



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

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2440
Courier # 56-20-25-MS# 2440

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Dempsey Benton, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

August 29, 2008

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: 4 DAY WORK WEEK

In the advent of the rising fuel and other costs, several counties have inquired about the viability of moving to a four-day work week and closing their agencies one day a week. The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance related to Work First, Food and Nutrition Services, Child Support Enforcement and Child Welfare Services that should be considered as the county contemplates this move. The list below is not all inclusive. It is, however, based on questions that have been raised by county staff as well as the best thoughts of staff at the Division. If you have any additional questions, please consult with your program representative or Local Business Liaison.

Program specific points to consider include:

WORK FIRST:

- Similar to Medicaid, Work First staff would have limited access to EIS to key in information during the extended hours of operation. Because EIS is a mainframe system, it must be taken offline every night to process the work performed in the county each day. Currently EIS is up as late as is possible to manage this work and be ready for the next workday. EIS shuts down at 5:30 each night so that batch jobs can be run and the system available by 7 a.m. the next morning.
- The county would need to address how to meet application processing, hearing notices and recipient reporting timeframes.
- The county would need a process that addresses emergency situations (food, electricity cutoff notices) on the non-workday which could include developing a plan for clients to access community agencies for emergency assistance outside of DSS on the non-workday.
- With approval from DSS, DIRM can adjust the EIS system for a county to have Fridays as a non-work day. Pullcheck and WF cutoff deadlines will not change. They are on the state work schedule.
- Timely notice deadlines will no longer be uniform across the state and may result in giving additional benefits to some recipients when they are not terminated timely.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES:

- North Carolina General Statute 7B-101(22) defines a workday as “any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday when the courthouse is closed for transactions”. All statutory CPS/In-Home/Foster Care/Adoption timeframes must be met despite an additional non-work day.
- CPS is mandated 24/7, therefore the county’s weekend/afterhours intake coverage must address the new non-workday as well. Counties should consider community partners, such as schools, mental health and medical providers, who may constitute a large portion of their reporting base, are open on their non-workday. Therefore, counties may need to consider their staffing patterns for after hours coverage.
- Courtesy requests for assistance from other counties cannot be denied due to the county being closed.
- Communication, collaboration and coordination with community partners such as churches, schools, mental health, law enforcement should occur to ensure that they are aware that DSS will be responsive to their needs.
- Provisions should be made to ensure appropriate coverage for court hearings and appointments that fall on the non-workday. Accommodations for transportation to hearings and appointments for children in care should be ensured.
- Procedures and protocols will need to be developed or enhanced to respond to families we are working with as well as foster families regardless where they are in the system. A crisis may not be one that results in a CPS report but those that occur in the general life of a case such as an acting-out foster child, an overwhelmed foster parent, a shut-off notice received by the parent whose children are in their care. Essentially, the agency should consider mechanisms to respond to families in crisis with an additional non-work day.

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

- ACTS Region 22 is available to key in information from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. ACTS Inquiry Region 26 is available after 6:00 p.m.
- Federally mandated timeframes are initiated and tracked in ACTS. The county would need to address how to meet the timeframes.
- Communication and coordination with local partner agencies such as the sheriff’s department, attorney and the clerk of court to ensure their cooperation in establishing and enforcing court orders in a 4 day work week.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES & ENERGY PROGRAMS

- All applications/re-certifications should be processed the day before the due date when the due date falls on a non-workday when the agency is closed. This includes regular and emergency cases.
- Applications cannot be denied prior to the 30th day for failure to provide information.

- Every case that is denied for failure to provide information and due on a non-workday will be considered overdue.
- Food and Nutrition staff would have limited access to FSIS to key in information during the extended hours of operation. Because FSIS is a mainframe system, it must be taken offline every night to process the work performed in the county each day. Currently FSIS is up as late as possible to manage this work and be ready for the next workday. FSIS shuts down at 5:30 each night so that batch jobs can be run and the system available by 7 a.m. the next morning.
- Timely notice deadlines will be affected. These would no longer be uniform across the state and may also result in giving additional benefits to some recipients when they are not terminated timely.
- If an adequate notice is sent and the 10th work day falls on a non-workday, the report date should be extended to the next workday.
- CIP policy states that if a client comes in with a life-threatening emergency and qualifies for assistance, the agency must alleviate the crisis within 18 hours. Considerations of this timeframe must be included in a county's plan.

There have also been questions about daysheet reporting and what changes might be necessary. To assure proper distribution of time to the appropriate programs, overtime must be recorded on the DSS-4263, Worker Daily Reports. This includes all overtime that is; time for which monetary compensation, compensatory time or no compensatory time is received. A note should be made in the comments section as to the time spent which exceeds the normal workday. When compensatory time is taken, the time should be reported as General Administration (Code 990). However, it is not necessary to report days on which the agency is officially closed for business, e.g., holidays, snow days, etc. Or, in the instance of a 4 day work week, workers would only complete a day sheet for those days they are scheduled to work.

We hope you find this information to be helpful. As other questions arise and as we learn more about how to effectively and efficiently operate in changing climates, we will share that information with you. Thanks for all you do to serve the people of North Carolina.

Sincerely,



Jo Ann Lamm, Deputy Director

DIR-05-2008