



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

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Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Sherry Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

June 19, 2008

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

Subject: Work First Biennial County Planning

The Work First Block Grant planning cycle has begun again. This letter includes the designation letter that your agency must submit to the Division that will designate whether your county will operate as either a Standard or Electing County. Guidance is also provided on completing the county Work First Block Grant plan for the biennium that includes FFY's 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (hereby referred to as the 2010-2011 biennium.)

The deadline to return the Standard or Electing County designation form is by close of business September 26, 2008. All county Departments of Social Services must submit a designation form. The decision must have the support of three-fifths of your county commissioners. Designation letters with original signatures should be submitted to the Division of Social Services no later than the established deadline. Counties providing the designation letter after the deadline will be considered a standard county.

Planning can be challenging with the many variables of uncertainty that currently exist. Designating standard or electing can be equally as difficult. Frequently, counties will submit the designation to be a standard county by the deadline and later decide that they would prefer to change their designation to be an electing county. The reverse is also true. North Carolina General Statute §108A-27(e) allows that counties desiring to "redesignate" their county status must notify the Department in writing at least six months prior to the effective date of the next State Plan. Six months prior to the next TANF State Plan is **April 1, 2009** for this state plan cycle. In the request for redesignation, the county must submit documentation that three-fifths of its county commissioners support the redesignation. This provision gives each county an opportunity to ensure the most appropriate designation.

Funds available for distribution to electing counties will be adjusted based on State and/or Federal legislation. When counties are preparing their plan and deciding whether to change or remain as standard or electing, they need to be cognizant that any estimates received from the Division of Social Services' (DSS) Budget Office will be based on current available dollars and subject to change based on legislative decisions. Electing County budgets will be effective July 1, 2009 and the programmatic changes will be effective October 1, 2009 during this planning period.

When completing the county Work First Block Grant plan, instructions are included in North Carolina General Statute §108A.27 and Work First Policy Section 003, *The Planning Process for Work First*. The planning process is an important component of Work First and consists of several significant criteria. Those criteria include:

- the selection of county status (electing or standard)
- the composition of the planning committee

- the county plan model
- public comment
- the primary contact designee.

A successful county plan also includes involvement from multiple community partners. This is an opportunity for counties to take full advantage of the localized flexibility provided for in the Work First Program. Preparations should begin now in the development of the Work First Block Grant Plans for the 2010-2011 biennium. Current and/or former Work First recipients, employers, child care providers, child welfare staff, private sector organizations, and others may prove to be valuable resources in the planning process.

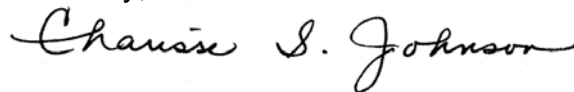
The county Work First Block Grant Plans are due to the Division of Social Services **no later than close of business on October 31, 2008**. County Work First Block Grant plans should be submitted by the established deadline to allow for the plans to be reviewed according to schedule. A plan that is not reviewed can not be approved for the upcoming 2010-2011 biennium.

Attached, you will find a Work First Planning Outline, Submission Requirements, designation letter, and timelines for submitting the county plans. Review the planning outline and the submission requirements thoroughly, as some changes have been made. Changes are easily identified in the planning outline as they are in bold font. A highlight of the changes includes the following:

- Revisions on submitting the electronic Work First plan,
- Electronic plans have a naming convention,
- All counties should provide their work participation rates and a discussion of what the county is doing to increase it's work participation rates,
- Work First Block Grant plans must be family centered,
- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Local Management Entity (LME),
- Citizenship/Identity requirements that are mandatory for both Electing and Standard Counties, and
- Demonstration grant initiatives may be included as innovative strategies.

With the effective date of October 1, 2008 for the federal TANF Final Rule resulting from the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the Division asks that each county approach this planning process with a strong focus on strategies for increasing the work participation rate, while providing family centered non-punitive services. Questions regarding this matter should be directed to your Work First Representative or the Work First/CPS Policy Team at (919)733-4622.

Sincerely,



Charisse S. Johnson, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

CSJ: cem

Attachments

[2010-2011 Designation Form](#)
[WF Plan Outline 2010-2011](#)

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Local Business Liaisons Managers
Jo Ann Lamm
Children' Services Program Representatives
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Work First Representatives
Hank Bowers
Carlotta Dixon

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