Interview Guide for PHA Staff

INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWER

This guide is for Public Housing Agency (PHA) staff knowledgeable about the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and the Community Choice Demonstration (CCD) program, including agency executive directors, policy and program directors, HCV managers, HCV specialists, and any other PHA roles directly recruiting and enrolling HCV participants for Community Choice or standard services. Interviews with PHA staff will be conducted individually or in small groups, based on staff roles and availability. (Note: Interviews with staff providing comprehensive mobility-related services to mobility program participants will use the mobility service provider interview guide.) Make every effort to cover all questions in the guide and probe for in-depth responses.

How to use probes and prompts: *Probes* should be used if the respondent's answer does not cover the topics listed in the probes. *Prompts* should be used when a respondent isn't sure how to answer a question or seems unsure about what the question is asking. If a respondent provides an answer to a question, whether or not they include mention of the items listed as prompts, then the interviewer should not use the prompts.

Informed Consent:

- Prior to arriving for in-person interviews, print a copy of the appropriate consent form for each respondent.
- For interviews with the PHA staff, please have them read the consent form themselves. Review the key points verbally with the staff after they have read the consent.
- Provide a copy of the consent form to the staff person for their records. For in-person interviews this should be a hard copy and for virtual interviews, this should be sent to them via email.
- The following instructions do not need to be read aloud to respondent but prior to the interview, this information should be shared as appropriate.

If you would like translated materials, or to complete the interview in language other than English, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you. If you need information to be presented in an accessible format, for example, Braille, audio, large type, or sign language interpreters, or need a reasonable accommodation (a change or adjustment) so that you can participate, please let us know. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have.

CONSENT

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am <NAME>, a researcher at <ORGANIZATION>, and this is <NAME> from <ORGANIZATION>. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have as I move through the introduction.

Before we begin, I want to tell you a few things about this study and your participation in it.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hired a research team led by Abt Global and other researchers, including the Urban Institute, to conduct a study on HUD's Community Choice Demonstration (Demonstration) program. The research team and HUD want to determine whether mobility-related services are effective in helping families with a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) move to opportunity neighborhoods. During this interview, we will ask you questions about the Demonstration, including questions about your role and [PHA_NAME's] involvement in the Demonstration, your perspective on the Demonstration, and how well the Demonstration meets the needs of participating families.

We hope that you will be candid in the information you provide about the program. We are not evaluating your agency or its services. As part of this study, we are talking with representatives from PHAs participating in the Demonstration, [IF PHA DOES NOT PROVIDE MOBILITY-RELATED SERVICES IN-HOUSE: along with mobility services providers], landlords, and participating families. We estimate this interview will last about 90 minutes.

We will be conducting interviews again in the future and may reach out to you in a future year.

During the interview, [NAME/I] will be taking detailed notes; we will not identify your name in our notes. With your permission, I/we will audio record the interview to have an accurate record of what is said as a back-up to our notes; we will not record any video. I/we may contact you after the interview to ask for clarification. No one outside the research team will be allowed to listen to the audio recordings or review the notes. Only the people doing the research will see any information that identifies you personally and we will destroy the recording, transcript, and notes at the conclusion of the project.

What we learn from all the interviews will be published in reports to HUD. When we write our reports and discuss findings, the answers you provide during an interview will be combined with answers from many individuals. We will never share any information that identifies you or any other respondents by name outside of our research team. However, we may identify the agency you work for, and unique roles could allow an individual to indirectly attribute a statement to you. We make every effort to avoid this, but you should be aware of the possibility.

The questions in this interview have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. The information requested under this collection is fully protected and kept private to the extent possible according to the Privacy Act of 1974.

Do you have any questions about the study or today's discussion? *[Pause for response and address any questions]*

Do you agree to participate? *[Pause for response]*

Are you comfortable with this interview being recorded? *[Pause for response]*

Thank you, we are going to turn on the audio recorder now.

The audio recorder is now on.

Do you have any questions before we continue?

OK, let's start.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to evaluate the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Choice Demonstration. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number and expiration date for this collection are OMB #: 2528-0337, Exp: 12/31/2026. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Anna P. Guido at Anna.P.Guido@hud.gov or call at 202-402-5535.

BACKGROUND [ALL RESPONDENTS]

First, we'd like to hear about your organization and your position here.

1. Tell me about your current position.
    a. How long have you held this position?
    b. [*If new to the position*] What was your previous position?
2. What are your primary responsibilities at [PHA]?
    a. What are your responsibilities related to the Community Choice Demonstration?
3. How much of your time do you spend on the Community Choice Demonstration?

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND FIDELITY [HCV DIRECTOR OR PHA DIRECTOR OVERSEEING CCD]

4. Does your PHA currently provide any mobility-related services or administrative policy options to standard voucher recipients—separate from the Community Choice Demonstration efforts?
    a. [If yes] Which services? Tell me about them.

    Prompts: Neighborhoods or school information, housing/apartment lists, search assistance, referrals to mobility-related services, alternative payment standards (neighborhood rents or SAFMRs), regional portability, security deposits, landlord incentives?

    b. [*If yes*] Are those services still available to [PHA name] voucher holders?
    c. [*If yes*] What proportion of PHA voucher participants would you say receive these services?

5. Have standard HCV program operations changed in any way because of Community Choice Demonstration participation?
    a. [*If yes*] What has changed?
    b. Can you give some examples?
    c. Tell me about what prompted these changes?

    Prompts: Staffing or staff roles; HCV admission processes, administrative policies (search times, portability, payment standards, occupancy standards, HQS inspections, lease-up processes); availability of mobility-related services, alignment with partner PHA procedures, definitions of opportunity areas, tracking of voucher holders' residential locations?

MOBILITY PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS [HCV STAFF MANAGING/LIAISING WITH PARTNER PHA and/or SERVICE PROVIDERS, INCLUDING HCV DIRECTOR OR PHA DIRECTOR OVERSEEING CCD]

We'd like to hear more about the partnerships that are part of Community Choice Demonstration, including what has worked well so far and any challenges that you've faced implementing these partnerships and the program.

6. [*From site information*] We understand that your main partners in the demonstration program are [PHA(S) AND [MOBILITY SERVICES PROVIDER NAME(S)] (if relevant)]. Is this correct?

7. Are there other partnerships or agencies involved in the mobility program, that you consider key contributors to the program's success?

   Prompts: Other local service providers, local landlord association, funders, local evaluators, other partners aside from HUD technical assistance and implementation teams?

   a. [*If yes*] What are their roles in Community Choice Demonstration?

      Prompts: Specific CMRS components; outcomes tracking/evaluation; staff capacity building/TA; overall administrative design, championing/supporting the effort, landlord outreach?

PARTNER PHAS [ALL RESPONDENTS IN SITES WITH MULTIPLE PHAS]

Let's start with your work with your PHA partners.

8. Have the roles of [PHA] and [PARTNER PHA] changed at all during the past year?

   a. [*If yes]* Can you tell me about those changes?

   Prompts: Primary leadership/lead PHA, collaborator, supporting other lead PHAs/organizations?

9. Thinking about your current collaboration on Community Choice Demonstration, what would you say has worked well so far in the collaboration?

   a. What has been challenging?

   Prompts: Building staff capacity, coordination of HCV services, communication, fidelity to the model, service provider coordination, enrollment issues, working with the evaluation/TA/implementation teams, portability across PHAs?

10. How do you stay in communication with [PARTNER PHA]?

    Prompts: informally/as needed, standing meetings, training

    a. How often do you communicate with them?

    b. What is the title of your main collaborator there?

PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE PROVIDER [HCV DIRECTOR OR PHA DIRECTOR OVERSEEING CCD]

Now we'd like to hear more about your interaction with the staff providing mobility-related services.

11. Tell me about how things are going with [SERVICE PROVIDER or PHA staff providing mobility-related services] so far.

    a. What is going smoothly?

        i. Why do you think that is?

    b. What challenges have there been with their work, if any?
    Prompts: Staffing capacity, communication with PHA/HCV teams for vouchers to move or expediting lease-ups, outreach/recruitment of new landlords

    c. Do you think any of the challenges you've mentioned are related to the fact that services are provided [in house / by an external organization]?

        i. Why do you think that is?

        ii. How have you navigated these challenges?

HOUSING SEARCH CONTEXT [HCV STAFF INCLUDING HCV DIRECTOR OR PHA DIRECTOR OVERSEEING CCD]

We'd like to hear a bit more about your local housing market and the challenges facing voucher families searching for housing.

12. Tell me about your housing market and the kinds of units that Housing Choice Voucher holders generally access.

    Probes: Type of housing (single family, apartments), Type of landlords (management companies, mom and pop shops), Market tightness

        a. Are these the same kinds of units that Demonstration participants access in Opportunity Areas?

13. From your perspective, what are some common barriers families face while searching for housing with a voucher?

        a. What additional barriers, if any, do families face when searching for housing in **an opportunity area**?

14. Do these barriers differ for new admission families coming off the waitlist, versus families who already have vouchers and are trying to move?

        a. [*If so*] in what ways?

15. To what extent do you think the Community Choice Demonstration addresses these barriers?

    a. Tell me more about this.

    b. Which barriers are more challenging to address through mobility-related services?

    c. Which are easier?

DEMONSTRATION RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS [HCV ENROLLMENT/RECRUITMENT STAFF]

Now we'd like to hear about your experience so far with enrolling families in the demonstration and mobility program.

16. Have you made any changes in the past year to the process of informing HCV families about the opportunity to enroll in the Community Choice Demonstration, for either existing voucher families or new admission families?

    a. [If yes,] What changes have been made?

17. How is the recruitment process going?

    a. Have you experienced any challenges recruiting either existing or new admission voucher families?

    b. Are there any particular strategies that have been more effective in identifying interested families? Please describe.

        i. Less effective? Please describe.

18. What, if any, differences do you see between families that choose to enroll and those that do not?

    Prompts: Children's ages (older/younger), smaller/larger families, race/ethnicity or primary language, current neighborhood; new admission versus existing voucher families

19. Do any families that are eligible for the Community Choice Demonstration express concerns about data, privacy, or the consent process for the evaluation?

    a. How widespread are any such concerns?

MOBILTY-RELATED SERVICES IMPLEMENTATION [HCV DIRECTOR OR PHA DIRECTOR OVERSEEING CCD]

Now we'd like to hear more about the Community Choice Demonstration program model and services, and implementation to date. [SHOW LIST OF SERVICES] We understand these are the comprehensive mobility-related services [CMRS] services included in the Demonstration.

20. Which of these services, if any, are not available to participating households?

    a. Why are they not offered?

    b. Do you expect they will be offered going forward?

    c. Have any services been made available but not to their full extent?

        i. [If yes] Which ones?

        ii. [If yes] Why do you think that they are not offered to their full extent?

21. Have you made any changes to PHA policies related to the Community Choice Demonstration or the way services are offered to Demonstration participants?

    a. [*If yes*] What changes have been made?

    b. What led to the changes?

    c. Were these changes made with input from your site liaison or TA provider?

22. What would you say has gone well to date with the [PHA's/SERVICE PROVIDER's] provision of mobility-related services?

23. From your perspective, are there parts of the CMRS model that are easier for [PHA's SERVICE PROVIDER] to implement than others? Please describe.

24. What about the provision of CMRS has been challenging for [PHA's SERVICE PROVIDER]?

    Prompts: Staff capacity or expertise to provide comprehensive mobility-related services [at PHA or service provider]; landlord engagement; timing of voucher issuance, notice to vacate, and leasing up; fidelity to the model?

25. What improvements are you hoping to see as implementation moves forward?

26. Which service or services provided through Community Choice Demonstration do you think are the most effective or important for helping families access opportunity areas?

    a. What led you to identify this service/these services as most effective?

    b. Are there any other service or services you think are particularly effective?

27. Are there any services not included in CMRS for families that you think would help facilitate moves to opportunity areas?

    a. [If yes] Tell me about those services and why you think they would be helpful.

28. Are there any services not included in CMRS for landlords that you think would help facilitate the participation of landlords in opportunity areas?

    a. [If yes] Tell me about those services and why you think they would be helpful.

29. Do you have any plans to address these service needs?

a. [*If yes*] How?

VOUCHERS TO MOVE, EXPEDITED INSPECTIONS, AND EXPEDITED LEASING PROCESSES [ALL RESPONDENTS]

Now we'd like to hear about your experience with issuing vouchers to move to families in the Demonstration and the expedited inspections and leasing processes.

30. First, please describe the PHA's process for issuing vouchers to move.

31. How would you say the issuance of vouchers to move has gone so far?

    a. What has worked well?

    b. What challenges have there been?

        i. How have staff addressed the challenges?

32. Are families required to submit a notice to vacate to their current landlord before receiving a voucher to move?

    a. [*If yes*] How has this requirement affected families' decision to move?

    b. [*If yes*] How has this requirement affected housing insecurity?

33. Please describe the process for expediting housing inspections.

34. How have expedited inspections gone so far?

    a. How many days does it take for Community Choice Demonstration families' units to get inspected from the date a completed Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) is submitted?

    b. How many days does it take for a non-Community Choice Demonstration family?

    c. What challenges have there been with meeting expedited inspection goals?

        i. How have staff addressed the challenges?

35. Please describe the process of expediting lease-ups

    a. How would you say the expedited lease-ups have gone so far?

    b. How many days does it take for a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract to become executed from the time a Community Choice unit is approved??

    c. How many days does it take for a non-Community Choice Demonstration unit?

    d. What challenges have there been with meeting expedited leasing goals?

i. How have staff addressed the challenges?

EARLY OUTCOMES [ALL RESPONDENTS]

We would like to hear your perspective on how the Community Choice Demonstration program is doing so far, and any observations about early outcomes for families.

36. What differences, if any, have you observed in housing search outcomes between new admission families and existing voucher families participating in the Community Choice Demonstration?

Probes: Differences in moves to opportunity areas, time spent searching, types or amount of assistance received?

a. What, in your opinion, explains these differences?

37. What differences in search outcomes have you observed for families receiving services through the Community Choice Demonstration compared with families in the standard HCV program?

Prompts: Search times; unit quality, number of HQS inspection failures; requests for higher payment standards or HAP (housing assistance payments); more or less porting?

38. Has participation in the Community Choice Demonstration benefitted the participant families?

a. [*If yes]* Can you tell me more about the benefits?

Prompts: Opportunities for housing that better serves a family's needs, opportunity to live in a different area, increased choice, support for landlord interactions, support for lease-up?

b. Do you think the program has met families' expectations?

i. [*If no*] In what ways do you think it has not met their expectations?

c. What challenges have families experienced participating in this program?

i. About what share of families have faced these challenges?

39. Have you observed any challenges so far to the ability of Community Choice Demonstration participants who want to remain in an opportunity area to do so once they move to one?

a. [*If yes*] Can you describe the challenges?

i. About what share of families have faced these challenges?

b. [*If yes*] Has [PHA] or your partners identified ways to try to address the challenges?

c. What do you think might help families stay in opportunity areas?

Prompts: Post-move services, supports for children, economic supports, access to a reliable car or reliable public transportation?

40. Among families that have moved to an opportunity area, do you know of any participants who do not want to stay there?

    a. [*If yes*] What are reasons they do not want to stay in opportunity areas?

        i. About what share of families do not want to stay?

41. What do you think might help encourage these families (families that don't want to stay in Opportunity Areas) to remain in opportunity areas?

REFLECTIONS [ALL RESPONDENTS]

42. To what extent has the Community Choice Demonstration implementation so far met your expectations?

    a. How has it been different from expectations?

43. Are you satisfied with the final opportunity area maps and administrative policies?

    a. [If no] Why are you unsatisfied with them?

44. What might be useful to you and your team as you move forward with Community Choice Demonstration, to improve family mobility outcomes?

    Prompts: Staff resources, expertise with comprehensive mobility-related services, HUD guidance, other waivers or programmatic flexibilities, TA provider support, additional partnerships within the community (landlord association)?

CLOSING [ALL RESPONDENTS]

45. Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think I should know about your experience with the Community Choice Demonstration?

46. Are there any other PHA or service provider staff that you think we should be sure to talk to about the Community Choice Demonstration?

47. Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

Thank you for your time. I will turn off the recorder now.