



Staffing a Program

Owners have discretion in determining their program’s staffing structure. Most FSS programs have at least one staff member whose sole or primary responsibility is administering the FSS program. This position is known as an FSS coordinator, FSS case manager, or FSS coach. In addition, some programs may have an FSS Program Manager. Property management staff at a corporate level, as well as onsite property management and accounting staff, can also play a role in FSS programs.



Property Owner

The owner is authorized by HUD to establish the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program and decides whether a property will offer the program. The owner is ultimately responsible for the management agent’s administration of the FSS program.

Property Management Staff at a Corporate Level

Staff that oversee property operations from a corporate, headquarters, or regional level can be critical to the operation of a successful FSS program. While they are typically not involved in day to day onsite management, they provide important program support in escalating and resolving any issues that arise and they should be kept apprised of FSS program updates. If current resident services or property management staff can take on this role or if they must hire new staff or contract with a third party to administer the FSS coordinator’s functions.

FSS Program Manager

The FSS Program Manager may or may not be the same person as the FSS Coordinator, depending on the size of the property and the structure of the organization. An FSS Program Manager can be an existing staff person, such as a Property Manager or Director of Resident Services.

The role of the FSS Program Manager is to ensure a successful program launch and smooth ongoing operations. Responsibilities include program outreach, relationship management with other FSS program staff, and submitting performance reports to HUD.

The Program Manager is generally responsible for designing the FSS program; overseeing its execution, and managing and providing support to FSS coordinators when they run into challenges.

FSS Coordinator

Most FSS programs have at least one staff member whose sole or primary responsibility is administering the FSS program. This position is known as an FSS coordinator, FSS case manager, or FSS coach. Owners/agents may employ one or more FSS coordinators directly or can contract with a third-party organization to serve as the FSS coordination staff.

FSS coordinators provide coaching and case management services to program participants. Responsibilities may include the following:

- Recruiting participants;
- Completing participant assessments;
- Helping participants set goals;
- Executing the Contract of Participation and the Individual Training and Services Plan with participants;
- Building partnerships with service providers;
- Supporting a participant's job search, placement, retention, and advancement, as well as the achievement of other goals;
- Making referrals to service providers;
- Assessing participant progress;
- Monitoring escrow accounts;
- Determining when a participant has graduated and approving escrow disbursements, and
- Reporting on program outcomes.

Typical Caseloads for FSS Coordinators. Owners/agents have discretion to determine how many participants to assign to each FSS coordinator, but they must meet certain minimum caseloads if they wish to obtain HUD approval to use residual receipts to fund the coordinator's salary and benefits. Housing Notice H-2016-08, "Family Self Sufficiency Program in Multifamily," notes that one full-time FSS coordinator is generally expected to serve at least 25 individual participants. HUD may approve one part-time FSS coordinator if the owner/agent plans to serve fewer than 25 individual participants. An additional part-time coordinator may also be employed at the same hours to participant ratio to accommodate increased participation.

If a coordinator needs to travel to see clients at multiple properties, this may reduce his/her coaching capacity and add travel expenses to the budget. If the coordinator is also expected to perform FSS program management responsibilities (i.e. program outreach, relationship management with other program staff, and submitting performance reports to HUD), that may also reduce his/her coaching capacity.

Preferred Qualifications. FSS coordinators may have a college degree in social work or a related field. Coordinators should be committed to the mission of the program; have relevant work experience; treat participants with empathy and without judgment, and have experience working with low-income families. Coordinators should preferably have knowledge of the local resources available to help residents increase their earnings and assets, although the knowledge of such resources can be learned on the job.



Onsite Property Management and Accounting Staff

Property management staff complete interim and annual income recertifications, which determine the amount of earned income deposited into participant escrow accounts. They typically spend between 8-16 hours for training in the first year of an FSS launch and one to three hours a month thereafter to carry out other related program activities, such as referring residents to the program and coordinating with the FSS coordinator and accounting staff.

Accounting staff work on monthly Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System (TRACS) voucher processing, which is essential for properly managing escrow funds. They typically spend between 10-20 hours for systems setup and escrow training, and then one to two hours a month per property for ongoing escrow calculations. Regular responsibilities include managing the escrow accounts on behalf of participants; conducting periodic account audits, and issuing escrow funds to participants as needed.

Contracting

Owners/agents may choose to operate an FSS program in partnership with a third-party contractor. This approach typically works for properties whose staff do not have the capacity or professional ability to provide coaching or case management. Owners/agents who contract with third party organizations to administer the FSS program on their behalf should consider how they will monitor the performance of the contractor. They may decide to hold regular meetings with the provider and periodically review reports and randomly selected FSS participant program files.