



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor

**MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH** • Secretary

**SUSAN OSBORNE** • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for  
Human Services

**Date:** January 5, 2021

**Dear County Directors of Social Services:**

**Attention:** Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

**Subject:** Suspended H and I Controlled Substance Felons Assessments during COVID-19 Pandemic (effective through February 28, 2021) and Extend Sanction Dates

**Priority:** Information and Action Required

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

The unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 state of emergency and continued requirement for social distancing has disrupted how services are delivered by the County Departments of Social Services, including the ability of Qualified Professionals in Substance Abuse (QPSA) to perform assessments for those Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) applicants that have H or I controlled substance felony offenses in North Carolina.

Counties are required to continue to suspend the substance abuse assessments for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) applicants and recipients that have H or I controlled substance felony offenses in North Carolina by entering a future sanction date in NC FAST when processing applications, recertifications and changes. Extend the sanction start date for cases that do not extend past the current suspension month for assessments, February 2021.

**II. POLICY PROCEDURES**

Applicant and recertified households that contain an individual with a H or I controlled substance felony are required to successfully complete and/or participate in an approved substance abuse program. This requirement is being temporarily suspended until their next recertification. The individuals must still meet their minimum 6-month minimum disqualification period per FNS 290.02 A.1.

1. The worker must explain to the FNS unit that the requirement to successfully complete an assessment with the local area mental health has not been waived. The requirement is being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be required at their next recertification.

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

2. The worker must take the following actions to enter evidence and document the suspension of the requirement in NC FAST:
  - a. Enter a sanction in NC FAST using the last day of the month following the last month of the certification period as the start date. Do not enter an end date.
  - b. Document in the NC FAST notes that the initial assessment was waived due to COVID-19 pandemic and the individual must comply at the next recertification. Apply normal policy as outlined in FNS 290 at the next recertification.

**Example:**

- Date of application: 4/24/2020.
  - Date of conviction: 1/2/2018.
  - Certification period assigned: April 2020 to September 2020.
  - The worker will enter a sanction in NC FAST using start date of 10/1/2020 and no end date.
3. **Reminder:** refer to the report in FAST Help to extend the sanction start dates for the cases that were not extended past the current suspension month (February 2021) for assessments. The sanction start date must be changed in NC FAST by extending the sanction start date to the last day of the month after their new certification period ends to prevent premature closures and allow applicants and recipients time to comply once the suspension is lifted.
    - a. Refer to the report posted in [FAST Help](#) > **Economic Services>Reports>FNS>Drug Assessments>210104 Drug Assessments**. Use the NC FAST report password to retrieve the report.
    - b. A report was posted in FAST Help January 04, 2021 which contain cases with a sanction start date for the month February 2021.
    - c. Once the sanction start dates are changed NC FAST will generate a notice. Caseworkers must ensure the correct notice is generated.

### III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

This policy is effective upon receipt for recertifications, any pending applications, and all new applications taken up to and including February 28, 2021. If you have any questions, please submit to the Operational Support Team (OST) at [dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director  
Economic and Family Services Section

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