

DAKOTA COUNTY CDA

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER FAMILY SELF SUFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2011

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program is to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate the use of Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program with public and private resources to enable families eligible to receive assistance to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency.

II. DESCRIPTION OF FAMILIES EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE

A. Demographics

The Dakota County CDA currently has an Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) of 2,306 vouchers. The following demographics describe characteristics of the families receiving housing assistance, including those under FSS Contracts as of July 2011.

RACE	PERCENT
Black	38%
White	58%
American Indian	.014%
Asian	.019%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	.002%
Other	4%

ETHNICITY	PERCENT
HISPANIC	5%
NON-HISPANIC	95%

B. Number of Families Expected to Participate

In 1992, the Dakota County CDA was awarded with 94 certificates and vouchers for the FSS program. The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 allowed the program size to decrease and the CDA's FSS program became voluntary.

The Dakota County CDA's FSS program will voluntarily have a program size of 30 participants.

III. Program Coordinating Committee

The Dakota County CDA established a Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) in 1992 to assist in securing commitments of public and private resources for the operation of the FSS program. The PCC will be re-organizing in 2011 to better serve the needs of the participants and will meet quarterly, in accordance with HUD regulations.

A. Membership

Membership in the PCC is drawn from a variety of agencies and individuals which includes, but is not limited to:

Dakota County E&EA
MN Workforce Center
Neighbors, Inc
Scott/Carver/Dakota CAP Agency
360 Communities
Inver Hills College
Dakota County Technical College
Hastings Family Services
Women Venture
Lutheran Social Service
WIC

B. Roles of the PCC

- 1) The PCC will act as an advisory body to the Dakota County HCV FSS program;
- 2) The PCC will enable the FSS program to access community resources and obtain commitments for services from social service providers;
- 3) The PCC will meet quarterly

IV. OUTREACH EFFORTS

To recruit potential FSS participants, the CDA markets the program to all current HCV participants, including Family Unification Program (FUP) HCV participants.

Current HCV participants are required to attend an annual recertification appointment at the CDA, which includes an audio visual briefing. The briefing contains information about the FSS program. Marketing brochures are also made available in the CDA office.

New HCV participants will receive FSS information through the new participants briefing as well as through a marketing brochure provided in their briefing packet.

A brochure rack in the briefing room displays a variety of community resource information including the FSS marketing brochures.

V. FSS SELECTION PROCEDURES

Participants selected for the FSS program will be current participants of the CDA's HCV program and meet the eligibility criteria in HUD regulations.

FSS Application Process

1) *Orientation*

The CDA will invite interested HCV participants to attend an FSS orientation meeting. The orientation will provide an explanation of the benefits and requirements of the FSS program.

2) *Pre-Enrollment Form*

Prospective participants are provided with an opportunity to complete a pre-enrollment form following the orientation.

3) *Baseline Income*

In accordance with HUD regulations, the FSS Coordinator will determine a baseline income level upon receipt of the pre-enrollment form.

VI. FSS WAITING LIST

If there are not current spaces available, prospective participants will be placed on the FSS waiting list in the order of the date and time of their completed pre-enrollment forms. If the CDA contacts an applicant on the FSS Waiting List and they fail to comply with attending an orientation, their name will be removed from the FSS Waiting List. If an individual is removed from the FSS waiting list, they may request to attend an orientation in the future.

VII. NEEDS ASSESMENT

Participants will be required to complete a needs assessment to assist the FSS Coordinator in identifying any gaps in services for the following: social services, future goals, employment, school/training, child care, transportation, and financial independence

VIII. INDIVIDUAL TRAINING AND SERVICE PLAN

Participants will be required to attend a meeting with the FSS Coordinator. The coordinator and the participant will review the needs assessment and referrals will be provided as appropriate. The FSS Coordinator will assist each participant in the development of their Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP). The ITSP is a written plan prepared that sets forth interim and final goals for the FSS participant. The ITSP includes the supportive services to be provided to the family member, activities to be completed by that family member and the agreed upon completion dates for the services and activities.

IX. CONTRACT OF PARTICIPATION

All participants selected for participation in the FSS program will be required to sign a five-year Contract of Participation. The Contract of Participation will be in the prescribed form HUD-52650 and include a completed ITSP. The contract will include annual income, earned income, and the family rent as of the effective date of the contract.

Family Responsibilities

Family responsibilities under the Contract of Participation include, but are not limited to;

- a) Seek and maintaining suitable employment throughout the term of the contract;
- b) Complete activities in the ITSP within the specified dates;
- c) Provide the CDA with information regarding employment, job search, interviews, education attendance and other FSS services and activities.
- d) Reside in Dakota County for the initial 12 months of the FSS contract.

X. CONTRACT COMPLETION

In order to successfully complete the FSS Contract of Participation and receive any money in the FSS Escrow Account, participants must meet the following criteria;

- 1) Participants have not received an MFIP cash grant in the previous 12 months
- 2) Are employed at least 32 hours per week.
- 3) Participants have met their interim and final goals as laid out in their met the goals of their ITSP.

XI. CONTRACT EXTENSION

A participant in the FSS program may request an extension of the FSS contract if they are unable to complete their goals within the five-year period due to circumstances beyond their control such as; serious illness in the immediate family, involuntary loss of employment, serious injury that interferes with employment opportunities, and other circumstances that are deemed as good cause by the CDA.

Extensions will not be granted for loss of employment due to lack of performance on the part of the FSS participant.

Requests for contract extensions should be submitted in writing to the Assistant Director of Housing Assistance. The request letter should include the following;

- 1) An explanation of why the goals were not completed;
- 2) What goals still need to be completed; and
- 3) The time frame in which they will be completed

The CDA will grant no more than one extension of two years. Participants will be notified in writing of the CDA's decision within 10 business days. If a participant is denied a contract extension, they are eligible to request an informal hearing.

XII. CASE MANAGEMENT

Participants of the FSS program will be in regular contact with their FSS Coordinator to develop and carry out the goals developed in their ITSP. The Coordinator will make referrals to appropriate resources and services, assist with goal development and planning, document success and setback, monitor progress and provide the support necessary to assist with goal completion

At a minimum, the FSS Coordinator will contact the participants on a quarterly basis. This quarterly contact will ensure participants are making progress on their ITSP, identify struggles the participant is encountering and recommend solutions.

XIII. MAINTENANCE OF ESCROW ACCOUNTS

The CDA will establish FSS escrow accounts for FSS participants whose portion of the rent increases due to an increase in their earned income. The escrow funds will be deposited into an interest bearing, HUD approved account.

A. Calculation of Escrow

FSS escrow credits will be calculated monthly and in accordance with HUD regulations. Interest on the FSS escrow account balances will be allocated monthly.

B. Escrow Reports to Families

Escrow account reports will be sent to each FSS participant annually. The report includes the escrow balance at the beginning and ending balances, deposits, withdrawals and interest accrued.

C. Interim Disbursements

Participants in good standing may request an interim disbursement of escrow funds prior to the completion of their contract. The interim disbursement must be used for continuing growth and for reaching the goals articulated in the ITSP (examples: pay for books at school, car repairs needed for transportation to work. Requests for interim disbursements will be limited to the lesser of 25% of the participants escrow account balance or \$1,000. Interim disbursement requests will be submitted to the Assistant Director of Housing Assistance. The request must detail the need, exhaustion of other resources, and quote(s) documenting the expense. If approved, the participant must submit receipts showing the use of funds.

D. Final Disbursement of Escrow

Final disbursement of the FSS Escrow account will be made to the FSS participant when a written request is submitted and the participant has completed the required goals of the FSS Contract. Any money owed to the CDA will be withheld from the total escrow amount before the disbursement.

E. Forfeiture of Escrow Funds

Participants of the FSS program have no right to any funds from their FSS escrow accounts if the Contract of Participation is terminated or the CDA determines the family did not successfully graduate from the FSS program. The CDA will close the participant's escrow account and will treat forfeited funds as receipts in accordance with HUD regulations at the time of the forfeiture.

XIV. TERMINATION

The CDA may terminate the Contract of Participation under the following circumstances:

- a. Failure to meet their obligations under the ITSP and Contract of Participation.

Non-compliance includes:

- 1) Failure to attend scheduled appointments
- 2) Failure to participate in quarterly updates
- 3) Failure to work on activities and/or goals in the ITSP
- 4) Failure to complete activities and/or goals within the specified time frames
- 5) Failure to participate in job related activities (employment, education, training, workshops, etc.)

- b. If the participant is terminated from the HCV program.
- c. The CDA and participant agree to terminate the contract

If a participant voluntarily withdraws from the FSS program, the participant may apply for FSS in the future, with the understanding that:

- The participant would complete the FSS application process and sign a new ITSP and Contract of Participation.
- The participant would not be eligible for any funds accrued previously and would only be eligible to receive future deposits into escrow upon rejoining the FSS program.

XV. PORTABILITY

A. Incoming Ports

The CDA is not obligated to accept incoming portable FSS participants. If the CDA accepts the participant in the FSS program, the CDA will execute a new FSS Contract of Participation.

- a) The CDA will contact the initial HA to request a copy of the FSS Contract of Participation, and to request a transfer of any escrow funds if the voucher is absorbed.
- b) Incoming portable participants will be given priority on the FSS waiting list.
- c) Incoming portable participants must meet with the FSS Coordinator and complete a needs assessment, ITSP and Contract of Participation.
- d) Incoming portable participants whose vouchers are not absorbed by the CDA may continue in the FSS program of the initial PHA if they are willing to maintain the Contract of Participation and the FSS escrow account.

B. Port Outs

The CDA will notify the receiving Housing Authority of the family's participation in the FSS Program. The notification requests the receiving HA to notify the CDA if they plan to enroll the participant in their FSS program or if they wish for the CDA to maintain the account.