

FISCAL YEAR 2025

2025 FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY REPORT



July 2026

**Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Public and Indian Housing
Office of Public Housing Investments**

I. BACKGROUND

Section 23(m)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437u(m)(2)) requires the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provide a report to Congress on the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. Specifically, it states:

(m) Reports

(1) To Secretary.—*Each eligible entity that carries out a local self-sufficiency program approved by the Secretary under this section shall submit to the Secretary, not less than annually a report regarding the program. The contents of the report shall include—*

(A) *a description of the activities carried out under the program;*

(B) *a description of the effectiveness of the program in assisting families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency;*

(C) *a description of the effectiveness of the program in coordinating resources of communities to assist families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency; and*

(D) *any recommendations of the eligible entity or the appropriate program coordinating committee for legislative or administrative action that would improve the self-sufficiency program carried out by the Secretary and ensure the effectiveness of the program.*

(2) HUD annual report.—*The Secretary shall submit to the Congress annually, as a part of the report of the Secretary under section 8 of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act, a report summarizing the information submitted by public housing agencies under paragraph (1) and describing any additional research needs of the Secretary to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The report under this paragraph shall also include any recommendations of the Secretary for improving the effectiveness of the self-sufficiency program under this section.*

II. INTRODUCTION

Originally authorized in 1990, FSS is the nation's largest asset-building program for low-income families, giving HUD-assisted residents a unique opportunity to increase earnings and build consistent savings. Through FSS, residents work with an FSS coordinator to set and work towards goals, with the overall objective of increasing their economic empowerment. The program has two main components: (1) case management and coaching, which is designed to connect participants to resources and help them work towards the goals that they set for their futures, and (2) an escrow savings account, which allows participants to save money as their earnings increase. FSS has had a positive impact on the lives of thousands of participants and their families in the 35 years since it was first established.

It is not a requirement that graduates of FSS leave rental assistance, but approximately 30 percent of graduates from the program exit rental assistance within 1 year of their graduation from the program. Because there is variation in where families are positioned along the spectrum of self-sufficiency at the time they enter FSS, many families may see substantial increases in earnings and employment during their time in the program but still be eligible for rental

assistance when they graduate. Aside from the graduation requirement for the FSS head of household to be employed and for the entire household to be free of welfare assistance, the goals of program participation are unique to each family. The program is highly customizable so that it can support participants in setting and achieving goals that are both attainable and impactful for their families.

FSS is administered by over 1,000 public housing agencies (PHAs), both in Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs, and Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) owners across the United States to serve HUD-assisted residents. HUD provides grants to the majority of eligible FSS programs, which can be used to fund the salary and fringe benefits (including training) of FSS coordinators.

In 2024, 894 FSS programs were funded by HUD, and the rest operated utilizing funds from other sources to support the salaries and benefits of their FSS coordinators. The total amount of HUD funding awarded to these programs in 2024 was approximately \$132 million, for an average of approximately \$87,000 per FSS coordinator. Among PHA grantees, the average amount awarded per FSS coordinator was just over \$86,000, and for PBRA owners, the average was approximately \$97,000. The number of positions awarded per program ranged from 0.5 to 28, with 67 percent of programs receiving one FSS coordinator.

HUD first implemented the FSS Annual Report Survey in 2024 to gain more insight on the ways in which FSS programs are utilizing the 2022 [FSS Final Rule](#) flexibilities from the Congressional re-authorization of the program in 2018.¹ Given that there are a number of areas in which FSS programs have the freedom to customize their program policies, HUD's aim in producing the FSS Annual Report is to capture what FSS implementation looks like across the country. The results of these surveys will be useful in gaining a better understanding of how FSS is implemented on the ground, identifying areas for improvement, and continuously refining the technical assistance that HUD offers to FSS programs and practitioners.

The 2025 FSS Annual Report Survey analyzed data reported for calendar year 2024. In 2024, FSS programs supported approximately 59,000 families in non-Moving to Work (MTW) PHA programs, with 3,800 families completing their contracts and graduating from the program. Given that families can participate in the program for up to 7 years, this equates to at least 40 percent of families who were eligible to graduate doing so.² Approximately 60 percent of participants earned escrow during the program, and among the families who graduated from the program with escrow in 2024, there was an average of approximately \$11,000 in escrow disbursed upon graduation.³

¹ See 24 CFR 984.

² HUD is continually working to improve the data collection. At this time, this may be an underreport.

³ These figures do not include families served by MTW agencies or PBRA owners, as these organizations report participation data differently from non-MTW PHAs. HUD estimates that there are an additional 13,000 families participating in FSS through MTW and PBRA programs.

III. ANALYSIS

A. Key Findings

Results were relatively consistent between the 2024 and 2025 FSS Annual Report Surveys, but there were a few notable differences.

- There are several best practices that were implemented more frequently in 2025 than in 2024, including tracking participants' escrow use after graduation and using a triage system to manage FSS coordinators' caseloads.
- In 2025, the percentage of respondents who listed not knowing about the training stipend as the reason they did not request one decreased by 13 percentage points. Many more programs reported that they requested a training stipend under the HUD FSS grant in 2025 than in 2024. Awareness of the flexibility to request a training stipend as part of fringe benefits seemed to be a significant factor, as in 2024, the most common reason for not including a training stipend was that respondents did not know this was an option. In contrast, in 2025, respondents were more likely to report that they did not request training funds because they prioritized funding for training through other sources, which is a positive indication that agencies are vested in the success of their FSS programs.
- Approximately half of programs do not place a cap on the number of interim escrow disbursements participants can take or on the amount that they can withdraw through an interim disbursement. Despite this, it is uncommon for participants to expend all their escrow prior to graduation, which is a positive outcome.
- FSS coordinators come from a wide range of professional backgrounds and experiences.
 - 62 percent have past coaching or case management experience, but others previously worked as administrative staff, had experience with workforce or benefits programs, or had other experiences, such as teaching or other work related to housing.
 - A notable number of FSS coordinators possess lived experience, with 18 percent of respondents stating that they have an FSS coordinator who was previously an FSS participant and 7 percent reporting that they have an FSS coordinator who is currently a resident.
- There is a clear display of strong support for FSS among respondents to the survey. Respondents emphasized the importance and impact of FSS for their participants, sharing stories of how the program has provided significant benefit for the families who have participated. Many respondents posed suggestions for additional resources HUD could provide or potential administrative and legislative updates to the program that they would like HUD to explore, but overall, the most common recommendation was to increase access to the FSS Program both by expanding existing programs and funding new programs.

HUD has identified several areas for exploration based on the interpretation of the survey results. Below are actions that HUD can take in the short term to continue to improve the FSS Program.

- HUD's messaging on best practices and program recommendations can make an impact in the way that PHAs and PBRA owners are implementing FSS. Going forward, HUD

will use FSS Annual Report Survey data to identify areas for improvement in FSS implementation and be strategic in encouraging local programs to adopt best practices.

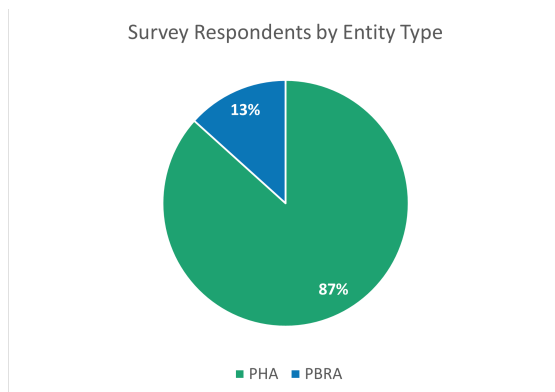
- HUD will continue to develop and make resources available for creative opportunities for training and technical assistance, including collaboration with industry partners, that would allow for continuous professional development for FSS coordinators.
- By observing alternative FSS program structures, such as those implemented through MTW, HUD will continue to learn about the efficacy of program innovations.
- In addition to the funding process updates that HUD made in the FY24 FSS funding cycle, HUD will explore ways to continue to refine and streamline the funding process to reduce administrative burden.

B. Survey Design and Administration

HUD first administered the FSS Annual Report Survey in 2024, collecting data on how FSS programs operated during calendar year (CY) 2023. Based on lessons learned from the administration and results of the first Annual Report, HUD staff made several revisions to the survey to clarify questions that respondents found to be confusing or ineffective, added questions to continue exploring areas of interest identified in the first survey, and updated multiple-choice options to more accurately capture the experiences of FSS practitioners and program participants.

Response collection began on April 10, 2025, and concluded on July 15, 2025. HUD staff conducted outreach and publicized the survey using the FSS mailing list and announcements during monthly FSS Office Hours sessions. In accordance with the OMB-approved collection instrument⁴, HUD used Microsoft Forms to collect survey data. In order to collect data from any organization with an FSS program, respondents accessed the survey using a public link.

To ensure that all responses included in the analysis were from eligible entities, HUD validated all responses against its records of approved FSS programs. There were 968 valid survey responses. 839, or 87 percent, of the responses were from PHAs, and 129, or 13 percent, were from PBRA owners. This ratio is consistent with the ratio of FSS grants made to PHAs and PBRA owners: in the Fiscal Year 2024 funding cycle, 89 percent of FSS grants were made to PHAs and 11 percent were made to PBRA owners.



⁴ OMB Control Number 2577-0178.

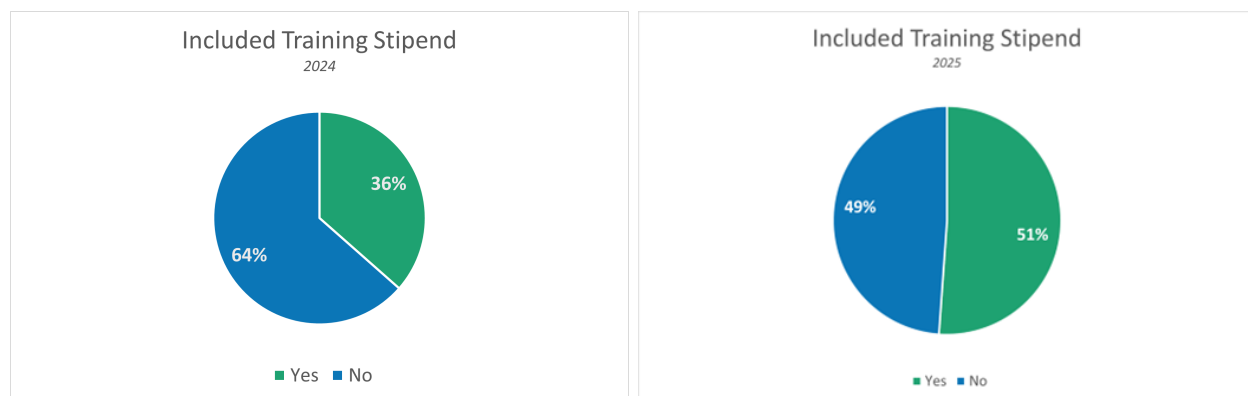
HUD does not have a comprehensive list available of all PBRA owners who operate FSS programs, making it impossible to calculate the survey response rate among PBRA owners. However, this data is available for PHAs. In 2024, the year for which respondents were reporting data in this survey, there were 952 active FSS programs being run by PHAs across the country, both funded and unfunded, serving residents of Public Housing and HCVs. 839 of these responded, resulting in an 88 percent response rate. The survey was designed so that respondents could not submit their responses without filling out every question, so all survey responses were complete. The PHA response rate and percentage of responses from PHAs and PBRA owners were consistent between the 2024 Annual Report and the 2025 Annual Report.

As was the case in the 2024 FSS Annual Report survey, the responses were representative of a wide array of FSS programs. Programs from 49 States, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands submitted responses to the survey. Wyoming is the only State without a respondent and American Samoa is the only territory without a respondent, as there are no active FSS programs in these locations.

C. Changes from 2024 Annual Report Results

1. Training Stipend

The HUD FSS grant can be used only for the salary and fringe benefits of the number of FSS staff positions funded under an agency's grant. However, applicants may include a training stipend in their calculation of fringe benefits when they submit their FSS grant application. HUD encourages grantees to make use of this eligible expense of the grant and to request the amount of funding that they need to cover the cost of FSS coordinator training as part of their fringe benefits. In 2024, the majority of respondents indicated that they did not request funding for a training stipend under the fiscal year (FY) 2022 NOFO, through which HUD awarded funding for CY 2023, the period of performance covered by the 2024 Annual Report. Only 36 percent of respondents stated that they had included a training stipend in their funding request that year. In 2025, however, there was significant improvement in this number, with the majority of respondents now indicating that they did request a training stipend in their fringe benefits in the year covered by the 2025 Annual Report.

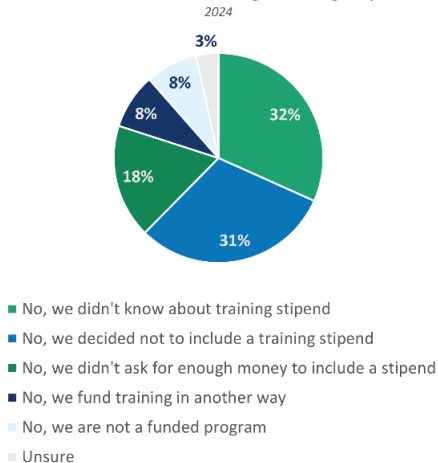


Programs that responded to this question stating that they did not include a training stipend were then asked to choose a reason for why they did not include funding for training in their request.

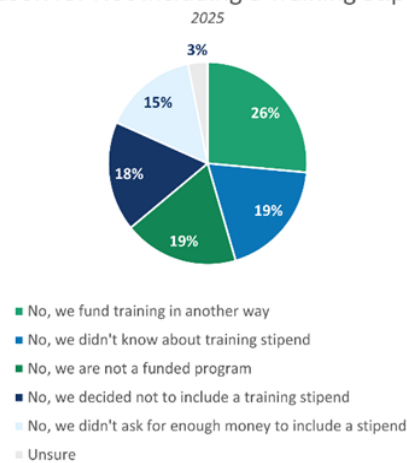
There was another notable shift in these responses between the 2024 and 2025 FSS Annual Report Surveys. In 2024, the most common reason for not including a training stipend was that the respondent's organization did not know about the training stipend availability, with 32 percent selecting this option, and the second most common response was that the organization decided not to include a training stipend. Only 8 percent of respondents stated that they were funding training in another way.

There was a significant change in these responses in 2025. In this year, the most common reason for not including a training stipend was that the agency funds training in another way, up to 26 percent from 8 percent in 2024. Now, only 19 percent of respondents stated that they did not request a training stipend because they did not know they were able to do so. Additionally, only 18 percent of respondents said that they chose not to include a training stipend in their funding request, compared to 31 percent in the previous year.

Reasons for Not Including Training Stipend



Reason for Not Including a Training Stipend



The need for high-quality training on program models and implementation as well as on coaching, case management, and similar skills was identified as a top recommendation in the FSS longitudinal evaluation. The skill and tenure of FSS program managers is one of the top indicators of programs with strong outcomes. HUD staff have made a conscious effort to ensure that FSS practitioners are aware of the training stipend and understand that HUD is supportive of grantees requesting funds for this purpose. These results are highly encouraging in that they indicate that this messaging has likely been effective, as more programs are requesting the training stipend, and when they do not, fewer are stating that the reason they did not request training funds was a lack of knowledge that this was an option.

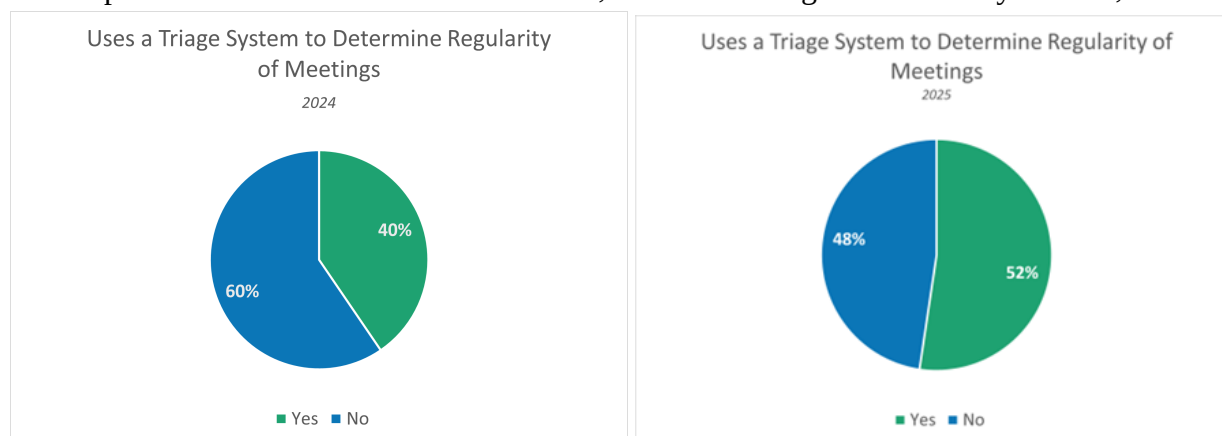
Additionally, respondents who did indicate that they requested a training stipend were asked how much funding they spent on training in 2024. This question was also included in the 2024 Annual Report, however, once HUD analyzed the data, it appeared that the question was ambiguously worded, leading some respondents to answer the question with regard to the total amount that they spent on training across all their FSS coordinators, while others reported the amount that they spent on training per FSS coordinator. As a result, the data was determined to be unreliable and was not included in the 2024 Annual Report.

This year, HUD clarified the question to ask respondents how much they spent per FSS coordinator. The average amount reported was approximately \$4,140, and the median amount was \$2,000. The difference between the median and average amounts reported indicates that there are many grantees who request a lower amount of funding and a smaller number who request larger amounts. When outliers were excluded from the sample, the average decreased to approximately \$2,100, which is consistent with the median amount. Including the cost of travel, this cost is in the range of what an organization would pay to send each FSS coordinator to one multi-day training per year. When asked about the types of training that FSS coordinators attended using these funds, common responses included national FSS conferences, industry conferences with an FSS or Supportive Services track, and in-person or virtual training on FSS regulations and best practices. Attending in-person trainings, conferences, or local/regional practitioner roundtables also provides an opportunity for FSS practitioners to connect with others in the field and establish relationships that result in cross-pollination of ideas, tools, and resources. Given these results, it appears that programs are making use of the option to add training funds to their FSS grant, and that they are doing so in a reasonable way that makes good use of Federal funding.

2. *Triage System and Meeting Frequency*

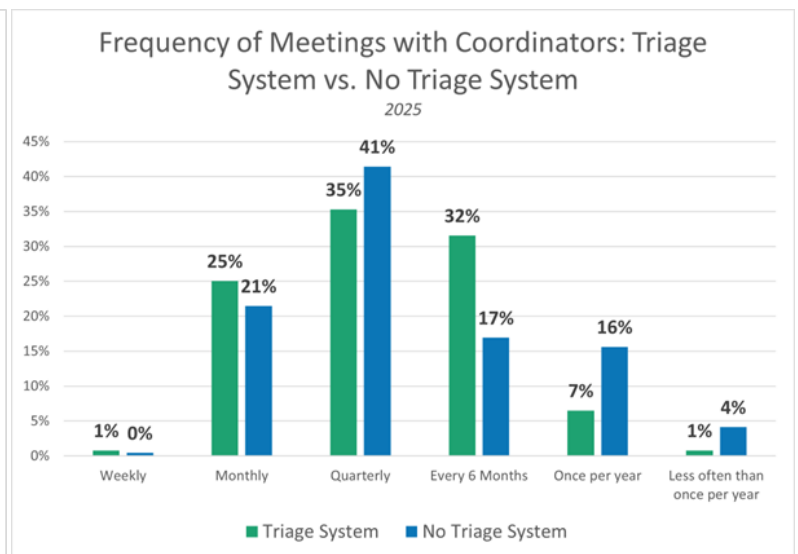
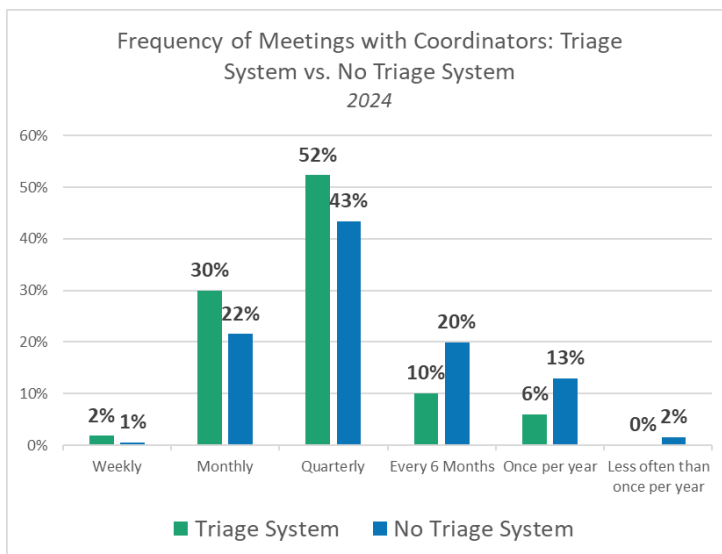
There is a wide range of strategies which FSS coordinators may use to manage their caseloads, but a common one, which HUD considers to be a best practice, is a triage system. Triage systems can take different forms, but the essential concept that is consistent across triage system models is that participants are prioritized according to their level of need. Under a triage system, an FSS coordinator would assess the needs of the residents in their portfolio using a consistent tool and would spend more time working with those who have more intensive needs, and less time with those who have fewer intensive needs.

HUD recommends that programs consider adopting some form of triage system, as this can be an efficient way for FSS coordinators to prioritize those participants who need the greatest amount of support. In the 2024 FSS Annual Report Survey, 40 percent of respondents indicated that they implement a triage system. There was a noticeable shift in the 2025 FSS Annual Report Survey, with the majority of respondents now reporting that they use a triage system, at 52 percent. These results are positive, as they indicate that more programs are adopting this best practice. This strategy also helps supervisors understand the actual time and effort required of FSS coordinators and helps to distribute caseloads. For instance, while an average caseload may be 50:1, a coach



may be able to effectively serve 75 low-need participants at one time but only 20 high-need participants. Some programs with multiple FSS coordinators have been able to identify specific populations with which various FSS coordinators are particularly adept at working. A triage system allows them to better balance families across the available FSS coordinator resources. There was a further interesting difference between 2024 and 2025 Annual Report results when comparing the frequency with which participants meet with their FSS coordinators, separated by whether the program is implementing a triage system. In 2024, programs that implemented a triage system tended to have more frequent meetings between participants and their FSS coordinators. Of those using a triage system, 30 percent stated that most of their participants met with FSS coordinators monthly, compared to 22 percent among programs not using a triage system. Note that 52 percent of programs implementing a triage system indicated that most participants met with FSS coordinators quarterly, while 43 percent of those not implementing a triage system said the same. It was more common for programs without a triage system to report that their participants met with an FSS coordinator every 6 months or once per year than it was for programs with a triage system to do so.

In 2025, however, there was a marked shift in these responses. Programs implementing triage systems became less likely to report more frequent meetings between participants and FSS coordinators. Those implementing a triage system were still more likely to report that most participants met with their FSS coordinator monthly, but the gap between groups narrowed, with 25 percent of those operating a triage system selecting this option compared to 21 percent of those who are not. In 2025, programs implementing a triage system became more likely to meet with their participants every 6 months or less frequently than programs without a triage system, which was a reversal compared to data reported for 2024.

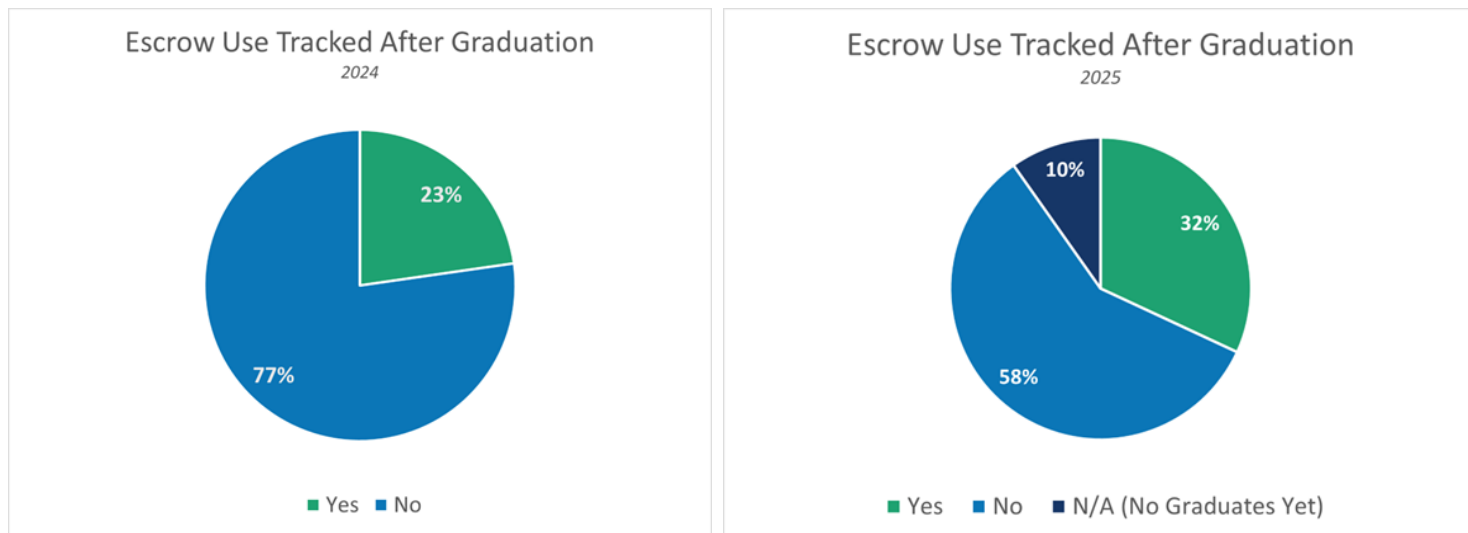


These results are notable in that they may reflect the natural fluctuation that will occur when using a triage system, compared to the relatively static results among those programs who do not implement a triage system. Since participants' level of interaction with their FSS coordinator under a triage system would be determined based on the intensity of their needs, it would naturally follow that there would be variation from year to year based on the makeup of an FSS coordinator's portfolio. In a year where more participants require additional support from their

FSS coordinator, there may be a higher frequency of meetings under a triage system. However, in a year where participants tend to have less intensive needs, implementing a triage system could lead to less frequent meetings. This is evidence that a triage system could support FSS coordinators in managing their caseload more efficiently, as it would help them to prioritize their clients and be flexible in working with them in a way that matches the intensity of their needs.

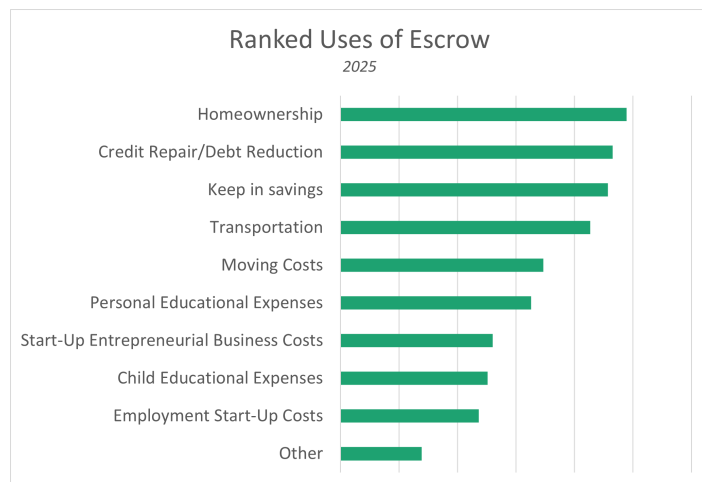
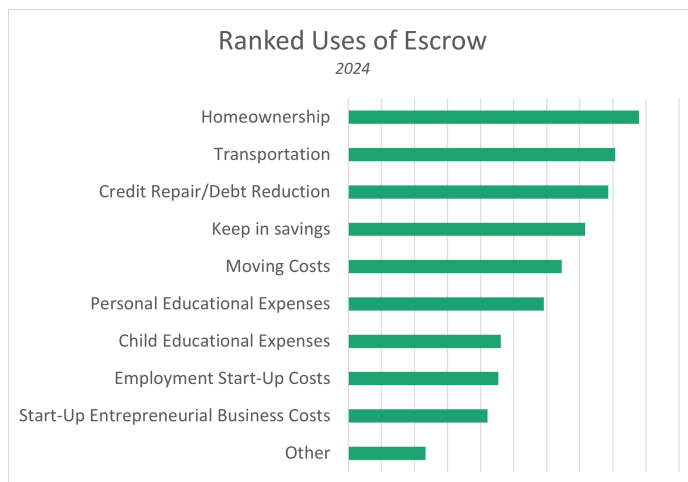
3. *Escrow Use After Graduation*

After graduating from FSS, graduates receive their escrow savings and can use those funds for whatever purpose they choose. PHAs and PBRA owners cannot limit or mandate how a graduate uses their escrow once it is disbursed and are not required to track escrow usage after graduation, but they are permitted to track this data if they choose to do so. Results from the 2024 FSS Annual Report showed that only a small percentage of respondents, 23 percent, were tracking participants' use of escrow after graduation. In the 2025 survey, there was a notable shift, with 32 percent now responding that they track graduates' use of escrow after leaving the program. HUD revised this question in 2025 to allow respondents to indicate that they have not yet had any graduates from the program. 10 percent of respondents chose this option.



While HUD does not mandate FSS programs to track graduates' use of escrow after they leave the program, programs are encouraged to do so. The 2025 survey results indicate that this messaging has been effective in increasing the number of programs who now collect this data.

Respondents who indicated that their program tracks escrow use after graduation were then asked to rank the frequency of categories of potential escrow uses. Despite the increase in the percentage of programs who are tracking the ways in which participants use their escrow after they graduate from FSS, the uses of escrow reported in the 2025 survey were mostly consistent with those reported in the 2024 survey, with few exceptions.



The four most common uses were the same in both years: homeownership, credit repair/debt reduction, keeping in savings, and transportation were the top responses in both surveys. However, ranking of the top four responses changed somewhat in 2025, with credit repair/debt reduction replacing second-ranked transportation, which decreased to fourth place. Homeownership remained the top use of escrow in both years. As noted in last year’s report, this use of escrow may be overrepresented in the survey because it is an outcome that may be easier for a housing authority or PBRA owner to track due to potential connections to HUD homeownership programs. The consistency of this outcome between annual surveys reinforces the importance of this use of escrow, even if it is somewhat overrepresented in the results.

Additionally, there was a change in lower-ranked uses of escrow. In 2024, start-up entrepreneurial business costs ranked as the least common use of escrow with only an open category for other uses ranked below it. In 2025, however, entrepreneurial business costs moved up above child educational expenses and employment start-up costs. These trends will be an area to monitor in future surveys to determine whether this change is an outlier or if it is an indication of a more consistent shift in escrow usage.

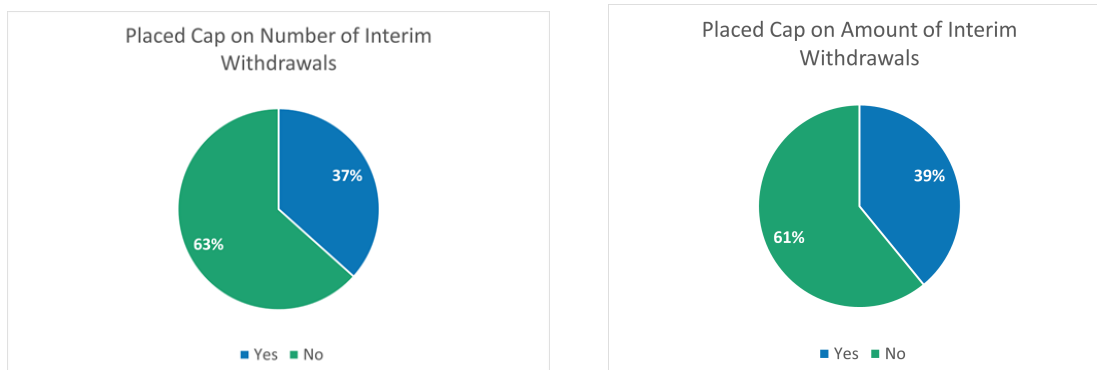
D. 2025 Annual Report Quantitative Results

HUD has built flexibility into the FSS Annual Report Survey to allow for some changes in questions from year to year. Based on the results of the 2024 Annual Report, HUD FSS staff identified topics on which more information would be beneficial and added questions to the 2025 Annual Report to allow for deeper exploration in these areas.

1. Interim Withdrawals

FSS programs have the flexibility to set policies around whether they allow participants to make withdrawals from their escrow accounts while the participant is still enrolled in the program (42 U.S.C. 1437u(e)(2)). HUD recommends this as a best practice, as having access to these funds while in the program can support participants in their goals, for example, by allowing them to repair a car so that they can get to work, giving them funding that they might need to buy a uniform or supplies necessary to start a new job, or making it possible for them to pay the cost of

a training or educational program. In both 2024 and 2025, HUD asked respondents whether they allowed participants to make interim withdrawals, and the results showed in both years that the vast majority of programs are implementing this best practice, with 89 percent stating that they allowed interim withdrawals in 2024 and 90 percent reporting the same in 2025. Those that do not are often very large programs that have intricate accounting systems that make it difficult to allow interim withdrawals for funds in a timely manner that can meet pressing needs.

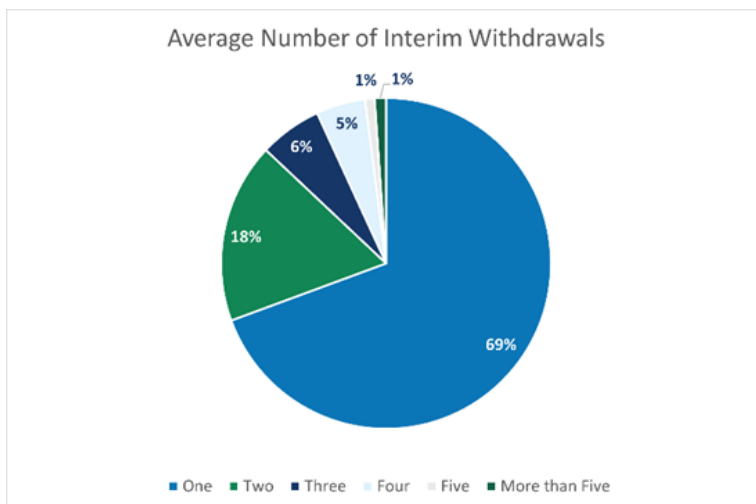


In 2025, HUD added questions to gather more detailed data on FSS programs' interim withdrawal policies. Programs that allow interim withdrawals may still implement some kind of restrictions on the timing of these withdrawals, how often participants can withdraw funds, and the amount of funding a participant can withdraw. HUD asked respondents who allow for interim withdrawals whether they place any kind of cap on the number of withdrawals they allow a participant to make or on the amount of their escrow a participant can withdraw. 37 percent of respondents reported that they place a cap on the number of times a participant can make a withdrawal, and 39 percent capped the amount that a participant could utilize in an interim withdrawal. 48 percent of programs responded that they do not implement either type of cap; just over half of programs are implementing one or both types of caps.

Respondents were asked to provide a description of the caps that they place on interim withdrawals. There was a wide variety of policies, and some placed restrictions on the number of times per calendar year a participant could make a withdrawal, while others placed restrictions on the number of withdrawals permitted over the span of a resident's participation in the program. It is common for programs to allow participants to make withdrawals one to two times per calendar year, though many programs have a more restrictive policy of allowing one to two withdrawals over the course of a participant's time in FSS.

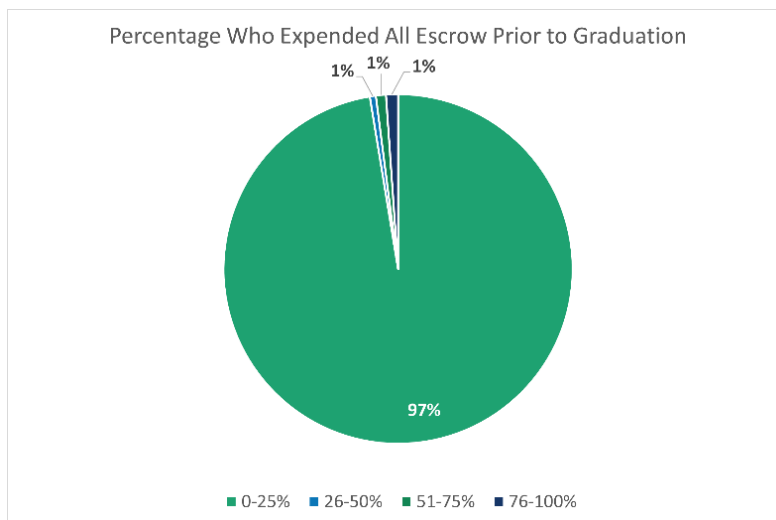
There was also a wide range of monetary restrictions on interim withdrawals reported. Some programs set a dollar threshold under which they would allow for withdrawals; this was often set at \$1,000 or \$2,500. A number of respondents also specified that they allow participants to withdraw up to this threshold each year. Many programs set limits on the percentage that participants could withdraw, though these limits varied widely between respondents, with restrictions set anywhere between 20 percent and 80 percent of a participant's accumulated escrow. The most common response, however, was to limit participants from withdrawing more than half of their current escrow balance.

Additionally, HUD asked respondents to estimate the average number of interim withdrawals that a participant will make during their time in the program. A significant majority of 69 percent said that the average participant makes one interim withdrawal while in the program, though it was somewhat common for respondents to report that their average participant made two interim withdrawals, at 18 percent. An average participant making more than two interim withdrawals is relatively rare, as only 13 percent of respondents selected an option for three or more withdrawals.



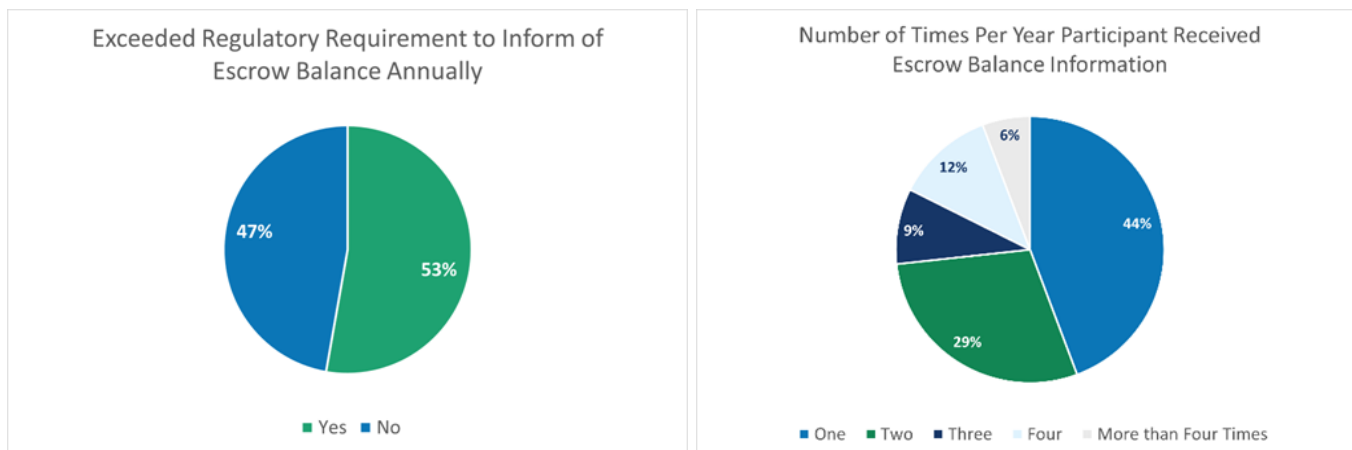
2. *Escrow and Program Exits*

Given the fact that policies allowing interim disbursements are almost universal among survey respondents and that many of these programs did not report having any kind of cap on disbursements, one may wonder if this results in participants significantly spending down their escrow savings before they graduate from the program. To address this concern, HUD asked respondents what percentage of participants expended all their escrow before graduating. The results show that this is very uncommon, with 97 percent of respondents stating that 0 to 25 percent of their participants expend all their escrow prior to graduation.



Additionally, respondents were asked to approximate the average interim withdrawal amount. The average reported was just over \$2,200, and the median reported amount was \$1,600. This indicates that there are likely a small number of higher disbursement amounts that raise the average. However, given that the average escrow payment to graduates with accumulated escrow was over \$11,000 in 2024, both estimates reflect a relatively modest use of interim escrow disbursements.

HUD interprets this as showing fiscal responsibility regarding asset-building, a primary goal of the program. There may be a significant barrier or opportunity that requires an outlay of funds on participants' way to meeting their goals. One of the unique qualities of the FSS Program is that it does allow for accumulated funds to be used to mitigate a derailment. However, these results indicate that interim escrow withdrawals are being used thoughtfully and strategically. An important element of responsible stewardship of FSS escrow is keeping participants informed of their escrow balance. It is a regulatory requirement that FSS programs inform participants of their balance annually, but HUD emphasizes the benefits of more frequent notifications. Regular updates on their escrow balance can be a motivating force for participants, showing them their progress in the program and encouraging them to continue working towards their goals. 53 percent of respondents stated that they exceed the regulatory requirement to inform participants of their escrow balance annually. 29 percent of respondents reported that they inform participants of their escrow balance twice per year, and 12 percent stated that they do so four times per year.

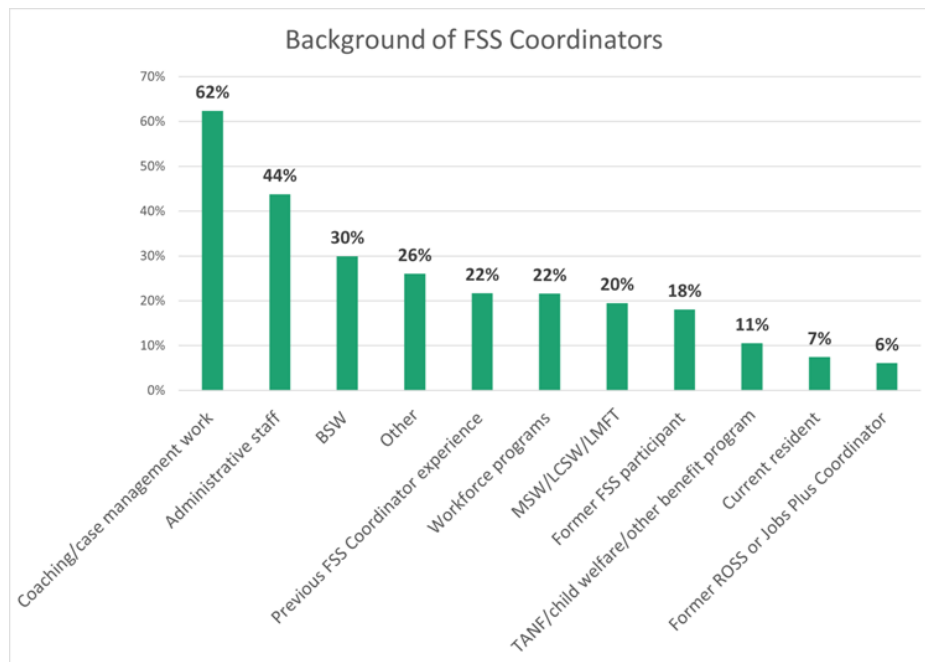


This is a positive indication that the majority of programs are exceeding this regulatory requirement. HUD will continue to message the benefits of frequent escrow balance notifications with the goal of further increasing the number of FSS programs who are keeping their participants informed on their escrow more often than what is required by regulation.

3. *FSS Coordinator Background*

There is a wide array of skills and past experiences which can make a person successful in the role of FSS coordinator, so HUD does not prescribe what qualifications are required in order to become an FSS coordinator. As a result, there is a great deal of variation in the backgrounds of FSS coordinators, both across different programs and between FSS coordinators at the same agency. To gain a better understanding of what the population of FSS coordinators looks like

across the country, HUD added a question in the 2025 Annual Report asking respondents to report what kinds of experience their FSS coordinators possess.



Respondents were able to select multiple options to reflect the full range of experiences of their FSS coordinators. The majority of respondents, 62 percent, indicated that they have an FSS coordinator with past coaching and case management experience, which is a natural fit given the nature of FSS coordinators' responsibilities. The second most common response was that the FSS coordinator has past experience working as administrative staff. This may indicate that agencies promote staff from administrative roles into the position of FSS coordinator. There are six types of experience that appeared with moderate frequency, with between 18-30 percent of respondents selecting these options: a Bachelor of Social Work, other experience not named as an option, previous FSS coordinator experience, experience in workforce programs, a Master of Social Work or another similar qualification, and previous FSS participation experience. Frequent qualifications the respondents named in the "Other" category include past experience working as a landlord or in property management, teaching experience, and a bachelor's degree in a field of study other than social work.

It is notable that 18 percent of respondents stated that they have an FSS coordinator who was previously an FSS participant and that 7 percent indicated that their FSS coordinator is a current resident. HUD has historically emphasized the value that lived experience can bring to the work of an FSS coordinator, as someone who has been in a similar position to the people they are serving may be able to understand their perspectives and experiences more deeply, helping that FSS coordinator to work with participants more effectively. These results show that a significant number of FSS programs employ FSS coordinators with lived experience, which indicates that these programs understand the value that these perspectives can bring.

E. Qualitative Feedback from FSS Programs

The statutory report requirements instruct HUD to ask FSS programs for their feedback on the program.⁵ At the end of the FSS Annual Report survey, following the questions focused on specific policies and practices, there were two additional free response questions that allowed respondents to provide HUD with more open-ended feedback.

1. Additional Resources

The first free response question asked respondents whether there are any additional resources that they would like for the HUD FSS team to provide. In analyzing these responses, there are several primary themes that become clear. The most common response was a request for some kind of specialized training. There was a wide range of topics that respondents requested for this type of training, including escrow calculations and account management, homeownership, goal setting, and program administration. Many other respondents requested further FSS training in general, without naming specific topics. This feedback is consistent with the results of the 2024 FSS Annual Report Survey, and HUD is taking action to address this need that FSS practitioners have expressed. There are multiple technical assistance products that HUD is in the process of developing which will be designed with the goals of delving deeper into specific topics that might come up in the day-to-day work of an FSS coordinator and making it easier for FSS coordinators to find answers to the questions that they may have about best practices and program administration. HUD hopes that these products will be useful in meeting the needs of FSS coordinators.

Similarly, the second most common type of response was a request for HUD to provide more templates and tools that FSS coordinators could use. Examples included sample outreach materials, databases of information on community services, models of forms such Individual Training and Services Plans, and additional webinars and program guidance. HUD has already developed and made available some of the requested resources, such as a sample FSS Action Plan and sample Cooperative Agreements.

Another notable trend was a desire for opportunities to connect with HUD staff and other FSS coordinators in-person through conferences or trainings. Many respondents expressed the value that they find in meeting with their peers face-to-face so that they can hear about what works well in other programs and learn from each other, in addition to requests for more opportunities to connect with HUD FSS staff. Some respondents requested that these events be national, while others noted that it would be useful to hold regional convenings, as programs in the same region may both be facing similar obstacles and have similar resources and opportunities available to them.

Alongside these requests for additional resources, many respondents expressed appreciation for the resources that are currently available. In particular, FSS coordinators appreciated the forms,

⁵ “Each eligible entity that carries out a local self-sufficiency program approved by the Secretary under this section shall submit to the Secretary, not less than annually a report regarding the program. The contents of the report shall include... any recommendations of the eligible entity or the appropriate program coordinating committee for legislative or administrative action that would improve the self-sufficiency program carried out by the Secretary and ensure the effectiveness of the program.” (section 23(m)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437u(m)(1)).

links, and recordings available on the HUD website and the ability to connect with HUD staff directly through monthly Office Hours and the FSS mailbox.

2. Legislative and Administrative Feedback

A second open-ended question asked respondents for their top recommendations for legislative or administrative action that would improve the FSS Program. One of the top responses was a request that funding for FSS be continued and increased so that new programs can receive funding and existing programs can continue to expand to serve more residents. These respondents emphasized the important service that FSS provides for their participants. One FSS coordinator stressed this point:

As an FSS Coordinator, I serve vulnerable households who are actively working toward self-sufficiency despite facing numerous barriers. Through the FSS program, I've supported families who have increased their credit scores, completed IT certifications, secured mental health services, repaired essential vehicles, and even moved into homeownership... These outcomes are not only transformative for the individuals and families we serve but also reflect long-term community benefits. Continued funding ensures this life-changing support remains available and accessible.

Another common theme was suggestions for structural changes to the program. These proposed changes were varied, but common suggestions included requiring FSS participation for residents, implementing an opt-out enrollment model instead of the current opt-in approach, and allowing for additional extensions to the Contract of Participation beyond the 2 years that are currently allowed. Many other respondents requested changes in response to the Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), in particular, allowing for FSS participants to continue requesting interim income recertifications—the process for requesting interim recertifications for increases in income has been significantly altered by HOTMA (see PIH Notice 2023-27 Section I.10 for additional information on the impact of HOTMA on FSS). While the majority of these changes would require legislative action and will not likely be addressed in the short term, there are potential structural changes that would explore some of these suggestions. Namely, the Housing for the 21st Century Act and the ROAD to Housing Act propose to pilot an opt-out model of the escrow account, which would provide an opportunity to test the efficacy of this approach. The bills to establish these pilots are currently being considered by Congress.

Other frequent suggestions included changes to the FSS funding process, most often proposing to use the FSS Achievement Metrics score as a method for rewarding high performing programs and requesting that FSS move to a multi-year funding model. Additionally, many respondents suggested expanding the range of eligible expenses under the grant. While currently, the FSS grant only covers the salary and fringe benefits of FSS coordinators, these respondents requested the ability to pay for administrative costs or direct services for participants out of grant funds.

Throughout these responses, there was strong support for the program and description of the impact that FSS can have on the lives of participants. As one respondent stated,

The tangible results we see with these FSS families in terms of earned income increases, new escrow accounts established, improved money management skills, and greater economic independence, whether or not they graduate from the program in the end, demonstrate what can be accomplished when they come to believe they have a choice in their economic success and aren't limited to a low-income existence. The case management provided through this program helps significantly to combat that limiting mindset.

3. Success Stories

As part of the 2025 FSS Annual Report Survey, HUD asked respondents to share success stories from their participants. Dozens of FSS practitioners submitted stories of their participants which illustrate the impact that FSS has every day on families across the country. Selections of these stories are included below, with names changed to protect FSS participants' privacy.

Savannah Public Housing Authority, GA

Deidre enrolled in the FSS program with an earned income of \$31,000, paying approximately 50 percent of her total rent. Since enrolling, she purchased a new vehicle (a 2025 Toyota) and improved her credit score to 624. She now earns \$80,000 per year, working three jobs. Deidre has also transitioned out of public housing and moved into a house where she is now independently paying rent.

In addition to these milestones, she has made significant personal improvements. Over the past year, Deidre changed her eating habits, committed to regular exercise, and successfully lost over 30 pounds. Professionally, she has been recognized at work for excellent workmanship and was honored as Employee of the Month.

Deidre would like to take a moment to sincerely thank her FSS coordinator for the support, guidance, and encouragement she has provided throughout Deidre's time in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Because of this program, she has been able to reach her goals and, in many areas, exceed what was originally outlined. Deidre is grateful to her FSS coordinator for believing in her and for all that she does to help participants succeed. Her support has truly made a lasting difference in Deidre's life.

Housing Authority of the County of Butte, CA

Anthony joined the FSS program on January 1, 2019, with an annual income of \$9,000, paying only 23 percent of the total rent. He came in with a clear and strong desire to build and expand his own business in landscaping. He's successfully grown his venture quite a bit, and now he's actively working towards bringing on more employees to help him scale even further. His journey has been truly remarkable, from dropping out of school in the third grade to operating a successful business and graduating from FSS with over \$15,400 in escrow.

He currently earns \$22,000 per year with his business and pays almost 40 percent of the total rent. His next big goals include tackling the challenge of getting his contractor's license and exploring opportunities for expansion. His vision is to reach a point where he can focus more on

the strategic side of managing his business, allowing him to oversee operations rather than getting bogged down with all the manual labor himself.

Anthony wanted to share a powerful message with the entire team during his graduation: "If I can achieve these goals, despite all the struggles and hurdles I've faced, then absolutely anyone can too!"

Cumberland Valley Redevelopment and Housing Authority, KY

As a single mother of four for the past 8 years, Teresa's journey has not always been easy. For the largest portion of that time, she relied on State assistance to provide for her four children. While she was grateful for the support, she always wanted to build a more stable and independent future for her children and herself.

During her time in the FSS program, she was not only encouraged to set goals, but she was truly supported in achieving them. Teresa obtained her EMT and Advanced EMT licenses and began the paramedic program. She started FSS with no income and is now earning \$36,000 per year and has purchased her own home.

These accomplishments were life-changing for Teresa and her family. The program helped her believe in her ability to grow professionally and become self-sufficient. The FSS program did more than offer motivation, it provided real, tangible support. Teresa's escrow of more than \$5,000 has helped immensely with her cost of living and the transition toward financial independence. That assistance gave her stability at a crucial time and made it possible for her to focus on continuing her education and career advancement without falling backwards. Because of this program, Teresa is no longer just surviving, she is building a career and a future for her children. The encouragement, guidance, and financial support have truly made a lasting difference in their lives.

Teresa is grateful to all involved in the FSS program for the role they played in helping her reach this point and the impact they have had on her life and the lives of her children.

New Smyrna Beach Housing Authority, FL

Jane began the FSS program making \$19,000 as a dietary employee at a health provider but had goals to increase her income by earning a certification or degree. With the support of her FSS coach, Jane is now working as an anesthesia tech and is making \$37,000 per year, having nearly doubled her income. She started a checking and savings account and began independently saving money in addition to her escrow.

In FSS, Jane learned how to improve her credit by disputing credit charges and making payments. She was able to learn how to better manage her money by attending financial literacy courses via Zoom. Jane even took the initiative to take a homeownership course to teach her how to prepare to own her own home.

Jane graduated from FSS and is living in a home she inherited. She took with her \$13,627.53 in escrow savings. She leaves this advice for anyone in FSS or considering joining the program, "Never give up and keep going. It may seem frustrating...keep up, keep pushing...it's worth it."

Cumberland and Lincoln Housing Authority, RI

At 18 years old, Barbara, along with her family, was uprooted with the unexpected loss of their mother. Without adult guidance and support, they faced the challenges of balancing young adult life with the hard-hitting responsibilities of the real world - rent, food, school, transportation, utilities, and a whole new world to navigate.

Barbara was informed about the FSS program through her housing authority. When she enrolled, she had no income and was paying \$0 rent. Meeting with her FSS coordinator and talking over goals and progress always kept her motivated to focus on the life she wanted to build for herself. Barbara was able to pay off her credit card debt, start a public relations business, graduate from college, and get a great job at a law firm that has helped her sustain herself to this day.

When it was finally time to graduate from the FSS program and leave Section 8, she was able to collect \$4,000 to help her in her new journey of financial independence. Now she is a homeowner and runs a thriving business that continues to grow. She is so thankful for the FSS program and all the amazing women who helped her during that time. She feels that she would not be where she is today without the support from the FSS program.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the 2025 FSS Annual Report Survey, HUD has identified several key takeaways that can be used to improve program administration in the future. First, it is clear that HUD's messaging on best practices and recommendations for program operations influence the way that PHAs and PBRA owners implement FSS. There are multiple areas, including tracking escrow use after graduation, using a triage system for caseload management, and requesting a training stipend under the FSS grant, where grantees reported implementing HUD's best practices more frequently in 2025 than they had in 2024. This illustrates the impact of HUD's communication on program implementation. Going forward, HUD will use the results of the FSS Annual Report Survey to inform communications strategies and to continue to promote the adoption of best practices.

Second, HUD will continue to develop and make additional resources available for FSS coordinators and collaborate with industry partners in an effort to provide opportunities for the continuous development and professional growth of FSS practitioners. Based on the results of the survey, there is a significant appetite among FSS coordinators for additional training and resources, and further support from HUD could help address this need and continue to strengthen program implementation.

Third, many MTW agencies are implementing creative, innovative FSS program models that differ from the standard way in which the program is operated. HUD will continue to observe and collect information on these alternative approaches to the program to learn whether they are effective. By learning about the impact of these innovations, HUD may find lessons that can be applied more widely to both MTW and non-MTW FSS programs.

Finally, while HUD has implemented changes to the FSS funding process in recent years that have greatly increased efficiency, feedback on the FSS Annual Report Survey indicates that there

is still room for improvement in this area. HUD will continue to explore ways in which the application process can be further streamlined to increase efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and allow for more focus to be put on program implementation rather than the application for funding.

HUD is not proposing any legislative or regulatory changes to the FSS Program at this time. This report provides an overview of the information submitted by PHAs and PBRA owners on the operation of the FSS Program in CY 2024 and fulfills the congressional directive in section 23(m)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437u(m)(2)).