

Atlanta Housing Authority
Moving to Work Reforms that Incentivize Employment

AHA's MTW Agreement Provision: Attachment D, Section IV. – Self-sufficiency/supportive services
Attachment D, Section V. – Single Fund Budget with Full Flexibility
Attachment D, Section III. – Occupancy Policies

➤ **Work/Program Participation Requirement** – This policy, applicable to all AHA-assisted programs, requires that (a) one non-elderly (18 to 61 years old), non-disabled adult household member maintain continuous full-time employment (at least 30 hours per week) and (b) all other non-elderly, non-disabled household members maintain work or participation in a combination of school, job training and/or part-time employment as a condition of the household receiving and maintaining subsidy assistance. This policy reform thwarts the perception that families are not pursuing economic independence and self-sufficiency.

➤ **\$125 Minimum Rent** – This policy raised the minimum rent from \$25 to \$125 for both the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs. This policy does not apply to households in which all household members are either elderly and/or disabled, and whose sole source of income is Social Security, SSI, or other fixed annuity pension or retirement plans. Such households will still be responsible for paying rent based on 30% of their monthly adjusted income for rent and utilities or, if a public housing resident and who make the election to do so, the Affordable Fixed Rent. This policy raises standards of responsibility for public housing assisted residents and Housing Choice participants and increases tenant contributions towards rent.

➤ **30% of Adjusted Income** - In order to preserve housing affordability for participants of the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the total tenant payment of participants, unless subject to AHA's minimum rent, will be no more than 30% of the household's monthly adjusted income for rent and utilities. Especially important is the fact that this initiative ensures that the financial arrangement of former public housing families who relocated using Housing Choice vouchers will be no different than the financial arrangement they had as public housing residents.

➤ **Elderly Income Disregard** – Under this policy, if an elderly public housing resident or elderly Housing Choice participant, whose sole source of income is Social Security, SSI, and/or other fixed annuity pension and retirement plan income, becomes employed on a temporary, part-time or other limited basis which does not result in the discontinuance of the elderly resident's or participant's sole source of annual fixed income, then employment income will be disregarded and not used in calculating annual income.

➤ **Human Development and Support Services** – Provide professional individualized coaching and counseling services to families impacted by revitalization and Quality of Life Initiative relocation activities and assists clients who are non-compliant with the work/program participation requirement. AHA uses MTW Funds and HOPE VI funds to pay for these vital services to families in both the Public Housing and Housing Choice Programs.

➤ **Service Provider Network** – An established network of service providers that facilitates families' work and self-sufficiency goals and supports families in meeting the work/program participation requirement. Leverages MTW Funds with resources from established organizations with proven track records to support incremental costs associated with serving AHA-assisted households.

➤ **Comprehensive Homeownership** – AHA is able to establish its own policies, procedures, eligibility and participation requirements for its homeownership programs, to include changes to HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Program requirements. This program is designed to prepare eligible participants in becoming successful home owners.

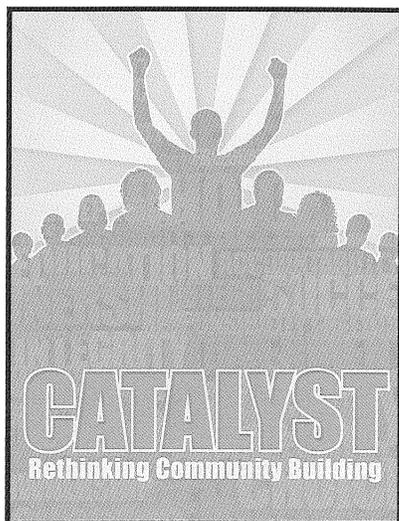
Special Edition!



A-HA!

A PUBLICATION OF THE ATLANTA HOUSING AUTHORITY
RESIDENT SERVICES DIVISION

"Supporting Neighborhoods. Protecting Dreams."



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The Power to Achieve... — The Will to Succeed! —

Six AHA families tell their stories of life before and after Relocation.

You can see it on their faces and hear it in their voices: Residents who have taken advantage of the Housing Choice Voucher program are on the verge of transforming their lives. Their newfound sense of purpose is unmistakable – and unshakable.

The Atlanta Housing Authority is moving forward with its historic initiative to tear down the city's oldest and worst public housing projects as part of its Quality of Life Initiative. Blighted buildings that had become havens of rampant drug-dealing and violent crime will soon be revitalized. One day, all of them will be replaced with model, mixed-income communities that anyone would be proud to call home.

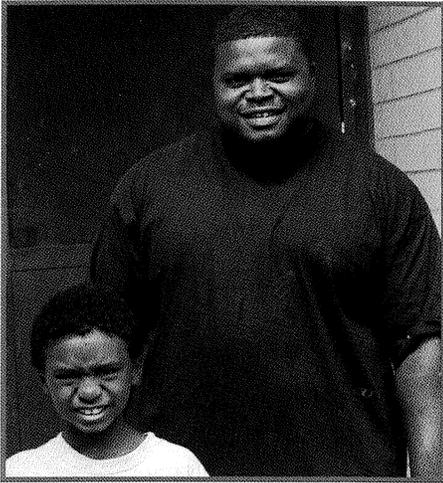
While that process will take several years to complete, residents are getting the opportunity to relocate to privately-owned rental properties in and around metro Atlanta. As a result, voucher-holders are enjoying the benefits of communities with access to jobs, better schools, and other amenities that were lacking in the projects.

"Getting a voucher has helped me start a new chapter in my life,"
- Deshea Johnson, *Successfully Relocated from Bankhead Courts.*

To continue their participation in the voucher program, residents must, of course, honor the promises they've made to be good tenants and neighbors in their new communities. The six residents profiled in this **special edition** are living up to those expectations...and exceeding them.

In the months since AHA has received federal approval to demolish Bankhead Courts, Thomasville Heights and Bowen Homes, former residents of those projects say they are making great progress. Despite some challenges, they have no regrets about the bold steps they've taken to realize their ambitions and provide better surroundings for themselves and their families.

None of them was expecting a handout. Through their own hard work and the ongoing support of Relocation Specialists and other services, families are getting the assistance they need to reach success.



Stirling Plant stands outside his former apartment in Bowen Homes with his son, Donte, 7, before moving to a new home in southwest Atlanta.

Stirling Plant - Bowen Homes Preparing for His Family's Future

Donte Plant is only seven-years-old and has no idea what a Housing Choice Voucher is. All that matters to this bright-eyed, 2nd grader is that he won't always be cooped up inside the apartment in Bowen Homes once his father moves into a new townhouse in southwest Atlanta.

"I'll be very happy because they're shooting all the time over here," Donte says of the housing project where they've lived for about a year. "Our new house is big and has a lot of room to play."

As his son speaks, Plant smiles broadly. A single father who also has a two-year-old daughter, Plant was always fearful about allowing Donte to play outside their apartment in Bowen Homes. Plant, 32, grew up in Decatur and wound up in Bowen Homes after suffering some financial setbacks. After landing a job with AVIS Rental Car at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Plant was excited when he learned Bowen Homes was slated for demolition. Better yet, he was eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher that would cover most of his rent in a much better neighborhood of his own choosing.

With the help of a Relocation Specialist, Plant found a three-bedroom townhouse in southwest Atlanta that offers a gated entry and a private garage. He has clear ideas about improving his life and is preparing for his family's future. Plant wants to open an auto detailing shop with his brother and plans to fix-up foreclosed homes for resale. For now, he's working overtime and trying to save money to get Donte into Little League baseball and tap dancing classes.

"AHA is helping me out so I don't fall down again and it just feels great," he said recently. "I want to be a role model for my son."



Shuntera Cook gets ready to prepare dinner for her family in the kitchen of her new townhouse with her three children.

Shuntera Cook - Bankhead Courts Excited About a Better Life for Her Children

Shuntera Cook, 23, lived in Bankhead Courts for only eight months. For this mother of three young children, it was eight months too long.

Terrified by the crime and violence in the projects, Cook kept to herself most of the time and only ventured out to go to work as a cashier at a Family Dollar store.

"I really didn't talk to anyone over there," she said, with the lone exception of a childhood friend who also lived at Bankhead. "There was always drama. I wasn't into that."

Cook, an Atlanta native, knew exactly what she was looking for: "I wanted a quiet place that looked nice on the inside as well as the outside. I wanted a place that had good schools where my kids could learn."

Cook said she remembers vividly when AHA officials informed residents the projects would be razed and that residents who qualified could get Housing Choice Vouchers that would help them relocate to better neighborhoods. "They said all I had to do was

keep a job where I was working at least 30 hours a week and stay compliant with my lease," she recalls. "I didn't think it was going to be easy, but I knew I could do that." After getting assistance to find a new home, Cook signed her lease on August 29th...a date that's etched in her memory.

No longer stressed out about her home environment, Cook plans to go to school to become certified as a pre-K teacher and fulfill her passion to work with children. She feels "blessed" that the Relocation Program provided the help she needed. "The way I look at it, the voucher gives people a chance for a better life. That's what happened to me."



Roderick Barnswell - Bowen Homes Takes Pride in Being a Good Neighbor

A safe place to call home while chasing his dreams was all Roderick Barnswell, 21, was looking for in life. When a Housing Choice Voucher helped Barnswell get out of Bowen Homes, that's exactly what he found.

Since moving out of the soon-to-be-demolished projects where he'd lived since he was a boy, Barnswell is now renting a one-bedroom apartment in the Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts. From his balcony overlooking the city, Barnswell doesn't waste time thinking about where he came from. He's too focused on where he's going.

Roderick Barnswell has big dreams and is enjoying a new perspective on life from the balcony of his intown apartment.

"In this environment, I can be successful," he says, scanning the horizon. "I had to change my environment, change my surroundings to do what I'm doing now."

These days, Barnswell is doing so much it's hard keeping up with him. He's an aspiring singer and entrepreneur, works part-time as a customer service representative, just graduated from Georgia State University, and is the father of a 5 month old girl whose pictures he proudly keeps on display.

"Moving out of Bowen Homes means I don't have to take my daughter around negativity," Barnswell said of the child who lives in Cobb County with her mother. "Environment is important and I want the best for my child."

Barnswell realizes that with every privilege also comes responsibility. After completing the mandatory training classes required for voucher recipients, he's pleased that AHA Relocation Specialists stay in touch with him. He also knows he must "do right" by following the rules of his lease and being a good neighbor in order to keep his voucher. "It's worth it," he says.



Leroy Huff - Thomasville Heights Enjoying a New Place, a New Lease on Life

Leroy Huff, 46, and his wife Aundrea, 50, lived in Thomasville Heights for about a decade in relative peace. Then in 2004, Mr. Huff recalls, "It started getting wild."

"For some reason, things started changing," Mr. Huff says. "People were robbing and shooting. Kids would just throw garbage on the ground. It got so bad; I was helping the maintenance people pick up the trash every day. It didn't make any sense. People wanted to just be nasty, but I didn't."

Thankfully, those days are behind them. A Housing Choice Voucher enabled the couple to move into an apartment at the Atlantic Station complex in Midtown, and they love it.

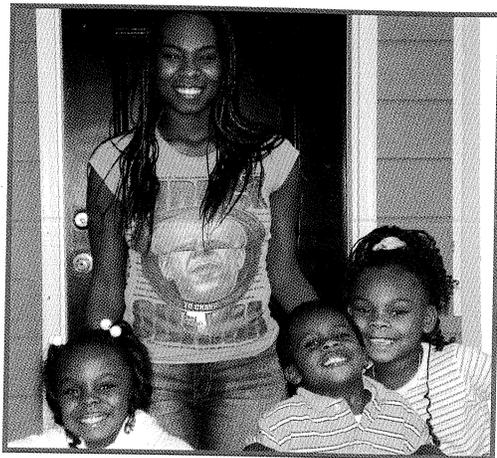
"Boy was I happy to move out," says Mr. Huff, who is now on permanent disability after a job-related injury. "It's nice and quiet here. You don't have to worry about shooting and robbing. I can walk outside at any time night or day and not even think about it."

Leroy Huff and his wife, Aundrea, enjoy the view from their new Atlantic Station apartment.

After moving out of Thomasville Heights in September, Mrs. Huff says she feels they have a new lease on life. Atlantic Station is a "live-work-play" community that is close to shops and stores. No longer does she feel isolated in her apartment like she did before getting the voucher that gave them the chance to relocate.

Another resident has also relocated from Thomasville to the same Atlantic Station apartment buildings where they now reside. The couple is also enjoying meeting new neighbors who may have different backgrounds but share their wish to live in a safe and clean environment.

When asked if he misses the projects they left behind, Mr. Huff doesn't hesitate to answer, "Oh Nooo," he says. "Never."



After a long day of work and school, Deshea Johnson stands on the porch of her townhouse with her three children.

Deshea Johnson - Bankhead Courts On a Mission Toward Success

The first day Deshea Johnson, 23, moved into Bankhead Courts, her car was stolen. She was relieved when the vehicle was recovered a short time later, but she didn't get much time to celebrate. When she looked out her apartment window the next day, the car was gone...again.

During the brief time Johnson lived at Bankhead, her car was stolen a total of three times and her apartment was once robbed by thieves who took everything she owned.

"They stole the bed and the crib and the chairs and the TV and dressers. It looked like I never even stayed there."

Johnson got sick and tired of being victimized by crime. She jumped at the chance to apply for a Housing Choice Voucher when she learned Bankhead Courts would be torn down.

After completing the required training courses and working closely with a Relocation Specialist, Johnson moved up and out of Bankhead. She decided to use her voucher to move to a townhouse complex in northwest Atlanta. So far, the move is working out better than expected for Johnson and her children – ages 5, 4, and 2.

But Johnson is on a mission and has little time in her schedule for socializing. She's working two part-time jobs to pay her portion of the rent that the voucher doesn't cover, as well as other household bills. Johnson has submitted an application to attend Atlanta Technical College where she plans to study nursing. Eventually, she wants to become a registered nurse who specializes in caring for the elderly.

"Getting a voucher has helped me start a new chapter in my life," she says. "I thank AHA so much for this opportunity!"



Almeda Ringer rises early every day to get her children ready for school.

Almeda Ringer - Thomasville Heights Determined to Make a Difference

When Almeda Ringer, 27, asked the landlord of the house she'd seen with a "For Rent" sign outside if he accepted housing vouchers, he simply said: No, I'm not taking Section 8."

But Ringer was determined; she's always been that way. Ringer kept talking with the landlord about how much she liked the house near Turner Field. Before their conversation was over, she'd changed his mind. "He said I seemed like I was a nice person and I got the place," Ringer remembers.

Within a few months, Ringer and her four boys had moved out of Thomasville Heights where she lived for eight years. She credits the Housing Choice Voucher Program with helping her transition to a better neighborhood.

Opportunity knocked in the form of the Quality of Life Initiative which provided Ringer with a Housing Choice Voucher and much more. "I asked if they could hurry up and give me one," she recalled. "In my case, it helped out a lot." Ringer loves her new house in southeast Atlanta that features hardwood floors and her own private bathroom.

Working part-time at a fast-food restaurant and finishing a training program to become a medical assistant keeps Ringer super busy. She's determined to attend nursing school and wants to work with children at Emory University Hospital.

Ringer is proud that her own children are being raised in a neighborhood where they're exposed to people from different backgrounds. "I don't want my kids to grow up knowing only Black people," she says. "I don't want them to treat people different because of their race. I tell my kids they've been stereotyped to be failures but to never let anyone put them down, no matter what."

Ask Barney...

Your questions about Relocation, Housing Choice Vouchers, and more answered here.

Getting approved for a Housing Choice Voucher and getting ready to improve your life can be an exciting time, and a little confusing too. AHA's Senior Vice President Barney Simms wants to answer some of the questions he hears most often from residents who are concerned about making the BIG MOVE.

Q: How do I get my furniture to my new home and how do I pay for my moving expenses?

A: Families have three choices: 1) the housing authority can use its movers and also give you \$100 for any other expenses you might have; or 2) you can hire your own moving company and receive an allowance from AHA that's based on the number of furnished rooms where you live now; or 3) you can pay all of your own moving expenses and submit receipts to the housing authority for reimbursement.

Q: What am I supposed to do about childcare when I'm working a full-time job or going to school?

A: Taking good care of children is important to all of us. That's why every parent in the program is assigned a Human Services Specialist to help with everything from finding quality, affordable childcare to making sure you have the transportation resources you'll need to get to and from your job or school. Contact your Human Services Specialist for help.

Q: When I move into my new apartment, am I responsible for paying the utilities?

A: Depending on where you've chosen to live, you may or may not have to pay utilities. If the property owner requires you to pay some or all of the utilities, the housing authority will provide you a utility allowance based on the size of the unit and the types of utilities that you will be responsible for paying. AHA will lower your rent by the utility allowance amount so that you will have money to pay your utilities. Relocation Specialists will also help you find the best utility rates and budget plans to suit your household.

Q: What's the difference between a tenant-based and a project-based housing voucher? Is there a difference in how much I have to pay?

A: Tenant-based vouchers are portable; they travel with you wherever you decide to move. On the other hand, project-based vouchers are permanently connected to a rental unit that's owned by a private landlord. Whether

you use a tenant based voucher or stay at a property that has project based vouchers, your portion of rent will always be 30% of your adjusted household income minus a utility allowance if you are required to pay utilities.

Q: What kind of help should I expect from the Atlanta Housing Authority after I've gotten a voucher and moved into my new home?

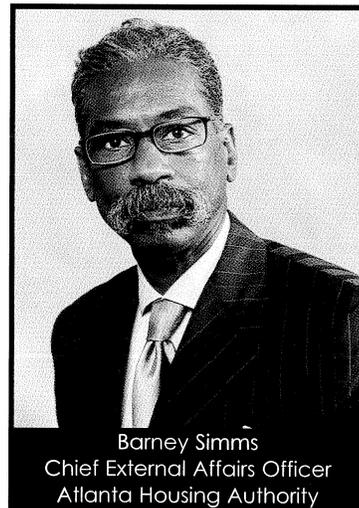
A: A lot. Housing Relocation Specialists will assist you in making the right choices about where you want to live based on your family's specific needs. Once you've moved in, a Human Services Specialist will be there to make sure your transition into your new neighborhood goes as smoothly as possible. In all, each resident gets a total of 27 months of assistance before, during, and after they've moved out of the projects.

Q: I'm glad to be getting out of the projects, but how can I be sure my Housing Choice Voucher will help me move into a neighborhood that doesn't have the exact same problems?

A: The housing authority is committed to helping you find a better and safer community than the one you're leaving behind. Relocation Specialists can provide you with information on each neighborhood such as the level of crime and performance of schools. Also, each resident will have a chance to tour neighborhoods in and around metro Atlanta to help you find the kind of community you're looking for and which offers your family the best chance of success. The final choice is yours.

Q: The community I've chosen is nothing like the projects. How will I know what's expected of me once I move into my new home?

A: Every resident who receives a Housing Choice Voucher is required to attend a series of "Connecting the Dots" seminars that tell you what's expected of you in your new home, prepare you to stay in compliance with your lease while offering practical housekeeping tips and making sure you become an asset to your new community.



Barney Simms
Chief External Affairs Officer
Atlanta Housing Authority



Atlanta Housing Authority

Resident Services

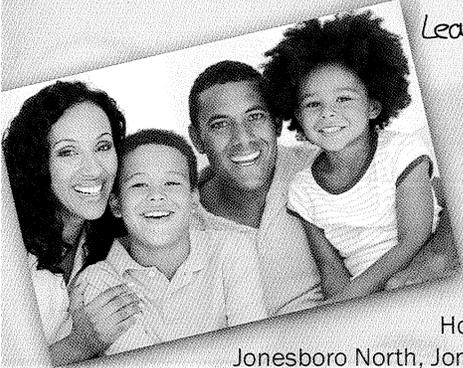
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Barney Simms—Senior Vice President and Chief External Affairs Officer

A-HA! wants to hear from you. If you have a story to share about an AHA resident, program, policy or event, send an email to: chloe.rauch@atlantahousing.org.

Human Services Case Management Providers for Relocating Families

Learn More About the Services Provided to AHA Participants Before and After Relocation



Integral Youth and Family Project, Inc. (IYFP) provides innovative and effective human services management for Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) residents to ensure that each resident is successful in achieving self-sufficiency through counseling, coaching, and access to services and programs designed to meet their specific needs. IYFP unique approach towards resident's achievement of social and economic success involves: intense one-on-one case management, counseling and coaching, connection to resources, and promotion of individual responsibility.

IYFP services the following AHA Communities: Affected residents from Harris Homes, Grady Homes, John O. Chiles, University Homes, Antoine Graves and Graves Annex, Englewood Manor, Jonesboro North, Jonesboro South, Bankhead Courts, Bowen Homes, Thomasville Heights, Herndon Homes, Hollywood Courts, Palmer House, and Roosevelt House.

Families First, Inc. provides skilled professional counseling and supportive services to families of Atlanta Housing Authority by empowering families through intervention, education and advocacy. Families First unique problem-solving approach towards independence involves emphasis on "growth, situational change, and building resilience to overcome personal stumbling blocks."

Families First, Inc. services the following AHA Communities: Affected residents from McDaniel Glenn, McDaniel Glenn Annex, MLK Towers, Leila Valley and U-Rescue Villa.

Both firms assess the resident's needs and address barriers which provides the foundation for an individualized plan for meeting self-sufficiency goals. Both firms are required to assist residents with becoming independent by connecting them to appropriate services, activities, and opportunities for job training and education.

For more information, please call Atlanta Housing Authority at (404) 892-4700.