Interview Guides for Searching Households

INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWER

Questions for searching CMRS and control households have been separated into two separate interview guides. Use the first interview guide if the household was assigned to the CMRS group. Use the second interview guide if the household was assigned to the control group. The consent form is the same for both treatment and control.

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.
- Offer the family the option of reading this consent form aloud or to themselves. If the family opts to read it to themselves, please verbally recap the key points with the respondent to ensure that they understand.
- Provide a copy of the consent form to the family for their records. For in-person interviews this should be a hard copy and for virtual interviews, this should be 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.

Interview Guide for Participating Families Currently Searching for Housing (Treatment)

This guide is for treatment group families that are currently searching for housing with a voucher through the Community Choice Demonstration program, including both existing and new admission voucher families. Make every effort to cover all questions in the guide and use the probes and prompts for in-depth responses.

WARM-UP/BACKGROUND

First, I'd like to learn a bit about you, your family, and the reasons you are interested in moving.

1. Tell me about who lives with you.
    a. How many children live here with you?
    b. What are their ages and what grade are they in?

    [Note that names will be removed/redacted.]

2. About how long have you had a Housing Choice Voucher, also called a Section 8 voucher?
    a. [*Existing voucher families*] How many different apartments/homes have you lived in since you got a voucher for the first time?

3. My understanding is that you are currently searching for new housing.
    a. To start off with, can you tell me about where you are currently living?

    [*Existing voucher families*] *Probes*: Single-family house, Apartment?

    [*New admission families*] *Probes*: Living in own home, Staying with family or friends, Staying in a shelter, Something else?

    b. How long have you lived in this apartment/home/shelter?
    c. [*If living with family or friend*] Can you stay there as long as you like?

4. I am interested in learning more about why you want to move out of your current location. Can you share the reasons you want to move?

5. Now that I understand why you want to move, I would like to know more about why you decided to participate in the Community Choice Demonstration as part of your moving plan. Thinking back to when you first enrolled, what got you interested in joining the Demonstration?

PHASES 2-3: PRE-MOVE PREPARATION

I would like to talk with you about your experiences with the Community Choice Demonstration. Right now, I want to focus on the time right after enrollment, the pre-move preparation phase. That is, up until the time you started your housing search.

6. Right after enrolling in the Community Choice Demonstration, the program offers households:

   [Show list of CMRS services to interview respondent]

   > **CMRS**: a one-on-one meeting with a CCD coach where you map family systems, identify goals for the move, learn about opportunity areas, and review your credit report, and also follow-on support preparing an application cover letter, options to attend group workshops, and referrals to credit repair or financial coaching services

   Which of the early pre-move preparation services that Community Choice Demonstration offers did you use?

   a. What led you to use [list services respondent indicated that they used]?
   b. Of the services you used, which did you find most helpful (if any)?
      i. Why were these services especially helpful?
   c. Which of the services did you find least helpful?
      i. Why were these services not as helpful?
   d. Why didn't you use [fill in services based on response]?

7. I would like to hear about your experiences with the staff you worked with to enroll in the Community Choice Demonstration and prepare for your housing search. In particular, I would like to learn more about the people you interacted with before you started your housing search.

8. Thinking back to before you started your housing search, were you assigned to a particular staff member, or did you interact with various people at the housing authority?

   a. Which of these staff people did you interact with *the most*?
   b. What did you communicate about with [STAFF MEMBER(S)]?
   c. How did you typically communicate with [STAFF MEMBER(S)?
      Prompts: Scheduled meetings, In-person, Informal calls/texts
   d. How often did you speak with them?
   e. What was most helpful in your interactions with [Staff Member(s)]?

i. Can you give an example?

f. What interactions were not as helpful?

g. Can you give an example? Did your work with [STAFF MEMBER] prepare you for your housing search? Tell me more about that.

9. [*New admissions family*] We are going to shift gears a bit here and talk about getting your voucher from [PHA]. Think back to when you got the voucher - think about all of the parts of the process - the paperwork you completed, how you communicated with [PHA] staff, etc.

   Can you walk me through your experience of getting the voucher?

   a. What parts of getting the voucher felt easy?

   b. What parts of getting the voucher felt hard?

   [*Existing voucher family*] We are going to shift gears a bit here and talk about getting a voucher to move. Have you received your voucher?

   [*If* yes] Think back to when you got the voucher to move – think about all of the parts of getting the voucher, from the timing for submitting notice to your current landlord to how you communicated with the [PHA] staff.

   Can you describe your experience of getting the voucher to me?

   c. What parts of getting the voucher felt easy?

   d. What parts of getting the voucher felt hard?

10. I am interested in learning about the information you were given from the housing authority or mobility services staff when they issued your voucher to move.

    a. What did they tell you about where you could use your voucher?

    b. What were you told about how to go about searching for housing?

    c. What information or resources did they provide, such as information about neighborhoods or a list of units, for your housing search ?

    d. Did they tell you how much you could afford in rent?

    e. What were you told about the things that need to happen after finding a unit?

       Prompts: Inspection, Request for Tenancy Approval.

11. After receiving your voucher to move, did you have any questions about how to use the voucher that were not answered?

a. *[If yes]* What questions did you have?

[Interviewer instructions: If the respondent indicates that they have outstanding questions, please refer them to their coach/service provider.]

PHASE 4: HOUSING SEARCH

Now I'd like to focus on what has happened since you began your housing search.

12. The Community Choice Demonstration offers the following services to support households in their searches:

    CMRS: support from a leasing coordinator, unit referrals, unit or neighborhood tours, support negotiating with landlords, coverage of application fees, and assistance with submitting applications.

    Which of these housing search services have you used so far?

    a. Of these services, which have been most helpful?

        i. Can you tell me what was helpful about [name service(s)]?

    b. Which of the services offered so far have been least helpful?

    c. Are there services you anticipate being helpful to you in later stages of your search?

Now let's talk about the search itself—what you are looking for, how it's going, etc.

13. When deciding where to live, what is most important to you?
    Prompts: The unit, Neighborhood, Family, Amenities and Services

14. What kind of house or apartment or features are you looking for?
    Prompts: Number of bedrooms, Unit type, Unit features

15. What are the main ways you are searching for housing?

    Prompts: Housing authority list, List from Community Choice Demonstration, Recommendations from friends or family, Specific websites

16. How many unit referrals have you received from the mobility services staff?

    a. How satisfied have you been with the referrals you've received? Please tell me more about this.

        Prompts: Number of referrals, quality of referrals, referrals matched/did not match household requirements

17. How many units located in Opportunity Areas have you found on your own?

18. Roughly how many apartments/houses have you seriously thought about applying for so far during your search?

    a. How many rental applications have you submitted to any of those apartments/houses?

        i. [*If 1 or more*] Were any of these units from the list of apartments/homes that the mobility services staff provided for you?

    b. What happened after you applied in each case?

        Prompts: Accepted/denied

    c. Can you walk me through the experience of applying for a unit?

        i. What parts of applying of a unit felt easy?

        ii. What parts felt hard?

    d. Did you want to move to any of these apartments/homes but could not for some reason?

        i. [*If yes*] What was the main reason you couldn't move to the home you wanted?

            Prompts: Landlord did not accept application; housing authority's inspection; credit problems; discrimination

    e. About how long have you been searching for housing with your voucher?

19. I would like to hear more about the neighborhoods you have been looking at during your housing search.

    a. After working with the Community Choice Demonstration coach, did you identify any neighborhoods that would work best for you and your family?

    b. How would you describe your search: is it focused on particular neighborhoods or more open?

    c. What neighborhoods are you looking in?

    d. How familiar were you with those neighborhoods at the start of your search?

    e. Are there neighborhoods you want to avoid?

        i. [*If yes*] Which neighborhoods?

        ii. What makes you want to avoid them?

f. Does the racial or ethnic make-up of a neighborhood factor into your interest in moving there?

g. Have the coach's suggestions affected your search?

i. [*If yes*] Can you give an example of how a suggestion affected your search?

20. Are there opportunity area neighborhoods you are thinking about or want to move to but don't think you can for one reason or another?

a. [*If* yes] Why do you think you won't be able to move to any of those areas?

Prompts: Location, Landlords, Discrimination, Unit or building type?

21. Have your children's needs factored into decisions about which neighborhoods to search in?

a. [*If yes*] How have they affected your decisions?

Prompts: Daycare or childcare, schools, medical care, family, or community ties, etc.

b. [*If schools/education identified as a decision factor*] Tell me more about how your children's schooling affects your decisions about where to search for housing.

Prompts: Academics, school safety, extracurricular/after-school programs

c. Do you expect your children will need to change schools when you move?

i. [*If yes*] What are your thoughts about keeping them in the same school versus changing schools when you move?

22. How did you feel about the possibility of moving to an Opportunity Area neighborhood when you first started with Community Choice Demonstration?

Prompts: Excited, Worried, Nervous?

a. When you think about moving to an opportunity area, what do you think the benefits might be for your family?
Prompts: Unit/building amenities, Neighborhood amenities, Safety

b. What downsides do you imagine there might be?

23. How do your children feel about moving?

Probes: What excites them? What worries them?

a. [*As applicable]* I know that kids sometimes worry about different things depending on their age or their gender. Can you tell me about any worries related to moving that are particular to each of your children?

Let's talk a little bit about your experiences interacting with mobility services staff and landlords during your housing search.

24. How often are you speaking with the mobility services staff during your search process?

25. How easy or difficult has it been to receive the mobility services you want?

    a. [*If easy]* Can you share an example of an instance where you got the services you wanted?

    b. [*If challenging*] Tell me more about a specific example where it was challenging to get the services you want.

    Prompts: Communication with staff; Availability of needed service(s); Clarity on services available

26. What has been your experience explaining Housing Choice Vouchers to landlords during your housing search?

    a. Tell me about your experience explaining the Community Choice Demonstration to landlords.

27. Have you encountered any challenges in finding a place you want to live that you haven't talked about?

    Prompts: Lease up process, Financial barriers, location, Housing availability, Landlord issues, Discrimination

PHASES 5-7: LEASE UP AND POST-MOVE SERVICES

Even though you haven't found your next unit yet, I'd like to hear your thoughts on some of the services that the Demonstration offers to households during the later stages of their search, lease-up, and move.

28. Community Choice Demonstration offers the following services to support households as they lease up:

    CMRS: expediting the filing of RFTA paperwork, arranging expedited inspections, communicating with landlords around signing the lease and arranging key transfers/move-in dates, setting up housing assistance payments, and financial assistance that can be used for holding fees, moving expenses, security deposits, and leasing bonuses for landlords.

Of these services, which do you think will be most helpful?

a. Do you think the program provides enough assistance to allow you to move to an Opportunity Area?

    i. [*If not*] What expenses or barriers do you think that you would need services for to move to an Opportunity Area?

OVERALL SATISFACTION

29. [*Existing voucher families*] Thinking back to other housing searches and moves you have made with your voucher, have the mobility services you have received so far through the Community Choice Demonstration made any difference compared with your previous experiences? Tell me about that.

    a. Thinking about past experiences with landlords and using your voucher, how do you think the services you are receiving or will receive through Community Choice Demonstration make a difference with your interactions with landlords?

30. Overall, how satisfied are you with the mobility services that you have received during your housing search?

    Probe: Why satisfied or dissatisfied?

    a. Overall, how satisfied are you with Community Choice Demonstration [STAFF MEMBER(S)]? Tell me more about that.

CLOSING

31. If you could make changes to improve the kind of mobility services that the Community Choice Demonstration provides people with vouchers searching for housing and leasing up in an opportunity area, what changes would you make?

    Probes: Type of services, length of services, staffing changes?

32. Is there anything I did not ask about your moving experience or Community Choice Demonstration services that is important for me to understand?

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

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

[Discuss compensation and collect future contacts list.]

Interview Guide for Participating Families Currently Searching for Housing (Control)

This guide is for control group families that are currently searching for housing with a voucher through the standard Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, including both existing and new admission voucher families. Make every effort to cover all questions in the guide and use the probes and prompts for in-depth responses.

WARM-UP/BACKGROUND

First, I'd like to learn a bit about you, your family, and the reasons you are interested in moving.

1. Tell me about who lives with you.
    a. How many children live here with you?
    b. What are their ages and what grade are they in?

    [Note that names will be removed/redacted.]

2. About how long have you had a Housing Choice Voucher, also called a Section 8 voucher?
    a. [*Existing voucher families*] How many different apartments/homes have you lived in since you first got a voucher?

3. My understanding is that you are currently searching for new housing. Is that correct?
    a. To start off with, tell me about the place where you are currently living?

    [*Existing voucher families*] *Probes*: Single-family house, Apartment?

    [*New admission families*] *Probes*: Living in own home, Staying with family or friends, Staying in a shelter, Something else?

    b. How long have you lived in this [apartment/home/shelter]?
    c. [*If living with family or friend*] Can you stay there as long as you like?

4. I am interested in learning more about why you want to move out of your current location. Can you share the reasons you want to move?

5. Now that I understand why you are hoping to move, I would like to know more about why you decided to participate in the Community Choice Demonstration program as part of your moving plan. Thinking back to when you enrolled, can you tell me about what got you interested in joining?

PRE-MOVE PREPARATION

I would like to talk with you about your experiences with getting a voucher.

6. [*New admissions family*] Think back to when you got the voucher - think about all of the parts of the process - the paperwork you completed, how you communicated with [PHA] staff, etc.

   Can you walk me through your experience of getting the voucher?

   a. What parts of getting the voucher felt easy?

   b. What parts of getting the voucher felt hard?

   [*Existing voucher family*] We are going to shift gears a bit here and talk about getting your voucher to move. Think back to when you got the voucher – think about all of the parts of getting the voucher, from the timing for submitting notice to your current landlord to how you communicated with the housing authority staff.

   Can you describe your experience of getting the voucher to me?

   a. What parts of getting the voucher felt easy?

   b. What parts of getting the voucher felt hard?

7. I am interested in learning about the information the [PHA] gave you when they issued your voucher to move.

   a. What did they tell you about where you could use your voucher?

   b. What were you told about how to go about searching for housing?

   c. What information or resources did they provide, such as information about neighborhoods or a list of units, for your housing search?

   d. Did they tell you how much you could afford in rent?

   e. What were you told about the things that need to happen after finding a unit?

8. After receiving your voucher to move, did you have any questions about how to use the voucher that were not answered?

   a. *[If yes]* What questions did you have?

[Interviewer instructions: If the respondent indicates that they have outstanding questions, please refer them to their HCV specialist or housing authority contact who administered the voucher.]

HOUSING SEARCH

Now I'd like to focus on what has happened since you began your housing search.

Let's talk about the search itself—what you are looking for, how it's going, etc.

9. When deciding where to live, what is most important to you?
   Prompts: The unit, Neighborhood, Family, Amenities and Services

10. What kind of house or apartment or features are you looking for?
    Prompts: Number of bedrooms, Unit type (apartments/homes), Rent amount/range, Unit features (e.g., pet-friendly, washer/dryer, ground floor, yard, AC, etc.)

11. What are the main ways you have searched for housing?

    Prompts: Housing authority list, Recommendations from friends or family, Specific websites

12. Roughly how many apartments/houses have you seriously thought about applying for so far during your search?

    a. How many rental applications have you submitted to any of those apartments/houses?

        i. [*If* 1 or more] Did you apply to any units from a housing authority list?

    b. What happened after you applied in each case?

       Probe: Accepted/denied?

    c. Can you walk me through the experience of applying for a unit?

        i. What parts of applying of a unit felt easy?

        ii. What parts felt hard?

    d. Did you want to move to any of these apartments/homes but could not for some reason?

        i. [*If yes*] What was the main reason you couldn't move to the home you wanted?

           Prompts: Landlord did not accept application; housing authority's inspection; Credit problems; Discrimination

    e. About how long have you been searching for housing with your voucher?

13. I would like to hear more about the neighborhoods you looked at during your housing search.

a. How would you describe your search: is it focused on particular neighborhoods or more open?

b. What neighborhoods are you looking in?

c. How familiar were you with those neighborhoods at the start of your search?

d. Are there neighborhoods you want to avoid?

   i. [*If yes*] Which neighborhoods?

   ii. What makes you want to avoid them?

e. Does the racial or ethnic make-up of a neighborhood factor into your interest in moving there? Tell me more about that.

14. Are there neighborhoods you are thinking about or want to move to but don't think you can for one reason or another?

    a. [*If* yes] Why do you think you won't be able to move to any of those areas?

       Prompts: Location, Landlords, Discrimination, Types of housing?

15. Have your children's needs factored into decisions about which neighborhoods to search in?

    a. [*If yes*] How have they affected your decisions?

    Prompts: Daycare or childcare, schools, medical care, family, or community ties, etc.

    b. [*If schools/education identified as a decision factor*] Tell me more about how your children's schooling affects your decisions about where to search for housing.

       Prompts: Academics, School safety, Extracurricular/after-school programs

    c. Do you expect your children will need to change schools when you move?

       i. [*If yes*] What are your thoughts about keeping them in the same school versus changing schools when you move?

16. What has been your experience explaining your Housing Choice voucher to landlords during your housing search?

17. Have you encountered any challenges in finding a place you want to live that you haven't talked about?

    Prompts: Lease up process, Financial Barriers, Location, Housing availability, Landlord issues, Discrimination

CLOSING

18. Is there anything that might make your housing search with a voucher easier?
    a. [*If yes]* What would make your housing search easier?
19. Is there anything I did not ask about your moving experience that is important for me to understand?
20. Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?

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

[Discuss compensation and collect future contacts list.]