



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

Economic Independence Section • 325 North Salisbury Street  
2420 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2420  
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor  
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director  
(919) 733-3055

August 6, 2002

**Re: Automated Food Stamps**

Dear County Director of Social Services:

The Food Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2002 was signed into law on May 13, 2002. The act contains several required policy changes, as well as several optional changes. The Economic Independence Section, along with the Division, is evaluating the impact of the upcoming changes. Staff is also working with counties to assess the options to determine which options will benefit both the citizens of North Carolina and county agencies.

One of the options, which will provide enormous benefits to both clients and staff, is the conversion from quarterly reporting to semi-annual reporting. This option will allow food stamp households with income to attend one face-to-face recertification per year and complete one mail-in form per year. The option also allows households to be subject to minimal reporting requirements, thus reducing the stringent requirements that households are bound by today. The option will also reduce the amount of paperwork and client contact that food stamp workers currently experience.

While the implementation of the Semi-Annual Reporting Option will be beneficial to all parties, there is one area of concern that has been identified. It appears that our automation system will no longer be able to support Automated Food Stamps (AFS). Staff has completed a thorough evaluation of the process and, at this time, a solution has not been identified. They will continue to look for a way to continue to allow AFS cases but, at this point in time, it does not appear to be a viable option.

Please take time to assess your county's use of AFS and prepare to make arrangements to transition AFS cases to regular Food Stamp cases in your county should the need arise. The earliest we anticipate implementing the Semi-Annual Reporting Option is March 2003. This means that the earliest that AFS cases would be eliminated is February 28, 2003. We wanted to share this information with you in a timely manner so that your county may plan accordingly to address staffing and workload issues that may arise due to the elimination of AFS cases. Please note that every effort will be made to automate the conversion process as much as possible if the elimination of AFS cases is ultimately required.

Please feel free to contact Rhonda McLamb at 919-733-7831 if you have any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Wilbert R. Morris, Chief  
Economic Independence Section

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**EI-22-2002**