



## Emergency Food & Shelter Program (EFSP)

### **Program Overview and Purpose**

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is a federally-funded program administrated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Unlike FEMA's disaster assistance programs authorized under the Stafford Act, EFSP is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (PL 100-77). Implementation of the EFSP is not contingent on a Presidential disaster declaration, and funds are not to be used to provide emergency assistance for circumstances that are the immediate result of a disaster situation.

The purpose of the EFSP is to supplement and expand the ongoing work of local social service organizations, both non-profit and governmental, to provide shelter, food and supportive services to individuals and families who have economic emergencies. Accordingly, EFSP funding is open to all organizations helping hungry and homeless people, as well as organizations that support those at risk of becoming hungry or homeless due to economic hardships.

### **Client Eligibility**

The EFSP is a needs-based program for which clients must qualify. Local Boards may determine client eligibility for EFSP or use established LRO eligibility. Any criteria used must provide for assistance to needy individuals without discrimination (age, race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, economic status or sexual orientation), sensitivity to the transition from temporary shelter to permanent homes, attention to the specialized needs of homeless individuals with mental and physical disabilities and illness, and to facilitate access for homeless individuals to other sources of services and benefits.

### **Eligible Program Services**

Eligible services that LROs may provide to clients using EFSP funds are:

- Food, in the form of served meals or groceries
- Lodging in a mass shelter or hotel
- One month's rent, mortgage, and/or utility bill payment
- Transportation costs associated with the provision of food or shelter
- Minimal repairs to mass feeding or sheltering facilities for building code violations or for handicapped accessibility
- Supplies and equipment necessary to feed or shelter people, up to a \$300 limit per item

### **Program Structure and Administration**

A national board, chaired by FEMA, with representatives from American Red Cross; Catholic Charities USA; The Jewish Federations of North America; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; The Salvation Army; and United Way Worldwide, is the sole recipient of EFSP funds from FEMA and establishes the program's policies, procedures, and guidelines. United Way Worldwide also serves as the National Board's Secretariat and Fiscal Agent, administering the program on a day-to-day basis. In alignment with the program's mission, the National Board seeks to allocate funds to the neediest areas in the country, ensure fast response, foster public-private sector partnerships, ensure local decision-making, and maintain minimal, but accountable, reporting.

The National Board provides EFSP funds to local jurisdictions (counties or cities) based on an allocation formula using the most recent national population, unemployment, and poverty statistics. Those jurisdictions that qualify for an allocation must each convene a local board comprised of representatives at the local level of the same organizations as those on the National Board; a local government official must serve in place of the FEMA representative. In jurisdictions where affiliates of National Board agencies do not exist, other appropriate representatives should be invited to sit on the Local Board. For example, if there is no Catholic Charities, a comparable Roman Catholic group or a priest could serve. Each Local Board must have a tribal representative if the jurisdiction is located within or encompasses any federally-recognized tribal land, and each Local Board must have a representative who is homeless, formerly homeless, or a former recipient of program services.

Additionally, the National Board encourages organizations representing or serving the special emphasis groups named in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act be included on Local Boards. These groups include the elderly, families with children, veterans, and the physically and mentally disabled.

Each Local Board decides which local social service organizations (called Local Recipient Organizations [LROs]) in their jurisdiction are to receive program funds. Local Boards publicly advertise the availability of funds in the print media and local social service organizations apply for the funds using their Local Board's written application process. Once the Local Board has made its funding determinations, it submits a Local Board Plan which appraises the National Board of the LROs selected and how the funds are to be used. The National Board then disburses funds directly to LROs that, along with their Local Boards, have met all program and grant requirements and have no outstanding compliance problems from prior years.

For more information in the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, please visit:  
<https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/index.cfm>