



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **HACA's Family Self-Sufficiency Program Receives Grant Award from HUD to Help Low-income Housing Residents Gain Economic Independence**

*Federal funding supports connections to education, employment,  
and financial literacy for Austin families*

**AUSTIN, TEXAS** – The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) is pleased to announce that their Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program has been awarded funding in the amount of \$293,577 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These federal funds allow HACA to provide Service Coordinators for the calendar year 2021. Service Coordinators empower participating families to find jobs, increase earned income, reduce the need for rental assistance, and make progress toward achieving economic self-sufficiency.

HACA has operated a successful FSS program since 1994, with HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) administering on the federal level. HACA's FSS Service Coordinators work directly with residents for up to five years to achieve their goals and to connect them with existing programs and services in the local community. Goals that FSS participants set for themselves may include earning a GED or high school diploma, going to college or finishing a degree, improving credit scores, and building escrow savings with the pathway toward purchasing a home.

"It speaks volumes that HUD has awarded HACA's FSS efforts with this year's funding," said Mike Gerber, HACA CEO. "Our FSS staff takes great pride in the achievements we've had elevating residents during the twenty-three years of this program. Last year we celebrated twenty-seven new resident graduates. They saw an average annual wage increase of \$30,488 individually, and earned a combined amount of \$338,433.83 in escrow savings as a graduating class."

Residents in the program sign a five-year contract of participation and agree to set specific goals and achievements to accomplish during that time. To graduate from the program, the resident must establish employment and may not receive cash welfare assistance for twelve months prior to graduation. Families in the FSS program have an interest-bearing escrow account established for them.

The amount credited to the family's escrow account is based on increases in rent due to improved family income during their time in the FSS program. After graduation, the FSS resident receives the escrow funds to help pay for personal advancements like educational expenses or make a down-payment on a home.

"We are very grateful for this grant award from HUD to continue supporting our families on their transformative journeys," said Becky Summersett, Family Self-Sufficiency Manager for HACA. "Our FSS approach takes into account the whole person and addresses the real-world barriers on their pathway to success. Our community partners play an important role in providing our families the resources needed to achieve their goals. The FSS Program is also able to directly impact our participants with HACA's non-profit, Austin Pathways. Assistance for needs such as child care, school supplies, gas cards, and work equipment is provided to remove barriers so that a participant can attend class or work. When a resident completes this program with a new career, a great credit score, or is prepared to buy their first home, a permanent impact has been made within their family that ripples out to the community."

Residents of HACA's rental assistance programs may apply for the FSS program. To learn more about HACA's Family-Self-Sufficiency Program, visit [hacanet.org/residents/fss-services](https://hacanet.org/residents/fss-services) or email [beckys@hacanet.org](mailto:beckys@hacanet.org).

### **About the Housing Authority of the City of Austin**

Established in 1937, the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) is a public unit of government separate from the City of Austin. HACA's mission is to cultivate sustainable affordable housing communities and partnerships that inspire self-reliance, growth, and optimism. As a High-Performing housing authority that assists over 20,000 Austinites, HACA owns and operates 1,839 units of subsidized housing in 18 developments throughout Austin. For more information, visit [www.hacanet.org](https://www.hacanet.org), or find us on Twitter [@hacanet](https://twitter.com/hacanet).

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