

Emergency Food and Shelter Program

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is a federally funded program administered by FEMA. Authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77; reauthorized under P.L. 100-628), EFSP implementation is not contingent on a Presidential major disaster declaration. The EFSP funding is for people with non-disaster related emergencies and can be used for a broad range of services.

EFSP supplements and expands ongoing work of local social service organizations, both nonprofit and governmental, to provide shelter, food and supportive services to individuals, families, and households who have economic, non-disaster related emergencies. EFSP funding is open to all organizations helping individuals, families, and households who are experiencing, or at risk of, food insecurity and/or homelessness.

Eligible Program Services

Local private or public organizations that receive EFSP funds may use these funds to provide the following services:

- Food in the form of served meals or groceries
- Lodging in a mass shelter, or in a hotel/motel or other off-site shelter facility limited to 30-days assistance per individual or household
- One month rent or mortgage, and/or utility, assistance to prevent eviction or foreclosure.
- Transportation costs associated food or shelter
- Minor emergency repairs of small equipment essential to mass feeding or sheltering, not exceeding \$300 in repair costs per item
- Emergency repairs to comply with building code citations for mass care feeding or sheltering facilities, not exceeding \$2,500
- Expenses incurred making mass feeding or sheltering facilities accessible for individuals with disabilities, not exceeding \$2,500
- Supplies and small equipment essential to feed or shelter people, not exceeding \$300 per item.

Program Structure and Administration

The EFSP National Board is the sole recipient of the EFSP grant award from FEMA and establishes the program's policies, procedures, and guidelines. FEMA chairs the National Board 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. United Way Worldwide also serves as the National Board's Secretariat and Fiscal Agent, administering the program on a day-to-day basis. 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.



National Board

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. Jurisdictions that qualify for an allocation must 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 representatives do not exist, other appropriate representatives should be invited to sit on the local board.

Local Boards

Local boards must include in their membership a representative who is homeless, formerly homeless, or a former recipient of program services. If the jurisdiction is located within or encompasses any federally recognized tribal lands, the local board must invite a tribal representative from each tribe to serve on the board. If a jurisdiction has a tribal population, then a tribal representative must also be invited to serve. Additionally, the National Board encourages local boards to expand their membership to best reflect the community. In expanding membership, local boards must:

- Involve organizations that advocate for or provide services to the elderly, families with children, veterans, and individuals with disabilities;
- Publicly advertise availability of funds and application guidelines;
- Evaluate applications and determine which local private or public organization applicants will receive EFSP funding; and
- Notify the National Board on how funds are to be used and which organizations were selected for funding, as the National Board disburses awards directly to the recipient organizations. Recipient organizations must agree to all program and grant requirements, and resolve outstanding compliance problems, before funds can be released.

Client Eligibility

The EFSP is a needs-based program for which clients must qualify in order to receive assistance. Local boards may determine eligibility requirements for clients seeking assistance based on need for EFSP or may use established local recipient organizations' eligibility requirements. All clients must provide assistance:

- Without discrimination (age, race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, economic status, or sexual orientation);
- With sensitivity to the transition from temporary shelter to permanent homes;
- With attention to the specialized needs of homeless individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities and/or illnesses; and
- With a focus on facilitation of access for homeless individuals to other sources of services and benefits.

Service fees for EFSP assistance are prohibited. Further, eligibility cannot be conditioned on attendance at, or participation in, religious or counseling services.