

Appendix A: Tenant Interview Protocol

Phase 2 Tenant Protocol

INTRODUCTION

My name is _____ and I am with Quadel Consulting working on a research study for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Today we will be talking about your experiences with the Housing Choice Voucher program and with neighborhoods in the city. We might end up talking about a few different things, but we will talk mostly about places you've lived, houses and apartments you've rented around here, and those you've thought about renting or living in. This information will help the government determine the effectiveness of SAFMRs instead of FMRs in moving tenants to areas of opportunity. This survey will take about 50 minutes and we will compensate you for your time by providing you with \$20. Your participation is voluntary. All information you provide will be kept confidential.

I have some questions prepared, and you might have some things you want to bring up too. So think of this as a conversation, rather than an "interview." You can stop talking at any time. If I raise an issue or ask a question you don't want to talk about, just say so and we will move on to something else. No big deal.

I don't work for [name of PHA]. The [name of PHA] provided us with the contact information for 100 HCV holders in the [City], and you are one of 10 that we will be talking to for the study. After we talk to all of the families, we will combine everyone's perspectives into a research report that we will send to HUD that may become available for the general public to read. We may include short quotes or summaries of individual comments from our conversations with families that receive vouchers in the report, but nothing you say will be attached to your name or personal information directly. Your comments will be anonymous. None of your responses will affect your eligibility for assistance.

I would like to record our conversation because I don't want to take many notes during the interview. This way, I can really concentrate on what you have to say. If you want me to turn the recorder off for any reason or at any time, just say so. No one will hear the recording except for the research team. Then we will erase it. We will take out your name and any other identifying information from the written transcript.

Any questions?

OK, let's start.

Is it okay if I turn on the recorder now? [Get verbal consent].

Background/Selection Criteria

Note to interviewer: Prefill this section based on administrative data. Based on this information, assign each household to one of the six household move types in Exhibit 1. Interview questions vary based on household move type. During the interview, please confirm which category the household belongs to. Proceed with the interview using the questions appropriate to the household move type.

A. Voucher receipt year

- Post-SAFMR voucher recipient (2011 or later for Dallas and Plano; 2013 or later for demonstration PHAs)

a. Neighborhood type

- Low rent ratio
- High rent ratio

- Pre-SAFMR voucher recipient (before 2011 for Dallas and Plano; before 2013 for demonstration PHAs)

b. Move type and neighborhood type

- Low rent ratio – no move
- Move from a low rent ratio ZIP to another low rent ratio ZIP
- Move from a low rent ratio ZIP to a high rent ratio ZIP
- Multiple neighborhood types and moves (e.g., initial move from a low rent ZIP to a high rent ZIP then back to a low rent ZIP)

B. Household type

- Senior (62+) or disabled
- Parent(s) with minor children

Note to interviewer: The goal of the study is to interview households in six categories of Household Move Type (see Exhibit 1). Please check the household type prior to the interview. Interview questions vary according to the Household Move Type.

Exhibit 1: Household Move Type

	Interviewer: Enter 'X' in row for correct household move type
Households who became voucher holders before change to SAFMR (before 2011 for Dallas and Plano; before 2013 for demonstration PHAs)	
Group 1: Same unit - low rent ZIP Code	
Group 2: Mover - low to high rent ZIP Code	
Group 3: Mover - low to low rent ZIP Code	
Group 4: Repeat mover - low to high to low rent ZIP Code	
Households who became voucher holders after change to SAFMR (2011 or later for Dallas and Plano; 2013 or later for demonstration PHAs)	
Group 5: New HCV holder (since implementation) - low rent ZIP Code	
Group 6: New HCV holder (since implementation) - high rent ZIP Code	

Phase 2 Tenant Protocol

*Note to interviewer: For respondents in Dallas and Plano, use **2011** as the year SAFMRs were adopted. For all other respondents, use **2013**.*

A. HOUSING HISTORY

A1. Tell me the story of the place you are **living right now**.

[Interviewer: if the respondent does not volunteer this information, follow up with ALL of these probes: How did you end up here? What was the main reason you ended up here? Is employment a reason why you are living here? When did you move here? Who lives with you? Is anyone in your household elderly? Is anyone in your household disabled?]

A2. If you had to do it over again, would you have chosen this unit [*“house” or “apartment”*]? What are some things you like about this [*house/apartment*]? Tell me what you wish you had known about this house/unit before you moved in.

A3. If you had to do it over again, would you have chosen this neighborhood? What are some things you like about this neighborhood? Tell me what you wish you had known about this neighborhood before moving in.

A4. Tell me about your housing choice voucher. We understand that you first received a voucher from [*fill in PHA name*] in [*YEAR*]. Is that correct?

Interviewer: If the respondent has lived at its current address since at least 2010 (for Dallas and Plano) or 2012 (for other PHAs), skip to Question A6. If not, proceed to Question A5.

A5. I'd like to find out about each place you've lived since [interviewer, choose one: 2011 (for Dallas/Plano) / 2013 (for other PHAs)]. You've already told me about your current place. Where did you live before that?

Probes: How did you end up there? What was the main reason you moved there? When did you move there? What was the address/ZIP Code/cross streets? Tell me the whole story of how you left that place. Why did you decide to leave?

Interviewer: Repeat A5 as often as necessary to get all units back to either a) unit prior to first receiving a voucher (may have continued to live there upon receiving voucher) OR b) unit at the time SAFMRs were introduced.

A6. I'd like to make sure I have all the details right about the places we've talked about. *[Interviewer, please work with the respondent to complete Exhibit 2, Housing History, working backwards from the current unit to previous units. Stop at a) unit prior to their first voucher unit OR b) their unit the year before the time SAFMRs were introduced.]*

Exhibit 2: Housing History

	Location Description (for use in identifying unit, e.g., Andrews St.)	Address ZIP Code /Cross-streets	Dates of Residence	Same ZIP Code as Previous Unit?	Used Housing Choice Voucher to Rent Unit?	First Unit Rented with a Voucher?	First Move Since [2011/2013] (Y/N)?
Current unit							
Prior unit #1							
Prior unit #2							
Prior unit #3							

B. UNDERSTANDING OF SAFMRs

Interviewer: Questions B1 to B6 are only for voucher holders who initially received their voucher in 2010 or earlier (for Dallas or Plano) or in 2012 or earlier (for other PHAs), before the change to SAFMRs.

For voucher holders who received their vouchers more recently, after the transition to SAFMRs had already occurred, SKIP TO B7:

READ TO RESPONDENTS: Before starting the next set of questions, I'm going to describe to you what I understand to be a change in the policies of the *[fill in PHA name]* that has occurred since you first got your voucher. You may already know this, and if so, please be patient as I walk through this explanation. The *[fill in PHA name]* sets policies for the housing choice voucher program that determine the maximum amount a housing choice voucher will pay for rent for a 1 bedroom, 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom or larger apartment or house. These maximums are called "payment standards." In the past, the *[name of PHA]* set one payment standard for each apartment or house size (number of bedrooms) for all of their vouchers. ¹ Starting in *[2011/2013]*, *[fill in PHA name]* began setting different payment standards for different ZIP Codes in the *[name of metropolitan area]*. So now for example, a 2-bedroom apartment can have different payment standards depending on the zip code where it is located.

¹ The study team will verify that the PHA had not used its authority to have multiple payment standards prior to adopting SAFMRs.

B1. Are you aware that you can rent more expensive apartments in some parts of the city than in others? (Probes: How did you find out about this new rent policy? Did the PHA notify you of this change? If so, how were you notified? What did you understand from the notification? Was the notification clear?)

B2. Do you understand why the *[fill in PHA name]* set the new rent policy? (Interviewer: probe to get at the respondent's understanding of the intention of the ZIP Code-based payment standards?)

B3. Can you tell me what you remember about what the PHA told you about the new rent policy when you attended your annual recertification in *[2011/2013]*? This was right after the new rent policy had been adopted. (Probes: Was any additional information given to you? What additional information did you receive? What kind of things did they give you (e.g., handouts, verbal explanation, referral to a website)? Was information provided to you any other way, such as at a tenant meeting or in a newsletter?)

B4. When you first learned about the new rent policy, did you find it confusing at all? If so, what was confusing? (Probe: Were your questions about the new rent policy answered? When and how were your questions answered (during recertification, during a phone call, with information on the PHA website, other)? Are you still confused at all about the new rent policy?)

B5. Did you get information about the new rent policy from sources other than the PHA, such as other voucher holders? What did you learn from these other sources?

B6. Could the *[fill in PHA name]* have done anything differently to make it easier to understand how the new rent policy works and what it was intended to do? If so, what?

Interviewer: Questions B7 to B11 are only for voucher holders who initially received their voucher in 2011 or later (for Dallas or Plano) or in 2013 or later (for other PHAs), so after the change to SAFMR.

For voucher holders who received their vouchers more recently, after the transition to SAFMRs had already occurred, SKIP TO Section C]:

READ TO RESPONDENTS: Before starting the next set of questions, I'm going to describe to you what I understand to be a policy of *[fill in PHA name]*. You may already know this, and if so, please be patient as I walk through this explanation. The *[fill in PHA name]* sets policies for the housing choice voucher program that determine the maximum amount a housing choice

voucher will pay for rent for a 1 bedroom, 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom or larger apartment or house. These maximums are called payment standards. The *[fill in PHA name]* sets different payment standards for different ZIP Codes in the *[name of metropolitan area]*, so for example, a 2-bedroom apartment can have different payment standards depending on the ZIP Code where it is located.

B7. Are you aware that you can rent more expensive apartments in some parts of the city than in others? (Probe for whether respondent understood that payment standards varied by ZIP Code.) Did you learn about this from the PHA, from other sources, or both? If from other sources, what were these other sources?

B8. Do you find this policy confusing in any way? If so, what? (Probes: Did you have any questions about the policy when you first learned about it? Were your questions about the rent policy answered? When and how were your questions answered (during re/certification, during a phone call, with information on the PHA website, other)?)

B9. Did you get information about this rent policy from sources other than the PHA, such as other voucher holders? What did you learn from these other sources?

B10. Could the [fill in PHA name] have done anything differently to make it easier to understand how the rent policy works and what it is intended to do? If so, what?

C. MOVE EXPERIENCE AND SEARCH PROCESS

Interviewer: Questions C1 to C7 are only for voucher holders who initially received their voucher in 2010 or earlier (for Dallas or Plano) or in 2012 or earlier (for other PHAs), so before the change to SAFMR, AND who have moved (in Exhibit 1, “Group 2: Mover - low to high rent ZIP Code,” “Group 3: Mover - low to low rent ZIP Code, or “Group 4: Repeat mover - low to high to low rent ZIP Code”).

For voucher holders who received their vouchers more recently (Groups 5 and 6), after the transition to SAFMRs had already occurred, SKIP TO C8:

I'd like to find out more about your [Interviewer: choose the first permanent move (e.g., not short-term or temporary) since SAFMR went into effect in their location] decision to move. This would have been in [date] from [location 1 to location 2].

C1. Tell me all about the move from [location 1 to location 2, e.g., Stratton Street to Walnut Ave.]. [Interviewer: skip any topics that were already discussed in Section A.]

Probes:

Did you move to a different ZIP Code?

Was the rent higher/lower/the same in location 2?

Why did you move? Tell me all the things that made you want to/need to move:

Required by PHA or landlord

Required by personal circumstances (health, education, child care, work, family, disability, other)

Housing unit (quality of housing unit, size of housing unit, other)

Rent was going to increase if I stayed

Couldn't afford the rent anymore

For a better opportunity (lower crime, better environment, better schools, better access to jobs, to be closer to work, better access to transportation, better access to health care, better access to other community amenities (what?), closer to friends, closer to family, other)

What would you say was the most important reason why you decided to move? (*Alternate question, if the most important reason is hard for the respondent to discern: Of all the reasons you decided to move, which do you think might have been the biggest reason?*)

Interviewer: (Check prior to interview)

- Household moved from a low rent ratio area to a high rent ratio area after SAFMR (Group 2) – ask questions C2-C4 then skip to question C6;
- Household moved from a low rent ratio area to another low rent ratio area (may have stayed in the same ZIP code) after SAFMR (Group 3) – skip to C5;
- Household moved from a low rent ratio area to a high rent ratio area and back to a low rent ratio area after SAFMR (Group 4) – skip to question C7:

C2. Group 2 Households with low rent ratio to high rent ratio move:

Did the fact that your voucher would allow you to afford a higher rent unit in your new location affect your decision to move? How important was this to your decision to move?

C3. Group 2 Households with low rent ratio to high rent ratio move:

Do you think neighborhoods with higher rents are generally “better” for you and your family? If so, how are they better? Schools? Access to jobs? Safety/crime rate? Environmental quality? Housing quality? Access to other amenities?

Interviewer: If the respondent says no or seems confused about the question, ask the question again, this time filling in the name of the specific neighborhood in place of “neighborhoods with higher rents. Do you think [neighborhood name] is better for you and your family than the neighborhood you lived in before that?

C4. Group 2 Households with low rent ratio to high rent ratio move:

Are there any negatives of living in higher-rent areas like [insert neighborhood name] for you and your family? If so, what are those negatives?

C5. Group 3 Households with low rent ratio to low rent ratio move:

Did you consider the fact that your voucher would allow you to afford a higher rent unit in some ZIP Codes when you moved to [current unit location description, e.g., State Street]? Did that affect your search for a new unit or your decision to move in any way? If so, how?

C6. Tell me a little about the neighborhood in [prior unit #1 location description]. What did you like the best about that neighborhood? What did you like the least? How does the neighborhood in [current unit] compare to the neighborhood in [prior unit # location description]? How is/was it better? How is/was it worse? What do you like most about your current neighborhood? What do you like least?

C7. Group 4 Repeat Mover Households with low to high to low rent ratio moves: We have already talked about your move to [location description of current unit]. Now I would like to ask you to about your move to [prior unit #1 location description].

When you moved in [move year] to [prior unit #1 location description, e.g., Washington Street], did you move to a different ZIP Code? If yes, do you know if rents there were generally higher or lower? Tell me all the things that made you want to move. *If this is the last move (to the current unit), ask:* Are you happy with your decision to move/the location of your new unit? What do you like/dislike about it? Do you plan to move within the next year?

Now I'd like to ask you about your move in to [prior unit #2 location description.] When you moved in [move year] to [prior unit #2 location description, e.g., Appleton Road], did you move to a different ZIP Code? If yes, was it higher or lower rent? Tell me all the things that made you want to move. *If this is the last move (to the current unit), ask:* Are you happy with your decision to move/the location of your new unit? What do you like/dislike about it? Do you plan to move within the next year?

Interviewer: Questions C8 to C10 are only for voucher holders who initially received their voucher in 2011 or later (for Dallas or Plano) or in 2013 or later (for other PHAs), so after the change to SAFMR AND who have moved (in Exhibit 1, "Group 5: New HCV holder - low rent ZIP Code," and "Group 6: New HCV holder - high rent ZIP Code").

For voucher holders who initially received their voucher earlier and for voucher holders who have never moved, skip to Section D.

C8. Can you tell me about when you first got your voucher? Did you decide to move right away, or did you decide to stay where you were and use your voucher to lease in place? How did you make that decision? What were the main things that went into that decision?

When you (eventually) moved, tell me about that decision.

Probes:

Did you move to a different ZIP Code?

What were rents like in the place you moved to? Were they higher, lower, or about the same as the rents in the neighborhood you lived in before receiving the voucher?

Tell me all the things that made you want to/need to move:

Required by PHA or landlord

Required by personal circumstances (health, education, child care, work, family, disability, other)

Housing unit (quality of housing unit, size of housing unit, other)

Couldn't afford the rent anymore

Voluntary for a better opportunity (lower crime, better environment, better schools, better access to jobs, better access to transportation, better access to health care, better access to other community amenities (what?), closer to friends, closer to family, other)

What would you say was the most important reason why you decided to move? (*Alternate question, if the most important reason is hard for the respondent to discern: Of all the reasons you decided to move, which do you think might have been the biggest reason?*)

C9. Did the PHA's policy of having different payment standards for different neighborhoods affect your decision to move? How important was this? Do you think you would have moved even without the higher payment standards? Would you have moved to the same apartment?

C10. Tell me a little about the neighborhood in *[prior unit #1 location description]*. What did you like the best about that neighborhood? What did you like the least? How does the neighborhood in *[current unit]* compare to the neighborhood in *[prior unit # location description]*? How is/was it better? How is/was it worse? What do you like most about your current neighborhood? What do you like least?

Interviewer: Questions C11 to C13 are only for voucher holders who have moved according to the Housing History in Section A. These voucher holders can be in any of Groups 2 through 6. To facilitate the discussion, start by looking at a map of the area with the respondent that shows neighborhoods.

I'd like to find out more about your search process when you decided to move from *[location 1]* to *[location 2]* *[Interviewer: choose the first permanent move (e.g., not short-term or temporary) since SAFMR went into effect in their location]*. This would have been in *[date]* from *[location 1 to location 2]*.

C11. Tell me about your search for a new unit.

Probes:

How did you go about searching for a house or apartment [at the time you moved to location 2]?

Looking at the map, show me the places you looked at during your search. How did you decide where to look?

Looking at the map, were there neighborhoods you wanted to look at but didn't? What were the reasons you didn't look at those neighborhoods? Can you tell me about them? What were all the things that made you want to look at these places?

[Interviewer: prior to the interview, identify higher-rent neighborhoods in the PHA's jurisdiction.]

Did you *consider* looking for a unit in *[names of specific areas]* with higher rents? Why/why not?

Did you *actually* look for a unit in *[names of specific areas]* with higher rents? Why/why not?

Were you familiar with *[names of specific areas]* with higher rents? Have you been there before? Did you know how to get there?

C12. What assistance did the *[fill in PHA name]* give you in helping you search for a new unit? (Probe for list of participating landlords, information about neighborhoods, maps, search tips, counseling from PHA staff?) Did this assistance include helping to identify or pursue units in ZIP Codes with higher payment standards? If so, how?

C13. Did the landlord you now rent from know about the HCV program before you moved in? Had he/she rented to HCV holders in the past? If he/she was unfamiliar with the program, were you able to explain it? Did the landlord give you any trouble about having a voucher? If so, what kind of trouble? Before finding your current unit, did you contact any landlords who refused to accept the voucher? If so, did they tell you why they refused?

D. EXPERIENCE WITH SAFMRs

Interviewer: Questions D1 to D2 are only for voucher holders who initially received their voucher in 2010 or earlier (for Dallas or Plano) or in 2012 or earlier (for other PHAs), so before the change to SAFMR (in Exhibit 1, Groups 1-4).

For voucher holders who received their vouchers more recently, after the transition to SAFMRs had already occurred (Groups 5 and 6), SKIP TO E1:

D1. In the last few years when your lease/housing contract has come up for an annual review, do you recall whether the payment standard for the unit you were living in ever went down? (Probe if needed to clarify: were you told by your landlord that you would need to pay more in rent in order to stay in your unit because of a change in the PHA's rent policy?) Y/N If so, by how much? Which unit were you living in at the time? *[IF YES, continue to D2. IF NO, skip to D6.]*

D2. *If the payment standard went down:* When was that? It looks like you were living in *[unit location description]* (from Housing History) when the payment standard went down. I'm interested in knowing how that change in payment standard might have affected your rent or anything else about your experience. Could you tell me the whole story about what happened at that time? *[Interviewer: record whether the resident seemed to understand the questions and have confidence in their answers.]*

Prompts:

Did the amount you had to pay for rent change? Did it go up or down?

Did other housing-related costs change (e.g., payments for utilities or lawn service)? Did these go up or down? What was that like for you? What effect did this have for you and your family?

Do you know whether the amount of rent the landlord received from the *[insert PHA name]* change?

Tell me about whether you discussed this with the landlord? How did this happen? Did the landlord ever suggest that you should move or leave?

Did you decide to move?

E. STAYERS - people who have NEVER MOVED

Interviewer: Section E is only for voucher holders who have not moved according to the Housing History in Section A, Group 1 and some members of Groups 5 and 6.

E1. You said you [*leased in place/have not moved*] since [*SAFMRs were implemented/you first received your housing voucher*].

E2. Did you/do you think about moving since you received your voucher? If so, approximately when was this?

IF Yes (considered moving), continue to E3, otherwise skip to E11:

E3. What made you decide to stay here?

Probes:

Found a unit, but it didn't work out (why? Related to inspection, or rent reasonableness, or other?)

Couldn't find a landlord willing to rent to you

Ran out of time

Changed mind for other reasons (what?)

E4. Were moving-related expenses such as a security deposit a factor in your decision not to move? How important was this factor?

E5. If there is an elderly and/or disabled member of your household, was this a factor in your decision not to move? If so, how did it factor into your decision?

E6. If there is a school-age child in your household, was this a factor in your decision not to move? If so, how did it factor into your decision?

E7. Was the place where you work, or a place where you would like to work a factor in your decision not to move? If so, how did it factor into your decision?

E8. Was already having friends, family, a church or other religious organization, or other support community nearby a factor in your decision not to move? If so, how did this factor into your decision?

E9. Are there any other major factors that you considered in your decision not to move? If so, what were they and how did they factor into your decision?

E10. [For respondents who have thought about moving] Did you take any specific steps to search for a unit? If so, what kinds of things have you done to search for a new unit?

- Look at apartment listings
- Visit the neighborhood
- Visit units
- Talk to friends or family about moving
- Call landlords
- Other (what: _____)
- Nothing

Experience with Search Process

If respondent reported making search efforts in E10, continue to E11, otherwise skip to E17:

E11. What made/makes you want to consider a move? Were higher payment standards in some neighborhoods a factor? (Probes: Schools? Access to jobs? Safety/crime rate? Environmental quality? Housing quality? Access to other amenities? Other?)

E12. Has the *[fill in PHA name]* given you any assistance in helping you search for a new unit? Did this assistance include helping to identify or pursue units in *[names of specific areas with higher rents]*? If so, how?

E13. Looking at the map, did you search for a new unit in *[names of specific areas with higher rents]*?

IF Yes (searched in higher-rent ZIP Code), continue to E11, otherwise skip to E13:

E14. What was your experience with searching for a unit in *[names of specific areas with higher rents]*? What were your primary sources of information about available units?

E15. Did the landlords you contacted know about the HCV program? Had any of the landlords rented to HCV holders in the past? If the landlords were unfamiliar with the program, were you able to explain it? Did the landlords give you any trouble about having a voucher? Did the landlords accept the voucher?

IF No (did not search in higher-rent ZIP Code):

E16. What kept you from searching for a unit in [*names of specific areas with higher rents*]? Where did you search instead? Why?

Future move decisions

E17. Are you considering a move in the future? Y/N

E18. ***If Yes, considering moving:*** What are your reasons for considering a move in the future?

Probes:

Will be required by PHA or landlord

Will be required by personal circumstances (health, education, child care, work, family, disability, other)

Housing unit (quality of housing unit, size of housing unit, other)

Purely voluntary for a better opportunity (lower crime, better environment, better schools, better access to jobs, better access to transportation, better access to health care, better access to other community amenities (what?), closer to friends, closer to family, other)

To move to a better neighborhood with higher payment standards

F. Demographics

I have just a few final questions for you to make sure we have all of our details right.

F1. How do you identify your race?

- White
- Black/African American
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

F2. How do you identify your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino
- not Hispanic or Latino

F3. Tell me about how far you got in school.

Probe:

High School completion? GED?
Training programs?
College classes?

F4. Are you currently working? Did you work for pay last week? If yes, about how many hours per week do you usually work? How much are you paid by the hour (or if not paid by hour ask for wages for other time period). If you are not currently working, when would you say was the last time (month/year) when you worked for pay?

F5. Who lives in your household with you (number of adults and children)? What are the ages of your children? *[to identify special considerations in the decision to move]*

F6. Interviewer: Indicate gender of respondent: _____.