

FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY - Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

WHAT IS THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY (FSS) PROGRAM?

Family self-sufficiency (FSS) is a HUD program which was established in 1990 by Section 554 of the National Affordable Housing Act that encourages communities to develop local strategies to help assisted families obtain employment that will lead to economic independence and self-sufficiency. Public housing agencies (PHAs) work with welfare agencies, schools, businesses, and other local partners to develop a comprehensive program that gives participating FSS family members the skills and experience to enable them to obtain employment that pays a living wage.

The purpose of FSS is to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate the use of public housing assistance and housing assistance under the Section 8 rental certificate and rental voucher programs with public and private resources, to enable families eligible to receive assistance under these programs to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency.

The objective of the FSS program is to reduce the dependency of low-income families on welfare assistance and on Section 8, public, or any Federal, State, or local rent or home ownership subsidies. Under the FSS program, low-income families are provided opportunities for education, job training, counseling, and other forms of social service assistance, while living in assisted housing, so that they may obtain the education, employment, and business and social skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. The success of FSS is measured by the number of families who achieve self-sufficiency and by the number of FSS families who, as a result of participation in the program, have family members who obtain their first job, or who obtain higher paying jobs; no longer need benefits received under one or more welfare programs; obtain a high school diploma or higher education degree; or accomplish similar goals that will assist the family in obtaining economic independence.

WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED THROUGH THE FSS PROGRAM?

FSS program services may include, but are not limited to:

- Child Care
- Transportation
- Education
- Job Training and Employment Counseling Substance / Alcohol Abuse Treatment or Counseling
- Household Skill Training
- Homeownership Counseling

WHAT FAMILIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FSS PROGRAM?

Families who receive HUD assistance under the Public Housing or Section 8 programs are eligible to participate in the FSS program.

WHO ADMINISTERS THE FSS PROGRAM?

The FSS program is administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs). The PHA establishes an FSS program coordinating committee and develops an FSS action plan. The FSS program coordinating committee helps the PHA to develop its action plan and FSS program policies, obtain public and private supportive services funding and commitments, and oversee the overall implementation of the FSS program.

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WHO FUNDS A LOCAL FSS PROGRAM?

For the most part, PHAs must rely on their own or other local resources to operate FSS programs. However, under the authority of annual appropriations acts, HUD has been able to provide some funding for FSS program coordinators to assist PHAs in operating FSS programs.

HOW DO FAMILIES APPLY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FSS PROGRAM?

Families who are eligible to participate in FSS should contact their local PHA to discuss participation in the program.

HOW DO PHAs SELECT FAMILIES FOR THE FSS PROGRAM?

PHAs can give a selection preference—for up to 50 percent of its FSS slots—to eligible families with one or more family member(s) enrolled in, or on the waiting list for, an FSS-related service or job placement program. For all other selections, the PITA must use an objective system, such as a lottery. PHAs may screen applicants for interest and motivation to participate in FSS, but may not screen for education, job history, credit rating, marital status, or number of children.

WHAT REQUIREMENTS MUST A FAMILY MEET TO PARTICIPATE IN FSS?

The PHA and the head of each participating family execute an FSS contract of participation that specifies the rights and responsibilities of both parties. The 5-year FSS contract specifies goals and services for each family. Family members must fulfill all requirements in order to obtain full benefits. The FSS contract requires that the family comply with the lease, that all family members become independent of welfare, and that the head of the family seek and maintain suitable employment. Possible sanctions for noncompliance with the FSS contract are termination from the FSS program, forfeiture of the FSS escrow account, withholding or termination of supportive services, and termination of housing assistance.

CAN PHAs REQUIRE FAMILIES TO PARTICIPATE IN FSS?

No. Participation of families in the FSS program is voluntary and cannot be a condition of receiving HUD-assisted housing.

DOES A FAMILY HAVE TO MOVE OUT OF PUBLIC HOUSING OR GIVE UP ITS RENTAL ASSISTANCE AFTER THE FAMILY COMPLETES THE FSS PROGRAM?

No. Although it is hoped that families will no longer need housing assistance upon completion of the FSS program, some families that complete the program will still need assistance for housing. The law provides that a family may complete its FSS contract -and receive its escrow while continuing to receive housing assistance.

WHAT REGULATIONS COVER THIS PROGRAM?

Regulations are found at 24 CFR 984.

WHAT YOU BELIEVE, YOU CAN ACHIEVE!

If you believe in your mind that something is possible, you will take the steps necessary to fulfill that belief.

BELIEVE YOU CAN BE INDEPENDENT THROUGH FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY!