



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program Action Plan

A. INTRODUCTION

The origins of the Family Self Sufficiency program (FSS) are in two pilot projects implemented in 1986 and 1990, Project Self-Sufficiency and Operation Bootstrap, respectively. These projects were set up to test self-sufficiency programs for families with housing subsidies, and both demonstrated that families needed essential services in order to move toward economic self-sufficiency. These services include child care, transportation, medical care, and long-term education and training.

In the wake of the successful demonstration of these projects, family self-sufficiency became one of the initiatives under the Homeownership and Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) program enacted in 1990, and the FSS program was subsequently created under the National Affordable Housing Act the same year.

FSS built upon and refined both Project Self-Sufficiency and Operation Bootstrap. It remained a voluntary program in 1991 and 1992, but became mandatory in 1993 for any new increments of funding issued to Public Housing Authority's (PHA). The 1993 regulations were further modified by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA).

The purpose of the FSS program is to coordinate housing assistance with public and private resources to enable assisted families to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

This FSS program is administered by the Housing Authority of the County of Kern (HACK) for the jurisdiction of the County of Kern.

The FSS Program National Goals include:

- a. Becoming self-sufficient and independent of Federal, State, or local housing assistance;
- b. Obtaining a job for the first time or obtaining a better paying job;
- c. Getting off Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) or other public assistance; and
- d. Increasing the family income to a level where 30% of adjusted gross monthly family income is equal to or exceeds the appropriate Fair Market Rent.

B. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

Applicable regulations for Low Income Public Housing (LIPH) and Housing Choice



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

Voucher (HCV) FSS programs include:

- 24 CFR Part 5: General Program Requirements
- 24 CFR Part 8: Nondiscrimination (Chapter 2-1 of the LIPH Admissions and Occupancy Policy and Chapter 15-B of the Administrative Plan)
- 24 CFR Part 902: Public Housing Assessment System
- 24 CFR Part 903: Public Housing Agency Plans
- 24 CFR Part 945: Designated Housing Low Income Public Housing (LIPH) and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants.
- 24 CFR Part 960: Public Housing Admission and Occupancy Policies
- 24 CFR Part 965: PHA-Owned or Leased Projects—General (Appendix V- LIPH developments).
- 24 CFR Part 966: Public Housing Lease and Grievance Procedures (LIPH Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy Appendix IV-Grievance Procedure)
- 24 CFR Part 982: Section 8 Tenant-Based Assistance: Housing Choice Voucher Program (Administrative Plan board approved 12-12-18).
- 24 CFR Part 984: Section 8 and Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program (Chapter 14 of the Administrative Plan and Chapter 8 of the LIPH Admissions and Occupancy policy).

C. OVERVIEW

The FSS action plan is required by HUD. The purpose of the action plan is to establish policies for carrying out the FSS program in a manner consistent with HUD requirements and local goals and objectives. Further, this action plan must comply with the requirements specified for the plan in the regulations [24 CFR 984.201(a)]. The regulatory requirements dealing specifically with the FSS action plan itself largely involve the development, revision, and required contents of the plan.

This FSS action plan is set forth to define HACK's local policies for operation of the program in the context of federal laws and regulations. All issues related to FSS not addressed in this document are governed by such federal regulations, HUD handbooks and guidebooks, notices, and other applicable laws. The policies in this FSS action plan have been designed to ensure compliance with the consolidated ACC and all HUD-approved applications for program funding.

HACK is responsible for complying with all changes in HUD regulations pertaining to the FSS program. If such changes conflict with this plan, HUD regulations will take precedence. Administration of the FSS program and the functions and responsibilities of HACK staff shall be in compliance with the personnel policy and HUD's family self-sufficiency regulations, as well as all public housing and HCV regulations, in addition to



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

federal, state, and local fair housing laws and regulations.

D. SINGLE ACTION PLAN [24 CFR984.201(f)]

HACK is implementing a LIPH and HCV FSS program, and will submit one action plan. HACK will review and update the action plan at least once a year, and more often if needed, to reflect changes in regulations, Housing Authority operations, or when needed to ensure staff consistency in operation.

E. TIMETABLE FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The time table for program implementation has already occurred. Outreach selection, and enrollment activities are ongoing. FSS slots are in the process of being filled and will continue to be filled as vacancies occur and additional slots are created. The services identified in this Action Plan are in place and are being accessed by FSS program participants. The continued implementation of the FSS program has been revised according to HUD requirements and information contained in this Action Plan.

F. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FSS PROGRAM

HACK has developed both mandatory and discretionary policies for FSS action plan.

- Mandatory policies are those driven by legislation, regulations, current handbooks, notices, and legal opinions.
- Discretionary policies consist of those developed for areas in which HACK has regulatory discretion, or with regard to optional, nonbinding guidance including guidebooks, notices that have expired, and recommendations from individual HUD staff.

HUD expects HACK to develop policies and procedures that are consistent with mandatory regulations and to make clear the optional policies that HACK has adopted. This action plan is the foundation of those policies and procedures for the FSS program. HUD's directions require HACK to make policy choices that provide guidance to staff and consistency to program applicants and participants.

A. Mandatory Policies

1. A "Needs Assessment" is conducted on each adult family member who is eligible to participate in FSS.
2. An "Individual Training and Services Plan" (ITSP) is prepared for the head of the FSS family, and each adult member of the FSS family who elects to participate in the program. The ITSP consists of the supportive services to be provided to and the activities to be completed by the family member. The training plan is attached to and incorporated as part of the "Contract



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

- of Participation".
3. The HUD approved Contract of Participation is entered into between a participating family and HACK. It sets forth the terms and conditions governing participation in the FSS program. The effective date of the contract begins the first day of the month following the date in which the FSS family and HACK enter into the Contract of Participation. The Contract of Participation ends five (5) years after the next re-certification.
 4. At enrollment, the most recent effective rent certification must be used to establish the baselines. If a family has income disregarded due to EID, that income is included in the baseline.
 - The FSS baseline income is determined by calculating the FSS family's total annual earned income from wages and business income (if any) as of the effective date of the FSS contract. In calculating baseline annual earned income, all applicable exclusions of income must be applied, except for any disregarded earned income that may be applicable to the determination of annual income.
 - The FSS baseline monthly rent is the FSS family's total tenant payment, as of the effective date of the FSS contract, for families paying an income based rent as of the effective date of the FSS contract; or the amount of the flat rent (which includes the applicable utility allowance), and including any hardship discounts, as of the effective date of the FSS contract, for families paying a flat rent as of the effective date of the FSS contract.
 5. The FSS "account" means the "escrow account", which is established by HACK. Monthly deposits are deposited into a single account for each participating FSS family. The FSS credit amount shall be the lower of:
 - Thirty percent of one-twelfth of the amount by which the family's current annual earned income exceeds the family's baseline annual earned income; or
 - The increase in the family's monthly rent. The increase in the family's monthly rent shall be the lower of:
 - The amount by which the family's current monthly rent exceeds the family's baseline monthly rent;
 - For HCV families, the difference between the baseline monthly rent and the current gross rent or the payment standard, whichever is lower; or
 - For PBV families, the difference between the baseline monthly rent and the current gross rent.



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

The disbursement of funds is paid to the household member who signed the Contract of Participation when it has been completed.

6. If an FSS family has under-reported their income after the baseline was set, the amount credited to the FSS escrow account will be based on the income amounts originally reported by the FSS family. If the family is found to have under-reported income in the re-examination used to set the baseline, the escrow for the entire period of the Contract of Participation will be re-calculated using the correct income to set the baseline and then calculate subsequent escrow amounts.
7. If an HCV family is in the process of moving to a new unit, and is not under a lease, there will not be an escrow credit until they are under lease agreement again.
8. There are three ways FSS participants can access their escrowed savings.
 - First, when FSS participant successfully graduates from the program by achieving their ITSP goals, and has become independent from welfare assistance before the expiration of the term of the contract of participation, including any extension thereof. Graduates are eligible to withdraw the full amount of their escrowed savings, which they may use for any purpose.
 - Second, at the discretion of the FSS program, FSS participants may be allowed to access their escrowed funds prior to graduation when they have achieved one or more interim goals. FSS escrow funds can only be released early if the funds will be used for a purpose consistent with the participant's ITSP. For example, participants may be allowed to withdraw FSS escrow funds to pay for college tuition or a job training program or repairs to a car needed to commute to work.
 - Third, the contract of participation will be terminated with an escrow disbursement when:
 - Services that the PHA and the FSS family have agreed upon are no longer available
 - The head of the FSS family becomes permanently disabled and unable to work, unless the PHA and the FSS family identify a new FSS family member to designate as the new FSS head of household; or
 - An FSS family in good standing moves outside the jurisdiction of the PHA for good cause, as determined by the PHA, and continuation of the Contract of Participation after the move, or completion of the Contract of Participation prior to the move, is not possible.

In order to access an escrow disbursement, FSS families must be able to provide adequate documentation to verify the completion of their goals and/or



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

hardships. It will be the discretion of the PHA to determine what is considered adequate documentation.

9. A family's election not to participate in FSS will not interfere with rights of non-participating families which state that a family's election to not participate in the FSS program will not affect the family's admission to the public housing or HCV program, nor will it affect their right to occupancy in accordance with its lease.

B. DISCRETIONARY POLICIES

1. HACK offers incentives to participate in the FSS program with the following: escrow accounts, food boxes, hygiene items, assistance with documentation requirements of services with outside agencies for services related to the FSS Contract of Participation, assistance with filing for unemployment, child care, and related benefits. Periodic workshops are held on budgeting, credit scores, employment readiness, and homeownership opportunities. An FSS conference is held periodically to recognize graduates and present escrow checks. The conference includes workshops for existing participants that have not completed their goals yet and families considering participation in the FSS program. Each workshop during the year HACK provides refreshments and certifications of completion for the workshop.
2. Selection of participants is based on their income and from referrals through Housing Managers and Housing Specialists.
3. The modification of goals in the ITSP, and/ or extensions are given for participants that demonstrate a hardship in completing their goals, but will be able to get back on track with an extension or modification of their goals. Extensions will only be granted for good cause, meaning there are circumstances beyond the control of the FSS family that impede the family's ability to complete the Contract of Participation obligations. For example, the initial goal may have originally been to purchase a home but the market is not favorable. The participant would then change their focus to increasing their income or obtaining a college degree. Participants are allowed two (2) extensions during the program and update goals as needed. Approved extensions cannot cumulatively exceed two years.
4. Previous FSS participants are allowed re-admittance of the FSS program, including graduates and those who exited the program without graduating; as long as they are in good standing with their LIPH lease or HCV Participant obligations and have been off the FSS program for a minimum of 6 months.
5. If an FSS family underreports income or assets; a letter is sent to the participant requiring they contact their FSS Coordinator to determine if there is an FSS program violation, LIPH lease violation or HCV Participant Obligations violation. The amount of unreported income is determined and whether or not



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

the unreported income results in termination from the HCV or LIPH program; or if a repayment agreement is appropriate. If the repayment agreement is entered into with the Participant, and they fail to pay, they are subject to termination from the FSS program and the HCV or LIPH program. If the participant is nearing the end of their program and meet the qualifications to graduate, the overpayment may be deducted from the total escrow approved. No escrow is accrued for the unreported income.

6. The grievance procedure for FSS families is found in Chapter 10 of the Administrative Plan and Appendix IV- of the LIPH Admissions and Occupancy Policies
7. No preference is given to families that port in from another jurisdiction. Additionally, Families that port out must be provided information on their options based on the family's specific circumstances, which may include, but are not limited to,
 - Modification of the FSS contract
 - Termination with FSS escrow disbursement
 - Termination of the FSS contract and forfeiture of escrow
 - Locating a receiving PHA that administers an FSS program must port to a jurisdiction that has an FSS program to continue their FSS participation

G. SERVICES

HACK certifies that the development of services and activities under the FSS program have been coordinated with the Workforce Investment Act, and any other relevant employment, child care, transportation, training, and education programs in order to avoid duplication of services.

In administering the program, HACK promotes the development of strategies in coordination with local community agencies using HUD's Low- Income Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs combined with public and private resources to assist families in achieving economic independence and self- sufficiency.

The objective of the FSS program is to reduce the dependency of low-income families on Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), Section 8, and public housing subsidies, or any Federal, State, or local assistance. Under the FSS program, low-income families are provided opportunities for education, job training, counseling, and other forms of social service assistance. Living in assisted housing is used as a leverage so that families may obtain the education, employment, business and social skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency.

HUD measures the success of a local FSS program not only by the number of families



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

who achieve self-sufficiency, but also by the number of FSS families who, as a result of participation in the program, have family members who obtain their first job, higher paying jobs, and no longer need benefits received under one or more of the welfare programs.

Outside organizations provide home buyer education workshops. HACK provides My Financial Academy, a program that covers financial literacy such as:

- a. budgeting,
- b. credit scores,
- c. setting financial goals,
- d. credit cards,
- e. loans,
- f. debt management,
- g. vehicle purchases and
- h. student loans.

HACK provides referrals to

- a. Dress for Success to obtain work attire and mock job interview skills,
- b. weekly job leads,
- c. monthly bus passes
- d. substance abuse programs,
- e. mental health programs,
- f. Kern Literacy council for basic reading skills,
- g. Bakersfield Adult school for GED preparation,
- h. Bakersfield College and California State University Bakersfield for higher education planning,
- i. PG&E help with bills and energy efficient appliances,
- j. Community Action Partnership of Kern for food,
- k. child care service providers through the Department of Human services, and Community Connection for Child Care,
- l. Americas Job Center for work readiness skills.

Family support needs are Identified in the beginning of the Participant Contract by the ITSP and updated monthly during progress meetings with participants. Additionally, extra attention is given to families with time sensitive deadlines related to their goals. For example, if a family goal is to take an exam that will lead to higher education, professional licenses and the like, the FSS Coordinator will reach out to the family to ensure they are studying, or taking care of issues related to the time sensitive goal.

H. PARTICIPATING COORDINATING COMMITTEE

There is no existing Participating Coordinating Committee (PCC) that is available for



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

the PHA to join, therefore, a PCC will be established. The PCC is made up of one or more FSS program coordinators, representatives from public housing residents and HCV participants and community-based organizations. Their role is to provide resources and assistance in the implementation of the FSS program. A Program Coordinating Committee has been established to network and collaborations with other agencies assist in providing information regarding the FSS program on a regular basis.

I. OUTREACH

The recruitment for participation in the FSS program comes from current HCV and LIPH residents. Recruitment for the program consists of the following:

1. Letters, flyers and brochures are delivered to every resident.
2. HCV briefings are conducted on a regular basis with an overview of the FSS program presented to attendees by either the FSS Coordinator or HCV Housing Specialist.
3. The FSS Coordinator attends resident meetings to recruit potential candidates for the program.
4. FSS literature is distributed to each public housing development and representatives from these developments communicate on a regular basis with the FSS Coordinator to refer potential candidates to the program.

HACK outreach efforts, include the recruitment of eligible families, ensuring that both minority and nonminority groups are informed about the FSS program.

J. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

HACK's FSS selection procedures, ensure that families are selected without regard to race, color, religion, disability, sex, familial status, or national origin. (Chapter 2-1 ACCOP, Chapter 15-B Administrative Plan).

The FSS slots are currently filled with eligible families in accordance with an objective selection system, such as a lottery, the length of time living in subsidized housing, or the date the family expressed an interest in participating in the FSS program.

Eligible families from any other local self-sufficiency program are expected to agree to executing an FSS contract of participation.

K. PROGRAM TERMINATION

Failure to complete FSS programs goals or violating the HCV participant obligations or LIPH Lease requirements will result in the termination of the FSS program, forfeiture of FSS escrow account funds, and terminate all supportive services under the families Participant Contract.



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

Participants are given the rights to request an informal review (Administrative Plan Chapter 11 A-B, LIPH ACCOP Appendix IV Grievance Procedure).

If an FSS family is terminated from the program, and forfeits their escrow, the funding goes into an account to be used for the benefit of other FSS families. These funds may be used to support FSS participants in good standing, including, but not limited to, transportation, child care, training, testing fees, employment preparation costs, and other costs related to achieving obligations outlined in the Contract of Participation.

L. ESTIMATE OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

The Housing Authority of the County of Kern estimates 400 eligible families can reasonably be expected to receive supportive services under the FSS program.

M. FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS [24 CFR 984.201(d)(1)]

Family demographics of the HCV and LIPH participants are listed below. This data is meant to be a snapshot of demographics during a point in time. It may later be used to help HACK and the program coordinating committee (PCC) to identify supportive service needs of the families expected to participate in the FSS program.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER/PUBLIC HOUSING

| TOTAL FAMILIES | PERCENT OF TOTAL |
|--|------------------|
| Total of all families being serviced by FSS: 311 | |
| Household with H.O.H. being single Female: 208 | 67% |
| Household with H.O.H. being single Male: 13 | 4% |

Household race;

| | |
|---|-----|
| White: 155 | 50% |
| Black/African American: 150 | 50% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native: 4 | 1% |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 2 | .6% |
| Asian: 0 | 0% |

Ethnicity;

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Hispanic or Latino: 132 | 42% |
| Not Hispanic or Latino: 179 | 58% |



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE COUNTY OF KERN

Creating brighter futures...one home, one family at a time

Income Limits;

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Extremely Low-Income: 247 | 79% |
| Very Low-Income: 39 | 13% |
| Low-Income: 25 | 8% |

Household with income from wages;

| | |
|---|-----|
| Head of household with income from Wages: 151 | 49% |
| Other household member with income from wages: 21 | 6% |

Household with TANF;

| | |
|--|-----|
| Head of household receiving TANF: 144 | 46% |
| Other household member receiving TANF: 5 | 2% |

Household with income from SS or SSI;

| | |
|---|----|
| Head of household receiving SS/SSI: 9 | 2% |
| Other household member receiving SS/SSI: 23 | 7% |

Household with other income source;

| | |
|--|-----|
| Head of household with other income: 94 | 30% |
| Other household member with other income: 11 | 3% |

Household with children;

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Have 1 - 4 children: 255 | 82% |
| Have 5 - or more children: 25 | 8% |

Household size;

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Family of 1 – 2 members: 76 | 24% |
| Family of 3 – 4 members: 130 | 41% |
| Family of 5 or more members: 105 | 33% |

Household with disability;

| | |
|---|----|
| Head of household with (HUD) disability: 11 | 3% |
| Other household member with disability: 16 | 5% |