Mobility counseling for Housing Choice Voucher holders overview

Low-income families often face considerable barriers to using Housing Choice Vouchers in low poverty, resource-rich areas, including a lack of familiarity with the neighborhoods and landlords who are apprehensive about renting to voucher holders.

Voucher holders that seek to rent from owners that do not regularly rent to voucher holders may also face heightened qualification and financial barriers, including increased credit scrutiny and greater requirements for up-front payments to cover security deposits, move-in fees, and other expenses. Because of these and other factors, including a desire to live near friends and family, voucher holders may limit their housing search to neighborhoods with which they are familiar and where they know landlords are willing to rent to voucher holders.

Mobility counseling helps interested voucher holders learn about a wider range of neighborhoods, including resource-rich neighborhoods. Public housing agencies can create mobility programs (either on their own or in partnership with a non-profit) that offer one-on-one counseling sessions and apartment search assistance, as well as group workshops on tenant rights and navigating financial barriers, neighborhood tours, aid in negotiating with landlords, and post-search guidance on how to access services in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Together with programs to provide financial assistance to cover security deposits and first- and last month’s rent, mobility counseling programs can help low-income households move to areas that offer safe streets, high-performing schools and access to good jobs.