

Analytic Framework: Tenant-based Housing Voucher Programs

The analytic framework shows the postulated pathways through which tenant-based housing voucher programs (hereafter referred to as “vouchers”) may improve housing conditions and health equity for households with very low incomes. Households who apply for and are offered vouchers use the voucher to search for HUD approved housing. Households who search and find HUD approved housing within the allotted timeframe may use the voucher.

Voucher users, if moved to higher opportunity neighborhood, could increase access to social determinants of health, such as education, transportation, and employment, and receive more benefit from the voucher programs. Voucher users, if moved to lower opportunity neighborhood, may have limited access to social determinants of health, and receive less or no additional benefit from the voucher programs (Sard, 2016).

Voucher users could experience improved housing conditions and housing stability, improved education, improved physical and mental health and appropriate healthcare use, reduced risky behavior and crime, and reduced intergenerational poverty. All these outcomes would increase health equity (Sard 2016, Fischer, 2015).

A few potential harms have been postulated. Voucher users, especially youth in the family, may experience disruption to their social network and daily life. It has been suggested that moving may increase barriers to employment (e.g., lack of transportation).

Potential effect modifiers include the following: client characteristics such as family structure (e.g., gender, age, race), program characteristics (e.g., assistance/counseling, time allowed to find housing, small area fair market rents), and setting characteristics (e.g., market tightness, inclusionary zoning/regulation, source of income discrimination bans, Small Area Fair Market Rent).

References

Fischer W. Research shows housing vouchers reduce hardship and provide platform for long-term gains among children. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2015.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition. The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes. National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2020. Available from URL: https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/Gap-Report_2020.pdf Accessed July 16, 2020.

Sard B, Realizing the Housing Voucher Program’s potential to enable families to move to better neighborhoods. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2016.