

***It's All About the Kids,  
2001-2006***

*Participants served and their housing and  
school success to date*

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**May 2007**

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# Acknowledgments

We thank Shari DeZelar of Lutheran Social Service, and Elizabeth Hinz of the Minneapolis Public Schools, who helped us understand how the *It's All About the Kids* program works and helped to oversee the collection of data from Lutheran Social Service and school district records. We also thank David Heistad, Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment with the Minneapolis Public Schools, and his associate Alex Chan for providing the analysis of student data for this evaluation. We also thank Amy Smith of Lutheran Social Service for coordination in the final preparations of this interim report.

The following Wilder Research staff also helped to produce this report:

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# Summary

## **Program background**

*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. Its 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 identifying eligible families in unstable or inadequate housing in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty, and helping them get and keep permanent, affordable housing in less poor neighborhoods while staying in the same elementary school area. This report presents a summary of available information about how the program is working, and preliminary findings on outcomes for the first four and a half years of operation, from fall 2001 to June 1, 2006.

## **Services to date**

To date, the program has records of 190 families served, including 605 children. Most (75%) are single-parent families (including 72% single-parent female) and most (72%) have two to four children (average of 3.2 children). Parents are from all racial and ethnic groups, with 62 percent African American, 15 percent American Indian, and 12 percent White. Six percent are of Hispanic ethnicity. The average age of the parent is 35, and most children are of elementary school age.

## **Participant characteristics**

Most parents in the program have significant barriers to housing. At the time they entered the program, over one-half (56%) were unemployed, 37 percent had criminal charges on their records (with an average of 2.1 charges), 43 percent had at least one unlawful detainer on their records or had been evicted from their most recent housing, 78 percent had at least one account in collection, and 29 percent had a credit judgment or bankruptcy in their credit records. One-quarter (27%) were in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. Including those who were staying temporarily with family or friends, 42 percent were homeless at the time they entered the program. In addition, 12 percent disclosed that someone in their household had a problem with substance abuse, 26 percent disclosed that there was someone in their household with a mental health problem, and 17 percent had disclosed a problem with domestic violence.

Only five families (3%) had none of these barriers while one-third (65%) had three or more barriers, and the average across all families was 2.6 barriers. The presence of multiple barriers makes it harder for families to gain self-sufficiency, because efforts to address any one barrier are hindered by the difficulties arising from the others.

### **Participant retention**

Program retention rates are high. Of the 190 families found eligible to participate, 169 (89%) had successfully moved. One hundred eighty-three (96%) had completed orientation and been cleared to begin their housing search. Of these 183 families, only 13 had dropped out of the program, and eight families were still within their four-month window of time to locate new housing. These high program retention rates may reflect the program's design, which requires and supports parents' initiative to seek services.

### **Income levels**

Annual household income increased by an average of \$706 for the 107 families for whom this information was recorded both at the time of move and one year later. Although hopeful, this change is not statistically significant.

### **Housing stability**

Housing stability rates were high up to a year after the initial move. Nearly all participants (97%) remained in their new housing for at least six months, and 86 percent remained for at least 12 months.

Not surprisingly, housing stability rates were lower after the initial one-year lease period. Of the 85 families who moved at least 24 months ago, 47 (or 55%) were still in the same housing after two years. Of the 44 families who moved at least 36 months ago, 17 (or 39%) were still in the same housing at three years.

Subsequent moves are not necessarily a negative outcome for families. Seventy percent of these moves were because families found other housing they preferred, while only 12 percent were due to eviction.

### **School stability for children**

Information about school mobility was available for 315 children, and was compared to mobility rates for the Minneapolis Public School district as a whole. This analysis indicates that participant children have lower school mobility, on average, than do other children in the district, and that in the later years of the program the difference was large enough that it is highly likely to be related to program participation.

## **School attendance**

The program may help improve attendance rates for younger (elementary school age) children. After rising in the year following the move, attendance rates begin to drop again, but without a comparison group it is not possible to tell how much of this drop is due to the common decline in attendance by students who grow older and leave elementary school for middle school.

## **Test scores**

Reading scores show modest improvements in the first year following the move.

Math scores, which dropped district-wide in the fall of 2006, also dropped for participant children. A comparison group analysis will be needed to determine whether the participant children's score decline was greater or smaller than that of other students in the district.

## **Issues to consider**

The school results reported here for the children served by *It's All About the Kids* show, on average, a slight improvement in attendance rates compared to the year prior to the move, and slightly better school stability compared to children who are not in the program. Achievement test scores show a modest improvement in reading scores in the first year. There was a slight decline in math scores, which is consistent with trends observed district-wide and not unique to the program. Future analyses using a matched comparison group will help to estimate what differences are due to the program.

Many parents in the program face multiple and serious personal and housing-related barriers. In light of this fact, it is important to recognize the length of time that may be needed for children to remedy what are, for many, severe educational deficits. In addition, many factors beyond the control of the program also contribute to the outcomes documented here. Therefore, the program's potential to contribute to students' school attachment and performance, while substantial, must always be kept in perspective compared to other influences more directly related to the school and classroom itself. For example, it appears that the program's success in helping parents become more self-sufficient may be contributing to higher rates of voluntary mobility. The in-depth interviews with clients illustrate the program's effects in helping some families position themselves for further moves to still better housing after a year or a few years.



In view of these considerations, results to date suggest that most aspects of the program are working as intended. The evaluation suggests that the program continues to demonstrate the potential to help children realize improvements within the five-year time period in which they are expected. These outcomes might be enhanced if additional program services could more directly target children's school attendance and performance. However, analysis of only Minneapolis school outcomes may miss many of the positive effects of the program, in light of the number of families who have moved outside the district as they have gained greater self-sufficiency.

# Background

*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. It began operating in the fall of 2001, with the purpose of improving 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 and helping them get and keep better housing in less poor neighborhoods while staying within the same elementary school attendance area.

The program is aligned with the core missions of the collaborative partners. Its goal of improving children's school success is the main objective of the Minneapolis Public Schools, while the focus on high-risk children and strategy of reducing student mobility among schools address challenges identified as high priority. The strategy of facilitating moves from neighborhoods of high poverty to those with more mixed incomes is the main purpose of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority's Hollman voucher program, which is the source of the Housing Choice vouchers<sup>1</sup> made available to the families in the program. The services needed by participating families to make these strategies successful are those which Lutheran Social Service's housing programs have developed and refined over many years:

- Recruitment of landlords to participate in the Housing Choice program
- Intake, assessment, and education of new Housing Choice tenants in renter responsibilities
- Identification of barriers to successful housing and development of a plan for addressing these barriers, and case management support to implement the plan
- Help with clients' housing search and with logistics of the move when new housing has been identified
- Extended support for both landlords and tenants to resolve any problems in the new housing

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Choice (previously called "Section 8") vouchers are a form of federal rental assistance for low- and very low-income households. A voucher recipient may use it for any rental unit that is available within rent guidelines, meets standards set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and whose landlord agrees to participate in the program.

In addition to the efforts of the four collaborative partners, *It's All About the Kids* depends for its success on the initiative and cooperation of participating families (with encouragement and support from the partners), the participation of private landlords (also encouraged and supported by the program), and a base of community services. These services include both intensive, specialized services (such as mental health or substance abuse treatment) to help families resolve barriers to housing, as well as more basic, universal services (such as bus routes or park and recreation programs) to provide an ongoing network of support for families in their new neighborhoods.

The program description provided here emphasizes current program practices, but it is important to bear in mind that program adjustments have been made based on experience and necessity as the three years of implementation have unfolded. Most notably, services to participating families were originally provided by Minneapolis Redesign. Lutheran Social Service took over this function beginning in April 2003. There have also been some changes in how potentially eligible families have been referred to the program, and the handling of orientation and tenant education has been strengthened based on earlier program experiences.

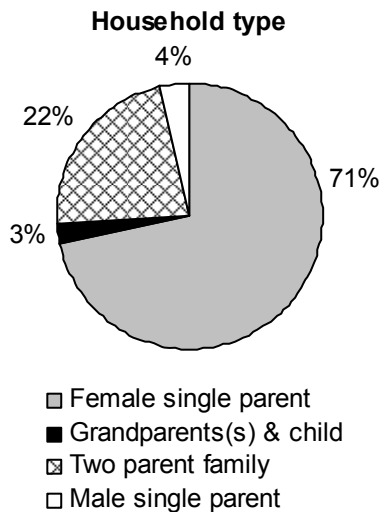
This report, the third in a series, presents a summary of available information about how the program is working. It presents a “snapshot” view of participants’ situations and program operations as of June 1, 2006, with school outcomes through fall 2006. The description of program purposes and activities is based on written materials and conversations with program partners. Information about participants and their progress in the program is based on data collected from individual client case files. The data elements collected, and the form for collecting them, were designed by Wilder Research staff in consultation with Lutheran Social Service staff, and Lutheran Social Service staff collected the data shortly after June 1, 2006. Because of the transfer of responsibility for case management, including maintenance of files, between agencies partway through the period covered by this report, documentation may not be as complete for participants who entered the program earlier as for those who began after the transfer.

Information on school mobility, attendance, and test scores are from the records of the Minneapolis Public Schools, and were analyzed by staff of the district’s Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Department.

In the summer and fall of 2006, Wilder Research staff conducted face-to-face interviews with four participants, randomly selected within selected categories (year of entry, geography, race, and household composition), in order to obtain a more qualitative understanding of how the program affected children and their parents, and how parents view the importance of school and housing stability. Information from these case studies is incorporated into this report.

# Participants served

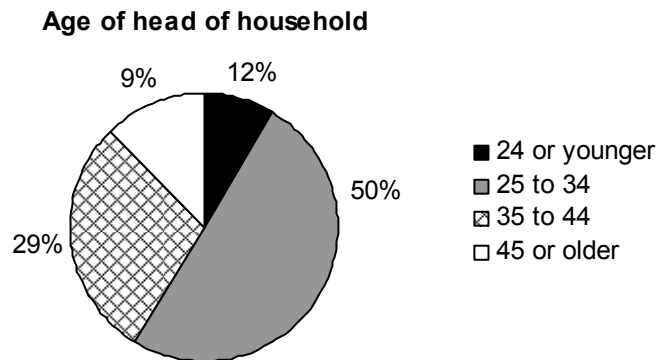
As of the June 1, 2006, cut-off point for this report, the program has records of 190 families served, including 605 children. Salient characteristics of these families include:



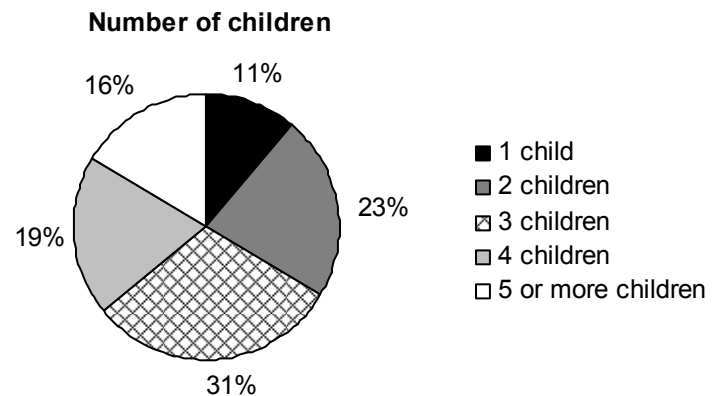
- Of 190 families for whom household type is recorded, 143 families (75%) are headed by a single adult, including 136 families (72%) headed by a single female adult, and 42 (22%) are headed by two parents. Five families (3%) are headed by a grandparent.

- Many heads of household (62%) are African American, 12 percent are White, 15 percent are American Indian, 2 percent are Asian, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 4 percent of households are of mixed race. (The total excludes 8 heads of household whose race is not identified.)

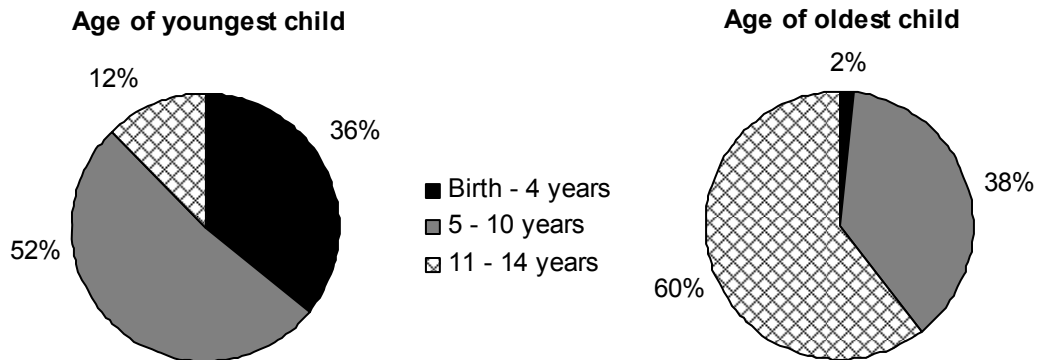
- The average age of the head of the house oldest is 64.



- Most (72%) families have two to four children; the largest family has nine and the average is 3.2 children per household.



- Children’s ages reflect the program’s focus on elementary schools: the average age of the *youngest* child in the family is 6, and the average age of the oldest (excluding those 18 or older) is between 11 and 12. The youngest child in the program’s households is newborn, and the oldest is 20.



Families were referred to the program from any of 32 different Minneapolis schools. However, nine schools represent the referral source for 66 percent of all participating families. Beginning with the school referring the most families, these are:

- Sheridan (26 families), Andersen Open (26)
- Anishinabe (17), Kenny (14), Ramsey (13)
- Armatage (8), Pillsbury (8), Parkview Montessori (7), Windom (7)

Other information, gathered as part of the intake process or in the course of preparing a housing search plan, gives some indication of the degree of difficulty these families might have in finding or retaining housing:

- Less than one-half (44%) of the household heads were employed at the time they entered the program.
- 37 percent have criminal charges in their histories; 19 percent have three or more charges. Of those with any charges, the average number is 5.9 and the median number is 3 (that is, half of this group have 3 or fewer charges, and half have 3 or more).
- 43 percent have at least one unlawful detainer<sup>2</sup> on their record (including 10% who have three or more) or had been evicted from their most recent previous housing.
- 78 percent have at least one credit account in collection, and 29 percent have a credit judgment or bankruptcy in their record. Combined, 87 percent have a bankruptcy or at least one account in collection.

<sup>2</sup> An unlawful detainer is a suit brought by a landlord to evict a tenant and recover unpaid rent.

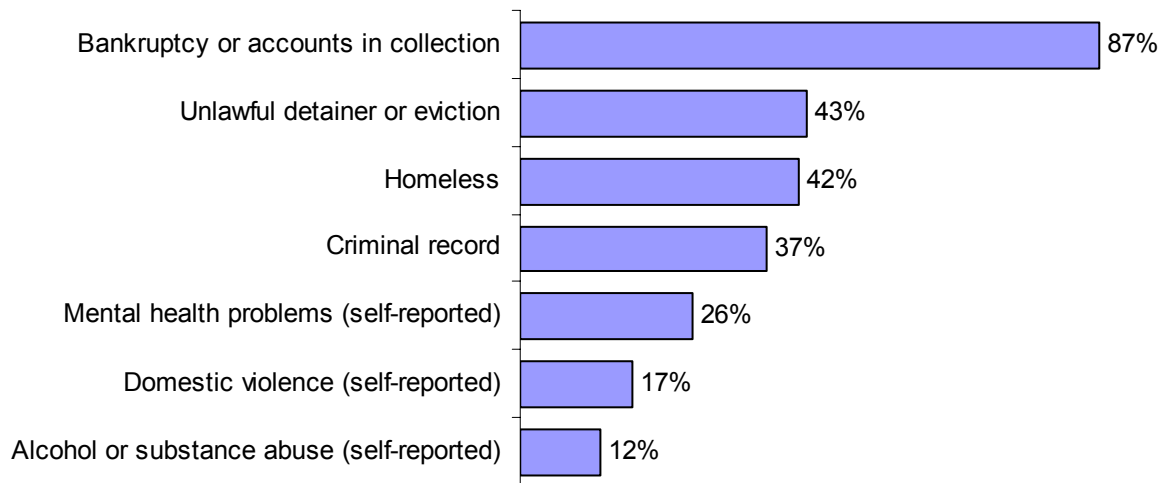
- Of those for whom previous housing status is documented, 42 percent were homeless when they entered the program. This includes 27 percent who came from a homeless shelter or transitional housing program, as well as 15 percent who were living in hotels or motels or staying temporarily with family or friends.

Case files also contain evidence of further problems. The criminal history, unlawful detainers, and credit records mentioned above are part of the standard intake process, since landlords will require this information before accepting a tenant. In addition, in the course of developing a housing plan, families may or may not choose to disclose other kinds of problems, including problems with substance abuse, mental health, or domestic violence. Since these were included only if families volunteered the information, the figures reported here are known to under-report the true incidence of these problems among the program clientele. Recognizing this limitation, it helps to understand the challenges to stable housing for these families to know the following:

- 12 percent report alcohol or substance abuse in the household.
- 26 percent report a household member with mental health problems.
- 17 percent show evidence of domestic abuse in the household.

The figure below illustrates the prevalence of each of these barriers.

**1. Percent of clients with selected barriers to stable housing**

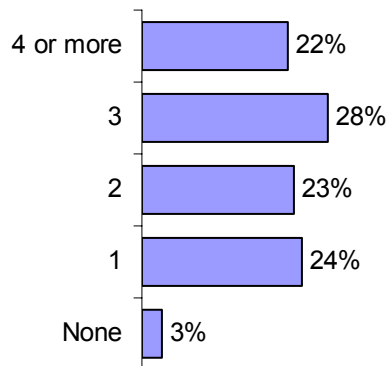


Only five families (3%) had *none* of the seven barriers shown above. Furthermore, one-third (65%) of respondents reported three or more barriers and one-fifth (19%) reported at least five barriers to acquiring housing. On average, participating families have 2.6 of these barriers. (See Figure 2.) The presence of multiple barriers makes it harder for

families to gain self-sufficiency, because efforts to address any one barrier are hindered by the difficulties arising from the others.

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## 2. Number of barriers among program clients



Over the four and a half years of the program, the percentage of families with these barriers has fluctuated from year to year. The proportion with credit collections or bankruptcy has risen and fallen from year to year, as has the proportion of clients with criminal history, and those with evictions or unlawful detainers. These changes do not appear to have any relationship to intentional differences in program recruitment.

By contrast, the proportion of families with prior homelessness has changed significantly as a reflection of referral patterns. In 2001-2003, 60 percent of program families were homeless at the time they entered the program. This proportion dropped to 28 percent in 2004-2006. The source of the Housing Choice vouchers offered to families has now changed, and after June 2006, the vouchers available to *It's All About the Kids* will be exclusively for people experiencing homelessness.

The effect of such barriers on families' housing situations is illustrated in the case study interviews that were conducted in 2006. Of four families picked at random to illustrate a variety of experiences in the program, one had been unable to find stable housing because of poor credit, one because of a past felony conviction, and one due to serious illness. Only the support of the program made it possible for these families to convince landlords to lease to them. This support has also made it possible for them to establish a successful rental history that will qualify them to obtain other housing more independently in the future.

With an understanding of some of the barriers that program clients face in securing housing, and in maintaining housing for any length of time, we now turn to a description of the program that helps these families accomplish these goals.

# Services received and benchmarks attained

The information below is presented in terms of the four main stages of the program:

- Intake
- Orientation and tenant education
- Housing search and move
- Post-move support

## *Intake*

Families are identified and referred by staff (typically but not always a school social worker) at designated Minneapolis Public Schools. The schools participating in the program are elementary schools whose attendance boundaries include both concentrated poverty neighborhoods and neighborhoods that are non-concentrated. Families that may be identified for participation must be low-income (to qualify for Housing Choice vouchers), and living in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty within the school's attendance boundaries. Higher priority families include those whose children have attendance problems, or who are experiencing homelessness, families with younger children, and families that do not need more bedrooms than are likely to be available in the local housing market (usually only one or two).

When the school representative identifies a likely family, he or she explains the program to the parent and gives the parent the name and phone number of the intake worker at Lutheran Social Service. The school representative calls the intake worker to mention the referral, but it is the parent's responsibility to take the next step. This feature of the program's design reflects the partners' judgment that if the parent does not take the initiative to make the first contact, it is unlikely that he or she will have the ability to follow through on other responsibilities that will be important for success in the program.

When a referred parent contacts the Lutheran Social Service intake worker, an appointment is arranged for a meeting at which the intake worker can explain the program and the parent can be screened for eligibility. Standard tenant screening checks are requested for credit record, criminal record, and prior rental history. While the intake process involves identifying possible barriers to housing, the program's philosophy is to look for reasons to include the family in the program (not to exclude them), provided they do not have a criminal or rental record too severe to be "sold" to prospective landlords.



Since fall 2001, 190 families have completed the intake process and been accepted into the program. The first intake was in October 2001; the latest one included in this analysis was May 2006.

### ***Orientation and tenant education***

When a family is accepted into the program, they are given one month to complete orientation and tenant education. In the orientation, a Kids Program case manager reviews the housing search process with the client. The tenant education class is offered by an Owner Outreach Coordinator, who also works with landlords to recruit and support their participation in the program. Prior to April 2003, tenant education was not required, and there are seven families in the program during that period whose case files show no indication that they received orientation or tenant education.

Of the 183 families for whom case files record both intake date and completion of orientation, most (120, or 66%) completed it within a month, and the mean time period is 30 days. However, one-quarter (25%) completed the orientation in a week or less.

### ***Housing search and move***

When families complete the orientation and tenant education, they are ready to start their housing search. The program allows them four months to complete this step and sign a lease. During this stage, their case manager helps them identify neighborhoods in which to look, helps them develop a search plan, and discusses with them how to apply and interview for housing. The Owner Outreach Coordinator makes contacts with property owners to persuade them to participate in the Housing Choice voucher program and explain how the program reduces risks to owners in renting to families. The Owner Outreach Coordinator provides participants with information about housing vacancies. Lutheran Social Service also enlists a cadre of volunteers who are trained to read maps to drive clients around their target neighborhoods while they look.

Once a family locates an apartment, they are sent to the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) to get their voucher. The program offers clients two different grants funded by the Family Housing Fund. Up to \$500 may be spent for moving costs (including a truck, application fees, utility hook-up charges, and the like), and up to \$1,500 may be spent for the security deposit. Lutheran Social Service volunteers with trucks are also available to help with the move.

Of the 169 families who had moved by the time at which data were collected for this report, 108 (65%) are known to have received moving assistance funds. Security deposit funds were provided to 123 families (74%).

Of the 183 families who completed orientation and tenant education, 13 dropped out of the program without completing their housing search. Eight more were still within their four-month search period but had not yet moved. The remaining 169 families in the program have successfully moved.

Families have four months to complete their housing search after orientation and tenant education. On average, families complete this step in 74 days, with a maximum of 452 days (at a time before the four-month limit was instituted). The median length of time until the move was 57 days (half of moves occurred within 57 days or fewer, and half occurred 57 days or more after completion of orientation and tenant education).

The high program retention rates described above likely reflect the program's deliberate inclusion of design elements intended to require and support parents' initiative to seek services. For example, parents who are referred to the program are not considered for participation until they have made the initial call to the intake worker; and parents who have completed the orientation must take the initiative to begin their own housing searches. In response to these self-help efforts, the program affirms and supports the parents' efforts to follow through.

### ***Post-move support***

Since April 2003, the program has evolved in its approach to families after they move. Up until then, most program effort was concentrated on mobility counseling, or helping families locate new housing and prepare for the move. Since that date, more energy has been devoted to helping the family adjust and stabilize in their new housing, including helping them make connections to community resources.

Of the 169 families who have moved, the average length of time is 766 days from the move to June 1, 2006, the time at which data were collected for this report. This average includes one family who moved on June 1, 2006. The earliest move was just over four and one-half years earlier, or November 1, 2001.

Case files document a significant level of post-move contact and support for most families. This support is spread throughout the first year, and for most families also continues into the second year after the move.

- 82 percent of families received one or more program contacts in the first month following their move.
- 80 percent of families received one or more contacts during the second and third months.
- 82 percent received one or more contacts during the fourth through sixth months.
- 83 percent received one or more contacts during the seventh through twelfth months.
- 61 percent received one or more contacts during the second year after their move.

# Case studies: what the program means to kids and families

During 2006, Wilder Research staff conducted face-to-face interviews with four participating parents from different parts of the city and different years of the program. The information provided by those parents included their views concerning the difference the program made for them and for their children, and their expectations for future housing options.

The following vignettes present four families' perspectives on the Kids Program. Taken from the parents' own accounts, they illustrate just a few of the kinds of challenges faced by families in the program. They demonstrate the variety of changes that families experience, which may include a move of just a few blocks or one to an entirely new neighborhood; new housing in an apartment or a single-family house; or housing that becomes the family's long-term residence, or housing that is a first step towards stable housing that will not be achieved until later.

In the fall of 2002, Marie\* was living with her parents and two sisters in a transitional housing program, their third home in three years. They were having trouble finding a more stable place to live because of her parents' poor credit record. With the program's help, they moved to a rented house in a good neighborhood where Marie made friends she liked and could play with them in a park just across the street. Marie also loves having a back yard of her own where she can play alone, and her mother says it helps her develop her creativity. Recently, the house was acquired by a new landlord who says they can stay for two more years. Marie's parents hope to be able to buy their own home in the same neighborhood, because they have easy routes from there to their jobs, and because that is where their children's school is.

Mylene\* is being raised by her grandmother, a single mother who is also still raising kids of her own. Mylene's grandmother had very little time to care for the children because of the extra shifts she was working – which were still not enough to pay the rent. In addition, the neighborhood was scary, and Mylene was not allowed to go outside. The program helped Mylene's family to move to a more affordable apartment in a better neighborhood. Now Mylene can play outside. Her grandmother knows and trusts the neighbors, and allows the children to walk to the park, and even leave their bikes outside. Although she likes the new housing, the grandmother expects to have to move again within a year, because the place is not large enough for an additional child she is now expecting.

\* Not their real names

In the spring of 2003, Annie\* was living with her dad in an apartment with uncovered electrical outlets, mold, mice, and constantly leaking plumbing. This was their third home in three years, but no better landlord would rent to them because of Annie's dad's past criminal record. *It's All About the Kids* helped them move, and helped them with initial furnishings and cleaning supplies, as well as school supplies for Annie. The new apartment building, just a few blocks away, is well maintained, and Annie and her dad are treated with respect there. According to her dad, the new setting has helped Annie feel more secure, and as a result both her self-esteem and grades have greatly improved. The program has helped them make connections with services in the neighborhood, but her dad hopes to move again next year, after four years in this apartment. He would like to be closer to his job in the suburbs, and he would like his daughter to be in a different school district.

Eddie\* was in kindergarten when his family was referred to the program. His mother had lost her job due to a serious illness, leaving her unable to afford her rent. He was living in a homeless shelter with her and his two siblings. He often asked if he could skip school. Within a month, the program helped the family find and move to regular housing. A year later, now in first grade, Eddie is more eager to go to school. His mother thinks it might be due to less stress, as a result of their more stable living conditions. The family is starting to feel at home in the new neighborhood, although Eddie's mother reports that she does not have anyone she can call when she wants advice, encouragement, or help finding something she needs. However, the program has helped them connect to services in the neighborhood, and she intends to stay in the new housing as long as she can. She reports the program "helped tremendously."

\* Not their real names

# Program outcomes to date

Program outcomes documented to date are in three main categories: income levels, housing stability, and school results. Housing results are documented in terms of whether families are still in their same housing after 3, 6, 12, and 24 months. Three measures of school results of interest to the program are currently retrievable: school stability, attendance, and reading and math achievement test scores. The Minneapolis Public Schools staff looked up school identification numbers for most school-age children. Staff in the Minneapolis Public Schools Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Department retrieved and analyzed school stability, attendance, and test score data as of fall 2006. Further analyses with a matched comparison group will be done later in 2007, which will give more indication of how the program has affected school outcomes for children.

## *Income levels*

Annual household income is collected by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority at the time of the move and annually thereafter when families must re-certify their eligibility. Lease-up data were available for 165 of the 169 families who have moved.

- One-year follow-up income data were available for 107 families, and showed an average increase of \$706 (from \$15,148 per year to \$15,854 on average).
- Two-year follow-results for 49 families started from a lower average lease-up income of \$13,905 and increased to \$15,456 on average, a gain of \$1,551.

Although not statistically significant, these changes are hopeful. In addition, families with more gains in income have more choices in where they can live, including the suburbs. Since our information about income comes only from those who are still living within the area served by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, it is likely that these data under-report actual gains in income among program families.

There were no statistically significant differences in income change based on the number of years since the move, or on the number or types of parental barriers, or on whether the family had remained in their new housing.

## *Housing stability*

- Housing stability rates are high for the first year after the move. They drop off from the first to the second year, and again after the second year. The majority of subsequent moves were for voluntary reasons, indicating that families are attaining greater levels of self-sufficiency. Although subsequent moves may not contribute to immediate residential stability, this evidence suggests that the larger goals of improved family well-being and regional social integration are being advanced. About half of families who have moved again are now using non-MPHA vouchers, which may indicate that they are now living outside of Minneapolis. Almost two-thirds of the families still living in Minneapolis are in three zip codes in Northeast (55418), Powderhorn (55407), and Longfellow (55406).

Figure 3 below shows the numbers of families in the program according to the length of time elapsed since their move (from move date to June 1, 2006), and the number of those families for whom Minneapolis Public Housing Authority files show whether or not they are still in the same housing. For example, reading the first line, six families had moved less than three months before June 1, 2006, and information on their housing stability could be found for five of these families.

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### **3. Distribution of program families by length of time since move, and availability of data on subsequent moves**

<b>Time since family moved</b>	<b>Number of families in cohort</b>	<b>Number of families for whom subsequent moves are known</b>
Less than 3 months	6	5
At least 3 months	5	5
At least 6 months	22	22
At least 1 year	51	49
At least 2 years	41	41
At least 3 years	44	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>166</b>

**Source:** Lutheran Social Service and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority case files (collected by LSS staff); analysis by Wilder Research.

Figure 4 below shows the percentage of families who have remained in the same housing following their move, cumulatively for each of the possible follow-up points. For example, of the 166 families for whom subsequent move data are available, 161 made their program-assisted move at least three months before June 1, 2006. Of this group, one had moved again by the three-month follow-up point, leaving 160 (or 99% of those in this cohort) who were still in the same housing after three months. After the figure is a description of the stability rates at each of the follow-up time periods, as well as information about families' reasons for moving again.

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#### 4. Post-move housing stability, by length of time since initial move

Time since family moved	Cumulative number of families in cohort *	Number who have moved again	Number still in same housing	Percent still in same housing
At least 3 months	161	1	160	99%
At least 6 months	156	5	151	97%
At least 1 year	134	19	115	86%
At least 2 years	85	38	47	55%
At least 3 years	44	27	17	39%

**Source:** Lutheran Social Service and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority case files (collected by LSS staff); analysis by Wilder Research.

**Note:** \* The numbers in this table are the numbers for whom subsequent moves are known.

- **3 months.** Of the 169 families who had moved, 161 had moved at least three months before data were collected. Of these, 160 (or 99%) remained in their new housing for at least three months.
- **6 months.** There were 156 families who had moved at least six months before data were collected. Of these, 151 (or 97%) remained in the same housing for at least six months.
- **12 months.** There were 134 families who had moved at least a year before data were collected. Of these, 115 (86%) remained in the same housing for at least a full year. Of the 19 families who had moved again, half (9) had stayed in the same housing until less than two weeks before the year was over. The main reason for moving again is known for 14 families, and for 10 of them (71%) it was because they found other housing they preferred. Only two families moved because they were evicted.



- **24 months.** There were 85 families who had moved at least two years before data were collected. Of these, 47 (55%) remained in the same housing for at least two years. The main reason for moving again is known for 21 of the families in this group, and for 18 of them (86%) it was because they found other housing they preferred. No families were evicted, although 3 (14%) agreed with their landlord to a mutual termination of the lease.
- **36 months.** There were 44 families who had moved at least three years before data were collected. Of these, 17 (39%) remained in the same housing for at least three years. The main reason for moving again is known for 23 families, and for 14 of them (61%) it was because they found other housing they preferred.

Overall, the main reason for a subsequent move is because the family has found other housing they prefer. This was the reason for 70 percent of families who moved again, while only 12 percent moved because of eviction. Mutual termination of lease, which often indicates a poor landlord-tenant relationship, was the main reason for an additional 7 percent, and a variety of other reasons made up the remaining 12 percent.

Of the 76 families who were known to have moved again, 61 (81%) were still using a Housing Choice voucher. This included 30 families still using the same voucher provided in the initial move, one family using a different kind of voucher also provided by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, and 30 families using vouchers provided by a different housing authority.

These results indicate a significant drop-off in housing stability after the initial lease period. However, the majority of subsequent moves were for voluntary reasons, indicating that families are attaining greater levels of self-sufficiency. The kinds of vouchers being used shows that up to half of families who have moved again may now be living outside of Minneapolis.

Differences in housing stability were related to the extent of program contact that families received to help them get settled into their neighborhood after their initial (program) move. Among families who received regular contact during the first year, 54 percent remained in their new housing throughout the follow-up period, compared to 40 percent of those who did not receive as regular contact. Sixteen percent of families with less regular contact had two subsequent moves, compared to only 2 percent in the group with more regular contact. Specific neighborhood does not appear to be related to housing stability: There were no significant differences based on the zip code to which the program helped the family to move.

The information about families' reasons for moving suggests that subsequent moves by participating families should not necessarily be considered a negative outcome for the program or the families it serves. For families who were helped to move to housing where they feel safe, where they like the neighbors and schools, and have convenient access to jobs, children's recreation, and other amenities, the parents we interviewed hoped to stay in the same place indefinitely. Others, however, hoped to move again to still better housing or better neighborhoods, or find their current housing unsuitable (such as because of change of ownership, or because a family change requires more bedrooms).

These four interviews, while not representative of all families, suggest that subsequent moves may be positive outcomes for some families. A subsequent move for voluntary reasons suggests that a family has established (or re-established) a solid rental and credit history, which may open up far more housing options than were available to them at the time they made their program-assisted move. Thus the program move is not always directly into a long-term housing situation, but for many may instead be an important step on the way to longer-term housing stability.

This perspective on subsequent moves is further supported by the fact that people who received fewer community-based services in their new neighborhoods, and those with lower incomes, were less likely to move again – perhaps because they were less able to establish the qualifications or connections to locate and secure new housing without the program's help.

## ***School results***

This section describes post-move results for children in school stability, attendance, and math and reading test scores.

### **School stability**

- The program appears to have a small but significant effect in reducing school mobility for participating children.

School stability is a key objective of *It's All About the Kids*. The purpose of the targeted housing search is to help families identify better and more stable housing in neighborhoods where their children can remain in the same elementary school, and the post-move services are intended to help them stay in that housing so their children can continue to attend the same school. In turn, reduced school mobility is expected to result in better attendance, more parental involvement in the schools, and better school achievement for the children.

Information about school mobility was available for 315 children who have already moved. In order to examine possible differences before and after families received the program's help, school research staff calculated the average number of monthly school moves for students during the year in which they moved and for subsequent years. The average mobility of participant children was also compared to averages for other children in the district. Mobility was calculated in terms of moves per month in order to permit comparison among children who have been in the program for varying lengths of time.

This analysis indicates that participant children have lower school mobility, on average, than do other children in the Minneapolis Public Schools, and that in the later years of the program the difference is large enough that it is highly likely to be related to program participation.

Figure 5 below shows the average moves per month for participant children, non-participant children of low family income ("Low-SES group"), and other non-participant children ("High-SES group"), where the income grouping is based on children's eligibility for the district's free and reduced-price lunch program. The average mobility is shown for each group for each year since the program began.

The between-group comparisons at the bottom of the table show that, on average, children who have participated in *It's All About the Kids* have lower school mobility than other district children in every year after the first year of the program. In 2003-04 and 2004-05, some of these differences were large enough that we can be confident that they are related to program participation and are not merely due to chance differences. For example, in 2004-05, participant children averaged .1509 school moves per month, compared to averages of .1910 for Low-SES children and .1860 for High-SES children in the Minneapolis district. This is .0401 fewer school moves per month among the participant group compared to the Low-SES group, and .0351 fewer moves per month compared to the High-SES group.

## 5. School mobility of participant children, compared to other children in the Minneapolis Public Schools

	School year				
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Participant group					
Average school moves per month	.2880	.1614	.1671	.1509	.1716
Number in group	7	118	223	292	315
Low-SES group					
Average school moves per month	.1638	.1870	.1716	.1910	.1956
Number in group	33,694	34,834	30,573	30,805	28,901
High-SES group					
Average school moves per month	.2167	.1931	.2200	.1860	.1814
Number in group	20,102	17,136	17,941	14,254	13,855
Comparison of group means:					
	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Participants vs. Low-SES	.1242	-.0255	-.0046	-.0401**	-.0240
Participants vs. High-SES	.0713	-.0371	-.0529***	-.0351*	-.0098
Low-SES vs. High-SES	-.0529***	.0062**	-.0483***	.0050*	.0142***

**Sources:** Lutheran Social Service case files (collected by LSS staff), Minneapolis Public Schools student records (collected and analyzed by Minneapolis Public Schools staff).

**Notes:** \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### Attendance

- The program may help improve attendance rates for younger (elementary school age) children. To control for the typical decline in attendance that occurs at higher grade levels as children age, it will be necessary to also examine attendance for a comparison group over the same time period.

Attendance data are available for at least some children from September 2000 through June 2006. Attendance rates for a school year were computed by dividing the total number of days attended by the total number of days enrolled. Attendance rates were not computed for children with fewer than 35 enrolled days (about one-fifth of the total number of days possible in a school year). Before- and one-year-after-move attendance rates could be computed for 241 children; two-year-after-move comparisons were made for 130 students; and three-year-after-move comparisons for 42 children.

Because attendance rates typically decrease as children move from elementary to middle schools, attendance rates were calculated separately for elementary-age children (younger than 12 at the time of the move) and for older children (those age 12 or older). The results are shown below in Figure 6.

The Minneapolis Public School attendance goal is 95 percent or better for each individual student. This represents 8 absences or fewer for the school year. The district’s recent average has been 91 percent. Program participants in elementary grades were at district average when they entered the program. After one year, they were slightly higher than average (at a 92% attendance rate), closer to the district’s goal. In the second year after the move, average attendance slipped slightly, although it remained above the rate before the move.

Among older children, the average attendance rate fell in the year following the move, and continued to decline in subsequent years. It is typical for children’s attendance rates to fall as they grow older and move from elementary school to middle school, so it is likely that this drop is not related to program participation. In order to control for the effects of maturation, future analyses will compare changes in participant children’s attendance rates with changes in a matched comparison group of non-participant children.

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## 6. Pre- and post-move attendance rates

	Pre-move	Average attendance rate		
		First year after move	Second year after move	Third year after move
<b>Participants with one-year follow-up</b>				
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=152)	90.84	91.70	-	-
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=89)	90.23	85.28	-	-
Total (N=241)	90.62	89.33	-	-
<b>Participants with two-year follow-up</b>				
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=78)	90.93	92.29	91.40	-
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=52)	89.30	86.98	82.38	-
Total (N=130)	90.28	90.17	87.79	-
<b>Participants with three-year follow-up</b>				
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=24)	90.65	91.81	91.91	89.42
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=18)	90.16	87.38	83.53	75.64
Total (N=42)	90.44	89.91	88.32	83.52

## Test scores

- Reading scores show modest improvements in the first year following the move.
- Math scores do not show evidence that the program has made an improvement.

National Achievement Level Tests (NALTs) are given annually to students in grades 2-7 and 9 in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Until 2004-05, these tests were given in the spring. Beginning in 2005-05 these tests were given in the fall instead. It is not meaningful to compare fall test scores with previous years' spring test scores, so there are relatively few children in the program for whom we have valid pre-move and post-move tests that can be compared. For these students, results are shown below in Figure 7 (Math) and Figure 8 (Reading).

Results show slight decreases in math scores in the first year following the move, which were partially (for older children) or mostly (for younger children) made up in the second year. Average math scores declined district-wide during the same time period. It will be important to examine the scores of a matched comparison group to learn whether the decline among program children is larger or smaller than that observed in the district in general during the same time period.

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### 7. Math score attainment

	Average monthly growth in math score (Normal Curve Equivalent)		
	Year of move	One year post-move	Two years post-move
<b>Participants with one-year follow-up</b>			
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=55)	+0.09	-.19	-
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=15)	-.07	-.28	-
Total (N=70)	+0.06	-.21	-
<b>Participants with two-year follow-up</b>			
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=19)	-.05	-.14	-.01
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=3)	+.71	-.79	-.15
Total (N=22)	+0.05	-.23	-.03

**Source:** Minneapolis Public Schools student records (collected and analyzed by Minneapolis Public Schools staff).

Results show gains in reading scores for both age groups in the first year following the move. These gains are smaller for the younger children, and are not evident in the second year for either age group.

As with the math scores, it will be important to compare these test score trends with those of a matched comparison group in order to determine whether these scores are better or worse than those of other students at similar levels of risk.

In other studies of educational intervention, even whole-school change projects that have directly strengthened classroom instruction have been found to require three to five years of continuous implementation to show statistically significant changes in student achievement.

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## 8. Reading score attainment

	Average monthly growth in math score (Normal Curve Equivalent)		
	Year of move	One year post-move	Two years post-move
<b>Participants with one-year follow-up</b>			
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=54)	-.16	+.07	-
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=15)	+.21	+.33	-
Total (N=69)	-.08	+.12	-
<b>Participants with two-year follow-up</b>			
Younger than 12 at time of move (N=18)	-.30	+.08	-.05
Age 12 or older at time of move (N=3)	-.32	+.42	-.24
Total (N=21)	-.31	+.13	-.07

**Source:** *Minneapolis Public Schools student records (collected and analyzed by Minneapolis Public Schools staff).*

In sum, we observe evidence that program participants have lower school mobility rates than non-participants, and evidence that participation helps to improve attendance modestly for younger children. Without a comparison group, it is not possible to know if the changes in achievement test scores are different from those that might have been observed without program participation; math scores are slightly lower after the move, but reading scores are slightly higher.

# Issues to consider

The school results reported here for the children served by *It's All About the Kids* show, on average, a slight improvement in attendance rates compared to the year prior to the move, and slightly better school stability compared to children who are not in the program. Achievement test scores show a slight decline in math (which is consistent with trends observed district-wide and not unique to the program), and modest improvement in reading scores in the first year.

Further analysis is needed to estimate how much of the change in outcomes is due to program participation. Future analyses, including a comparison group of students not in the program, are planned in order to better estimate the effect of the program.

In interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind the relationship between this program's intervention and its desired effects. *It's All About the Kids* was designed to improve school stability, attendance, and achievement for low-income children by addressing some of the underlying issues relating to housing that limit their potential for school success. However, many factors beyond the control of the program contribute to the income, housing, and school results documented in this report. Therefore, the program's potential to contribute to students' school attachment and performance, while substantial, must always be kept in perspective compared to other influences that may be more directly related to the school and classroom itself. One such factor is the extent to which the larger community views school choice as an important value. Since the time the Kids Collaborative formed, the community's emphasis on school choice has increased, while support for the importance of residential and school stability has decreased.

Evidence on subsequent moves suggests that the program's success in helping parents achieve better rental histories and become more self-sufficient has enabled many of them to increase their self-initiated mobility for reasons that are positive. While the case study interviews indicate that parents generally perceive this kind of residential mobility as a positive effect, it may contribute to some of the school mobility among children. For families that moved, parents indicated a number of reasons for liking or not liking their children's schools, ranging from the extent to which their children had friends at school to the quality of instruction. Among the parents we interviewed, these reasons appeared to be strongly related to the parents' commitment to keeping their children in the same school. These are considerations that are not under the control of *It's All About the Kids*. However, if the program were to add a case worker to help address children's school attendance and other needs, it could help to change parents' perceptions of the value of helping keep their children in the same school for more extended periods of time.



As evidenced by the prevalence of serious housing barriers faced by parents in the program, many families enter the program after lengthy periods of instability and severe stress. It would be unrealistic to expect that long-established patterns of behavior (such as attendance patterns or a habit of solving problems by starting over at a new school) will be changed easily or rapidly. It is even less realistic to expect that school achievement, which depends in part on such behaviors, will change in just a year or two.

In view of these considerations, results to date suggest that most aspects of the program are working as intended. The evaluation suggests that the program continues to have the potential to help children realize improvements over the five-year time period in which they are expected, especially if program services more directly target children's school attendance and performance. However, analysis of only Minneapolis school outcomes may miss many of the positive effects of the program, in light of the number of families who have moved outside the district as they have gained greater self-sufficiency.