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“Our Kids Count Too”: The Failure of the Chicago Housing Authority and the Chicago Public Schools to Jointly Address the Needs of Children Relocated during the Plan for Transformation

Project description

The project examines the extent to which the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) coordinated with one another in order to support children whose families were relocated during the Plan for Transformation and provides recommendations for how urban school departments and housing authorities can work together to improve the experiences of children and families affected by public housing policy. Although the CHA made an effort to help families transition smoothly, such as hiring relocation counselors, there were few supports put in place to help children stay in the same school following relocation. The turnover in schools and instability that kids faced following the implementation of the Plan for Transformation negatively impacted their school experiences both academically and socially. The project combines information gathered through interviews and analysis of primary and secondary sources to highlight the experiences of children and families who were relocated from the CHA’s Robert Taylor Homes high-rise development. The research shows that there was little collaboration between the CHA and CPS, which meant that as children changed schools, they experienced disrupted academic and social experiences. Had the CHA and CPS coordinated more effectively to support relocated children and families, they would have been able to provide more stable school experiences to children in public housing, increasing the likelihood of positive academic and life outcomes.

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Name and Department of course instructor/faculty supervisor for project

Public Policy, Andrew Hammond (Second-Reader)

**“Our Kids Count Too”: The Failure of the Chicago Housing Authority and the Chicago
Public Schools to Jointly Address the Needs of Children Relocated during the Plan for
Transformation**

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Public Policy B.A. Thesis, The University of Chicago

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Abstract

This paper examines the extent to which the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) coordinated with one another in order to support children whose families were relocated during the Plan for Transformation and provides recommendations for how urban school departments and housing authorities can work together to improve the experiences of children and families affected by public housing policy. Although the CHA made an effort to help families transition smoothly, such as hiring relocation counselors, there were few supports put in place to help children stay in the same school following relocation. The turnover in schools and instability that kids faced following the implementation of the Plan for Transformation negatively impacted their school experiences both academically and socially. This paper combines information gathered through interviews and analysis of primary and secondary sources to highlight the experiences of children and families who were relocated from the CHA's Robert Taylor Homes high-rise development. The research shows that there was little collaboration between the CHA and CPS, which meant that as children changed schools, they experienced disrupted academic and social experiences. Had the CHA and CPS coordinated more effectively to support relocated children and families, they would have been able to provide more stable school experiences to children in public housing, increasing the likelihood of positive academic and life outcomes.

CHICAGO PUBLIC HOUSING: A STORY OF NEGLECT AND ISOLATION

The experiences of children growing up in public housing developments run by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) have long been an area of fascination and concern for social scientists, media, and the general public. The picture that has often been painted is one of single parent households, exposure to extreme levels of poverty and violence, and home lives wrought with anxiety and fear.¹ As a result of growing up in an environment neglected by city leaders and isolated from Chicago's upper and middle class residents, children living in the city's public housing high-rises experienced both physical and psychological trauma in their own communities.² The housing developments were characterized by uncollected litter, undelivered services, and unprotected public spaces.³ Gang activity overran many of the high-rises, as residents shot each other over turf wars and sold drugs to make their livings or bought them to feed their addictions.⁴ Many youth living in Chicago's high-rise public housing communities encountered terror and loss at a level that most people do not witness in their entire lifetimes—watching their friends and neighbors get shot and killed, seeing their family members fall victim to domestic and sexual violence, and getting involved with gangs as a means of survival.⁵

¹ Alex Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here* (United States: First Anchor Books, 1991).

² D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=285053&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

³ Hunt, 259.

⁴ Hunt, 259; Audrey Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: Voice of Witness, 2013), 47, 102.

⁵ Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*, x–xi; Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, 48.

The Chicago public housing developments had a disproportionately high number of youth. In many cases, single parents, typically single mothers, were living in units with upwards of three or four children.⁶ This was the case at the Robert Taylor Homes, where children outnumbered adults three to one.⁷ The high number of children in Chicago's public housing, in turn, burdened parents trying to make ends meet, overwhelmed local social services, and resulted in high-levels of social chaos, as children often had free reign of their housing developments with limited supervision.⁸ The lack of supervision resulted in children looking for places to play with their friends; they used walls as their canvases, elevators as their playgrounds, and CHA-maintained landscaping as their backyard play areas.⁹ Over time, the children's play turned into disruptive vandalism, such as breaking lightbulbs and throwing objects at people and windows, that interfered with quality of life in the complexes.¹⁰

With such high numbers of school-aged children living in neighborhoods where the public housing complexes were located, the schools also quickly became overcrowded. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) continuously failed to meet the needs of public housing residents. As the developments grew more populated, classrooms filled up, sometimes with as many as 40 children in one class.¹¹ CPS, however, refused to add new buildings or increase funding at existing schools. The over-populated schools deteriorated quickly, and the combination of over-sized classes and failing buildings created serious educational obstacles for children living in

⁶ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 147.

⁷ Hunt, 148.

⁸ Hunt, 146.

⁹ Hunt, 155–56.

¹⁰ Hunt, 155–56.

¹¹ Hunt, 162.

neighborhoods that housed large CHA complexes.¹² Overtime, graduation rates declined in the schools around many of the public housing high-rise developments, in particular the Robert Taylor Homes.¹³ The increased number of youth dropping out of school led to greater gang involvement and violence in and around the public housing communities, further reducing the quality of life for children and families.

The problems faced by residents living in Chicago public housing were exacerbated by the CHA's failure to care for its dilapidated high-rise public housing developments that were unsafe for children and families, both socially and physically. An example of this is the story of Eric Morse, a five-year-old boy who was dangled and then dropped out of a fourteenth story window in 1994 after he refused to steal candy for older boys living in his housing complex.¹⁴ CHA residents and the greater public not only attributed his death to the two older boys who held him out the window, but also to the CHA for failing to maintain units in its developments. The apartment from which Morse fell had been poorly secured, making it easy for local kids to get into the unit and subsequently to access the windows, which had only loosely attached boards covering them.¹⁵ This was true not only of the Ida B. Wells Homes where Morse lived, but also of all of the large-scale high-rise developments operated by CHA in the 1990s.

¹² Sudhir Alladi. Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 25–26.

¹³ Venkatesh, 25–26.

¹⁴ Susan Kuczka and Flynn McRoberts, "5-Year-Old Was Killed over Candy," *chicagotribune.com*, accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-941015-eric-morse-story.html>.

¹⁵ McRoberts.

Accidents related to poor building maintenance that involved young children were common, such as falls over unsecured balconies or down the shafts of faulty elevators.¹⁶

THE PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION AND ITS EFFECT ON CHILDREN

In 2000, after having been on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) list of troubled housing authorities for nearly two decades, the CHA announced the Plan for Transformation in an effort to improve the state of public housing in Chicago and create a better quality of life for the city's residents.¹⁷ The Plan for Transformation was launched by the CHA on the heels of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Hope VI program, which had provided funding to local housing authorities in the 1990s in order to "enable revitalization and transformation of the physical site of severely distressed public housing developments and the social dynamics of life for low-income residents at that site, or in any off-site replacement housing."¹⁸ CHA had begun its housing reform in the late 90s with money from the Hope VI program, but on a much smaller scale than the Plan for Transformation.¹⁹ As the new millennium approached, the CHA still had much work to do to reverse the neglect it had inflicted on its high-rise communities and thus was a clear contender when HUD opened up a request for proposals under its Moving to Work (MTW) program. MTW provides public housing authorities "the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally-designed strategies that use Federal dollars more efficiently, help residents find employment

¹⁶ Venkatesh, *American Project*, 26–27.

¹⁷ "Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation" (Chicago Housing Authority, January 6, 2000), 11, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/CHAFY2000-ANNUAL-PLAN.PDF>.

¹⁸ "Funding Availability for Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing (Hope VI Revitalization) Fiscal Year 1998" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, March 31, 1998).

¹⁹ "Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation," 15.

and become self-sufficient, and increase housing choices for low-income families.”²⁰ In line with the Hope VI and MTW plans, the overarching goal of the Plan for Transformation was to reduce socio-economic segregation, eliminate the pockets of extreme poverty that existed in the public housing high-rises by razing the high-rise complexes, and create mixed-income developments that would integrate households of different income levels into the same communities.²¹ In addition to reducing the areas of concentrated poverty, the CHA hoped to reduce the problems associated with drugs and violence that were present in many of the high-rises and improve outcomes for families.²²

The Plan for Transformation was estimated to cost \$1.5 billion and called for the demolition of 18,532 public housing units and subsequent construction of 25,000 new units over the course of ten years.²³ More than two-thirds of the demolished units were located in the public housing high-rises for which the CHA was often known.²⁴ Due to real events as well as media sensationalization, many Chicago residents associated these high-rise public housing communities, including the Robert Taylor Homes, with gang violence, debilitating poverty, and incidents such as children being thrown over balconies. Most of the high-rise public housing complexes had been neglected for years, and as a result, had become increasingly unsafe for habitation, condemned by HUD as being “beyond repair.”²⁵ At a loss for how to improve the

²⁰ “Moving to Work - Public and Indian Housing - HUD | HUD.Gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),” accessed April 18, 2018, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/mtw.

²¹ “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 11.

²² “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 7.

²³ “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 13.

²⁴ “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 17.

²⁵ “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 13.

high-rise communities, which were viewed by many city leaders and private-market citizens as an economic and social burden, the city opted to raze the high-rise buildings and begin construction on the mixed-income communities.²⁶

Demolition was a key component of the Plan for Transformation, which meant that thousands of CHA residents were forced vacate their homes before new ones could be built. In the interim between the high rises being demolished and new developments being constructed, there were approximately 16,500 households eligible for relocation.²⁷ To accommodate the high number of people who needed housing while the Plan was being implemented, the CHA granted upwards of 6,000 residents Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), which allowed them to rent on the private market using a publicly-funded housing subsidy.²⁸ Some residents opted to move into scattered-site housing, public housing concentrated in smaller-scale, privately managed buildings throughout the city, instead of using a housing choice voucher.²⁹ In some cases, renovations were concentrated in certain areas of a particular building or complex, so the CHA transferred tenants within that development instead of displacing them completely.³⁰ The CHA presented the relocations to residents and the greater public as temporary. The housing authority told people who were relocated that they would be able to move back into public housing after the redevelopment process had been completed. Residents who were relocated

²⁶ "The Plan for Transformation: An Update on Relocation" (Chicago Housing Authority, April 2011), 1, [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/22/4_14_11_Report_FINAL_appendices_\(1\).pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/22/4_14_11_Report_FINAL_appendices_(1).pdf).

²⁷ "The Plan for Transformation: An Update on Relocation," 3.

²⁸ "Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation," 24.

²⁹ Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh et al., "Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report," Working Paper (Center for Urban Research and Policy, Columbia University, February 2004), 9, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/curp/publications2/PH_Transformation_Report.pdf.

³⁰ "Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation," 25.

using a Section 8 housing voucher and had a lease effective date on or after October 1, 1999 had the “right to return.”³¹ This meant that they had the right to return to a public housing development once the Plan had been carried out, although they were not guaranteed a unit at their original development and had to remain lease compliant continuously in order to be eligible to exercise the right.³² If families wanted to, they could forego their “right to return” and move to the private market permanently by way of a housing choice voucher.³³

Throughout the implementation of the Plan for Transformation, CHA offered relocation counseling and other services to support people as they transitioned. HUD mandated that public housing authorities offer such services as part of the MTW grant criteria. These services included relocation counseling to educate residents on what housing options were available to them, moving services so that residents did not have to pay to move themselves, and, for people opting to move with housing choice vouchers, landlord negotiation seminars and security deposit assistance.³⁴ In many cases, the services did not provide all that much support to families, as CHA was relocating such a high number of households and many families had limited notice before their move and were unable to take advantage of the services offered to them.³⁵ Another result of the fast turnaround for relocation was that families did not have enough time to find adequate housing. For residents relocating with housing choice vouchers, it was relatively common for them to have to act so quickly that they ended up moving to a

³¹ “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 25.

³² “Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation,” 25.

³³ Venkatesh et al., “Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report,” 10.

³⁴ Kristine Berg, “Implementing Chicago’s Plan to Transform Public Housing” (University and Wisconsin Madison and the Conference on Chicago Research and Public Policy, May 12, 2004), 2–3.

³⁵ Berg, 13–14.

housing situation in under-served neighborhoods or with abusive landlords.³⁶ Similarly, people who opted to relocate to other public housing units often moved into units that were downtrodden and poorly managed, despite expecting to be moved to better living conditions.³⁷ In addition to offering relocation-specific services, CHA rolled out a Service Connector program, with the goal of connecting families to community organizations that offered social support, especially childcare and job training.³⁸ Many residents were critical of the Service Connector program, however, as they felt it did not adequately address their complex needs following relocation.³⁹

Although the Plan for Transformation was theoretically aimed at improving quality of life for CHA residents, in practice it tore apart long-established communities and broke up extended families that had lived in public housing for generations.⁴⁰ Residents of complexes such as the Robert Taylor Homes tended to be deeply connected to their communities, despite the extreme poverty and high crime rates that many people associated with public housing high-rise developments.⁴¹ It was common for many of the members of extended families to live in the same complex, sometimes for generations.⁴² In a lot of cases, children grew up with one or both sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and close friends all living in buildings in their

³⁶ Berg, 14.

³⁷ Berg, 14.

³⁸ Berg, 2.

³⁹ Berg, 14.

⁴⁰ Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "The Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study," Study (Center for Urban Research and Policy, Columbia University, September 2002), 4–5, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/curp/publications2/robert_taylor.pdf.

⁴¹ Petty, *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*.

⁴² Petty, 98.

development.⁴³ These connections often served as a source of support for children living in households struck by drug abuse or tied to gangs.⁴⁴ Additionally, for many families, the close community functioned as childcare and extra supervision for the children. With so many of their family and friends also living in the development, many tenants had limited ties to the outside world prior to being relocated. Among Robert Taylor Homes' residents, an average of 61% of their close friends and family also lived in the Robert Taylor Homes.⁴⁵ Additionally, many families were highly connected to institutions in the area surrounding the Robert Taylor Homes, including churches, schools, and social service centers.⁴⁶ Given how closely connected many people were to the Robert Taylor Homes community, a number of residents lost their social networks when they were displaced by the Plan. This meant that children were separated from their extended families, losing their support systems and, in many cases, their caretakers.

While the Plan for Transformation was aimed at reducing the pockets of deep poverty and crime and increasing the access low-income families had to economic opportunity, in practice many families ended up moving to high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods with limited employment options.⁴⁷ The primary neighborhoods where Robert Taylor Homes residents moved were Englewood, Grand Boulevard, Washington Park, and South Shore, all of which had and still have high unemployment rates and high numbers of families with incomes below the poverty line.⁴⁸ Of the families that relocated to these areas to rent on the private market with

⁴³ Petty, 98.

⁴⁴ Petty, 98, 100.

⁴⁵ Venkatesh, "The Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study," 4.

⁴⁶ Venkatesh et al., "Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report," 32.

⁴⁷ Venkatesh et al., 31.

⁴⁸ Venkatesh et al., 31.

HCVs, around 20% reported having problems with their landlords and 30% reported having trouble paying their rent and utility bills on time.⁴⁹ Crime also continued to be a concern to families following relocation. 39% of the families that moved reported being concerned with crime and gang activity in the neighborhoods they relocated to.⁵⁰ As the Plan was implemented, crime increased in the neighborhoods with large influxes of relocated Robert Taylor Homes' residents, indicating that the Plan was not effective at reducing crime.⁵¹ The Plan was also relatively ineffective at disbanding gangs, with over half of the prominent gangs that had existed in the Robert Taylor Homes moving into private market housing communities.⁵² Another significant gang-related consequence of the Plan was that an increased number of women became involved with gangs, holding or trafficking drugs and weapons for gang members.⁵³ As a result, more women relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes were subjected to physical and sexual abuse from gang members post-relocation.⁵⁴

Of the thousands of Chicago public housing residents displaced by the Plan for Transformation, a significant number were children.⁵⁵ At the Robert Taylor Homes specifically, around 72% of the registered residents at the development were under age 18.⁵⁶ This demonstrates that kids were disproportionately affected by the Plan. Not only were they forced to change homes and leave the communities that were familiar to them, but in many cases children also had to

⁴⁹ Venkatesh et al., 32.

⁵⁰ Venkatesh et al., 32.

⁵¹ David Melsness and Ryan Weichelt, "Spatial Crime Displacement on Chicago's South Side," *Geographical Bulletin* 55, no. 2 (November 2014): 71–75.

⁵² Venkatesh et al., "Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report," 38.

⁵³ Venkatesh et al., 38.

⁵⁴ Venkatesh et al., 38.

⁵⁵ Venkatesh, "The Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study," 3.

⁵⁶ Venkatesh, 3.

change schools, causing a significant disruption in their lives, both academically and socially.⁵⁷ Roughly 50% of families relocating from the Robert Taylor Homes did so after the school year had already started.⁵⁸ This was in part due to the late notice families received and in part because of the shortage of private market units available to residents trying to rent with a housing choice voucher.⁵⁹ For families who were unable to relocate until after the school year had begun, it was especially difficult for the children to assimilate into their new communities.⁶⁰ Some families opted to leave their children in schools in the area around the Robert Taylor Homes; however, for many children this meant a long commute to and from school everyday, sometimes having to take routes that were unsafe for them.⁶¹

Past research shows that relocation did not have a particularly strong effect on students' academic achievement.⁶² This is likely because most children relocated to schools and neighborhoods that were very similar to the ones they left.⁶³ While academic achievement—specifically standardized test performance—was not affected, there were other negative impacts on youth. In many cases, students were unhappy at school post-relocation, having been separated from the teachers and other students with whom they had established

⁵⁷ Venkatesh et al., “Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report,” 14.

⁵⁸ Venkatesh et al., 14.

⁵⁹ Venkatesh et al., 14.

⁶⁰ Venkatesh et al., 14.

⁶¹ Venkatesh et al., 32.

⁶² Brian A. Jacob, “Public Housing, Housing Vouchers, and Student Achievement: Evidence from Public Housing Demolitions in Chicago,” *The American Economic Review; Nashville* 94, no. 1 (March 2004): 233; Endea N. K. Murry, “The Right to Return: Returning Public-Housing Families and Their Decision-Making Processes on Schooling” (University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017), 124, <https://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/1939992716/abstract/10A672EA6D654CBBPQ/2>.

⁶³ Jacob, “Public Housing, Housing Vouchers, and Student Achievement,” 250.

relationships.⁶⁴ Additionally, there was increased likelihood of dropping out of school among relocated teenagers older than fourteen.⁶⁵ Some research has indicated that students with the best outcomes were those whose parents did research to inform themselves about their child's schooling options and who continued to be engaged in their child's educational experience.⁶⁶

This paper examines how the CHA and CPS could have coordinated more effectively in order to support children relocated during the Plan for Transformation. The premise of the paper is that because all children are entitled to have an equal opportunity to a free public education and because it was the city of Chicago that uprooted families, the city's agencies had an obligation to limit the disruption and negative impacts that relocation inflicted on the educational trajectories of children living in the CHA. Specifically, the paper considers the experiences of children whose families relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes using HCVs. The Robert Taylor Homes was one of the largest CHA high-rise communities and faced challenges similar to those faced by others like Cabrini-Green and the Ida Well's Homes, and thus the experiences of children relocating from the Robert Taylor would have been generalizable to those of children moving from other high-rise developments.

METHODOLOGY

The Plan for Transformation was an extremely controversial policy that many residents, community-based organizations, and researchers have criticized as overly ambitious and

⁶⁴ Murry, "The Right to Return," 122.

⁶⁵ Jacob, "Public Housing, Housing Vouchers, and Student Achievement," 251.

⁶⁶ Murry, "The Right to Return," 122.

inconsiderate of the needs of residents. While I wanted to understand what relocated children's experiences were during the Plan for Transformation, I also wanted to balance their perceptions of the Plan with those of the CHA and CPS. In conducting my research, I focused on two main areas: the city perspective and the resident perspective. Following this framework, I worked to gain a holistic understanding of the Plan for Transformation's implementation and impact, both as intended and as they actually happened.

The City Perspective

To gather data on the CHA's approach to the Plan for Transformation, I analyzed documents CHA published related to the Plan.⁶⁷ These documents consisted of: the city's original Plan for Transformation, published in 2000; the CHA Leaseholder Housing Choice and Relocation Rights Contract, which the organization distributed to residents ahead of relocation, outlining their right to return to public housing;⁶⁸ annual plans outlining CHA's implementation goals and initiatives for the Plan for Transformation for the following year, as dictated by the agency's MTW agreement with HUD;⁶⁹ and annual reports on the Plan's progress, similarly mandated by HUD.⁷⁰ I limited my analysis of the annual plans and reports⁷¹ to those published from 2000-2010, totaling 11 annual plans and 11 annual reports.

⁶⁷ An archive of CHA documents is available on the CHA's website: <http://www.thecha.org/documents/>

⁶⁸ "CHA Leaseholder Housing Choice and Relocation Rights Contract" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 1, 1999).

⁶⁹ "Plan for Transformation Year 2: Moving to Work Annual Plan FY2001" (Chicago Housing Authority, December 1, 2000), 7.

⁷⁰ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Report FY2002" (Chicago Housing Authority, 2002), 2.

⁷¹ Each year, CHA released both a plan for the following year and a report on the current year in the fall or early winter. For example, in fall 2002, CHA published the "Annual Plan for Transformation FY2003," followed by the "Moving to Work Annual Report FY2002" in late November or December of the same year.

For my analysis, I went through the documents and tracked what services were available to residents, as well as how the services changed over time. I also looked at the requirements CHA imposed on residents and how they changed as the Plan progressed. In addition, I tracked how inter-organization relationships changed over time, paying particular attention to CHA and CPS. As part of this, I conducted qualitative analysis on the extent to which CHA and CPS seemed to be working together based on references the documents made to the organizations' joint efforts. Finally, I examined how the annual plans and reports communicated with one another. In particular, I looked for discrepancies between planned initiatives and actual events, inconsistent or inexplicable statistics, and outcome measures of CHA programs from year to year.

To understand the steps that CPS took to support children during the Plan for Transformation, I requested an interview with a former high-level CPS official. This individual was one of the most senior members in the CPS administration from 2001-2009 and played a key role in creating and implementing the school district's response to the Plan. While he did not grant me an interview, he did opt to provide me with relevant information via an email exchange. The information gathered through this exchange painted a particularly helpful picture of how CPS approached the Plan for Transformation and worked to soften its effect on children and schools. The Findings section includes a summary and analysis of the information the former official provided.

The Residents' Perspective

To develop an understanding of how former residents believe that CHA and CPS could have supported children better during the Plan for Transformation, I conducted an initial ethnographical interview with a man, Jovan, who was 14 when his family relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes with an HCV in 2003. The interview focused on the services Jovan and his family received during relocation, as well as his experience moving into new neighborhoods and schools. I connected with Jovan through a contact at We the People Media, a small media company that published the *Residents' Journal*, another data source I used and discuss in detail later. The interview lasted approximately one and a half hours and consisted of ten questions, which Jovan had access to ahead of the interview. I recorded the interview and transcribed it prior to conducting my analysis. I then went through the transcript, as well as my interview notes, identifying themes and representative quotes.

I further explored residents' relocation experiences through an analysis of articles from the *Residents' Journal*, a newspaper written by CHA residents that was published one to five times per year over a 14-year period. The majority of *Residents' Journal* readers were CHA residents who looked to the outlet primarily for neighborhood news and CHA-related stories.⁷² The CHA launched the *Residents' Journal* in 1996;⁷³ however, in 1999 the housing authority cut funding for the publication.⁷⁴ The magazine's staff opted to continue producing it, and they formed a

⁷² Ethan Michaeli, "Smashing Stereotypes," *Residents' Journal*, April 2001.

⁷³ "About Us | We The People Media | Residents' Journal," accessed March 1, 2018, <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/about-us/>.

⁷⁴ "About Us | We The People Media | Residents' Journal."

non-profit called We the People Media.⁷⁵ Adult and youth residents wrote the articles included in the paper, which, following the CHA's announcement of the Plan for Transformation in 2000, chronicled events related to the Plan. While a fairly small pool of writers wrote the articles, the articles feature the stories, perspectives, and opinions of hundreds of others. They highlight residents' responses to major CHA policy announcements, document the challenges that relocation posed, and report on the experiences of CHA residents more generally during the first ten years of the Plan for Transformation. As such, the stories that appear in the newspaper paint a holistic picture of residents' experiences with the first 11 years of the Plan for Transformation. After the organization stopped publishing the paper in 2010, it archived full versions of nearly every issue on its website, which is where I accessed the papers.⁷⁶

To collect data, I went through each issue of the paper published from 2000 to 2010, totaling 22 issues, to find articles that were written by or about Robert Taylor Homes residents. I found 24 relevant articles from which I identified key themes and relevant anecdotes. To remain within the scope of the paper, I only analyzed articles documenting the relocation experiences of families using Housing Choice Vouchers or resident responses to CHA or CPS policies. For this reason, I excluded some stories about or relating to Robert Taylor Homes' residents. Excluded articles include but are not limited to pieces detailing relocation difficulties for seniors moving from the high-rises, backlogged electric bills preventing Robert Taylor Homes' residents from relocating, and police brutality problems in the complex in the early 2000s.

⁷⁵ "About Us | We The People Media | Residents' Journal."

⁷⁶ Issues of the *Residents' Journal* can be accessed on We the People Media's website: <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/archive/issuu/>.

My final source of resident perspective data was the public comments sections of the CHA annual plans. As previously discussed, the plans offer good insight into the city's perspective on the Plan for Transformation; however, they also include detailed public comments that provide insight into residents' views on the Plan. As part of its funding agreement with HUD under the MTW program, CHA had to provide opportunities for residents to give their input on the annual plans.⁷⁷ One way the agency achieved this was by releasing drafts of the annual plans and opening them up for public comment for 30-45 days in the early fall. During the comment period, CHA residents and members of the greater Chicago community, including representatives from advocacy groups and community-based organizations, could submit their feedback to the CHA in writing. The CHA also held an annual hearing at the end of the comment period where people could deliver their comments in person to CHA leadership.

Starting with its FY2002 plan, CHA began publishing public comments it received as an appendix in the final version of that year's plan. The appendices feature a table that lists the names of the people submitting comments, their roles in the community, the comments they submitted, and the CHA's response to the comments. Because I was specifically focusing on the resident perspective, I only analyzed comments that came directly from residents or from members of the Local Advisory Councils (LACs) or Central Advisory Councils (CACs), which were groups of residents elected to represent the issues of people living in a particular CHA development. I excluded comments from LAC members representing developments other than the Robert

⁷⁷ "Plan for Transformation Year 2: Moving to Work Annual Plan FY2001."

Taylor Homes, as well as comments from residents who had no affiliation with the Robert Taylor Homes or had relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes using a method other than a Housing Choice Voucher. In analyzing the comments, I looked for residents' responses to relocation services and programs offered by the CHA, focusing particularly on how residents' experiences differed from CHA's portrayal of its initiatives in its annual plans and reports.

FINDINGS

Through my examination of city documents, exchange with a CPS official, interview of a former Robert Taylor Homes resident, and analysis of two dozen articles written by CHA residents, I developed a comprehensive landscape of CHA and CPS policies and how they interacted with residents' every day lives. Three overarching themes emerged through this research: the main challenges families faced, the support the CHA offered relocated residents compared to the support residents wanted, and the role CPS played in the lives of relocated children.

Main Challenges Families Faced

Relocated residents faced many challenges as they were forced out of their communities and into different parts of the city. While the Plan for Transformation impacted residents in different ways, families that relocated to the private market with HCVs reported facing three main challenges: housing quality and stability, loss of community, and a lack of safety.

Housing Quality and Stability

Although violence and rundown buildings had made life in CHA's high-rise housing developments difficult, many residents felt that living in the Robert Taylor Homes provided more stability than renting on the private market with a Section 8 voucher.⁷⁸ In the Robert Taylor Homes, residents knew if they followed the CHA's rules, they would have a roof over their heads, even if it meant navigating less than ideal living conditions.⁷⁹ After relocating, many residents lost this sense of security as they confronted renting poor quality housing from profit-maximizing landlords while remaining CHA compliant.⁸⁰ The housing authority required that a private market apartment undergo a Housing Quality Standards (HSQ) inspection before a resident could relocate there.⁸¹ HSQ inspections were often rushed so that residents could be relocated in a timely manner.⁸² As a result, residents would commonly find themselves living in units with severe structural damage and bug and rodent infestations.⁸³ Residents describe many landlords renting to HCV holders, especially in low-income areas of the city, as profit hunters who did little to address residents' requests for maintenance or pest control.⁸⁴ Some landlords did not just neglect residents' needs but actively abused their authority over residents

⁷⁸ Mary C. Johns, "More Vouchers, Less Housing," *Residents' Journal*, August 2000; Beauty Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," *Residents' Journal*, June 2001; Beauty Turner, "Getting to Know Englewood," *Residents' Journal*, August 2003; Reginald Kizer, "Memories of R. Taylor," *Residents' Journal*, Spring 2009; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003, January 20, 2018.

⁷⁹ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 31, 2005), 171.

⁸⁰ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171.

⁸¹ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171.

⁸² "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171.

⁸³ Johns, "More Vouchers, Less Housing"; Turner, "Getting to Know Englewood"; Beauty Turner, "Closure Razes Resident Hopes," *Residents' Journal*, December 2004; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171; Beauty Turner, "Security Problems Continue for Residents," *Residents' Journal*, January 2007; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

⁸⁴ Turner, "Getting to Know Englewood"; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

whom they knew had little mobility. For example, at a public comment hearing in 2007, one relocated resident reported that her landlord was charging her family \$200 per month to use the appliances that came with her unit, placing a significant financial burden on her household.⁸⁵ When residents argued or threatened to move, landlords would often retaliate, including by turning off their heat and electricity, jacking up their rent, or—worse—initiating eviction proceedings.⁸⁶ Consequently, residents frequently had to accept extremely poor conditions or endure the process of relocating again.

Even when residents experienced decent housing conditions on the private market, they often had to move multiple times after their initial relocation due to issues between their landlords and the CHA. Aligning with typical private market practices, landlords leasing to voucher holders would raise the rents they charged every few years or so. Sometimes CHA would reject the increase, forcing a family to start the relocation process over.⁸⁷ Families also often had to move when their apartments failed CHA's annual HQS inspection. Even though the CHA inspected all apartments prior to leasing, inspectors would miss or overlook violations during their initial search, or run-down apartments would fail for deterioration that had occurred after a family moved there. When units failed inspection, the CHA immediately stopped payment on them, which meant that residents had only a short window of time in which to relocate.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan" (Chicago Housing Authority, December 28, 2007), 165.

⁸⁶ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; Angela Hilton, "A Section 8 Recipient's Painful Reality," *Residents' Journal*, October 2001; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

⁸⁷ Hilton, "A Section 8 Recipient's Painful Reality"; "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 165.

⁸⁸ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171.

Moving posed significant challenges for families. First, families had to identify an affordable apartment. Then, CHA had to inspect and approve the unit. Finally, the family needed to arrange the move and coordinate a school change for their child, if that was necessary. As was true with people's initial relocations, residents often struggled to find units in their current community or in a neighborhood where they were excited to move. People felt that resource limitations and time constraints imposed by CHA often diminished their options and forced them to move to areas in which they did not want to live.⁸⁹ Each move was expensive for families, who had to pay any application or security check fees and bear the costs of moving their belongings.⁹⁰ Moving multiple times after leaving a public housing development often dictated that children change schools at least once,⁹¹ though some children changed schools as many as six times due to moves their families made.⁹² Moving not only disrupted students' educational experiences but also caused significant stress in their homes due to the instability the disruptions created.

Loss of Community

Because families tended to live in the Robert Taylor homes for many years, and sometimes generations, many residents had extensive networks of friends and family also living in the Robert Taylor Homes. For example, it was common for someone's parents, siblings, cousins,

⁸⁹ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 171; Turner, "Security Problems Continue for Residents"; "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 160.

⁹⁰ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

⁹¹ Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place"; Turner, "Security Problems Continue for Residents"; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

⁹² Turner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place."

and friends from their school days to all live in the Robert Taylor Homes.⁹³ Even though the Robert Taylor Homes had thousands of people living there, many small communities formed. The development consisted of 28 buildings and social groups tended to be centered within a building or cluster of buildings.⁹⁴ As a result, people interacted with their friends and neighbors often, offering childcare help, providing emotional support, and looking out for one another during tough times.⁹⁵ Families lost these social supports when the relocation process began, and they found themselves in neighborhoods far from the people they knew.

The loss of community was similarly difficult for children whose families relocated. One young man described moving away from the Robert Taylor Homes as feeling like he was “moving to a whole new city or state.”⁹⁶ Even though he relocated just a few miles from the site of the development, he lost almost all of the connections he had valued in the Robert Taylor Homes. Further, his new neighborhood did not have the sense of community that the Robert Taylor Homes had, as neighbors did not socialize or rely upon one another in the way he had experienced growing up.⁹⁷ Even though he was in middle school when he moved, the young man reflected on his time living in the Robert Taylor Homes as “the best experience of his life.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

⁹⁴ In addition to the stories of residents featured in this paper, this is evidenced by the dozens of Facebook groups that exist for different Robert Taylor Homes buildings or building clusters, such as “Former First Families of Robert Taylor Homes 4037, 4022, 4101 and 3919,” which has 445 members. The numbers denote the building addresses. People would typically use the numbers to describe where in the development they lived, though some building clusters had nicknames like “the Hole.”

⁹⁵ Mary C. Johns, “Their Brothers’ Keepers,” *Residents’ Journal*, December 2000.

⁹⁶ Kizer, “Memories of R. Taylor.”

⁹⁷ Kizer.

⁹⁸ Kizer.

Jovan, the man I interviewed, felt similarly about his move from the Robert Taylor Homes, where he says he had social ties unparalleled by any connections he made following relocation.⁹⁹ Jovan's extended family and friends had lived at the Robert Taylor Homes for generations and had deep community ties.¹⁰⁰ His grandmother had been one of the first residents of the Robert Taylor Homes and had raised eight children in the development; his uncle cut hair there and knew everyone; his aunt had been the valedictorian at the neighborhood high school.¹⁰¹ Growing up, people had always supported and protected him, his younger brother, and their grandmother.¹⁰² Following relocation, Jovan lost touch with all of his friends, despite having known them for nearly seven years.¹⁰³ As Jovan points out, the majority of relocations happened in the early 2000s before kids had cell phones or social media.¹⁰⁴ If kids did not know their new phone numbers before their families moved, then they had basically no way to contact one another.

Safety

Residents of the Robert Taylor Homes were no strangers to crime. As was the case in other high-rise developments, gangs had dominated their community and functioned as one of the main forms of enterprise in their neighborhood's economy.¹⁰⁵ When the CHA rolled out the Plan, it demonstrated little regard for the gangs, disrupting their existing structures and putting

⁹⁹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰² Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰³ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

residents—gang-involved and not—at risk. As the CHA relocated residents and tore down buildings, gangs fought to protect themselves and their businesses. As a result, school-aged residents not only had to watch as their community literally fell apart, they also had to suffer the pain of seeing their friends and family members become victims of the gangs’ violence.¹⁰⁶

Many residents’ safety concerns persisted, or even worsened, following relocation. As previously discussed, residents often ended up moving into high-poverty, high-crime areas on Chicago’s South and West Sides.¹⁰⁷ Like in the Robert Taylor Homes, gangs tended to wield great power in these neighborhoods; however, in the Robert Taylor Homes, residents had understood how the gangs operated, and the gangs had provided protection to families and children.¹⁰⁸ Like other residents, many gang members and their families had lived in the Robert Taylor Homes for generations and had deep community ties. Jovan remembers some of the gang members he knew fondly, such as the older guys who would help his grandmother carry her groceries up to the eleventh floor every week.¹⁰⁹ He said they always looked out for the younger members. For example, when there were disagreements among the younger boys, they would intervene to help them stay out of trouble.¹¹⁰ If there were going to be a shoot out, the older men would warn Jovan and his brother, so they knew to stay in their apartment away from the danger.¹¹¹ While the safety came in an unconventional form, Jovan says he “felt safer

¹⁰⁶ Desaray Moore, “Teens: CHA Isn’t Fair,” *Residents’ Journal*, December 2000; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰⁷ Turner, “Security Problems Continue for Residents.”

¹⁰⁸ Beauty Turner and Brian J Rojal, “Deadly Moves,” *Residents’ Journal*, September 2004; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹¹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

in the Robert Taylor Homes than anywhere else [he] ever lived in [his] life when [he] was in Chicago.”¹¹²

As the gangs in the South Side adjusted to an influx of people and fluctuating gang lines, relocated families worried for their safety. One single mother of three who had hoped leaving the Robert Taylor Homes would provide a safer environment for her children was afraid to send her kids to the grocery store alone after the family moved to Englewood because there had been a shooting on her block every week since her family had moved in.¹¹³ The re-orienting of the gangs was also problematic in the schools. Jovan remembers the violence and chaos he saw during his time at Englewood’s Robeson High School, which absorbed a high number of relocated students in the early 2000s.¹¹⁴ “It was all these gangs and all these kids from different areas and different high schools who didn’t know each other and didn’t like each other all in the same building,” Jovan said, describing the fights and shootings that would erupt on a regular basis, disrupting students’ school experiences.¹¹⁵

Support for Relocated Residents

In examining what support CHA offered relocating residents and what support residents wanted, two broad areas stood out: communication and relocation services.

Communication with Residents

¹¹² Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹³ Turner, “Security Problems Continue for Residents.”

¹¹⁴ Kimberly Guillory, “Englewood Closure,” *Residents’ Journal*, 2006; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

One basic service that CHA struggled to provide residents during the Plan for Transformation was communication. Rather than coming from the housing authority, information about relocations often came from other residents via word of mouth.¹¹⁶ For example, it was common for people to learn that they were going to be relocated or to learn what relocation services were available to them from other residents instead of the CHA.¹¹⁷ Residents were frustrated by the lack of communication and felt that it was disrespectful of the CHA to not inform them about matters that had such a significant impact on their lives. One resident accused the agency of treating residents like “cattle” that it could move wherever and whenever it wanted.¹¹⁸ CHA’s failure to communicate was especially problematic when it left residents uninformed about criteria they needed to satisfy to remain lease eligible or timelines they had to follow in order to relocate.¹¹⁹

Frustrated, residents consistently expressed the need for better communication from the CHA. One common concern was that residents did not know what housing options were available to them under the HCV program.¹²⁰ Jovan’s family faced this challenge after they learned from their neighbors that they needed to relocate.¹²¹ Even once CHA gave them formal notice, Jovan’s grandmother struggled to understand exactly what the relocation process required or

¹¹⁶ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹⁷ Lienora Foster, “Wake-up, Residents,” *Residents’ Journal*, February 2000; Debbie Britton, “The CHA Relocation Contract,” *Residents’ Journal*, August 2000; Mary C. Johns, “A Relocation Runaround,” *Residents’ Journal*, June 2002; Turner, “Closure Razes Resident Hopes”; Gabriel Piemonte, “Residents: What People Want,” *Residents’ Journal*, December 2004; Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹¹⁸ Foster, “Wake-up, Residents.”

¹¹⁹ Britton, “The CHA Relocation Contract”; Piemonte, “Residents: What People Want.”

¹²⁰ “FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7,” 163; Johns, “A Relocation Runaround.”

¹²¹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

how to find an apartment on the private market.¹²² Jovan's older sister stepped in to help her grandmother, but nonetheless the family did not find an apartment fast enough and had to move in with a relative temporarily during his freshman year, putting all of their belongings in storage while his grandmother continued to look for a place to live.¹²³ Once they had relocated, residents did not know how to access services offered by CHA, such as connections to employment and after-school programs, which made it hard for residents to find stability in their new communities.¹²⁴ People expressed further frustration with the CHA's failure to communicate big picture aspects of the Plan with families. In particular, people were frustrated that the CHA did not advertise meetings or public hearings on the Plan more effectively and felt like the annual plans and reports were vague and confusing, making it hard for residents to understand how much progress had been made.¹²⁵

Relocation Services

One of CHA's most prominent programs for residents was the Service Connector System, which aimed to promote family self-sufficiency. The program connected residents to community-based service providers that could help them get settled in their new communities.¹²⁶ The CHA contracted with the City of Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS) to operate the program, and CDHS, in turn, contracted with community-based organizations to run programs

¹²² Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹²³ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹²⁴ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 163; "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan" (Chicago Housing Authority, November 2, 2006), 163.

¹²⁵ Piemonte, "Residents: What People Want"; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 165; "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 161; "FY2010 Moving to Work Annual Plan" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 22, 2009), 78.

¹²⁶ "Plan for Transformation Year 3: Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan FY2002" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 16, 2001), 34-35.

at the CHA developments.¹²⁷ In addition to helping residents find housing options, caseworkers were supposed to connect residents to services to meet needs relating but not limited to childcare, substance abuse, and transportation,¹²⁸ as well as youth engagement and job training programs.¹²⁹ Service providers also helped residents who were at risk of falling or had fallen out of lease compliance find resources to help them get back on track.¹³⁰ Although the Service Connector System was initially based in the housing developments, the de-concentration of residents necessitated that CHA transition to a neighborhood-based approach starting in 2005.¹³¹

The CHA promoted the Service Connector System as one of its most effective resident supports, but residents consistently expressed concerns with its effectiveness. One major complaint was that the program was inefficient. Multiple service providers operated at each Service Connector location, which sometimes left residents confused about who they should be looking to for services.¹³² Relatedly, the service providers each had independent contracts with CDHS on behalf of the CHA and did not always communicate, which meant some residents received redundant services and some were overlooked.¹³³ Residents also complained that their caseworkers did not provide them with sufficient support due to their over-sized caseloads. Early on in the program, there were a total of six social workers who were supposed to be

¹²⁷ "Plan for Transformation Year 3: Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan FY2002," 34–35.

¹²⁸ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 86.

¹²⁹ "FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6" (Chicago Housing Authority, November 1, 2004), Chapter 4: 1-3.

¹³⁰ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan for Transformation FY2004-Year 5" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 21, 2003), 38.

¹³¹ "FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6," Chapter 4: 1.

¹³² "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 161.

¹³³ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 161.

serving 26,000 families.¹³⁴ Although CHA increased the program's capacity over time, residents continued to voice their opinion that caseworkers did not have time to give them proper counseling and that the program was insufficient.¹³⁵ For example, multiple residents who needed help finding housing and understanding how to find an apartment on the private market reported that their caseworkers simply gave them a list of housing resources, as opposed to walking them through the relocation process.¹³⁶ Another feature of the program was that it was highly resident-driven, meaning basically the only residents who were connected to services were those who sought out the service connectors.¹³⁷

In 2008, the CHA replaced the Service Connector model with FamilyWorks. The new program focused primarily on equipping residents to find a permanent housing choice and stable employment as opposed to addressing families' social and emotional needs.¹³⁸ With the rollout of the new program, CHA partnered with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development and the City Colleges of Chicago to increase its programming capacity.¹³⁹ In implementing FamilyWorks, the CHA attempted to address some of the complaints residents had about the Service Connector System. For example, CDHS only contracted with six community-based organizations to connect families to services via FamilyWorks.¹⁴⁰ By reducing the number of providers connecting families to services, CHA theoretically made the program more efficient,

¹³⁴ "Plan for Transformation Year 3: Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan FY2002," 77.

¹³⁵ "Annual Plan for Transformation FY2003" (Chicago Housing Authority, 2003), 89; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 163; "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 163; "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 162.

¹³⁶ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 163.

¹³⁷ "Annual Plan for Transformation FY2003," 91; "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 73.

¹³⁸ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 87–86.

¹³⁹ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 163.

¹⁴⁰ "FY2010 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 43.

though the agency did not document the impact that this had on caseloads or resident experiences during my period of analysis. Additionally, the CHA launched a web-based management tracking system that allowed providers to see which families had been referred to services.¹⁴¹ While, again, CHA did not document the effectiveness of this system in my period of analysis, presumably a formal method for tracking residents' progress should have increased the programs efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition to the service connectors, there were a number of groups focused specifically on helping residents with relocation. CHA's relocation infrastructure developed gradually over time,¹⁴² but by 2006 there were five groups dedicated to relocation activities, including Relocation Project Managers, on-site resident Relocation Coaches, Relocation Counseling Agencies, Transitional Housing and Supportive Service Counselors, and Move-In Service Providers.¹⁴³ Relocation Project Managers oversaw the process of moving residents out of developments slated for relocations,¹⁴⁴ while Relocation Coaches were responsible for disseminating information about upcoming relocations and encouraging residents to attend informational meetings and seek out resources via the service connectors.¹⁴⁵ The Relocation Counseling Agencies helped HCV recipients find housing on the private market and conducted follow-up visits to let residents know about any important meetings or information.¹⁴⁶ Transitional Housing and Supportive Service Counselors assisted residents in their housing

¹⁴¹ "FY2010 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 43.

¹⁴² Turner, "Closure Razes Resident Hopes."

¹⁴³ "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 63.

¹⁴⁴ "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 63–65.

¹⁴⁵ "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 63.

¹⁴⁶ "FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 63.

searches and referred them to services in their new communities.¹⁴⁷ Finally, the Move-In Service Providers ensured residents met the requirements in their new apartments and tried to educate them about how to engage with their new communities.¹⁴⁸ Although the five departments supporting residents through relocation were separate from one another, there was significant overlap in the services they provided. When the departments failed to coordinate, some residents were left unsupported.¹⁴⁹ Relatedly, residents were confused by the overlap between the relocation specialists and often did not know the most efficient way to seek out assistance.¹⁵⁰

To prepare residents to move into units on the private market, the CHA required that people being relocated participate in Good Neighbor Counseling.¹⁵¹ Through classroom instruction and some individualized counseling led by contracted community-based organizations, the program aimed to teach residents “good neighbor” practices such as housekeeping, avoiding anti-social behavior, and interacting positively with landlords.¹⁵² Initially, the counseling included training to prepare families to enroll their children in a new school after they moved;¹⁵³ however, that part of the program was de-emphasized after 2002, when the counseling evidently shifted towards teaching families not to cause a disruption in their new buildings or neighborhoods. The Good Neighbor Counseling was problematic in that it assumed CHA residents were ill equipped to maintain their own homes or to form relationships in their new neighborhoods. It

¹⁴⁷ “FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” 63.

¹⁴⁸ “FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” 63.

¹⁴⁹ Johns, “A Relocation Runaround”; Turner, “Closure Razes Resident Hopes.”

¹⁵⁰ “FY2007 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” 161.

¹⁵¹ “Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan for Transformation FY2004-Year 5,” 33.

¹⁵² “Plan for Transformation Year 2: Moving to Work Annual Plan FY2001,” 28.

¹⁵³ “Plan for Transformation Year 2: Moving to Work Annual Plan FY2001,” 28.

ignored the fact that many residents had, for years, maintained apartments and formed close relationships with their neighbors, despite the neglect of the CHA. In 2006, the CHA replaced Good Neighbor Counseling with Family Obligation Workshops.¹⁵⁴ While these workshops had a less obviously stigmatizing name, they covered similar topics as the Good Neighbor Counseling had, and residents continued to feel that they were not being respected and their true needs were not being met.¹⁵⁵

In addition to the various forms of relocation counseling it offered, the CHA launched several initiatives to inform residents about potential relocation areas. Beginning in 2004, CHA offered “Explore Chicago” neighborhood tours to give relocating residents a chance to visit communities on the city’s South, West, and North sides. The tours provided HCV holders a chance to learn about public transportation options, entertainment venues, parks, and grocery stores in the different areas of the city.¹⁵⁶ They also gave residents a chance to get an initial understanding of the schools located in a particular neighborhood, though schools were by no means a main focus of the tours, as the program was intended to serve all residents not just those with children.¹⁵⁷ Although the CHA repeatedly touted the Explore Chicago tours as being a great opportunity for residents in its annual plans, in practice they were infrequent and reached a very limited audience. For example, in the annual plan for 2008, CHA explained the

¹⁵⁴ “FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” 80.

¹⁵⁵ “FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” 161, 162.

¹⁵⁶ “Moving to Work Annual Report FY 2004” (Chicago Housing Authority, 2004), 33; “FY2005 Annual Report” (Chicago Housing Authority, 2005), 48; “Moving to Work FY2006 Annual Report” (Chicago Housing Authority, 2006), 49; “Moving to Work FY2007 Annual Report” (Chicago Housing Authority, 2007), 65; “Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008” (Chicago Housing Authority, 2008), 58.

¹⁵⁷ “Moving to Work Annual Report FY 2004,” 33; “FY2005 Annual Report,” 48; “Moving to Work FY2006 Annual Report,” 49; “Moving to Work FY2007 Annual Report,” 65; “Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008,” 58.

benefits of the tours and said they would be offered weekly throughout the year.¹⁵⁸ The 2008 Annual Report, however, contradicts this, stating that just ten tours were offered that year, reaching only 81 of the hundreds of residents who relocated.¹⁵⁹ Because so few tours were offered, people who needed to relocate quickly or who worked inflexible jobs had limited access to them. As a result, some parents who wanted a CHA-facilitated opportunity to see and learn about schools in different neighborhoods would not have had that choice; instead, they would have had to contact the schools themselves and then invest the time and resources to travel to different neighborhoods to see them. For parents facing the logistical and social challenges of relocation while trying to make ends meet, such efforts would have been overwhelming and often could not take top priority. Another way the CHA attempted to help residents learn about other neighborhoods was through an online portal called RightMoves.Net.¹⁶⁰ The website let users explore apartment listings, social services, and various statistics for any community area in Chicago.¹⁶¹ The website also provided information about schools in the various neighborhoods of the city.¹⁶² One downside of the module, however, was that it required a computer, limiting some residents' ability to access the resource.

The CHA recognized that, contrary to the goals of the Plan for Transformation, many families relocated to high-poverty areas with limited resources, struggling schools, and few job opportunities.¹⁶³ To try and improve outcomes for relocated residents, the CHA started its

¹⁵⁸ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 72.

¹⁵⁹ "Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008," 51.

¹⁶⁰ "Moving to Work Annual Report FY 2004," 52.

¹⁶¹ "FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6," Chapter 3: 7.

¹⁶² "FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6," Chapter 3: 7.

¹⁶³ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Report FY2002," 39.

Housing Opportunity Program in 2002.¹⁶⁴ The program promoted moves to low-poverty areas by providing transportation to make it easier for residents to look at units in other parts of the city, helping residents work through challenges such as poor credit, and offering security deposit assistance.¹⁶⁵ The Housing Opportunity Program offered a more tailored approach than the CHA's other relocation programs, increasing its potential effectiveness. For example, when a family joined the program, a Housing Opportunity Counselor would conduct an initial assessment, working one-on-one with them to understand what their needs and goals were in terms of a home, schools, services, transportation, and job opportunities.¹⁶⁶ The counselor would help the family through the relocation process, making sure they made a move they were satisfied with.¹⁶⁷ Following relocation, the counselor would continue to meet one-on-one with the family, supporting their adjustment to the new neighborhood.¹⁶⁸ Although the Housing Opportunity Program offered more promise for families, it had a very limited reach. In 2008, the CHA set a goal of enrolling 1,000 families in the program, but only enrolled 372 families in practice.¹⁶⁹ One big problem with the program was that it targeted families that had already relocated at least once, many of which did not want to go through the trauma of being uprooted and losing their communities again.¹⁷⁰ Had the Housing Opportunity model been implemented for all HCV holders from the beginning, families and children might have had more positive experiences with relocation.

¹⁶⁴ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Report FY2002," 39.

¹⁶⁵ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 71–72.

¹⁶⁶ "Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008," 50.

¹⁶⁷ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 50.

¹⁶⁸ "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan," 50.

¹⁶⁹ "Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008," 50.

¹⁷⁰ "Moving to Work Annual Report FY2008," 50–51.

The Role of the Chicago Public Schools

There was significant student turnover in Chicago's public schools in the early 2000s as families relocated from CHA developments to other areas of the city. As a result, CPS had to deal with challenges such as balancing school under-enrollment with overcrowding and supporting children who struggled to adjust to a new environment following relocation.¹⁷¹ Despite the Plan for Transformation's impact on the schools, CPS and other city agencies were relatively uninvolved in the policymaking process that produced the Plan.¹⁷² CPS did not become a formal partner in the Plan until the later 2000s when community needs necessitated greater involvement from the schools. Even then, there was fairly limited collaboration or coordination between the two agencies, particularly when it came to meeting the needs of relocated children. As a result, CPS's approach to the Plan remained mainly reactionary and focused on meeting the needs created by the policies the CHA initiated.¹⁷³

Transition Support

One result of the lack of a coordinated approach to the Plan for Transformation was that the CHA did not consistently time family relocations to accommodate the school year; rather, relocations were often based on demolition schedules. Even when families were scheduled to move out of a development during the summer, practical challenges, such as finding an affordable apartment and getting it approved by CHA, often made it impossible for them to do

¹⁷¹ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Report FY2002," 39.

¹⁷² The initial Plan for Transformation, published on January 6, 2000, makes no reference to the Chicago Public Schools, City of Chicago Department of Health and Human Services, or other public agencies that the CHA touts as partners in its annual plans and reports in the later 2000s.

¹⁷³ Former high-level CPS official, "Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago."

so.¹⁷⁴ The rush to find an apartment that satisfied the requirements imposed by CHA often did not grant families the luxury of finding a home in the same school attendance boundary as their development. As a result, students whose families were relocated during the academic year often had two options: change schools mid-year or commute back and forth to their old neighborhood everyday. The former was problematic because it meant children's educations were interrupted as they adjusted to new schools, often resulting in academic gaps.¹⁷⁵ Starting in 2006, CPS attempted to make it easier for students to commute back to their old schools by providing them with free Chicago Transportation Authority (CTA) passes.¹⁷⁶ While this would have benefitted a subset of relocated children, it posed challenges for children who were not old enough to commute alone on the CTA. Additionally, some commutes required taking multiple busses or traveling through dangerous areas of the city. This was the case for Jovan, who was robbed and witnessed multiple shootings while commuting to his old school after his family was relocated.¹⁷⁷ To avoid the violence, Jovan would often cut school so he could commute at safer times.¹⁷⁸ Although he moved to a school closer to his family's apartment after his freshman year, Jovan says he often contemplated dropping out of school altogether during the nine months he commuted to Englewood, largely because of how hard it was to get to school.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Johns, "A Relocation Runaround"; "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 71; Turner, "Closure Razes Resident Hopes."

¹⁷⁵ Mary C. Johns, "Residents Blame CHA for School Closings," *Residents' Journal*, Spring 2009; Mary C. Johns, "Under Fire, Board Closes Schools," *Residents' Journal*, Spring 2009.

¹⁷⁶ "FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7," 85; "Moving to Work FY2006 Annual Report" (Chicago Housing Authority, 2006), 76.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

With so many children being displaced by the Plan for Transformation, CPS needed to ensure that schools had capacity to serve old and new students in neighborhoods that had large numbers of families moving in.¹⁸⁰ As a result of the population changes, schools in some areas of the city faced overcrowding.¹⁸¹ The influx of families was especially challenging for already struggling schools located in the predominantly low-income African American and Latino communities,¹⁸² as these neighborhoods absorbed the greatest proportions of relocated residents looking for affordable housing.¹⁸³ The district worked to add social workers and counselors who could support relocated children to schools in neighborhoods with high numbers of new families. The CPS official says that it “honestly wasn’t hard for [CPS]” to accommodate children changing schools because the Plan for Transformation moved slowly, with families being incrementally relocated over a period of about ten years.¹⁸⁴

Despite the district’s effort to accommodate overcrowding by adding social workers and counselors, CPS appears to have done little to reduce class sizes or provide extra academic support for children whose academic experiences had been disrupted by relocation.¹⁸⁵ In outlining the CPS response to the Plan, the former CPS official I spoke to mentioned nothing about adding educators in schools that had large numbers of students moving in.¹⁸⁶ Further, I have been unable to find any primary or secondary sources that document CPS efforts to

¹⁸⁰ Former high-level CPS official, “Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago.”

¹⁸¹ Former high-level CPS official.

¹⁸² Former high-level CPS official.

¹⁸³ Mary C. Johns, “Under Fire, Board Closes Schools,” *Residents’ Journal*, Spring 2009; “FY2006 Moving to Work Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 7” (Chicago Housing Authority, October 31, 2005), 171.

¹⁸⁴ Former high-level CPS official, “Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago.”

¹⁸⁵ Johns, “Residents Blame CHA for School Closings”; Former high-level CPS official, “Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago.”

¹⁸⁶ Former high-level CPS official, “Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago.”

normalize class sizes in schools with many relocated children or to provide extra academic support to students whose schooling was impacted by relocation.

The lack of information on academic support CPS provided may be the result of poor recordkeeping; however, it also suggests that CPS may not have identified relocated students' educations as a priority. The latter aligns closely with residents' feelings that CPS policies often stigmatized and disproportionately harmed children whose families received housing benefits through the CHA.¹⁸⁷ Residents expressed concerns that teachers and administrators treated children living in public housing differently and worried that CPS policies resulted in many CHA children attending unnecessarily overcrowded schools.¹⁸⁸ For example, some parents worried that educators would identify their children as troublemakers or demonstrate lower academic expectations for the children after they learned the kids were CHA residents.¹⁸⁹ The fact that CPS representatives, even at the highest level, focused mainly on the social and behavioral needs of residents is indicative that CPS policy did, in fact, stigmatize public housing residents. School turnover due to relocation meant teachers needed to assess and accommodate new students entering at varying levels of academic achievement. At the same time, many schools experienced increased enrollment due to relocation, further burdening teachers and limiting their abilities to serve students' individual needs. By adding social workers and counselors and not teachers to schools serving large populations of relocated children, CPS made an implicit

¹⁸⁷ Clemolyn "Pennie" Brinson, "Renaissance 2010: Sweeping Changes," *Residents' Journal*, December 2004; Johns, "Residents Blame CHA for School Closings"; Johns, "Under Fire, Board Closes Schools"; Mary C. Johns, "Tenants Protest New CHA School Reporting Policy," *Residents' Journal*, Spring 2010.

¹⁸⁸ Guillory, "Englewood Closure"; Johns, "Under Fire, Board Closes Schools"; Johns, "Residents Blame CHA for School Closings."

¹⁸⁹ Johns, "Tenants Protest New CHA School Reporting Policy."

assumption that children coming from public housing would have more behavioral and emotional problems than other students. Further, CPS's response indicates that policymakers may have seen less academic potential in relocated students, as they did not see it necessary to add extra teachers to support students' academic transitions to new schools.

Collaboration with the CHA

While CPS did not play a key role in developing the initial Plan for Transformation, there appeared to be increased collaboration between the schools and the CHA overtime. For example, they collaborated to ensure children knew about and had access to after-school programs.¹⁹⁰ Outreach about these programs was left up to the schools though,¹⁹¹ so schools may not have known which areas or kids to target. As a result, kids whose families relocated with HCVs likely benefitted less from the collaboration than children who continued to live in CHA developments. CPS and the CHA also seemed to have some building sharing arrangements, as CPS took over several emptied out CHA facilities to use as office space.¹⁹² Additionally, there seemed to be coordination tied to new school development. As the CHA moved forward with the Plan for Transformation and the development of the new, mixed-income communities, CPS began renovating and constructing schools in some of those neighborhoods. These new and updated schools, however, were part of the CHA's attempt to attract private-market renters to the communities and were not designed for the benefit of children living in public housing. Further, because school improvements were primarily happening in re-developed

¹⁹⁰ "FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6," Chapter 4: 3.

¹⁹¹ "Plan for Transformation Year 2: Moving to Work Annual Plan FY2001," 41.

¹⁹² "Annual Plan for Transformation FY2003," 36.

neighborhoods, children who had moved to other parts of the city with HCVs did not benefit from the better school facilities.

Starting in 2005, the CHA's annual plans referenced sharing data with CPS so the schools could adjust their programming to accommodate relocating families.¹⁹³ The CHA annual plans and reports never explicitly say what data was being shared, however, or how the schools were using it to adjust their approach to the Plan. The vagueness of the references to data sharing combined with the CHA's poor record of resident-tracking are evidence that the data sharing arrangement the agencies had probably did not help the schools support relocated children as effectively as it could have. This is further supported by the fact that the CPS official I connected with never mentioned the schools receiving data from CHA; rather, he said that CPS looked at which schools had received lots of students and *then* added in social workers and counselors there.¹⁹⁴ The optimal data sharing arrangement would have enabled the schools to have the infrastructure to accommodate relocated students established before the students arrived, so that the kids could have benefitted from transition support starting day one at their new school.

In 2007, the CHA began requiring that families sign a release allowing the housing authority to obtain their children's attendance records from their schools.¹⁹⁵ The agency expanded this policy in 2010 when it began asking families for permission to access students' attendance

¹⁹³ Former high-level CPS official, "Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago."

¹⁹⁴ Former high-level CPS official, "Re: Question from UChicago Public Policy Major Re: Public Housing in Chicago."

¹⁹⁵ "Moving to Work FY2007 Annual Report," 123.

records, grades, and disciplinary histories.¹⁹⁶ While the CHA told families they planned to use the information to assess its programmatic impacts, residents worried that their children's in-school disciplinary infractions or poor grades might affect their lease eligibility.¹⁹⁷ This concern was founded given that the CHA's initial 2007 school release policy identified children's poor attendance as grounds for a family to be deemed lease noncompliant.¹⁹⁸ Residents were further upset by the policy because they believed their children would be unfairly stigmatized in school if their teachers and administrators learned they were public housing residents. The CHA does not follow up on the status of the policy in its 2010 annual plan or annual report, so it is unclear whether the agency followed through with enforcing it or not.

Conflicting Policy

At some points during the Plan for Transformation's first ten years, CPS policies directly conflicted with the interests of relocated children. From 2000 to 2010, CPS closed or transitioned several dozen schools, primarily in high poverty areas. In 2004, Mayor Daley and Superintendent Arne Duncan launched Renaissance 2010, an initiative that aimed to "to create more high-quality educational options across Chicago."¹⁹⁹ To achieve this goal, CPS transitioned away from the neighborhood schools model in a number of communities, turning neighborhood schools into charter, magnet, or sometimes private schools.²⁰⁰ When the status of a neighborhood school changed, students living in that school's attendance boundary no

¹⁹⁶ Johns, "Tenants Protest New CHA School Reporting Policy."

¹⁹⁷ Johns.

¹⁹⁸ "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan for Transformation FY2004-Year 5," 39; "Moving to Work FY2007 Annual Report," 123.

¹⁹⁹ "CPS : District Initiatives : Renaissance 2010," accessed April 17, 2018, <http://www.cps.edu/PROGRAMS/DISTRICTINITIATIVES/Pages/Renaissance2010.aspx>.

²⁰⁰ Brinson, "Renaissance 2010: Sweeping Changes."

longer were guaranteed a spot there, which resulted in many children needing to change schools.²⁰¹ The initiative caused more upheaval for children who had been relocated through the Plan for Transformation because it disproportionately affected schools in low-income areas, which had accepted the highest numbers of relocated children. This meant that children who had just recently changed schools following relocation lost their spots in their new neighborhood school and either had to change schools again or hope they could re-enroll through a lottery system.²⁰² For children who had already had their educational experiences interrupted by relocation, having to change schools again likely had detrimental effects on their educations.²⁰³

Even more disruption was caused by school closures, both related to and independent of Renaissance 2010. Children living in the Robert Taylor Homes were negatively impacted by school closures in 2003 when CPS shut down DuSable High School, which had served the Robert Taylor Homes community since the development opened in the 1960s. Jovan would have started his freshman year at DuSable in 2003, but when CPS closed it down the school department funneled him and his classmates into Robeson High School in Englewood, one of the city's poorest performing schools.²⁰⁴ At Robeson, Jovan found very little social support from his teachers, who did not even notice that he cut his last two periods almost every other day.²⁰⁵

The DuSable closure is a key example of CPS and the CHA's failure to coordinate with one another. CPS closed DuSable in 2003, four years before the Robert Taylor Homes had been fully

²⁰¹ Brinson.

²⁰² Brinson.

²⁰³ Brinson.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

emptied out. As a result, many high school-aged kids living in the Robert Taylor Homes were forced to move to a new high school until they relocated, when they likely had to change schools again. Had CPS and CHA worked together more effectively to better time DuSable's closing with relocations from the Robert Taylors Homes, the agencies would have afforded hundreds of teenagers a more consistent school experience.

School closures also affected children post relocation. In 2009 alone, CPS closed 16 schools, concentrated mostly in the city's South and West Sides.²⁰⁶ High poverty neighborhoods where many families had relocated to faced the bulk of the closings. For example, hundreds of families had relocated to Englewood, which had two main high schools: Englewood High School and Robeson High School.²⁰⁷ In 2006, CPS closed Englewood High School, transferring its students to Robeson.²⁰⁸ Students who had relocated to Englewood and settled in at Englewood High School were distraught by the announcement, anxious about the prospect of having to adjust to new teachers and peers yet again.²⁰⁹ Students attending Robeson High School were similarly concerned as they wondered how their already full classrooms and crowded hallways would be able to handle an influx of new students.²¹⁰ When CPS cited under-enrollment as the impetus for the 2009 closings, CHA residents were angered that city policy was yet again harming their

²⁰⁶ Johns, "Residents Blame CHA for School Closings."

²⁰⁷ Guillory, "Englewood Closure."

²⁰⁸ Guillory.

²⁰⁹ Guillory.

²¹⁰ Guillory.

children.²¹¹ They expressed great concern over the amount of turnover the closures would cause in primarily black schools, especially on the heels of the Plan for Transformation.²¹²

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Public housing policy plays a significant role in the lives of children, as housing authorities have significant control over where their families live, how stable their housing situations are, and the types and extent of services that children and families living in public housing receive. Major housing policies, such as the Plan for Transformation, affect the lives of public housing residents of all ages; however, as records show, a majority of registered public housing residents are children, so policies like the Plan for Transformation have a disproportionate effect on their experiences. Below I have outlined policy recommendations for HUD and city leaders, specifically housing authority and school department administrators, based on my findings. These recommendations are intended to help housing authorities and school departments in large cities better support children and families that are affected by major housing policies.

Recommendation 1: The federal government should require that a city soliciting funding for public housing reform submit a joint plan created by its housing authority and school department that outlines how the two organizations are going to support relocated children during the transition.

²¹¹ Johns, "Under Fire, Board Closes Schools."

²¹² Johns.

As my findings demonstrate, being uprooted and forced to relocate homes can have a detrimental impact on children’s social and academic experiences, especially when relocation means a child has to leave his school and social network. By planning ahead and working together, housing authorities and school departments can reduce the negative effects that relocation may have on children. The CHA did eventually form partnerships with CPS and other city agencies, however, the partnership with CPS was not formally established until year four or five of the Plan for Transformation,²¹³ which means hundreds of children relocated before the housing authority and the schools had officially begun working together. The schools likely would have been more prepared to support relocated children had the CHA formed its partnership with CPS prior to Plan’s official launch and the relocation of any families. While children still would have faced the challenges associated with community loss and moving to a new neighborhood, their school transitions and academic experiences likely would have been better.

In implementing large-scale housing policy reform, cities often rely on outside funding from the federal government via HUD. For this reason, HUD, and the federal government more broadly, can function as a good “gatekeeper” to the implementation of large-scale public housing reform projects at a local level. HUD already serves as a grant-maker for such projects, as was the case with the Plan for Transformation, which the city funded largely using HUD’s Hope VI and MTW grants. The recommended joint plan should be added to the list of required

²¹³ “FY2005 Annual Plan: Plan for Transformation Year 6.”

components that cities must submit with their grant applications and project proposals, meaning that funding is partially contingent on the quality of the plan.

At a minimum, the joint plan should include the following components:

1. *A memorandum of understanding between the housing authority and school department that families will not be relocated during the school year.*

During the Plan for Transformation, the CHA gave families 90 days notice prior to relocation,²¹⁴ but as previously discussed, CHA did not always time the relocations according to the school calendar. As a result, many students had to choose between changing schools mid-year or commuting back to their old neighborhood, neither of which were typically good options. Agreeing to coordinate relocation timings with the school year would enable a city's housing authority and school department to disrupt fewer children's educational experiences and thus improve outcomes for kids. Relatedly, if families relocate and enroll their kids in a new school during the summer, there is a greater chance the school department would know where the kids are moving going into the school year and thus could make arrangements to accommodate them in the late summer, rather than having to scramble mid-school year to add extra support staff.

2. *A data sharing agreement so that schools know which students will be moving and can prepare appropriately.*

²¹⁴ "CHA Leaseholder Housing Choice and Relocation Rights Contract."

While the CHA did begin sharing data with CPS in 2005, it remains unclear what data was shared or what impact it had. As previously discussed, the vagueness of the references to data sharing seem to suggest that CHA was unable to share specific data but rather general estimates of how many families were moving or when developments would be closing. As a result CPS often had to wait until the school year had begun before it could assess which schools needed extra support and then adjust accordingly, disrupting school ecosystems and children's school experiences.

Since the first 11 years of the Plan for transformation, improvements in technology and tracking capabilities have allowed housing authorities to more effectively manage and follow their residents' needs and locations, information that housing authorities should, in turn, be sharing with school departments. These systems can increase the capacity of housing authorities to monitor which neighborhoods families are relocating to and how many children they have. As I discussed in the Findings section, by 2010 the CHA had begun using web-based tracking systems to see which families had been relocated or referred to services. While the newness of the tracking system resulted in limited impact for relocated families over the eleven-year period this paper considers, the improved technology has likely since increased the CHA's effectiveness and efficiency at tracking residents' moves and progress. Cities should take advantage of such tracking systems in the future. Specifically, housing authorities should be regularly updating school departments to inform them which neighborhoods families are moving to and the

breakdown of children's ages, so that schools can better prepare to support new community members.

While ideally housing authorities could send schools family-specific information, it is also important that families' privacy is protected. When the CHA announced it would be receiving data on specific children's school performance and behavior, residents were outraged. As the findings discussed, one of the primary reasons they were upset was because they worried their children would be labeled as public housing residents and treated poorly as a result. With the recommend data sharing agreement, housing authorities should not reveal children's or families' names with school departments in order to prevent children from entering their new schools with a label that may result in them being treated unfairly. Although policy cannot directly prevent people's implicit biases, it can prevent children from being unjustly stigmatized.

- 3. A strategy for how to time relocations so that schools near a particular development do not empty out and need to shut down long before all the local residents have been relocated.*

My findings demonstrate that CPS's poorly timed school closures caused added disruption to the academic experiences of many relocated children, as the closures forced many children to change schools yet again. CPS's Renaissance 2010 and other decisions to close schools represent poorly coordinated policy that ignores the needs of primarily low-income students.

The clearest cases of failed coordination between the CHA and CPS, however, were the mistimed school closures that occurred near developments slated for demolition, disrupting children's school experiences before their families had even relocated. This was true for children of the Robert Taylor Homes when DuSable High School closed in 2003, four years before everyone had relocated. From a financial resources standpoint, it is understandable that CPS did not want to operate a school with increasingly low enrollments; however, there should have been communication between the CHA and CPS so that the school department would have known how long there would be families living in the Robert Taylor Homes that a local neighborhood school would best serve. Had that communication happened, DuSable could have been phased out as opposed to shut down altogether. Relatedly, the CHA should have had an understanding of what DuSable's enrollment numbers needed to look like to stay open and then considered that information as it coordinated relocations, perhaps prioritizing relocations of families with high-school aged kids so they could move before the school closed and limit how many times their children had to change schools.

Recommendation 2: Cities should mandate that relocation counseling include a school counseling component, in which relocation counselors are trained to inform parents of what their children's schooling options are in potential new neighborhoods and provide enrollment support so that children can start school at their new schools immediately following their move.

As part of the Plan for Transformation, CHA offered multiple forms of relocation counseling aimed at preparing families to move and helping them adjust once they had. High caseloads and confusing divisions of labor reduced the effectiveness of the counseling, however, and it was not until 2008 or 2009 that the CHA finally began consolidating and streamlining its relocation services.

Even once the CHA had begun to increase the efficiency of its relocation counseling programs, there was one glaring gap in its services: school choice and enrollment support. When families relocated, they most commonly had to change neighborhoods and, as a result, their children often had to change schools. School quality in Chicago differs significantly across neighborhoods, so moving to Englewood has different academic implications than moving to Kenwood, for example. Relocated families had a lot on their plates as they prepared for the forced uprooting of their lives and, for many families, taking the initiative to understand the distinctions between different neighborhoods' schools could not take priority over finding an affordable, CHA-approved apartment.

Going forward, it is important that cities include school choice and enrollment support as part of their relocation services. CHA had an established infrastructure of relocation supports, which should have been extended to include one-on-one counseling that helped families identify target neighborhoods to relocate to based on their children's academic needs and follow up support to help them enroll their children in a new school after they had moved. This was the model CHA used to support families in its Housing Opportunity Program, which provided more

in-depth and individualized services to families to help them move to low-poverty areas. In addition to an initial assessment of what a family's needs were in terms of schooling, a Housing Opportunity Counselor would follow the family through their move and make sure that the family's children had been enrolled in a school in their new neighborhood soon after relocation. The Housing Opportunity Program, however, served a very limited number of families and thus few children benefitted from the school-related services the program offered. In the future, housing authorities should implement services like those the Housing Opportunity Program offered, with a particular focus on making sure families are afforded the opportunity to consider school options as a factor when selecting a neighborhood to move to and then helping families enroll their children in a new school so the kids do not miss any academic time and immediately start integrating into their new communities.

Recommendation 3: The city should fund school busses for two groups of children: 1) those whose families have been relocated during the school year but want to finish the academic year at their old school; and 2) children whose neighborhood schools closed prior to their families being relocated and thus must commute a farther distance to the schools to which they have been re-assigned.

In the ideal world, children would not have to relocate during the school year and neighborhood schools would never close before all the children in an area had been relocated. Pragmatically though, policy implementation is an imperfect process, and both of these situations may arise. Families may have trouble finding apartments and thus need to delay relocation into the school year. Similarly, resource considerations may force a school

department to shut down schools with decreasing enrollment even though there are kids left to serve.

Children who wanted to commute to their old school following relocation or had to commute to a new school before they had been relocated faced daily barriers to getting their education. Although the CHA offered CTA passes to children whose families had relocated but who wanted to commute to their old school, taking public transportation across neighborhoods was not a feasible option for all children, as I discussed in the Findings section. For example, some relocated children would have been too young to take the bus by themselves. Parents trying to meet CHA work requirements and raise other children or who could not have afforded the transportation costs for themselves would not have been able to make the commute with their children everyday, rendering the free CTA passes for relocated children moot. Relatedly, some commutes were too dicey, as was the case for Jovan. For many children, even those who really enjoy school, as Jovan always had, their educations were not worth literally risking their lives on the CTA.

In order to improve the experiences of children affected by these challenges in the future, schools should offer school busses that reduce the burdens imposed on children and their families. School busses would make it easier for younger children to continue attending their old school, as they eliminate the need for their parents to accompany them on the CTA each day. Similarly, for older students who want to avoid violence or a strenuous commute, providing school busses would allow them to get to school more efficiently and safely. While

creating bus routes and funding school busses is expensive, the city could save money in the short-term on CTA passes and in the long-term on the social costs associated with an under-educated population. The previously discussed barriers to commuting to school with a CTA pass increase the likelihood that a child will not attend school, as was the case with Jovan who skipped school in order to avoid a dangerous commute. Similarly, forcing children to transfer to a school in their new neighborhood mid-year would disrupt their education and may cause them to disengage from school. School busses enable students to finish the academic year at their old school and reduce the barriers associated with traveling to school on the CTA, thus increasing the likelihood that children will persist in school and have more positive outcomes. School busses serve a similar benefit for children who must commute to a new neighborhood prior to relocation due to a school closure, as they face comparable barriers to attending school each day.

CONCLUSION

After his family relocated a second time, Jovan transferred to South Shore High School, where he found supportive teachers and peers he connected with.²¹⁵ He joined the basketball team, got his grades up, and was initiated into the National Honor Society.²¹⁶ When the CHA hiked up his grandmother's rent after he graduated, citing the fact that she had work-eligible adults living with her, Jovan left his program at Chicago State University and joined the military.²¹⁷ Eventually though, he returned to get a Bachelor's degree in Organizational Communication from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and then to get his Master's in Human Resources from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.²¹⁸ Today, Jovan is a Teach for America Corps Member, teaching English in the Memphis Public Schools.²¹⁹

Jovan acknowledges he was lucky that his second relocation landed him in a school that prevented him from dropping out.²²⁰ In the years since his family relocated, Jovan has gradually re-connected with his childhood friends from the Robert Taylor Homes, primarily through social media.²²¹ Many of his friends have not fared as well as he has, and they are struggling to hold down jobs or raise young children.²²² Several were murdered after they moved away from the Robert Taylor Homes.²²³ While he eventually ended up in a school that positively impacted the

²¹⁵ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²¹⁶ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²¹⁷ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²¹⁸ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²¹⁹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁰ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²¹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²² Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²³ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

course of his life, Jovan says that leaving the Robert Taylor Homes and navigating Robeson High School were some of the hardest experiences he has ever had.²²⁴

Jovan's story is a prime example of the challenges that CHA and CPS's failure to coordinate imposed on relocated children. The premature closing of DuSable High School forced Jovan to commute from Bronzeville to Englewood's Robeson High School, taking three different busses through some of Chicago's most dangerous areas.²²⁵ Jovan says the commute was extremely taxing and made it hard for him to feel motivated to go to school everyday.²²⁶ At Robeson, he encountered significant violence stemming from the influx of relocated and re-routed students with gang affiliations clashing with the established gangs of Englewood.²²⁷ The school was overcrowded and poorly managed, so when Jovan left school early several days a week, no one noticed.²²⁸ Like many other children, Jovan's first relocation was one of several, and when his family moved a second time within a year of their first relocation, he had to change schools, again being forced to make new friends and adjust to new teachers.²²⁹ While the move to South Shore was a positive one academically and socially, it was just one piece of Jovan's relocation experience, which had been characterized by unstable housing, violence, and loss of community.

²²⁴ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁵ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁶ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁷ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁸ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

²²⁹ Interview with Jovan Gathings, Former Resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, 1996-2003.

Limitations and Considerations

When I originally set out to do my research, I had intended to conduct a minimum of five interviews with former residents of the Robert Taylor Homes. I quickly learned, however, that it is difficult to find interviewees given that they now live in all different parts of the city or have left Chicago. Additionally, many people seem to view the relocation process as a traumatic one that they do not necessarily want to re-visit. As a result, I was hesitant to press former residents I reached out to for interviews when they were unresponsive. While the *Residents' Journals* and public comments from the CHA annual plans provided interesting and valuable insights and a wide-range of perspectives, it would have been helpful to hear additional perspectives through a greater number of ethnographical interviews.

Another limitation was the poor recordkeeping on the part of the city. The CHA was historically ineffective at tracking moves and outcomes during the Plan for Transformation, as the fact that the city lost track of approximately 2,200 relocated families exhibits.²³⁰ While the records got significantly better over the course of the period from 2000 to 2010, there are still gaps in information that CHA documents do not explain. For example, while the documents show that the last family moved out of the Robert Taylor Homes in 2007, the annual plans and reports do not provide numbers for how many families relocated from the development between 2000 and 2007, making it difficult to understand the pace of relocations or when they were concentrated. Additionally, the CHA documents are consistently vague, which makes it difficult to understand how some programs operate or the logic behind having multiple programs

²³⁰ "The Plan for Transformation: An Update on Relocation," 3.

servicing similar purposes, such as with the CHA's multitude of relocation and service referral programs. As the Findings discussed, this vagueness was also problematic for residents who did not know how to seek out services.

Two major topics of the Plan for Transformation that this paper does not discuss in-depth are race and segregation. Given the high number of Black residents that CHA serves, the Plan for Transformation had a disproportionately high impact on Black families and communities. This impact was augmented by the fact that a large number of residents relocated into the predominantly Black neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West Sides, further straining the limited resources in those communities. While this paper does not focus on the issue of race and the implicit racial biases that lie in many CHA and CPS policies, these are important to consider when assessing the harm the Plan for Transformation caused children.

Looking Ahead

The Plan for Transformation will finally achieve its goal of re-building 25,000 public housing units.²³¹ What was slated to take 11 years, has taken 19, leaving thousands of families in flux. While Chicago attempted the one of the largest scale public housing reforms in American history with its Plan for Transformation, the vision has yet to be realized. Over the coming years and decades, we will watch as the city continues to struggle to integrate different populations of the city into its mixed-income communities and follow the stories and outcomes of people who once called the high-rises their homes. Most of the children relocated in the early 2000s

²³¹ "Approved FY2018 Moving to Work Annual Plan" (Chicago Housing Authority, October 12, 2017), 2.

have long since entered adulthood, though the effects of the Plan for Transformation and their disrupted schools years live on with them. As we move forward, it is important for other cities to learn from Chicago's over-ambition and to consider the needs of public housing residents—including children—before irreparably disrupting their communities.

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The University of Chicago

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College Access Intern

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- Worked as member of six intern team to manage academic and social programming for 125 low-income and minority Chicago Public High School students
- Supported students' college application process including college choice, essay review, and funding opportunities
- Organized and carried out Culminating Event attended by over 400 people

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Communications Intern

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- Designed and executed research project examining the quality of media coverage of 19 MacArthur Fellows in 46 media outlets across eight different media markets
- Planned and managed two five-hour Briefings on MacArthur's work attended by 170 Chicago-area interns
- Produced research into how peer organizations use social media platforms including Instagram and Vine as part of the Foundation's restructuring of its social media strategy

National League of Cities (NLC)

Intern in the Institute for Youth, Education and Families

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Summer 2015

- Interviewed city leaders nationwide about implementation of the five goal areas of *Let's Move!* Cities, Towns and Counties and wrote case studies to help elected increase the initiative's local impact
- Collaborated with the Communications Team to develop plans for September 2015 White House event for *Let's Move!* that was attended by the First Lady and approximately 50 mayors from across the country
- Created detailed report of best practices and laws that influence programs for runaway youth that was distributed via webinars, briefs, and blog posts to city leaders looking to establish services for runaways

LEADERSHIP

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago (MUNUC)

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- Elected as Secretary-General to lead year-round efforts to produce annual Model UN conference with \$300K budget and attended by 3,000 high school students from 15 countries and staffed by 220 University of Chicago students
- Oversee development and execution of content for 26 Model U.N. committees and manage concurrent administrative processes
- Preside over fourteen-member Executive Committee accountable for conference quality and success
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Neighborhood Schools Program, University of Chicago

Leadership Corps and Teaching Assistant

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October 2014-Present

- Select, train, and monitor 400+ University students working in South Side K-12 schools
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- Consulted for a South Side nonprofit client to provide frameworks, metrics, and research to help the organization better position itself to funders and increase its community impact
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