates had been allocated directly to the Leadership Council, which conducted HQS inspections itself and/or worked with different housing authorities where its families leased up. There was no partner agency required. Nor did the two

client families lost units, as landlords rented to other apartment seekers.

The Leadership Council's MTO program had a total of \$228,897 in funding, of which 66 percent was from HUD and the rest from the CHA. The first Chicago MTO treatment group families began counseling in February 1995, and the initial move to a low-poverty area occurred in April 1995. However, progress was very slow from the start. At the end of 1995, only 14 families had succeeded in finding housing in low-poverty areas, and by June 1996 the total had only grown to 27. Despite the December 1995 takeover of Section 8 program management by a private organization and that organization's efforts to improve Section 8 administration, the Leadership Council decided to withdraw from the MTO demonstration in May 1996. The agency's letter to HUD Secretary Cisneros cited "the enormous difficulties we have encountered in working with the Chicago Housing Authority.... There have been too many insuperable problems associated with the collapse of the CHA to permit us to continue beyond this point."

Chicago: CHAC, Inc.

In an effort to end the mismanagement of the CHA's Section 8 program, HUD intervened in 1995, selecting a private management entity to take over Section 8 operations in Chicago. CHAC, Inc., a for-profit entity (formed as a subsidiary of Quadel Consulting Corporation), was awarded the contract. CHAC took over Section 8 in Chicago in December 1995 (with the Leadership Council still acting as the partner nonprofit agency for MTO).

The senior staff hired for CHAC were experienced Section 8 administrators with mobility backgrounds and a strong commitment to making mobility part of the ordinary Section 8 program. Two of the senior staff had worked on the MTO demonstration before moving from Boston. The interim executive director, permanent executive director, and deputy director were

agencies have a pre-existing relationship to provide a foundation for MTO. Because of the overall management problems at the CHA, HUD took over the agency in May 1995 and installed a new management team. A decision was soon made to privatize the Section 8 program so that some of the inefficiencies and mismanagement could be corrected. (Government Accounting Office, *Public Housing: Status of HUD's Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority*, June 7, 1995 and September 5, 1995).

Letter from Ms. Aurie Pennick, Executive Director of the Leadership Council, to former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, May 28, 1996.

all from agencies already involved in the MTO program.

When the Leadership Council decided to withdraw from the MTO program, HUD invited CHAC to assume the role of NPO. One of the counselors from the Leadership Council was hired by CHAC, and a second counselor and supervisor were subsequently added. It took several months for CHAC to sort out and clarify the relationships among those performing PHA functions for MTO (such as eligibility determination and processing lease-ups), those working on mobility counseling in the general Section 8 program, and those serving as the counselors for the MTO treatment group.

While there are some overlapping functions—for example, the mobility staff and the MTO staff do landlord outreach together looking for units in low-poverty areas—the counselors operate comparably to the other MTO sites. For MTO families, outreach and briefings are conducted by both "PHA" and "NPO" staff. All families receive a credit check, counselors help clients learn about new neighborhoods and search for housing, and other needs are identified and addressed in the context of housing mobility. Information about housing and other resources in Chicago's 77 community areas is available in a Resource Room. CHAC's orientation is toward skill-building and self-sufficiency, working with clients around the whole array of changes now facing low-income families dependent on public benefits programs. CHAC has organized workshops on a variety of topics, including substance abuse, domestic violence, and welfare reform. Counselors also refer clients to other social service agencies for family counseling and various types of services.

Despite the changes in CHA administration, CHAC continues to face many of the challenges that affected the Leadership Council. The CHA continues to have management problems, with frequent turnover in site management. The new CHA administration has accelerated the pace of demolitions, seeking to shift many residents to the Section 8 program and creating political controversy and resident resistance to any efforts to relocate them. Finally, the CHA's developments continue to be extremely dangerous and violent. It is also true that some of the families applying for MTO from those CHA developments bring with them a substantial

Chicago's City Planning department divides the city into 77 community areas for statistical purposes. The area definitions are rooted in sociological research and are consistent with local residents' views of neighborhood boundaries.

number of problems, including domestic violence, substance abuse, and gang involvement, which can cause them difficulty adapting to the requirements of the private rental market. As a result, lease-up rates in Chicago have been the lowest in the five sites.

CHAC's MTO funding for counseling totals \$315,141, all from HUD. CHAC has increased the pace of lease-ups for the MTO treatment group, although the tight rental market in Chicago and the problems at the CHA continue to impede lease-ups. Lease-ups rose from 27 (the number achieved by the Leadership Council) to 84 by August 1997, and a steady level of activity is anticipated for the balance of 1997 as families in additional CHA public housing developments are brought into MTO. Assuming that CHAC is successful in placing 116 families (and thus reaches the site target of 143), their average cost per lease-up will be about \$2,700, and they will have worked with about 530 families, at an average cost of about \$590 per family.

Los Angeles: Fair Housing Congress of Southern California and Beyond Shelter

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) received an allocation of 188 Section 8 vouchers for the MTO demonstration, with 94 for the MTO treatment group and 94 for the Section 8 comparison group. (All four other sites each received a combination of 285 certificates and vouchers for the demonstration.) HACLA initially selected two different nonprofit agencies to provide counseling services for MTO treatment group clients. The lead NPO was the Fair Housing Congress of Southern California (FHC), whose primary focus is on promoting fair housing. Their staff research rental markets, conduct testing, and provide legal assistance to people who feel they have been victims of housing discrimination. The MTO demonstration was the FHC's first experience with providing direct housing counseling services to clients.

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) sought to stress self-sufficiency in its MTO program. For this reason, and because of the FHC's lack of prior counseling experience, HACLA selected as a partner for FHC Beyond Shelter, a social service agency whose primary mission is transitional assistance to the homeless. The agency offers a wide variety of services for its clients, including: counseling and case management; crisis

As in New York City, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles selected its nonprofit partners via a competitive procurement process.

intervention; housing search assistance; money management; job development workshops and the services of a job developer; child development workshops and child abuse prevention; advocacy with government agencies (AFDC, schools, health care services, mental health care); transportation assistance; and assistance in locating child care. Beyond Shelter also develops, owns, and manages “service-enriched” affordable housing, which is low-income housing with a full-time coordinator and resident services available on-site. Finally, the agency has a Technical Assistance Department that sponsors workshops and provides training and consulting to other organizations who are developing similar programs.

Beyond Shelter initially gained relevant experience for MTO through its involvement in a HACLA program that provided Section 8 vouchers and certificates to social service agencies to use for homeless families. Later, the agency became involved in Los Angeles' Mobility Plus program, providing housing search and placement services to low-income residents with emergency Section 8 housing assistance after the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Like MBHP in Boston, Beyond Shelter initially had strong reservations about participating in MTO, in this case because of objections to the random assignment of participants. However, after much internal debate, the agency decided to participate because staff saw MTO as fitting their philosophy of promoting self-sufficiency—helping low-income families gain the skills necessary to end their dependence on government housing assistance and other forms of government support.

The FHC's role in the Los Angeles MTO partnership was to provide housing search assistance for the MTO treatment group clients. FHC generally had two full-time counselors for MTO, although there was a lack of administrative support and a great deal of turnover at both the management and staff levels. The counselors conducted landlord outreach, made presentations at the housing authority's briefing sessions for new families, conducted home visits, and took clients to see units in low-poverty areas. The FHC counselors stressed independence and taught skills to their MTO clients, but they also had a strong service orientation, often finding units and negotiating with landlords on the clients' behalf. They also intervened in any cases of suspected discrimination.

Beyond Shelter also maintains a warehouse that offers clients a range of donated goods, including appliances, pots and pans, dishes, toiletries, and toys.

Beyond Shelter brochure, February 1997.

Because Los Angeles is so large and its rental vacancy rate is relatively high, there are a wide variety of neighborhoods from which Section 8 recipients can choose. While the FHC counselors provided clients with information about new and unfamiliar areas, they did not strongly urge clients to select housing there. As a result, some clustering of clients developed in transitional neighborhoods.

As subcontractor to FHC, Beyond Shelter's primary role was to provide case management and supportive services to clients following their moves to low-poverty areas. This agency also had two full-time counselors who worked with MTO clients, as well as a program director who supervised the counseling on a part-time basis. The counselors attended the Section 8 briefings for the MTO participants and (like FHC) conducted pre-move home visits. However, unlike FHC, Beyond Shelter's counselors conducted a very extensive socio-economic assessment during the home visit and intervened immediately in any crisis situations. Indeed, if the FHC counselors noted any urgent problems during *their* home visits, they would immediately notify Beyond Shelter.

Once clients had moved to low-poverty areas, the Beyond Shelter counselors assisted them in adjusting to their new communities, helping them locate services and resources in their new neighborhoods. The counselors also worked with clients to set realistic goals for themselves and their families. Beyond Shelter's philosophy strongly emphasized achieving self-sufficiency and overcoming barriers to independence; all clients were thus encouraged to seek education and job development. The counselors worked intensively with some clients, addressing family problems and intervening for them with government agencies. In addition, they developed a budget management workshop for MTO clients and often referred them to the agency's job development and child development workshops. Thus, the Los Angeles program resembled Baltimore's in the intensity of non-housing counseling, but these services were provided to movers rather than to all clients before housing search.

The dual-NPO arrangement in Los Angeles proved to be somewhat cumbersome. Staff reported that clients were often confused about which agency to call for specific services, and

These are neighborhoods that, although showing poverty rates below 10 percent in the 1990 Census, may well show higher poverty rates in the next census. The issue of neighborhood choice, and the characteristics of the areas chosen by counseled families, will be examined across all sites in the final MTO evaluation (after the Census 2000 data become available).

there was intermittent tension between the counselors of the two agencies regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. Leadership turmoil at FHC also created tension. However, the housing authority was very active in managing the program and addressing these conflicts. Within a relatively short period of time, the NPOs' work with MTO clients became quite focused and effective in achieving low-poverty moves.

The two Los Angeles nonprofits began working with clients in January 1995 and placed their first client in a low-poverty area in May 1995. Complete lease-up of the 94 Section 8 vouchers initially allocated for the MTO treatment group in Los Angeles was reached in January 1997. In addition, the lease-up rate for the MTO treatment group in Los Angeles was 62 percent, highest among the five sites to date. (The rate for the Section 8 comparison group was 86 percent, also highest among the sites.) At the end of February 1997, Fair Housing Congress of Southern California and Beyond Shelter completed their responsibilities in the MTO demonstration.

Funding for the two NPOs' counseling effort totaled \$287,907, of which 62 percent was from HUD and the remainder from HACLA. The FHC and Beyond Shelter worked with 151 families to place 94 clients; excluding start-up costs, the average net cost per lease-up was about \$2,700, and the net cost per family counseled was about \$1,700.

Los Angeles: On Your Feet

In 1995, HACLA decided to add 250 of its own Section 8 vouchers to fund a second round of the MTO demonstration in Los Angeles. However, because of the difficulties involved in managing the two-NPO model, HACLA decided to select a single nonprofit to provide both search assistance and case management for the second round of the program. On Your Feet (OYF), another agency whose primary mission is transitional assistance to homelessness, was selected through a competitive process and began providing services to MTO clients in October 1996. Located in the San Fernando Valley, On Your Feet was also involved in the Mobility Plus program for earthquake relief; like Beyond Shelter, OYF provides housing search assistance to

Estimated at about \$31,000.

The net cost to HUD was about \$1,700 per lease-up and about \$1,050 per family counseled.

the homeless with an emphasis on self-sufficiency. However, On Your Feet is a much smaller agency than Beyond Shelter and does not have as many in-house resources.

For MTO, On Your Feet employs a case manager who provides budget management counseling and coordinates services for the families. Two staff members help clients search for housing, and an administrative assistant provides support. Through its small FSS program, OYF offers the services of a job developer, who can make referrals to jobs and other education and training programs. The agency also has a part-time social worker and counselor who can provide crisis intervention and assistance with family and personal problems. Another part-time staff member provides "entrepreneurial counseling" to clients who want to start their own businesses.

While the agency itself is small, On Your Feet has contacts with a network of other organizations, such as a credit counseling service and a real estate firm that provides assistance to low-income first-time homebuyers. These resources are also being used to provide services for the MTO families. At the time that the field data collection for this report was completed, On Your Feet was still in its start-up phase. Therefore, this report does not assess their performance or describe the level of service that they provided to clients.

New York City: Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

The nonprofit agency responsible for counseling MTO clients in New York City is the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC). Located in upper Manhattan's Washington Heights/Inwood neighborhood, NMIC is a community-based organization working in an area of concentrated poverty and immigrant population (largely Dominican, but including some other Spanish-speaking groups). Founded in 1979 to "strengthen and preserve the rich ethnic and economic mix of the Northern Manhattan community," the agency's focus is on improving conditions in the neighborhood; its wide range of activities includes housing rehabilitation and management, weatherization, social and legal services, homeless prevention and assistance, job training, and YouthBuild. The Moving to Opportunity demonstration is NMIC's first collaboration with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), but the organization works with a wide range of other city and state agencies.

NMIC's philosophy in the MTO program, as in its other programs, is marked by respect

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, *Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 1996*, p. 5.

for clients' choices and their privacy. For example, home visits have not generally been done with MTO clients, because—according to the agency's former Deputy Executive Director—many of them have "too many agencies poking and prying into their lives already." The staff trust the clients and seek to establish open, honest relationships with them.

This agency has a distinct advocacy orientation, and its ability to intervene for client families with the New York Public Assistance bureaucracy has played a critical role in making MTO work as well as it has in New York City. The agency emphasizes empowering clients to make choices that improve their own lives. NMIC staff work to make sure their clients understand the benefits and risks of moving from public housing to Section 8 under MTO, as well as how housing assistance may be affected by further welfare system changes. Similarly, MTO clients are not pressured to move: they must be ready and work hard at it themselves.

The MTO program tries to stay focused on moving—not on other issues or problems—unless these become an impediment to moving. But Northern Manhattan also offers case management and a wide range of social services; when needed, the agency's capacity in these areas has added depth and breadth to its direct MTO services focused on housing search. There is significant support from other parts of the nonprofit: several caseworkers attend the MTO briefings and assist new families in filling out the Family Assessment forms; social work interns help with landlord outreach; the casework supervisor has provided services to clients with particular needs; legal assistance has been made available when required; and the weatherization program lends a van and driver for community tours in the outer boroughs, Westchester, and Northern New Jersey.

In a very tight and expensive housing market, the MTO staff have concentrated on finding affordable rental housing in low-poverty areas by developing a network of brokers in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island who understand what type of units the program is seeking. Since the brokers need to give the counselors unit addresses so they can check for low-poverty census tracts, trust must be established first; otherwise, a broker would suspect the searcher would try to go around him/her to rent the apartment directly, cutting out the broker's fee.

In the New York City housing market, virtually all rentals go through brokers, who are middlemen gathering vacancy listings from owners. An owner may list the same unit with several brokers, and only the broker successful in producing the tenant that leases up gets paid the fee.

Northern Manhattan's MTO program has made particularly good use of group activities at various points in the process of finding and leasing apartments in low-poverty areas. These have included: fair housing workshops; rap sessions bringing together brokers, families who have moved, and searchers; a lunch for movers to talk about landlord-tenant relations; a networking session for families who had moved to the Northeast Bronx; and a focus group with HUD staff attended by six interested and articulate movers with a mixture of experiences.

Northern Manhattan began working with MTO clients in December 1994 and achieved its first low-poverty lease-up in April 1995. After 33 months of program operations, a total of 111 MTO treatment group families have succeeded in moving to low-poverty areas with Section 8 certificates and vouchers. For the initial two years of the program, when NYCHA targeted public housing developments in Manhattan to recruit clients for the MTO program, NMIC staff found it difficult to interest residents in MTO because of reluctance to leave Manhattan. More recently, the agencies have jointly conducted outreach in public housing developments in the South Bronx. Staff have found these clients to be much more motivated to move and the placement rate has accelerated as a result.

Among the nonprofit agencies participating in the MTO demonstration, Northern Manhattan has run the program with the least funding of all the NPOs—a total of \$384,608 from HUD, no funding from the housing authority, and virtually no other cash resources. Because of these limited resources, the program has had to manage with a relatively small staff. The agency's former deputy director served as part-time MTO program manager; one full-time counselor has staffed the program from the beginning, with a second counselor working part-time (later full-time) on MTO. Social work students serving as interns at NMIC help out from time to time. Assuming NMIC places 143 families, the average net cost per lease-up, excluding start-up costs, will be about \$2,500; if the agency works with approximately 460 families to achieve this goal, the average net cost per family counseled is projected to be about \$780.

1.4 CATEGORIES OF COUNSELING ASSISTANCE

Figures are as of August 31, 1997.

Estimated at about \$24,000.

The nonprofit organizations participating in the MTO demonstration provide three categories of counseling assistance to families in the MTO treatment group: ***housing-related assistance, non-housing assistance, and follow-up assistance***. In each of these categories, the agencies can offer a wide range of different types of assistance. For example, as part of housing-related counseling, search assistance can include teaching search skills, providing information about low-poverty communities, taking clients on tours of low-poverty areas, locating and showing clients units, negotiating with brokers and landlords, and intervening for clients with landlords and housing authorities. The NPOs have varied even more in the types of non-housing assistance they provide. While all sites have done at least some crisis intervention and provided information and referrals, some NPOs have provided non-housing services directly, including case management, budget and household management, job development and parenting classes, and advocacy with other agencies (such as public assistance, schools, mental health services). The type and extent of follow-up services for movers has varied, too, with Baltimore and Boston primarily doing crisis intervention, New York focusing on intervention with landlords and public agencies, and Los Angeles providing intensive supportive services post-move.

Because of this variety and complexity, it is helpful to have a framework that allows analysis of the information about the counseling services offered at each site and supports comparison across sites. The framework allows us to compare qualitatively the service provided in the three categories on each of three dimensions: ***breadth*** of services (the substantive range of counseling content); ***intensity*** of services (the amount of staff time and resources devoted to delivering the services); and ***degree of client intervention*** (the extent to which counseling staff intervene on behalf of the MTO families to bring about desired results).

The variation among the NPOs on these three dimensions reflects, to a large extent, the differences in their missions and philosophies. Some agencies (e.g., Leadership Council and NMIC) have emphasized client independence and initiative, while others (e.g., Beyond Shelter, CAN) have a more traditional “intensive service” or case management approach. At this early stage of the demonstration, it is too soon to tell whether one model is more effective than another or what the long-term implications of the NPO’s service models will be for the MTO families. However, this framework does provide a useful analytic tool for comparing the five sites on their approaches to MTO counseling.

For example, Baltimore's housing counseling model involves a broad array of services, a highly intensive level of service, and a great deal of client intervention. The NPO offers neighborhood tours, assistance in finding units, workshops, skill-building, and intervention with landlords and the housing authority. However, CAN's non-housing services are somewhat less intensive, because most of Baltimore's non-housing counseling is provided in a group setting and focuses on budget and household management (although the counselors *are* available for crisis intervention). Finally, compared to the intensive counseling before families obtain their certificates or vouchers and are able to move, CAN has provided a significantly less broad and intensive package of follow-up services.

As described above, Boston's housing counseling model is slightly less intensive than Baltimore's; much of the housing-related information in Boston is provided through workshops in MBHP's Resource Room, but the counselors work actively with clients to find units in low-poverty areas and to make the moves happen. In contrast, MBHP's model is much more moderate on the breadth, intensity, and degree of client intervention of its non-housing counseling; the counselors provide crisis intervention and support but refer clients elsewhere for specific services. Finally, Boston has provided a relatively low degree of follow-up; MBHP's counselors primarily provide crisis intervention after people move, rather than consistent follow-up or transitional services to all movers.

Based on its long experience with the Gautreaux Program, the Leadership Council's model heavily emphasized client initiative and required families to search for housing independently. Thus, the agency did not provide a broad array of services, but rather sought to teach clients search skills that would enable them to succeed on their own. CHAC's approach, on the other hand, has been more similar to the Boston model. The agency offers broad and intensive housing search services and uses linkages to agencies providing other non-housing services, but to date CHAC has placed relatively little emphasis on follow-up.

The situation in Los Angeles was more complex because of the dual-NPO model. The Los Angeles program model involved a moderate breadth and intensity of housing-related services; FHC offered housing search assistance but did not have the workshops or information

The Leadership Council counseled too few MTO families (due to the CHA problems) for their program to be evaluated. All client follow-up responsibilities were transferred to CHAC.

on local communities that other sites offer. Further, the counselors did not consistently conduct landlord outreach, take clients out for tours of potential communities, or look with them for possible apartments. However, the Los Angeles model involved a relatively high level of client intervention; the counselors were active in negotiating with landlords and helping expedite paperwork through HACLA. On non-housing services and follow-up (which have a great deal of overlap in this site because non-housing services were focused on movers), Los Angeles provided a very high level of service. Fair Housing Congress's partner NPO, Beyond Shelter, offered a wide array of services, as well as providing information and referral for other types of service. Counselors worked intensively with clients, helping them define and pursue goals, and frequently intervened for them with landlords, social service agencies, and public assistance offices.

New York's model of MTO counseling involves a moderate level of housing search services, in large part because NMIC did not have the resources to focus as much staff time and energy on housing tours or accompanied apartment visits as other sites. However, it offers a high degree of client intervention in the program's innovative methods of working with rental market arrangements (particularly the ways staff developed of working with real estate brokers to identify possible units in low-poverty areas). New York's counseling model involves a moderate level of non-housing services because, although NMIC offers an array of supportive services, these services were only provided to MTO clients with pressing needs. However, New York provides a high degree of non-housing client intervention through its work helping families with the public assistance system. Again, because of limited resources, the agency's MTO model includes only a moderate degree of follow-up, emphasizing advocacy in assisting movers with transferring their public assistance benefits and with landlord relations.

Thus, the framework allows us to assess how the NPOs' varied among categories and between cities in the provision of services to clients. In later chapters on housing-related assistance, non-housing assistance, and follow-up, we use this framework to draw together our discussion of the differences among sites.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The analysis presented here draws on a number of different types of data from several

sources. Appendix A provides further details on these different data sources.

The remainder of this report is divided into four chapters. Housing-related counseling is analyzed in Chapter 2, which also examines characteristics of the local rental markets in which the NPOs' clients are seeking housing. Chapter 3 focuses on non-housing services—the broad range of other services that could be delivered by the NPOs or provided via information and referral to other agencies. In Chapter 4, we present an analysis of the follow-up assistance offered to MTO treatment group families after their low-poverty moves. Finally, Chapter 5 seeks to reach conclusions about the efficacy of counseling in facilitating and supporting families' moves to low-poverty locations and includes an exploratory analysis of how moving behavior may be affected by family characteristics and background conditions in combination with the counseling interventions documented in this report.

CHAPTER TWO
HOUSING-RELATED ASSISTANCE

There is considerable variability among the five MTO sites in the breadth of housing-related services offered to clients, in the intensity of services delivered, and in the degree of intervention by the counseling staff on behalf of the MTO families. In this chapter, we examine these variations by comparing how the different sites accomplished key steps in preparing MTO families to search for and find housing in low-poverty areas. Exhibit 2-1 shows the broad range of housing-related assistance provided across the five demonstration sites.

Exhibit 2-1
Areas of Housing-Related Assistance Provided
in MTO Counseling

Housing-Related Counseling Areas (Except Search)	Search-Related Services
Rent calculations, savings required, assistance with budgeting for rent and utilities Self-presentation to owners and managers Information sources and other search preparation Fair housing rights, handling fair housing issues Offering location options Choosing a new neighborhood Preparing to move	Showing potential neighborhoods to clients Finding possible units for clients Showing actual units to clients Contacting landlords or managers for clients Pre-inspecting units with clients Handling possible discrimination situations for clients Assistance with obtaining inspections and lease approvals Assistance with other Section 8 requirements Assistance with rent negotiations

2.1 HOUSING MARKET CONDITIONS IN THE MTO SITES

Counseling efforts in the MTO sites are greatly affected by general housing market conditions. There was also an important change in the Section 8 Fair Market Rents (FMRs) during the period of MTO operations covered in this report. The materials in this section about the market conditions and FMRs thus provide necessary background information for examining housing-related assistance to MTO clients.

Exhibit 2-2 (lotus)

Exhibit 2-2 shows data on rental vacancy trends in the five metropolitan housing markets. These data cover very wide geographical areas, and they do not reveal differences in vacancy rates that may exist between the central city and suburban areas or between inner-ring

and outer-ring suburban communities. However, they do show general patterns of change over time. For example, between 1989 and 1991, well before the MTO demonstration began, there was a significant rise in vacancy rates in all five sites, reflecting the national recession of that period. By 1993 (just prior to the start of MTO), vacancies had begun to fall in Boston and New York but were still high elsewhere and still rising in Chicago. During the demonstration period, according to these figures the rental markets tightened appreciably in Baltimore and Boston, loosened further in LA, and remained fairly level in Chicago and New York.

More specific information for Manhattan and the balance of New York City suggests a constriction in supply (rather than a local economic boom) as the driving force behind rising rents in the second half of 1996.

The trends in Section 8 Fair Market Rents—which largely define the limit of rents affordable with tenant-based assistance—are shown in Exhibit 2-3 for the period 1994 to 1996. In October 1995, the FMRs underwent an across-the-board reduction, as their basis was shifted nationwide from the 45th down to the 40th percentile of prevailing rents for decent rental housing. The reductions in the five MTO sites ranged from 1.7 percent in Chicago to 3.6 percent in Boston (for a 2BR unit). In 1996, the FMRs stayed flat in Los Angeles, increased slightly in Baltimore, and rose somewhat more in Chicago and New York City. The rise of 8.3 percent in the Boston-area FMRs from 1995 to 1996 was based on data collected by the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) (in a random digit dialing survey) that corrected HUD's proposed levels.

"As Market Shifts, Bad Old Days of Finding an Apartment Return," *New York Times*, July 16, 1996, p. 1.

While there are exceptions made to FMRs, the exceptions are tightly controlled in number and rationale. HUD approval is required for area-wide exception rents and for individual rents over 110 percent of FMR. MTO vouchers are also governed by the FMRs in each site (rather than a lower Payment Standard for both the MTO experimental and Section 8 comparison groups).

Exhibit 2-3 (lotus)

The experience reported by three MTO sites bears out the tightening markets and suggests that there have been greater reductions in vacancy rates, and perhaps larger increases in general rent levels, than are indicated by the aggregate figures shown in the exhibits. In Boston, both the BHA and MBHP have noted a tightening rental market and reduced lease-up rates among Section 8 participants generally in 1996 and early 1997. A survey by Boston's Rental Housing Association in 1997 also reveals a much tighter market in the City of Boston,

with only a 1.34 percent vacancy in the greater Boston area. The rental market in Chicago is said to be very tight for apartments below the FMR; this situation has recently worsened with the reopening of the general Section 8 waiting list and the vouchering out of buildings in several large developments. Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) reports that rental vacancy in low-poverty areas with affordable rents for Section 8 are always scarce. Only the Baltimore and Los Angeles sites have not reported that tightening rental markets are impeding MTO program operations.

2.2 MTO COUNSELING: INITIAL CONTACTS WITH FAMILIES

The MTO demonstration design offers counseling to the MTO treatment group families in order to assist them in using their Section 8 certificates and vouchers to lease-up in low-poverty areas. Under the design, each MTO family is assigned a counselor who is responsible for helping the client to stay motivated and to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to move. However, the counseling agencies have chosen different ways to make initial contact with the families and to help them achieve an MTO lease-up.

Briefing Sessions and MTO Orientation

For the family entering the program, the first step after random assignment to the MTO treatment group is typically an orientation meeting or briefing. All the sites except Baltimore include representatives of both the NPO and the PHA in these sessions. In Boston, Los Angeles, and New York, the PHA takes the lead and conducts a regular briefing on Section 8 certificates and vouchers, with emphasis on the special aspects of the MTO program. This PHA briefing is followed by the NPO's orientation to MTO, including information on the low-poverty neighborhood requirement and the locations in the metropolitan area that qualify. The MTO counselors are also introduced at this time, and each client is usually introduced to the particular

Greater Boston Real estate Board, *Rental Housing Industry Survey*, Winter 1997, p. 2.

Families are notified by the PHA that they have been found eligible for Section 8, assigned to the "special MTO group," and will be receiving a certificate or a voucher. The form of assistance (whether certificate or voucher) is also determined through random assignment.

This was also the practice in the early Chicago program.

counselor with whom he/she will be working. At the end of the briefing, a Section 8 certificate or voucher may be issued to each family in attendance.

There are exceptions to this pattern, both in the first and the last steps. In Baltimore, the Community Assistance Network (CAN) conducts the MTO orientation first, separately from (and well before) the Housing Authority of Baltimore City's (HABC's) briefing. The meeting at CAN's office is shorter, and the emphasis is solely on MTO. Clients are told they will receive a Section 8 certificate or voucher but that first they must attend four required workshops for families in the treatment group.

Only the PHAs in Boston and Chicago issue Section 8 certificates and vouchers at the time of the briefing. In Baltimore, as noted, issuance follows completion of the four mandatory workshops. At the briefing, Los Angeles and New York City issue a "Letter of Intent" instead, in order to provide extra search time to MTO families who must meet the low-poverty requirement before they may lease-up on Section 8. In the New York program, the Letter of Intent is good for 60 days, bringing to 180 days the total period in which the family can search for an eligible apartment. In Los Angeles, where the regular Section 8 program typically gives families only 60 days (with no extensions), the Letter of Intent extends the search time to 120 days.

The main message of the MTO briefing and orientation sessions by the counseling agencies is about opportunity and choice. The content typically included identification of allowable areas under the low-poverty requirement (using maps) and an explanation of the portability of the Section 8 certificate or voucher. The part conducted by the NPO is designed to be motivational, emphasizing that families can use Section 8 to improve their quality of life and obtain better educational opportunities for their children.

The length of the combined Section 8 and MTO briefings varies from one to three hours, depending on the amount of paperwork that is completed during the initial session and on the length of the presentations. In some locations the NPOs acknowledge that the initial

The Letter of Intent indicates that the family is scheduled to receive a certificate or voucher; if a unit is found before actual issuance, the letter assures the landlord that this prospective tenant will be provided with rental assistance.

This procedure was specially authorized by HUD for the MTO treatment group families in the demonstration, but the decision to implement delayed issuance was up to the PHA and NPO at each site, depending on the tightness of the local labor market.

presentations are confusing to the clients. The length of the session, its complex content, and the presence of children may all contribute to this problem. In Los Angeles, the fact that both NPOs made presentations also confused some clients.

The secondary message the NPOs try to convey in these initial meetings is that the counselors are there to support and assist the clients throughout the search period. Thus, even if some clients are initially confused, they leave with an appointment to see a counselor who can begin answering their questions.

The location of the initial briefings also varies. In Boston and New York (and in the early Chicago program) briefings alternate between the PHA offices and the NPO offices; the counselors indicate they prefer the latter, as the clients seem to establish links to the counseling agency more readily. Because the NPO orientation is separate, all Baltimore clients make an early visit to the CAN office. In Los Angeles, all briefings are held at the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) offices.

In the Boston program, there is an added benefit to briefings at Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP): MTO clients are introduced to the Resource Room, in which information on every Boston city neighborhood and suburban community has been organized to expand choice and facilitate search. The Resource Room also contains a computerized listing service for vacant apartments.

Two of the sites, Baltimore and Los Angeles, ask the families to sign a 'contract' with the NPO. These contracts are designed to provide the clients with a clear understanding of what is expected of them and in turn what they can expect from the counselor and the NPO. For example, the agreements require that the client look for housing in low-poverty areas, deal with credit problems, and (in Baltimore) attend workshops; in return the NPO is obligated to work with all family members to develop a plan, support their efforts, and take the client to see a minimum of three units. Exhibit 2-4 shows the contract format used by CAN in Baltimore.

**Exhibit 2-4
Moving to Opportunity Counselor/Client Contract**

Counselor's Goals: My purpose is to assist you in Moving To Opportunities that will improve your quality of life.

Counselor's Agreement:

- I agree to work with you and all members of your household to develop a plan for moving to
- ity
- I agree to support you in your efforts to succeed in the **MTO** program
- I agree to keep all scheduled appointments and will notify you when I cannot
- I agree to preserve confidentiality
- I agree to assist you in finding housing suitable for your family in designated low-poverty census tracts
- I agree to provide you with transportation to at least three (3) different communities to locate suitable

- I agree to work with you both in your home and in the office
- I agree to provide holistic counseling before and after the move
- I agree to make workshops available to you as needed
- I agree to assist you in resolving any crisis situation involving you and/or members of your household

Client's Goals:

Client's Agreement:

- I agree to be committed to succeeding in the **MTO** program before and after moving
- I agree to be consistent in showing progress in achieving the goals that I have defined with my
- r
- I agree to accept and participate in all counseling/workshops relevant to my success in the **MTO**

- I agree to attend workshops on budgeting, home care, making it in a new neighborhood, landlord/tenant, and other workshops my counselor feels are appropriate for my success in relocating
- I agree to keep all scheduled appointments and will notify you when I cannot
- I agree to provide my counselor with all the necessary information needed to assist me in achieving my

- I agree to preserve confidentiality
- I understand that although you will assist me I have the primary responsibility to locate housing for my

- I agree to seek appropriate housing diligently in designated low-poverty census tracts
- I agree to make every effort to resolve any outstanding problems, i.e., credit, old utility bills, children's

CLIENT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

COUNSELOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE

Home Visits

The next step for MTO treatment group families is typically a one-on-one visit between the MTO counselor and the family. In Boston and LA, appointments for these meetings are arranged at the initial orientation, while the Baltimore counselors schedule the visits after the orientation.

The goals for this first one-on-one meeting are numerous, although the primary point is to begin establishing a bond between the client and the counselor. Among the other goals are:

- Reviewing and explaining the requirements of the program;
- Answering questions about Section 8;
- Discussing credit history and any unresolved credit problems that may affect a landlord's willingness to accept the client as a tenant;
- Discussing the client's own goals, issues, and needs; and
- Completing an intake form or assessment.

This is also an opportunity for the counselor to first hear about sensitive personal matters, such as family issues, credit problems, court cases, criminal history, substance abuse, domestic violence, or gang involvement. Frequently, once the client is comfortable, the MTO counselor will walk through the home to discuss the family's housing needs and whether additional furniture will be required for a new apartment. This procedure may also allow the counselor to identify a house-keeping issue, evidence of other adults living in the unit, possible substance abuse, or parenting problems. However, the counselors generally report they can deal with such issues more effectively when the client raises them or when they come up as the client is searching for a unit.

In the sites where they are used (Baltimore, Boston, and Los Angeles), home visits are viewed as very valuable by the MTO counselors. Not only do the visits provide an opportunity for initiating a relationship of trust between the client and counselor, they also provide an opportunity to assess the condition of the apartment and some of the motivating factors behind the client's participation in MTO. In Baltimore and Los Angeles, counselors also used the visits

Credit checks are done in all sites except New York prior to home visits. The credit check allows the counselor to identify any credit issues that could prevent clients from leasing up. New York City does not do them, because landlords there typically do not ask for this information.

as an opportunity to meet all of the members of the family, in order to identify any additional needs or concerns.

Occasionally, however, an MTO client will resist a home visit. This usually occurs when a client is embarrassed about the condition of the home and does not want to show the counselor the apartment. Sometimes, there is a boyfriend or girlfriend who is not listed on the lease, and the client is trying to hide this fact. MTO counselors in all sites emphasize that it is important to understand the entire family constellation, especially if there is a "significant other," to ensure the involvement and commitment of all members in the decision to move.

A Boston Grandmother

A 57-year-old woman with two grandchildren (ages 12 and 13), Renee spoke no English. She was very anxious to move out of her Boston public housing neighborhood because of the violence there, and MTO was the best chance she had been given in a long time. A bilingual MBHP counselor began to work with her.

Renee had once owned her own business and a home, but the business failed and she lost the home to foreclosure. She told the counselor about this during her home visit. In light of her remaining credit problems, the MBHP counselor referred Renee to a credit counseling agency, which helped her to establish a plan to pay her outstanding bills.

Renee was reluctant to leave the City of Boston, despite her urgent wish to move her family out of public housing. After four months of searching, Renee found an apartment in Roslindale, one of Boston's outlying neighborhoods, and was able to move.

The New York NPO, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), does not do home visits, as a matter of policy. The organization believes strongly in respecting each client's privacy, because they know that many of these clients have had multiple agencies reviewing their living situations and other circumstances. Therefore, they begin developing a relationship with MTO clients through an office visit, continuing with phone conversations and during appointments to see prospective housing units. NMIC also does not conduct credit checks, since the local public assistance system pays the rent directly to the landlord.

The initial NPO in Chicago, Leadership Council, stopped doing home visits when (during visits to public housing sites) a counselor encountered two very dangerous situations: a dead body in a stairwell and a problem in a client's apartment. The agency then tried to hold meetings with new clients at public places near the developments where the clients lived, but these locations (such as a McDonald's) did not prove conducive to establishing good communication. It also proved difficult to get clients to come to the Leadership Council's MTO office in the

All names of clients have been changed to protect their privacy and details of their family situations have been altered for the same reason, as necessary.

Loop for an initial meeting. The CHAC staff currently providing counseling to clients in Chicago started home visits again, accompanied by CHA police escorts. However, a major gang war broke out in CHA housing in 1996, intensifying the violence and increasing the chances that counselors would be caught in very dangerous conditions. In addition, one of the counselors was confronted by an unstable client when she visited the home. Because of these problems, CHAC, too, made the decision to suspend home visits.

All sites make a concerted effort to recontact families that do not keep appointments. This is the job of the PHA staff if the Section 8 briefing is missed; however, the NPOs try to contact families directly and personally, to urge them to attend the briefing and obtain the certificate or voucher. Very few families pass up this chance (as we discuss in the next section). After the initial meeting or briefing, some NPOs allow two or three no-shows but then drop a family from further assistance. (Of course, the family can search and even lease up without NPO help.) Other agencies continue to recontact inactive clients throughout the period before their certificate or voucher expires.

Other Early Contacts

Workshops of various kinds are offered to MTO clients in four sites: Baltimore; Boston; Chicago; and LA. In Baltimore, three workshops are devoted to home management, three to budgeting, and one to tenant/landlord issues. Clients must attend four of the required workshops before they can go to an Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) Section 8 briefing and receive their certificate or voucher. In addition, the program offers three optional sessions: a personal appearance workshop where clients learn how to present themselves to landlords; a property appearance workshop where clients learn about lawn and garden maintenance; and a workshop for children on adjusting to their new community.

In Boston, a housing search workshop is offered twice monthly in MBHP's Resource Room. Staff discuss techniques for housing search and clients share stories and sometimes share

The gang war was due to a variety of factors, including tension over demolitions at some sites and the trial of the leaders of the Gangster Black Disciples, one of the most powerful gangs in Chicago. For a complete discussion, see Susan J. Popkin *et al.*, *The Hidden War: The Battle to Control Crime in Chicago's Public Housing*, a report to the National Institute of Justice (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., December 1996).

leads on apartments. CHAC in Chicago offers various optional workshops (on housing search, financial management, fair housing, motivation-building, and domestic violence) to which MTO families are invited. Los Angeles' Beyond Shelter offered optional money management and child development workshops to MTO clients after they moved, but the counselors also worked with some clients on money management issues earlier in the process.

As the clients begin the search phase of the program, the counselors stay in contact with them. While staff will be seeking apartments suited to the family's needs, they will also help their clients maintain the motivation to search and move. Most counselors develop a very good sense of what is feasible for a particular family and whether the family will ultimately move under the MTO program. Occasionally, friendships develop between clients during the workshops, and these friendships may also contribute to motivation and provide mutual support.

Exhibit 2-5
Initial Contacts in MTO Counseling

Percent of participants who:	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago ^a	Los Angeles	New York
Attended the Section 8 briefing	85%	100%	90%	100%	100%
Attended the NPO briefing/intake session	93	100	90	99	8
Had a credit check	84	98	100	100	0 ^b
Had a home visit	91	96	18	95	NA ^b

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files (N=365).
Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A).
Missing: 1 case (Baltimore)

NOTE: Data are weighted to represent accurately the mix of movers and non-movers in each site.

a Initial Chicago NPO (Leadership Council) only.

b The New York NPO does not conduct credit checks or home visits; see text for discussion.

Exhibit 2-6
Results of Credit Checks and Home Visits

Percent of Clients	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York ^a
<i>Results of Credit Checks</i>	48%	28%	58%	58%	NA
Problem	52	69	41	42	
No problem	0	4	1	1	
Other					
<i>Results of Home Visits</i>	29	5	12	69	NA
Problem	71	93	84	31	
No problem	0	2	4	1	
Other					

Source: NPO participant tracking logs as of 11/30/96 (N=1,195).
Sample: All families randomly assigned to the MTO treatment group.
Missing: 70 cases (Baltimore 11, Boston 12, Chicago 9, Los Angeles 22, New York 16).

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

a The New York NPO does not conduct credit checks or home visits; see text for discussion.

Exhibits 2-5 and 2-6 present data related to the initial contacts between the NPOs and the MTO treatment group families. As indicated in Exhibit 2-5, virtually all participants in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York attend the Section 8 briefing and the NPO intake session. Credit checks and home visits are done for virtually all the Boston and Los Angeles families. Only 18 percent of the Chicago sample had a home visit, and none of the New York families in the sample had either credit checks or home visits, for the reasons discussed above.

In Baltimore, due to the mandatory workshop attendance prior to the Section 8 briefing, a significant number of CAN clients dropped out; that is, they did not complete the workshops and therefore could not receive Section 8 assistance. Overall, about a fifth of Baltimore families assigned to the MTO treatment group were never issued a certificate or voucher, a proportion substantially higher than that of any other site.

Both the credit checks and the home visits can serve as useful diagnostic tools for the counselors, indicating whether there are problems that may pose a barrier to the family's efforts to move to a low-poverty area. Housekeeping problems have come to be seen as endemic to low-income populations, although credit problems are probably more widespread. Exhibit 2-6

A small number of Baltimore families assigned to the MTO treatment group did not pursue the counseling because they became eligible for relocation by the housing authority (under a HOPE VI project) and chose that option instead.

Based on tracking log data for 1,195 families assigned to the MTO treatment group, the percentages to whom Section 8 certificates or vouchers were never issued are as follows: Baltimore 19.1 percent; Boston 3.3 percent; Chicago 5.3 percent; Los Angeles 1.0 percent; New York 5.7 percent.

shows the results of the credit checks and home visits, as recorded by the NPO counselors in the participant tracking logs.

Where credit checks are done, the incidence of problems ranges from a quarter of the families (in Boston) to over half of them (in Chicago and Los Angeles). All the counselors focused on credit problems that could prevent clients from renting an apartment in the private market, such as balances with the utility companies.

Standards for home visits are not as uniform. While very few home visits to Boston families have revealed problems (just 5 percent), over a quarter of the Baltimore sample and nearly 70 percent of the Los Angeles families were recorded as revealing problems to the counselors. It is important to note that each site used different criteria when assessing the quality of a family's home environment. In particular, the LA figure is likely to be biased upward by two factors: first, both NPOs did home visits and could detect and record problems; second, one of the NPOs offered such a broad range of non-housing counseling services that its staff probably took an interest in a far wider range of factors and conditions than was typical of the other NPOs.

Additional space in the logs is used to comment on the nature of the problems and their resolution.

However, credit checks were not completed for 40 percent of the Chicago clients, and home visits were not done for 90 percent of these families.

Exhibit 2-7
Coverage of Pre-Search Housing Counseling Areas

Percent of clients for whom housing-related services were provided and recorded^a	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York
Budget assistance and rent calculations	85%	11%	7%	100%	50%
Fair housing rights, handling fair housing issues	82	1 ^b	17	100	80
How to meet landlords and managers	83	3	37	100	100
Search strategies	82	8	81	100	100
Location options	84	39	93	100	100
Choosing a new neighborhood	84	7	54	100	98
Preparing to move	82	0	6	100	34
Other housing-related services	4	5	2	0	6

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files (N=365).

Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A).

Missing: 2 to 4 cases (1 to 3 Baltimore, 1 Chicago).

NOTE: Data are weighted to represent accurately the mix of movers and non-movers in each site.

^a Record-keeping practices varied significantly among the NPOs. There were also differences in the interpretation of some of these areas. See text for discussion.

^b Interviews with Boston NPO staff indicate that these topics are covered during the Section 8 briefing, during search workshops, and throughout the whole counseling process. Under a HUD grant, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights has done workshops for Boston MTO and also did some testing for one MTO client.

Exhibit 2-7 provides information on the coverage of various pre-search housing counseling topics. The Los Angeles and New York NPOs appear to provide these services to virtually all of their clients, while the other agencies provide them to smaller proportions of their caseloads. However, MBHP staff indicate that information on all of these topics was provided to all Boston clients at the initial Section 8 briefing; according to the current program director, counselors did not record this information in the client files because it was regarded as "routine." Similar differences in record-keeping may affect data from the other sites as well.

Letter from James Wessler, Director of Resident Initiatives, MBHP, May 22, 1997.

2.3 LOCATING UNITS

One of the primary functions specified in the MTO NOFA for the nonprofit counseling agencies is to find housing units in low-poverty areas that will meet the needs of their MTO treatment group clients. The effort to locate rental units proceeds on two fronts: landlord outreach is intended to identify owners and managers with substantial rental holdings in order to interest them in the MTO program; at the same time there is the housing search process, which is specifically focused on currently available units. Both are inevitably shaped by the local housing markets in the five sites; market conditions were described in Section 2.1.

Landlord Outreach

Landlord outreach has been conducted in a variety of ways in each of the MTO sites, in part because of the very different levels of rental vacancies in each metropolitan area. All the NPOs in the MTO demonstration began their programs with a landlord outreach initiative. Landlords were recruited by networking and following up leads, one by one. In many cases, the counselors would call and visit landlords to answer questions about MTO and encourage their participation in the program. However, landlord outreach strategies tended to change once counselors were actively assisting clients to search for housing, as the following descriptions show.

Baltimore

At the beginning of the MTO program in Baltimore, the CAN counselors called and visited landlords with large numbers of rental units to encourage their participation in the program. The majority of this work was completed in November and December 1994. In November, the counselors concentrated on landlords in Baltimore City and Howard County. In Baltimore City, this strategy was unsuccessful, since none of the landlords contacted expressed interest in the MTO program. In contrast, the telephone calls to landlords with two- and three-bedroom units in Howard County produced an overwhelmingly positive response: all of the landlords were willing to have their units listed for MTO clients. The outreach was expanded in December to eligible areas within the other surrounding counties—Baltimore, Anne Arundel, and Harford. Again, suburban landlords expressed interest in having their units listed for CAN's

clients.

For a time, CAN counselors also looked through the Sunday papers for units listed for rent. On a regular basis, one counselor would identify units s/he thought might be right for MTO clients and then circulate the list to the other counselors.

At the end of 1994, CAN changed its approach to landlord outreach. As MTO clients began moving into new units (starting in January 1995), CAN staff found it was more effective to use a “client-specific” approach, where they would contact landlords individually and “sell” them on the strengths of a particular family. In addition, the agency started receiving calls from interested landlords and no longer saw the need for general outreach. The CAN program manager estimated that about 40 percent of the MTO landlords were new to the Section 8 program.

Boston

Landlord outreach has been a consistent part of the MTO program in Boston from the start. Indeed, active efforts were the focus of NPO staff during the three-month interval (June-September 1994) between the start of family outreach and the first assignment of families for counseling. In these first few months, letters introducing the program were sent to approximately 45 management companies in metropolitan Boston. Most of these introduction letters produced little response on the part of the management companies, and MBHP decided to recontact these companies once clients were actively searching. During the first few months, MBHP staff also visited a number of management companies to present the MTO program; the majority of these contacts met with positive response.

As the program got underway, the focus shifted more toward locating available units, with MBHP using mostly in-person meetings or calls to landlords or management companies. The majority of the landlords expressed interest in the program and, during 1995, indicated that they had units available for rent. Most of these landlords indicated they had already been participating in the Section 8 program.

During 1996, MBHP staff continued to make an average of 5 to 10 landlord contacts each month. They also worked with rental brokers and have realized approximately 20 to 25 percent of their placements from brokers.

While MTO counseling staff still read the Sunday real estate sections for units in appropriate geographic areas and price ranges for their clients, their most productive lists are of the landlords they have worked with before. Sometimes landlords will call back and say they have another unit or will refer another landlord to the program. The counselors write thank you notes in response and otherwise recognize landlords who have cooperated with the NPO.

Chicago

Landlord outreach in Chicago during the first phase of the MTO program was managed by the staff from the Leadership Council. From prior experience with the Gautreaux Program, their preference was to identify available units outside the City of Chicago, although they did obtain some listings for low-poverty sections of the city. However, few MTO families were attracted to suburban units, both because they were unfamiliar with the neighborhoods and because of the lengthy travel required to get to these areas.

The units located by the Leadership Council's counselor included units in suburban towns as well as units in two- to four-flat buildings in the older low-poverty neighborhoods of the city. Vacancies in the small properties in city neighborhoods are often not advertised, and program staff found it hard to gain access to these "informal" markets, requiring substantial searching in order to get even one or two landlords willing to make their units available. In addition, vacant units in these locations were almost always gone within two weeks and some were reported rented in a few days.

A second problem was the unwillingness of the MTO clients to go see the units or even consider moving to particular neighborhoods. According to the counselors, this was the result of both strong links to family and friends in and near the public housing developments and a strong fear of the unknown. For most, the idea of moving to the suburbs was like moving to a foreign country, and a move from the south side (where most of the targeted public housing developments were located) to the north side of the city could seem equally unreal.

Since it took over the landlord outreach role, CHAC has vigorously pursued listings in low-poverty areas for MTO (as well as for its general mobility program). A December 1996 log showed over 50 such listings and 44 new landlords who would accept Section 8 referrals, even though the rental vacancy rate remains quite low. However, landlord outreach remains a

significant challenge and has become increasingly difficult as large numbers of low-income families are searching for units. Further, like the Leadership Council, CHAC has encountered continuing problems with clients who are extremely reluctant to move to unfamiliar areas.

Los Angeles

In the first stage of Los Angeles' MTO program, the housing authority took the lead in identifying potential landlords for the MTO program. Owners routinely call HACLA to list their properties with the Section 8 program. For MTO, HACLA staff identified those landlords with units in qualifying low-poverty census tracts and then forwarded the information to the Fair Housing Congress (FHC).

FHC staff also participated in landlord outreach more actively in the beginning of the program than later. Before FHC began receiving MTO clients, staff spent several months identifying units in low-poverty areas and creating a book with photographs and detailed descriptions much like one would find in a real estate office. However, once the agency began actively serving clients, the staff quickly found that most of these listings had expired.

Counselors then began taking clients on drives through low-poverty areas and calling places that had "for rent" signs posted. This method was extremely time-consuming with only limited results; for example, one FHC counselor saw 16 units in Fairfax, but only two owners would take Section 8. HACLA staff often accompanied FHC on these trips and sometimes conducted similar searches independently.

Because of staffing shortages, FHC had to curtail its intensive landlord outreach and

This arrangement developed because the housing authority's contract with the NPOs only reimbursed them for lease-ups within the Los Angeles City limits. The NPO staff initially looked further afield but then realized they would need to do more city placements in order to have their costs covered for MTO counseling. HACLA indicated that there were numerous low-poverty census tracts within the city and that the Section 8 program staff would provide listings in those areas based on their routine landlord contacts. The contractual limitation (reimbursement to the NPOs only for city placements) posed an obstacle to broader movement only for a short time, because then HUD funded the payments for out-of-city placements instead of HACLA.

There is no fair housing protection for receipt of Section 8 or other housing assistance under either Federal or state law in California, nor is there such protection by local ordinance in the City of Los Angeles.

instead focused on landlords the program had used previously. These landlords proved an important resource, in that they referred a number of other landlords to FHC to participate in the program. As mentioned above, FHC also received landlord listings from HACLA.

For recent families entering MTO, On Your Feet (OYF) has the advantage of coming into the program with information about what strategies have and have not worked for the FHC. OYF also draws on its experience in housing search in its homelessness prevention program and the Mobility Plus emergency earthquake assistance program. OYF staff initially placed an ad in the Apartment Owners' Association Newsletter, met with real estate agents, and contacted management companies with large numbers of units. In addition, OYF spent time updating the agency's existing landlord database, although these contacts have not proved very useful; most of them are located in the San Fernando Valley, but most clients MTO prefer to move elsewhere in the Los Angeles area.

The most useful approach appears to be simply identifying vacancies through ads in local community newspapers in areas where clients want to move and then contacting the landlords to "sell" them on participating in the MTO program.

New York

Landlord outreach in New York MTO has had a very different structure than any of the other four sites. Staff from NMIC first recruit rental property brokers, because such brokers control listings for most of the rental market in this city. Using broker listings in the yellow pages, the counselors and the MTO site assistant have made large numbers of phone calls to find out where the brokers work and whether they cover any low-poverty areas. From those calls, the primary MTO counselor at NMIC has established productive relationships with about 16 brokers (eight working in the Northeast Bronx, six in Queens, and two in Staten Island). When time and caseloads permit, staff continue to make calls to brokers listed in the yellow pages to introduce MTO and see if there is interest in the program. Landlord outreach logs maintained by NMIC since the program began in early 1995 show that there has been extensive outreach to landlords through brokers in New York, with only little interest expressed. The most intensive outreach occurred between April 1995 and April 1996, with an average of about 250 calls being placed each month.

For MTO to be viable in New York, the NPO had to devise ways to entice brokers into the program. Since brokers are in the housing market for cold cash, NMIC's primary counselor figured out a competitive advantage for the program: she can get the brokers their fees (or vouchers for their fees) more quickly from Public Assistance for MTO clients than can other potential renters receiving public assistance. Therefore, the brokers prefer to rent to MTO clients, because they get paid more quickly. This staff member has also worked effectively to establish trust between the brokers and NMIC, so that the brokers are willing to give her unit addresses that can be checked for eligibility in low-poverty census tracts.

In addition to contacting brokers, NMIC staff have directly contacted landlords to explain the MTO program and Section 8. They have found that most of the time landlords are not interested in MTO, because it involves accepting tenants with Section 8 assistance, which involves more "red tape" than an unassisted rental. Some landlords have a bad impression of Section 8, fearing that it may take too long to get a unit inspected and too long to get paid by the housing authority. Because of New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) special efforts for the MTO program, however (involving prompt inspections and reduced delay in the start-up of landlord payments for lease-ups), these concerns have been less salient. NMIC has been quite successful in getting new landlords to participate in the Section 8 program; as of May 1996, 44 of 46 families had been placed with landlords who were new to Section 8.

Encouraging Moves to Low-Poverty Areas

All the entities involved in planning the MTO demonstration (HUD, Abt, the PHAs, and the NPOs) recognized from the beginning of the program that clients will need special encouragement and support to make moves to low-poverty areas. This is in part because many MTO participants were long-term residents of public and assisted housing developments, which can be isolating environments. It is also due to the likelihood that the participants have limited familiarity with neighborhoods beyond the inner-city areas that are their homes; indeed, some may come from families that have lived for several generations at the same public housing site.

To do this, the broker must trust NMIC with information on how to contact the owner.

Comparable concerns were also raised by landlords in Chicago.

Thus, their experience with the private rental market may also be very limited.

To break through these barriers and educate clients about the possibility that (with Section 8) they now have a far wider choice of communities, the counseling agencies use a variety of different techniques. Neighborhood tours have been extensively used, as these descriptions illustrate:

- In New York, the NMIC staff try to take clients on two trips to low-poverty areas during the search period. Apart from the NE Bronx, these trips have been to New Jersey (directly across the George Washington Bridge from Washington Heights, the location of NMIC's offices) and to Westchester. They borrow the NMIC Weatherization program van. On the road, they stop at brokers' offices and the families fill out apartment applications, they have lunch, and sometimes they see apartments.
- In Boston, the MBHP counselors do the community tours one-on-one with clients, putting 300-400 miles on their cars each month. They advise clients to pick five communities, and the counselors go and search with them there. If the choices are far away, the client is expected to take more responsibility for the search. The Hispanic communities in Springfield and Providence have attracted some clients. (Some 35 to 40 percent of leased-up units are found by clients, but often after seeing the neighborhood with the counselor and then going back on their own.
- In Baltimore, sometime during the first few months the counselor will take the client on at least one drive to visit different neighborhoods where he or she might want to move. These drives do not typically involve visits to actual units; rather, they are just an overall tour of the neighborhoods.

Beyond neighborhood tours and individual searches, some of the agencies have found ways to encourage networking among their MTO clients. CAN, MBHP, and NMIC have all brought successful movers back to meet with families still searching for housing; these contacts are vivid proof that a low-poverty move, while difficult, is possible and can result in satisfactory choices for the clients and their children. In New York, the counseling staff ask if they can share the names and phone numbers of the clients who are searching at the same time. People find out that they are neighbors (from the same public housing developments); some may have known each other by sight before but not by name. At MBHP in Boston, the search workshops in the Resource Room every other Thursday morning bring clients into repeated contact with each other. Such trips and workshops provide opportunities for mutual support, even for "buddies" to form.

Nevertheless, the requirement that MTO treatment group clients find units in low-

poverty census tracts has been a challenge and sometimes an obstacle to the families and counselors throughout the demonstration period. It may be difficult for clients to read the maps and visualize which locations qualify for the program, particularly if they have limited familiarity with any area beyond their inner-city neighborhoods. It is hard to provide detailed enough maps to clients, and mistakes associated with being on the wrong side of a census tract boundary—i.e., across the street from a low-poverty area—can be very frustrating. Landlords, too, sometimes raise questions about "acceptable areas;" they may feel resentful of the requirement, especially if they need a tenant for a unit in a census tract that does not qualify.

The geographic limitation has also raised a number of issues for the MTO counseling agencies. Among them are the following:

- Counselors have found that not all low-poverty census tracts are acceptable areas; some show signs of disorder or deterioration, others contain large apartment complexes that are not especially nice, and counselors have discouraged clients from searching there.
- Conversely, many areas with good housing, well-served by public transportation and with various positive features, are in the 10 to 20 percent poverty range.
- The boundaries of census tracts can present real anomalies, with one side of a street eligible and the other side not. Often there is no apparent difference in the housing or its condition.
- Neighborhoods may have large student populations that put the area over the 10 percent limit, yet they are otherwise appropriate.
- Some neighborhoods appear to have changed since the 1990 Census and are likely not low-poverty any more, yet these are eligible locations for MTO clients.

In sum, while the low-poverty requirement is among the least popular features of the MTO demonstration for the staff of the counseling agencies, they understand the research goals of the demonstration and the need for a clear difference between the areas from which families are being drawn and those to which they are moving. The NPOs staff must constantly remind, limit, and occasionally disappoint some clients who are searching for housing and neighborhoods better—and most of all safer—than the places they currently live.

Counselors have also discouraged clients from moving to an apartment complex where a number of MTO clients have already moved.

Search Assistance to Families

Search assistance to families in MTO includes preparation for the search process, introduction to neighborhoods and communities with low poverty rates (as well as good services and rents eligible for Section 8), and searching for units that will meet the family's needs. Although there is some variability among the NPOs, most offer one or more of these elements of search assistance.

Some of the agencies help clients to prepare for their interactions with landlords by coaching them on appearance and self-presentation. Since so many of the owners accepting MTO tenants have small holdings (and may even be potential neighbors in an owner-occupied property), personal impressions are important. For example, a Boston counselor reported that one of her clients scared off the owners of some prospective units with horror stories about “the projects” she was seeking to leave. The counselor discussed this and urged the client to simply say she wanted to leave public housing for a better life.

The Baltimore NPO video-taped and critiqued clients during role-playing exercises about meetings with landlords. Counselors have encouraged clients to develop a "portfolio" to introduce themselves and their family to prospective landlords. These portfolios can include pictures of family members, a list of the client's goals, a positive credit report, and references from prior landlords. The resume prepared by one Chicago MTO client is shown in Exhibit 2-8. (All names have been changed to protect privacy.)

Tenant
Personal References & Fact Sheet

Jane Deets
Pastor's Wife
(555)555-5555

Heather Barns
Step Mother
(555)555-5555

Barbara Banks
Friend
(555)555-5555

Milly Lawn
Friend
(555)555-5555

Dr. Abigale White
Professor
(555)555-5555

Isabel Rosatto
Advisor (School)
555)555-5555

Supervisor - Mrs. Turmel (555)555-5555 Employed 4½ yrs.
Housing Manager - Mr. McDonald (555)555-5555 The Brainbrige Organization

I am the head of household. I have two children and two granddaughters. My daughter, Julie is twenty years old. My son, Lawrence is ten years old. My granddaughters, Bethany and Jessica are three and one year old respectively.

I am employed at State University. I and my daughter are students at State University. My majors are: Psychology and Occupational Therapy. I have one ½ year left to completion. My daughter is a sophomore in the Criminal Justice Program.

We presently rent a townhouse in the Bay Park area. I am moving because I need a larger home. I have lived in my present home since June 14, 1991 and never failed an inspection, which occurs every quarter. I have **always** paid my rent and have **never** been evicted. They have **never** disconnected my lights and gas. I do not have the greatest credit, however, I am presently working on correcting this. I do have a savings and checking account, and I have never been overdrawn.

I am a law-abiding, God-fearing woman. My desire is to better my life and give my children an opportunity to have a better chance, a good education and a safe environment where they will flourish into the respectable adults I desire them to be. This is what motivates me to continue striving for something better. I am looking for a landlord who cares about their property and desires a good tenant who will care for their property as if it were their own. I hope we are your choice. The neighborhood looks very pleasant. Obviously, people take pride in the community. I am pleased that there is a school and park district close to the house. Transportation is conveniently placed and there are stores close by. This is an ideal location and the house structure from the outside looks very solid and well kept. It is our desire to live here.

Thank you for this opportunity. My children and I thank you for considering us as tenants. I can guarantee you that if you choose the Winters family you will not regret the decision. We hope that this reference and fact sheet will help you in getting to know pertinent information about us. We have appreciated your consideration and time, we will prayerfully await your response.

Most Sincerely Submitted,

May R. Winters

All the counseling agencies encourage clients to take as much initiative as possible, although counselors are there to support and help. Setting up appointments to see vacant apartments can be done by either clients or counselors. The counselors frequently drive clients to see the units, although in New York they accompany them by subway. The MBHP counselors sometimes go with their clients on public transportation and show them that units outside Boston are not impossibly far away.

Most of the NPOs offer clients an introduction to appropriate neighborhoods, discussing them in the briefing and taking clients to see them. Neighborhood tours—in the city and the suburbs—have been offered by all the sites, either as an introduction to an area (usually with a group of clients) or as part of a visit to specific units. These tours usually include important features such as supermarkets, bus or train lines, schools, medical facilities, playgrounds, child care, community centers, and churches.

Counselors also frequently accompany clients on their initial visits to landlords. Over time, however, the counselors have learned that clients often "hang back" if the counselor is there. As a consequence, if the client is prepared, counselors will sometimes wait in the car and send the client in to meet the landlord alone. This procedure encourages the client to speak for him/herself and to take the initiative in asking questions.

The NPOs counselors provided a range of search-related services to the MTO families. In Boston, Baltimore and Los Angeles, families were shown possible neighborhoods and the majority of clients in Los Angeles, New York, and Baltimore were assisted with finding possible units. In contrast, the counseling logs and files indicate that only a third of Chicago and a quarter of Boston clients received this assistance.

The NPOs in Los Angeles and New York contacted landlords and managers for almost three-fourths of their clients, while provision of this type of assistance was recorded for less than half of the families in Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago. However, NPO staff in Los Angeles and New York

A Large New York Family Finds a Home

In January 1996, NMIC succeeded in placing a family of 10 in a large, well-maintained house in Mount Vernon. This African-American family consisted of two parents, seven children, and one grandchild. They had been living in a two-bedroom apartment in public housing and now have a six-bedroom house with a finished basement.

were far less likely than staff at the other sites to accompany clients to see units, even when the apartments had been found by their agency. In New York, this was an adaptation to limited staffing and resources.

Pre-inspection of a dwelling unit by the NPO serves two possible purposes for MTO families: it can help them focus on the features and condition of the apartment relative to their needs, and it can also alert them to potential problems when the unit is inspected according to Section 8 Housing Quality Standards. Recorded provision of this service by the NPOs varies greatly, with over two-thirds of the Los Angeles clients helped in this manner, compared to one-third of the Baltimore clients, a quarter of the Chicago families, and very few in New York and Boston. (It appears likely that, on this item as on others, differences in record-keeping may be confounding differences in practice among the counseling agencies.)

The new Los Angeles NPO, OYF, began by using quite a different approach to search assistance. OYF staff did not give neighborhood tours, nor did they encourage MTO clients to search or contact landlords on their own. Instead, they worked with clients to identify where they wanted to live, then found available units in those areas and took the families to see the units. Neighborhoods were viewed and discussed when the counselors and clients were driving to see prospective units, and contacts with landlords are handled by the counselors (who felt that MTO is a much stronger "sell" if the counselor explained the program and handled negotiations about rent and security deposits). This was clearly a very different approach than the other NPOs' emphasis on the development of the client's own skills. Both HACLA and Abt worked with OYF to re-orient their approach to encourage greater client initiative and to build more client skills.

Exhibit 2-9
Housing Search: Number of Units Shown by NPO Staff

Clients for whom search-related services were provided and recorded	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago^a	Los Angeles	New York
Percent of assigned families shown any units	79%	69%	24%	52%	50%
Mean number of units shown	2.7	1.5	0.4	2.8	1.0
Mean units found by NPO ^b	2.4	0.9	0.2	2.5	1.0
Mean units found by family ^b	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.0

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files (N=365).
 Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A).
 Missing: 6 cases (Baltimore).

NOTES: Data are weighted to represent accurately the mix of movers and non-movers in each site.
 Percentages may not add to 100 percent, due to rounding.

^a Original Chicago NPO (Leadership Council) only.

^b Units may be found by other sources than NPO and family.

Data from the sample of counseling agency files on the numbers of units shown the MTO treatment group families are displayed in Exhibit 2-9. These data show that units found by the NPOs account for most of the units shown to families, except in Chicago. CAN staff could take credit for finding an average of 2.4 units out of the average total of 2.7 units shown per family in Baltimore, while the FHC staff found 2.5 of the average 2.7 units shown in Los Angeles. Indeed, for this sample, NMIC staff found *all* the units shown to clients. But there is evidence of client search effort in all the other sites.

Exhibit 2-10
Housing Search: Extent of Search and Source of Units

	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York
<i>Percent of families with:</i>	33%	39%	59%	52%	56%
No search address recorded	19	29	16	12	17
One search address recorded	18	17	13	8	10
Two search addresses recorded	29	15	13	29	17
Three search addresses recorded					
<i>First search address found by:</i>	56%	60%	39%	79%	92%
NPO	36	34	30	17	8
Family	8	5	16	3	0
Other					
<i>Second search address found by:</i>	57%	60%	45%	89%	90%
NPO	34	30	15	11	10
Family	9	10	40	0	0
Other					
<i>Third search address found by:</i>	42%	79%	65%	86%	92%
NPO	43	21	10	14	8
Family	15	0.0	26	0	0
Other					

Source: NPO participant tracking logs as of 11/30/96.

Sample: All families randomly assigned to the MTO treatment group: N=1195.

Missing: 70 cases (Baltimore 11, Boston 12, Chicago 9, Los Angeles 22, New York 16).

NOTE: Percents are based on number of searches, not on total number of participants.

In their participant tracking logs, the NPOs also provide data on search activity, and these data are available for a much larger portion of the MTO treatment group. This information—on the first three search addresses for each family—is tabulated in Exhibit 2-10. No search addresses are recorded for about a third of the Baltimore and Boston families, about half the Los Angeles families, and more than half of those in Chicago and New York. Nearly 30 percent of the families assigned to CAN and FHC have three documented searches, compared to under 20 percent for the other three sites. The data on who located the three documented units reveal that the NPOs account for well over half of them, with the exception of first and second units in Chicago and third units in Baltimore.

For about 50 searches in Chicago since CHAC took over the NPO role, a quarter of the clients (in contrast to 9 percent of the Leadership Council clients) have three unit searches documented.

The fact that the agencies are aware of the NOFA requirement and are documenting their

The Challenges of Housing Search

During the search period, the contacts and meetings with MTO counselors are frequent—at least weekly, and usually more often. Keeping up the family's motivation is a challenge for the counselors, who must deal with a broad range of client concerns. For example, those who have not been responsible for paying utility bills (and this is true for many residents of public housing) worry about how they will be able to pay for the heat, gas, and electricity. Others worry whether their Section 8 certificates or vouchers will continue as long as they need the housing assistance, since they have heard that Section 8 renewals are now only two years' duration. Some worry about adapting to a smaller unit, since it can happen that a family with a three-bedroom unit in public housing may only be eligible for a two-bedroom certificate or voucher. Others question why they should have to move "so far away" to qualify and why they will have to endure isolation from friends, lack of adequate public transportation, lack of others speaking their primary language, and distance from their churches.

While seeking to address clients' concerns, the counselors must also encourage the families to search independently. CAN staff like the clients to take as much initiative as they can, although the counselors stress that they are there to support and help in this effort. MBHP clients are clearly encouraged to search on their own. In the early Chicago program, Leadership Council's clients were expected to take most of the responsibility for locating eligible housing; now this responsibility is shared with CHAC's counseling staff. The FHC liked its clients to make the landlord contacts and set up appointments to see available units; then the counselors would take them out to see the units. OYF, at least initially, made all the appointments with landlords.

Some clients were very proactive and searched extensively on their own. In New York, when NMIC finds an eligible and suitable unit and there are two or three clients who might fit

compliance efforts in the tracking logs may make them more likely to record the units they have found. However, these data are supported by the counseling log/file data, which are less subject to the same bias.

The MTO certificates and vouchers have five years of funding, although—as with all other Section 8 certificates and vouchers—they are renewable by HUD.

the unit (in terms of size, location, and access to transportation), the counselor may take several families to see it. But more often, the staff will match a unit to the client who is working the hardest or the client with the shortest time left on the Section 8 clock. Families who are really independent build relationships with brokers on their own and see many units. But if a client needs some back-up, NMIC staff will go with the client. Working people see apartments in the evenings and on weekends; counseling staff go on some of these visits, too.

Housing search tends to be a very intense activity for NPO staff members, who sometimes voice regret that they must spend so much time on search, leaving less time for "real counseling." However, all the agencies realize that the task of finding good units in low-poverty areas with affordable rents under Section 8 requires energy and focus, limiting their ability to deal with other issues.

Lease-Up Assistance

When a client has found a unit in a low-poverty location with a willing landlord and an affordable rent, the deal is not necessarily complete. Counselors may participate in a range of negotiations with landlords and interventions with the

An MBHP client with a large family, who need she found turned out to be in a census tract th but the MTO counselor convinced her to keep in Revere. When she came to the next "rap s participants.

PHAs. Typical assistance with landlords includes explaining the Section 8 program, negotiating a lower rent, and offering reassurances about the client and the Section 8 subsidy. Assistance in New York City includes providing NYCHA with a copy of the deed to the property and the apartment's previous lease (required by the Section 8 program there), as well as furnishing a "break-down letter" to Public Assistance containing the landlord information for shelter allowance payments, the rent-in-advance payment amount, security deposit amount, and broker fee amount.

All the PHAs operating the MTO demonstration have special leasing officers assigned to process the lease-ups for both the MTO treatment and Section 8 comparison groups. This assures prompt attention to requests for lease approval, as well as double-checking of low-poverty locations and continuity in maintaining the program tracking forms. Even so, sometimes the PHA may need to be prodded to make the lease-up happen. The need for a prompt inspection for housing quality standards is one factor here, as landlords can change their minds about the

tenant in the intervening time or can decide against getting involved in Section 8's rules and paperwork.

In New York City, the Housing Authority has made exceptional efforts to provide timely inspections for the MTO treatment group, with the MTO program manager going out himself to do the inspection if a special unit (e.g., a large apartment or one in an excellent location) is at stake. While the other markets may not be as tight, affordable units in good locations are always scarce, so the NPO and PHA staff work together to keep the deals intact. In Boston, the MTO inspections are assigned to a particular team at the BHA, whose members are aware of the program's special requirements.

In Chicago, the CHAC inspection teams are particularly aware of the need for timely response on units in low-poverty areas. This applies to re-inspections, too, since fewer than 40 percent of all units pass HQS on the first inspection. HACLA in Los Angeles expedites inspections for MTO voucher-holders and also has other staff assigned to speed the lease-up paperwork for the demonstration families.

Summary

Overall, the data on assistance with finding units and fulfilling other Section 8 requirements indicate a fairly high level of counseling support for clients who reach this stage. The Los Angeles NPOs and the New York agency appear to play particularly important roles in the movement of paperwork among client, landlord, and housing authority, facilitating the completion of an eligible MTO lease-up and the move of a client to a low-poverty area.

2.4 SPECIAL CHALLENGES OF MTO MOVES

Coping with Problems

In the course of MTO counseling, many different kinds of problems have arisen for the families in the MTO treatment group. Sometimes these problems are brought to the counselors, and sometimes they are manifested by non-participation in the counseling relationship. A considerable number of families in Baltimore and New York, in particular, have been no-shows for Section 8 briefings and/or for NPO orientation. However, all sites have experienced problems with families who express fears about moving to unfamiliar areas and are very reluctant to move.

CAN's approach, with its client-counselor contract and mandatory workshops, may quickly weed out families who are not sure they really want to move. In New York, where for the first two years MTO recruited only from Manhattan public housing developments, it was very difficult for some families to see the advantages of moving compared to the convenience of their current locations and the generally good condition of their apartments and developments. By the time they were recontacted for the orientation and Section 8 briefing, almost 6 percent had already changed their minds about participating in MTO. In Chicago, CHAC has experienced extensive problems with clients who participate in all phases of the counseling process, but decide at the last moment that they are too fearful to make the move.

Occasionally situations arise that result in a client being advised not to move. Two sites mentioned that clients with health problems or terminal illnesses who currently are receiving medical treatment and need special transportation may find it very difficult to replace these services in a new community. In Chicago, the counselors have assisted families in finding help for mental health problems that prevented their participation in MTO.

A substance abuse problem can also be a barrier to moving. Without treatment and recovery, the client is a poor candidate for placement with a private landlord. In some cases, drug-related activity among family members has reduced the family's willingness to move out of the neighborhood, despite dangerous conditions in the public housing development.

Sometimes the problems the client is presenting are resolvable once confronted, and the client can ultimately be converted to a "mover." In other cases, however, there is no immediate solution. For example, in Los Angeles, the counselors have advised a few clients not to move because of immigration issues; that is, there was too much risk that the family would lose their housing assistance.

In addition, families drawn from some Baltimore developments undergoing HOPE VI demolition and renovation were given relocation alternatives that may have seemed safer than MTO. There were options to be relocated within public housing, or to receive Section 8 assistance but retain the right to come back to public housing.

Anecdotally, it is reported within NYCHA that long-time tenants are rewarded by transfers to Manhattan developments, which are the most desirable in the agency's large inventory. Thus, the tenants MTO was seeking to recruit may have been the longest in public housing and the most loyal to it. Certainly, response to family outreach improved when MTO began to draw families from NYCHA developments in the Bronx.

Client motivation is the key, according to counselors. The number of visits to units does not appear to staff to be a key predictor that can distinguish those who succeed in finding a unit from those who do not. Instead the NPO staff attribute the difference to other personal characteristics of the MTO families. Not surprisingly, those who have very limited education and personal motivation, those with a language barrier, and those who do not feel they can move to an area that meets the low-poverty restriction have the most difficult time finding a unit and moving.

Encounters with Discrimination

A number of possible or probable incidents of housing discrimination have been encountered by MTO families during the housing search process. In Los Angeles, an African-American counselor took an African-American client to see an available unit. The owner was Hispanic and was far from welcoming, and the client left feeling that she was being discouraged because of her race. To follow up, a Spanish-speaking counselor from the FHC called the owner to inquire about the unit and was encouraged to come see it. Confronted about this difference in treatment, the owner apologized and rented to the African-American family.

In New York City, a Dominican client attended a fair housing workshop held by NMIC and then filed a complaint against a landlord who told her he did not want to rent to Dominicans; NMIC staff assisted the woman in filing the complaint. Another encounter with discrimination (or suspected discrimination) occurred during the search process in the Boston area: One MBHP client encountered a change in manager attitude when she said she had Section 8 and would be paying 30 percent of income for rent. The manager asked for a couple of days to review the file. After more than a week, the client was finally told that there was a deposit already on the apartment from someone else. At this point, the NPO called the Boston Fair Housing Commission, and a tester was sent out. The tester found that there were, in fact, two 3BR apartments available. After the tester introduced herself and indicated there were grounds for a lawsuit, the application for the apartment was processed in one day and the MTO participant obtained the unit.

Persons receiving Section 8 assistance are considered a protected class in Massachusetts, although not in many other states.

Beyond encounters with discrimination during the search process, some MTO families have met differential treatment when making school arrangements for their children in the new communities. In one case, a Los Angeles client was told that there was no room for her child in the public elementary school in her new location. Suspicious, she asked the Beyond Shelter counselor to intervene. The counselor (a blond, fair-skinned Latina) then contacted and met with the school administrator to enroll "her child." When she was assured of admission, she confronted the school official with the difference in treatment; the client's child was able to enroll immediately.

In the Boston area, there has been one racial incident involving a child from an MTO family in a suburban school. The counselor contacted school administrators and also attended a PTA/PTO meeting to help deal with the incident and raise the awareness of the school community. The school has been good at following through to diffuse tension and resolve the issue.

2.4 HOUSING-RELATED ASSISTANCE: A SUMMARY

To summarize the differences among the five sites on housing-related counseling, we have used the analytical framework presented in Chapter One (Section 1.4). The framework compares the sites on the *breadth, intensity, and degree of client intervention* involved in their housing-related counseling. Baltimore's program was high on all three dimensions. CAN's program involved intensive pre-search counseling on budget and household management, as well as on self-presentation and dealing with landlords. The agency conducted home visits and credit checks for all clients. Further, CAN did extensive landlord outreach and took families on neighborhood and community tours. Finally, although the agency's model stressed independence and teaching search skills, the counselors were also always available to help with problems, negotiate with landlords, and assist with lease-up as needed.

Boston and Los Angeles provided somewhat less intensive levels of service than Baltimore. In both sites, there was some variation over time in the level of service offered to the MTO families. This variation was due at least in part to staff turnover; in Los Angeles, this turnover resulted from the instability at FHC, while in Boston key staff moved to another MTO site. Both MBHP and FHC conducted home visits and credit checks and conducted at least some

neighborhood tours. However, Boston provides a great deal of useful information to families through its Resource Room, while Los Angeles was more likely to find units for the families, contact landlords, and to conduct pre-inspections of the units. NPOs at both these sites also intervened with landlords and housing authorities, as needed, to expedite lease-ups.

New York's services were less broad, primarily because of lack of resources and the need to focus on finding units in such an extremely tight rental market. Further, unlike all the other sites, NMIC has chosen not to conduct home visits or do credit checks. However, the agency does provide an extraordinary degree of intervention for clients. The counselors work with brokers to identify units for the MTO families, then work with Public Assistance to make the MTO families more attractive to landlords than other Section 8 tenants.

In Chicago, the Leadership Council's counseling model stressed client independence and initiative; therefore, counselors provided less direct housing counseling than at other sites. The counselors did not identify units for the families or provide neighborhood tours, nor did they generally accompany clients on visits to units. They also did not conduct home visits because of safety concerns, although they did attempt to have clients meet them at the Leadership Council's offices. CHAC's program offers a broader range of housing counseling services, more similar to that provided at the other sites.

In sum, each NPO developed its model of MTO housing-related assistance based on its mission and history, but then each adapted its practices to the needs of local clients, to housing market conditions, and to the operating policies of its partner PHA. By May 1997, over 550 MTO treatment group families had made low-poverty moves with NPO assistance. In the long term, it is the quality of these moves—their duration, the availability of education and employment in the new locations, and subsequent effects on the attainments and well-being of family members—that will tell us about the effectiveness of MTO counseling.

CHAPTER THREE

NON-HOUSING ASSISTANCE

While the NOFA for the MTO demonstration contained fairly specific requirements for housing-related assistance for MTO treatment group families, the requirements for other types of assistance that the NPOs might provide were much less clear. The NOFA called generally for NPOs to provide budgeting assistance for voucher holders and assistance in "adjusting to new environments."

The MTO *Program Operations Manual (POM)* offered more detailed guidelines, but left the NPOs a great deal of flexibility and choice in designing their own programs. The *POM* included three ground rules for providing counseling:

- First, that the level of assistance be reasonable and within the realm of public policy options—that is, that NPOs should not try to solve all of the family's problems directly, but rely on providing information and referral;
- Second, that any counseling approach should seek to build the capacity of the enrolled families to become independent and survive on their own in a location and dwelling unit of their choosing; and
- Third, that the services offered must fit within program budgets.

The implication of these ground rules was that the NPOs should handle most non-housing services by information and referral. The rules did not, however, preclude the NPOs from offering a broader service package if they so desired. Given the flexibility of the requirements and the differences in available funding, the five sites varied considerably in the breadth, intensity, and degree of client support in their non-housing counseling activities. As noted in earlier chapters, these choices were generally based on the overall management philosophy of the NPO.

The MTO counseling agencies have generally provided an array of non-housing services to the participating families. Exhibit 3-1 lists the range of non-housing services offered by the NPOs, including employment and education-related services, supportive services, and special assistance.²

² The Leadership Council in Chicago did not provide such services, consistent with its approach in the later years of the Gautreaux Program.
Abt Associates Inc.

Exhibit 3-1
Areas of Non-Housing Assistance Provided in MTO Counseling

Employment and Education	Supportive Services	Special Assistance
Job development services/ seminars Job training referrals (for adults and older children) Education (GED, ESL, Literacy) referrals (for adults and older children) College counseling/financial aid referrals	Family and individual counseling Case Management Crisis intervention Budget management Household management Parenting education Welfare and legal advocacy Transportation assistance Referrals for mental health and health care Assistance in obtaining child care	Basic furnishings and household items Financial assistance with security deposits and utility hook-ups Assistance with moving expenses/locating movers

While there is considerable variation among the sites in the types of services they offered, there are some services common to the NPOs that provide non-housing assistance. Each of these counseling agencies provides direct assistance with budgeting and household management, as well as direct assistance in dealing with schools, welfare offices, and other government agencies (although the format and intensity of these services has varied considerably). All of these agencies also intervene in urgent or crisis situations that their counselors identify during home visits or other client contacts. Finally, a small number of the agencies use a case management approach to working with the MTO families—that is, they address client needs comprehensively rather than focusing on providing a specific service.

However, while NMIC provides only limited supportive services, the counselors spend considerable time and energy assisting families in resolving problems with their public assistance benefits, including benefits transfer, obtaining housing allowances and move assistance, getting direct landlord payments issued correctly, and getting benefits reinstated after cutoffs. These services, although relatively narrow, are critical for making the move happen and stabilizing the client afterward.

In this chapter, we describe the NPOs' approaches to non-housing assistance in detail, drawing primarily on the materials gathered from the interviews with counselors. In Section 3.1,

Because there was so much variation and because the agencies did not record their activities consistently, the counseling file abstraction data on non-housing assistance are difficult to interpret; as a result, we have chosen to give this source less emphasis.

we review the different types of non-housing assistance offered at the five sites, indicating which types were provided directly and which by referral. In Section 3.2, we focus on services related to employment and education; in Section 3.3, we examine supportive services. Finally, in Section 3.4, we look at any types of special assistance the NPOs provided, i.e., tangible forms of aid such as help with security deposits or with obtaining appliances or other household goods.

3.1 EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

One of the purposes of the MTO demonstration is to test whether moving to low-poverty areas helps families become economically self-sufficient. The five NPOs vary considerably in the amount of emphasis they put on assisting the MTO families to achieve this goal.

Baltimore

Although CAN's philosophy stressed self-sufficiency, the agency did not provide much direct service in the area of employment and education, instead referring clients as appropriate. According to CAN staff, about 20 percent of the clients were working when they entered MTO, and many other clients were already involved in employment and job training programs. The counselors estimate that they assisted about 30 percent of the clients with referrals to education and employment-related services. If they had not completed high school, clients were encouraged to complete their GED. If they were ready for college, they were encouraged to consider relocating to an area with a college nearby. The counseling staff at CAN did not have "much faith" in job training and did not emphasize this type of service. But an informal study conducted by the counselors of 66 families (out of the first 99 families) that moved showed that 30 percent were working when they entered the program, 55 percent were working at the time of follow-up, and 85 percent were either working or enrolled in full-time school or training.

Boston

However, while these data give an estimate of the amount and type of service provided, they likely do not present an entirely accurate picture. For example, it was not always clear from counselors' notes what type of service was provided or whether a particular service was provided directly or by referral. Further, counselors often did not log all the services they provided.

MBHP in Boston does not offer any direct employment or education-related services, although staff do work with MTO clients on setting goals, such as finding a job or getting more education to qualify for a better job. The counselors talk to the clients about the steps necessary to attain their goals (getting a GED, going into a job training program) and, once the client has decided on these steps, make referrals to education and job training programs. In addition, the counselors sometimes help MTO clients create resumes or fill out job applications. Some clients were already working when they came into the MTO program, and so the counselors felt they required less assistance.

The MBHP counselors estimate that they referred about five percent of the MTO clients for employment and job training-related services and about 10 percent for education (GED, ESL, and literacy programs). The file abstraction data indicate that the Boston counselors provided some service in this area, including their work in helping clients make plans to achieve their goals for attaining self-sufficiency, as well as some referrals to other agencies.

Chicago

Unlike the other NPOs, there is little indication in either the counseling log data or the interviews with counselors that the Leadership Council in Chicago provided any assistance to MTO families with employment or education. Again, the Leadership Council's model stressed independent searching, and so counselors had relatively little ongoing contact with participants.

CHAC has focused more on employment, particularly since the 1996 welfare system changes have taken effect. CHAC's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program began actively providing service to clients in the spring of 1997; the MTO counselors try to recruit their clients to use these additional services. The FSS services include linkages to training opportunities and recruiting sessions with local employers. The FSS and MTO programs have also jointly sponsored informational sessions on the changes in public assistance and their impacts on clients. Finally, the MTO counselors work with clients on setting goals, and they encourage them to find jobs in their new communities.

Los Angeles

MBHP's own FSS program is over-subscribed, and enrollment has been closed for some time.

Los Angeles offered the greatest breadth and intensity of assistance with employment and education of the five MTO sites but focused these services only on successful movers. Because the agency's overall mission is to help its clients become self-sufficient, Beyond Shelter has a job developer on staff and offers a four-session job development seminar. The Beyond Shelter counselors worked with each MTO family to set goals for adults and children. Then, depending on the family's needs, staff made referrals to either the agency's own job development services or to outside agencies.

The Beyond Shelter counselors reported that they gave referrals for education or employment-related services to virtually every family with whom they worked actively. The data abstracted from the counseling logs and files support this claim. Further, about two-thirds of the clients who were referred for education were also referred to job training programs.

The counselors themselves estimated that they referred about 40 percent of the clients to Beyond Shelter's job developer. They also made referrals to other job training and JTPA programs. When interviewed for this report, the counselors indicated that they felt even more clients needed job development services, but these clients required English as a Second Language (ESL) or literacy classes before they could begin working on employment-related issues. Beyond Shelter counselors frequently provided referrals for English and Spanish GED classes, ESL classes, and English and Spanish literacy classes. Finally, even if clients were already working, Beyond Shelter's counselors sometimes helped them to find a better job.

The Beyond Shelter counselors generally tried to work with all members of the MTO families. For example, in a Hispanic household, they might refer the wife to school, even if the husband was already working. The counselors also might try to provide assistance to the older children, referring them to programs for teens or job development and helping them get information about financial aid for college. In one case, the counselor was able to put an older daughter in touch with an association for Latino teens that provided her with information and assistance in obtaining financial aid for college. In another case, the agency's job developer helped an adult child obtain training to become a firefighter.

The counselors attempted to work with every family that moved, but a few families either declined services or had language barriers (i.e., speaking only Cambodian or Vietnamese) that made providing services problematic. These latter clients were referred to community service providers for the Asian community.

The counselors felt the job development assistance was effective, but noted that they had to do a great deal of follow-up to help make sure that families pursued their goals. They observed that many clients found the low-poverty move overwhelming and were afraid of making more changes in their lives, such as seeking education or employment. The counselors worked to keep families motivated and encouraged them to keep trying to find work, even if they failed in their first attempt.

On Your Feet, the current NPO in Los Angeles, has continued this emphasis on employment and education. As the agency's name implies, its philosophy also stresses helping people move toward self-sufficiency. On Your Feet runs the San Fernando Valley FSS program for HACLA and is using a similar service model for the MTO families. Families are required to meet with the agency's job developer shortly after they move. The job developer works with them to help them either find immediate employment or pursue further education or training that will qualify them later for a job. The job developer works with clients on an ongoing basis, working out of both On Your Feet's and HACLA's offices. The agency also has a consultant on staff who provides entrepreneurial training to help clients start their own businesses. Finally, On Your Feet holds group counseling sessions to help keep clients motivated.

New York

Although NMIC in New York has an in-house JTPA training program and a database on JTPA resources, staff report that few MTO clients have been interested in the employment-related services. Some are required by the public assistance program to participate in work experience or training programs. The NMIC staff observe that though the families want to get off public assistance, many feel they cannot because they have young children. Some clients do indicate that they want to go back to school, and at least one has started to work since moving. However, the agency does not work with them to set employment-related goals or to help them toward self-sufficiency, viewing these services as outside the boundaries of their MTO work. The file abstraction data indicate that the NMIC staff provided no referrals or assistance with employment or education-related services for the MTO families in that sample.

3.2 SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services include case management, direct counseling, budget and household management, parenting, assistance with health and mental health care, legal aid, transportation, and advocacy with other agencies. With the exception of Chicago during the period when the Leadership Council was operating MTO, all of the NPOs have provided at least some supportive services to MTO clients and intervene in urgent situations as needed. Some agencies provide a great deal of direct service, while others tend to do more referrals. Data describing the supportive services offered at each of the sites are presented in Exhibit 3-2. In this section, we discuss the breadth and intensity of supportive services provided by each of the NPOs.

Exhibit 3-2
Supportive Services for MTO Experimental Group Families

Type of service and percent of clients receiving it	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles ^a	New York
Budget Management	81%	6%	5%	33%	10%
Direct Service	1	0	0	26	0
Information & Referral					
Credit Counseling	64	11	22	16	0
Direct Service	2	6	23	27	2
Information & Referral					
Household Management	69	3	3	14	0
Direct Service	2	0	0	13	0
Information & Referral					
Parenting	21	1	0	3	0
Direct Service	2	0		6	0
Information & Referral					
Child Care	4	0	5	12 ^b	0
Direct Service	0	0	2	30	0
Information & Referral					
Health Care	2	2	2	6	0
Direct Service	0	0	0	13	0
Information & Referral					
Mental Health Care	0	1	0	3	0
Direct Service	2	1	0	5	0
Information & Referral					
Legal Aid	3	1	2	0	0
Direct Service	0	1	0	19	0
Information & Referral					
Transportation	2	1	4	0	0
Direct Service	0	0	8	5	0
Information & Referral					
Other Services	4	3	0	5	25
Direct Service	4	0	0	16	2
Information & Referral					

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files (N=365).

Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A).

Missing: 0 to 4 cases (Baltimore 0 to 3, Boston 0 to 1, Los Angeles 0 to 1).

NOTE: Data are weighted to represent accurately the mix of movers and non-movers in each site.

^a Los Angeles data are difficult to interpret because "Information and Referral" often indicates a referral to other Beyond Shelter services.

^b This figure likely refers to the parenting classes provided by Beyond Shelter, rather than to providing child care.

Baltimore

As discussed earlier in the chapter, CAN counselors conducted an extensive needs assessment with clients when they enrolled in the program, and they provided the MTO families in Baltimore with a great deal of intensive service before they obtained their Section 8 certificate or voucher. However, the main focus of CAN's assistance was on budget management and household management, provided through the required seminars. The counseling log abstractions reflect this intensive assistance: 81 percent of the Baltimore clients received counseling on budget management; 64 percent received assistance with credit counseling; and 69 percent received assistance with household management.

The CAN counselors also provided intensive services to deal with family problems. For example, the counseling log data indicate that 21 percent of the families received help with parenting issues. In one instance, a counselor worked intensively with a family in which the mother had serious substance abuse problems, to increase her involvement in her children's education and to help her realize the importance of providing a safe environment for her children to grow.

The CAN counselors also intervened in other problem family situations. This same counselor worked intensively with a woman who was severely depressed, even holding counseling sessions for the client's four children to help them cope with their mother's illness. Another counselor worked with a family (after their move) to resolve a son's behavioral problems (including being disruptive in school and refusing to take the school bus). A third counselor worked intensively with a blind man who had sole custody of his three children under 18 (as well as several older children).

While CAN provided intensive assistance with budgeting, household management, and family problems, the interviews with counselors and the file abstraction data indicate that they did not devote as much time as NMIC or Beyond Shelter to intervening for clients with third parties (such as government agencies or health care providers).

The tracking log data indicate that half the CAN clients did not have credit problems; see Exhibit 2-6.

Some clients in the final months of CAN's program did not receive the full set of counseling seminars before moving.

Boston

While the MBHP counselors in Boston conduct an extensive needs assessment at the initial home visit and make referrals to other agencies, they provide relatively little direct service. The types of direct service they do provide include working with the public assistance office to resolve problems with AFDC (although the problems in Boston are apparently not as complex as those in New York), advising clients on how to obtain a restraining order or get help with domestic violence problems, and helping families deal with problems at their children's new schools. The counselors describe assisting families with school-related concerns as a major focus. Some families require help to transfer their children to schools in their new communities. Counselors also help with finding transportation and extended-day programs for children enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs, and they assist families in identifying day care options in the suburbs. Finally, one counselor worked on locating day camp placements for the summer, including trying to find scholarships.

The MBHP counselors make referrals for MTO families for a variety of services. For example, counselors refer clients to legal aid for domestic violence, immigration problems, and problems with AFDC. They also refer clients to substance abuse treatment programs and consumer credit counseling. Finally, they help clients apply for fuel assistance to pay their heating bills in their new homes.

Chicago

As discussed above, the Leadership Council's counseling model required MTO families to search independently for housing in low-poverty areas. As a result, counselors had very little direct contact with clients and did not develop the same types of relationships as the counselors at the other four sites. The only indication that non-housing assistance was provided is that 22 percent of the clients received direct assistance with credit counseling and another 23 percent were referred elsewhere for this type of help. However, the interview data do not indicate the content of this assistance nor how it was provided to clients. The assistance probably was associated with credit reports, which were obtained and reviewed for about 60 percent of the Leadership Council's clients.

The current Chicago NPO, CHAC, provides more supportive services for MTO families. The agency provides information about social services in both city and suburban communities. CHAC also holds "mentoring sessions" for clients who are searching for housing to provide support and help keep them motivated. In addition, the agency brings in speakers from the Chicago Police Department's speakers bureau to conduct seminars (for clients who are searching) on topics such as domestic violence, gang involvement, and substance abuse. Staff have recently begun developing a seminar on household management, in response to the discovery that a number of clients were having difficulty maintaining their new units. Counselors also work individually with clients to address their specific problems.

Los Angeles

In the area of supportive services, Los Angeles' two NPOs provided intensive and comprehensive services. In particular, the counselors from Beyond Shelter acted as case managers and (unless a client declined services) worked actively with the families on resolving problems and moving toward self-sufficiency. Based on the lengthy pre-move "socio-economic" assessment, counselors intervened immediately in any crisis situations, such as domestic violence or substance abuse. In most cases, these were the only services provided to non-movers. ~~However, if families were very needy, the services provided by Beyond Shelter's counselors~~ could be quite extensive during the 120-day search period.

Once an MTO family moved, Beyond Shelter began providing extensive supportive services. The file abstraction data show that 59 percent of the families received assistance with budget management, 43 percent received help with credit counseling, and 27 percent received assistance with household management. The budget management assistance was primarily provided through a seminar developed by the counselors, but they also worked with clients individually. For example, one counselor developed a system for a developmentally disabled client to organize and manage her bills, working with her to sort through a pile of papers under her mattress and put them in envelopes marked by month.

We have combined the figures for direct service and referral here because it was often difficult to distinguish in the files whether clients were referred to other services within the agency or to other agencies.

Beyond Shelter also offered a child development program to MTO families; the counselors referred clients they thought needed help with parenting to the program, and they also worked with clients individually as well. For example, one client had a daughter who was a runaway, and the counselor worked with her to try to resolve the situation.

Other services were provided primarily by referral, including health care services and mental health care. In addition, about 19 percent of families received referrals for legal assistance; according to the counselors, these situations primarily involved immigration problems, loss of AFDC benefits, or efforts to obtain child support. Finally, the counselors from Beyond Shelter often intervened for clients with public agencies, particularly AFDC and schools; examples include helping clients get their children registered in a new school or transferring welfare benefits to a different local office. The Beyond Shelter counselors also helped clients in resolving problems with child support payments.

New York

As mentioned earlier, NMIC consciously avoided making MTO "just another social service program." Although families filled out an assessment form at the briefing, staff did not conduct home visits nor intensive needs assessments with clients. However, even though the MTO program's resources were extremely limited, a social worker is available to help families with urgent problems. The NMIC counselors estimate that about 20 percent of MTO clients have required these more intensive supportive services to resolve problems with domestic violence, with accessing health care, and for dealing with disabled children.

NMIC did intensive case work with a client who had been hospitalized for a degenerative muscular disease. The client had a daughter with Downs' syndrome; there was also a home health aide living in the household. They had joined MTO because they needed a larger apartment. A social work intern at NMIC worked with the client's social worker and other service providers to define her housing needs and target the search effectively.

The NMIC counselors also provide a significant amount of help to clients in dealing with problems with public assistance benefits. New York's public assistance program is complex and

According to Exhibit 3-3, at least a quarter of NMIC's clients received supportive services, although the types of service are not indicated.

is undergoing major changes, so the counselors have had to master a number of arcane rules and regulations. In addition to helping clients with the housing-related issues described in Chapter Two (obtaining funds for moving expenses and brokers' fees, and arranging for housing allowance payments to be sent directly to the new landlords), they help clients whose public assistance is terminated. They have also assisted clients in negotiating work requirements. For example, one client who had severe arthritis was assigned to report to an outdoor work crew at 6 a.m.; the counselor was able to help her obtain an indoor job placement without her being sanctioned or losing her benefits.

This range of benefit-related assistance requires a great deal of time and energy. Sometimes a counselor has to spend the entire day at the public aid office to resolve problems successfully; sometimes calls to the clients' caseworker must be made every day for more than a week. However, this high degree of intervention appears essential if MTO families are to be able to stabilize in their new situations.

3.3 SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Special assistance refers to tangible or monetary forms of aid, including helping with paying security deposits, assisting with the actual move, and providing families with appliances and other household goods (or helping them obtain them). Most of these forms of assistance were funded through independent sources, such as foundation support, or from the NPO's operating funds.

Baltimore

CAN had resources from a foundation grant that allowed the agency to provide MTO families with some tangible assistance in moving, and as a result, the agency was able to help some families with the security deposit. The counselors would sometimes accompany the families to second-hand stores to help them find bargains on furniture or household goods. Finally, they would direct them to inexpensive moving companies and occasionally actually help with the move. The counseling log data indicate that this type of special assistance was provided only about 7 percent of the time, but the interviews with counselors indicate that it was probably more frequent.

Boston

MBHP also tries to help clients with their move, when possible. The agency assists families in applying for fuel assistance and sometimes helps to set up movers. In December 1994 and again in April 1996, the agency received small grants from the Boston Foundation, which have permitted the counselors to provide assistance with security deposits, utility hook-up deposits, appliances, furniture, moving expenses, and broker's fees. While the file abstraction data indicate that only about 4 percent of MBHP's MTO clients received any type of financial assistance, these records likely underestimate this activity.

Chicago

As was the case with education and employment and supportive services, there is no indication in either the counseling log data or the interviews with counselors that the Leadership Council provided any special assistance to families with their moves. At this time, CHAC does not offer this type of assistance either; however, the agency is actively seeking ways to offer its Section 8 clients assistance with security deposits. The Chicago Housing Authority has offered to make some funds available for a revolving loan fund, but it is not clear how such a fund would be administered. CHAC is also investigating nonprofit organizations that might be willing to guarantee security deposits for participants.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles provided the most extensive assistance in this category as well. Beyond Shelter has a warehouse where it collects donated appliances, furniture, and other household items (such as dishes and toiletries). This resource proved important to MTO clients; as many of the rental units in Los Angeles do not have refrigerators, Beyond Shelter was able to help clients obtain them through their warehouse or at a discount through other vendors. The agency was also able to provide such necessities as furniture, dishes, and pots and pans. The counselors would usually prepare a "care package" (of donated household goods such as toilet paper, paper towels, and toiletry samples) to take to MTO families after they moved. Finally, like CAN and MBHP, Beyond Shelter had the resources to provide some financial aid for clients who could not

pay their security deposits. The counseling log data indicate that 38 percent of the families (and 59 percent of the successful movers) in Los Angeles received some type of special assistance from Beyond Shelter.

While On Your Feet's resources are not as extensive, the agency does collect donations of household goods and clothing (primarily professional clothing for job interviews) and it provides these items to clients as necessary. On Your Feet also has a small fund from private donations that it uses for assistance with security deposits.

New York

NMIC in New York did not have the same access to private sector resources as the agencies in Baltimore, Boston, and Los Angeles, and was not able to provide the MTO families with much special assistance. However, the counselor did provide some help with moves, giving the families the names of low-cost movers and helping them to get estimates. As noted above, the families were required to get three estimates and present them to the public assistance office in order to receive a moving allowance.

3.4 NON-HOUSING ASSISTANCE: A SUMMARY

The counseling framework presented in Chapter One allows us to summarize and compare the five NPOs on the breadth, intensity, and degree of advocacy of the non-housing counseling they provided. Clearly, Beyond Shelter in Los Angeles offered the most comprehensive package of non-housing services. It is a large social service agency with many in-house services available to the MTO families. The agency has a strong self-sufficiency emphasis and offers a breadth of education- and employment-related services that were unmatched by the other NPOs. Further, the counselors at Beyond Shelter provided *only* non-housing services; because they were not also responsible for housing search, they had more time to dedicate to case management.

Baltimore provides an intense level of non-housing assistance, both because of the time and attention the counselors devote to working with clients individually and because of the requirement that all MTO clients attend seven workshops before beginning their housing search. Since most of CAN's efforts focused on budget and household management (although the counselors did work with clients to resolve family problems), these services are not as broad as

those provided by Beyond Shelter.

NMIC in New York provides non-housing counseling of moderate breadth and intensity. Although NMIC does have a range of non-housing services available, these services are only offered to the MTO clients with pressing needs. However, there is a high degree of client intervention, because of the NMIC counselors' extraordinary efforts to help families with problems with the public assistance system.

Boston's MBHP offers no direct non-housing services; all services are provided through information and referral. Counselors do work with individual clients and intervene in crises, but the breadth and intensity of these services is substantially lower than in other sites.

Finally, in Chicago some families in the early MTO program received credit counseling. However, CHAC has been developing non-housing services; in future reports, Chicago's MTO clients may prove to have received broader non-housing assistance.

Baltimore

The NPO in Baltimore, the Community Assistance Network (CAN), provided most of its non-housing assistance to clients prior to their moves. These services were very intensive but focused primarily on budget and household management. MTO treatment families in Baltimore were required to attend seven workshops—three on home management, three on budgeting, and one on tenant/landlord issues—before being allowed to receive a Section 8 certificate or voucher and begin searching for housing. Most of these workshops were run by CAN's subcontractor, the Baltimore Urban League. A second subcontractor, Baltimore Neighbors Inc. (BNI), dealt with fair housing issues and offered the workshop on tenant/landlord relations.

CAN's counselors worked intensively with families on an as-needed basis to resolve any urgent problems, sometimes providing family counseling. In addition, the counselors referred families to other service providers for help with needs such as employment, job training, or education. Finally, CAN was able to offer special assistance in some cases with security deposits and other relocation costs.

Boston

The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP) in Boston provides direct

assistance to families with goal-setting, budget management, job search, and crisis intervention. As in Baltimore, the counselors have information about a network of other agencies to which they can refer clients: for help with problems like substance abuse or other mental health needs; for obtaining job training or education; for consumer credit counseling; for fuel assistance; and for legal aid. MBHP also has \$20,000 in foundation funds that it can use to offer clients some financial assistance with relocation costs and household goods.

Chicago

The Leadership Council, the initial MTO counseling agency in Chicago, provided virtually no non-housing assistance to the MTO treatment families they served. As discussed in earlier chapters, their counseling model called for families to search independently. Further, very few home visits or needs assessments were done. There is no indication from either the counseling log abstraction data or from interviews with counselors that the Leadership Council staff provided non-housing assistance, except for referring some clients for credit counseling.

CHAC, Inc., the organization that is now serving as the NPO in Chicago, has added a variety of non-housing services for the MTO families. The agency's Resource Room offers information for various city and suburban communities about a range of services including transportation, social services, schools, job training, and adult education opportunities. Through the Chicago Police Department's Speakers Bureau, CHAC also offers families who are searching seminars on topics such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and gang involvement. CHAC staff offer sessions periodically on topics such as credit reporting and household management, and they provide referrals for other types of services (e.g., drug treatment, mental health, family counseling) as needed. Finally, the counselors urge their clients to participate in CHAC's FSS program, which offers services such as seminars on changes in public assistance benefits and recruiting sessions with potential employers.

Los Angeles

For the first two years of the demonstration, MTO in Los Angeles involved two NPOs: the Fair Housing Congress of Southern California (FHC), which provided the housing search assistance; and Beyond Shelter, which provided non-housing services exclusively. Beyond Shelter's primary mission is providing transitional assistance to the homeless and promoting self-sufficiency. The agency offered a wide range of its services to the MTO families, including:

- individual and family counseling;
- budget management;
- job development;
- parenting and child abuse prevention;
- child care;
- transportation assistance; and
- a warehouse that offers free appliances and other household goods.

These services were offered and coordinated through a case management approach in which the needs of MTO families were broadly assessed and counselors responded to the full spectrum. As part of case management, the counselors referred clients to a range of educational, employment, and health related-services. Finally, the counselors intervened on behalf of their clients with welfare offices, schools, and other agencies (such as mental health and health care services and the housing authority) as needed.

However, the dual NPO model in Los Angeles had implications for the amount of service provided to clients; although Beyond Shelter's counselors conducted in-depth "socio-economic" assessments with all families assigned to the MTO treatment group, they only provided pre-move services if the family had an urgent need. Otherwise, all of their services were provided as follow-up support to successful movers. Those families who did not succeed in moving received no further services from Beyond Shelter once their Section 8 vouchers expired.

Although it is much smaller in size, the current MTO counseling agency in Los Angeles, On Your Feet, offers a service package similar to that of Beyond Shelter. On Your Feet's primary mission is also transitional assistance to the homeless, and its philosophy also stresses self-sufficiency. In addition, the agency runs HACLA's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program for the San Fernando Valley region. All of the services of this FSS program are available for the MTO families, but (as in the original program) most of these services are being provided after the families have moved to low-poverty areas.

Like Beyond Shelter, On Your Feet uses a case management approach to service provision. The agency invites all families to attend an orientation session shortly after they move. At the orientation, the clients schedule appointments with the case manager, who provides budget management counseling directly, and refers clients to the agency's job developer, social worker, and psychotherapists (as well as making referrals to other agencies as appropriate). On Your Feet also holds group sessions on budgeting and occasionally sponsors

special groups, such as women's support group. In addition, the agency has established relationships with organizations that provide credit counseling (at no cost) and with a real estate firm willing to assist low-income home buyers. Finally, through donated resources, On Your Feet has access to some funds for assisting clients with security deposits and can provide them with clothing and household goods.

New York

The NPO in New York, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), is also an agency that provides transitional assistance to the homeless and offers a wide array of services to the community. New York has the lowest counseling budget of the five MTO sites, and so this agency only provides a limited service package to the families in the program. Further, NMIC's philosophy is not to make MTO a traditional social service program but to focus almost exclusively on helping families to move.

NMIC has a staff of social workers who are available to assist clients with a range of problems—such as substance abuse, domestic violence or other family issues—but the agency has only provided those services to a very small number of MTO clients, on an as-needed basis. The agency also has an in-house JTPA training program, but (according to staff) no MTO clients have chosen to use this service.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT

In the design of the Moving to Opportunity demonstration program, follow-up support is an essential part of the services available for MTO treatment group families who move. Follow-up support is meant to help the family stabilize in its new low-poverty location, assisting family members to make the adjustments involved in becoming private-market tenants and to take advantage of communities that offer greater educational and employment opportunities. According to the *MTO Program Operations Manual*, follow-up support has four possible main components, although each NPO was able to choose which forms of support were most relevant to their clients:

- Providing *stabilization assistance* for the families in their new homes and neighborhoods;³
- Creating a *support network* for assisted families in the same local area;
- *Offering owners/managers* of housing occupied by MTO treatment group families help with resolution of any problems; and
- Offering assistance to the families at the time of their first two *lease renewals*.⁴

For some families in the MTO demonstration, follow-up support from the NPO counselors helps to ensure a client's success in establishing a new home. Through telephone calls and personal visits, a counselor can reassure the client who may be feeling anxious about a new neighborhood and offer valuable advice about home maintenance or dealing with the landlord. For other families, follow-up support has been important to preventing eviction and maintaining their participation in the Section 8 program. The MTO program coordinator in Baltimore believes that, without some form of follow-up support, some 15 to 20 percent of the families CAN helped to move would have left their new homes and the MTO program before the end of the first year.

³ Stabilization assistance is defined as direct help to a client that supports the client during the period of transition to a new home and neighborhood. It can include providing assistance in budgeting and home management as well as making referrals to resources such as schools, churches, and social service agencies.

⁴ *Moving to Opportunity Program Operations Manual*, pp. 14-2 to 14-3.
Abt Associates Inc. 4-100

This chapter focuses on the nature and intensity of follow-up support provided by the MTO counseling agencies. Section 4.1 describes the extent of follow-up contacts at each site and presents data on who initiates the contacts (client, counselor, or landlord). Section 4.2 provides an overview of the various follow-up support services provided. In Section 4.3, we discuss the use of successful clients as role models and the use of post-move group sessions. Finally, in Section 4.4 we summarize and compare the MTO follow-up services across the sites.

4.1 LEVEL OF FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT

By the end of 1996, a total of 484 treatment group families had moved through the MTO program. Based on data from the participant tracking logs maintained by each NPO, it appears that the level of follow-up support provided to these movers by the NPOs varied considerably from one site to the next. The NPOs in New York, Baltimore, and Los Angeles made follow-up contacts with over 80 percent of their clients who have moved. By contrast, Chicago's records show that follow-up contacts were made with about 40 percent of the movers there, while the Boston data show that about 30 percent of that site's movers received follow-up contacts.

Follow-up contacts with MTO families are not always initiated by the counselors. Information regarding the source of the follow-up contacts was collected from MTO counseling logs and client files for a sample of 172 movers. These data show the average number of follow-up contacts ranged from nine in Los Angeles down to two in Boston, with a five-site average of five contacts. Approximately 66 percent of these follow-up contacts were initiated by the counselor, 26 percent by the family, and 3 percent by the landlord (see Exhibit 4-1 for more detail).

Overall, it appears that the NPOs are providing support less frequently than initially anticipated. Los Angeles, New York, and Baltimore have provided the most support post-move. Boston and Chicago appear to have provided less regular follow-up support.

There is no way to determine whether the poor follow-up in Boston is a result of bad record-keeping or a lack of emphasis on follow-up support.

Exhibit 4-1
Source of Follow-Up Contacts for MTO Treatment group Movers

Percent of contacts initiated by:	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York	Total
Family	20%	34%	45%	29%	12%	26%
Counselor	73	55	41	65	85	66
Landlord	3	2	8	3	4	3
Unspecified	5	9	5	4	0	5
Average Number of Contacts	5.8	1.9	4.7	8.6	3.5	5.3

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files.
Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A); movers only (N=172).
Missing: 29 cases (4 Baltimore, 22 Boston, 3 Los Angeles).

NOTES: Data are weighted to represent accurately the mix of movers and non-movers in each site.
Data in this exhibit reflect all recorded contacts.
Percentages may not add to 100, due to rounding.

4.2 NATURE OF FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT SERVICES

There is a substantial amount of overlap between the non-housing assistance provided to families (discussed in Chapter 3) and the follow-up services provided after they move. This is particularly true in Los Angeles, where most of the non-housing service provision was done once a client had leased up. Exhibit 4-2 shows the areas of follow-up support provided by the NPOs.

Exhibit 4-2
Areas of Follow-Up Support Provided to MTO Treatment group Movers

Areas of Support Provided to the Family	Areas of Intervention Beyond the Family
Adjustment to new neighborhood or community, such as locating needed resources and easing transition to a new home and community Transportation issues Child care issues Health care referrals Employment/training referrals Networking with other MTO families	Landlord-tenant relations and mediation Problems with housing units Public assistance benefits problems Discrimination Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment problems School problems

Follow-up services provided to clients range in intensity from a simple phone call to see how a client is doing, to sustained work on more complex issues such as landlord-client

interaction, employment issues, assistance with enrolling children in new schools, adjusting to a new neighborhood, dealing with issues of discrimination, and tenant rights. In addition, counselors in most sites find themselves acting as advocates for clients or doing crisis intervention in areas such as landlord-tenant disputes, pending evictions, problems with the units (items needing repair, Housing Quality Standards issues, or utility problems), public assistance benefits, and discrimination. Landlord support primarily focuses around rent payments and dealing with the PHAs or the public assistance offices when payments are late, although sometimes it addresses other difficulties landlords may have with tenants, such as concerns about unit maintenance.

The Baltimore NPO does not provide a standard set of follow-up services to all clients. Instead, the type of assistance provided is based on individual client needs. The goal of the NPO is to provide the client with all of the "necessities" that make change possible. Some of the move-related services have included help with the transfer of benefits and help arranging utility hook-ups. Counselors are encouraged to meet with clients in-person within a month after they move. In addition,

Because of follow-up support, Cathy has old African-American woman. A single parent ex-husband.

At the time she began participating in M in South Central Los Angeles. She was const unattended for fear it would be burglarized.

Beyond Shelter provided assistance with assistance intervention for Cathy. In addition, NPO's help.

Cathy is now renting a house in Anahei Beyond Shelter job development program; Ca courses. Once their training is completed, the

counselors ~~try~~ to contact landlords to remind them that they are there to serve them as well, should any issues with their MTO tenants.

In Boston, follow-up support has generally centered on utility problems (such as broken furnaces or unexpectedly large utility bills), help adjusting to their new neighborhood, family referrals (e.g., to schools, doctors), and crisis intervention. Boston counselors have had several follow-up contacts around the issue of racial discrimination as well. Shortly after her move, one Boston client witnessed a Ku Klux Klan demonstration in a suburban park where she was having a July 4 picnic. Talking it through with her counselor helped the client deal with this frightening and worrisome experience.

Under the Leadership Council, follow-up support in Chicago consisted primarily of phone calls to check on clients' progress and occasional assistance to families having trouble with the transfer of benefits. Subsequently, CHAC counselors have visited most of the clients who have moved (and contacted the rest by phone). Among the issues clients identified during these follow-up contacts were daycare, transportation, and security deposits. Also, MTO clients in Cook County are not being served by the Cook County FSS program, and CHAC may be able to enroll them in CHAC's own FSS program.

Chapter 3 of this report has already described the supportive services provided by Beyond Shelter, the original Los Angeles NPO that focused on follow-up services.

These services from Beyond Shelter included referrals to new schools, job training programs, doctors and hospitals; counselors showed families the libraries and grocery stores and helped them obtain all of the necessities required to stabilize themselves. Counselors also helped the clients to develop personal goals *after* the move, when they had settled into their new units and were ready to pursue new opportunities. As with the other sites, the Los Angeles NPO also spent considerable time intervening for clients as well as teaching them about the pending changes in public assistance benefits.

In New York, a majority of the follow-up contacts revolve around assisting clients with public assistance benefits issues. Clients rely on benefits for income, including their rent payment (which is often paid directly to the landlord). There have been several instances in

Nancy, an MBHP counselor, had been in contact with one of her MTO movers, Diane. During their conversations, Diane told Nancy that there were no problems and implied that everything was fine in her new unit. But in their next contact, Diane seemed upset and told Nancy that her ex-boyfriend (the father of her youngest daughter) had been released from prison. During a visit to see his daughter, he started a heated argument with Diane and caused some property damage. The landlord was very angry and wanted to evict Diane. He and Diane went to court, and she signed an agreement stating that she would not allow her ex-boyfriend in her home and that she would vacate the unit at the end of year.

In addition, Diane had just been told that she was losing her Section 8 certificate because she failed to submit her recertification paperwork and ignored several letters requesting she come into the office to remedy the situation. While explaining the story to Nancy, Diane finally admitted that she did not complete the paperwork because she could not read the letters she had received. The eviction and loss of Section 8 assistance were just 30 days away.

With legal assistance arranged by the NPO, and with intervention from Nancy on Diane's behalf, they were able to obtain an expedited hearing. In the end, Diane got to keep her Section 8 assistance, although she still had to vacate her apartment. She and her two daughters are living with her mother while she and Nancy begin the search process again.

All names of clients have been changed to protect their privacy, and details of their family situations have been altered for the same reason, as necessary.

which the MTO counselors have intervened to help keep a client's case from being closed. One client had her case closed two months prior to her move, and she and her counselor had to work to get her case reopened in her new neighborhood and then to get the back payments she owed to her landlord. They were successful.

Some information about the type of issues raised during follow-up contacts with tenants and landlords was recorded by NPOs on the counseling logs. Data abstracted from these forms and client files show that the issues raised in follow-up contacts usually center around a family's adjustment to the new neighborhood or school, landlord-tenant interactions, and transportation or employment issues. The most common "other" issues were public assistance issues, family and child services referrals, Housing Quality Standards (HQS) violations, problems between landlord and PHA (usually regarding rent payments), and utilities (such as transferring service from one unit to another, broken furnaces or hot water tanks). Exhibit 4-3 shows the most common problems or issues raised by the family, counselor, or landlord in follow-up contacts.

Clients may also notify counselors when there is a crisis. Usually these crises involve landlord-tenant disputes, loss of benefits, or domestic violence issues. One example of successful follow-up support—in which the client had to give up her apartment but avoided losing her Section 8 subsidy—occurred in Boston.

Exhibit 4-3

Issues Raised in Follow-Up Contacts With MTO Experimental Group Movers

Issue	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York	Total
New Neighborhood	6%	18%	11%	18%	14%	13%
Landlord/Tenant Relations	19	21	22	16	29	19
New School	6	0	11	0	0	3
Transportation Issues	10	0	11	2	7	6
Employment/ Training Issues	25	7	0	8	0	13
Other	34	55	45	57	50	47

Source: Data abstracted from NPO counseling logs and client files.
 Sample: Stratified random sample (see Appendix A); movers only (N=172).

NOTES: Percentages are based on the total number of contacts in each site.
 Percentages may not add to 100, due to rounding.

4.3 GROUP PARTICIPATION—MTO FAMILIES WORKING TOGETHER

Group sessions are a good way to make participants feel as though they belong. Clients can listen to the experiences of other families as well as share their own experience. The NPO in Baltimore, and now CHAC in Chicago, work with faith-based organizations as a source of support for families once they move into a new neighborhood. The NPOs in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York have all tried to bring movers in the same community together, at least informally. In Boston and Los Angeles, the counselors have provided families moving into neighborhoods with phone numbers of other MTO clients living there. (The family's permission is always obtained before telephone numbers are provided.) Focus groups have also been held with movers in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York.

NMIC has also brought movers together to talk about landlord/tenant relations. For many of the movers, the landlords are also neighbors, and it can be hard to insist on repairs face-to-face. Sharing these problems brought out good suggestions for handling a variety of situations, including setting limits on some landlords' actions. For example, one landlord's son frequently dropped in unannounced and would wander around looking in the refrigerator and dresser drawers. The tenant was afraid to object, but after discussing the situation, she handled it herself rather than asking her counselor to intervene. All agencies agree that these are excellent ways to make clients feel more confident in themselves, in their decision to participate in MTO, and their neighborhood choices.

Most of the agencies have also held some group sessions combining movers and non-movers, and their staff agree that this is particularly helpful to the new clients. In New York, past movers are invited to all of the MTO meetings, including rap sessions, orientation and briefing sessions, and pizza parties. The topics covered in the pizza parties include landlord/tenant relationships, proposed changes in public assistance, and a general discussion about how families are doing. One client who used her Section 8 assistance to move to Boston came back to New York to attend one of these group sessions and she spoke positively about her long-distance move.

In Boston, the movers were initially brought together through rap sessions. While these sessions allowed movers to discuss their experiences with families still searching, they also

provided them a chance to meet new people and stay connected to MTO. Although these sessions have been restructured into housing search workshops, movers have returned at the request of the NPO to share their experiences about living in new neighborhoods.

In Baltimore, past movers are invited to orientation sessions and holiday parties. In December 1996, CAN sponsored a holiday party and a contest. The contest asked children to write an essay explaining what their MTO move meant to them. The impacts on these children—expressed in their own words—were striking.

One child of a Baltimore family wrote of the MTO move, "The way my move has affected my life is that I don't have to listen to guns all night and watch people standing around on the corner looking for or selling drugs.... Most of all I'm happy for my mom because she doesn't have to worry about me going and coming home from school... It is really fun to see all our parents get together—they watch out for each one of us. [The change has taught] me the importance in having good neighbors...there is a lot of trust.... But most of all it has been better for my mother, for her health, because she can go for a walk around the school track...without having to walk over drug needles. My mother was always sick in the bed before we moved.... It's a good feeling to see her not taking a lot of medicine."

Group sessions are not as frequent post-move as they are pre-move. Of the 172 movers in the data abstracted from the counseling logs and client files, fewer than 40 percent were recorded as participating in any post-move group sessions. At the sessions they did attend, the most common formats were:

- Rap sessions;
- Money management/budgeting seminars (to help clients adjust to paying utilities and establishing bank accounts);
- Successful mover reunions (focus groups or pizza parties); and
- Buddy system/introductory sessions to meet other families.

There is not much data about post-move group sessions, but site agency staff agree that group sessions between successful movers and those still searching provide benefits to both. The movers get a chance to share their stories and help each other with possible solutions to problems. Those now searching realize that it can be done. All of the counseling agencies plan to do more group sessions as the MTO program continues.

4.4 FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT: A SUMMARY

Overall, the level of follow-up service offered to MTO clients who have relocated has

varied significantly across the five sites. Of all the sites, Los Angeles planned for and provided the most extensive follow-up services. Beyond Shelter took a very active role in supporting the families in their transition into the private rental market and in their strides toward self-sufficiency.

New York also offered significant follow-up support. Despite its small staff and limited budget, NMIC has provided considerable help to its movers. These services have focused primarily on public assistance benefits and landlord relations. However, NMIC has also intervened when serious problems arose, as when a landlord stopped providing heat and the client had to relocate.

Baltimore provided somewhat less support than Los Angeles and New York. CAN was good at maintaining contact with families after they moved but did not offer a wide range of services to the movers. CAN counselors tried to contact families monthly, but the services provided were substantially less intense than the services provided pre-move, and the degree of client intervention was moderate.

MBHP in Boston provided significantly less broad and intensive follow-up services than the NPOs in Los Angeles, New York, or Baltimore. In Boston, follow-up support consists primarily of crisis intervention. There have also been some racial problems in the schools, in which the MBHP counselors have intervened. However, there is much less emphasis on transitional supportive services.

In Chicago, there was little indication that the Leadership Council provided follow-up services to families, other than phone calls to check in. More recently, CHAC staff have visited all the families that moved in the Chicago program and are trying to develop more intensive follow-up services for new movers.

Follow-up support is important both for the client and for maintaining good landlord relationships. One of the challenges of MTO has been identifying and recruiting new landlords to accept Section 8. In many cases, it is the assurance that the counselors are a resource for the landlord as well as the client that has convinced the landlords to participate. One example from Baltimore illustrates the importance of these relationships. A manic-depressive client found a unit and leased up. Shortly after settling in, she stopped taking her medication, resulting in erratic, disruptive behavior. Unsure about what to do for the client, the landlord contacted the

NPO. The solution was to move the client to another location, and the landlord was grateful to the counselor and stated that had the client not been an MTO participant, the landlord would have been alone, with no idea how to handle the client's outburst. Because of CAN's actions, the landlord continued to be willing to accept MTO clients.

This example and others in this chapter illustrate not only how follow-up support can vary from one client to the next, from help with family-related issues to negotiating through a new public assistance program to employment referrals and counseling. The examples also show the level of staff effort that can be required. The Baltimore staff that handled the case just described spent a significant amount of time working with the client and the landlord to resolve the problem. Follow-up interventions can involve five-minute telephone calls or weeks of assistance. As noted previously, only the NPO in Los Angeles planned from the start to allocate significant resources to follow-up client assistance. This helps to explain why Beyond Shelter offered the most extensive post-move assistance, as does the fact that a separate NPO handled the housing search and lease-up activity. While there was uneven follow-up support at some other sites, the NPOs all now recognize the ongoing needs of their clients and are seeking ways to help more regularly provide stabilization and follow-up support.

CHAPTER FIVE

COUNSELING UTILIZATION AND EFFICACY

This chapter presents information on the utilization of counseling services by families in the MTO treatment group and on what difference these services may have made to them in making a move to a low-poverty location.⁵ It links the provision of counseling in the MTO sites to the immediate outcomes most likely to have been affected by the interactions between nonprofit organization (NPO) staff and clients.

Qualitative evidence on the role of counseling in promoting effective housing searches suggests that the needs of MTO clients often vary considerably as they enter the program: some require very little assistance in order to secure new housing, while others require a great deal of hand-holding. Even for a given NPO, the intensity of counseling assistance and the types of assistance provided may well differ from one client to the next.

Despite these variations, we have identified five key components of counseling that are helpful to many clients in promoting effective searches. These are outlined in Section 5.1. In Section 5.2, we analyze how counseling services may have influenced client success in making a low-poverty move. For example, did clients who completed the NPO's counseling program have a better chance of leasing up under Section 8?

The possible contributions of counseling to making MTO families more self-sufficient are considered next. Self-sufficiency is a much-used term in this era of significant welfare system changes; here, self-sufficiency refers to the client's ability to make choices that can lead out of poverty, ending dependence on housing assistance and other benefits. In Section 5.3, the discussion focuses primarily on the effectiveness of NPO efforts to encourage self-sufficiency during the housing search process.

⁵ Research from the 1970s demonstrated that supportive services can have a direct effect on neighborhood quality and locational choices for movers. See William L. Hamilton, *A Social Experiment in Program Administration* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Books, 1979), Chapter 3.
Abt Associates Inc. 5-110

As they have accumulated experience in MTO, the nonprofit counseling agencies have made changes over time to their programs. In Section 5.4, these changes are reviewed, along with information on the counselors' assessment of the impact of the changes. The remainder of the chapter focuses on organizational issues that have affected the delivery of counseling services in the MTO demonstration (Section 5.5) and on lessons learned from MTO to date for other mobility counseling efforts (Section 5.6). As HUD seeks to focus the larger Section 8 program on contributing to recipient self-sufficiency, this report's analysis of MTO counseling offers lessons of value for future efforts to encourage mobility among Section 8 participants.

5.1 THE ROLE OF COUNSELING IN PROMOTING EFFECTIVE SEARCHES

The role that counseling plays in assisting moves to low-poverty areas varies greatly in the MTO demonstration, depending on the needs, capabilities, and motivation of each client. Counselors report that some families need very little assistance in order to make a low-poverty move, while for other families the most intensive, hands-on assistance may not result in a move.

The stories of two MTO clients illustrate how the needs of individual families differ. An MTO counselor from the Community Assistance Network (CAN) in Baltimore told the story of Elaine, a motivated single mother with two teenage sons, who started the program in July 1995. She was very anxious to move because she wanted to remove her sons from the drug- and gang-infested neighborhood in which they lived. In addition, the building in which the family was living was slated for demolition. Elaine had attended but not graduated from college. She wanted to work but was currently unemployed. Elaine found a unit soon after she started searching. According to the counselor, she wasn't that particular about the unit but wanted to be near public transportation and grocery stores. Elaine and her sons moved, and she is now taking some additional college courses. The counselor helped Elaine to identify a unit but otherwise only needed to provide minimal assistance: this client had the skills and the motivation to move without the assistance of MTO counseling.

At the other end of the "counseling need continuum" is Adelea, a 35-year-old Hispanic mother living in Boston. At the time she joined the MTO program, she had five children and a

All names of clients have been changed to protect their privacy, and details of their family situations have been altered for the same reason, as necessary.

sixth on the way. In addition, her eldest child was pregnant. Adelea had never worked, and she had some mental health issues. An adult daughter was working, but Adelea's relationship with her was strained.

The Boston NPO, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, worked intensively with Adelea on a number of issues. The MTO counselor encouraged Adelea and her employed daughter to seek family counseling. She spent long hours helping the family search for a large enough apartment and was persistent even when Adelea missed appointments to meet landlords. When a unit was eventually found, the counselor arranged for Adelea to obtain fuel assistance and worked to get her furniture and other necessities. She has stayed in touch with and supported Adelea long past the move-in. This move only occurred because of the presence and involvement of an effective counselor.

While Elaine and Adelea represent opposite ends of the need continuum, most families who have come through the MTO demonstration fell somewhere in between. For the majority, it appears that some form of housing and non-housing counseling has been useful or necessary in order for them to search effectively for housing and move to low-poverty areas.

As described earlier in this report, a broad range of counseling assistance has been offered to MTO clients through their local NPOs. What, then, are the basic components of counseling that are critical in order to help clients move to low-poverty locations? Based on interviews with MTO counselors and site observations, we have identified five key components of counseling assistance that appear to be vital to low-poverty housing mobility for these families:

- Motivating families to move to low-poverty areas;
- Informing families about suitable neighborhoods;
- Locating units and landlords on behalf of clients;
- Helping clients to be effective in searching on their own; and
- Intervening with third parties (such as landlords or housing authorities) on behalf of clients to ensure a lease-up occurs.

Each of these is discussed below.

Motivating Families to Move

All participants in MTO volunteer to be part of the demonstration and sign an agreement indicating this choice. But some families sign up knowing why they want to move and where they want to live, while others are much more ambivalent about moving (although they will not pass up the unusual chance to get a Section 8 certificate or voucher). Thus, the first and most basic element of counseling is building the clients' understanding of, and enthusiasm for, what can be an important change in their lives.

In the MTO program, counselors work to build motivation among clients in group sessions and through one-on-one counseling. In all five sites, the initial NPO orientation sessions are used to build motivation and excitement for the program by discussing the benefits of moving out of public housing to a low-poverty neighborhood. The positive experiences of families who moved through the Chicago Gautreaux program were frequently cited in the beginning, and examples of successful MTO families have been used more recently. In Boston and Baltimore, the NPOs invite successful MTO movers back to discuss their experiences with current searchers in group sessions or workshops, as a way to build enthusiasm among clients and make them realize this *can* be done. The New York NPO holds pizza parties and potluck lunches where searchers can meet some of those who have moved.

Motivational counseling also occurs on an individual basis. For some clients, lack of motivation is a real roadblock to moving, as may be fear of the unknown. One counselor in Baltimore told the story of Rose, a single mother with a child and two grandchildren living at home. Rose had lived in public housing most of her adult life. While she had once worked, she had been on welfare for a number of years and showed little interest in employment or training programs. Despite having signed up to participate in MTO, Rose showed little initial interest in the program, although she did ask some relatives to help her find a place to live. The counselor worked hard to encourage Rose and also began to talk and work with Rose's relatives. Even though Rose had some credit problems, the counselor helped her find an apartment with a landlord who was willing to overlook these problems. As a result, Rose was able to move to a low-poverty neighborhood in the Baltimore area.

The Enrollment Agreement also explains the research aspects of MTO and provides the basis for the participant's informed consent.

Informing Families About Suitable Neighborhoods

MTO counselors find that many clients are willing to search only in a relatively small and familiar geographic area. With these families, the counselors' challenge has been to widen horizons—to encourage searching in new communities that can offer educational and employment opportunities not available in the more familiar neighborhoods. A family's willingness to look beyond the "old neighborhoods" can ultimately determine whether they will move, since the familiar areas tend to be concentrated-poverty neighborhoods. When the city's low-poverty areas have limited affordable housing, and particularly if the rental market is tight, a wider search may be the only way to make moving possible. For this reason, several NPOs have offered neighborhood tours as a way to help families seriously consider low-poverty areas.

A successful search often requires researching and introducing a family to one or more neighborhoods where transportation and services are appropriate to the family's needs and where the family will most likely be welcomed by the community. In Baltimore, for example, one part of a suburban community initially opposed the MTO program prior to the program's commencement in 1995. As it did not seem likely this community would welcome CAN's clients, they were provided information about other choices. Counselors also advise clients against moving to areas where a number of MTO families have already settled, in order to avoid a concentration of Section 8 families in one area. However, clients are free to choose any unit in any low-poverty neighborhood, as long as Section 8's requirements are met.

In most cases, the clients choose their future apartments and neighborhoods with information and advice from the NPO. But they do not always take the advice of their counselors. One Boston counselor noted that she had seen clients settle in neighborhoods she urged them to avoid, simply because a unit was available and the family's voucher or certificate was due to expire.

Locating Available Units and Willing Landlords

A central component of the counseling process at every site is the effort to identify and take clients to visit particular units and landlords. The MTO NOFA required the NPO to show each client three units, but in many cases counselors need to go beyond this requirement in order to foster a successful move.

Overall, the importance of this counseling component in any particular search depends on how difficult it is to locate a unit suited to a particular client's needs and characteristics. In New York, for example, where the vacancy rate is exceptionally low, the assistance of the NPO in helping to identify units on behalf of all clients is essential. In cities with softer rental markets, like Los Angeles and Baltimore, some clients find units with only modest help from the NPO. However, even in those cities, locating units on behalf of clients is critical in cases where:

- The client had very specific locational needs (e.g., need to be near a particular hospital or place of employment);
- The client needs a large unit (counselors at all sites report difficulty in locating units with more than three bedrooms);
- The client has a strong locational preference that is hard to meet; or
- The client does not have the necessary skills to search independently.

Every NPO expected that clients would do some independent searching. As discussed in Chapter 2, at three sites (Boston, New York and Los Angeles), between 10 and 20 percent of visits to prospective units were arranged by clients. In Baltimore, where there is considerable pre-visit coaching, perhaps one-third to one-half of the visits were arranged by the clients.

Helping Clients to Search Effectively

The NPOs in Baltimore and Boston place considerable emphasis on working with the clients to promote self-esteem and skill-building and to help them search independently for housing. Some counselors (especially those in Baltimore) view the effort to build client self-sufficiency during the search as important, because landlords are more impressed with clients that can present themselves effectively. Through role-playing of interviews with landlords or managers, either in group sessions or video-taped for review and discussion, clients learn how to get the information they need about the apartment while making a positive impression. They may even practice how to inquire by telephone about a unit, so that they get the chance to see the unit rather than being screened out over the phone.

Counselors also discuss with their clients the Section 8 Housing Quality Standards that govern whether a prospective unit will pass inspection. Clients with the skills to identify HQS problems should be less likely to choose units in poor condition and better prepared to discuss repairs with the landlord.

Assisting Clients with Third Parties

In most cases, counseling does not end once a unit is identified. Counselors can play a critical role in working with landlords, housing authority staff, and others to ensure that a lease-up occurs. For example, counselors report that they have negotiated rents with landlords, met with landlords to offer assurances about the program and their clients, and intervened with a housing authority or welfare agency to expedite paperwork. Without these interventions, it is generally agreed that many lease-ups would have been delayed, and some might not have occurred at all.

NMIC's work with the Public Assistance offices in New York is one example of intervention with third parties. As another example, Baltimore's NPO worked with clients and the local utility companies to arrange payback agreements for outstanding bills. Once they had repaid a certain amount, the clients were able to get utilities turned on when they moved to new units.

The NPOs also assist some clients with third-party problems after their moves. In New York there have been requests from landlords to help correct rent checks coming directly from Public Assistance. There have also been discussions with clients about landlord relations. The counselors have noted, though, that a client may talk through a problem with them but then decide to handle it herself, indicating that skills *are* being built for the future.

5.2 THE RELATIONSHIP OF COUNSELING TO LEASE-UP SUCCESS

In MTO, the goal of the counseling process is to help the client move with Section 8 assistance to a low-poverty area. Although a small number of clients have had problems that led the counselors to advise against moving, most families who have joined the program and been assigned to the MTO treatment group have been reasonable candidates for a low-poverty move.

The purpose of the following analysis is, first, to describe some of the basic characteristics and preferences of families in the MTO treatment group, and then to relate these characteristics—and the families' use of counseling—to whether they successfully moved through MTO. Statistical techniques are used to see if we can learn, on a preliminary basis, what

Of course, the real success of these moves cannot be measured until more time has passed, to see

explains success in making a low-poverty move. (Technical information on this analysis is presented in Appendix B.)

We first examine the characteristics of families in the MTO treatment group and then look at how much they utilized the counseling. Information on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of MTO families, some aspects of counseling, and whether the family moved through MTO are available for 850 families in this group. These are families that joined the demonstration relatively early.

Family Characteristics and Background Conditions

Who are the families assigned to work with the counseling agencies to make low-poverty moves? Exhibit 5-1 displays a number of key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the heads of these families. The average incomes of these families vary among the sites, as the exhibit shows. Three sites (Boston, Los Angeles, and New York) have average incomes in the \$9,500 to \$11,000 range, while the other two have average annual incomes below \$7,500. Half to two-thirds of the families have AFDC as their primary income source in all five sites. The site with the highest average income, New York, also has the lowest proportion of families primarily depending on welfare payments (54 percent) and the highest proportion working (28 percent).

whether the families adjust to their new environments and to determine the effects of the moves on education, employment, and family well-being.

Most enrolled in 1994 and 1995, although some joined in the first half of 1996.

The heads identified themselves when completing the participant baseline survey at program enrollment.

Exhibit 5-1
Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics
of Initial MTO Treatment Group Families
(Percent Distributions)

	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York	All Sites
Average Total Household Income ^a	\$6,750	\$9,995	\$7,146	\$9,575	\$10,959	\$8,818
Percent with AFDC as Primary Income Source	64.8	60.3	66.9	71.2	54.3	63.0
Head of Household Currently Working?	13.0	14.2	10.0	13.3	20.3	14.2
Full-Time	10.2	13.7	7.5	12.5	7.7	10.7
Part-Time	76.9	72.1	82.5	74.2	72.0	75.2
Not Working						
Race of Head of Household	96.8%	41.2%	98.5%	51.2%	54.6%	68.5
African-American	0.0	13.9	0.8	25.2	2.1	7.9
White	1.4	0.5	0.0	1.6	1.4	1.0
American Indian	0.0	4.6	0.0	3.2	0.0	1.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	39.8	0.8	18.9	41.8	20.9
Other						
Ethnicity of Head of Household	2.6	45.3	2.6	46.0	43.7	29.9
Hispanic	97.5	54.7	97.4	54.0	56.3	70.1
Non-Hispanic						
Sex of Head of Household	2.3	7.4	3.0	14.0	5.6	6.1
Male	97.7	92.6	96.9	86.1	94.4	93.9
Female						
Head of Household Marital Status	3.7	11.0	2.5	23.4	9.9	9.6
Married	96.3	89.0	97.5	76.6	90.1	90.4
Other						
Median Number of Children	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Head of Household Currently in School?	13.4	16.9	9.2	16.5	12.5	14.1
Yes	86.6	83.1	90.8	83.5	87.5	85.9
No						
Head of Household a Graduate?	43.5	45.1	47.9	32.5	47.2	43.6
High School	15.7	18.0	16.5	8.3	25.4	17.1
GED	40.7	36.9	35.5	59.2	27.5	39.3
Neither						
Number of cases	218	229	130	129	144	850

Source: Participant baseline survey data.

Sample: MTO treatment group families only.

Missing: 0 to 87 cases (0 to 22 Baltimore, 0 to 10 Boston, 0 to 54 Chicago, 0 to 9 Los Angeles, 0 to 2 New York).

NOTES: Families in this sample were largely served in 1994 and 1995, although about 10 percent were served in early 1996.

Percents may not sum to 100, due to rounding.

Heads of household were self-identified on the survey form.

^a As determined for Section 8 eligibility.

In terms of racial and ethnic composition, the families from Baltimore and Chicago are heavily non-Hispanic African-Americans (over 95 percent). Those from the other three sites are different, with 43 to 46 percent Hispanic. There are also relatively more whites in Boston (14 percent) than in other sites.

Boston and Los Angeles also have the largest number of men identifying themselves as the household heads (7 and 14 percent, respectively). In all sites, more than half the respondents have never been married, ranging from 48 percent in New York to 73 percent in Baltimore.

The median number of children per family ranges from two to three, but while about a fifth of the respondents in Baltimore and Boston have one child, in Chicago and Los Angeles the proportion is smaller. Indeed, more than 40 percent of the Los Angeles families have four or more children.

Exhibit 5-1 also displays some information about schooling and work. Across the sites, 9 to 17 percent of the family heads are currently in school, perhaps resulting from the fact that between 35 and 60 percent of them have finished neither high school nor a GED. Respondents with full- or part-time jobs represent just 17 to 28 percent of the heads (with the lowest proportion in Chicago and the highest in Boston and New York). In sum, the MTO families in the counseling group have somewhat different characteristics from site to site, characteristics that could influence their success in moving through MTO. (This question is explored later in this section.)

Attitudes Toward Moving

When families enroll in the MTO program, they are asked a number of questions about their current living conditions and about their motivations and preferences for a move. Selected answers from the same 850 MTO treatment group families are shown in Exhibit 5-2. The figures are for each of the five sites and then for all five combined.

Exhibit 5-2
Background Conditions and Experiences of Initial MTO Treatment Group Families
(Percent Distributions)

	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York	All Sites
Moved more than 3 times in 5 years?	11.5%	11.4%	7.0%	7.0%	3.5%	8.7
Yes	88.5	88.7	93.0	93.0	96.5	91.3
No						
Most important reason for wanting to move?	59.0	65.7	54.0	66.7	48.8	59.6
Get away from drugs, gangs	29.0	28.2	25.0	7.3	37.2	26.1
Get a bigger/better apartment	9.5	5.6	16.9	23.6	11.6	12.1
Better schools for my children	1.0	0.0	3.2	0.8	1.6	1.1
Get a job	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.3
Be near my job	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.6
Be near my family	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.1
Have better transportation						
Second most important reason for wanting to move?	30.2	33.8	28.8	24.0	33.1	30.5
Get away from drugs, gangs	26.6	37.1	27.2	25.6	23.9	28.9
Get a bigger/better apartment	33.2	23.9	32.8	40.5	33.9	31.9
Better schools for my children	6.5	1.4	9.6	7.4	5.4	5.6
Get a job	0.5	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.8	0.5
Be near my job	3.0	2.8	0.0	1.7	2.3	2.2
Be near my family	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.5
Have better transportation						
Where want to move?	4.6	12.0	3.9	6.3	5.0	6.8
Somewhere else in my neighborhood	58.8	44.3	70.5	42.2	53.6	53.3
Different neighborhood in city	27.8	21.2	19.4	19.5	19.3	22.1
Different neighborhood in the suburbs	7.4	18.1	5.4	28.9	21.4	15.6
Different city outside the area	1.4	4.4	0.8	3.1	0.7	2.3
Other						
Condition of current house or apartment?	5.1	3.9	6.2	4.7	2.1	4.4
Excellent	28.4	23.1	28.5	20.2	27.1	25.5
Good	40.4	45.4	40.0	53.5	50.0	45.3
Fair	26.2	27.5	25.4	21.7	20.8	24.8
Poor						
Satisfaction with current neighborhood?	5.5	21.1	10.0	14.8	7.7	12.2
Very/somewhat satisfied	8.7	21.5	19.2	23.4	14.0	16.9
In the middle	85.5	57.5	70.8	61.7	78.3	71.0
Very/somewhat dissatisfied						
Number of cases	218	229	130	129	144	850

Source: Participant baseline survey data.

Sample: MTO treatment group families only.

Missing: 0 to 87 cases (0 to 22 Baltimore, 0 to 10 Boston, 0 to 54 Chicago, 0 to 9 Los Angeles, 0 to 2 New York).

NOTES: Families in this sample were largely served in 1994 and 1995, although about 10 percent were served in early 1996. Percents may not sum to 100, due to rounding.

Fewer than 12 percent of these families report having moved three times in the last five years, and (except in Los Angeles) less than a third have ever lived outside their current metropolitan area. The most important reasons these families give for wanting to move center on "getting away from drugs and gangs;" in every site, from 49 to 60 percent give this as their main reason for moving. The next most mentioned reason (except in Los Angeles) is "getting a better apartment," but a substantially smaller number of families choose this answer compared to escaping crime. Wanting better schools for their children is cited frequently, especially as the second motivation for a move (24 to 41 percent).

When family heads are asked where they would like to move, these respondents heavily favor a different city neighborhood; only about a fifth mention a suburban neighborhood, with slightly more choosing this response in Baltimore (28 percent, compared to 19 percent for Los Angeles). Los Angeles respondents appear most likely to say they want to move to a different city outside the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The responses to questions about current

housing and neighborhood conditions show that these families report they live in fair or poor housing (two-thirds in every site), and the vast majority (58 to 85 percent) are dissatisfied with their current neighborhoods. Crime victimization—although not shown in the table—is very high among these families, with a fifth or more reporting this in all sites but Boston (where "only" 7 to 17 percent reported experiencing various crimes in the past six months).

Counseling Utilization

All the families just described were given the opportunity to get NPO help to make a low-poverty move. How much assistance did they get from the MTO counseling agencies? Some information about the use of NPO counseling services by these 850 families is available from the participant tracking logs, where the NPOs record the completion and results of the home visit and credit check, facts about the first three units of the family's housing search, and the outcome of the effort to lease up with a Section 8 certificate or voucher. The available information items on counseling are more limited than those drawn from the counseling logs and files used elsewhere in this report, but—instead of a small sample—there is information for a much larger part of the program population.

Exhibit 5-3
Indicators of Counseling Utilization for the MTO Treatment Group

	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York
Number of search units recorded					
None	28.9%	33.2%	56.9%	46.5%	46.5%
One	20.2	29.7	13.1	13.2	22.2
Two	19.3	19.2	18.5	7.0	6.9
Three	31.7	17.9	11.5	33.3	24.3
Number of recorded search units found by NPO					
None	55.1%	48.9%	82.3%	50.4%	49.3%
One	19.3	31.0	7.7	14.7	22.9
Two	14.7	12.7	4.6	10.9	8.3
Three	11.0	7.4	5.4	24.0	19.4
Was counseling program completed by this client? ^a					
Yes	73.4%	74.7%	66.9%	88.4%	66.7%
No	26.6	25.3	33.1	11.6	33.3

Source: NPO Participant Tracking Logs
Sample: MTO treatment group only
Missing: 0 cases

^a Counseling program staff coded an outcome for each client, with the following options: Completed NPO program; Dropped out of NPO program; No show/no contact with NPO; or Ineligible. Completion of the NPO program could occur even if a lease-up did not result.

Exhibit 5-3 shows three indicators of counseling utilization, by site, based on information from the NPO tracking logs. Except for Chicago, the counseling agencies reported information on search addresses for 53.5 to 72.1 percent of the families assigned to them. As a measure of counselors' contribution to these searches, one or more recorded search addresses were found by the NPO staff for 17.7 percent (Chicago) to 50.7 percent (New York) of the families in the MTO treatment group. And a very high proportion (two-thirds to nine-tenths) of all the families were considered to have completed the counseling programs in their respective sites.

Those utilization measures should be carefully interpreted. Number of searches reflects client as well as NPO effort, albeit often with counselor support. Also, despite instructions to the NPOs to code NPO program completion independent of lease-up, it is likely that most leased-up families were coded as completing the program, along with many who did not succeed in moving.

Counseling Effectiveness

In order to begin the process of understanding what aspects of families' backgrounds and what components of counseling are relevant to helping families find a unit in a low-poverty area, some statistical analysis was done to explore key relationships. Appendix B provides more technical detail on how and why these relationships were examined.

Initial results showed that some of the families' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics were related to whether the families leased up with MTO counseling. For example, combining data from all the sites, families with a head in school were more likely to move, as were those with one child (rather than more than one). In addition, those who had moved more than three times in the past five years were more likely to lease up, as were those indicating willingness to make a suburban move. Families with fair or poor housing conditions and those dissatisfied with their neighborhoods were also more likely to move than the relatively few families expressing more satisfaction with their units and locales.

To sort out the relative effects of family characteristics, background conditions, and counseling utilization on the ability of MTO treatment group families to lease up with Section 8 assistance, a multivariate statistical analysis was undertaken. This analysis must be considered preliminary for several reasons. First, the MTO program population is still growing, and many more families will complete low-poverty lease-ups with counseling agency assistance during 1997. Second, data will become available on the counseling being provided by CHAC in Chicago and by On Your Feet in Los Angeles, with their associated client outcomes. With these additional data, there will be room for a more careful delineation of the determinants of counseling utilization and how utilization in turn affects success in moving.

In addition to looking at family characteristics, background conditions, and counseling use, we also examined whether there were important differences in how successful families have been across the MTO cities. For example, local housing market conditions could have an important effect, even if there were no differences in the families or the counseling programs from site to site.

An earlier, extremely careful analysis that models mobility in stages comes from the Housing Allowance Demand Experiment. See Jean MacMillan, *Mobility in the Housing Allowance Demand Experiment* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates), June 1980.

The results of the multivariate analysis show that three groups of factors *do* influence a family's chance of leasing up through MTO:

- *Use of counseling helps families move.* More searches, more units found by the NPO for the family, and completion of the counseling program all increase the likelihood of lease-up.
- *Site differences* (which reflect both market conditions and NPO program models) *affect lease-up activities.* Controlling for other factors, families in the Baltimore, Boston, and LA programs were more likely to move than those in New York, while families in Chicago were less likely to move.
- *Some family characteristics also influence whether a move occurs.* For example, families with only one child, those with the household head in school, and those dissatisfied with their current neighborhood were more likely to move. Hispanic families and those with more income were less likely to move, all else being equal.

This preliminary analysis has important limitations, as noted above. Nevertheless, it is clear that counseling utilization does increase lease-ups, i.e., that the counseling being provided through the MTO demonstration is effective in helping clients make moves to low-poverty areas.

5.3 THE ROLE OF COUNSELING IN PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

In the long term, an important measure of the success of the MTO program will be the extent to which a family's move to a low-poverty area leads to self-sufficiency through improved employment and educational opportunities. Measuring this kind of change cannot be undertaken for some time to come. However, we can gain some understanding of how counselors work with clients to build self-esteem and encourage them to take the initiative in searching, an experience that may contribute to an increased sense of efficacy in other activities after the move occurs. Counselors also report instances in which the non-housing services provided through MTO (primarily job development) have led to employment for clients who were not previously working.

Building Self-Esteem and Encouraging Independent Searches

CAN in Baltimore and MBHP in Boston made the greatest effort to use counseling to

These counseling utilization measures were entered one at a time in separate regression models (see Exhibit B-2).

building self-esteem and independence during the search process. The Baltimore program as a whole was designed on the premise that working with clients first (in workshops) to address budget, household management, and other issues would lead to more successful searches and help clients to manage better after the move. During the workshops, MTO counselors helped clients to work on their image so they could present themselves effectively to landlords. This was done through role-playing exercises and video-taping of clients as they gave mock presentations to landlords. Clients were also encouraged to prepare a personal portfolio to present to landlords containing family pictures, a credit report, letters of reference, and even a list of client goals.

Having successfully completed the workshops, clients were encouraged by CAN counselors to take responsibility for their own search. While counselors might drive clients to visit units, they learned to wait in the car while the clients made the initial contact. (One counselor said that, based on early experience in the program, if she went in with the client to see a landlord, the client often "hung back.") Counselors in Boston and Los Angeles noted that, while they often accompanied the clients on landlord visits, they encouraged the clients to "do the talking."

CAN staff believe that, in many instances, they succeeded in helping clients to present themselves better to landlords. This belief was one factor in the change in CAN's landlord outreach. While the CAN counselors did considerable outreach to landlords early in the program, they stopped doing this when it became apparent that prepared, poised clients could sell themselves and the program much more effectively.

Other Efforts to Build Self-Sufficiency

The NPOs operating the MTO demonstration have also worked with clients to develop job or other skills that lead to increased self-sufficiency. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this assistance has already been helpful to some clients. As described in Chapter 3, in Baltimore,

Another factor was the realization that landlord outreach does not solve the problem of needing to match a client to a specific vacant unit with a willing landlord.

The current Chicago NPO is actively linking MTO clients to Family Self-Sufficiency programs in Chicago or suburban areas.

CAN staff have collected post-move data on early clients showing that 37 percent of them are working, compared with 17 percent before their moves.

In Los Angeles, where the Beyond Shelter staff provided the most comprehensive package of job and educational services, counselors cited a number of examples in which their assistance has already led to employment for MTO clients. One counselor described how she assisted Maria, a 27-year-old mother with two children and a disabled husband, to obtain employment. When Maria joined MTO she spoke little English and showed little interest in completing her high school education or working. The Beyond Shelter counselor first helped the family to buy furniture after their move, to obtain emergency food assistance, and to sort out problems with the local social services office.

Having gained the client's confidence, the counselor persuaded her to attend a budget workshop and English classes. Maria also attended a job development program that helped her develop a resume and acquire interviewing skills. These experiences served to build Maria's confidence; she applied for a job at a local fast-food restaurant, got it, and within a month was promoted to manager. Since then, she has hired another MTO client as an employee.

Another Beyond Shelter counselor worked with Ramon, a 27-year-old father of five young children. Although working at the time he entered the program, Ramon wanted to obtain a better paying job (his salary at the time was \$6 per hour) with fringe benefits. After moving, Raul joined Beyond Shelter's job development program, which helped him build his confidence; he became less worried about his immigration status and his English. Upon completing the program, the counselor helped Ramon to find a job operating a forklift, which pays \$8 per hour with a full benefits.

5.4 CHANGES IN COUNSELING APPROACHES OVER TIME

Over the course of the demonstration, all of the nonprofit agencies have made changes in their counseling programs. These changes have often resulted from efforts to improve counseling in order to better respond to client needs, although some were necessary due to a reduction in staff or other resources. As reported by NPO staff and counselors, the most common program modifications are discussed below.

According to counselors, the area of activity that underwent the most significant change

was *landlord outreach*. In part because of the requirements of the NOFA, four of the five original NPOs initially undertook significant efforts to recruit landlords for the program. As described in Chapter 2, this effort involved meetings with landlord associations as well as visits to major property managers and large apartment developments in the area. Over time, all four NPOs found that this effort was not particularly helpful in identifying units for their clients. Owners and managers who expressed a willingness to work with MTO did not particularly notify the program of vacancies or necessarily accept as tenants particular families the counselors brought to them. On the other hand, many landlords without previous Section 8 experience seemed willing to consider renting to MTO clients.

Instead of a formal approach to landlord outreach, the counselors began working to find available units for their clients through whatever practical means were available—newspaper ads, For Rent signs, consulting rental property real estate brokers, and word of mouth. As a result, many more small landlords participate in the program than the NPOs originally expected. NPO staff generally agree that working to find units to meet specific client needs is much more effective than working to identify landlords and property managers of large numbers of units "willing" to accept Section 8 or trying to convince them that they should accept Section 8.

In Los Angeles, for example, the Fair Housing Congress staff initially spent a great deal of time driving around trying to identify apartment complexes located in low-poverty areas. They then contacted the apartment managers to see if they accepted Section 8, but many did not. As noted earlier, this was very time-consuming and produced only limited results. Eventually, the housing authority agreed to identify units for the program—a move that was also helpful in adapting to limited NPO resources.

In addition to changing approaches to landlord outreach, there were also *shifts in the level of counseling assistance* (especially group counseling) provided both before and after lease-up. At some sites, counselors realized they needed to provide more assistance up-front, while others grew increasingly aware of the need for follow-up counseling. These shifts were generally made within the NPOs' existing staffing and resources for MTO.

Baltimore's CAN obtained a van soon after the program started. Early in the program,

In Chicago, landlord outreach was believed to be unnecessary because the long-running Gautreaux Program had made the real estate community quite familiar with mobility efforts.

counselors took clients out, one or two at a time, to tour neighborhoods. With the van, they were able to economize on the number of tours, which was especially helpful since some of the communities they visited were located 45 minutes or more from downtown Baltimore. The use of the van sometimes caused problems if groups were taken to look at actual units, since this could result in two clients competing for the same unit. However, a counselor at CHAC in Chicago noted that—when she helped a very cooperative landlord by holding an open house for MTO families at a vacant apartment—this type of competition made the clients really work to present themselves well to the owner.

In Los Angeles, where Beyond Shelter's counseling was to be offered to clients post-move, counselors learned that clients required more pre-move assistance than had originally been planned. So Beyond Shelter staff began to assist clients with budget and household management issues during the search process. Soon after the program started, Los Angeles also decided to delay issuance of the Section 8 voucher, recognizing that MTO clients needed more time at the front end for addressing financial and other issues as well as for searching.

By contrast, in Baltimore, where a wide array of counseling resources were offered upfront, the program manager became aware of the need for greater follow-up support. At the time of our interviews, she was in the process of modifying procedures for follow-up.

The NPOs in Boston and Baltimore also shifted their approach to focus greater attention on *encouraging clients to search independently for housing*. Different methods were used at each of the sites. Early in the program, MBHP's counselors showed great willingness to meet with clients in their homes. Perhaps because the counselors were taking the initiative to contact the clients, it seemed that many clients were waiting for the counselors to do something for them. Also, too few clients were coming in to the MBHP offices to make use of the Resource Room, which provides information about a wide variety of neighborhoods and also carries listings of apartments available for rent. In order to encourage clients to do more for themselves and to take advantage of the Resource Room, counselors began asking clients to meet with them at MBHP offices. This change led to more active participation of the clients and increased use of the Resource Room.

5.5 ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES AND COUNSELING EFFICACY

It is inevitable that, in a program involving a dozen different agencies, during more than two years of operation organizational issues would arise that would affect the program's ability to serve the MTO treatment group clients. Such issues have affected both PHAs and NPOs in the MTO demonstration. The most important examples are described here.

Lack of Capacity to Carry Out Standard Section 8 Operations

Major problems in the administration of the Chicago Housing Authority's Section 8 program significantly impeded the delivery of services to the MTO treatment group families there and resulted in the privatization of the Section 8 program by the federal government. Delays in family outreach and waiting list preparation proved expensive, since the NPO was fully staffed, installed in new quarters, and ready to serve families at least four months before clients were first assigned to them. The CHA's delays in inspections, inconsistent inspections, and lost paperwork resulted in the failure of a number of lease-ups. More generally, landlords in city neighborhoods were reluctant to work with the Section 8 program because they were aware of the CHA's problems in making timely rent payments. All these factors put a damper on demonstration operations and lease-up rates during the first year of MTO in Chicago. CHAC has been working to improve the Section 8 program's operations and image since it took over management at the beginning of 1996.

Organizational Instability and Internal Change

In Los Angeles, one of the original nonprofit organizations, the Fair Housing Congress, went through a period of organizational instability during MTO program operations; the FHC had five executive directors during a six-month period in 1995-96. The initiative for the MTO proposal to the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) had come from the FHC central office, which generally served as a support center for the component fair housing organizations across southern California. Tensions between the central staff and the member organizations arose during 1995, as the board sought to play an increased oversight role in member operations. The resistance of the member organizations led to the resignation of the board chair and a number of board members.

This organizational instability led to turnover among MTO counselors and program managers. The original counselors, who were highly qualified for their positions, were replaced

by less qualified staff. As a result, the quality of the services provided to clients declined. Lack of staff continuity was also confusing to clients, and it necessitated repeated training about MTO's goals and rules. Relations with the partner nonprofit, Beyond Shelter, and with HACLA were also made more difficult by the changes within FHC.

Internal changes made by MBHP in Boston affected the counseling being delivered by that organization to MTO treatment group families. As described in Chapter 1, the supervisor with responsibility for MTO and the MTO program manager (who also counseled part-time) both left MBHP in late 1995 (after about 14 months of program operations) to help staff CHA's new effort in Chicago. The supervisor had been the main proponent of MTO in the organization and had worked closely with Boston Housing Authority (BHA) officials on the response to the MTO NOFA.

With the departures, MBHP moved the smaller MTO staff (now two full-time counselors plus an administrative assistant) into a different part of the organization, supervised by a manager with other program responsibilities and reporting to a vice-president for community development. This section of MBHP is strongly committed to inner-city revitalization and resident empowerment, missions seen as contradictory to the mobility focus of MTO. The MTO staff felt isolated from their new colleagues for a considerable period of time after the reorganization. Loss of leadership appears to have reduced the efficacy of the counseling at MBHP for most of 1996, as did a lack of clients due to slow intake by the BHA. However, program commitment and momentum were improved in 1997.

Tensions Between PHAs and NPOs

Partnerships between public housing authorities and nonprofit organizations are intrinsic to the design of the MTO demonstration. But it is relatively rare for these types of organizations to have collaborated before. There are exceptions, of course. A notable one, salient to MTO, was the extensive collaboration between HACLA and Los Angeles-area agencies in housing relief efforts after the January 1994 Northridge earthquake. In Baltimore, the PHA and NPO worked closely together in drafting their proposal for MTO and maintained a close and cordial working relationship throughout the demonstration period. Some nonprofits also serve as social services providers under contract to PHAs. Nevertheless, the innovative

MTO design probably grew from combining an NPO role modeled on the Leadership Council's Gautreaux work with the operational expertise of housing authority Section 8 programs.

The joint efforts required of PHAs and NPOs in the MTO demonstration go well beyond typical contracting relationships. The partner agencies not only needed to plan and prepare for the demonstration together, they also must continue to coordinate efforts and monitor progress over the course of program operations. As the period of enrolling families, counseling, and leasing-up has extended into a third year, problems with partners are perhaps inevitable, and some of these problems have affected counseling efficacy, in the following ways:

- Difficulties in regulating the flow of families into the demonstration (in Boston, Chicago, and New York) have led to uneven caseloads for the counseling agencies. At times, the counselors have lacked active families with whom to work, while at other times they have had more families than they can help effectively. MTO's research design has contributed to this difficulty by reducing the number of families being assigned to the MTO treatment group.
- While all the site PHAs have assigned particular Section 8 staff to MTO, limited staff resources have slowed demonstration activity and kept caseloads lower than needed at times in Boston, Chicago (CHA), Los Angeles (early in the program), and New York. On the other hand, NPO expectations about quick HQS inspections and rapid paperwork processing have not always been reasonable, and unwarranted promises made to landlords do not help lease-ups.
- Authority to negotiate rents, which is a clear responsibility of the Section 8 program under HUD regulations, has been an issue in Boston. Counselors have helped clients negotiate rents with landlords, only to have the housing authority make a rent reasonableness determination that does not support the result. This problem has largely been resolved through training the counselors on the boundaries of their role and increasing communication between NPO staff and the PHA staff involved in inspections and rent determinations.

Indeed, for the first year of the demonstration, when HUD provided direct grants to fund the nonprofits, there were no necessary contractual relationships between the PHAs and the NPOs. While three of the participating PHAs (HABC, CHA, and HACLA) provided additional funding to their site NPOs through contracts even in the first year, no such relationship was initially established in the two other sites (Boston and New York).

The original random assignment ratio (the ratio of assignments among the three groups in the experiment) was set so that balanced numbers could be achieved between movers in the MTO treatment and Section 8 comparison groups. The need to change the ratio arose when the actual lease-up rates of these groups diverged substantially from the rates projected before the demonstration began. In all sites except Chicago, lease-up rates among the group receiving counseling greatly exceeded expectations, so the assignments to this group were slowed down, reducing the flow of families to the NPOs.

Beyond these specific problems, there have been periodic tensions between PHA and NPO partners in four of the five MTO sites. The most notable of these were problems with CHA Section 8 administration, which contributed to the withdrawal of the Leadership Council in Chicago, as described earlier.

In Los Angeles, HACLA encountered difficulties coordinating the two NPOs and maintaining program momentum during the period of instability at Fair Housing Congress. In Boston, the departure of the original MTO leadership from both organizations has been followed by a period of growing organizational tension, based in part on MTO operational issues and in part on the fact that BHA and MBHP both administer substantial Section 8 programs in the same territory. And the New York City Housing Authority and Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation find themselves on the opposite side of many issues concerning housing and welfare policy in New York City, although staff of the two agencies have worked extremely well together on MTO. Only in Baltimore—where the Housing Authority of Baltimore City and CAN collaborated extensively to prepare the MTO application, and where their offices are in the same building—has the relationship between PHA and NPO been largely free of tension and marked by continuing cooperation and mutual respect. By all accounts, this is largely due to commitment from the top leadership of HABC to make MTO work. The leadership at CAN, in turn, made every effort to work cooperatively with the PHA and recognized the authority's strengths as well as its limitations.

5.6 SIGNIFICANT LESSONS FOR MOBILITY COUNSELING

Within the broad parameters of the MTO demonstration design, the five sites' counseling agencies selected a variety of approaches and made changes that appear to offer useful lessons for others wishing to provide mobility counseling. The following are major lessons that may be drawn from the first two years of the demonstration (although they do not substitute for a thorough process evaluation of MTO).

Lessons from MTO About the Value of a Nonprofit Counseling Agency

MBHP operates the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Section 8 program for Boston and 33 other cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan area.

In general, nonprofit organizations bring skills for assisting Section 8 clients that differ from the skills of housing authorities. These skills include educating and motivating clients, assisting clients while also encouraging self-reliance, supporting clients facing significant changes in their lives, and linking clients to a variety of services. Nonprofit organizations bring particular contacts to counseling, as part of local networks of social service or community development agencies. It also seems that clients can have a different relationship with counseling staff from an NPO than they can with PHA staff, as the latter must conduct highly regulated transactions (such as eligibility determination, lease-up, and income recertification) with the families.

Selecting an NPO. The NPO needs to have staff experienced in working with similar clients and in providing similar types of counseling. This includes both housing search assistance and—ideally—other supportive services (such as education and job development, money management, and help with problems like substance abuse). Examples of relevant experience include working with homeless families in housing placement, or counseling Section 8 recipients on self-sufficiency. Experience working with fair housing complainants may not, by itself, be an indication that the NPO can provide effective mobility counseling.

Organizational Support. The NPO leadership (board and executive) needs to support the goals of mobility or opportunity counseling and make sure that this work can become an integral part of the organization's operations. The NPO needs to have the capacity to support a sustained counseling effort, including the ability to provide leadership to staff in this sometimes difficult work. The NPO also needs to have a regional focus and/or be able to operate throughout the metropolitan area.

Lessons from MTO About Counseling and Follow-Up Support

Client Needs Assessment. While a client needs assessment has proven to be a valuable tool for nearly all the MTO counseling agencies, the assessments vary considerably in scope. Some of the MTO sites have done very extensive social and economic histories with their clients; others have kept a narrower focus on housing issues. Even without a broad assessment, it is important to identify issues that might prevent the family from making a successful move (such as drug abuse, health problems, or family conflict).

Requiring Participation/Contract Between Client and NPO. Only one of the MTO counseling agencies (CAN in Baltimore) established firm requirements for client participation *and* used a contract to define the mutual responsibilities of counselor and client. CAN had good success with the mandatory upfront workshops, and the staff of that agency feel this is a good means of covering important topics (such as budgeting and self-presentation), while it also ensures that families are willing to commit the necessary time and energy to succeed in leasing up in a low-poverty location.

Extent and Type of Housing Search Assistance. Housing search assistance can take a number of forms. Examples from MTO are: neighborhood tours; assistance in locating units; accompanying families on visits to units; assistance in negotiating with landlords; and creating a Resource Room. Some or all of these may be appropriate, depending on client needs, available resources, and local housing conditions.

Extent and Type of Non-Housing Assistance. Mobility counseling inevitably focuses on housing search, but mobility programs must decide what other types of assistance can and should be provided to clients. Possibilities include: assistance with self-sufficiency issues (job development, education, and training); advocacy with other agencies (such as welfare offices, child protective agencies, and housing authorities); and help with problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence. A critical decision is whether such assistance will be provided directly or through information and referral.

Importance of Follow-Up Support. Early indications about the value of follow-up support suggest that it is important to many families but essential for those families who required more intensive housing and non-housing services pre-move. For other families, those who were "ready to move," it was merely beneficial. Since these families did most of their housing search on their own and required very little assistance from the NPO, they subsequently had an easier transition in their new unit. However, it is too soon to determine the true effects of follow-up support on a client's ability to become self-sufficient. While clients may enroll in job training or education programs, we will not be able to measure the impact of the move (or of training and education) on a family's life until follow-up data are collected.

We do know that in some cases, both the tenants and the landlords found a sense of security knowing that a counselor was available to help if problems arose. In addition, regular

follow-up contacts with a client can provide counselors with an early indication of possible problems, such as recurring substance abuse problems. This allows the counselor to intervene early and to avoid bigger problems such as eviction. Follow-up contacts should be provided regularly to ensure the family that they are not alone in this endeavor and they have support systems to help them adjust.

Resource Requirements. MTO offers some lessons about the resources needed for mobility counseling, although the research aspects of the demonstration may well make MTO's counseling more expensive than it would be in an ongoing program. Start-up costs for the NPOs fell in the \$20,000 to \$31,000 range as the agencies conducted outreach to landlords and families and prepared to counsel clients. Cost estimates to date (with the demonstration not yet completed in four sites) show net costs per counseled family ranging from \$600 to \$1800 and net costs per lease-up ranging from \$2500 to \$3300. Although HUD provided at least half the funds in all five sites, in three sites local resources (including PHA funds) covered 22 to 46 percent of nonprofit costs.

Lessons from MTO About PHA-NPO Partnerships

Different Types of Organizations. PHAs and NPOs are different kinds of organizations, and their staff may even "speak different languages." What are some examples of differences? PHA staff are necessarily more limited by program rules and paperwork than NPO staff. NPO staff may be more forceful advocates for individual recipients and less concerned about "administrative issues" (including completing necessary paperwork). NPO staff may also be more interested in challenging program limits (for example, getting exception rents approved), and they can help the PHAs do so. MTO has shown that an equilibrium can be established between the staffs of the two types of agencies, but this equilibrium needs steady support from key administrators and HUD technical assistance staff.

Maintaining Communication and Cooperation. Establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation between PHA and NPO takes work. Regular conversations and

In particular, the requirement that MTO families lease up in areas with poverty rates below 10 percent undoubtedly makes it harder for families to move, increasing the assistance needed and reducing the proportion of NPO clients who succeed in moving.

meetings about the program are necessary, as is cross-training of staff. The PHA should provide administrative training about Section 8 to the NPO staff, so they are clear on how Section 8 works and how their efforts will connect with the program. Also, lower-level staff from the two organizations must have the opportunity to get to know and trust each other. In Baltimore, HABC's willingness to provide office space to CAN in the same building that housed the Section 8 department contributed greatly to communication between the two agencies; both staffs highly recommend "co-locating" a mobility counseling program with the Section 8 office.

Effective Monitoring and Support. Assuming that the PHA is the agency initiating a contractual arrangement with the NPO, the contract between the PHA and the nonprofit organization should:

- Designate a lead staff member in the lead PHA for the mobility or opportunity counseling effort;
- Define the responsibilities of both parties to the contract for this program;
- Provide for the timely flow of funding from the PHA to the NPO; and
- Establish lines of communication, monitoring, and reporting (which ideally should flow in both directions).

Extending the Partnership. Although they may be the core of a mobility counseling program, the PHA and NPO are not the only organizations whose cooperation is needed to make a program succeed. Other local housing authorities, social service agencies, and legal services providers can play an important role. Two MTO sites formed local advisory boards early in the demonstration, to spread information, gain support, and smooth the way for client referrals. Inter-jurisdictional cooperation—city and suburban housing agencies working together—is particularly vital so that clients can exercise Section 8 portability and move across local boundaries without impediment.

Some Lessons Learned from MTO Counseling

The Moving to Opportunity demonstration is a small HUD-funded initiative, with just five sites and a dozen participating agencies. It will affect the lives of fewer than 5,000 families all told, and only about 2,000 of these families will receive counseling to assist in making low-poverty moves. Further, it will be several years before the major social and economic outcomes

of greatest interest to the Congress and HUD can be measured and analyzed.

Yet MTO is already serving as a useful testing ground for ways to encourage mobility among Section 8 recipients. It has proven difficult to gather good data about the quantity of counseling services delivered to MTO clients, but the qualitative data on counseling—combined with sustained observation of the agencies carrying out the demonstration—indicate that this kind of PHA-NPO partnership and the types of counseling provided to the participating families are viable models for future mobility efforts. While resources may be more limited in the future, and the need may thus be greater to use *group* counseling and education methods, these approaches must be combined with housing search assistance in order to actually affect the spatial patterns of residence in the Section 8 program.

Mobility counseling appears to be a key component of the future HUD envisions for the Section 8 program. This is evident from HUD's new Regional Opportunity Counseling Initiative, which is bringing PHA-NPO partnerships and a metropolitan focus to 15 metropolitan areas around the country. If the agencies operating the Section 8 program are to foster movement among clients and to eliminate and prevent concentrations of assisted families, mobility counseling is one demonstrated, vital means toward achievement of these goals.

Appendix A

DATA SOURCES ON MTO COUNSELING

Four types of data collection were carried out specifically for this report: qualitative interviews with MTO counseling staff; site visits to the NPOs and meetings with some of their clients; counseling log file abstraction forms (summarizing data from client folders kept by the NPOs); and—for a small number of clients—intensive case reviews with individual counselors. In addition to these data, we were able to draw upon other data gathered by Abt Associates for HUD over the course of the demonstration. Those data sources include the MTO participant tracking logs kept by the NPOs and PHAs and collected monthly by Abt Associates, baseline survey data, cost data, and documentation about the sites obtained through site visits, monitoring phone calls, and reconnaissance notes. Exhibit A-1 summarizes the sources; this appendix describes the data specifically gathered for this report.

Exhibit A-1
Data Sources Used in the Analysis of MTO Counseling

Type of Data	Data Source	Number of Cases	Contents/Topics Covered
In-depth inter-views	MTO counselors and supervisors	One per site ^a	Agency philosophy, counseling process and changes, client motivation, problem resolution, reasons for failure/success.
Counseling log/file abstraction forms	Counseling logs and client case files	362	Summary measures on clients' progress through the MTO program, including: number, type and length of client contacts with counselors; yes/no indicators for stages passed in program; types of housing and non-housing assistance received; housing search information; lease-up and follow-up data (if applicable).
In-depth client case review	MTO counselors and client files	Six per counselor per site	Details about client experiences in MTO, counseling assistance, family background, success/failure in housing search and reasons why.
MTO treatment group tracking logs	Site agencies (NPOs and PHAs)	1,195	Details on program milestones (random assignment date, section 8 issuance date, referral to NPO, home visit, and credit check); search dates and addresses; move-in date, address and follow-up contacts (if applicable).
Participant base-line survey	Family head at MTO program entry	850	Details on prior move history, reasons for wanting to move, housing and neighborhood conditions and satisfaction, experience with crime, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.
Other qualitative data: MTO reconnaissance and site visit notes, ongoing site monitoring notes	Conversations with NPO administrative staff and counselors, observation of NPO activities, discussions with clients	Several per site (spring 1994-early 1997)	Background information on the agencies; initial approach to counseling; changes in counseling approach over time; organization and staffing issues; inter- and intra-agency coordination of MTO; barriers to counseling and mobility moves; client stories.
NPO cost data	NPO administration staff	One per NPO	Cost forms completed by each agency during the first 12 months of MTO operations; additional data on HUD funds allocations.

^a The counseling responsibilities in Chicago were shifting to CHAC at the time of these interviews, making it difficult to complete them. Further interviewing was conducted with CHAC staff to provide a more current picture.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interviews were conducted with counseling staff and supervisors in all of the MTO sites except Chicago. These interviews, conducted in the spring of 1996, were designed to collect information about the agency's philosophy, its counseling process (including initial meetings, home visits, search procedures, briefings, and follow-up), client motivation techniques, problem resolution, and reasons for failure/success. The interviews provided an opportunity for the counselors to discuss their views about the program, their opinions about approaches that work and those that do not work, and the changes they have made to their counseling procedures over time.

At the time these interviews were being conducted, the Leadership Council was making its decision to withdraw from the MTO program. CHAC, Inc. had not yet begun to act as the counseling agency. During this transition period, it was not feasible to complete the qualitative interview with either group. However, some information is available from exit interviews with Leadership Council MTO staff, and subsequent interviews have been conducted with CHAC staff.

Site Visits

During their periodic visits to each MTO site, the NPO counselors and supervisors described to the Abt site monitors the process of working with MTO families and the problems encountered. Abt staff accompanied counselors and clients during the search, visited clients in new homes, and talked to participants who had not succeeded in leasing up. *Site visit and telephone monitoring* notes—as well as materials provided by the site agencies (such as annual reports, workshop outlines, and staff resumes)—were used for additional information on agency background and philosophy, counseling practices, and MTO progress at each site.

Counseling Log Abstractions

Counseling log abstraction forms were designed to collect summary data from the MTO counseling logs and client files about the milestones a family goes through during the counseling and search process. These forms were designed to provide quantitative measures of counseling practices in a form that would be comparable across sites. The data were abstracted by the MTO site assistants, on-site staff hired by Abt Associates to assist with all aspects of data collection at the demonstration sites.

Topics covered on the abstraction forms included: indicators of whether the client received various housing and non-housing counseling services; whether the client participated in group counseling sessions; information on the number, type, and duration of contacts between the client and the counselor; and search information. For families that succeeded in moving through MTO, the data include move-in date and follow-up contact information; for dropouts or withdrawals, the data indicate reason(s) why the client did not complete work with the NPO.

Data were collected for a randomly selected sample of families assigned to the MTO treatment group. The first wave sampled clients with random assignment dates through December 31, 1995. The second wave sampled later clients (assigned between January 1 and December 31, 1996). The sample was stratified by moving status. Exhibit A-2 shows the sample allocation by site.

Exhibit A-2
Sample Sizes for Counseling Log Abstraction Data

Site	Movers	Non-Movers	Total
Baltimore	55	42	97
Boston	56	44	100
Chicago	7	43	50
Los Angeles	38	27	65
New York	16	34	50
Total	172	190	362

The abstracted data provide useful information about the number of contacts between clients and counselors, the various milestones clients pass, and a total count of units searched. But data about the extent of actual counseling service delivery are limited by the quality of the agencies' record-keeping. The counseling log forms did not require detailed notes on client contacts and services provided, and client folders also often lacked such information. In addition, information about attendance at group meetings, workshops, and rap sessions may be recorded on a master attendance sheet (if recorded at all) and not transferred to each client folder. Finally, the demonstration may have provided too little guidance to NPOs about how data should be recorded in a client folder. Therefore, there are strong reasons to believe that the services provided by the NPOs are under-reported in the abstracted data. As a result, we rely more heavily on the qualitative interviews and tracking log data in this report.

The participant tracking logs document up to three unit addresses a family visits during the housing search. The counseling log abstraction form asks for the total number of units searched, and the total number referred by the NPO, clients family, and other sources.

Two reasons have been offered by NPO staff for the limited record-keeping. First, counselors spend most of their time with clients out of the office, searching for units or conducting home visits, which makes it difficult to update their client folders regularly. Second, a counselor's top priority is to serve his/her clients, and record-keeping gets less attention.

For example, in Boston, counselors only record in their files that budget and credit counseling are done when they refer a client to a consumer credit counseling agency; they do not record the initial, routine review of the credit report and family budget with the client.

In-Depth Client Case Reviews

In addition to the qualitative interviews and counseling log abstraction forms, Abt project staff conducted intensive case reviews at each site for a small group of families from the abstraction sample. These case reviews offer more insight into a family's experiences in MTO and into the services provided by the counseling agency. Client stories based on these reviews are used in the report to add depth to the analysis of MTO counseling.

Other Data Sources

Quantitative data on NPO services for a larger sample of families have been drawn from the *MTO treatment group tracking logs* maintained by the site agencies. The logs maintained by the NPOs contain information on home visits and credit checks, on up to three units visited (including search date, address, and result), on the location of successful moves, and on follow-up contacts between counselors and movers. Tracking log data are available from the MTO data system for 1,195 treatment families, with information through December 31, 1996.

Participant baseline survey data are available for 850 treatment group families from the MTO data system. These families were largely served in 1994 and 1995, although about 10 percent entered the program in the first half of 1996. The baseline survey—collected at the time of entry into MTO—includes information about previous mobility patterns and reasons for wanting to move. Exhibit A-3 shows the numbers of cases in the tracking log and baseline survey data sets.

Site monitors selected approximately six families to review with each counselor, using the abstraction forms to choose different kinds of cases.

The difference between total assigned families and the number of baseline surveys is due to processing lags.

Exhibit A-3
Total Assigned Families (MTO Treatment Group)
and Tracking and Baseline Samples

	Baltimore	Boston	Chicago	Los Angeles	New York	Total
Number of families assigned to the MTO Treatment Group (through 12/31/96)	252	273	257	193	230	1,205
Participant Tracking Log Cases	252	273	247	193	230	1,195
Percent of Assigned	(100)	(100)	(96.1)	(100)	(100)	(99.2)
Participant Baseline Survey Cases ^a	218	229	130	129	144	850
Percent of Assigned	(86.5)	(83.9)	(50.6)	(66.8)	(62.6)	(70.5)

^a These sample sizes reflect lags in processing and heavy recent population build-up in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

NPO Cost Data

During the first 12 months of MTO operations, each counseling agency recorded the costs of working on the demonstration, using forms designed for this purpose. For ten months, labor costs were recorded in the aggregate, while for two months detailed labor cost information was required. Direct costs were itemized each month, and the indirect cost rates for each agency were applied.

For the present report, the cost data are combined with funding data to calculate costs per client counseled and costs per lease-up, net of start-up costs (costs incurred before active work with clients began).

Appendix B
THE RELATIONSHIP OF COUNSELING TO LEASE-UP SUCCESS:
TECHNICAL NOTES

This appendix provides technical detail on the analysis of lease-up success summarized in Chapter 5 of the report. It contains additional information on the sample used, as well as on the multivariate analysis. Note that this analysis must be considered preliminary, as the MTO program population is not yet complete: it is anticipated that the MTO treatment group will finally number about 2000 families. Further, the initial lease-up is only one of a number of important impacts that will be examined in future evaluation research.

The Analytic Sample

The analytic sample for the multivariate analysis includes 850 families in the MTO treatment group. These are families that joined the program relatively early (most in 1994 and 1995, although some in the first half of 1996). Compared to the sample of MTO experimental group families used elsewhere in this report, the sample has a higher proportion of final outcomes (lease-ups or expirations), and there is a slightly different mix among the sites. In particular, compared to the sample of 1195 MTO experimental group families with only random assignment and participant tracking log data available, this sample of 850 contains a greater proportion of families from Baltimore and Boston and a smaller proportion from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. This difference reflects the heavier early activity in the Baltimore and Boston sites. (See Appendix A.)

Relationship of Counseling Utilization to Family Characteristics

The measures of counseling utilization discussed in Chapter 5 and presented in Exhibit 5-3 bear some relationship to family characteristics and background conditions, as shown in Exhibit B-1. Most of the characteristics in the exhibit have positive relationships to the utilization measures, with the exception of working for pay (fewer searches), total income (fewer searches and fewer units found by NPO), African-American (fewer units found by NPO), and the Chicago site (negative on all three utilization variables). These relationships suggest that, with the full data set in the future, a two-stage model should be explored: first determinants of utilization, then determinants of lease-up.

To sort out the relative effects of family characteristics, background conditions, and counseling utilization on the ability of MTO experimental group families to lease-up with Section 8 assistance, a multivariate statistical analysis was undertaken. In addition to the three groups of independent variables just mentioned, site dummies were also tested for inclusion as

Exhibit B-1
Relationship between Counseling Utilization Measures
and Family Characteristics and Background Conditions

Number of Searches		Number of Search Units Found by NPO		Completion of NPO Counseling Program	
Family Characteristic or Background Condition	Sign	Family Characteristic or Background Condition	Sign	Family Characteristic or Background Condition	Sign
In school	+	African-American	-	Moved 3 times in past 5 years	+
High school education	+	White	+	Want to move to suburban neighborhood	+
Moved 3 times in past 5 years	+	Hispanic	+	Dissatisfied with current neighborhood	+
Dissatisfied with current neighborhood	+	Current housing condition (rating) ^b	+	Current housing condition (rating) ^b	+
Working for pay	-			Total income	-
Total income	-			Credit problem identified by NPO	+
Sites:		Sites:		Sites:	
Baltimore	+	Baltimore	NS	Baltimore	NS
Boston	-	Boston	NS	Boston	NS
Chicago	NS	Chicago	-	Chicago	-
Los Angeles	NS	Los Angeles	+	Los Angeles	+

New York	NS	New York	+	New York	+
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Source: NPO Participant Tracking Logs and Participant Baseline Surveys (N=850)
Sample: MTO treatment group only
Missing: 0 cases

NOTE: Bivariate relationships, as measured by Pearson correlation coefficients. All reported relationships are statistically significant at the $p \leq .05$ level, except those marked NS (not significant).

- a Counseling program staff coded an outcome for each family, with the following options: Completed NPO program; Dropped out of NPO program; No show/no contact with NPO; or Ineligible. Completion of the NPO program could occur even if a lease-up did not result.
- b Ratings: Excellent=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1.

explanatory variables (with the New York site omitted, serving as the reference category). The results of this analysis are summarized in Exhibit B-2.

In Exhibit B-2, the dependent variable for all three models is whether the family succeeded in leasing up through MTO. Each column shows the results of the analysis when one particular counseling utilization measure is included as an explanatory variable. The three models reported each contain one of these measures. They also contain a uniform set of other independent variables. Overall, the model that includes the utilization variable for completion of the NPO's counseling program is the strongest, while the model that includes the number of search units found by the NPO is the weakest of the three. However, they do not differ greatly in either explanatory power or in the patterns of significance and magnitudes of coefficients. Having only one child gives a family a significantly greater probability of leasing up, while being Hispanic or having a higher income reduces the chances of leasing up. Background conditions and experiences that help with lease-up include being dissatisfied with the current neighborhood and being in school.

Site dummies also proved to be significant in all three models. (The intercept represents the omitted site, New York.) These site dummies likely represent some combination of program features and local markets, so they should be interpreted with care. The coefficients of the Chicago dummy are negative and highly significant in all three equations, while those for LA are

A preference for suburban moves, and three moves in five years, have a positive influence on lease-up when the models are allowed to include different sets of independent variables to maximize explanatory power.

all positive and highly significant. The dummy variables for Baltimore and Boston also contribute explanatory power to all three models.

These findings are consistent with those of a more detailed study conducted for HUD on success leasing up in the Section 8 program. In particular, that study also found that lower incomes were positively associated with success. There are different interpretations of this relationship; one suggests that families with lower incomes work harder to get on the Section 8 program, because the subsidy incentive is greater, while another suggests that landlords prefer tenants for whom the housing authority pays all (or nearly all) the monthly rent, as the flow of rental income to them is more dependable.

The significant negative coefficient for being Hispanic is of some interest. We conjecture that it results primarily from the experience of Los Angeles Chicano families. PHA and NPO staff there consistently reported that it was harder to convince these clients to move. Their reluctance was based most often on fears about immigration status, given the climate of opinion in California against immigration; the subsequent withdrawal of welfare benefits even from legal immigrants would reinforce these fears. Further, the Fair Housing Congress—the NPO providing housing search assistance in LA—did not consistently have Spanish-speaking counselors for MTO. Both these factors could contribute to the negative effect observed here.

~~This multivariate analysis is preliminary for several reasons: first, the MTO program population is still growing, and many more families will complete low-poverty lease-ups with counseling agency assistance during 1997. Second, data will become available on the counseling being provided by CHAC in Chicago and by On Your Feet in Los Angeles, and on associated client outcomes. With these additional data, there will be room for a more careful delineation of the determinants of counseling utilization and how utilization in turn affects success in leasing-up.~~

Stephen D. Kennedy and Meryl Finkel, *Section 8 Rental Voucher and Rental Certificate Utilization Study* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, May 1994); see pp. 64-67 on the analysis of success by moving.

An earlier, extremely careful analysis that models mobility in stages comes from the Housing Allowance Demand Experiment. See Jean MacMillan, *Mobility in the Housing Allowance Demand Experiment* (Cambridge, MA, Abt Associates, June 1980).

Exhibit B-2
Factors Contributing to Success in Leasing Up
(MTO Experimental Group Only)

Dependent variable: Leased Up (1=Yes, 0=No)

Independent Variables	Counseling Utilization Measure in Model		
	Number of Searches	Number of Search Units Found by NPO	Completion of NPO Counseling Program ^a
<i>Intercept</i>	.2013**	.2313*	-.0137
<i>Family Characteristics</i>			
Hispanic	-.0755*	-.0578	-.0420
One child	.0749 ⁺	.0787 ⁺	.0821*
Total income	-.0000069*	-.0000091**	-.0000045
<i>Background Conditions and Experiences</i>			
In school	.0658	.0870 ⁺	.1075**
Prefer move to suburbs	.0567	.0571	.0262
Moved 3 times in 5 years	.0627	.0894	.0437
Dissatisfied with neighborhood	.0440	.0825*	.0333
<i>Counseling Utilization</i>			
Number of searches	.1698**		
Units found by NPO		.1400**	
Client completed counseling ^a			.5510**
<i>Site/Market</i>			
Baltimore	.1065*	.1961**	.1732**
Boston	.1016*	.1513**	.0833 ⁺
Chicago	-.1874**	-.1362*	-.2050**
Los Angeles	.2150**	.2335**	.1315**
R ²	.2923	.2199	.3590
Adjusted R ²	.2820	.2086	.3497
Number of Observations	840	840	840

Source: NPO Participant Tracking Logs and Participant Baseline Surveys (N=850)
Sample: MTO experimental group only
Missing: 10 cases (1 Baltimore, 7 Boston, 2 Los Angeles).
Statistical significance: ** p <-.01; * p <-.05; + p <-.10

^a Counseling program staff coded an outcome for each family, with the following options: Completed NPO program;

Dropped out of NPO program; No show/no contact with NPO; or Ineligible. Completion of the NPO program could occur even if a lease-up did not result.