



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Aging and Adult Services**

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Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary

Dennis W. Streets, Director
919-733-3983

January 12, 2011

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: Directors
Special Assistance Supervisors
Adult Services Supervisors**

SUBJECT: Restructuring of Special Assistance Program

This letter is to inform you about a restructuring within the Adult Services Section at the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). As you know, the Adult Programs Representatives (APRs) currently provide Special Assistance (SA) consultation and technical assistance via on-site visits, telephone calls and e-mails to their assigned county departments of social services (DSS). They also conduct the training for the case management component of the SA In-Home Program. SA policy development and the delivery of other SA training events have been the responsibility of staff in the Section's SA Unit located in the Raleigh office. SA program compliance monitoring has been conducted by other field-based staff who are part of the SA Unit.

Effective with the receipt of this letter all SA program activities, i.e., consultation, technical assistance, training, and program compliance monitoring will be consolidated within the SA Unit in the Adult Services Section. As a result of this change, the APRs will no longer be the primary point of contact for the SA Program with one exception. They will continue to provide consultation, technical assistance, and training for the case management component of the SA In-Home Program. DSS adult services staff should continue to contact the APR assigned to their county for all questions pertaining to SA In-Home case management. All activities related to SA eligibility will be handled by the SA Unit. We believe this restructuring will allow us to provide better customer service to you and your staff and will simplify and streamline your access to SA consultation and technical assistance.

As part of our restructuring effort, an e-mail listserv has been established and will be managed by our SA Unit staff. Currently, our SA Program Representatives are Brenda Porter and Angie Phillips. Our other SA Program Representative is on extended leave. Chris Urso is the SA Program Administrator. The listserv address is specialassistance@dhhs.nc.gov.

DSS staff should immediately begin submitting all SA questions (except SA In-Home case management) to this address based on the procedures listed below. Callers will be asked to submit questions to the listserv. Using the listserv will help to assure that questions will be handled in a timely manner with all responses provided in writing.

Counties should use their internal resources when SA policy or procedural questions arise. SA income maintenance caseworkers should first consult the SA policy manual, their lead worker and their supervisor. If questions remain after these internal resources have been exhausted, the supervisor should then submit the question via specialassistance@dhhs.nc.gov. All e-mails should:

- Protect client confidentiality. EIS case IDs should be provided, if available. No Medicaid IDs, social security numbers or client names should be included in the e-mail.
- Provide detailed information on the situation. Please provide adequate information for SA staff to respond. Incomplete information will require additional correspondence and will delay the final response.
- Provide results of the county's research. Inform SA staff of the county's policy research and any additional research on the case situation.
- State whether the case is an application, change, or redetermination and give the processing deadline.
- Provide contact information, including the phone number of the supervisor or county contact should additional information be needed.

The listserv will be monitored by SA Unit staff during regular business hours. Counties can expect to have a response within two business days. This response may be to request additional information from the county to clarify the question or inform the county that additional research will need to be conducted by SA Unit staff. If SA Unit staff need to do additional research, an indication of when an answer will be provided will be included in the e-mail response. We anticipate that counties will find this new process provides easier and quicker access when SA questions arise that cannot be resolved within the county.

As part of the restructuring of the SA Unit, we are evaluating the current monitoring process and procedures. We are working to revamp the current process in an effort to streamline monitoring activities while continuing to assure good program compliance and best practices in the SA Program. One area that we are exploring is the use of management reports available to the SA Unit staff. This will allow SA Unit staff to conduct desk audits and use a more targeted approach to program improvement activities. This action is timely not only as we restructure the SA Unit responsibilities,

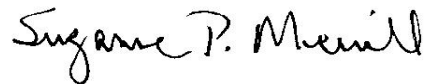
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but also because during State Fiscal Year 09-10 SA program compliance staff completed the second round of monitoring for each county.

The SA training schedule for this fiscal year has been published and can be found on our website at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/adultsvcs/TrainingCalendar.pdf> . We anticipate fulfilling that schedule unless we are subject to any travel or budget constraints. We encourage counties to participate in these trainings if at all possible.

We look forward to implementing these changes and believe they will improve our overall administration of the SA Program at the state and local level. It is likely that during this transition there will be a period of adjustment. We appreciate your patience and support as we implement our restructuring of SA program activities. As always, we welcome your feedback. Please call or e-mail me or Chris Urso with questions or comments. We can be reached at 919-733-3818 or Suzanne.Merrill@dhhs.nc.gov or Chris.Urso@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Suzanne P. Merrill, Chief
Adult Services Section

SPM:cu

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cc. Dennis W. Streets