



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

• 325 North Salisbury Street •

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Courier # 56-20-25 Fax 919-733-0645

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Dempsey Benton, Secretary

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

December 17, 2007

RE: Food and Nutrition Services Participation Rates

Dear County Director of Social Services:

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

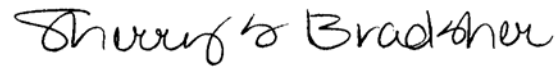
The winter months bring additional challenges to all county departments of social services as you assist citizens with a variety of services. As we all know, many households in North Carolina are potentially eligible for Food and Nutrition Services, but often fail to apply for services. A recent report published in USA TODAY indicated that one out of every five children in many states live in households that struggle to provide enough food at some point during the year. The article and report can be viewed at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-11-15-hungrykids_N.htm. Nationwide, the report revealed that 18% of children in the United States were hungry or at risk of hunger. Unfortunately, this report highlights North Carolina as a state where 21.1% of our children are either hungry or at risk of hunger, placing NC slightly above the average nationally. This percentage was based on U.S. Census Bureau Data averaged during the 2003-2005 period. And while not highlighted in this report, let's not forget another underserved target population – persons over 50 years of age. Many with fixed incomes are making decisions every day about what to eat, what bills to pay, how to heat their homes and buy their medications.

The Division is committed to increase participation efforts within the Food and Nutrition Services Program by strengthening and building partnerships across our state with such agencies as the food banks of North Carolina, Farmer's Markets and Public Health WIC programs. We are also committed to working with our federal partners, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to remove any barriers to households that may discourage participation in the Food and Nutrition Services Program. While our focus is on increasing participation in the Program, we want to remember to encourage individuals to focus on healthy nutrition by choosing healthy foods as a part of their diets.

In addition, we are pleased to announce that we have received verbal approval for phase one of NC FAST. We are hopeful that this automation will provide some needed relief to workers managing the program.

Efforts to increase participation in the Food and Nutrition Services Program must continue. Please continue your local efforts and let us hear about your successes. If you have ideas or suggestions to share, please let us hear from you. You may contact Adonica Hampton at Adonica.Hampton@ncmail.net or David Locklear at David.Locklear@ncmail.net or by calling (919) 733-7831.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherry S. Bradsher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sherry S. Bradsher

SSB:dl

FNSEP-19-2007