



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

June 25, 2020

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Energy Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors
Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Administrators, Managers and Supervisors
Refugee Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors
Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

Subject: COVID-19 Waivers and Flexibilities

Priority: Action Required

On March 18, 2020 the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 was signed to provide programmatic waivers and flexibilities based on a public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act related to an outbreak of COVID-19 when a State has also issued an emergency or disaster declaration. NC DHHS elected to take advantage of numerous waivers and flexibilities to eliminate hardships for North Carolina families. As we prepare to transition, the Division of Social Services is providing guidance to all county directors on transitioning to normal program policies.

Below is a list of all Economic and Family Services waivers and flexibilities put in place to alleviate household hardships due to COVID-19 and when non-pandemic policies will be reinstated. It is important to remember even if a waiver or flexibility is not reinstated counties still must have a plan to address social distancing to the extent possible. State and local social distancing regulations should always be followed.

It is recommended that each county conduct refresher training from the Energy, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Refugee and Work First manual sections that correspond to all waivers ensuring workers understand the differences in regular policy and waiver procedures. These differences should be thoroughly understood by staff and communicated to social services customers when necessary.

Energy Program:

- Changes were made to Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) policy regarding accepting CIP applications by mail and telephone and not requiring applicants to have a disconnect notice. These changes are permanent and will be ongoing. Applicants will be able to access applications for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and CIP programs via ePASS to print, mail, fax or drop-off at their local DSS agency.

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

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Food and Nutrition Services (FNS):

The Department has requested approval from USDA to extend these waivers until July 31, 2020 and is waiting for a decision. If these waivers are not extended by USDA then the following waivers will expire on June 30, 2020.

- [EFS FNS AL-6-2020 Administrative Disqualification Hearing \(ADH\) by Telephone](#)
The letter outlined alternative procedures for conducting an ADH by telephone. If no waiver extension is approved by USDA, conducting ADH by telephone is no longer valid effective June 30, 2020. Resume following regular policy in FNS manual section 710 Administrative Disqualification Hearings effective with all Administrative Disqualification Hearing Requests received on or after July 1, 2020.
- [EFS FNS AL-7-2020 Application and Recertification Interview Waiver](#)
If no waiver extension is approved by USDA, this policy is no longer valid for all FNS applications and recertifications received after June 30, 2020. Resume following regular policy in FNS manual section 310 Interviewing for all applications taken on or after July 1, 2020.
- [EFS FNS AL-13-2020 Food and Nutrition Services Certification Period Extension for June 2020 Recertifications](#)
If no waiver extension is approved by USDA, no additional automatic extension will occur after June 2020. Based on no waiver approval, cases with a certification period that ends July 31, 2020 will be sent a recertification form and will be instructed to return it by July 15th and regular recertification policy, per manual section 425, should be followed.

Waiver with expiration ending the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted:

- [EFS FNS AL-3-2020 Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents \(ABAWDs\) exempt due to COVID-19 public health emergency \(Amended\)](#)
The CARES Act temporarily and partially suspend the work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) participation in the FNS program. The suspension applies beginning April 1, 2020, through the end of the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted. Until such time, continue to use the COVID exemption reason for any otherwise eligible ABAWD.

Refugee Program:

Counties will refer to established Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance policy and procedures at the end of the extension period:

- [EFS RA AL-1-2020 Refugee Cash Assistance \(RCA\) Certification Period Extension](#)
At the end of the extension period, September 30, 2020, counties will refer to Chapter III: Refugee Cash Assistance Program in the Refugee Assistance Program policy manual.
- [EFS RA AL-2-2020 Refugee Medical Assistance Certification Period Extension](#)
At the end of the extension period, September 30, 2020, counties will refer to Chapter II: Refugee Medical Assistance Program in the Refugee Assistance Program policy manual.

Work First Program:

Flexibilities with expiration ending the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted:

- [EFS WF AL-4-2020 Automatic Payment Process for Work First Benefit Cases](#)
NC FAST will suspend automatic payments the end of the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration issued is lifted. Resume following regular policy in Work First manual section 205 Payment Rules and Benefit Issuances for current participants and new applications.
- [EFS WF AL-9-2020 Qualified Professional in Substance Abuse \(QPSA\) Assessment/Treatment and Substance Use Testing Requirement \(Amended\)](#)
Resume following Work First policy manual section 104B: Substance Use/Mental Health Initiative.
- [EFS WF AL-10-2020 Work First Cash Assistance Sanctions \(Amended\)](#)
NC FAST will reinstate all sanctions suspended for the specified reasons during the COVID-19 public health emergency period that have months remaining. Sanctions for new applications must be created and entered in NC FAST by county staff for the appropriate period of time with a future start date of 12/1/2021. NC FAST will modify the sanctions created with a future date of 12/1/2021 for the specified reasons to the appropriate sanctions period. NC FAST will update the sanctions to start effective the first of the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration is lifted. Resume following Work First Policy manual section 120.
- [EFS WF AL11-2020 Temporary Suspension of Work First Cash Assistance Terminations \(Amended\)](#)
WF cases that meet the criteria for termination at the end of the COVID-19 period must be terminated in NC FAST the end of the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration is lifted. Case managers must reinstate paperwork or procedural terminations suspended due to the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration and send a DSS-8110 Timely Notice to inform households their case will terminate. NC FAST will terminate cases closed due to exhaustion of the time clock and automatically send a notice of termination. Resume adhering to policy in Work First manual section 118.

Please email any questions regarding this policy to the DSS Operational Support Team (OST) via dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director

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