Appendix J: Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Focus Groups with Public Housing Authority Frontline Workers (Focus Group, Second Site Visit)

This information is being collected to inform the evaluation of the Family Unification Program (FUP) being conducted by a research team at the Urban Institute, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Child Trends. This information will be used to inform the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (HHS ACF) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to improve the administration of the FUP program. All the information you provide will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

If you have questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

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If you agree to participate in this study and feel that your rights have been violated or that you have
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Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Focus Groups with Public Housing Authority Frontline Workers (Focus Group, Second Site Visit)

Second Site Visit (6-9 months after implementation)

Background

Let's start off by talking about your roles in the FUP program. What is your position at the agency?

- What is your role in administering the FUP program? What are your other responsibilities?

- How long have you been working on the FUP program?

- About how often do you interact directly with FUP families?

- About how much of your time do you spend on FUP?

Eligibility, Referral Process, and Screening

- Thinking about how the program operated before COVID-19: Please describe the referral process.

    o What happens when you receive a referral? Please walk us through the process.

    o Does the child welfare agency take into account PHA requirements in their referrals? How effectively do they account for PHA requirements?

        ▪ *Probes: criminal background, substance use, rental history*

    ▪ How has this process changed since COVID-19?

Program Model

Thinking about how the program operated before COVID-19:

- Please describe how families move through the program.

    o Once an application is approved, when is the voucher issued?

    o How long is allowed for the housing search process?

- What types of housing search assistance are provided by the PHA? By any partners?

    - *Probe whether they provide to families a current list of other organizations that can help families find apartments, neighborhood tours, apartment viewings, landlord introductions*

- [If site has project- and tenant-based vouchers for families]

    - Are there differences in the housing search process for families that have tenant-based versus project-based vouchers? Describe.

- Did families encounter challenges while searching for housing and leasing up?

    o *Probe for finding units, affording security deposits, passing landlord screenings.*

- How did your organization respond to those challenges?

    o *Probe for providing extra "housing search assistance" or financial assistance to cover security deposits and application fees.*

- After the FUP family signs a lease,

    o Do they receive any services from the PHA? If so, please describe.

    o Do they receive any services from the child welfare agency? If so, please describe.

    o Do they receive any services from other community providers? If so, please describe.

- Do any FUP families participate in the Family Self Sufficiency program or a similar program?

    o If yes, is it provided by the PHA or by another organization?

    o If yes, please describe this program.

- How has this process changed since COVID-19?

    o Are families still moving through the process?

o How have you dealt with challenges related to families obtaining documents (e.g. social security cards)?

o Have there been any additional challenges related to COVID-19?

Partnerships with Child Welfare Agency

- Do you interact with child welfare agency staff about FUP families? In what ways?

     o *Probe for regular meetings, kinds of issues that were discussed.*

- Was there a single child welfare agency contact or did you work with several people, e.g. many caseworkers?

     o How often did you interact with child welfare staff? In particular, with caseworkers?

- What were the challenges working with child welfare staff?

- What helped you work together (e.g., single point of contact, regular meetings, shared goals, leadership support, shared data, etc.)?

Partnerships with Continuum of Care

- Do you interact with continuum of care staff about FUP families? In what ways?

     o *Probe for regular meetings, kinds of issues that were discussed.*

- Do you have a single continuum of care contact or do you work with several people, e.g. many caseworkers?

     o How often do you interact with continuum of care staff? In particular, with caseworkers?

- Have you experienced any challenges working with continuum of care staff?

- Have any factors been particularly helpful in working with the continuum of care staff?

- What helps you work together with the continuum of care staff (e.g., single point of contact, regular meetings, shared goals, leadership support, shared data, etc.)?

Partnerships with Other Agencies

- Do you interact with any other organization's staff about FUP families? Which agency/organization?

    o In what ways?

    o *Probe for regular meetings, kinds of issues that were discussed.*

- Was there a single organization contact or did you work with several people, e.g. many case managers?

    o How often did you interact with this organization's staff? In particular, with case managers?

- What were the challenges working with this organization's staff?

- What helped you work together (e.g., single point of contact, regular meetings, shared goals, leadership support, shared data, etc.)?

Implementation Challenges and Supports

- Have you encountered any challenges administering the FUP program? If so, please describe.

    o Do you receive referrals in a timely manner?

    o Have referrals had complete information?

    o Have you had to deny applications because the family did not meet voucher eligibility guidelines?

        ▪ Do you think the child welfare agency, or other referring agency, could have screened better for the things that led to the denial?

    o Have you had any challenges with families during the application or voucher issuance process?

        ▪ Are families getting their applications completed with no missing information or documentation?

    o Have you had any challenges leasing up families?

- Do families begin searching for housing as soon as they receive their voucher, or do they postpone starting their search?

- Are there landlords unwilling to house these families?

  o Have you had any challenges around families maintaining their vouchers?

- How did you overcome those challenges? Did other organizations play an important role in overcoming those challenges? If so, how?

- Have any factors been particularly helpful in implementing the program?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think I should know about the FUP program or your experience with FUP families?

Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?