



Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, Missouri

201 Switzler Street, Columbia, MO 65203

Office: 573.443.2556 ♦ TTY Relay 800.735.2966 ♦ Fax: 573.443.0051 ♦ www.ColumbiaHA.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Phil Steinhaus, CEO
Columbia Housing Authority

Phone: 573-554-7000

Email Address: psteinhaus@columbiaha.com

Web site: www.columbiaha.com

Columbia Housing Authority Awarded Funds to Promote Family Self-Sufficiency

Columbia, Missouri, July 18, 2016 – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today awarded \$103,675 to the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) to promote Family Self-Sufficiency. This grant is part of an allocation of \$75 million nationwide to help families living in public housing and those participating in HUD's *Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* connect with services to further their education, find good jobs, and to set them on a path to self-sufficiency.

Funded through HUD's ***Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)***, these grants allow public housing agencies (PHAs) to work with social service agencies, community colleges, businesses, and other local partners to help public housing residents and individuals participating in HUD's *Housing Choice Voucher Program* advance their education or gain marketable skills that will help them get a job or advance in their current workplace. As of Fiscal Year 2015, recipients of Project-Based Rental Assistance are also eligible to participate in the program.

“Connecting folks to jobs is an important part of HUD's mission as the Department of Opportunity,” said HUD Secretary Julián Castro. “By linking people to computer access, job training, childcare, and ultimately financial empowerment, these grants help people who are ready to compete and succeed in the workplace. HUD is proud to give them these tools for self-sufficiency.”

HUD's FSS Program helps local public housing authorities hire service coordinators who work directly with residents to connect them with programs and services that already exist in the local community. These Service Coordinators build relationships with the network of local service providers so as to more effectively serve the residents. The program encourages innovative strategies that link public housing and Housing Choice Voucher assistance with other resources. This broad spectrum of services will enable participating families to find jobs, increase earned income, reduce or eliminate the need for rental and/or welfare assistance, and make progress toward achieving economic independence and housing self-sufficiency.

Participants in the program sign a five-year contract that requires the head of the household to obtain employment and that no member of the FSS family is receiving cash welfare assistance at the end of the five-year term. Families in the FSS program have an interest-bearing escrow account established for them.

Columbia Housing Authority Awarded Funds to Promote Family Self-Sufficiency

The amount credited to the family's escrow account is based on increases in the family's earned income during the term of the FSS contract. If the family successfully completes its FSS contract, the family receives the escrow funds that it can use for any purpose, including improving credit scores, paying educational expenses, or a down-payment on a home.

The Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a long-standing resource for increasing economic security and self-sufficiency among participants. HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research issued [Evaluation of FSS Program: Prospective Study](#) in 2011 that evaluated the effectiveness of the FSS Program. Conducted from 2005 to 2009, the study showed that financial benefits are substantial for participants who remain in and complete the program. [An earlier study](#) found that individuals who participated in the FSS program fared better financially than those who did not enroll in the program. HUD is currently conducting a longitudinal study on the program, with the first set of results expected in 2018.

The Columbia Housing Authority employs two Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators who work directly with families receiving housing assistance helping them to develop a five-year plan for self-sufficiency. The CHA currently has 113 families actively enrolled in their Family Self-Sufficiency program.

“Our Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators are key to the success of the Columbia Housing Authority in helping our families create a pathway out of poverty,” said CEO Phil Steinhaus. “The Columbia Housing Authority wants to be a transformational agency that provides more than just housing,” said Steinhaus. “By combining housing with supportive Family Self-Sufficiency services, we transform the lives of our residents by helping remove the barriers they face in breaking the cycle of poverty,” Steinhaus added. “We also address the need for affordable housing as we lift families up and make them self-sufficient where they no longer need our assistance.” “This allows us to provide these same opportunities to other families on our waiting list.

Established in 1956, the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) owns and operates 749 units of affordable housing while also administering 1,180 housing vouchers through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Through these programs, the CHA provides rent subsidies to low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

With over 1,900 units of assisted housing options, the CHA represents approximately 9% of Columbia's rental market. The CHA's mission is to provide safe, healthy, and affordable housing opportunities to low-income individuals and families. In carrying out this mission, the CHA seeks partnerships and collaborative efforts with local organizations and other governmental agencies that provide services to improve the quality of life for CHA residents.

-end-