



**Berkeley Housing Authority**

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Item 6C  
NEW BUSINESS  
Jul 12, 2018

*Office of the Executive Director*

TO: Honorable Chairperson and  
Members of the Berkeley Housing Authority Board

FROM: William E. Wilkins, Executive Director  
Celinda Aguilar-Vasquez, Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator

SUBJECT: Family Self Sufficiency Program

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the FSS Program is to connect self-selected Section 8 program participants with educational and job training opportunities, so during the course of a 5-year period, they will become gainfully employed and welfare-free. An incentive to participation, aside from the benefits of increased income and no longer being dependent on welfare, is an escrow account that is established when an increase in family's income occurs, and provided to the family upon graduation from the FSS program.

In 2010 and again in 2013 HUD approved two 3-year waivers requested by BHA, removing us from being required to operate the FSS program. With the lack of resources at that time and a focused commitment to move from troubled status to a high performing agency, we appealed to HUD to allow us to take a 6 year hiatus from operating the FSS Program.

Originally BHA was tasked with operating a program with 57 mandatory slots, when the FSS program rolled out in the 90's. When a participant graduates from the program, a mandatory slot is removed; currently BHA has 37 mandatory slots remaining.

The second HUD-approved waiver expired in May of 2016, thus the FSS Program planning began. Prior to implementation we had several HUD-required steps:

- a. Convene a Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) to assist in the review of the draft Action Plan. The PCC convened and met to provide comment and make suggestions on the Family Self Sufficiency Action Plan (Attachment 1). The PCC is comprised of staff members of educational and job training resources in the Berkeley area including Berkeley City College; Berkeley Adult School; East Bay Community Law Center; Rubicon; and the One Stop Career Shop. The PCC has not met this year, but staff will work on reconvening the PCC committee within the next several months.
- b. Approval of the Action Plan by BHA's Board. Action plan approved by the Board January 2016.

- c. Approval of the Board-approved Action Plan by the HUD Regional Office. Approved effective May 17, 2016, when BHA began implementation of the FSS Program.

There are SEMAP implications for implementing an FSS Program. Annually, HUD requires housing authorities to submit a Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) certification (due in August) for various indicators, both quality control checking of quality of work being conducted and data on rates of work being conducted (topic areas include waitlist processing, annual re-certifications of participating households, proper rent determinations, inspections, and percentage of units leased/HAP budget expended). Our previous FSS waivers allowed BHA not to be scored on the FSS indicator, which includes: (a) whether families have been enrolled in FSS as required; and (b) the progress of those families in earning income, and establishment of escrow accounts. For Fiscal Year 2017-2018 we were unable to claim any points, but still scored at high performer under SEMAP. This year, we anticipate being able to claim at least 6 FSS indicator points (maximum is 10 points).

### TIMELINE/ACTIVITIES

June 2016	Staff began work on creating forms and implementing procedures for the Family Self Sufficiency Program. Attended FSS trainings with regards to implementation and operation of the program
Sept 2016	FSS Coordinator attended training
Oct. 2016	FSS recruitment letters mailed Recruitment responses due Random lottery to determine waitlist selection Notified selected FSS participants & invited to orientation
Nov. 2016	FSS Orientation Nov. 30, 10 a.m. at the North Berkley Library
Dec. 2016	First assessment appointments Met with 2 participants in December FSS Coordinator attended FSS Bay Area Coordinators meeting
Jan. 2017	14 assessment appointments Quarterly progress update form created Scheduled next FSS orientation for March 2, 2017
Feb. 2017	12 assessment appointments 11 Contracts of Participation (COP) and Individual and Training Services Plan (ITSP) signings Mailed 10 orientation invitation letters scheduled for 3/2/17
Mar 2017	23 assessment appointments 10 COP and ITSP signings Orientation scheduled for 14 applicants, 7 attended
Apr 2017	2 assessment appointments 13 COP and ITSP signings 2 Follow-up appointments

May 2017 FSS Coordinator attended FSS Bay Area Coordinators meeting  
3 assessment appointments  
14 COP and ITSP signings  
5 follow up appointments  
Mailed 10 orientation invitation letters scheduled for 5/25/17  
Mailed 8 orientation invitation letters scheduled for 6/8/17  
Orientation scheduled for 10, 7 attended

June 2017 4 assessment appointments  
4 COP and ITSP signings  
10 follow up appointments  
FSS Coordinator attended training  
Orientation scheduled for 8, 3 attended

July 2017 FSS Coordinator attended FSS Bay Area Coordinators meeting  
4 assessment appointments  
11 follow up appointments

Aug 2018 1 assessment appointment  
3 COP and ITSP signings  
9 follow up appointments  
Mailed 12 invitation letters to orientation

Sept 2018 FSS Coordinator attended FSS Bay Area Coordinators meeting  
2 assessment appointments  
3 COP and ITSP signings  
16 follow up appointments  
Orientation scheduled for 12 applicants, 5 attended

Oct 2017 5 assessment appointments  
3 COP and ITSP signings  
18 follow up appointments

Nov 2017 1 assessment appointment  
2 COP and ITSP signings  
18 follow up appointments

Dec 2017 2 COP and ITSP signings  
16 follow up appointments

Jan 2018 2 assessment appointments  
1 COP and ITSP signing  
22 follow up appointments

Feb 2018 15 follow up appointments

Mar 2018 10 follow up appointments

Apr 2018 FSS Coordinator attended FSS Bay Area Coordinators meeting  
12 follow up appointments

May 2018 27 follow up appointments

## ORIENTATIONS

Three FSS orientations have been given and after each, staff has worked on improving future orientations. For the remaining participants to be enrolled, staff will approach the orientation differently in order to reduce the time between orientation and enrollment. Staff has been working on implementing and finalizing a workbook to be mailed along with an interim re-exam packet with the orientation invitation so that they may be completed prior to orientation. This will allow the FSS Coordinator to fast-track the process and cut down on the time for COP signing and official enrollment in the program.

## PROCESS

After the initial orientation, a one on one meeting is set to discuss goals. The prospective participant must fill out an interim packet if a recertification has not been completed within the last 120 days. The FSS Coordinator completes the interim and sets up a meeting to sign the COP. A follow up appointment is set within 30 days of COP signing. Progress update meetings are then set up on a quarterly basis for each FSS enrollee. Preparation for a quarterly meeting, the meeting itself, logging notes, filing updates and any possible research to assist participant takes approximately 3 hours for each participant for each check in meeting.

## FSS COORDINATOR

The FSS Coordinator recruits program participants and manages their caseloads; acts as a housing specialist and completes interim and annual re-examinations and follows up on any tenant/landlord issues and/or inspection issues; communicates with FSS participants via email or phone in between in-person meetings to check on progress with ITSP goals, to answer questions, and provide encouragement; assists with reviewing resumes and cover letters; provides research in career exploration and applying for jobs and educational programs; helps participants directly or, who are having difficulty with access to a computer, low income internet, job search, educational institution research and applications; refers to appropriate agencies those in need of drug treatment programs, medical issues, mental health challenges.

Due to the lack of resources the FSS program does not monetarily assist clients with financial, child care, or educational assistance. HUD set up the FSS program so that FSS Coordinators are to refer clients to outside agencies and institutions that will assist them in their various needs, such as Department of Rehabilitation, Center for Independent Living, Berkeley Mental Health, and other agencies whose mission it is to provide job training, educational options, child care, health care, etc. Though we have very limited resources, staff may hold a workshop for FSS participants by the first half of calendar year 2019.

The FSS Coordinator attends quarterly Bay Area FSS Coordinators meetings which provide feedback and potential leads on resources that might be available to participants. In a Nan McKay training attended by staff, it was stressed that FSS Coordinators should not be providing direct services due to lack of resources and funding as well as expertise and training, and even licensure in some cases, but referring them to agencies that are trained in providing such services to FSS clients.

On an annual basis, HUD issues a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for funding of Coordinator position (partial salary and fringe). However, housing authorities may not apply for this funding until there is an established FSS program. The funding notice is issued generally in June; BHA was not considered for funding for the June 2016 or 2017 NOFA. Thus, no extra funding has been made available for this position. BHA will attempt to apply for the next FSS Coordinator NOFA that becomes available, should we be eligible.

## PARTICIPANTS

There are officially 23 participants enrolled in the FSS program and 14 pending enrollment. Out of 23 participants, 13 of them were receiving state disability, workman's comp or Social Security/SSI at the time of enrollment. At present, 4 remain unemployed and receiving food stamps and/or general assistance and 9 are receiving either workman's comp or Social Security/SSI. The youngest participant is 30, while the oldest participant is 76. There are 4 participants in their 30's, 9 in their 40's, 4 in their 50's, 5 in their 60's and 1 in their 70's. One participant passed away May 2018 and was eliminated from the program. A majority of the participants are planning to obtain jobs in such careers as: flight attendant, chef, and medical coding. Other FSS participants are enrolled in or planning to go back to school in such diverse fields as Counseling, Medical Coding, and Physical Therapist. The rest are still processing their next steps with the encouragement of and during the quarterly check in meetings with the FSS Coordinator, will make a decision to move in a forward direction.

Twelve (12) participants have established escrow accounts. The table below shows date escrow started and the amount of escrow they are accruing on a monthly basis.

<b>Date Escrow Effective</b>	<b>Escrow Amount</b>
7/1/2018	\$347.00
7/1/2018	\$657.00
4/1/2018	\$138.00
1/1/2018	\$2.00
4/1/2018	\$554.00
3/1/2018	\$273.00
8/1/2018	\$147.00
3/1/2018	\$436.00
9/1/2017	\$325.00
2/1/2018	\$60.00
4/1/2018	\$229.00
12/1/2017	\$87.00

Again, upon graduation, the household will be entitled to the escrow account accrued, but will not necessarily be terminated from having their Section 8 assistance. That would only happen in the case where the household is able to cover 100% of the contract rent (zero subsidy from BHA) for 6 months.

## CHALLENGES

The Family Self Sufficiency Program is an excellent opportunity which provides participants an escrow account that could potentially amount to thousands of dollars upon completion of their goals. Unfortunately this is not enough to entice participants to enroll. There is the fear that if they start working and paying more rent, they will be removed from the Section 8 program and no longer have that "security blanket" that is provided while on the Section 8 program. Many Section 8 program participants have been on the program for many years and the FSS Program appears as a threat to their security rather than an improvement to their quality of life by working and earning income. The FSS Coordinator continues to reach out to those on the FSS waitlist in hopes that they will be encouraged and inspired to join.