

Tyler Housing Agency

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Action Plan

Revised: October 1, 2024

Upon request Tyler Housing Agency makes accommodations for persons with disabilities.



Tyler Housing Agency

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Tyler Housing Agency Family Self-Sufficiency Program Action Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <u>SELECTION</u> | | <u>PAGE</u> |
|------------------|---|-------------|
| Chapter 1 | Introduction | 5 |
| Chapter 2 | Summary of Program | 8 |
| Chapter 3 | Program Size | 9 |
| Chapter 4 | Program Coordinating Committee | 10 |
| Chapter 5 | Outreach Efforts | 11 |
| Chapter 6 | Family Selection Procedures | 12 |
| Chapter 7 | Program Orientation | 13 |
| Chapter 8 | Contents of the Contract of Participation | 14 |
| Chapter 9 | Incentives to Encourage Participation | 16 |
| Chapter 10 | Activities & Supportive Services | 17 |
| Chapter 11 | Method for Identifying Family Support Needs | 19 |
| Chapter 12 | FSS Escrow Account | 21 |
| Chapter 13 | Contract Completion | 25 |
| Chapter 14 | Contract Extension | 28 |
| Chapter 15 | Contract Termination | 29 |

**Tyler Housing Agency
Family Self-Sufficiency Program Action Plan**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <u>SELECTION</u> | | <u>PAGE</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Chapter 16 | Complaints and Appeals | 31 |
| Chapter 17 | Appendix | 32 |

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a federal program funded by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). It was created under the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 with the purpose of connecting participants on HUD housing assistance with existing public and private resources in their communities to support increased economic self-sufficiency. The FSS program represents a bold approach to helping families leave the welfare system or low-paying jobs and achieve economic self-sufficiency. Families are given a ladder of opportunity to help them transition from poverty and obtain the skills needed to achieve financial independence. The over-riding theme of FSS is aiding families to take control of their lives by increasing their earned income and reducing their dependency on welfare assistance and rental subsidies. FSS does not simply attack the symptoms of poverty; it tackles dependency on all fronts and replaces powerlessness with the opportunity for a better future.

The Tyler Housing Agency (THA) was established in 1975 by the City of Tyler's Mayor and City Council to address housing needs of moderate and low-income families. THA's mission is to provide and develop quality affordable housing opportunities for individuals and families while promoting self-sufficiency, empowerment and neighborhood revitalization.

THA began its FSS program in 2010 and currently runs its FSS Program for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants. The FSS program is operated through THA's Neighborhood Services Department.

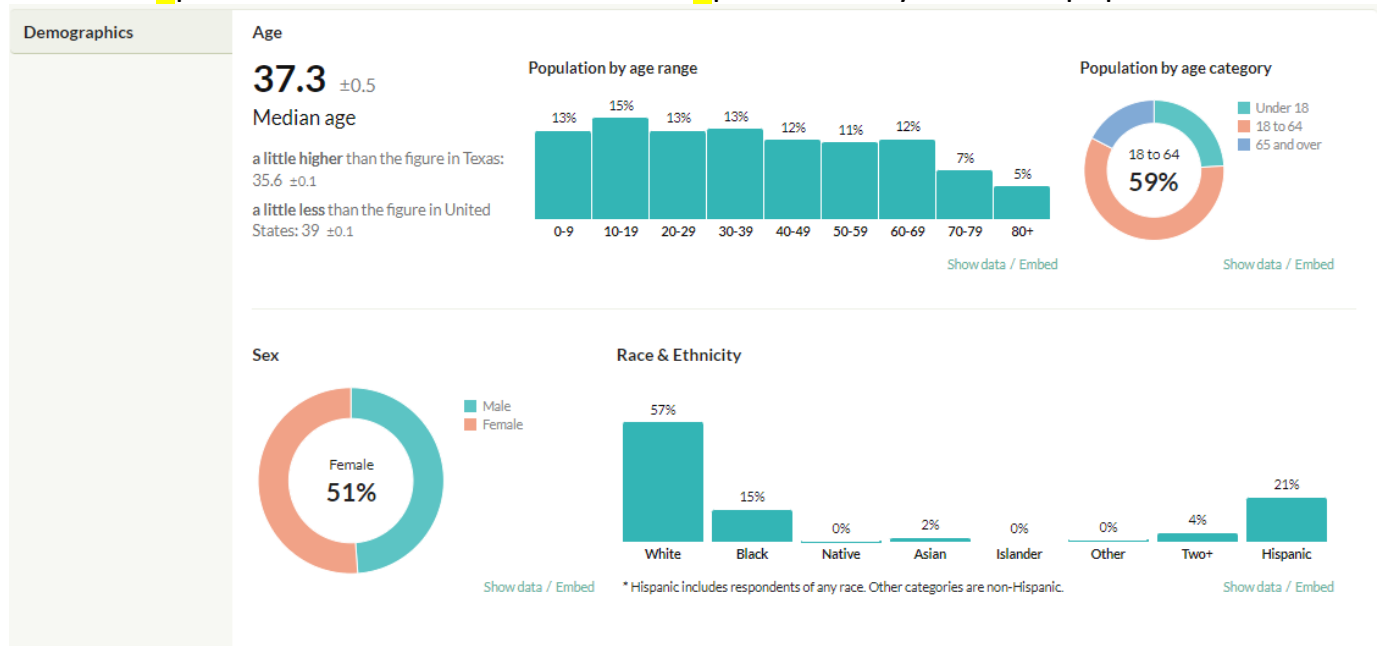
Tyler Community Profile

POPULATION TRENDS

The population of **Smith County**, as indicated in the **2022 American Community Survey** shows there were **80,889** households in the city with an average size of **2.9 persons** per household. According to the Annual Population Estimates provided by the US Census Bureau the population of **Smith County** was listed as **241,922** in **2022**.

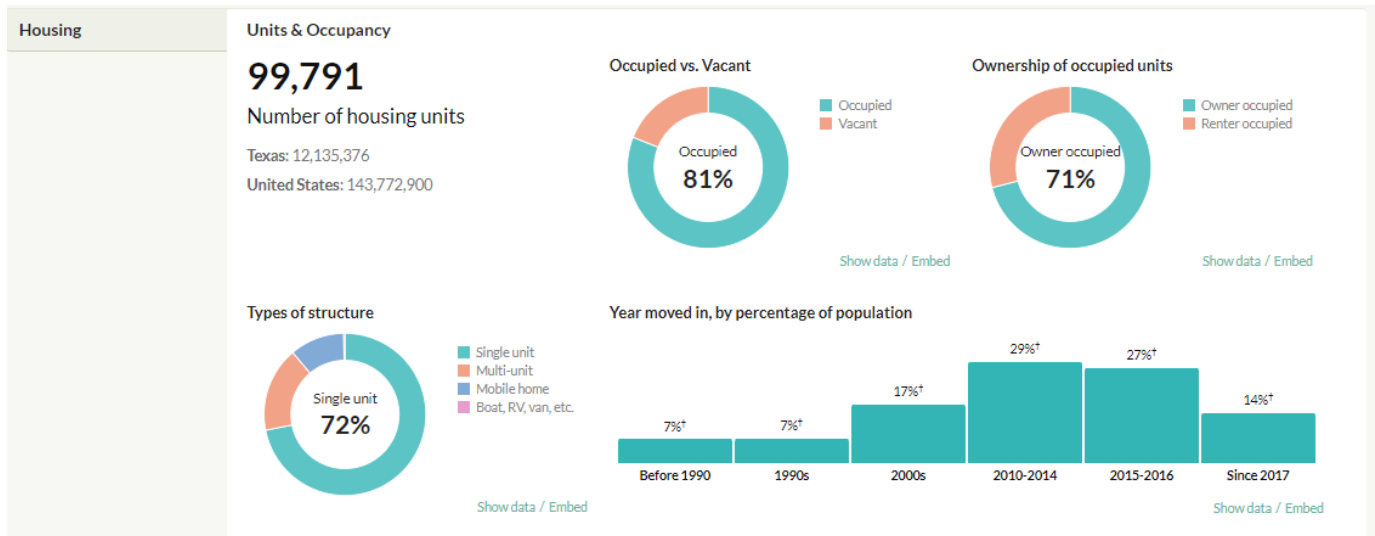
RACE AND ETHNICITY

A look at racial and ethnic distribution of the residents of **Smith County**, as shown in the table below, indicates that the largest population by race are **White**, at **57** percent of the total population and **Black or African- America** population, at **15** percent of the total population. The table below reflects **Hispanic** as the **second** largest population at 21 percent. The **Asian** population is stated to be **2** percent while those with 2 or more identified races make up **4** percent of the total population. **Other** makes up **0** percent, **Native** is **0** percent and **Islander** is said to be **0** percent of Tyler’s total population.



Tyler Housing

The average number of renter-occupied units in 2022 is said to be 3, make up 29% of the total population of owner occupied units. Those owner-occupied units make up the remaining 71% of the total housing units. Vacant housing units were identified as 19% while Occupied housing units make up the remaining 81% of the housing units surveyed in Smith County, Texas.



The City of Tyler currently has 1022 allocated tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers. The current voluntary program size is comprised of 25 (twenty-five) HCV Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) participants with a goal of assisting 35 (thirty-five) HCV Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) participants.

[Smith County, TX - Profile data - Census Reporter](#)

This FSS Action Plan contains the policies and procedures of THA’s Housing Choice Voucher FSS Program. It is designed to reflect the services the program provides to the participants it serves.

Chapter 2

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

The FSS Program is a service program offered free of charge to residents in THA's HCV Program. Once enrolled, FSS Participants receive individualized case management and service coordination by an FSS Coordinator or Program Coordinator (PC). These services support the participants in reaching their individual goals that are determined while participating in the FSS Program. In addition to employment goals, many participants choose to set goals related to improving their financial situation, increasing their education, purchasing a home, etc. The contract of participation (COP) is typically a 5 (five) year contract and the participant may withdraw from the contract at any time. Participation in FSS is voluntary and will not affect the participant's eligibility for continued housing assistance.

Assurances

Participation of families in the FSS program is voluntary and cannot be a condition of receipt of assistance under the HCV program. A family's election not to participate in the FSS program will not affect the family's admission to public housing or to the Section 8 (HCV) program or the family's right to occupancy in accordance with its lease. This program will not terminate supportive services obtained for the client or terminate an HCV participant's housing assistance if a participant elects to no longer participate and/or is terminated from THA's FSS Program.

Chapter 3

PROGRAM SIZE

THA's FSS program is a voluntary program that is in conjunction with THA's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The current voluntary program size is comprised of 25 (twenty-five) HCV participants with a goal of assisting 35 (thirty -five) HCV participants. This program is currently operating at or above its voluntary program size and is

maintaining waiting lists of participants willing to enroll in the program (see Chapter 6: Family Selection Procedures section for more information).

Chapter 4

PROGRAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE

According to federal regulations guiding the FSS program, a Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) must be created and maintained to assist in “securing commitments of public and private resources for the operation of the FSS program.” The PCC is also helpful in providing the FSS Program input and guidance with the development and implementation of the program. The PCC is required to have at least:

- 1 (one) current HCV/FSS participant,
- 2 (two) THA staff members, and
- at least 1 (one) community partner who chooses to participate in the PCC.

This helps the FSS team and its community partners to better coordinate our community resources with the hope of continuous improvement in the services provided to our shared client base and avoiding duplication of services and activities. The PCC meets

semi-annually and may conduct business on an as-needed basis via email, telephone conferences and/or in person.

Chapter 5

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Outreach efforts for the FSS program may include, but are not limited to the following methods:

- Mass mailing of program information to all current HA residents,
- Informational flyer with application included in Annual Reexamination Packets,
- Program information available on THA's website,
- Door to door recruiting, and
- Onsite and/or virtual Presentations at housing, tenant, community events, meetings, etc.

Outreach materials will be available in English, Spanish and any other language as requested assuming translating services for the language(s) requested are available. Interpreters will be utilized as needed for all aspects of the FSS Program and clients may contact staff through our TeleTYpe (TTY) telephone line, fax, email, telephone or in person. Efforts will be targeted equally to minority and non-minority families to ensure that non-English and limited English-speaking families receive information and have the opportunity to participate in the FSS program. Upon request, THA's FSS program provides reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Chapter 6

FAMILY SELECTION PROCEDURES

THA will select families for participation in the FSS program in accordance with HUD guidelines and the policies defined below. The FSS **Program Coordinator** - will maintain a waiting list. In general, applicants will be added to the FSS program's waiting list in the order in which their FSS Applications are received [24 CFR 984.203 (b)]. Families are then selected to enroll in the HCV FSS Program as slots become available.

There is an opportunity for family's receiving certain services to be prioritized on the waiting list for their enrollment/participation in the FSS Program. Federal regulations state that THA's FSS program may exercise its right to give preference on the FSS waiting list for up to 50 (fifty) percent of the total number of FSS slots to applicants who are participants in a related service program; therefore, THA will give preference on the FSS waiting lists for up to 1/2 (half) of the total participants in the HCV FSS Program.

If an applicant is eligible to receive preference, as defined above, then that applicant will be placed at the top of the FSS Program's waiting list. If there are other applicants already on the waiting list who have received preference, then all applicants receiving preference will be ordered at the top of the waiting list in the order in which their applications were received. Once all applicants on the waiting list receiving preference have been served, applicants who are not receiving preference will be served.

Federal Regulations allow THA to motivationally screen applicants for THA's FSS Program before enrolling anyone in the program; however, THA's FSS Program has chosen not to include motivational screening in Family Selection Procedures.

The FSS Program Staff have the primary responsibility to ensure that participants are not discriminated against in the selection process. It is the policy of THA to comply with all Federal, State and local nondiscrimination laws, the Americans with Disabilities

Act and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations governing Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. No person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under the FSS program on the ground of race, color, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, familial status, source of income or disability. In addition, THA's FSS staff will - upon request - provide reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities to ensure they are able to take advantage of the services provided by the FSS program.

Chapter 7

PROGRAM ORIENTATION

Before enrolling in the FSS Program all applicants must participate in an FSS Program orientation on either a group or individual basis (which may be held in person and/or virtually). It is the participant's decision whether they attend an orientation before applying to the program, while on the FSS waiting list or when they are ready to enroll in the program. The orientation will include a review of THA's FSS Program with additional discussions surrounding the following:

- Services offered to program participants,
- Participant expectations,
- An introduction to the FSS Escrow Account,
- Requirements to complete the FSS program, and
- The voluntary nature of the FSS program.

Chapter 8

INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

CERTIFICATION OF COORDINATION

In order to avoid duplication of services, THA certifies the services and activities associated with its FSS program have been coordinated with HUD, local public agencies including the City of Tyler and the Workforce Solutions East Texas, and private and non-profit service providers, including members of the PCCs, to avoid duplication of services and activities.

As part of the FSS program, THA offers incentives to encourage participation and enhance the participant's ability to achieve self-sufficiency. Some of these incentives are described below.

THA will establish an FSS Escrow Account for each eligible participating family in accordance with HUD guidelines as a financial incentive for program participation. Please see the Escrow Account section for more detailed information on this program incentive and how it can help assist clients in reaching their self-sufficiency goals financially while not only currently enrolled and participating in the FSS program but also after they have successfully completed the program.

Incentives for HCV participants participating in THA's FSS Program include, but are not limited to:

- Access to a variety of referrals for education,
- Job training and employment support,
- Access to financial management classes and comprehensive credit counseling,
- Access to credit reports and scores throughout enrollment in the program,
- Access to GED/HS Diploma preparation services through community partners and free GED testing.

THA will enroll all FSS Head of Household, Spouse, Co-Heads and adult family members 18 (eighteen) years and older (not currently enrolled as a full-time student) in Workforce Solutions East Texas' Job Seeker/ Work Search Program. Families will receive notification to register in Job Seeker/ Work Search Programs and activities, which must be completed within 90 (ninety) calendar days of the date the letter is uploaded through Assistance Check and/or mailed.

This Program includes but is not limited to following workshops (which may be in person and/or virtually):

- Effective Job Search,
- Creating an Attention-Grabbing Resume,
- Interviewing Preparation,
- Taking Initiative and Remaining Focused,
- Dependability,
- Problem Solving, etc.

Registration of each FSS participant in Texas Workforce Commission's Work-in-Texas.com online job search matching system is also a component of the work search program and verification of attendance in job readiness sessions and/or work search is required. If Social Security or SSI is received by any of the required participants, attendance is not required but may choose to participate. If required household members do not attend as required and are not present, the COP may be terminated which will result in an unsuccessful completion of the FSS Program. All final decisions will be made by the Housing Manager and/or Housing Eligibility Supervisor on a case-by-case basis.

If FSS participants are interested in pursuing Homeownership, FSS clients have a wide network of services available that assist with everything from homebuyer education to down payment assistance programs. FSS participants also have a number of personal incentives for involvement, including structured goal planning; greater opportunity to increase their standard of living; an enhanced support system; etc. Please note that many of these incentives are contingent upon available funding and are therefore subject to change.

Chapter 9

CONTENTS OF THE CONTRACT OF PARTICIPATIONS

Individual Training and Services Plan

There will only ever be one FSS contract of participation (CoP) at any time for each FSS family. As part of the required contents of the FSS contract of participation (CoP), the individual training and services plan (ITSP) will be used to assist in establishing specific interim and final goals by which THA and the family measure the family's progress toward fulfilling its obligations under the contract of participation and becoming self-sufficient.

Interim and final goals will differ depending on the family's individual needs. Regulations require the establishment of a final goal that includes both employment for the designated head of the FSS family and independence from welfare assistance for all family members regardless of age.

THA and the family may mutually agree to modify this contract or any incorporated ITSP in accordance with 24 CFR parts 887 and 984, as applicable.

Chapter 10

ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

FSS Program participants have access to an extensive network of activities and supportive services to assist with the goal of becoming more self-sufficient. Some of the activities and services are administered and offered directly by/through FSS staff, program partners, community agencies and other entities through referrals. The following list of activities, services and service providers reflect the current situation; however, these are subject to change as the FSS program and other agencies adapt to changing situations:

- **Case Management, Advocacy, and Referrals:**

A family participating in the FSS Program will be in regular contact with a case manager to develop and carry out the Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP). The case manager (CM) will provide ongoing supervision of the participant's progress and act as an advocate to empower families toward self-sufficiency. In addition, the case manager will facilitate and monitor other agency involvement and track participant progress on a regular basis.

- **Employment:**

Workforce Solutions East Texas (WSET)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
People Attempting To Help (PATH)
Handup Network
Community Action Program's Employment Readiness Program

-

- **Education:**

Adult Basic Education programs with Literacy Council of Tyler
Tyler Junior College (TJC), Texas College (TC) and the University of Texas at Tyler (UTT)
Hispanic Center
Pell Grant application and Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA)

- **Childcare Resources:**

Child Care Services through Workforce Solutions East Texas

Tyler Independent School District (TISD) Head Start Program
Mentoring Minds

- **Financial Management:**
Financial Management Workshops by partnering financial institutions
Individual Development Account Program
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
- **Homeownership:**
Habitat for Humanity
Home Start Programs with lending institutions
Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA)
- **Health Services:**
Women Infants and Children (WIC)
Department of Health and Human Services (HHSC)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
East Texas Center for Independent Living (ETCIL)
Cenikor
Parent Services Center (PSC)
Lifetime Health Center (LHC)
BCFS Health and Human Services/ Transition Center
East Texas CARES Resource Center
Special Health Resources (SHR_
- **Crisis Management / Emergency Assistance:** Housing Retention Program
East Texas Crisis Center (ETCC)
Community Action Program (CAP)
Salvation Army
- **Transportation:**
City of Tyler Transit
GoBus
NDMJ Transportation/ Taxi Service
Tyler Cab

Chapter 11

METHOD FOR IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILY SUPPORT NEEDS

Participants in the FSS Program work closely with the FSS Coordinator and HCV Housing Specialists to identify family needs in a holistic manner and to develop an Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP), which is an attachment to the Contract of Participation (COP). The ITSP identifies the final goals the participant will complete while enrolled in the program and the interim goals and activities that will be included in reaching those goals. During the first meeting with a new FSS participant, the FSS Case Manager will complete the FSS Needs Assessment with the client. This assessment helps the Case Manager and participant begin the goal setting process. The FSS Case Manager will assist the participant in setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals. The Head of Household (HOH) is required to complete and sign the Contract of Participation (COP), the Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP) and any related documents.

While on the FSS Program a client must work with their FSS case manager to report progress towards their ITSP goals within the timeframes indicated. The FSS Case Manager will assist the clients to locate and secure resources available in the community to assist them with their goals and will help navigate barriers to completing the goals whenever possible. The FSS Coordinator will track this progress with the FSS Progress Report Form. Each time this FSS Progress Report Form is completed with a participant, it serves as an internal needs assessment to continue helping the participant and the FSS Coordinator identify new and/or existing needs as they relate to their goals of self-sufficiency.

THA's FSS Program understands that throughout the course of the FSS Program a participant's priorities and goals may change; therefore, the program allows changes to be made to the ITSP as the Contract of Participation is carried out. Changes to an ITSP goal, including cancellation of that goal entirely, must be signed by the client, FSS Coordinator and Housing Manager before being considered as valid. All proposed changes to a participant's ITSP will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and THA's FSS Program will have the final authority in the approval or denial of a change to an ITSP goal.

The "Family Self-Sufficiency" Head of Household (not necessarily the Head of Household on the HCV case) is the only family member required to have an ITSP while on the FSS program; however, other adult household members - anyone in the home 18

(eighteen) years and older - can choose to work with an FSS Case Manager to create an ITSP. This secondary ITSP does not have the same employment requirements; however, all goals do not have to be completed within the designated timeframes for other household members who have chosen to participate.

In accordance with HUD guidelines the Head of Household on the FSS Contract of Participation will not always be the same as the Head of Household for the purposes of housing assistance. HUD guidelines 24 CFR 984.303(a) eligibility for program enrollment may include any adult member of the household (Head of FSS Family) as designated by the family. The following must be on record:

- One CoP per family,
- ITSP for as many members of the family as wish to participate,
- Escrow goes to the **designated FSS Head of Household** who signs the CoP.

24 CFR 984.103 Head of FSS family means the designated adult family member of the FSS family who has signed the CoP. The head of FSS family may, but is not required to be, the head of the household for purposes of determining income eligibility and rent.

Chapter 12

FSS ESCROW ACCOUNT

An FSS Escrow deposit is calculated based on an increase in earned income from the beginning of the clients FSS COP. The household's "family rent" is calculated in the COP. In general, an increase in the family's earned income after enrolling in the FSS program that leads to an increase in the household's "family rent" (as compared to the original figure in the COP), generates the beginning of escrow earning.

Escrow credit calculations are made whenever THA conducts an interim or annual re-examination during the COP. The FSS program will notify a participant if he/she begins to earn escrow in the program. THA will credit escrow accounts monthly; these credits will be effective on the 1st (first) day of the month when credited. THA will provide all current FSS participants with an escrow statement reflecting the current balance, deposits and withdrawals in the participant's escrow account each quarter. Interest amounts on escrow balances will be calculated and applied at the end of the program year (calendar year).

Interim Disbursement of the escrow account:

THA's FSS Program allows clients to receive interim disbursements from their escrow accounts in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Participants in the FSS program with a positive escrow balance will be allowed to request money from their escrow accounts prior to the completion of their COP,
- Requests for interim disbursements must be related to one or more goals articulated in the participant's ITSP,
- The participant must demonstrate how they are progressing towards the goal(s) before being approved for an interim disbursement,
- Acceptable progress towards the goal(s) will be determined by the FSS Coordinator, Program Manager and Department Director while the participant's complete Application for Interim Disbursement is reviewed,
- Participants will not be allowed to withdraw escrow funds in excess of 1 (one) time per FSS program year and not exceed 20 (twenty) - 40 (forty) percent of a participant's total escrow balance (actual amounts/percentages of requests for early escrow withdrawal will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved by the FSS Coordinator, Program Manager, Department Director),
- Early Disbursements will be made directly to the participant; however, documentation is required of the participant to validate the disbursement was made to the appropriate vendor. Receipts and additional documentation is required to be submitted to the FSS Coordinator.

The decision to release escrow funds will be made by consensus of the FSS Coordinator, Program Manager and Department Director.

The FSS program reserves the right to request that a participant complete a budget and/or provides additional documentation prior to making a decision on the participant's interim disbursement request.

Interim disbursement checks are cut directly to the FSS Participant; it is each participant's responsibility to submit documentation (i.e., receipts) to their FSS Coordinator to verify the funds were spent as intended on the Application for Interim Disbursement. An FSS Program participant will not be eligible to receive future interim disbursements from their escrow account and the interim disbursement will be deducted from the final escrow payment if proper documentation is not received.

Reduction of amounts due by FSS Family (24 CFR 984.305):

If the FSS family has not paid the family contribution towards rent or other amounts, if any, due under the public housing or Section 8 (eight) -assisted lease, the balance in the family's FSS account shall be reduced by that amount (as reported by the owner to THA in the Section 8 (eight) FSS program) before prorating the interest income. If the FSS family has fraudulently under-reported income, the amount credited to the FSS account will be based on the income amounts originally reported by the FSS family.

Porting the escrow account:

In accordance with HUD guidelines, THA's FSS program allows HCV FSS clients who port their FSS COP to port their FSS escrow accounts as well, if the receiving housing authority:

- Absorbs the voucher, and
- Currently administers/offers an FSS program.

In some cases, the receiving housing agency/ authority may not absorb the voucher; therefore, THA will continue administering the voucher. In this situation, THA's FSS Program staff will review the participant's progress and determine if he/she has completed his/her goals at the time of porting.

If the participant has made progress, sustained and/or completed his/her goals, THA will:

- Follow the escrow payout procedure and disbursement (see Chapter 11: FSS Escrow Account) and pay out the escrow balance to the participant (if completion criteria is met), and
- End the participants' COP

Upon THA's FSS Program staff's review of the participant's progress and determines that he/she has not completed his/her goals at the time of porting and the participant has not made progress, sustained and/or completed his/her goals, THA will:

- Forfeit the participant's current escrow balance, and
- End the participant's COP

Final Disbursement of the escrow account:

Final disbursement of the FSS Escrow Account will be made to the FSS Head of Household when the participant completes the COP and can verify that no one in the household is receiving welfare, as defined by FSS guidelines (see Chapter 12: Contract Completion section below for more information and THA's FSS Program's definition of welfare). Disbursements will be processed within 180 days from the date of program completion.

A Welfare Verification Form will be sent to the Health Human Services Commission (HHSC) to validate that no household member has received recurring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) - cash assistance **at the time of graduation and completion of the Contract of Participation and ITSP goal plan**. If the form is not returned within 14 (fourteen) business days, the FSS participant can sign a self-attestation form validating that no household member has received recurring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

The Final Disbursement check will be made payable to the current Head of Household receiving the housing assistance, which is determined in accordance with HUD guidelines. There are no requirements or stipulations on the participant's use of the final

disbursement funds. Any outstanding debt(s) owed by the participant to THA will be debited from the escrow account before the final escrow is paid out.

Forfeiting of the Escrow Account:

If the FSS COP is terminated, the balance of the participant's FSS escrow account will be forfeited in accordance with HUD guidelines. In the case of escrow forfeiture, clients will not be responsible to "pay back" any interim/previous disbursements of their escrow account received while enrolled in THA's FSS Program.

It will be at THA's discretion on how FSS forfeited funds will be used; however, FSS forfeited funds cannot be used towards the following:

- Settling debts owed by the family to the PHA,
- Salary and fringe benefits FSS Program Coordinators,
- General administrative costs of the FSS Program (HAP expenses, operating funds), etc.

Examples of FSS forfeited funds may include but not limited to the following:

- Support services for FSS participants in good standing –
 - Transportation,
 - Child Care,
 - Training Fees,
 - Testing Fees,
 - Employment preparation costs,
 - Other costs related to achieving obligations outline in the COP.
- Training for FSS Program Coordinate –
- Supporting activities to assist participants pursue any goal included in their COP either specifically or as a group.

Such requests by participating FSS families should be submitted in writing to the FSS Program Coordinator in advance. The review and approval process will mirror the interim disbursement of the escrow account process (see chapter 12).

Succession to FSS account (24 CFR 984.305):

If the head of the FSS family ceases to reside with other family members in the public housing or the Section 8 (eight)-assisted unit, the remaining members of the FSS family, after consultation with the PHA, shall have the right to designate another family member to receive the funds in accordance with paragraph (c) (1) or (2) of this section.

Chapter 13

CONTRACT COMPLETION

To complete the FSS COP and receive the balance of the FSS Escrow Account, the FSS Family must meet the following criteria. The FSS family is required to:

- Fulfill those CoP obligations to which the participating family has committed itself under the contract of participation no later than 5 years after the first re-examination of income after the execution date of the CoP.

- Maintain suitable employment (Please read the FSS Program’s definitions of the word 'suitable' below),
 - Must verify that no one in their household has received welfare by the end of the contract term (Please read the FSS Program’s definitions of the word 'suitable' and 'welfare' below),
 - Complete all goals listed on the ITSP within the designated timeframes (including the Head of FSS Household and any additional adult family members who created an ITSP),
 - Apply and be approved for their Final Disbursement from their escrow account by providing any additional information requested and/or completing the forms below:
 - Final Disbursement Application,
 - Employment Verification Form
 - Compliance with the lease
 - Documentation required to verify completion of goals.
-
- Maintain suitable employment (Please read the FSS Program’s definitions of the word 'suitable' below),
 - Must verify that no one in their household has received welfare **assistance at the completion of the contract term** (Please read the FSS Program’s definitions of the words 'suitable' and 'welfare' below),
 - The Head of Household and any additional adult family members who created an ITSP must complete all goals listed on the ITSP within the designated timeframes. The complete application will be reviewed by the FSS team for approval.

The complete application will be reviewed by the FSS team for approval.

In Contract Completion type (b), it is possible to complete the COP and not be eligible for a final escrow disbursement. If a participant is above 30 (thirty) percent Fair Market Rent (FMR) and a member of the household is still receiving welfare, the participant will complete their contract of participation when the income changes take effect; however, the head of household will not be eligible to receive their final escrow balance payout. This is due to the fact that welfare assistance continues to be received, as defined below.

Definitions:

Suitable-

THA's FSS Program defines "suitable" employment as a lawful activity that falls into at least 1 (one) of the following categories:

- Employment which is verifiable for a specified amount of hours/weeks at the current State of Texas minimum wage as specified/determined by the Department of Labor (DOL).

Employment must be with 1 (one) or more established, legitimate business(es).

- Self-employment which is verifiable and reflects net earnings (after business expense deductions) for a specified amount of hours/weeks at the current State of Texas minimum wage as specified/determined by the Department of Labor (DOL).
- Contracted or commission employment may be considered if it meets the hourly/income requirement, is verifiable and is being declared for tax purposes.

These cases will be staffed on an individual basis for approval.

- Reasonable Accommodation for Disabled Individuals:
Requests for a reasonable accommodation to the FSS program's definition of "suitable" must be submitted in writing prior to program completion.

The statement must be supported by a written statement from the individual's certified medical provider, which is required to include a recommendation from the medical provider as to a specific number of hours that the individual is able to work per week.

The FSS program will consider the number of hours specified by the medical provider when determining the hours required for the client to be "suitably" employed.

In addition to the above listed criteria, "suitable" employment will be determined by THA's FSS staff after consulting with the Head of Household and will be determined based on the specific skills, education and job training of the participant and available job opportunities in the area.

Welfare-

HUD defines welfare specifically for the FSS program in its guiding documents. It is defined as income assistance from Federal or State welfare programs and includes only cash maintenance payments designed to meet a family's ongoing basic needs. It does not include Food Stamps, Social Security payments, Medicaid, or similar benefits. In addition, HUD clarified in Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Notice 2007-20 that "child only" or "non-

needy” Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) grants “do not qualify as welfare assistance under FSS regulations.”

Chapter 14

CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

The initial term of the COP is 5 (five) years but in rare circumstances the contract may be extended for up to 2 (two) additional years. Requests for an extension of the contract will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to see if “good cause” exists for granting an extension. In general “good cause” means a circumstance beyond the family’s control and that directly prevents the participant from meeting the obligations of the contract.

Such causes may include:

- Serious illness,
- Injury in the immediate family,
- Involuntary loss of employment.

An extension - based on good cause reasons or circumstances - may also be granted to allow the family to meet the interim goal of remaining off welfare (as defined above) by the end of the contract term. Extensions will not be granted for loss of employment due to the lack of performance on the part of the FSS participant.

All requests for extension must be submitted prior to expiration of the COP by completing the Extension Request Form. Participants will be notified in writing within 10 (ten) business days of THA’s decision and may request an informal hearing if they disagree with the decision (see Hearing Procedures section for additional information).

Chapter 15

CONTRACT TERMINATION

A participant's Contract of Participation with THA's FSS Program may be terminated under the following circumstances:

- If the family withdraws from the FSS Program,
- Mutual consent of both parties (THA's FSS Program & the Head of the FSS Household on the Contract),
- The failure of the FSS family to meet its obligations under the contract of participation without good cause. In general, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis by FSS personnel to determine if there is "good cause" for not meeting the contract obligations. In general, "good cause" means a circumstance beyond the family's control that directly prevents the participant from meeting the obligations of the contract,
- If an act occurs that is inconsistent with the purpose of the FSS Program,
- If a client fails to report progress to their FSS Coordinator at least semi-annually. The Progress Report Form will serve as documentation and will constitute compliance with reporting participant progress. In the event the participant cannot be contacted for a report on progress, the case manager will mail the participant a Final Notice describing what action is needed of them to avoid contract termination. In the event

that the participant does not comply with the actions outlined in the Final Notice the contract of participation will be terminated,

- If the participant's housing assistance is terminated,
- If the HCV FSS participant ports their voucher to another jurisdiction and enters into an FSS Contract in their new jurisdiction, the current FSS COP with THA will be terminated. THA's FSS program will not require a 12 (twelve) month period on THA's FSS Program before honoring a port; the participant may port their HCV FSS contract at any time and FSS Case Managers will make an effort to assist them in this process.

In the case of a participant's Contract of Participation being terminated:

- All escrow money held on the family's behalf will be forfeited in accordance with HUD regulations (Exception: please see Chapter 11: FSS Escrow Account, "Porting the Escrow Account" section for additional information on how a participant's escrow may be held by THA if the participant ports their FSS contract, but their voucher is not absorbed by the receiving housing agency/ authority),
- The participant will receive a written notice stating the reason for their termination from the FSS Program and advising them of their right to request a Fair Hearing.

THA's FSS Program uses termination of the COP as the only corrective action for the failure to comply with family obligations defined in the COP. This program will not terminate supportive services obtained for the client or terminate an HCV participant's housing assistance if a participant is terminated from THA's FSS Program.

Termination from THA's FSS program for any reason does not preclude a client from future participation in THA's FSS program. THA has a 5 (five) year waiting period to re-enter into the FSS Program. The regular application process will be followed which may include being placed on a waiting list (if applicable).

Chapter 16

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The process and procedures for complaints and appeals used by Tyler HCV Administrative Plan will apply.

Grievance Procedures

THA's FSS Program will make efforts to resolve any and all grievances of FSS participants in accordance with the policies outlined in this Action Plan, current HUD regulations for the HCV program, FSS program and THA's current Administrative Plan. In the unlikely event that a grievance is not resolved an FSS program participant can request a hearing in accordance with the grievance procedures for the type of housing assistance the participant receives from THA by calling (903) 531-1303.

Chapter 17

APPENDIX

Definitions:

Case Manager: The staff responsible for FSSP related activities and participant adherence to the goals and objectives identified for the participants as well as the overall program.

Certification: A written assertion based on supporting evidence, provided by the FSS family or the HA, as may be required under this part, and which: (1) shall be maintained by the HA in the case of the family's certification, or by HUD, in the case of the HA's certification; (2) Shall be made available for inspection by HUD, the HA, and the public, as appropriate; and (3) Shall be deemed to be accurate for purposes of this part, unless the Secretary or the HA, as applicable, determines otherwise after inspecting the evidence and providing due notice and opportunity for commitment.

Contract of Participation (COP): A contract entered into between a FSS Family and the HA office that sets forth the terms and conditions governing participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Includes all individual training and services plans.

Earned Income: Income from wages, tips, salaries, other employee compensation, and any earnings from self-employment. Does not include any pensions or annuity, transfer

payments, any cash or in-kind benefits or funds deposited in or accrued interest on the FSS escrow account established by a HA on behalf of a participation family.

Enrollment: The date that the FSS family entered into the Contract of Participation with the HA which is the first day of the month following the date signed.

Escrow Account: An account established for the FSS family during its participation in the FSS Program. The HA will credit this account a portion of the increase of rent paid that would otherwise result from increases in earned income during the term of the Contract of Participation.

Essential Service: A necessary service which must be available before an FSS family can take advantage of other services being offered.

FSS (Family Self-Sufficiency): A program established by a HA within its jurisdiction to promote self-sufficiency among participating families, including the provision of supportive services to those families.

FSS Family or Participating Family: A family that receives assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher Program that elects to participate in the FSS Program and whose designated head of the family has signed the Contract of Participation.

FSSP (Family Self-Sufficiency Program): A program established by a HA within its jurisdiction to promote self-sufficiency among participating families, including the provision of supportive services to those families.

FSS Program Coordinator: The person(s) who runs the FSS Program. The person(s) may be responsible for duties including to but not limited to performing outreach, recruitment, and retention of FSS participants. In addition, the person(s) must administer FSSP related activities and monitor participant adherence to the goals and objectives identified for the participants as well as the overall program.

FSS Slots: Refer to the total number of Housing Choice Vouchers that comprise the minimum size of a HA's respective HCV FSS program.

Head of Family: The adult member of a participating family who is designated as head of household for purposes of determining income eligibility, and accountability for meeting program goals and objectives.

HOH (Head of Household): The adult member of a participating family who is designated as head of household for purposes of determining income eligibility, and accountability for meeting program goals and objectives.

HUD: The Department of Housing and Urban Development or its designee.

Individual Training and Support Services Plan (ITSP): A written plan that is prepared for the head of the FSS family and each adult member of the FSS family who elects to participate in the FSS program by HA in consultation with the family member. This plan will outline goals and objectives which are to be achieved by each FSS participating family during program participation.

PIH: The Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

Program Coordinating Committee (PCC): An advisory board of representatives from the public and private sectors which assist in developing the Action Plan and implementing the program.

Service Provider Agreement: The Memorandum of Understanding which is executed between the HA and an agency/organization which outlines the ranges of services which are to be provided to FSS Program participants and their families by that agency/organization.

Support Services: Services that the HA will make available or cause to be made available to an FSS family under the terms of the Contract of Participation.

THA: Tyler Housing Agency

Welfare Assistance: Income assistance from Federal or State welfare programs and includes assistance provided under the Aide To Family With Dependent Children (AFDC) Program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) that is subject to an income eligibility test; Medicaid, food stamps, general assistance or other assistance provided under a Federal or State program directed to meeting general living expenses, such as food, health care, child care; but does not include assistance solely directed to meeting housing expenses and does not include transitional expenses provided to JOBS participants. For purposes of the FSS program only, income assistance from federal or state programs and includes only cash maintenance payments designed to meet a family's ongoing basic need.

