

Emergency Food and Shelter Program

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is a federally funded program administrated by FEMA.

EFSP is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77; reauthorized under P.L. 100-628). Implementation of the EFSP is not contingent on a Presidential major disaster declaration. EFSP funds are for people with non-disaster related emergencies and can be used for a broad range of services.

The EFSP supplements and expands the ongoing work of local social service organizations, both nonprofit and governmental, to provide shelter, food, and supportive services to individuals, families, and households who are experiencing, or at risk of, hunger 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, a hotel or motel or another off-site shelter facility limited to 30-days assistance per individual or household.
- One month rent or mortgage assistance to prevent eviction or foreclosure and/or utility assistance.
- 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. The National Board governs the program nationally and selects jurisdictions – both counties and cities – with the highest need for food and shelter assistance and determines the amounts allocated to each. The allocation formula is devised by using the most recent national population, unemployment, and poverty statistics. Those jurisdictions that qualify for allocations must convene decision-making bodies called local boards. Local boards are responsible for making award determinations for local recipient organizations providing eligible program services.



National Board

FEMA chairs the National Board which consists of 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 nationally on a day-to-day basis.

Local Boards

Local boards must be 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 must also 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 invite organizations that advocate for or provide services to the elderly, families with children, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

Local boards advertise the availability of funds, establish priorities among community needs, award funds to recipient organizations, notify the National Board of funding decisions so the National Board can disburse funds directly to recipient organizations, and monitor and assist recipient organizations to ensure they follow program guidelines.

Client Eligibility

EFSP is a needs-based program for which clients – individuals, families, and households who are experiencing, or are at risk of, hunger or homelessness – must qualify in order to receive assistance. Local boards may determine eligibility requirements for clients seeking assistance based on their need for EFSP assistance or may use established recipient organization eligibility requirements.

All EFSP assistance to clients must be provided:

- 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.
- 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.