

The Impact of Poverty on Children

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A new study was released last week by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). ["Creating Opportunity for Children; How Housing Location Can Make a Difference"](#) reviews the work of dozens of the top experts on poverty including those that we used in our lawsuit, Kirk McClure and John A. Powell. Some of CBPP's key takeaways, with our comments, are listed below:

*"First, **high-poverty neighborhoods**, which are often violent, stressful, and environmentally hazardous, **can impair children's cognitive development, school performance, mental health, and long-term physical health.**"*

"...federal rental assistance programs have fallen short in helping families live in neighborhoods that provide these opportunities."

"...government-funded projects that often are situated in very poor, segregated neighborhoods."

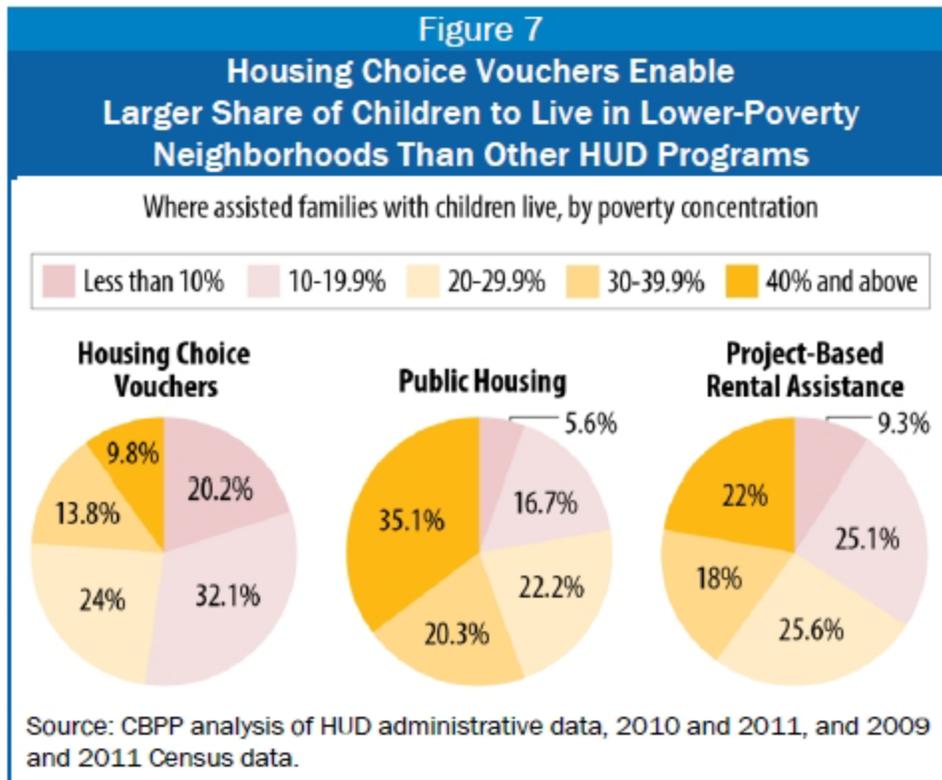
*"...only 15 percent of the children in families that received **rent subsidies** through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) three major rental assistance programs — the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, public housing, and Section 8 Project-Based Rental*

*Assistance (as described in Box 1) — **lived in low-poverty neighborhoods**, where fewer than 10 percent of the residents had incomes below the poverty line."*

The most important finding to emerge from this analysis is which program most successfully places children in low-poverty neighborhoods.

The following graphic shows that 20.2% of all children whose families use portable Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) (aka Section 8 Vouchers) are living in low-poverty neighborhoods, while 9.3% of all children whose families use Project-Based Vouchers are living in low-poverty neighborhoods. Finally, only 5.6% of all children whose families live in public housing are living in low-poverty neighborhoods.

Clearly, HCVs are the best choice!



The high concentration of poverty, created by public housing projects, makes it unwelcome in most neighborhoods, **so local political forces normally make sure that they are built in high-poverty neighborhoods making it, by far, the worst choice for subsidized housing; especially for children.** Indeed, the families who are intended to occupy the new Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes public housing projects, in this city, will be trapped, by design, in high-poverty neighborhoods.

When Emily Badger reviewed this study for the Washington Post, ([see article](#)) she commented, **"The government can't very well pick up public housing projects and move them to better**

neighborhoods." This is the precise reason that is so important to stop the rebuilding of public housing, in Galveston, at the intended locations. After they fail; they can't be moved.

"Students benefited academically from living in low-poverty neighborhoods, but most (two-thirds) of the gains came from attending a low-poverty school."

Note: They define a low-poverty school as one where less than 20% of its students are eligible for free or reduced lunches. GISD currently has 75% of its students eligible for free or reduced lunches.

"...they have relied increasingly on housing vouchers to provide rental assistance, so that families may choose where to live rather than being limited to government-funded projects that often were situated in poor, racially concentrated neighborhoods."

"A significantly larger share of families in public housing lived in high-crime neighborhoods than did voucher households or poor renters generally. Nearly one of four households living in public housing in 2000 resided in a neighborhood with a high rate of violent crime. On average, public housing households lived in census tracts with 60 percent more crime than in the rest of their cities."

"From 1995 through 2012, about 500,000 units of public housing and privately owned assisted housing either were demolished (and not replaced) or ceased to receive federal

rental assistance (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013b; National Housing Trust (2004); CBPP analysis of HUD data on tenant protection vouchers)."

Of course, HUD completely reversed course from this constructive trend when it demanded that the City of Galveston continue to use public housing, that does not serve the needs of children well, instead of the preferable HCVs.

The experts cited also support the use of regional strategies where Housing Authorities can place public housing units, project-based vouchers and HCV holders in the best locations regardless of jurisdictional boundaries like city limits.

"...the obligation of grantees to consider regional strategies (which HUD defines as collaborations between two or more local agencies or jurisdictions),..."

"...HUD has the authority to require consolidation when an agency is not administering the HCV program effectively, even if a state or local law limits the geographic area of agency operation."

GHA refuses to even try a regional approach!

"Maintenance and repair of public housing has been underfunded for decades, causing a substantial loss in the number of units available as projects deteriorate. HUD recently estimated that the remaining stock of public housing

*has accumulated a backlog of **unmet capital needs of \$26 billion.**"*

This exhaustive study by the CBPP supports and reinforces all of the reasons why this city should not be rebuilding public housing projects in high-poverty neighborhoods. The corrupt political choice to do so can only be viewed as willful and extreme negligence!