

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) F.A.Q

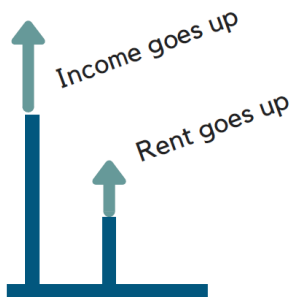
What is the Family Self-Sufficiency Program?

The FSS program can help you build a more stable financial future. As your earned income from work increases, your rent increase is saved in an escrow (savings) account that you will receive when you successfully complete the program. FSS is a five-year program.

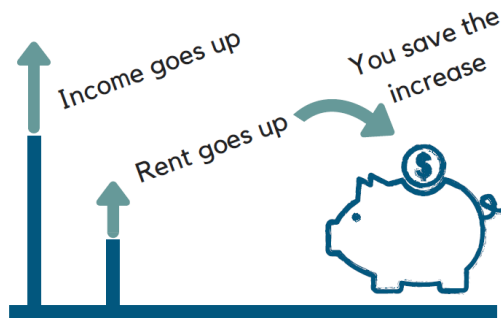
How does the FSS Savings account work?

When you enroll in the program your housing authority or property owner sets up and manages an FSS savings account for you. An increase in your rent because of an increase in earned income will result in a credit to your account each month.

Without FSS:



With FSS:



Do I have access to the savings account at any time?

You do not have access to the account during the program. Your FSS Coordinator will update you on the amount in your account, and how much is being contributed on a monthly basis at least once a year.

Who manages the account?

Your housing authority or property owner manages the account for you.

Can I add to the savings account?

The only way to add to your FSS savings account is through an increase in earned income. When your rent increases, you will still pay your new, higher rent but that increase in rent will also be credited to your savings account.

Can I use the savings account for emergencies?

You cannot use the account for emergencies. You can, however, request an interim disbursement during the program if you plan to use the money to make progress on one of your goals outlined in your contract. Approval of interim disbursements are at the discretion of your housing authority.

Do I have to complete all five years of the program?

You do not have to complete the full five years. However, you must complete all graduation requirements to receive the money in your savings. If you have completed all graduation requirements before your contract term is up, you may request an early graduation.

What are the graduation requirements?

There are three requirements to graduate from the program. First, you will need to be employed at least 32 hours per week at the time of graduation. Second, all household members will need to be free of cash welfare assistance for at least 12 months prior to graduation. Finally, you must complete the goals you set during the program.

What if I need more time to Successfully complete the program?

If you need more time to complete the program, you can request an extension of up to two (2) years depending on the circumstances. For example, if you have an unexpected health issue or sudden job loss, you can request an extension prior to the expiration of your contract.

What if I do not complete my goals during my five year contract?

To graduate and receive your savings, you will need to complete your goals. That said, you will be working with an FSS Coach throughout the program to create and change your goals as your interests and circumstances change.

Am I eligible to join the program if I'm unemployed?

Yes, those who are not currently employed are allowed—and encouraged—to join the program. However, you must be willing to seek and obtain employment. **Please note that to receive your savings at the time of graduation you must be employed!**

Will I lose my housing assistance by joining the FSS program?

No, when you successfully complete the program you may keep your rental assistance if you still need it and are income eligible. If you do not graduate the program, you will not lose your housing assistance.

What happens if I lose my housing assistance while participating in the program?

If you lose or give up your housing assistance while enrolled in FSS, you can no longer participate in the program. Depending on the circumstances you may be eligible for early graduation.

If I am not working but have a member of my household who is working, does that income count toward my FSS escrow account?

Yes, any increase in earned income that affects your household rent will contribute to your FSS savings account. However, the contract holder is the one who must be employed in order to receive the savings account at the time of graduation. This also means any earned income in your household when you enroll in the program will be included in the starting income on your contract.

If my rent decreases is money taken out of my FSS savings account?

No, during the program money is only taken out of your savings account if you need and request an interim disbursement to make progress toward one of your goals. When your income changes and you recertify, your monthly savings credit will also change, but no money will be withdrawn from the account.

If you are interested or have questions about the FSS program, contact our office and ask for Whitney

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