

Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency
Family Self-Sufficiency
Action Plan
2009 **10**

1. Introduction

In 1985, the Mayor of Des Moines appointed the initial task force for Project Self-Sufficiency. Project Self-Sufficiency was a program that was designed to assist Section 8 participants in becoming self-sufficient. This was accomplished by providing free case management to participants. Project Self-Sufficiency evolved into Operation Bootstrap. The premise was still the same in helping Section 8 participants to become self-sufficient. Today the program is known as the Family Self-Sufficiency Program and includes assisting Public Housing residents in addition to Section 8 voucher participants.

The DMMHA consists of **390 382** units in Public Housing and **3169 3108** Section 8 vouchers that can be allocated. Percentages of ethnic groups in Public Housing are **76 75%** Caucasian; **21 22%** African-American; 1% Asian-American/Pacific Islander; 2% Native American/Alaskan; and 2% Hispanic. Percentages of ethnic groups in Section 8 are **69 67%** Caucasian; **29 31%** African-American; **1 0%** Native American/Alaskan; 1% Asian /Pacific Islander; and 2% Hispanic. We will target all active Public Housing units and Section 8-voucher recipients for the Family Self-Sufficiency program. Families will be informed that election to not participate in the FSS program will not affect the family's right to receive housing assistance.

The DMMHA's goal is to have 80-90 participants enrolled in the Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency program. DMMHA is mandated by Housing and Urban Development to have **12 7** Section 8 participants in the program.

The DMMHA's goal is to have 25 participants enrolled in the Public Housing Family Self Sufficiency Program.

2. Goals and Objectives

A. The overall goal of Family Self-Sufficiency is to assist unemployed or underemployed, low-income individuals and families in making the transition from public assistance to productive employment and economic

self-sufficiency. This is accomplished by providing linkages to resources within the community, case management and education through workshops. These resources can assist FSS participants in obtaining opportunities for education, job training, counseling and other forms of social assistance that will lead to economic independence.

3. Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators

A. The FSS Coordinator(s) will complete an in depth Needs and Asset assessment with each participant upon enrollment. This assessment identifies participants' strengths, resources, goals, barriers and needs.

B. The FSS Coordinator(s) will assist participants with the development, assessment and reassessment of an Individual Training and Services Plan. The FSS Coordinator(s) will collaborate with other agencies actively involved with participants to ensure continuity of services.

C. The FSS Coordinator(s) will provide individual case management for each participant.

D. A primary purpose of the FSS Coordinator(s) is to assist families in achieving productive employment and self-sufficiency through provision of and/or referral to supportive services available in the community. Knowledge of resources available in the community is fundamental in this role.

E. The FSS Coordinator(s) will market the FSS program and provide outreach and recruitment of potential participants. (Refer to Section VIII)

F. The FSS Coordinator(s) will oversee work with the Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) to leverage services for DMMHA FSS participants. (Refer to Section IV)

G. The FSS Coordinator(s) will be responsible for program reporting and program evaluation of the project as required by HUD and the PCC.

4. Program Coordinating Committee (PCC)

To effectively assess all community resources, DMMHA will have two Program Coordinating Committees. An Executive Program Coordinating Committee is comprised of staff from city government, county government, and educational institutions, private and non-profit institutions. The other

Program Coordinating Committee consists of staff from the Housing Authority, resident(s) from Public Housing and Section 8, and other private and non-profit organizations.

- A. Role of the Executive Program Coordinating Committee
 1. Assist in policy changes that would identify and increase support services available in the community to promote self-sufficiency of participants.
 2. Oversee the efforts of the PCC Board to ensure continuity of services. Make recommendations or suggestions to the FSS Coordinator(s) for possible representatives to serve on the PCC.
 3. Meet on a regular basis and review the Action Plan annually.

- B. Role of the Program Coordinating Committee (staff committee)
 1. Assist with development, implementation and review of the FSS Action Plan.
 2. Assist the FSS Coordinator(s) with the development, implementation and review of the project evaluation system.
 3. Assist in securing commitments of public and private resources for the operation of the program.
 4. Assist in providing linkages to resources within the community for the operation of the FSS program.
 5. Assure linkage of resources and services to participants.
 6. Serve as a review panel for FSS reviews.
 7. Meet on a regular basis to accomplish the goals of the Action Plan.

5. Activities and Supportive Services

The FSS Coordinator(s) are resource navigators for FSS participants. A primary role of the FSS Coordinator(s) is to complete a Needs and Asset Assessment that will identify resources needed by the client. The FSS Coordinator(s) will refer clients to agencies to ensure eligibility for services and to ensure duplication of services does not occur. The FSS Coordinator(s) will monitor coordination of supportive services.

A. Child Care

Participants may qualify for childcare assistance programs that are offered in the community. Participant's eligibility will be contingent upon program criteria.

1. FSS participants who are involved in the Promise Jobs program will be referred to Promise Jobs first.

2. ChildNet/Child Care Resource and Referral of Central Iowa will provide a link for participants looking for childcare. Participants will be referred to the centralized intake office in order to locate a listing of childcare within their area.
3. Participants may be referred to the Iowa Department of Human Services or Polk County Community and Family Services.

B. Housing

1. The FSS Coordinator(s) will refer participants to agencies in the community if they are in need of rental assistance, utility or energy assistance.

C. Homeownership

1. Participants who are interested in homeownership will be referred to agencies that may include Citizens for Community Improvement, Home Incorporated, Iowans for Social and Economic Development (ISED) Ventures, Habitat for Humanity and Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC).
2. Participants who are interested may qualify for the 5(h) Affordable Homeownership Program and will be referred to the DMMHA Homeownership/Property Disposition Coordinator. FSS participants are given a preference in this homeownership program.
3. Participants who are interested may also qualify for the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program and will be referred to the Coordinator for that program. The HCVHP is only available to FSS participants.
4. Participants will be referred to other community agencies as available.

D. Transportation

Program participants may qualify for different transportation subsidies. It will be important for the FSS Coordinator(s) to refer each client for the most appropriate funding source so duplication of services does not occur.

1. Participants may be referred to Promise Jobs, Polk County and Opportunities thru Transit.
2. Participants will be referred to other community agencies as available.
3. Persons with a disability will be referred to specialized transportation options such as Para Transit and Bus Plus.

E. Career Counseling, Job Development and Employment.

The FSS Coordinator(s) will work with each participant individually to receive the training and education necessary to obtain a career in their field of choice that provides a livable wage.

1. The FSS Coordinator(s) will refer eligible participants to the Iowa Workforce Development office or Des Moines Area Community College's (DMACC) Workforce Academy for assistance in developing resumes and cover letters, interviewing, and completing applications and the job search.
2. The FSS Coordinator(s) will coordinate with the Promise Jobs worker of those participants who are recipients of FIP (Family Investment Program) and enrolled into Promise Jobs to ensure continuity of services.
- 3. The FSS Coordinator(s) will participate in the Job Placement Network (JPN) which is a collaboration of local-area vocational specialists in order to facilitate employer contacts, gather a comprehensive list of employment opportunities and serve as a referral source for more specialized employment services.**
4. Participants will be referred to other community agencies as available.

F. Education and/or Training programs

1. FSS participants who are in need of obtaining their GED or High School Diploma will be referred to the appropriate agency or educational institution for tutoring services. These could include Drake University Adult Literacy Center, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and the **Central Iowa Re-engagement Center**.
2. FSS Coordinator(s) will assist participants who wish to further their education on a post-secondary level or to receive training in a trade or occupation. Assistance will occur through information and referral to the appropriate resources.
3. Referrals will be made to the College Planning Center in regard to financial assistance for those who are interested in receiving a post-secondary education. **Other local-area resources include DMACC and the Iowa College Access Network (ICAN).**
4. Participants who want to learn the English language will be informed and referred to English-as-a-Second Language classes that are available in the community; **including the New Iowans Center and Refugee Services.**

5. Participants will be referred to other community agencies as available.

G. Entrepreneurial Training

Participants who have developed Individual Training and Services Plans that include self-employment or small business development goals will be referred to the appropriate agency. This will allow for assessment and guidance in developing feasible business plans.

1. Eligible participants may be referred to Iowans for Social and Economic Development (ISED) Ventures, Small Business Development Center, or the Small Business Administration for assistance in starting up a small business.
2. Participants will be referred to other community agencies as available.

H. Other Supportive Services

1. Counseling agencies, Catholic Charities, Child Guidance, Jewish Family Services, Family Counseling Center, Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, Children and Families of Iowa, Eyerly Ball and Broadlawns will provide counseling to participants at no cost, or at a fee based on a sliding scale.
2. Iowa Legal Aid, **the Volunteer Lawyers Project, Justice for Our Neighbors**, The Eddie Davis Community Center, Legal Services Corporation of Iowa, National Association of Disability Representatives, Polk County Bar Association and Drake Law Center will provide legal assistance to participants as appropriate.
3. The Iowa Substance Abuse Hotline will provide a list of community resources of Alcohol/Drug treatment counseling; treatment services will be provided by appropriate referral.
4. Participants needing health services who are uninsured will be informed about free and subsidized health services in Des Moines and Polk County. This may include the following: Broadlawns Medical Center, House of Mercy Medical Clinic, Primary Health Care and Visiting Nurse Services. **The FSS Coordinator(s) may also assist the participants in applying for public insurances such as Title 19 (Medicaid), Iowa Cares and/or Hawk-I.**
5. Participants who are in need of money management education and assistance will be referred to agencies that may include Iowa State University Extension Office, Citizens for Community

Improvement, Consumer Credit Counseling Services or Iowans for Social and Economic Development Ventures.

6. Other referrals may include United Way's 2-1-1.

6. Program Evaluation

- A. The program evaluation, as required by HUD, will be conducted by the FSS Coordinator(s). This evaluation will look at how successfully each Individual Training Services Plan was carried out and the overall outcome for each participant. Specific criteria will be established by the Program Coordinating Committee, and will include HUD requirements as well.

- B. FSS participants, graduates and service providers will be given a survey to evaluate the FSS program. Data collected will be compiled and reviewed on a regular basis.

7. Incentives for FSS Participants

- A. The possibility to accrue an escrow (**savings**) account based on HUD guidelines.
- B. Support in becoming self-sufficient. (Individual Case Management)
- C. Referrals to agencies that may assist with providing supportive services.
- D. Specialized workshops covering a variety of topics such as budget and credit, homeownership, **mental and physical health**, etc.
- E. Preference in the DMMHA 5(h) Affordable Homeownership program.
- F. Opportunity to purchase a home through the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program.

8. Outreach Efforts

The following consists of a variety of steps the FSS Coordinator(s) may take to solicit applications for the FSS program.

- A. Program information may be sent to all families participating in the Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency programs describing the program and soliciting participation.

- B. FSS Coordinator(s) may attend Section 8 briefings to describe the program and solicit participation.

- C. Brochures describing the FSS program may be included with Public Housing and Section 8 leasing packets and new admissions visits, and all recertification packets will include the FSS interest forms.
- D. Public Housing residents who meet the community service requirement by HUD may be referred to the FSS Coordinator(s) to assess their potential for participating in the FSS program.
- E. Due to an increasing population of residents whose first language is not English, materials and applications will be offered in other languages or attempts will be made to locate and obtain an interpreter/ translator per individual's request.
- F. Presentations and marketing materials are available to organizations in the community from the FSS Coordinator(s). **FSS materials can typically be found at the offices of PCC members, the Central Iowa Re-engagement Center and Iowa Comprehensive Human Services (ICHS).**
- G. Program information is available throughout the administrative offices, including a FSS bulletin board outside the client meeting rooms.
- H. Potential participants without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, sex, disability, familial status or national origin will be solicited for the FSS program.

9. Application Process

- A. An **pre-application and full** application form will be completed by all prospective participants and submitted to DMMHA.
- B. Each applicant will be required to attend an orientation. FSS program information will be given to each potential participant. The applicant will also receive the FSS Handbook and an interview will be conducted. The FSS program will be explained in detail.

10. Selection Process

- A. All applications will be reviewed for completion by the FSS Coordinator(s).

- B. All applicants must have completed the orientation.
- C. The FSS Coordinator(s) will confirm with the Section 8 or Public Housing Case Manager that the potential participant is an active Public Housing resident or Section 8 voucher recipient and in good standing with their housing assistance.
- D. FSS participants will be selected without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin.
- E. Should the Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency (DMMHA) have more eligible applicants than number of available openings in the FSS program, a waiting list will be implemented. Placement on the waiting list will be chronological according to the date stamp on the full application.
- F. When openings in the program occur the FSS Coordinator(s) will begin contacting applicants on the FSS waiting list to notify them of the opening and inquire about their interest in enrolling into the program.

11. Development of Personal Needs Assessments and Individual Training and Services Plan:

- A. Participants selected for FSS program will begin with completing the Needs and Asset assessment and developing an Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP). Participants may be required to attend DMACC's Workforce Academy or visit Iowa Workforce Development Office to assist them with the development of their goals. This plan will include setting interim and long range goals. Also, this plan will include determining services needed and a time schedule for providing them.
- B. For each participant who is a recipient of welfare assistance, an interim goal must be established that the family will become independent from welfare assistance, as defined by HUD regulations for Family Self-Sufficiency, and remain independent from welfare assistance at least one year (**12 consecutive months**) before the expiration of the term of the FSS Program Contract of Participation, including any extension thereof.

- C. Upon completion of development of the Individual Training and Services Plan, the FSS Coordinator(s) will have an initial meeting with each participant to explain the expectations of the program and the time frames for implementing the plan. After this meeting, participants will have quarterly contact with the FSS Coordinator(s).
- D. The FSS Coordinator(s) will assess and reassess regularly with the participant the Individual Training and Services Plan. Modifications will be made to the Individual Training and Services Plan as goals change or need to be added to promote self-sufficiency.
- E. Monitoring progress of individual participants will be the responsibility of the FSS Coordinator(s). This will include at least quarterly contact with each client to ensure that the Individual Training and Services Plan is in progress.
- F. Once qualified applicants have been accepted into the program and have agreed upon an Individual Training and Services Plan, they will meet with the FSS Coordinator(s) to execute the FSS Program Contract of Participation (HUD form 52650) and Individual Training and Services Plan.

12. Escrow Procedures

A. Escrow Accounts

When available from HUD, individuals may receive an escrow account based on HUD guidelines.

B. Interim Disbursements

The DMMHA will not permit the individual or family to withdraw funds from the FSS escrow account before completion of the FSS Program Contract of Participation.

C. Final Escrow Disbursement and Procedures

Upon determination from the HA that the FSS participant has successfully completed the FSS Program Contract of Participation, processing will occur as outlined in Exhibit 1.

13. Contract of Participation-Extensions

- A. DMMHA may grant extensions for up to 2 years in cases that, in DMMHA's sole discretion, the circumstances are beyond the

control of the participant, and which prevent completion of the training and services plan.

14. Contract of Participation – Written Modifications

- A. The Contract of Participation may be modified in the following areas if DMMHA and the participant mutually agree:
 - 1. Individual Training and Service Plans
 - 2. The contract term (portability and extensions)
 - 3. Designation of the FSS Head of the Family

- B. A change in the designated FSS head must be included as an attachment to the contract. It must contain the following:
 - 1. Name of new designated FSS head.
 - 2. Signatures of the new FSS head and a DMMHA representative.
 - 3. The date signed.

15. Program Graduation

FSS participants must meet the requirements as stated in the FSS Program Contract of Participation in order to successfully graduate from the program.

- A. Participants must make a written request for completion of the contract and submit it to the FSS Coordinator(s).

- B. The written request must include:
 - 1. a statement to be released from the program.
 - 2. to release their escrow monies.
 - 3. a statement that they have not received welfare assistance, as defined by HUD, for twelve consecutive months.
 - 4. state whether they would like to continue with housing assistance or not.

- C. Written third-party verification must also be provided confirming all individuals in the household have been free of welfare assistance for 12 consecutive months.

- D. The FSS Coordinator(s) will verify with the Housing Case Manager that the participant is not in violation of any housing assistance program guidelines or has lease violations.

- E. If successful completion of the FSS Program Contract of Participation occurs; the escrow check will be issued to the participant minus any monies owed to the DMMHA.

- F. FSS participants who have successfully graduated from the FSS program will not be allowed to reapply for the program in the future.

16. Relocating to another Housing Agency

- A. If the receiving HA accepts a FSS participant moving out of the jurisdiction of DMMHA, the FSS participant may continue in the FSS program in the new jurisdiction if resources are available.

- B. A FSS participant moving to the DMMHA jurisdiction will be accepted into the FSS program if adequate resources are available. A revised FSS Contract of Participation will be executed.

- C. If a participant moves out of the DMMHA jurisdiction and is accepted into the FSS program and is accepted and absorbed by the Housing Agency, any escrow account will be transferred to that Housing Agency. If the participant moves out of the DMMHA jurisdiction and is not absorbed by the new Housing Agency, the escrow account will be maintained by the DMMHA.

17. Program Termination

- A. Failure to complete terms of the FSS Program Contract of Participation may result in termination from the FSS program. Termination from the FSS program will result in forfeiture of the escrow account.

- B. The FSS Program Contract of Participation can be rescinded by mutual consent between the participant and DMMHA. A voluntary termination will result in forfeiture of the escrow account.

- C. Termination of Section 8 or Public Housing assistance will result in automatic termination of the FSS Program Contract of Participation. Termination from the FSS program will result in forfeiture of the escrow account.

D. FSS participants who are terminated from the FSS program must wait two years before they can reapply for the FSS program.

E. Appeal Procedure

1. Upon termination of rental assistance in the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program or Public Housing Program and termination of the FSS Program Contract of Participation, all grievance procedures and informal hearing procedures found in the Section 8 Administrative Plan and the Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy will be followed.

a. In the event a participant goes to district court after being terminated from the housing assistance program, their FSS status will be on hold until there is a final determination by the district court. During this holding period, no escrow deposits will be made.

2. The following appeal procedure will be used when an applicant for participation in the FSS Program is denied or when termination from the FSS program occurs and rental assistance in either the Section 8 Housing Voucher program or Public Housing program continues and is not terminated.

- a. A review committee of three selected from the PCC board will serve as the review panel.
- b. The FSS Coordinators will represent DMMHA and be responsible for coordination and scheduling of the review.
- c. The participant must submit a written request for a review within (10) business days after DMMHA mails the notification of the decision to deny enrollment or to terminate FSS participation.
- d. The review shall occur within ten (10) business days of receipt of a request.
- e. The complainant shall be given the opportunity to present written or oral objections.
- f. The review committee shall notify the complainant in writing of the final decision within ten (10) business days of the review and shall state the reasons for the final decision.