



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

Pat McCrory
Governor

Aldona Z. Wos, M.D.
Ambassador (Ret.)
Secretary DHHS

Wayne E. Black
Division Director

December 20, 2013

Dear County Directors of Social Services:

The Division recognizes the many significant challenges you have faced as we have transitioned from the legacy systems to NC FAST. We appreciate the hard work, overtime and extra effort that your agency, especially the front line worker, has made to successfully complete applications, recertifications and changes necessary to provide benefits to families.

The Department of Health and Human Services has received notification from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) emphasizing the need for North Carolina to comply with processing requirements for the FNS program in order to avoid future suspension or disallowance of administrative funds. (Copy attached.)

The purpose of this letter is to remind all county DSS offices of the federal requirements from USDA regarding time standards for FNS applications and recertifications. An "application pending" report was pulled from NC FAST on December 11, 2013. It showed 29,160 pending FNS applications. Of the 29,160 total pending applications, 18,726 were subject to the 30 day time standard, and 10,434 were expedited applications that must meet the 7 day time standard. The 18,726 applications to be processed in 30 days showed 9,855 were timely and 8,871 were over the 30 day time standard. Of the 10,434 expedited applications, the report showed 1,436 are timely, and 8,998 are untimely and have been pending anywhere from 8 to over 120 days. A further review of the "application pending" report also indicated that there were duplicate applications for individuals who are currently active and already receiving benefits in NC FAST.

A "pending recertification" report was also pulled on December 11, 2013. It showed 9,109 pending recertifications. Of the 9,109 pending recertifications, 6,741 were timely and 2,368 were untimely.

Based on this review of the pending application and recertification reports, we are requiring that county agencies adhere to the following guidelines:

- A thorough name search must be completed on each applicant to determine if the client has a pending application in the ePASS queue or if the applicant or other household members have a current case in NC FAST. If an application is taken and approved for the household and the agency discovers that there was a pending application in the ePASS queue, the worker must process the original, currently-pending ePASS application according to FNS policy and deny the later-filed ePASS application based on the client being currently active in another case.

Economic and Family Services
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- All emergency applications must be completed and benefits available to the household within 7 calendar days. Non-emergency applications must be completed within 30 calendar days if all required verifications have been received.
- All timely recertifications must be completed by the last day of the month of the certification period. Untimely recertifications must be processed within 10 days of receiving the required verifications.

Counties are required to process **all** expedited applications within the 7 day time frame. Counties must also meet the 30 day time frame for regular applications if evidence is available and the case is ready to process.

Our Department is working diligently to assist counties in meeting the required FNS time frames. Counties received a letter from Deputy Secretary, Sherry Bradsher, dated December 5, 2013 (copy attached), which outlines some of the steps that the Department will be taking to provide support to counties.

Over the course of the next several weeks we will be working with counties to identify best practices in organizational structure and work flow. We will develop a mechanism for sharing ideas with all 100 counties that will help to meet required time frames. Please contact Dean Simpson at 919-527-6330 or by e-mail at dean.simpson@dhhs.nc.gov if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dean Simpson".

Dean Simpson
Division of Social Services