

## Chapter 4

### SELECTING AND SERVING FSS FAMILIES

#### INTRODUCTION

FSS regulations require that the PHA include in its action plan a statement indicating how it will select families for participation in the FSS program. This includes outreach, waiting list management, and other selection procedures. When followed, the PHA's selection procedures ensure that families will be selected without regard to race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.

Once selected for participation in the FSS program, families are to be provided various activities and supportive services so that they may obtain the education, employment, and business and social skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. A description of such activities and supportive services is also a requirement of the FSS action plan.

This chapter contains three parts:

Part I: Incentives, Outreach, and Assurance of Noninterference: This part describes the incentives the PHA will offer and the outreach efforts the PHA will use in order to encourage participation and recruit eligible families for the FSS program. It also contains the required assurance of noninterference with the rights of nonparticipating families.

Part II: Family Selection: This part covers whether the PHA will use preferences for family selection and which preferences the PHA will employ if they choose to do so. In addition, this part describes the selection factors the PHA will use in screening families for participation in the FSS program.

Part III: Activities and Support Services: This part lists the activities and supportive services to be provided to families through both public and private resources, describes the method the PHA will use to identify family support needs, and covers the required certification of coordination.



## **PART I. INCENTIVES, OUTREACH, AND ASSURANCE OF NONINTERFERENCE**

### **4-I.A. OVERVIEW**

The FSS program offers incentives such as the FSS escrow account, case management, and other supportive services that not only encourage participation, but also help families achieve self-sufficiency. In addition to encouraging program participation through such incentives, PHAs also conduct outreach to recruit FSS participants from among eligible families. As part of this process, families need to know that their choice as to whether to participate in the FSS program will not affect their admission to the public housing or housing choice voucher programs, nor will it affect their right to occupancy. This part describes the PHA’s policies regarding these issues, all of which are required aspects of the FSS action plan.

### **4-I.B. INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION [24 984.201(d)(5)]**

By regulation, the FSS action plan must include a PHA’s incentives plan—a description of the incentives that the PHA intends to offer eligible families to encourage their participation in the FSS program. The incentives plan provides for the establishment of the FSS escrow account and any other incentives designed by the PHA

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will offer the following services to its FSS participants as incentives to participate in FSS:

<b>Incentive</b>	<b>Provided By</b>	<b>Description</b>
FSS escrow account	Caribou Housing Agency	The escrow deposit is a savings account that is set up by the Caribou Housing Agency. The money deposited is a direct result of the participant’s increased contribution to their rent due to an increase in earned income after joining FSS.
Case management	FSS Coordinator	In addition to developing an ITSP in coordination with the participant, the FSS Coordinator will provide participants with information, referrals and connections to services such as child care, transportation, education, job training, and employment counseling, credit repair and budgeting to assist participants in achieving their goals.

#### **4-I.C. OUTREACH EFFORTS [24 CFR 984.201(d)(6)(i)(ii)]**

In addition to offering incentives for FSS participation, PHAs also conduct outreach in order to recruit more FSS participants from eligible families. The FSS action plan must include a description of these efforts to recruit FSS participants, including notification and outreach, the actions the PHA will take to assure that both minority and nonminority groups are informed about the FSS program, and how the PHA will make this information known.

##### PHA Policy

The PHA will notify eligible families about the FSS program using the following outreach locations, activities, methods, and languages, where appropriate. These points of contact and methods have been selected to ensure that both minority and nonminority groups are informed about the FSS program.

<b>Location/Activity</b>	<b>Staff/Partner</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Language</b>
Briefings/Orientations	Caribou Housing Agency Staff	Flyer Presentation	English
Interims/Recertifications	Caribou Housing Agency Staff	Flyer Presentation	English
Transfers/Portability	Caribou Housing Agency Staff	Flyer	English
Inspections	Caribou Housing Agency Staff	Flyer	English

#### **4-I.D. ASSURANCE OF NONINTERFERENCE WITH THE RIGHTS OF NONPARTICIPATING FAMILIES [24 CFR 984.201(d)(10)]**

A family's housing assistance or admission into assisted housing should never depend on whether they choose to participate in the FSS program, and PHAs need to make this known as part of the recruitment process. For this reason, the PHA's action plan must include an assurance that a family's decision to not participate in the FSS program will not affect the family's admission to the public housing or housing choice voucher programs, nor will it affect the family's right to occupancy in accordance with the lease.

##### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

Participation in the FSS program is strictly voluntary. Housing Choice Voucher Program participants will be notified in all literature and media presentations related to the FSS program that should they decide not to participate in the FSS program it will not affect their HCV housing assistance. This material will also specify that the family will retain the right to occupancy according to their lease and family obligations contract.



## **PART II. FAMILY SELECTION**

### **4-II.A. OVERVIEW**

The FSS action plan is required to contain a statement indicating the procedures for selecting families for FSS program participation, including a description of how the PHA will do so without regard to race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. This part describes these procedures, taking into account whether the PHA will use preferences for family selection and which preferences the PHA will employ if they choose to do so, in addition to defining the factors the PHA will use in screening families for program participation.

### **4-II.B. FSS SELECTION PREFERENCES**

As part of the process for selecting families for participation in the FSS program, the PHA may choose whether to employ the use of preferences. In particular, if the PHA so chooses, it has the option of giving a selection preference for up to 50 percent of its public housing FSS slots and 50 percent of its HCV program FSS slots, respectively, to eligible families who have one or more family members currently enrolled in an FSS-related service program or who are on the waiting list for such a program. Such a preference may be further limited to participants in and applicants for one or more specific eligible FSS-related service programs.

Should the PHA choose to adopt such a preference, it would need to include the following information in its action plan:

- The percentage of FSS slots, not to exceed 50 percent of the total number of FSS slots for each of its FSS programs, for which it will give a selection preference
- The FSS related service programs to which it will give a selection preference to the programs' participants and applicants
- The method of outreach to and selection of families with one or more members participating in the identified programs [24 CFR 984.203(a)]

A PHA may wish to adopt additional selection preferences as well [Notice PIH 93-24].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will not adopt the use of preferences when selecting families for participation in the FSS program.

Even with up to 50 percent of the total number of FSS slots filled via selection preferences, and the possibility of other slots being filled by means of additional preferences, open slots will remain. Regardless of whether the PHA adopts selection preferences, those FSS slots for which the PHA chooses **not** to exercise the selection preference must be filled with eligible families in accordance with an objective selection system such as a lottery, the length of time living in subsidized housing, or the date the family expressed an interest in participating in the FSS program. This system must be described in the action plan [24 CFR 984.203(b)].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will use the date the family expressed an interest in participating in the FSS program to fill the FSS slots for which the PHA chooses not to exercise the selection preference.

### **4-II.C. SELECTION FACTORS**

Many factors contribute to whether a PHA may choose to select a family for participation in the FSS program. These selection factors can help the PHA screen families for admission, and ultimately contribute to the PHA's decision to either allow or deny a family's admission into the FSS program.

#### **Motivation Selection Factors [24 CFR 984.203(c)(1)]**

A PHA may screen families for interest and motivation to participate in the FSS program provided that the factors utilized by the PHA are those which solely measure the family's interest and motivation to participate in the FSS program. For this reason, PHAs must only apply motivational screening factors that are permissible under the regulations.

#### ***Permissible Motivation Selection Factors***

Permitted motivational factors include requiring attendance at FSS orientation sessions or pre-selection interviews, and assigning certain tasks indicating the family's willingness to undertake the obligations that may be imposed by the FSS contract of participation. However, any tasks assigned should be readily accomplishable by the family based on the family members' educational level or disabilities, if any. Reasonable accommodations must be made for individuals with mobility, manual, sensory, speech impairments, mental, or developmental disabilities [24 CFR 984.203(c)(2)].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will screen families for interest and motivation to participate in the FSS program by assigning a meeting or workshop which is the same type of meeting or workshop for each family. The Caribou Housing Agency will only use the fact that the family attended as a screening factor, even if tasks or exercises are not completed in the meeting. In addition, if the family needs either childcare or transportation to be able to attend, or requests an accommodation for a disability, the Caribou Housing Agency will either refer the family to available services or exempt the family from this screening factor.



### ***Prohibited Motivation Selection Factors***

Prohibited motivational screening factors include the family's educational level, educational or standardized motivational test results, previous job history or job performance, credit rating, marital status, number of children, or other factors, such as sensory or manual skills, and any factors which may result in discriminatory practices or treatment toward individuals with disabilities or minority or nonminority groups [24 CFR 984.203(C)(3)].

### **Other Selection Factors**

In addition to motivational screening, the PHA may also wish to screen families for other factors.

### ***PHA Debt Selection Factor***

The PHA may deny FSS participation to a family if the family owes the PHA, or another PHA, money in connection with HCV or public housing assistance [Notice PIH 93-24, B-18].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will deny FSS participation to a family if the family owes the Caribou Housing Agency, or another PHA, money in connection with HCV or public housing assistance. Families that owe money to a PHA who have entered into a repayment agreement and are current on that repayment agreement will not be denied FSS participation.

### ***Unavailable Support Services Selection Factor***

If the PHA determines, after consulting with the family, that a missing service is essential to the family's needs, the PHA may skip that family (and other similar families) and offer the FSS slot to the next family for which there are available services [Notice PIH 93-24, B-8].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency may skip a family for which a service is unavailable that is essential to the family's needs and offer the FSS slot to the next family for which there are available services.

### ***Previous Participation Selection Factor***

A PHA may refuse to select a family for participation in the FSS program a second time if that family previously participated unsuccessfully (i.e., the family participated, did not meet its FSS obligations, and was terminated from the FSS program) [Notice PIH 93-24, B-14].

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency will not refuse to select a family for participation in the FSS program a second time if that family previously participated and did not complete.



## **PART III. ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **4-III.A. OVERVIEW**

Once families are admitted to the FSS program, the PHA becomes responsible for making sure these families are adequately served. The purpose of the family self-sufficiency (FSS) program is to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate the use of public housing assistance and assistance under the housing choice voucher programs with public and private resources, to enable families eligible to receive assistance under these programs to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency. As such, upon selection, families are matched with the appropriate activities and supportive services so that they may obtain the education, employment, and business and social skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. This is a vital element of the FSS program.

### **4-III.B. METHOD OF IDENTIFYING FAMILY SUPPORT NEEDS**

**[24 CFR 984.201(d)(8)]**

Before a PHA can determine the services and activities it will provide to FSS families, it must identify the services and activities appropriate to each family. The action plan must contain a description of how the program will identify the needs of FSS families and deliver the services and activities according to these needs.

#### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

Supportive services needs will be identified by completion of an informal needs assessment with the FSS coordinator before completion of the initial individual training and services plan and signing of the contract of participation.

**4-III.C. FSS ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES DESCRIPTION**  
**[24 CFR 984.201(d)(7)]**

As part of the required contents of the action plan, PHAs must both describe the activities and supportive services to be provided by public and private resources to FSS families and identify the public and private resources that are expected to provide the supportive services.

Of course, this task assumes that the PHA has first identified the needed activities and supportive services.

Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency’s FSS program, through its partners on the program coordinating committee, will provide the following activities and support services to FSS families:

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Support Service Specific</b>
<b>Aspire</b>	Caribou Adult Ed Presque Isle Career Center Northern Maine Community College MEOC ACAP Work Force Investment Board
<b>Maine Career Centers</b>	Job Seekers Training Programs Vocational Rehab Services Resume Writing & Interviewing Workshops Scholarship Opportunities
<b>Community Action Program</b>	Child/Family Services Health/Social Services Daycare and Head Start Family Planning Services Parenting Education Transportation
<b>University of Maine Cooperative Extension</b>	Business Education Community Development Nutrition/Food Safety Child and Family Development

	4H Youth Development
<b>National Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependencies</b>	General Information on Substance Abuse Assessment and Referral Service
<b>Maine Equal Justice Partners</b>	Advocacy in areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Food Assistance</li> <li>• Income Supports</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Education and Training</li> </ul>
<b>Women, Work, and Community</b>	Career/Life Planning Workshops Financial Education Employer Contact Job Site Visits Education and Training Connections Information and Referrals Individual Development Accounts
<b>Adult Education</b>	Hi-Set-High School Equivalency Test Computer Training
<b>Maine Community College / University System</b>	Certificate Program College
<b>Pine Tree Legal</b>	Representation Document Review Counsel or Advise

#### **4-III.D. CERTIFICATION OF COORDINATION [24 CFR 984.201(d)(12)]**

The FSS action plan is required to contain a certification that the development of the activities and services under the FSS program has been coordinated with the JOBS program (now Welfare to Work under TANF), the programs provided under the JTPA (now Workforce Investment Act programs), and any other relevant employment, child care, transportation, training, and education programs in the applicable area. The implementation of the FSS program's activities and services must continue to be coordinated as such to avoid duplication of activities and services.

##### Caribou Housing Agency Policy

The Caribou Housing Agency certifies that its FSS program has developed its services and activities in coordination with the Workforce Investment Act (formerly JTPA), Workforce Investment Board and One Stop Centers, Welfare to Work (formerly JOBS program), and any other relevant employment, child care, transportation, training, and education programs in the applicable area. The implementation of these activities and services will continue to be coordinated in this manner to avoid duplication of activities and services.

