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Center for Social Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston

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# Family Self-Sufficiency Program: An Evaluation

Center for Social Policy

John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies

## Summary

The **Center for Social Policy (CSP)** serves as a strategic learning and evaluation partner to The Boston Foundation, relative to its collective investments in the Fairmount Corridor. The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership's (**MBHP**) Family Self-Sufficiency (**FSS**) program is one of **TBF's** people-oriented Fairmount Corridor investments. The **FSS** program is part of a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) program to promote economic advancement for families receiving housing assistance.

## Results/Impacts

MBHP received a 5-year, \$500,000 grant from TBF to expand participation in the FSS program, particularly in Boston's Fairmount neighborhoods. The MBHP FSS program is designed to provide participants with additional case management and access to opportunities and services aimed at helping participants reach goals related to economic advancement. Over time, as participants earned income increases, they accrue savings in an escrow account, built up in lieu of increased rents. Evaluation findings to date include:

- The program has increased the number of total participants to 375 (baseline 216) with about 70% residing in the Fairmount Corridor neighborhoods.
- FSS participants residing in the Fairmount Corridor have seen their combined escrow balance increase to \$427,000 and combined earned income increase to over \$2 million.

## Conclusion/Next Steps

- Conducting quantitative analysis on the characteristics of successful program participants.
- Interviewing participants to learn more about what it takes to advance economically given their participation in the **FSS** program.
- Surveying **MBHP's** partners to understand the depth of these connections and how partnerships contribute to service quality.
- Conducting analysis on who applies to the program versus who does not, as well as what happens to program graduates.

## Research Questions

- How have program outcomes changed during the study period and how do they compare to other **FSS** programs?
- How do different family circumstances (e.g., service needs, income level, employment status, educational attainment, and care responsibilities) relate to outcomes?
- How does **FSS** partnership engagement during the study period enhance the variety and quality of supports and resources for program participants?

## Approaches and Methods

The **CSP** evaluation approach is intended to facilitate real-time learnings that promote data informed reflection, planning and decision making as the **FSS** initiative evolves. Our approach also generates policy relevant information on the **FSS** expansion and implementation for broader state and national family asset development audiences. The evaluation team uses *quantitative* and *qualitative* data collection and analysis strategies.

## Partnership Information

- **The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership**
- **The Boston Foundation**

## References and Resources

- **The Center for Social Policy**—<http://www.umb.edu/csp>
- **The Boston Foundation**—<https://www.tbf.org/>
- **The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership**—<http://www.mbhp.org/>