

**April 23, 2004 at 12.00 Noon  
Zimmer Lounge, Maxcy Hall**

**Spatial Structure in the Social Sciences Colloquia Series**

**Access to Social Services in Urban America**

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**Abstract:** The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) transformed the welfare system from one where welfare checks were the primary vehicle for assistance, to one where work support services are the primary form of assistance. Where one lives matters in this new era of social assistance, as residence determines which social services are proximate and readily available to an individual in need. Given such profound changes, this research proposal poses a number of questions of great importance for policy-makers and scholars interested in strategies for promoting self-sufficiency among low-income populations in urban settings: How does access to social services vary across our cities and communities? How can housing policy improve the links between low-income populations and service providers? Where are faith-based providers located within cities and which services do they provide? The Multi-City Survey of Social Service Providers (MSSSP) seeks to answer these questions by collecting information from providers currently serving low-income populations in one of five areas (mental health, substance abuse, education, job training, food, and emergency assistance) in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. The findings from this study will be of significant interest to urban policy scholars, policy-makers, and program managers. As I will have unique data on the context of social service delivery across a large number of providers, and will be able to discuss how access to social services varies across urban geography.