

Appendix C: FSH Step-down and Exit Guidelines

Each family has a unique path through the FSH program, and all will exit at some point. Most program exits will be positive because the family will be moving from reliance on on-going case management services to greater reliance on themselves and the networks they have built. It is also the reality that a smaller number of exits may be considered negative (such as exits due to lack of engagement and family status changes).

The guidelines below (adapted from guidance used by the *Connecticut Intensive Supportive Housing for Families Program*) offer a shared approach we can take to stepping down service intensity and program exit. In all situations, it is important to take a person-centered approach and value the family's voice in the process.

Step-down in Service Intensity

All adult family members are involved in the decision-making process for the step-down and the decision on who to include when meeting to plan for step-down. A decision and plan is agreed upon based on all of the following factors:

1. The client's desire/perception of readiness to step down.
2. FSD case is closed.
3. The client is affordably housed. Indicators of affordable housing include:
 - a. Has a Family Unification or Housing Choice (Section 8) voucher.
 - b. In a subsidized housing unit capping rent at 30% of income; OR
 - c. Is paying full market rent or mortgage at a rate of 50% or less of monthly income and has a detailed monthly budget that shows this is sustainable.
4. The client is in good standing with landlord or mortgage holder. Indicators include:
 - a. History of paying rent or mortgage on time.
 - b. Family is proactive about communicating with landlord and independently addresses issues if they arise.
 - c. Family constructively addressed conflict with other tenants if it arises; AND
 - d. All utility and other high priority housing payments are currently being made on time.
5. Housing is safe. Indicators include:
 - a. Good physical condition and passes any necessary inspections; AND
 - b. Where domestic violence is an ongoing factor, location is unknown to abuser OR abuser access is restricted (incarcerated, RFA order in place, etc...)
6. The client is employed and/or receives adequate financial resources to meet their basic needs.
7. Family has shown growth in the financial knowledge and skills needed to support long term maintenance of affordable housing. Indicators include one or more:
 - a. Consistent maintenance of a monthly budget
 - b. Confidence in ability to achieve financial goals.
 - c. Has established savings in an FSH Family Savings Account

- d. Has shown progress since program enrollment as measured by the Financial Capability Scale
8. Family is engaging with adequate, applicable formal and informal supports as defined in service plan.
9. Service plan goals reveal progress and assessment outcomes support step-down in service intensity.

Step-up in Service Intensity

When deemed appropriate and/or requested by the client, increasing service intensity shall be reviewed and implemented, using the same guidelines for stepping down.

Planning for Voluntary Exit

Decrease in service intensity is integrated and documented into the exit planning process.

Guidelines for program exit are the following:

- Pursued only upon agreement with all adult family members.
- Family adequately meets the criteria for Step-down in Service Intensity listed above as determined together by family and service coordinator.
- Exit is planned six weeks prior to expected exit date.
- Gradual decrease in frequency of case management (such as transition from two visits per week to one visit a week, for two to three weeks)
- Visits continue at least once every other week in final six weeks leading up to exit.
- Program accomplishments celebrated with family in last planned meeting prior to exit.
- Stability plan is reviewed with family in last planned meeting prior to exit and they are provided with a copy.
 - Plan includes program contact info, in case future needs arise.
 - Plan includes option for a post-exit check-in after three months.
- Family has made plans for how to access and use money accrued in FSH Family Savings account.
- Landlord or property manager is notified of family's exit.

Planning for Other Types of Exits

Other exits may sometimes be necessary and should be handled on a case-by-case basis. This may include changes in eligibility (for example: situations where there are no longer minor children in the household), significantly limited or loss of contact with the family, and other scenarios. Guidelines for program exit are the following:

- Service Coordinators should have a plan to engage the family and meet them where they are.
- Outreach attempts should vary (phone, email, in person, letters, dates, times, location, etc.) and be documented. Team members should be consulted and included as part of the engagement and decision-making process (Reach Up, Family Services, landlords, and other providers).

- Utilize written plans around expectations for meetings, and document attempts and outreach efforts.
- In circumstances in which a household is no longer eligible, the FSH provider may support a transition process (on average 30-90 days).
- Refer to other local service providers as appropriate for ongoing supports.
- OEO may be consulted as part of the planning process.
- All decisions should be reviewed and approved by the FSH program supervisor.
- Final notification for exiting the program should be documented and provided in writing.