

## *It's All About the Kids*

### Update on participants and housing outcomes, 2005

*It's All About the Kids* is a collaborative program of the Minneapolis Public Schools, Lutheran Social Service, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, and Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). It is funded by CPED, the Family Housing Fund, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, private foundations, the Greater Twin Cities United Way, and individuals. The program's purpose is to improve the educational success of children whose housing instability places them at high risk of poor school outcomes. It does this by having school personnel identify eligible families in unstable or inadequate housing in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. Lutheran Social Service and their partners help families find and keep permanent, affordable housing in less poor neighborhoods enabling children to stay in the same elementary school area.

This report presents preliminary findings on all participants served since its inception in fall 2001 through December 31, 2004. It is based on Wilder Research's analysis of data from the program's administrative records, and student data analyzed by the Minneapolis Public Schools.

#### Services to date

To date, the program has served 131 families, including 440 children. Most are single-parent families with two to four children. Parents are from all racial and ethnic groups, but roughly two-thirds are African American. The average age of the parents is 35, and most children are of elementary school age.

#### Participant characteristics

The families served by this program are at high risk for unstable housing for a variety of reasons. The following synopsis of known risk factors illustrates the importance of providing them with help to locate housing and maintain stability in the housing after the move.

Participants face an average of 2.2 of the following seven barriers. Only one out of ten families report none of these barriers.

- At least one criminal charge: 42%
- At least one unlawful detainer or eviction: 43%
- Bankruptcy, credit judgments, or an account in collection: 81%
- Homeless prior to intake: 51%
- Mental health problem (self-reported): 14%
- Domestic violence (self-reported): 13%
- Substance abuse (self-reported): 5%

In addition, roughly half of participants (52%) were unemployed at intake.

The children served by the program predominantly attend the following Minneapolis elementary schools: Sheridan, Andersen Open, Kenny, and Ramsey. Three-quarters of children in the program are from a core set of 11 schools, out of a total of 29 schools that have been involved.

#### Participant retention

Program retention rates are high. Of the 131 families found eligible to participate, 115 have successfully moved. 129 completed orientation and were cleared to begin their housing search. Of these 129 families, only 12 dropped out of the program, and two families are still within their four-month window of time to locate new housing.

*Continued*

Families that have successfully moved are offered services to help them maintain stability in their new homes, and the available data suggest that over 70 percent of these families have utilized moving assistance funds and/or security deposit assistance funds available through the program.

#### Participant outcomes: Housing stability

Housing stability rates are also high up to a year after the initial move, as summarized in the table below.

<b>Length of time since move</b>	<b>Number of families</b>	<b>Number and percent still in same housing</b>
Less than 3 months	16	13 (93%)
Between 4 and 12 months	33	32 (97%)
Between 13 and 24 months	33	17 (59%)
More than 24 months	29	8 (36%)

Of the 28 families who were known to have moved again, at least 22 (79%) were still using a Section 8 voucher.

#### Participant outcomes: Educational success

School outcomes below apply only to children whose families have moved. Attendance and test score results are available for a smaller group of children who moved long enough ago to allow for comparison of pre-move and post-move data.

#### School stability for children

About half of the children have changed schools at least once since their move. One-third of the children changed schools for reasons that appear to be avoidable (that is, *not* because they outgrew their school or because it closed), and one-sixth (40 children) moved while the school year was underway.

#### School attendance

On average, children attended 91.1 percent of school days before they moved, and 91.4 percent of days after they moved. Attendance gains were slightly larger for children within the first year after their move compared to those for children who had moved more than a year previously, and they were slightly larger for elementary than for secondary students. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

#### Test scores

Comparison data on test scores before and one year after the move are available for 58 children in math and for 57 children in reading, in grades 3 through 7. Two years of follow-up test data were available for 26 children in math and for 25 children in reading.

There was no significant change in math test scores. There was a small but significant improvement in reading scores in the second year after the move.

Given the small number of children for whom comparison data were available, and the relatively short time frame of follow-up in this analysis, these findings should not be considered a measure of the likely long-term results of the program. Program partners recognize that children in the program may need considerable time to address the educational deficits they have accumulated over a period of years, many of them in families with multiple and severe problems.

Plans are in place to track the effects of the program on educational success of students for up to five years.

**Wilder  
Research**

[www.wilderresearch.org](http://www.wilderresearch.org)

1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108  
651-647-4600; FAX 651-647-4623



#### For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *It's All About the Kids, 2001-2004* report. For more information about this report, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research, 651-637-2470.

Authors: Ellen Shelton, Ben Shardlow

JUNE 2005