

## **Family Self-Sufficiency Program**

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

Will I lose my housing benefits if I join?

**No.** Participation in the FSS program is voluntary. You will continue to receive housing benefits whether or not you complete the program. You have absolutely nothing to lose and a lot to gain by joining the program!

Do I have to be working to join?

**No.** Actually, the best time to join FSS is when you are not working or when you have very little income.

Do I have to be on welfare to join?

**No.** The only requirement to join the FSS Program is that you are a federal public housing or Section 8 resident with Worcester Housing Authority.

How does FSS work?

The Head of Household (HOH) enters into an agreement with the FSS program and is then able to utilize the program for up to 5 years. The HOH and the FSS Coordinator work together to create a plan that outlines the steps that need to be taken for the HOH to reach their goals. The HOH will meet monthly with their FSS Coordinator who will help the family obtain the services needed to achieve their goals. The goals are based upon each individual's plan. No two people on FSS have the same plan, it is based on what you want to accomplish!

What's in it for me?

As an FSS participant you will receive assistance in locating services to help you achieve your goals. Perhaps most exciting, however, is the financial incentive to join the program. As an FSS participant's earned income increases, the WHA deposits the increase in rent into an escrow savings account. The participant continues to pay their rent portion like any Public Housing or Section 8 resident, but receives the escrow money (plus interest) upon successful completion of the program. This money is not taxed as income and has no restrictions!

What's the catch?

To successfully complete the program and receive your escrow money, you must complete the goals outlined in your individual service plan. Furthermore, for twelve consecutive months prior to graduation all household members must be free of welfare (cash) assistance.