



County of San Diego
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
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The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program

WHAT IS THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM?

FSS is a program to help Section 8 participants develop and continue educational and career goals. Participants are encouraged to seek training or education that will enable them to work or improve their current employment situation. This program is a five-year plan.

DO YOU HAVE REFERRALS FOR EDUCATION OR TRAINING PROGRAMS?

Yes, FSS may be able to assist you with referrals, but you are responsible for registering for classes and paying for all fees. However, FSS does offer scholarship opportunities. These scholarships are available to FSS participants, Public Housing residents, and family members receiving assistance who are seeking higher education and are actively pursuing self-sufficiency.

CAN YOU HELP ME WITH CHILDCARE COSTS?

No, not directly. We are able to help with resources and referrals. By referring a child care provider to you, you will be responsible for paying for your own childcare services. However, your child care costs will be taken into consideration in the calculation of your portion of the rent. In order to be considered, you must provide proof of childcare to your Housing Specialist.

I HAVE AN EDUCATION ALREADY, IS FSS FOR ME?

Anyone receiving rental assistance who wants to go to work or improve his or her employment situation is an excellent candidate for this program.

WHAT IS THE ESCROW ACCOUNT?

It is similar to a savings account. When your rent changes, your new income is compared to your income at the time you joined FSS. If your earned income has increased and your net adjusted income has increased, the savings to the Housing Authority is deposited into an escrow account. These deposits continue monthly until your income and portion of the rent changes, and then your escrow deposit is recalculated. The process continues for the duration of your contract.

WHEN DO I START TO ACCUMULATE THE MONEY? HOW DO I KNOW HOW MUCH I HAVE?

Your escrow account starts to accumulate money when your portion of the rent increases due to an increase in earned income after you start participating in the FSS program. You will not accumulate money in your escrow if the landlord decides to increase your rent, only earned income is accepted. At least once a year, the Housing Authority will inform you of the balance in your escrow account.

DOES MY MINOR CHILD WHO IS ON SSI AND MEDI-CAL NEED TO BE OFF IN ORDER FOR ME TO RECEIVE MY ESCROW ACCOUNT?

No, as long as the Medi-Cal or SSI is connected to the child, you may be eligible to receive your escrow account funds if all other terms of the contract are fulfilled.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO RECEIVE THE FUNDS IN MY ESCROW ACCOUNT?

You must complete all of the goals you identified when you developed your FSS contract. For example, if your goal in your contract is to be a nurse, you must be working as a full-time nurse in order to graduate. In addition, you must not be receiving any kind of welfare benefits such as Cal-Works or General Relief for the last year of your contract, if so you are considered ineligible for graduation.

IF I DON'T MEET MY GOALS, WILL I LOSE MY RENTAL ASSISTANCE?

You must remain eligible for the Section 8 program at all times to continue participating in FSS. If you do not meet your goals, and you are eligible to continue receiving rental assistance, your assistance will continue. Participants may apply for an extension and up to two years to complete unfinished goals. If no extension is requested, and goals are not met, any money in your escrow account will be returned to the Housing Authority and used for rental assistance payments for other participants.

WHAT IF MY INCOME INCREASES AND I AM ASKED TO LEAVE SECTION 8 BEFORE THE END OF THE FIVE YEARS, AM I STILL ELIGIBLE FOR THE ESCROW ACCOUNT FUNDS?

The answer depends on how your assistance is terminated and if you are receiving any welfare benefits at the time. If you are able to complete your goals before the end of your contract date, you may be eligible to receive your escrow funds.

WHAT IF SOMEONE MOVES IN WITH ME AND THEY MAKE TOO MUCH MONEY? WILL I LOSE MY ESCROW ACCOUNT FUNDS?

If your household's income increases and you are no longer eligible for our rental assistance program, your FSS contract will end the day your rental assistance ends. Before your contract end date, you will be given the opportunity to apply for graduation and receive your escrow account funds. If you do not meet graduation requirements, you will not receive your escrow.

WHAT IF CONGRESS TERMINATES THE PROGRAM, WILL I STILL GET MY ESCROW FUNDS?

The Housing Authority would be required to comply with program termination guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in the event that the FSS program is terminated.

WHAT'S THE CATCH? WHAT WILL I LOSE IF I PARTICIPATE?

You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain, there is no catch! You will not lose your Section 8 rental assistance by participating in the FSS program. Just remember to keep your Housing Specialist informed of any financial or household composition changes you have (within 14 days).

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

There will be an application attached to this FAQ sheet allowing you to apply for the FSS Program. Please complete and return your application to an FSS Assistant to get enrolled. Once the FSS team receives your application, an FSS assistant will contact you to begin discussing your goals and develop your contract with the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

CAN I START THIS PROGRAM AT ANY TIME?

Yes, just call the FSS team at (858) 694-8709 and leave a message indicating that you are interested. However, before you can start your FSS contract, your income information may need to be updated if it has been more than three months since your last recertification or if there have been any changes.