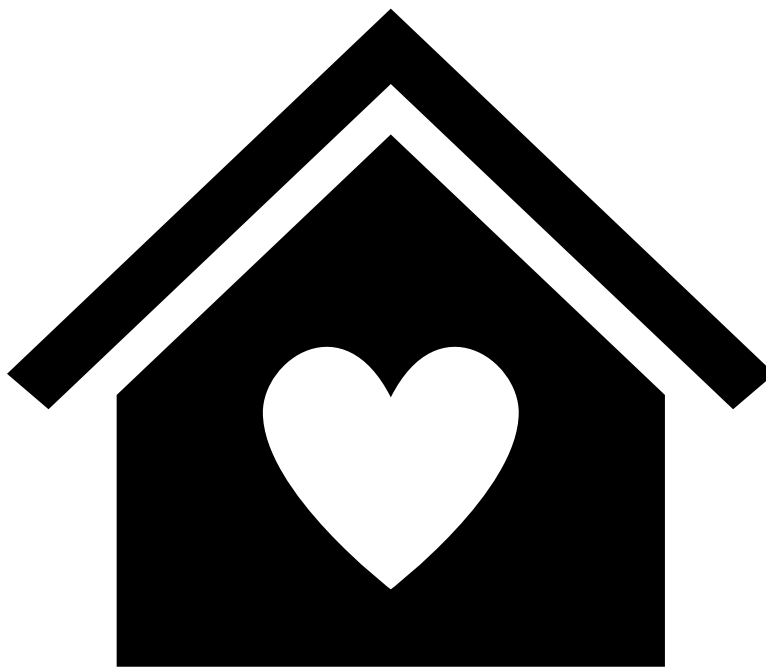


Family Supportive Housing Program

Annual Report: State Fiscal Year 2023



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Program Overview

The Family Supportive Housing (FSH) Program provides intensive case management and service coordination to homeless families with children, following evidence-based practice for housing families with complex needs and multiple-systems involvement¹. The program's goal is to reduce the incidence and duration of homelessness through support for families as they transition to and sustain permanent housing over time. Service coordination and case management focus on the root causes of a family's homelessness; promote resiliency for parents and their children; and help households build financial capability. FSH staff take a holistic, two-generation approach using non-judgmental, positive, and trauma-informed communication and engagement in their support of families. The FSH program² is a key component of ending family homelessness in Vermont by strengthening and supporting families with complex needs, increasing housing stability and reinforcing accountability.

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) administered Family Supportive Housing funding for nine community-based providers in FY 2023:

- Winston Prouty Center in Brattleboro
- Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) & Howard Center in Burlington
- Homeless Prevention Center in Rutland
- Upper Valley Haven in Hartford
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) in St. Johnsbury and Newport
- Family Center of Washington County in Barre
- Sunrise Family Resource Center in Bennington
- Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC) in Springfield³
- Pathways Vermont in St. Albans

¹ *A Practice Framework for Delivering Services to Families in Supportive Housing*, <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Practice-Framework.pdf>.

² For more detail about program design and eligibility see the [Family Supportive Housing Provider Manual](#).

³ Springfield Area Parent Child Center withdrew as an FSH Provider at the end of FY23.

These community-based service providers employed 19 Service Coordinators, who provided customized home-based case management, financial empowerment coaching, life skills support and referrals, tenant education, parent and child resiliency support, and support recovery and treatment. FSH Service Coordinators align and coordinate services with existing Agency of Human Services programs and initiatives. FSH Service Coordinators support enrolled families for a duration of time that is appropriate for each family, usually at least two years, and have the flexibility to exit families and/or continue necessary support as appropriate. Each Service Coordinator maintains a caseload of 12 to 15 families.

State Fiscal Year 2023 Highlights

During FY 2023, OEO and FSH providers continued to experience residual impacts of COVID-19 as a more competitive housing market has emerged, which lengthened the time families are enrolled in the program prior to being housed. This is true across programs as the average length of time people experience homelessness has risen from 79 days in 2018 to 289 days in 2023.⁴ Some providers reported a feeling of hopelessness as households face tremendous challenges in the rental market. In SFY24, OEO continues to support FSH providers in looking for new and creative ways to help families stay positive and actively engaged in the housing search process and in the program.

⁴ Coordinated Entry – System-wide Homeless Data.

SFY 2023 Results at a Glance⁵

Family Demographics

- Total Families enrolled during year: **344**
- Total Adults enrolled during the year: **462**
- Total Children enrolled during the year: **650**
- Total Families exiting the program during the year: **151**
- Total Families active in the program at year end: **217**

Housing Stability

- 62% of active families stably housed.
 - 57% of stably housed families are in good standing with their landlords.

Child Safety

- 90% of active families have children placed in-home.
- 42% of families had an open case with DCF Family Services at enrollment.
- 17% of enrolled families had an open DCF case with Families Services at the end of the year.
- 90% (585) of enrolled children are up to date with pediatric visits.

Engagement

- 85% of active families participated regularly in case management.

Financial Empowerment

- 28% of active families increased their Financial Capability Score
- 33% of active families had savings at year end.

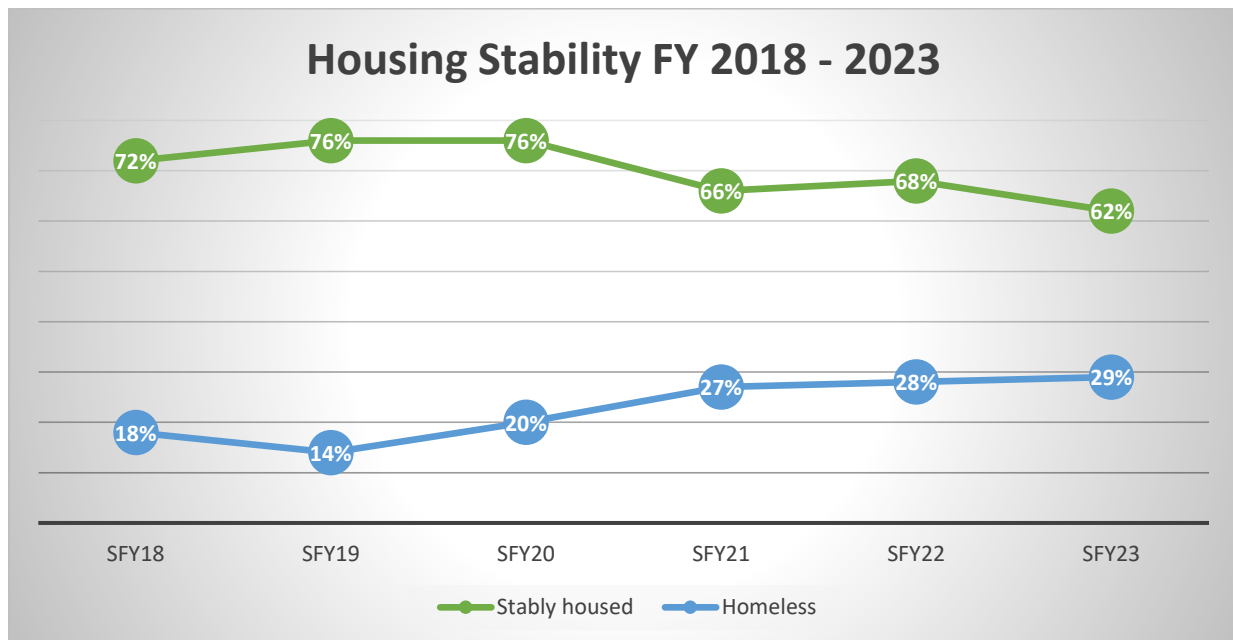
⁵ All percentages in this report based on 217 families active at year end, unless otherwise stated.

Analysis of 2023 Results

The FSH program measures performance in several key areas including:

- Housing Stability
- Family Engagement
- Financial Wellness
- Child Safety
- Adult Health and Wellness

Housing Stability



At the end of SFY 2023, 62% (135) of active families were stably housed. Once housed, the majority of FSH households are living in affordable housing or receiving some type of rental assistance. The remainder of active families include 29% (64) who were homeless and searching for housing, 2% (4) who were housed but considered at risk of homelessness, and data was not collected on 2% (4) of families. 57% (123) of housed families were reported as being in good standing with landlord, this is a significant decline from previous years. Good standing is defined as the absence of lease violations and that if back rent is owed, the landlord and tenant have an agreed upon plan to

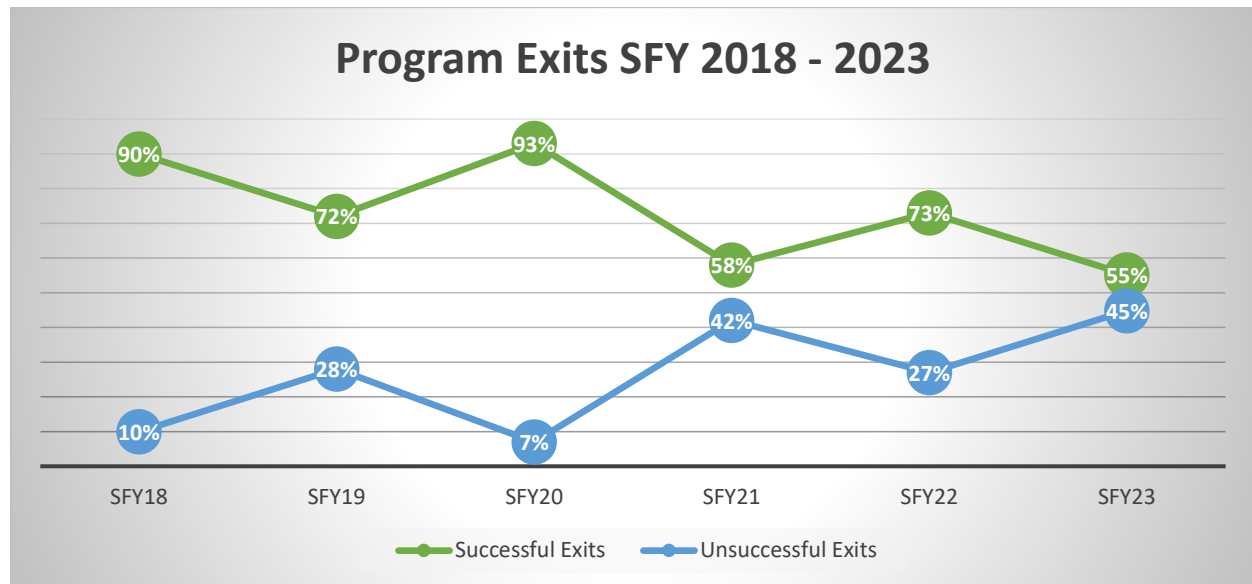
address the issue. For the past few years, many households in the Family Supportive Housing program relied on the VT Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) or Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance (RUERA) for 100% of rental and utility costs. That program was significantly scaled back over the course of State Fiscal Year 2023 and many families found themselves facing housing costs they could not afford without assistance. Over the past year, many other pandemic-era programs aimed at supporting low-income households also ended, such as the expanded child tax credit and additional SNAP benefits (3SquaresVT). The overall impact on families has been a decreased ability to maintain their rental obligations while covering other household costs (e.g., food, clothing). FSH providers are working with households to help them reallocate their limited resources to address increased costs and navigate community resources to preserve their housing.

We have a family that has been significantly delinquent with their rent several times. It's been so chronic that, even though they catch up eventually, the landlord is considering eviction as it's too hard to maintain the flow of income for them with this unit and they are a small landlord with just a few units. The last time they needed assistance, we were able to help them apply for HOP funding with the understanding that they would do a budget and stick with it. With a careful budget they decreased their spending and have been able to stay on track for almost a year. They have become more comfortable talking with the service coordinator about financial issues as they arise, and the landlord has commented that they are appreciative of the effort the family is making. They have become more financially stable through this process and are considering the FSH savings program as well to "plan for a rainy day."

From Family Center Washington County,

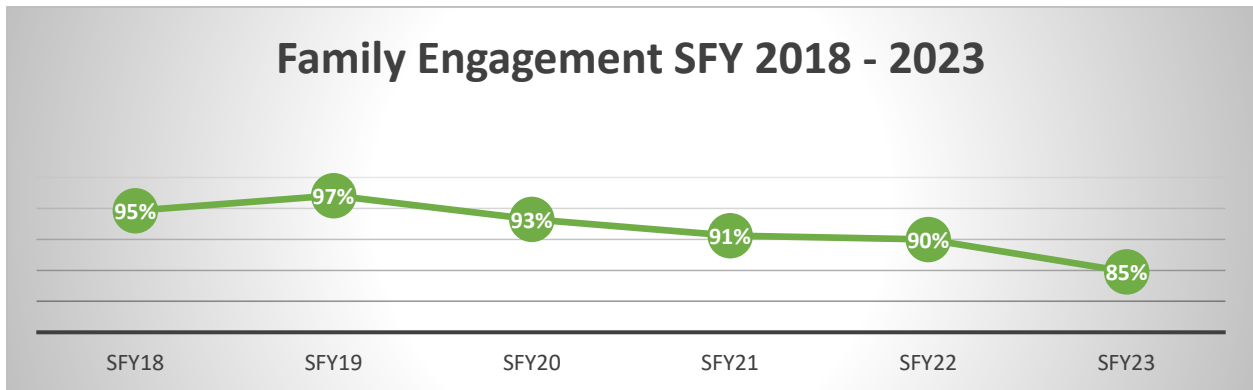
FSH providers continue to use a wide range of financial support to help families find and retain stable housing including rapid re-housing subsidies, Housing Choice vouchers, Family Unification vouchers, and more.

Exits



In the fourth quarter of SFY2023 29 families exited FSH. Of these families, 55% (16) exited successfully while 45% (13) exited unsuccessfully. Unsuccessful exits included a mix of households who were still experiencing homelessness and those who were housed. For households experiencing homelessness, FSH providers reported the lack of affordable housing and the increased length of time to find housing as a driving factor. FSH providers struggled, in some instances, to help families see the services as worthwhile when up against these systemic issues. OEO is prioritizing engagement as a topic of work with FSH providers this year. The end of the VERAP/RUERA funding this past year also significantly impacted households, OEO is working to make sure FSH providers can direct families to resources that are still available this year. FSH providers saw an increased impact from substance use on households, both housed and unhoused. OEO will continue to bring in subject matter experts to support FSH providers on this topic through training opportunities this year. At the end of SFY2023, OEO worked with FSH providers to update guidance around program exits. This included requirements for outreach and notification as well as consultation. It is hoped this will also have a positive impact on exits in SFY2024.

Family Engagement



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In Q4 of SFY 2023 85% (185) of active enrolled families participated regularly in case management, compared with 90% (223) in SFY 2022. Ninety-six percent (208) of active families actively engaged with service providers at least once during the fiscal year. Families enroll in FSH when they are experiencing homelessness. Remaining engaged in FSH during these early months can be hard for families who are struggling more than ever to access safe, affordable housing.

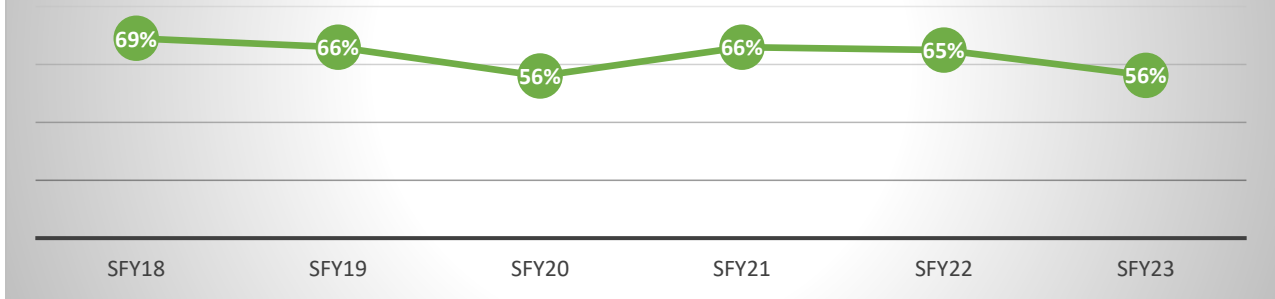
Child Health and Safety

FSH aims to work in partnership with families involved or at risk of involvement with the child welfare system to help create a safe environment for children and offer ongoing encouragement to the family as they work to have their child welfare case closed. In SFY 2023, 10% (22) of families had children placed out of the home, which was a slight increase from 8% seen in SFY2022. Eighteen percent (38) of active families had an open DCF case at year end. 90% (585) of children active at the year-end were up to date with pediatric well visits, compared with 94% (458) in SFY 2022. 56% (122) of families active at year end reported experiencing food insecurity compared with 65% (162) in SFY 2022.⁷

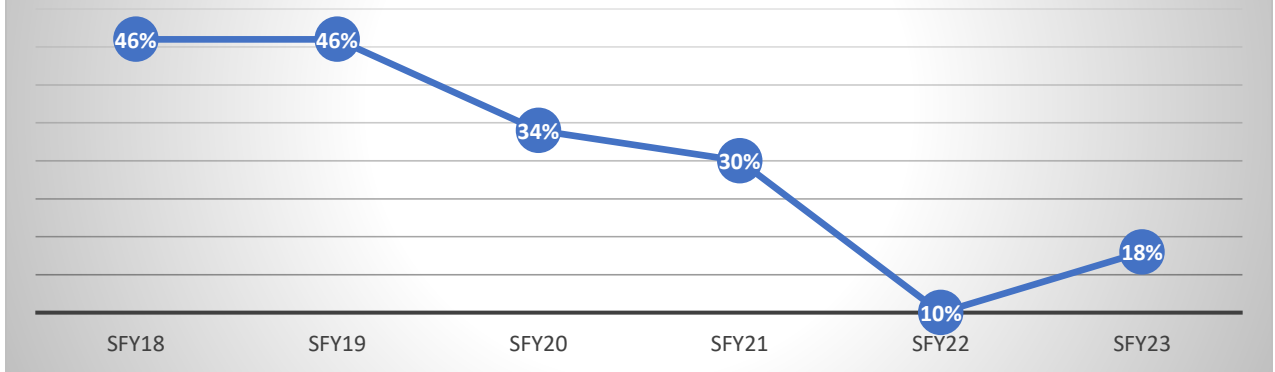
⁶ Graph based on measure “Families regularly participating in case management and program meetings active Q4”

⁷ As measured by the Hunger Vital Sign. [The Hunger Vital Sign™ - Children's HealthWatch](https://www.childrenshealthwatch.org) ([childrenshealthwatch.org](https://www.childrenshealthwatch.org))

Families Reporting Food Insecurity via Hunger Vital Sign SFY 2018 - 2023



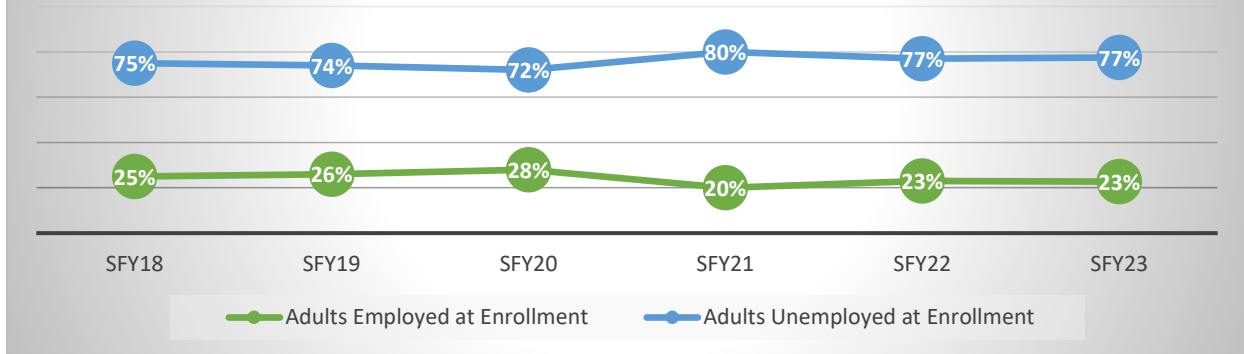
Active Families with open DCF case SFY 2017 - 2023



Financial Wellness

In SFY 2023, a total of 462 adults were enrolled in FSH. Seventy-seven percent (358) were unemployed at enrollment, and 23% (105) were employed at enrollment. Of the 358 adults who were unemployed at enrollment, 11% (30) secured employment by year end, <1% (2) entered a job training or education program, and 37% (106) secured other income. Thirteen percent (36) of active employed adults maintained employment for 6 or more months during the state fiscal year.

Adult Employment Status at Enrollment SFY 2018 - 2023

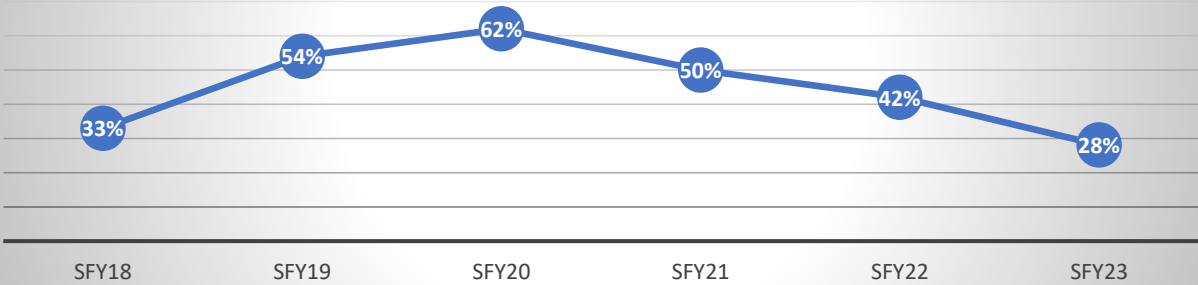


In SFY 2023, 33% (72) of active families reported having savings at year end and 14% (30) of families reported increasing savings during Q4 compared with 15% (38) of families who increased savings last year. Sixty-four percent (140) of active families had access to mainstream banking⁸ services at year end. Twenty-eight percent (61) of active families reported an increased financial capability score⁹. FSH providers focused more time on the housing search process than they have had to in prior years and getting families to participate in financial empowerment discussions was more challenging. Personal finance and finding and maintaining housing are intertwined. OEO is prioritizing financial empowerment training and technical assistance to FSH providers in SFY2024 to serve families effectively in achieving their goals.

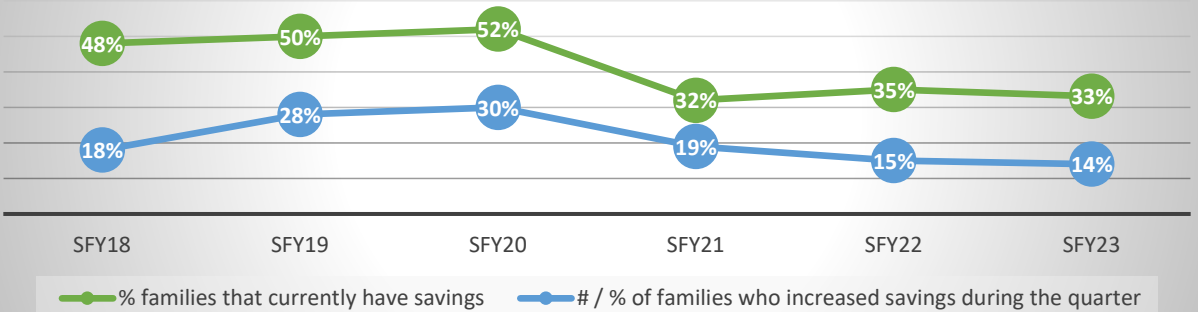
⁸ Defined as access to a FDIC or NCUA insured account.

⁹ The financial capability score measures financial knowledge and wellbeing from the perspective of the family. [Financial Capability Scale \(FCS\) – Financial Coaching Strategies \(wisc.edu\)](https://www.wisc.edu/financial-coaching-strategies/)

Families With Increased Financial Capability Score SFY 2018 - 2023



Family Savings Status SFY 2018 - 2023



One family was recently housed. During our working together, the mother secured an apartment and a job enabling her to become more financially independent. Making small, achievable goals was a huge motivator for this client as she enjoys being recognized for her accomplishments. She is currently taking advantage of the FSH savings program and has been successful each month in making her minimum deposit.

From Sunrise Family Resource Center, Bennington

Acknowledgements

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity would like to acknowledge the tremendous work and thank all our FSH program staff, who continue to provide intensive case management to combat homelessness, one family at a time. FSH is recognized as a solution-based tool to address family homelessness, and the expansion of this program is based on your dedication and hard work.