

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

Pheon Beal, Director
(919) 733-3055

July 14, 2005

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: Work First Program Administrators, Supervisors, and Staff

SUBJECT: Revised Report of Medical Evaluation Form (DSS-8655)

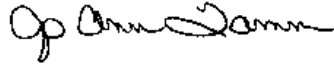
We are pleased to announce that the medical evaluation form has been revised and is available online. The revisions to the form should allow the medical provider an opportunity to identify strengths that may be easily translated into work and employment opportunities. Reasonable modifications were also made to the medical form based on best practice guidance from the Office of Civil Rights document entitled *Summary of Policy Guidance: Prohibition Against Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in the Administration of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*.

To capture the work restrictions and limitations of an individual, you will need to review the second page of the form. As you are aware, those individuals deemed unable to engage in work and work related activities for 35 hours a week should have a Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA) B reflecting the number of hours they are able to participate. This is not a change in policy, as the current State TANF Plan allows participants to engage in activities based on their ability. It is important that the MRA B accurately reflect any reasonable modifications made based on medical assessments, vocational evaluations, and other professional recommendations. For example, if a physician submits that a Work First participant can work or participate for 25 hours a week for 6 weeks based on a medical evaluation, then it is best practice and highly recommended that the MRA B be modified as such. Therefore, some plans may not represent full time participation. However, participation is expected to increase over time, which may require significant follow up to correctly develop an MRA B.

While this form is not required by policy for the verification of illness or incapacitation, it can serve as a tool to gather pertinent medical information related to work and training activities. Although further assessment and subsequent medical treatment may be necessary, best practice may require contact with the medical provider for more information or clarification of existing information. In such circumstances a valid consent would be required. Your local agency Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) officer may be able to provide guidance on information subject to the protections of HIPAA. As a reminder, North Carolina's Work First program must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, whereby a qualified individual is granted access to the benefits and services of the Work First program regardless of his/her incapacity or disability.

Any additional questions should be forwarded to Carla McNeill, Program Consultant in the Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section, at (919)-733-3360.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm".

Jo Ann Lamm, Section Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section

JAL/cem

[Attachment](#)

CC: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Sarah Barham
FSCWS Team Leaders
Work First Representatives

FSCWS-27-05