

# 2016 Dane County Housing Summit

## Dane County Housing Initiative (DCHI)



Working Together to Expand Housing Opportunities

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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## MARAH A. CURTIS, MSW, PH.D.

### Associate Professor

Ph.D., Columbia University, 2005

MSW, Hunter College, 1995

B.F.A., Marymount Manhattan College, 1990

Marah Curtis is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and a faculty affiliate at the Institute for Research on Poverty and the Center for Demography and Ecology. Her research program is an outgrowth of her professional practice as a child and family therapist in a variety of settings. Trained in public policy analysis at Columbia University's School of Social Work and beginning her academic career at Boston University, Curtis' work examines the role of public policies on the well-being of families with an emphasis on housing.

Housing policies have various goals; to incent homeownership, to provide a subset of the poor with stable, quality housing and to deconcentrate poverty. These policies proceed from the premise that one's home and neighborhood have a direct bearing on a host of well-being outcomes. The mechanisms for these relationships are unclear. Concerns that families that are eligible for or take-up a benefit may differ from non-recipients in ways that are associated with well-being are inherent challenges to understanding the role of public policy in ameliorating pressing social problems. Curtis' work seeks to model mechanisms assumed in our housing policies and relate those structural elements to well-being outcomes while attending to important methodological concerns. Her work interrogates how differences in housing conditions affect family wellbeing, including both parent's and children's outcomes. Her research focuses on how policies designed to improve the quality and stability of housing are effective in meeting those goals, as well as broader goals such as decreasing economic hardship. Curtis uses a variety of statistical techniques to analyze data from a range of large-scale datasets and collects policy data on system components missing in existing data but pivotal in understanding the role of public policies in the lives of vulnerable families.

She collaborates with researchers on campus as well as at the New York University Population Center, Canadian Centre for Health Economics, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing and Mathematica Policy Research.