

Public Housing Assistance and Social Security Disability Program Participation: Do Vouchers Crowd Out Disability Applications and Receipt?

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Key Findings and Policy Implications

This paper analyzes interactions between the economic support programs for non-elderly individuals with disabilities that are administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). The specific program analyzed in the study is HUD's Housing Choice Voucher program and its effect on SSDI and SSI participation. The analysis is conducted using zip code level data on program participation, compiled from administrative records of both agencies from 2004 to 2021. The paper finds that:

- There is substantial overlap across these economic support programs. More than one in five housing voucher holders also receives SSI as an adult with disabilities. In the 90th percentile of zip codes analyzed, nearly one-third of voucher holders also receive SSI.
- The racial and ethnic composition of voucher holders varies substantially across zip codes, especially for Black voucher holders. Roughly 80 percent of voucher holders are women. Two-bedroom rentals are the modal housing unit type by size, although one-bedroom and three-bedroom are nearly as common.
- There is a large and statistically significant substitution between housing and disability programs at the local level. Specifically, additional housing voucher utilization under the HUD program leads to fewer SSI applications, fewer SSDI applications, and lower SSI enrollment. The interactions are particularly strong for SSI, where our estimates range from a reduction of one SSI applicant for every 10 to 40 additional housing vouchers utilized.

These results point to significant substitutability between income support and housing support programs, potentially mediated by local housing authorities themselves, which has important implications for interactions between federal programs supporting individuals with disabilities as well as the net federal costs of funding additional housing vouchers.

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