

TCOG Family Self-Sufficiency Program Accepts Grant Award

Nearly \$200,000 awarded to TCOG through HUD

SHERMAN, January 27, 2022 – Eric M. Bridges, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments announced today that the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program received a grant award from the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) in the amount of \$197,458 to support program administration. "These funds are designed to provide clients with the tools necessary to achieve financial self-sufficiency," stated Mr. Bridges.

The Family Self Sufficiency Program coordinates Section 8 Rental Assistance with public and private resources to enable families to achieve economic independence. Each participant is required to establish individual goals and achieve them under a five to seven year contract. The theme of Family Self-Sufficiency is to empower people to take control of their lives and become independent, productive members of the community. By combining HUD's rental assistance program with a package of supportive services, FSS assists families in obtaining the skills they need to achieve financial independence and the pride that goes with it. Research has proven that the FSS program assists families to secure employment, increase wages and accumulate assets.

"People often ask what the Family Self-Sufficiency Program is. I respond it is a program designed to give a hand up, not a hand out. It is a program that changes lives," stated Rayleen Bingham, TCOG's Section 8 Program Manager.

TCOG's Family Self-Sufficiency Program has 94 current participants and 124 clients who have completed the program and graduated, receiving escrow disbursements of \$471,561.32 (Average per person \$3,802.91). Bingham states the FSS Specialist position is the hub of this program. "It requires in-depth case management and the opportunity to connect on a personal level with the participants. To have a successful program, the specialist is required to assume many different roles; Housing Administrator, Financial Advisor, Information/Referral Specialist, and the most important role, a mentor." The FSS Specialist is responsible for actively seeking community support and donations. The only portion of FSS funded by HUD is the rental assistance and escrow incentives.

Family Self-Sufficiency provides each participant the ability to achieve their dreams, provide our community with responsible tax-paying citizens and in turn become role models for future generations.

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

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