HUD NEWS

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Shaun Donovan, Secretary
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NEW HUD STUDY FINDS MOVING TO LOW-POVERTY NEIGHBORHOODS LOWERS RISK OF OBESITY AND DIABETES FOR POOR WOMEN
New England Journal of Medicine to highlight health outcomes of 'moving to opportunity'

WASHINGTON – Very-low income women who have the opportunity to move from high-poverty neighborhoods into lower poverty areas are significantly less likely to be extremely obese or to have diabetes. Those are among the key findings of a study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. An article in an upcoming issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) highlights the positive health findings, which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development previewed today.

"This study proves that concentrated poverty is not only bad policy, it's bad for your health," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "Far too often, we can predict a family's overall health, even their life expectancy, by knowing their zip code. But it's not enough to simply move families into different neighborhoods. We must continue to look for innovative and strategic ways to connect families to the necessary supports they need to break the cycle of poverty that can quite literally make them sick."

"Neighborhoods, Obesity, and Diabetes — A Randomized Social Experiment," will be published in the October 20th issue of NEJM. The article looks at the long-term impact of housing mobility on obesity and diabetes from the HUD study *Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program: Final Evaluation*. HUD's study tested the long-term health impacts of approximately 4,500 very low-income families living in public housing projects in high-poverty neighborhoods in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York.

The findings featured in the NEJM article showed that giving very poor families the opportunity to move to neighborhoods with lower poverty can have a positive impact on the physical health of adult women.

➢ The women who did not receive vouchers through this study had a prevalence rate of 17% for extreme obesity, much larger than the national average for women of approximately 7%. Women who were given the opportunity to move with housing vouchers to low-poverty neighborhoods showed a significantly reduced rate of extreme obesity – 3.4 percentage points lower – than the women who did not receive vouchers.   This means women with the opportunity to move were 19 percent less likely to be extremely obese than were women who did not receive a housing voucher.

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> ➢ The prevalence rate for diabetes for the group of women who did not receive vouchers was 20%, compared to the national average for women of 12%. For the group of women with the opportunity to move to low-poverty neighborhoods, the prevalence rate was 5.2 percentage points lower (as measured by glycated hemoglobin) than the women who did not receive housing vouchers. This means women with the opportunity to move were 20 percent less likely to have diabetes (as measured by glycated hemoglobin) than women who did not receive a housing voucher.

HUD's study also found even larger health effects for those women who moved with a housing voucher to lower poverty neighborhoods.

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) conducted the study for HUD. Lawrence Katz, the Elisabeth Allison Professor of Economics at Harvard University and NBER Research Associate, was the principal investigator and Jens Ludwig, the McCormick Foundation Professor of Social Service Administration, Law, and Public Policy at the University of Chicago and NBER research associate, was the project director.

While HUD directed the research, support for the study of health impacts discussed today came from a range of government and philanthropic sources, including the National Science Foundation, NBER, the University of Chicago's Center for Health Administration Studies, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

HUD began the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program (MTO) in 1994 to examine the effect of neighborhood on low-income families with children. Approximately 4,600 very low-income families living in public housing projects in five large cities – Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York – enrolled in the demonstration.

Between 1994 and 1998 families were randomly assigned to one of three groups: the *experimental group*, which allowed families to only use the voucher in low-poverty neighborhoods; the *Section 8 group*, which allowed the families to use the voucher in any neighborhood; and the *control group*, which did not receive vouchers. All families had the option of remaining in their current neighborhood. HUD tracked and interviewed the families until 2010.

During the study years, HUD released a number of analyses that revealed experiences of MTO participants. In 2003, HUD released "*The Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Interim Impacts Evaluation*." HUD will release the final report early November.

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