

# Family Options Study: Effects on Family Living Situation

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## Abstract

*This article uses data from the Family Options Study to address several questions about family living situations after a stay in emergency shelter. (1) What are the families' living situations, month by month, during the first 32 months after random assignment to one of the study's interventions? (2) What are the relative impacts of the interventions on two particular living situations—living in the family's own place and doubled up with a relative or friend? (3) What are the flows out of the status of living in the family's own place over time and what are the impacts of the interventions on these flows?*

*The Family Options Study randomly assigned 2,282 families staying in emergency shelters in 12 communities to one of four interventions: (1) SUB, priority access to long-term rent subsidies (usually housing choice vouchers); (2) CBRR, priority access to short-term rent subsidies provided by rapid re-housing programs; (3) PBTH, priority access to project-based transitional housing; and (4) usual care, in which families did not receive priority access to any particular type of assistance but were free to pursue whatever assistance they could obtain in their communities. Living situation data are based on five rounds of surveys during the first 3 years after random assignment and on the Homeless Management Information System and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Public and Indian Housing Information Center/Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System administrative data.*

*Results show that, relative to usual care, the offer of a long-term rent subsidy increases the proportion of families living in their own place throughout the followup period. The offer of long-term subsidies also reduced the proportion of families doubling up with family and friends as compared with usual care. For the first several months after random assignment, the offer of short-term rental subsidies also increases the proportion of families living in their own place as compared with usual care. Compared with an offer of a long-term subsidy, priority access to a short-term subsidy moves families into the status of living in their own place faster. Priority offers of short-term subsidies increase exits from the status of living in the family's own place relative to offers of long-term subsidies, to usual care, and to offers of transitional housing. This analysis adds to evidence reported previously about the relative effects of the interventions studied in the Family Options Study.*

## Introduction

The Family Options Study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is the largest rigorous study to investigate which interventions work best for families who experience homelessness. The study randomly assigned 2,282 families in 12 sites across the country.<sup>1</sup> Families who had stayed at least 7 days in emergency shelter were randomly assigned to one of four groups.

1. **SUB**, in which families were offered priority access to a *long-term rent subsidy*, typically a housing choice voucher (HCV).
2. **CBRR**, in which families were offered priority access to a short-term rent subsidy, lasting up to 18 months, in the form of *community-based rapid re-housing* assistance. The rapid re-housing component of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funded this assistance in all the sites except one.<sup>2</sup>
3. **PBTH**, in which families were offered priority access to a temporary, service-intensive stay, lasting up to 24 months, in a *project-based transitional housing* facility.
4. **UC**, in which families had access to *usual care* homeless and housing assistance but did not have priority access to any particular program.

Following random assignment, families were free to take up the programs to which they were given priority access or to make other arrangements on their own, as would be the case for any family given a referral to a program in the absence of the study. Priority access provided families with immediate access to a program slot—for an HCV, a short-term rent subsidy provided by a rapid re-housing program, or a unit in a transitional housing facility—but families still needed to meet the eligibility criteria of the program to which they were referred, complete any required paperwork, and, in some cases, find an acceptable housing unit. Families were not prohibited from using other programs to which they were able to gain access outside the study.

The study analyzed the relative effects of the SUB, CBRR, and PBTH interventions in pairwise comparisons, contrasting assignment to the intervention with assignment to another intervention or with the usual care. Only families who were eligible for both interventions in a pairwise comparison (for example, the SUB and CBRR interventions) and were randomized to one of them were included in each comparison. The intention-to-treat, or ITT, impacts for each comparison estimate the average effect of being offered one intervention rather than another. The average effect is estimated for all families in the comparison regardless of whether families actually participated in the intervention to which they were assigned. In this way, the study evaluates the effect of priority access to a program and thus shows the effect of a policy emphasis on a particular approach—that is, relatively more availability of a given type of program in a community.

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<sup>1</sup> See Gubits et al. (2015) for details about the implementation of the study.

<sup>2</sup> In Boston, the State of Massachusetts funded the short-term rent subsidies offered to families in the CBRR group. The Boston programs offered assistance very similar to HPRP, although rental assistance could be provided for longer periods.

## Overview of the Article

This article presents analyses on the living situations of the study families during the 3-year followup period. The analysis uses month-by-month data about the kinds of situations in which families were living during each month after random assignment. The analysis examines two living situations in detail.

1. Living in the family's own place; that is, in an apartment or house that the family head rents or owns.
2. *Doubled up*, defined as living with a relative or friend, somewhere not considered the family's own place.

Gubits et al. (2016, 2015) presented intervention impacts on experiences of doubling up in the 6-month periods before the 20- and 37-month followup surveys. Those reports defined doubled up based on the family's report of having spent *at least 1 night in the 6 months before the 20- or 37-month survey living with a friend or relative because the family could not find or afford a place of their own.*

This article draws on a different data source for doubled up, one with a slightly different definition. At each survey point, family heads were asked to describe their current living situation. Response options included partner's place and a friend's or relative's house or apartment (including parent's or guardian's house), either paying part of the rent or not. This article defines doubled up as living in either the family head's partner's place or in a friend's or relative's house or apartment. These survey response options were administered only if the family head reported that the family was not living in a house or apartment that she (or he) owned or rented, and so indicated a situation in which the family was not living in their own place. This article examines the month-by-month experiences of this type of living situation.

The programs offered to the families assigned to the SUB and CBRR groups seek to restore families to conventional housing in the community as swiftly as possible. This approach, sometimes called "Housing First,"<sup>3</sup> stands in contrast to that taken by the transitional housing programs offered to families assigned to the PBTH group. The philosophy of transitional housing emphasizes that many families who become homeless have barriers in addition to poverty that make it difficult for them to secure and maintain housing. PBTH programs are based on the view that addressing these barriers and needs with an array of services in a supervised residential setting lays the best foundation for ongoing stability.

Both of the living situations examined in this article (living in one's own place or doubled up with friends or relatives) are considered a return to conventional housing according to HUD's definition of homelessness.<sup>4</sup> In general, under HUD's definition, homelessness is deemed to continue until the family's primary nighttime residence is no longer an unsheltered location or in housing owned or controlled by an organization that provides services to people experiencing homelessness

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<sup>3</sup> Permanent housing is permanent in the sense that if the family is able to pay for the housing, either with or without assistance, they can stay there indefinitely. The Housing First approach is described in USICH (n.d.) and National Alliance to End Homelessness (2006).

<sup>4</sup> For a comparison of these definitions, see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (n.d.).

(emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing). The transitional housing programs offered to families assigned to the PBTH intervention do not end the current homeless spell according to HUD's definition.

Even though families living in doubled-up situations are not considered homeless according to HUD's definition, these types of living situations are often associated with instability. For example, families who share space with friends or relatives may experience crowding and disruption to children's school and family routines, and in some cases doubled-up situations may be unsustainable. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education defines homelessness to include unstable housing situations—children in families who are sharing other people's housing because of economic hardship are considered homeless.

To analyze the living situations of families enrolled in the Family Options Study, we use the family head's own assessment of the family's situation reported in the study's followup surveys. If the family head considered a place "her own," we record it as such, even if other people were living with the family (family heads were instructed not to consider their parents' homes as their own places). If a family head considered a place to be someone else's, we considered the family as doubled up. The only exception to taking the respondent's perspective on living situation was in cases in which a family was participating in a transitional housing program. The analysis in this article does not consider families staying in transitional housing programs to be living in their own place.<sup>5</sup>

The analyses presented in this article address three questions about the *month-by-month* living situations for study families.

1. What were families' living situations month by month during the first 32 months after random assignment?<sup>6</sup>
2. What were the impacts of group assignment on the living situations of *living in the family's own place* and *doubled up with a relative or friend* over time?
3. What were the flows of families out of the status of *living in the family's own place* over time and what were the impacts of group assignment on these flows?

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<sup>5</sup> Often, families in transitional housing programs live in apartments where they pay rent but from which they must move at the end of the transitional period. To distinguish transitional housing from the short-term rent subsidies provided by rapid re-housing programs in the Family Options Study, the study team did not randomize families to priority access to transitional housing programs in which families could assume the lease for the apartment at the end of the assistance period (referred to as *transition-in-place* programs). However, some families may have found their way into transition-in-place programs on their own. Administrative data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) do not distinguish transition-in-place programs from other transitional housing programs. The analysis presented in this article therefore likely undercounts the extent to which families were living in their own place, because no stay in transitional housing is considered living in one's own place and the data do not permit us to identify instances in which families stayed in transition-in-place programs.

<sup>6</sup> To have as long a time window as possible to examine living situations, we restricted the sample for this article to the families who responded to the 37-month followup survey. In the remainder of the article, we refer to the 37-month followup survey as "the followup survey." The followup time window is the length of time from random assignment to the calendar month of the followup survey. The length of this period differs for each family. The latest month with data on all respondent families is the 32nd month after random assignment. Therefore, all analyses in this article use the time window of month 0 to month 32 after random assignment.

Given the approaches underlying the SUB and CBRR programs of placing people in conventional housing as quickly as possible, we hypothesized that assignment to SUB and CBRR would initially *increase* the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care. Further, given the temporary nature of the subsidies offered by CBRR programs, we hypothesized that assignment to CBRR would increase the proportion, relative to assignment to SUB, of families *exiting* the status of living in their own place when the initial subsidies end. On the other hand, given that time spent in transitional housing programs is not considered living in one's own place, we expected that assignment to PBTH would initially *reduce* the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care, assignment to SUB, and assignment to CBRR. Whereas previous study reports presented impacts on being doubled up for reasons of economic hardship in the 6-month periods preceding the followup survey, this article defines doubled up as any situation in which the family lives with friends or relatives. It also provides a first look at how the proportions of families who are doubled up evolve over time within the assignment groups and how the impact evolves within each impact comparison.

## Data and Methodology

This section addresses the data used to analyze living situation and the methodology for the analysis. The article uses data collected for the Family Options Study and follows the impact analysis methodology reported in Gubits et al. (2015) and Gubits et al. (2016).

### Data

This article utilizes living situation data collected in surveys of the family head. In total, the study conducted five surveys after random assignment—the 6-, 12-, and 27-month tracking surveys and the 20- and 37-month followup surveys. The study team combined these data with Homeless Management Information System administrative records, HUD Public and Indian Housing Information Center/Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System administrative records, and study enrollment verification records to create the study's Program Usage/Living Situation database.<sup>7</sup> The Living Situation data consist of monthly indicator variables for each of the following living situations.

- Living in own place.<sup>8</sup>
- Living in partner's place.

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<sup>7</sup> See Gubits et al. (2016), appendix A, for more information on the Program Usage data. See appendix A of this article for a further description of how Living Situation data were created and for the survey questions used to measure the living situations. In the short-term and 3-year impact reports, one housing stability outcome measured "living in own house or apartment at followup." This outcome was based on the same survey item as the "living in own place" living situation status. However, the outcome variable used in the impact reports was not checked for consistency with known program use. During subsequent data cleaning, it was discovered that some families using transitional housing responded that they were living in their own place. The Living Situation data do not allow for concurrent status of living in own place for those in transitional housing.

<sup>8</sup> Family heads who described a living situation as their own place were considered to be living in their own place whether or not partners or spouses were living with them. The living situation indicators thus denote the family head's description of the living situation, rather than family composition.

- Doubled up with a relative or friend and paying part of rent.
- Doubled up with a relative or friend and not paying part of rent.
- Living in hotel or motel paid for by self.
- Living in a place not meant for human habitation (for example, car, abandoned building, anywhere outside).
- Staying in emergency shelter or transitional housing program.
- Staying in domestic violence shelter.
- Staying in other program or institution (indicating separation from other family members)—care facility, residential drug or alcohol treatment program, jail.
- Missing—no information on family's living situation or program use is available for the month.

Of the 2,282 families enrolled in the study, 1,784 (78 percent) families responded to the 37-month followup survey. Among survey respondents, 87 percent spent at least some time in emergency shelter during the followup period and 26 percent spent time in transitional housing programs. By far, the most common types of other living situations were living in own place, doubled up with a relative or friend and paying part of rent, and doubled up with a relative or friend and not paying part of rent. Altogether, 92 percent of families had lived in their own place for at least some time since random assignment, 21 percent had been doubled up paying rent for at least some of the time, and 15 percent had been doubled up not paying rent for at least some of the time. The proportions experiencing each of the other living situations in the preceding list were all less than 3 percent.

## Methodology

We conducted several analyses to examine families' living situations during the 3-year followup period. We estimated the relative impacts of the interventions in pairwise comparisons that contrast assignment to an active intervention (SUB, CBRR, and PBTH) with another active intervention or to the UC group. The impact analysis in this article follows the methodology described in Gubits et al. (2016). Only families who were eligible for both interventions in a pairwise comparison and were randomized to one of them were included in the comparison. Hence, each pairwise comparison can be thought of as an experiment between two well-matched groups.

## Month-by-Month Distribution of all Possible Living Situations

For each assignment group in each of the impact comparisons, we present an exhibit showing the proportions of families in each possible living situation. To focus the analysis, we aggregate some of the living situations, reducing the number of possible situations. In each month, a family had to have been in at least one of the following living situations or programs.

- Emergency shelter.
- Transitional housing.

- Doubled up (defined as a combination of living in partner's place, doubled up with a relative or friend and paying part of rent, and doubled up with a relative or friend and not paying part of rent).
- Living in own place.
- Other living situations and programs (defined as a combination of living in hotel or motel paid for by self, living in a place not meant for human habitation, other institutional settings indicating separation from other family members, and domestic violence shelter).
- Missing.

For months in which a family changes from one situation to another, the family is counted in each living situation for equal fractions of the month.

### **Month-by-Month Proportions Living in Own Place and Doubled Up**

For each pairwise comparison, we present an exhibit showing the proportions of families by assignment group who are living in their own place and who are doubled up in each month. These exhibits are based on impact estimates shown in tabular form in appendix B of this article, which is published online at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>. The proportions are regression adjusted from an impact regression that controls for study site and randomization ratio. The proportions are shown in the columns labeled “Mean” in the appendix B tables.

### **Exits From Status of Living in Own Place**

Although many families maintain the status of living in their own place once they achieve it, some families are not able to maintain that status. To understand more about the extent to which families' living situations change during the followup period, we analyze the time path of exits from the status of living in one's own place. We limit this analysis of exits from living in own place to comparisons involving families assigned to the SUB and CBRR interventions, the interventions intended to restore families to conventional housing as quickly as possible, and the families assigned to usual care. The analysis of exits excludes comparisons involving families assigned to the PBTH intervention because the families assigned to PBTH who used the offered assistance were, by definition, not living in their own place.

For families assigned to the SUB, CBRR, and UC groups, we examine exits from living in their own place in each 4-month period after random assignment. For each 4-month period, families are coded as exiting from their own place if they were not in their own place in any month in the 4-month period but had been in their own place at the end (in the last month) of the previous 4-month period. For the initial 4-month period (months 1 to 4), the family was coded as exiting from their own place if they were not in their own place at any time during the period subsequent to having lived in their own place.

For the SUB-versus-UC, CBRR-versus-UC, and SUB-versus-CBRR impact comparisons, we examined the percentage of families within an assignment group who exited from the status of living in own place in each 4-month period after random assignment. These results are presented

graphically and in tabular form in appendix B. The analysis of exits presented in appendix B focuses on the percentage of families exiting the status of living in own place within the entire assignment group so that experimental impacts can be reported.

We also examine the *exit rate*, defined as the percentage of families with an exit in a 4-month period divided by the percentage of families living in own place in the last month of the previous period. These exit rates are presented graphically in the article. Exit from living in own place is an outcome that is defined only for families who returned to living in their own place at some point after study enrollment. Because the interventions may differentially affect whether families return to living in their own place, the samples for whom exit from living in own place is defined are not strictly comparable. Therefore, unlike outcomes that are defined for all families in an assignment group, exit from living in own place is not well suited for internally valid impact measurement. Put differently, effects on exit rates are conditional impacts (that is, they can be decomposed into an effect on living in own place and an effect on exit conditional on living in own place), so they are not well defined in an experimental framework.

## Long-Term Rent Subsidy (SUB) Compared With Usual Care (UC)

The short-term and 3-year impact reports found substantial differences in program use between families assigned to the SUB and UC groups, with families assigned to the SUB group much more likely to use some form of long-term housing subsidy (88 percent compared with 38 percent). At the 20- and 37-month followup points, the study found that, relative to usual care, priority access to a long-term subsidy (assignment to SUB) increased the proportion of families living in their own place. The study also found that assignment to SUB decreased the proportion of families doubled up with a relative or friend because they could not find or afford a place of their own during the 6-month periods immediately prior to the followup points.

Study data enable us to examine families' living situations at more than the two major followup points. Exhibit 1 shows the living situations of all followup survey respondent families in the SUB-versus-UC comparison during the first 32 months after random assignment. Panel A shows that, within a few months after random assignment, most families assigned to SUB completed the voucher intake, housing search, and lease-up processes and were living in their own place. Throughout the remainder of the followup period, the vast majority of families assigned to SUB continued to live in their own place. In contrast, panel B shows that families assigned to UC had greater proportions staying in emergency shelter, staying in transitional housing, being doubled up, and with missing information during most months of the followup period.

Exhibit 2 focuses only on the two living situations of *living in own place* and *doubled up* for the SUB-versus-UC comparison. We display the SUB and UC groups on the same graph in exhibit 2 to highlight the differences observed between the two groups.<sup>9</sup> Families assigned to the UC group did not

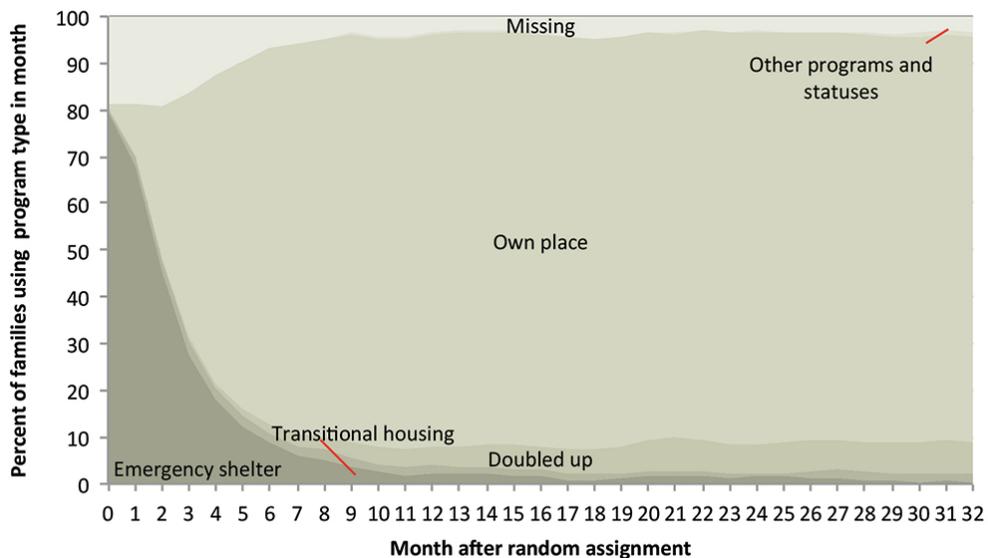
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<sup>9</sup> The results underlying this exhibit are presented in table form in exhibit B-1 at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>.

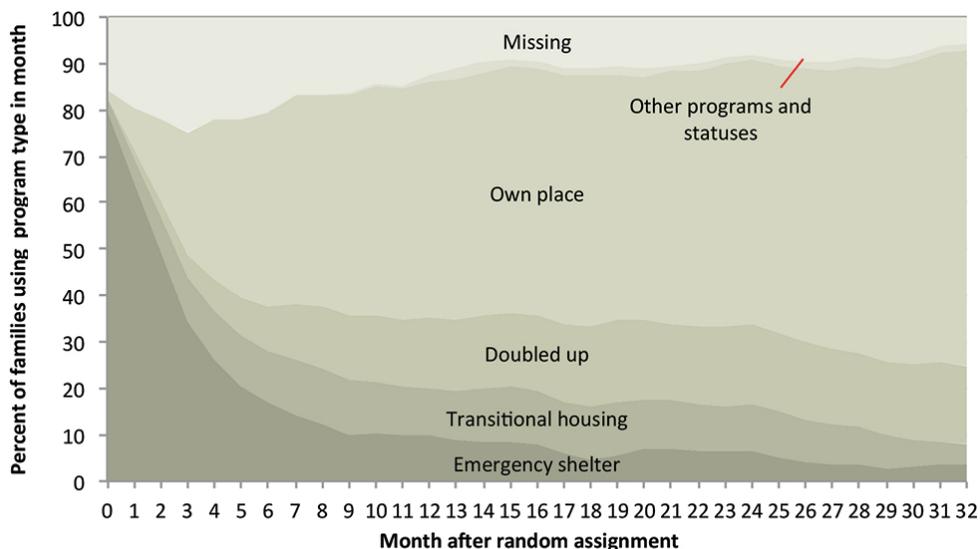
**Exhibit 1**

**SUB Versus UC: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of SUB Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of UC Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*

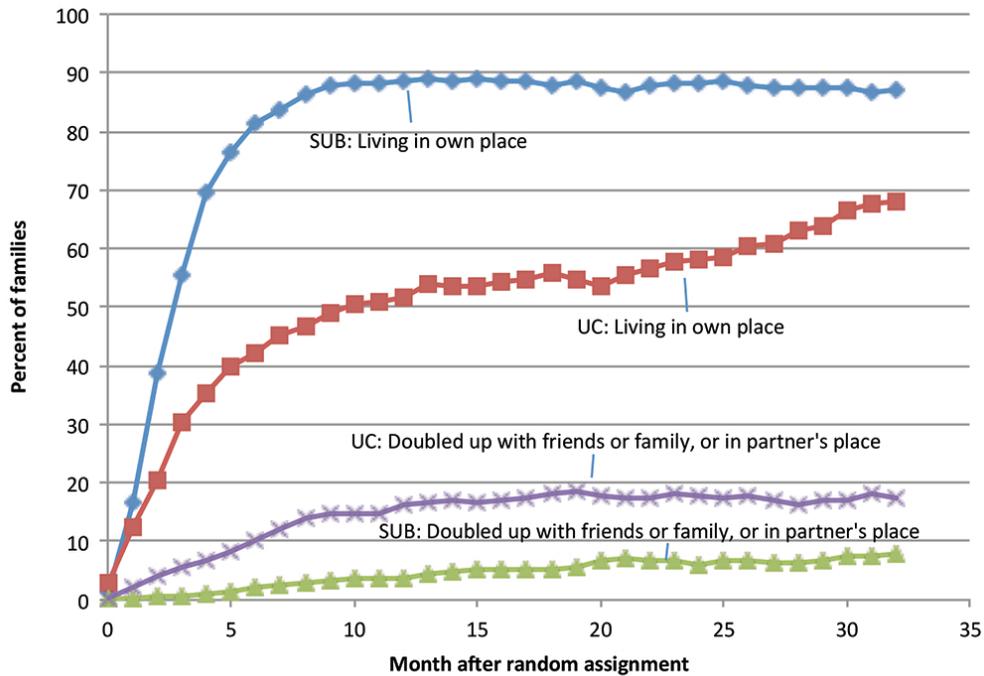


*SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy. UC = usual care.*

receive a referral to any particular program but were free to use whatever assistance they could find on their own. Gubits et al. (2016) reported that families in the UC group used a variety of programs and, by the 37-month followup survey, 30 percent of UC families had used a long-term subsidy.

**Exhibit 2**

**SUB Versus UC: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment**



SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy. UC = usual care.

Exhibit 2 shows that, by month 9 after random assignment, nearly 90 percent of SUB families are living in their own place and that this proportion is maintained throughout the followup period. The proportion of the UC group living in their own place grows relatively quickly in the first 10 months after random assignment and then grows more slowly after that point. By month 32, the proportion of the UC group living in their own place is nearly 70 percent. The differences in proportions between the two groups are statistically significant in all months. The proportions in the families offered priority access to long-term subsidies (SUB group) are about 39 percentage points higher than those in the UC group during months 6 to 9. These impacts gradually decrease to 19 percentage points by month 32 as the UC proportion gradually increases.

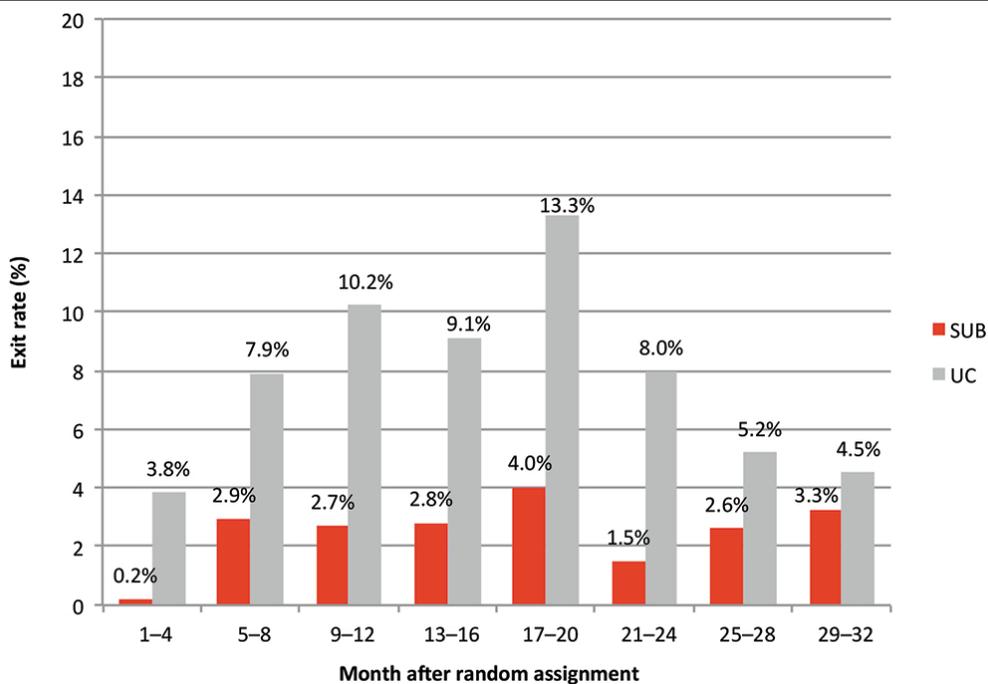
The exhibit also shows the proportion of families in each month who are doubled up. The UC proportion climbs to 17 percent by month 13 and then hovers around that level through month 32. The SUB proportion grows very slowly to about 8 percent in month 32. The differences in all months are statistically significant. About 1 year after random assignment, relative to usual care, assignment to SUB reduces doubling up by about 12 percentage points. We observe this reduction in doubling up through month 32, when the impact is 10 percentage points.

The Living Situation data show that some families do not continue living in their own place over time. The bars in exhibit 3 show the proportion of families in the SUB-versus-UC comparison who exit the status of living in own place in each 4-month period, conditional on having lived in one's

own place at the end of the previous 4-month period. Consistent with higher takeup of long-term subsidies and sustained use of those subsidies relative to usual care, exhibit 3 shows that families assigned to SUB had lower exit rates from living in their own place throughout the followup period. In the first 20 months after random assignment, in any 4-month period, about 2 to 4 percent of families assigned to the SUB group who lived in their own place exit that living situation compared with about 8 to 13 percent of the UC families. Over the entire time period, relative to usual care, priority access to a long-term subsidy (assignment to SUB) reduced the proportion of families with an exit from the status of living in own place from 30 to 16 percent (see exhibits B-2 and B-3 for these impact estimates on exits) and reduced the exit rate for the entire time period from 35 to 16 percent.<sup>10</sup>

### Exhibit 3

#### SUB Versus UC: Rate of Exiting Status of Living in Own Place, by 4-Month Period After Random Assignment



SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy. UC = usual care.

Sample sizes: SUB = 501. UC = 395.

Notes: Exit rates are the percentage of families with an exit divided by the percentage of families who were living in their own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. Exit is defined as not living in own place for at least one of the months in the 4-month period after living in own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. For months 1 to 4, a family is coded as exiting from own place if they had lived in their own place in an earlier month but were no longer doing so. Exit rate for months 1 to 4 uses denominator of those who lived in own place in any month 0 to 3. Underlying percentages for exit rate are regression adjusted, controlling for site and randomization ratio, and are weighted for survey nonresponse to represent full comparison sample.

Source: Family Options Study Program Usage/Living Situation data

<sup>10</sup> The exit rate for the entire time period is defined as the proportion of families who exited from the status of living in own place during months 1 to 32 divided by the proportion of families who ever lived in their own place during months 0 to 31.

## Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing (CBRR) Compared With Usual Care (UC)

Families assigned to the CBRR group received priority access to a short-term rent subsidy provided by a rapid re-housing program. On average, families assigned to the CBRR group who used a short-term rent subsidy did so for about 8 months (Gubits et al., 2016). The Family Options Study short-term and 3-year impact reports found a substantial difference in the use of rapid re-housing temporary subsidies between families randomly assigned to the CBRR and UC groups in the CBRR-versus-UC impact comparison (59 percent compared with 23 percent). However, this difference did not lead to detectable differences in either the proportion living in own place or proportion doubled up at either the 20- or 37-month followup points. The analysis of month-by-month impacts on family living situation presented in this section shows that, relative to usual care, priority access to the short-term rent subsidy offered to families in the CBRR group increased the proportion living in their own place during the first 8 to 10 months after random assignment. These month-by-month effects on family living situation suggest that the impact analysis at the 20- and 37-month followup points did not detect impacts on living situation that occurred early during the followup period but that had diminished by the 20- and 37-month followup points.

The two panels of exhibit 4 show the distributions of living situations in the CBRR and UC groups. Families assigned to the CBRR group start living in their own place sooner than families assigned to UC, and lower proportions have missing information during the first 6 to 8 months.<sup>11</sup>

Exhibit 5 shows the monthly proportions living in own place and doubled up for the two groups. For the CBRR group, the proportion living in their own place quickly rises to 60 percent by month 5 and then levels off through month 18 before a gradual rise begins in month 19. By month 32, 72 percent of the CBRR families are living in their own place. The proportion for the UC group also has its steepest rise in the first few months after random assignment, with a leveling off in months 13 to 20 followed by a gradual rise through month 32.

Priority access to rapid re-housing assistance increased the proportion of families living in their own place through the first year after random assignment.<sup>12</sup> The impacts are substantial in size in the first several months: 17 percentage points in month 1 and 26, 25, and 20 percentage points in the following 3 months. These impacts are consistent with the intention of rapid re-housing programs to move families quickly into their own places. The exhibit also shows positive impacts of 6 to 9 percentage points in months 19 to 24. It is not clear what explains this later period of impacts, after the UC proportion mostly caught up with the CBRR proportion in months 13 and 14

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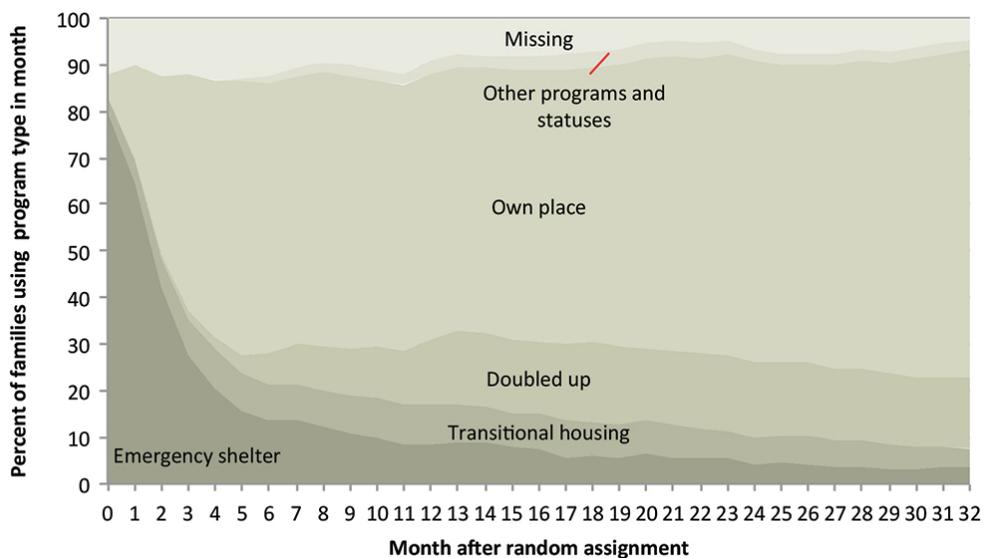
<sup>11</sup> The study did not collect retrospective information on living situations, except for living situations that were inferred based on program use (such as emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and long-term subsidy). The difference in missing information between families assigned to CBRR and to UC might result from the fact that information on use of rapid re-housing (and, by definition, living in own place) was available from HMIS data at the time the family began to receive the assistance. For families assigned to UC (for whom Program Usage data show later takeup of assistance), living situation is not available until either the families responded to a followup survey or took up assistance. Therefore, less use of programs among families assigned to UC in the initial months after random assignment might have resulted in less information about families' living situations.

<sup>12</sup> The differences are statistically significant in every month except month 11. See exhibit B-4 at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>.

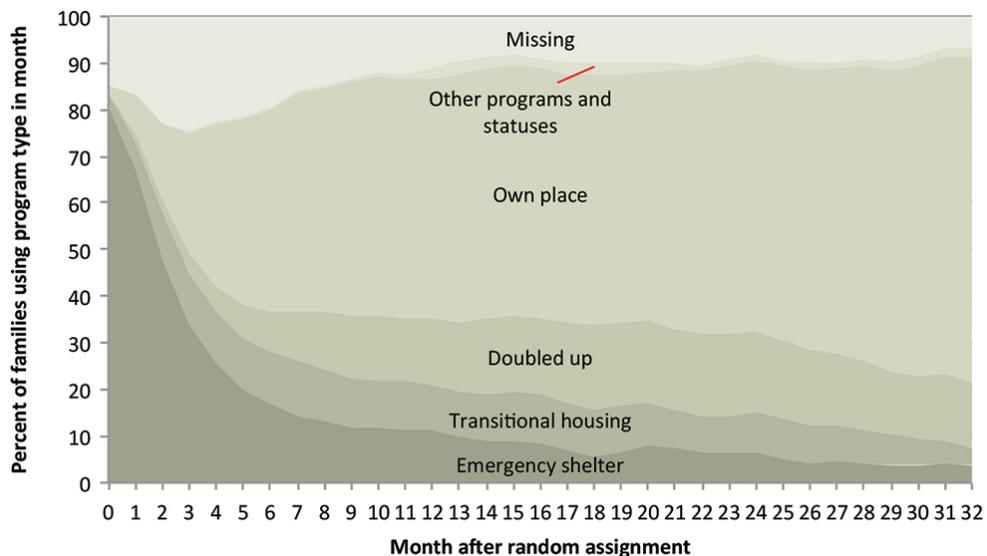
**Exhibit 4**

**CBRR Versus UC: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of CBRR Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of UC Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*

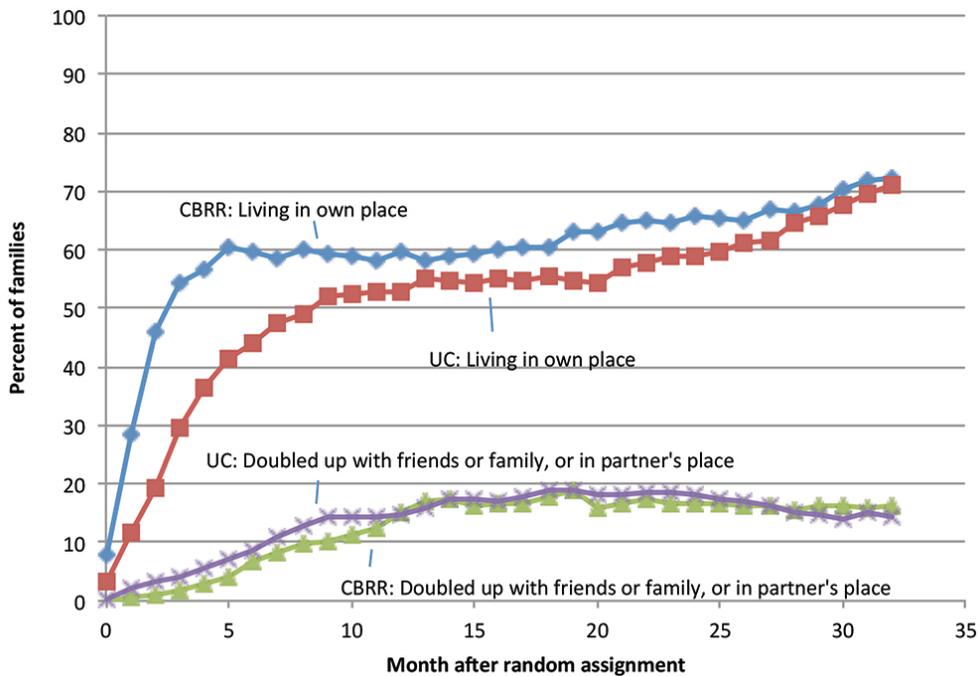


*CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. UC = usual care.*

and presumably after the end of the temporary subsidies offered by the study. This difference might arise from greater use of transitional housing programs among families assigned to UC compared with families assigned to CBRR.

**Exhibit 5**

**CBRR Versus UC: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment**



CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. UC = usual care.

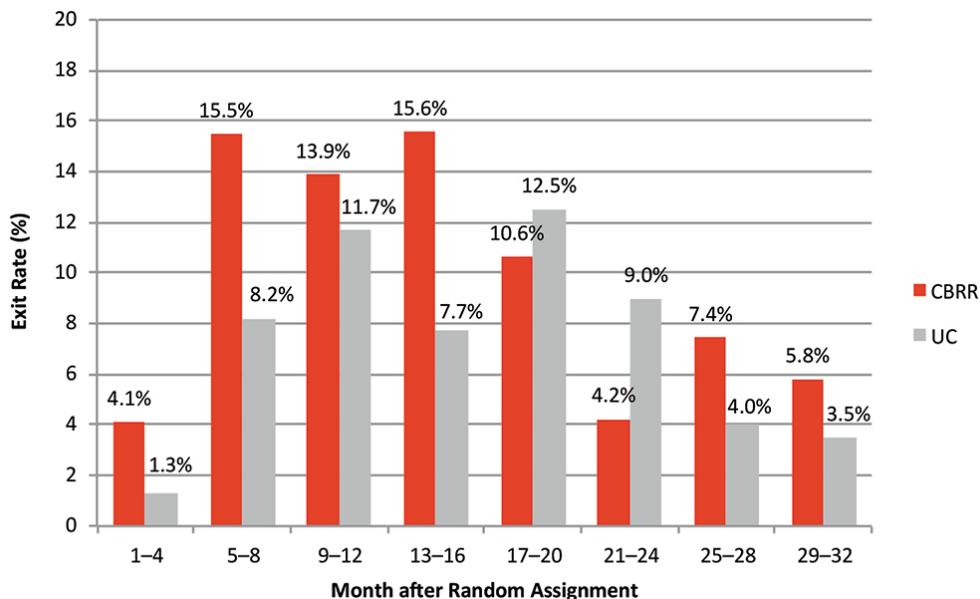
Exhibit 5 also indicates that assignment to CBRR, relative to usual care, reduces the proportion doubled up for a few months after random assignment (statistically significant reductions of 2 to 3 percentage points in months 2 to 5 and of 4 percentage points in month 9). After the first year, the proportions of families doubled up in the CBRR and UC groups are equivalent.

Exhibit 6 displays information on the rates at which families assigned to CBRR and UC exit the status of living in own place after having attained that living situation. This information, combined with information on the month-by-month impacts on exits (see exhibits B-5 and B-6) provides some evidence about whether families using rapid re-housing are able to continue living in their own place after the temporary subsidies end.

Exhibit 6 shows that even though, compared with usual care, assignment to CBRR led to higher proportions of families living in their own place, assignment to CBRR also led to greater movement out of living in their own place (most notably in the first 16 months after random assignment). Take months 5 to 8 after random assignment as an example. Although the vast majority of families assigned to CBRR who were in their own place in month 4 remained in that status, the percentage that exited this status—16 percent—was twice as high as the proportion—8 percent—who left their own place in the UC group. After month 16, exit rates from the status of living in own place are more similar in the CBRR and UC groups and generally lower. Over the entire period,

**Exhibit 6**

**CBRR Versus UC: Rate of Exiting Status of Living in Own Place, by 4-Month Period After Random Assignment**



CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. UC = usual care.

Sample sizes: CBRR = 434. UC = 434.

Notes: Exit rates are the percentage of families with an exit divided by the percentage of families who were living in their own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. Exit is defined as not living in own place for at least one of the months in the 4-month period after living in own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. For months 1 to 4, a family is coded as exiting from own place if they had lived in their own place in an earlier month but were no longer doing so. Exit rate for months 1 to 4 uses denominator of those who lived in own place in any month 0 to 3. Underlying percentages for exit rate are regression adjusted, controlling for site and randomization ratio, and are weighted for survey nonresponse to represent full comparison sample.

Source: Family Options Study Program Usage/Living Situation data

assignment to CBRR, relative to usual care, increases the proportion of families who exited the status of living in own place from 28 to 40 percent and increased the overall exit rate from 33 to 44 percent.

## Project-Based Transitional Housing (PBTH) Compared With Usual Care (UC)

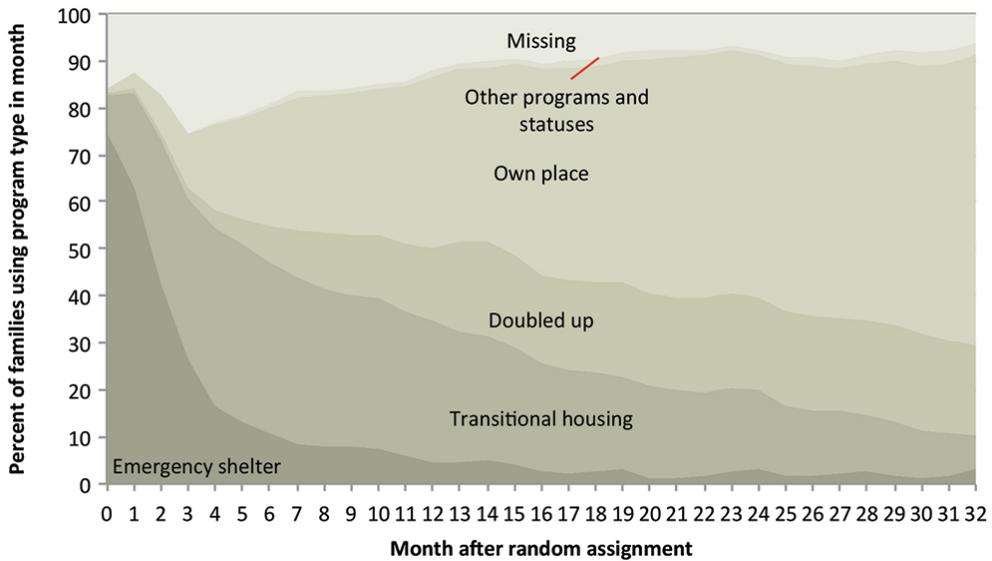
Assignment to the PBTH group offered families priority access to project-based transitional housing. Families who used the offered housing and services stayed in transitional housing for a median of 13 months. The short-term and 3-year impact reports found a difference in the use of transitional housing between the PBTH and UC groups in the PBTH-versus-UC impact comparison (53 versus 35 percent). However, this difference did not lead to detectable differences in either the proportion living in own place or proportion doubled up at either the 20- or 37-month followup points.

Because of the greater use of transitional housing by the PBTH group than by the UC group, we expect to see a lower proportion of PBTH families living in their own place during the first 2 years of the followup period (given that most transitional housing programs can serve a family up to 24 months). Exhibit 7 shows that this result is indeed what happened in this impact comparison.

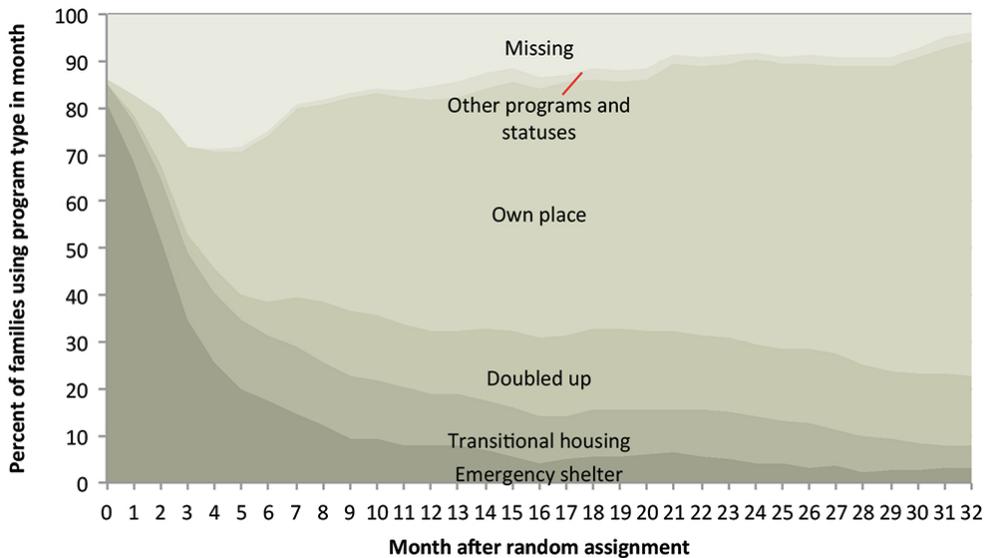
**Exhibit 7**

**PBTH Versus UC: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of PBTH Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of UC Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*PBTH = priority access to transitional housing. UC = usual care.*

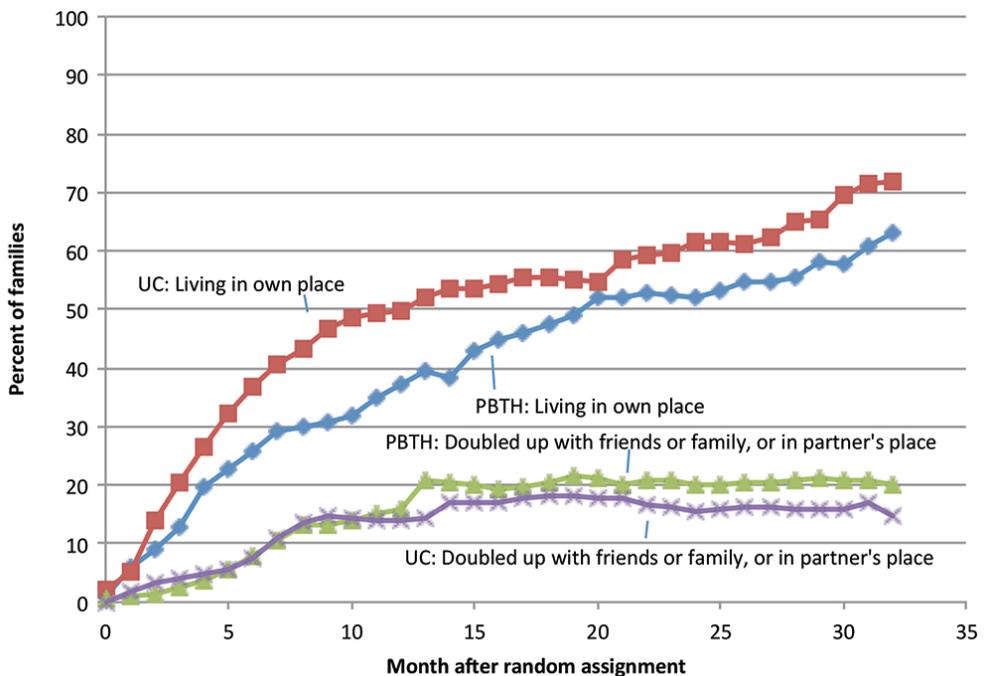
Compared with the UC group, lower proportions of the PBTH group lived in their own place and higher proportions were in transitional housing. Also, lower proportions of the PBTH group stayed in emergency shelter, consistent with findings in the short-term and 3-year impact reports.

Exhibit 8 shows that a lower proportion of members of the PBTH group, relative to the UC group, are living in their own place throughout the first 32 months after random assignment.<sup>13</sup> Although a lower proportion in the PBTH group was expected, given the transitional housing approach, it is somewhat surprising that this difference continues through month 32. We might have expected that, given the maximum stay of 24 months in transitional housing, the proportions would have equalized after the first 2 years. Instead, we find a difference of 9 percentage points even in month 32.<sup>14</sup>

Even though exhibit 8 shows the proportions doubled up in the PBTH group are numerically higher than in the UC group after the first year, the differences are not statistically significant with the exception of a single month (month 13).

### Exhibit 8

**PBTH Versus UC: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment**



PBTH = priority access to transitional housing. UC = usual care.

<sup>13</sup> Results are statistically significant in all months except months 19 to 23 and month 26. See exhibit B-5 at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Gubits et al. (2016) found a statistically nonsignificant 7-percentage-point decrease in living in own house or apartment at the 37-month followup (median followup period equal to 37 months).

## **Long-Term Rent Subsidy (SUB) Compared With Community-Based Rapid Re-Housing (CBRR), SUB Compared With Project-Based Transitional Housing (PBTH), and CBRR Compared With PBTH**

In the next sections, we present results for comparisons of the active interventions with one another. Each pairwise comparison includes only families eligible to be randomized to one of the interventions and who were randomized to one of them.

### **SUB Versus CBRR**

We first examine the SUB-versus-CBRR comparison. The short-term and 3-year impact reports found substantial differences in program use between the SUB and CBRR groups within the SUB-versus-CBRR comparison sample. Families assigned to the SUB group had much higher use of some form of long-term housing subsidy, and families assigned to the CBRR group had much higher use of temporary rapid re-housing subsidies. Families assigned to the CBRR group also had somewhat higher use of transitional housing. At the 20- and 37-month followup points, the study found that, relative to assignment to CBRR, assignment to SUB increased the proportion of families living in their own place and decreased the proportion with recent experience of doubling up because the family could not find or afford a place of their own.

The two panels of exhibit 9 show the distributions of living situations in the SUB and CBRR groups. The exhibit shows that, compared with the CBRR group, the SUB group had higher proportions living in their own place and lower proportions doubled up beginning a few months after random assignment and continuing through the followup period. The exhibit also shows lower proportions of families in the SUB group staying in transitional housing and emergency shelter, as has been noted in the study's prior reports.

Exhibit 10 shows the monthly proportions living in own place and doubled up within the two groups.<sup>15</sup> Immediately after random assignment, the CBRR group, as compared with the SUB group, has a higher proportion of families living in their own place (by 9 percentage points in the month of random assignment and 14 and 10 percentage points in following 2 months). In month 3, the groups have nearly equivalent proportions, and then the SUB group has a higher proportion of families living in their own place for the remainder of the followup period. Although families assigned to both the CBRR and SUB groups received priority access to subsidies to rent private-market housing,<sup>16</sup> the rapid re-housing assistance offered to the CBRR group enabled families to return to living in their own place slightly faster on average in the first 3 months after random assignment. This result suggests that, on average, takeup of the short-term subsidies offered to the CBRR group occurs more quickly than takeup of HCVs, the most common type of long-term subsidy offered to families in

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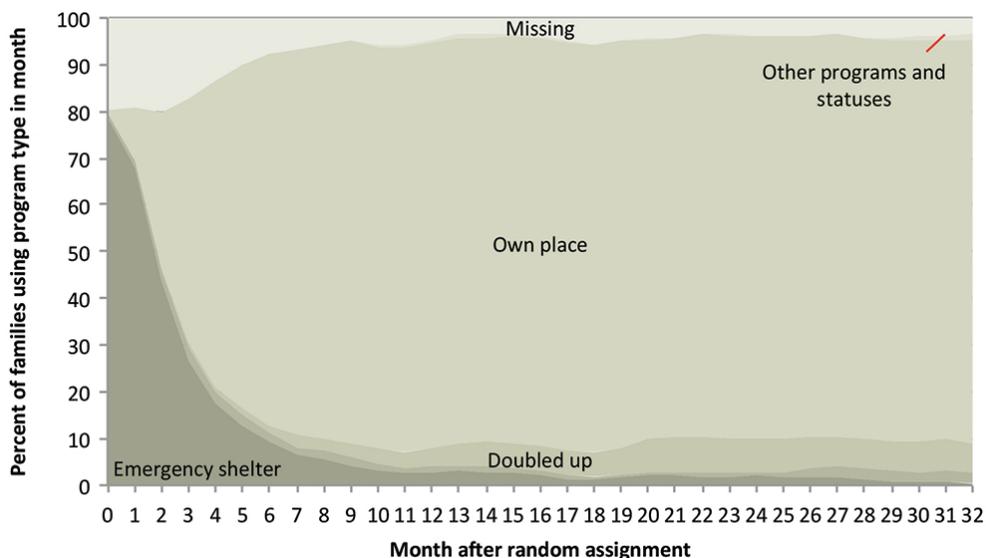
<sup>15</sup> Exhibit B-8, online at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>, shows the data in table form.

<sup>16</sup> Of all families assigned to the SUB group, 92 percent were offered HCVs. The other 8 percent were offered either public housing assistance or project-based vouchers.

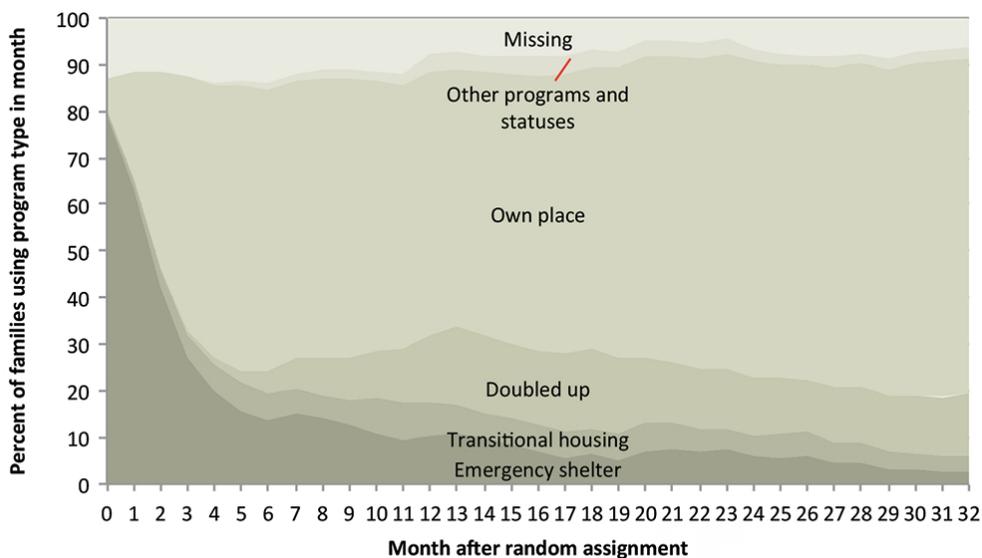
**Exhibit 9**

**SUB Versus CBRR: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of SUB Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of CBRR Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*

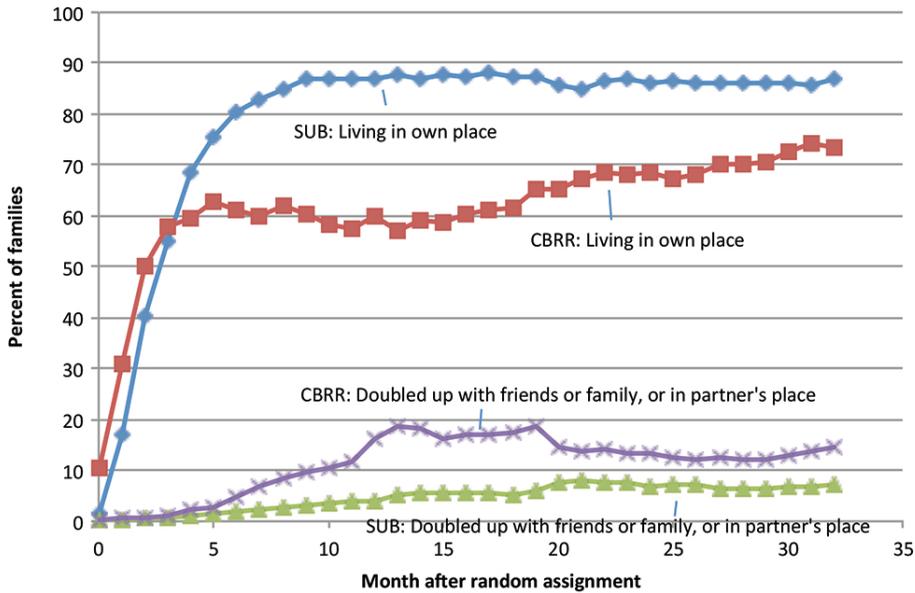


CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy.

the study. Two differences between short-term rent subsidies and HCVs may explain this finding. First, this finding appears consistent with distinctions between the inspection requirements for the short-term rent subsidies provided by HPRP programs and HCVs (Gubits et al., 2015). Habitability

**Exhibit 10**

**SUB Versus CBRR: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment**



CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy.

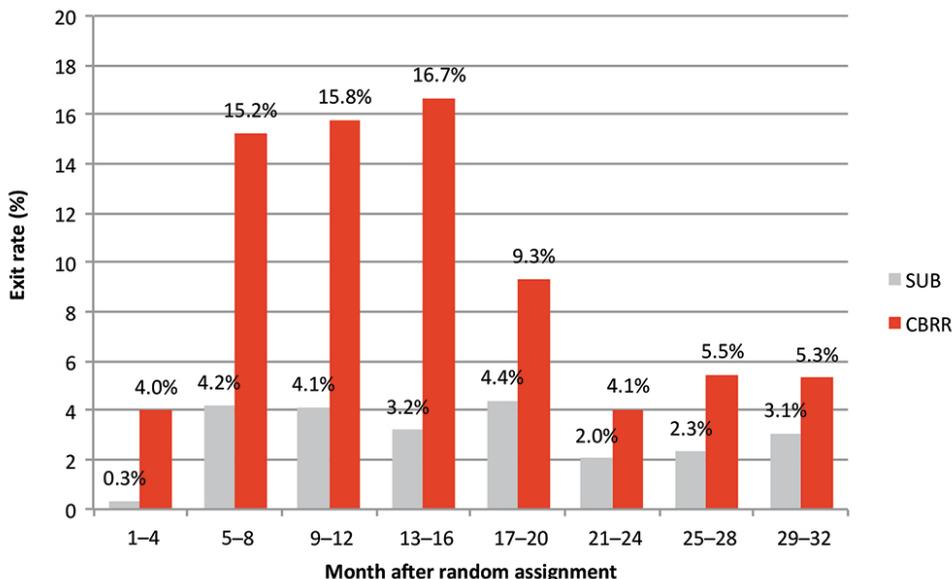
inspection requirements for HPRP were slightly less stringent than for HCV and, thus, might take less time to complete. Second, the short-term rent subsidy may take less time to administer than the HCV because of its simpler determination of subsidy amount. The short-term subsidy provided to families assigned to the CBRR group represented a substantial fraction of monthly rent; however, the short-term subsidy was rarely determined based on participant contribution of a fixed percentage of income, as is the case in the HCV program and other housing assistance programs such as public housing. More than one-half of families were referred to CBRR programs that set the subsidy as a fixed monthly amount, regardless of monthly rent or family income. These operational distinctions in the programs might explain why families assigned priority access to short-term subsidies were able to move to housing of their own more quickly than families assigned to long-term subsidies.

Beginning in month 6, the SUB group had lower proportions doubled up than the CBRR group. Assignment to the SUB group reduced the proportion doubled up by about 11 to 12 percentage points in months 12 to 19 and by about 5 to 6 percentage points in the later months of the followup period. This finding indicates that, over time and relative to assignment to SUB, higher proportions of families assigned to CBRR were living in doubled-up situations.

It might be expected that, given the temporary nature of the rapid re-housing subsidy, a higher proportion of families assigned to priority access to CBRR programs would have exits from the status of living in own place as compared with the SUB group. Exhibit 11 shows that, compared with the SUB group, the CBRR group did indeed have higher exit rates from living in their own place throughout the followup period. Even though assignment to CBRR led to higher proportions

**Exhibit 11**

**SUB Versus CBRR: Rate of Exiting Status of Living in Own Place, by 4-Month Period After Random Assignment**



CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy. Sample sizes: SUB = 362. CBRR = 290.

Notes: Exit rates are the percentage of families with an exit divided by the percentage of families who were living in their own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. Exit is defined as not living in own place for at least one of the months in the 4-month period after living in own place in the last month of the previous 4-month period. For months 1 to 4, a family is coded as exiting from own place if they had lived in their own place in an earlier month but were no longer doing so. Exit rate for months 1 to 4 uses denominator of those who lived in own place in any month 0 to 3. Underlying percentages for exit rate are regression adjusted, controlling for site and randomization ratio, and are weighted for survey nonresponse to represent full comparison sample. Source: Family Options Study Program Usage/Living Situation data

of families living in their own place sooner than for families assigned to SUB, families assigned to CBRR were less able than families assigned to SUB to sustain this living situation. Over the entire time period, relative to assignment to CBRR, assignment to SUB reduced the proportion with an exit from the status of living in own place from 41 to 17 percent (exhibits B-9 and B-10) and reduced the exit rate from 44 to 18 percent. The pattern of difference in exits during the early followup period provides evidence that some families could not continue living in their own place when their temporary subsidy ended. Most families were able to remain living in their own place, however.

**SUB Versus PBTH**

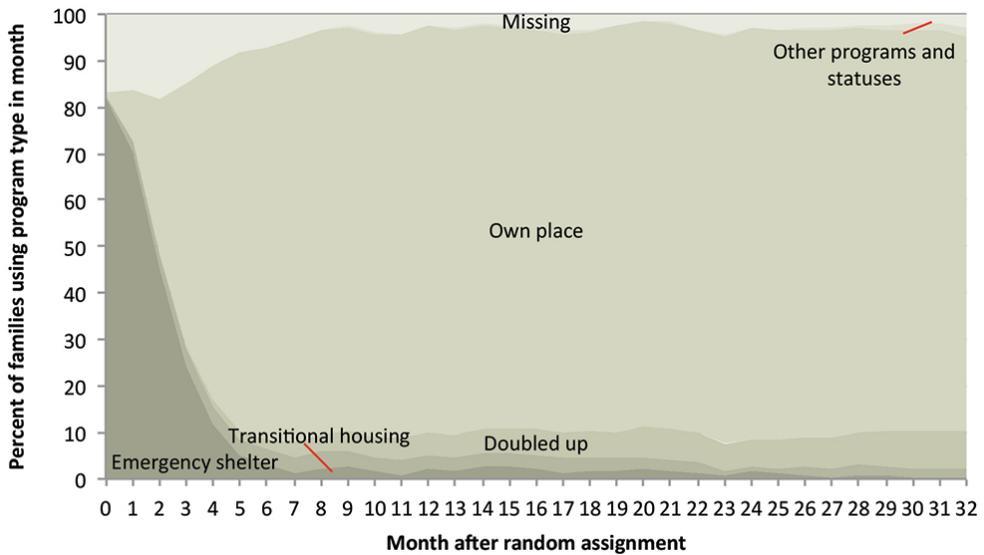
Next, we turn to the SUB-versus-PBTH comparison. In this comparison, the differences in program use were large in the expected ways; use of a long-term rent subsidy was much higher in the SUB group and use of transitional housing was much higher in the PBTH group. Previous reports found that, at the 20- and 37-month followup points and relative to assignment to PBTH, assignment to SUB increased the proportion of families living in their own place and decreased the proportion with recent experience of doubling up.

Exhibit 12 shows the distributions of living situations over time in the SUB and PBTH groups within the SUB-versus-PBTH comparison. Large differences are apparent in proportions living in own place (higher in the SUB group than the PBTH group), doubled up (higher in the PBTH group) transitional housing (higher in the PBTH group), and missing (higher in the PBTH group).

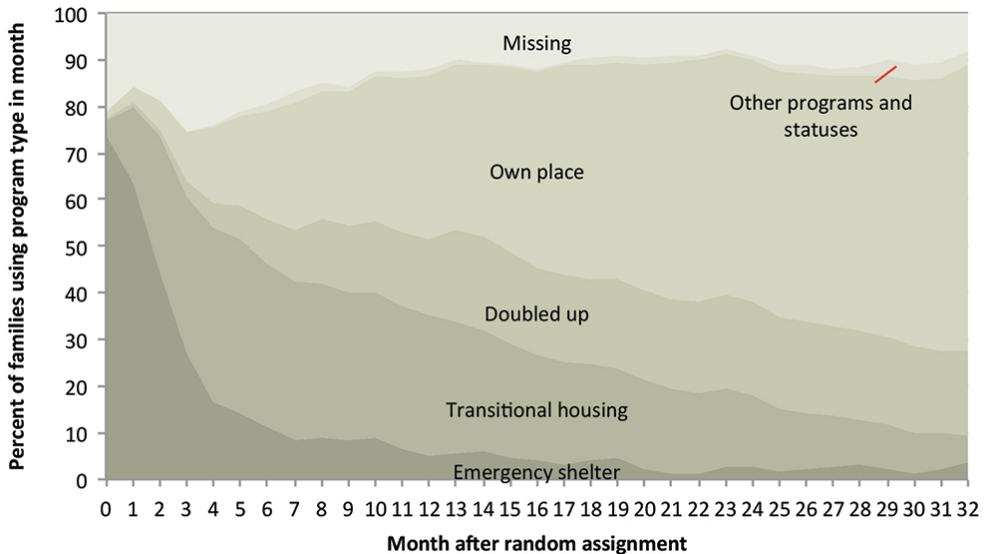
**Exhibit 12**

**SUB Versus PBTH: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of SUB Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of PBTH Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



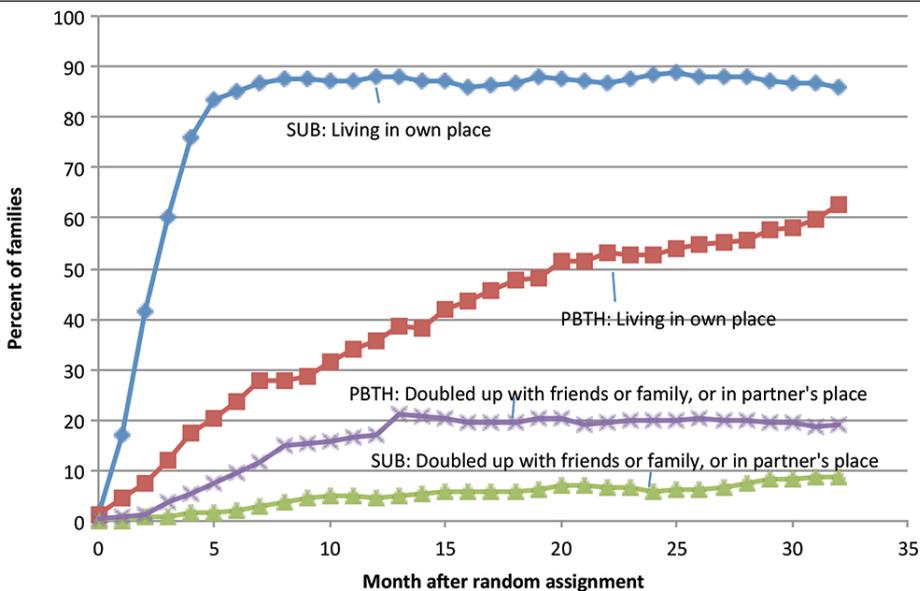
*PBTH = priority access to transitional housing. SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy.*

Exhibit 13 shows the proportions living in own place and doubled up for the SUB and PBTH groups. The SUB group has a much higher proportion of families living in their own place throughout the followup period. In month 32, the difference is 23 percentage points.

The proportion doubled up in the PBTH group remains constant from month 13 forward at about 20 percent. The corresponding SUB proportion is considerably lower but grows over time, to about 9 percent in month 32.

**Exhibit 13**

**SUB Versus PBTH: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment**



*PBTH = priority access to transitional housing. SUB = priority access to long-term rent subsidy.*

**CBRR Versus PBTH**

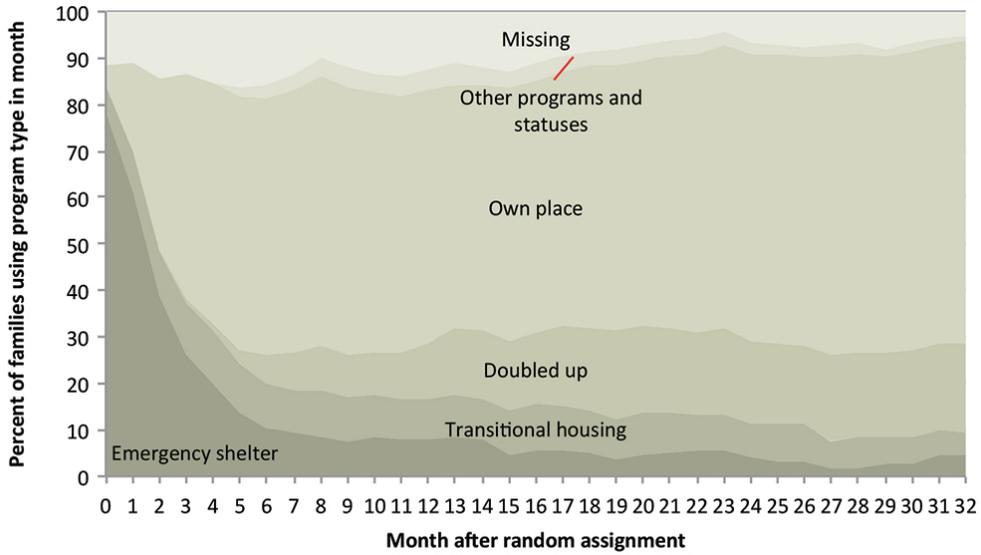
The sixth impact comparison is CBRR versus PBTH. The short-term and 3-year impact reports found that program use in this comparison differed in the expected ways (higher use of rapid re-housing for the CBRR group, higher use of transitional housing for the PBTH group) but detected no differences in living in own place or recent doubling up. The lack of a detected difference in proportions living in own place is surprising, given the philosophical difference between the rapid re-housing and transitional housing approaches.

However, looking at all months, rather than only the two followup points, reveals that the distributions of living situations for the two groups differ markedly in the first 2 years after random assignment (exhibit 14). During this time, the exhibit shows a higher proportion living in own place in the CBRR group and a higher proportion using transitional housing for the PBTH group.

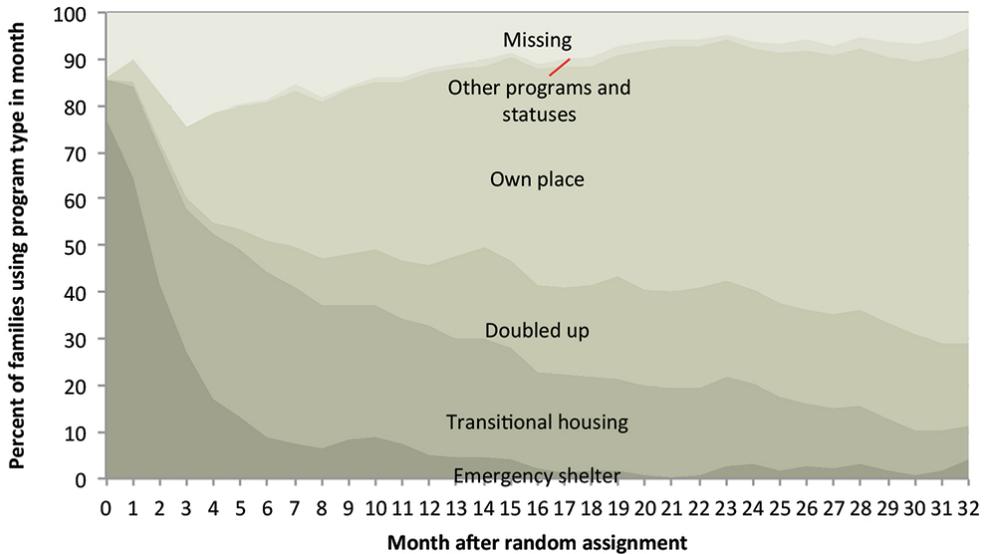
**Exhibit 14**

**CBRR Versus PBTH: Housing Status**

*Panel A: Housing Status of CBRR Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*



*Panel B: Housing Status of PBTH Families for 32 Months After Random Assignment*

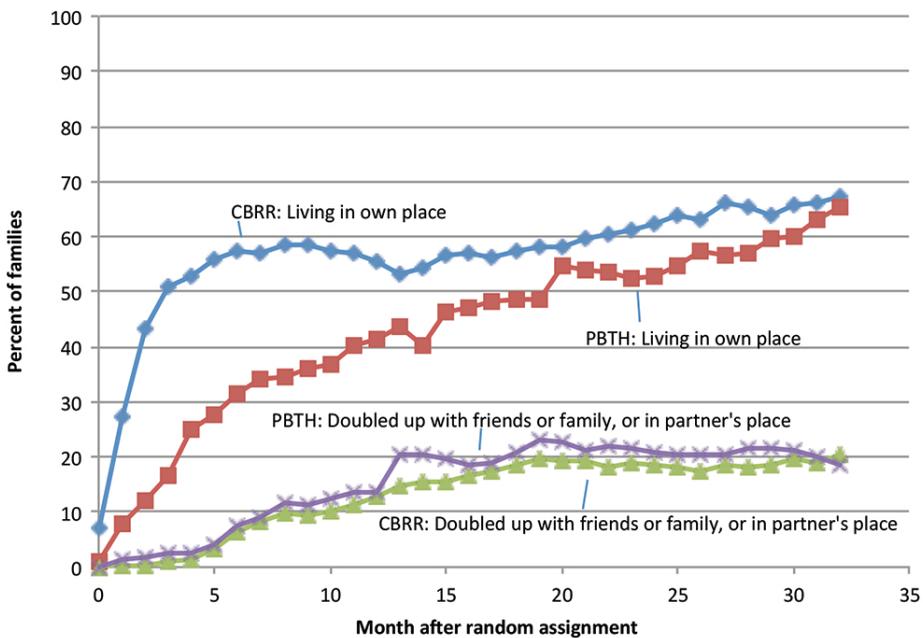


*CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. PBTH = priority access to transitional housing.*

Exhibit 15 shows large differences in the proportion living in their own place between the CBRR and PBTH groups in the first year of the study. These differences gradually become smaller and largely disappear by month 32. This exhibit shows that the 20-month impact analysis that examined living situation in the 6 months before the short-term followup survey could not capture the difference in living in own place that occurred in the first year after random assignment.<sup>17</sup> No differences are detected in the proportion of families in the CBRR and PBTH groups who are doubled up in each month.

### Exhibit 15

CBRR Versus PBTH: Percent of Families Living in Own Place and Doubled Up, by Month After Random Assignment



CBRR = priority access to community-based rapid re-housing. PBTH = priority access to transitional housing.

## Summary

This article analyzes the living situations of the Family Options Study families, making use of month-by-month Living Situation data. Given the different approaches of programs offered to families in the study, we hypothesized that (1) assignment to SUB or CBRR would initially increase the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care; (2) assignment to PBTH would initially reduce the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care, assignment to SUB, and assignment to CBRR; and (3) assignment to CBRR would increase the proportion, relative to assignment to SUB, of families exiting the status of living in own place.

<sup>17</sup> The tabular presentation of monthly impact estimates is in exhibit B-12 at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/Family-Living-Situation-Appendix.pdf>.

We find evidence supporting all these hypotheses. We find that assignment to SUB and assignment to CBRR both initially increase the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care. The proportion of families living in their own place in the SUB group remains higher than in the UC group throughout the followup period. In the CBRR-versus-UC comparison, the proportions of the two groups living in their own place equalize by month 32. In the SUB-versus-CBRR comparison, assignment to CBRR moves families into the status of living in own place faster (higher proportions in months 0 to 2). After that point, high takeup of the offered programs in the SUB group results in that group having higher proportions living in their own place in month 4 and after.

We find that assignment to PBTH does initially lower the proportion of families living in their own place relative to usual care. Surprisingly, the proportion in the PBTH group remains lower than in the UC group at month 32. The PBTH group also initially has fewer families living in their own place than in the SUB and CBRR groups. The PBTH proportion remains lower than that in the SUB group through month 32 and becomes roughly equivalent to the proportion in the CBRR group by the end of the followup period.

Looking at exits from the status of living in own place, we find that assignment to CBRR does increase these exits relative to assignment to SUB and also relative to assignment to PBTH or UC. The increase in exits occurs in the first 18 months after random assignment, the time when rapid re-housing temporary subsidies would be ending. We also find that assignment to SUB lowers exits from living in own place relative to usual care.

The data on the living situation of doubled up show that, after the first year, the CBRR, PBTH, and UC groups have constant and equivalent proportions of families doubled up. The SUB group has a lower proportion of families who are doubled up, but this proportion slowly increases throughout the followup period.

These findings on family living situations augment evidence about the relative effects of the interventions studied in the Family Options Study. Most importantly, this analysis builds on what we know about priority access to long- and short-term rental assistance. Gubits et al. (2016) concluded that having priority access to a long-term rent subsidy produces substantial benefits for families. This analysis shows that in addition to reducing housing instability, improving child and adult well-being, and reducing food insecurity, priority access to long-term subsidies also increased the proportion of families living in their own housing each month in the 3-year followup period and reduced the proportion of families who lived doubled up. High proportions of families offered long-term subsidies were able to lease up with this assistance, sustain the assistance throughout the followup period, and maintain independent housing.

This analysis also provides additional evidence about the relative effects of short-term rent subsidies. Although priority access to short-term subsidies produced similar housing stability outcomes for families as usual care at a lower cost during the entire 3-year followup period, this analysis finds that, in the first 8 months after random assignment, priority access to short-term subsidies increased housing independence relative to usual care. In addition, compared with priority access

to long-term subsidies, the offer of a short-term subsidy hastened family's return to independent living in the first 2 months after random assignment. Exits from independent housing were also higher for families who were offered short-term assistance relative to long-term subsidies, transitional housing, and usual care.

Multiple questions remain that warrant future investigation using the Family Options Study Program Usage and Living Situation data. These questions include: What percentages of families living in their own place are doing so with homeless and housing program assistance? What happens to families immediately after the end of program assistance? What are the typical lengths of time and episodic patterns of being doubled up? How do doubled-up living situations relate to other outcomes for families?

## Appendix A. Living Situation Data Construction

The Program Usage data set construction is described in Gubits et al. (2016), appendix A. The Living Situation data were based on a multipart survey item (see exhibit A-1) that was asked of family heads in the short-term 6-, 12-, and 27-month tracking surveys and in the longer, more detailed 20- and 37-month followup surveys. The surveys each asked for the address where the family was currently living and how long they had been living there. However, the surveys did not ask how long the family had been in the current living situation. The study team assumed that the length of time in the current living situation was the same as the length of time living at the current address. The survey data show that this assumption was not always correct, particularly when families were in doubled-up situations. In many cases, families' responses switched back and forth between *doubled up with a relative or friend and paying part of rent* and *doubled up with a relative or friend and not paying part of rent*. In general, when information about when a living situation status began was conflicting, the living situation was deemed to have started on the survey date.

The living situation statuses intersect with data on families' program use in following manner.

- Families using certain types of programs (rapid re-housing, the long-term subsidies offered to SUB families, permanent supportive housing, public housing, and project-based vouchers/Section 8 projects) are always considered to be living in their own places.
- Families staying in transitional housing are considered to not be living in their own place.
- Living situations besides *living in own place* are considered to be mutually exclusive with all other living situations and use of programs.

The Program Usage and Living Situation data have monthly indicator variables from the calendar month of random assignment through either (1) the calendar month of response to the 37-month survey (37-month survey respondents) or (2) the calendar month containing the 1,129th day after random assignment, the median 37-month response point (37-month survey nonrespondents).

**Exhibit A-1**

Survey Item on Living Situation (1 of 2)

A1. Which of the following best describes your current living situation?

<i>Would you say you are living/staying in...</i>	YES	NO	REF	DK
<A4a> A house or apartment that you own or rent. This does not include your parent’s or guardian’s home or apartment.	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4a≠1</b> <A4b> Your partner’s (boy/girlfriend’s/fiancé’s, significant other’s) place.	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4b≠1</b> <A4c> A friend or relative’s house or apartment, <b>and paying part of the rent</b> [PROBE: THIS INCLUDES YOUR PARENT’S or GUARDIAN’S HOUSE OR APARTMENT OR OTHER FRIEND OR RELATIVE]	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4c≠1</b> <A4d> A friend or relative’s house or apartment, <b>but not</b> paying part of the rent [PROBE: THIS INCLUDES YOUR PARENT’S or GUARDIAN’S HOUSE OR APARTMENT OR OTHER FRIEND OR RELATIVE]	1	2	7	8
<b><i>CAP1: We ask A4a, A4b, A4c, or A4d until we have a ‘yes’ response and then skip to A5. Once we have a YES SKIP TO A5; Otherwise, continue down A4e through A4p until a YES response is reached.</i></b>				
<b>BASE: A4a OR A4b OR A4C OR A4d ≠ 1</b> <A4e> A permanent housing program with services to help you keep your housing (on site or coming to you) <b>IF YES: COLLECT NAME OF PROGRAM:</b> <b>&lt;A4E_1_OTHER&gt;_____ THEN SKIP TO A5</b>	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4e≠1</b> <A4f> A transitional housing program <b>IF YES: COLLECT NAME OF PROGRAM: &lt;A4F_1_OTHER&gt;_____ THEN SKIP TO A5</b>	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4f≠1</b> <A4g> A domestic violence shelter <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A5</b>	1	2	7	8
<b>BASE: A4g≠1</b> <A4h> An emergency shelter <b>IF YES: COLLECT NAME OF PROGRAM: &lt;A4H_1_OTHER&gt;_____ THEN SKIP TO A5</b>	1	2	7	8

**Exhibit A-1**

Survey Item on Living Situation (2 of 2)

Would you say you are living/staying in...	YES	NO	REF	DK
BASE: A4h≠1 <A4i> A voucher hotel or motel <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4i≠1 <A4j> A hotel or motel you pay for yourself <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4j≠1 <A4k> A residential drug or alcohol treatment program <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4k≠1 <A4l> Jail or prison <b>IF YES: AND INCARCERATED FLAG1=NO or DK READ TERMINATE SCRIPT 1 IF YES AND INCARCERATED FLAG1=YES SKIP TO A9.</b>  <A4LCHK> Incarceration check is a check for interviewer’s if ICHK=Noor DK and A4l=yes. (1=Verify A4l, 2=Verify incarceration Check.)	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4l≠1 <A4m> A car or other vehicle <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4m≠1 <A4n> An abandoned building <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4n≠1 <A4o> Anywhere outside [PROBE: STREETS, PARKS, ETC.] <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8
BASE: A4o≠1 Somewhere else? <A4p> OTHER → SPECIFY: <A4P_1_OTHER>  _____ <b>IF YES: SKIP TO A9</b>	1	2	7	8

**Acknowledgments**

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