

NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary

YVONNE COPELAND • Director, Division of Child and Family Well
Being

Date: October 14, 2024

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Income Maintenance Caseworkers, Managers and Supervisors

Subject: Hurricane Helene – Statewide FNS Certification Extension Waiver

Priority: Information and Action Required

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

On September 26, 2024, Hurricane Helene brought severe flooding and power outages to many counties in western North Carolina. Many families and individuals were directly impacted by Hurricane Helene which forced them to temporarily relocate outside of their counties and forced many local departments of social services offices in western North Carolina to temporarily close.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) requested a statewide waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to extend Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) certification periods due to the impact of Hurricane Helene. NCDHHS requested this waiver statewide, not just for counties directly impacted by the disaster, in recognition that non-impacted counties have been and will continue to provide significant support to impacted counties for D-SNAP operations and other disaster-related efforts.

This waiver extending certification periods statewide will ensure that ongoing FNS households across the state continue to receive critical nutrition assistance, allows NCDHHS to sustain timely processing for ongoing households and new applicants, and alleviates the administrative burden on NCDHHS and county departments of social services as they plan to operate D-SNAP in western NC. This waiver ensures that both FNS households impacted directly by the hurricane and those not impacted by the hurricane will be able to continue receipt of their benefits without interruption while counties across the state work to support neighboring counties with disaster relief efforts.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

LOCATION 5601 Six Forks Rd, Building 2, Raleigh, NC 27609

MAILING ADDRESS: 2416 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2420

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-707-5800 • FAX: 919-870-4819

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

On October 7, 2024, USDA approved a Certification Extension Waiver for FNS households statewide whose certification periods were scheduled to expire in September, October, and November 2024. Certification periods that were scheduled to expire in September, October and November 2024 FNS recertifications will be extended by 6 months accordingly:

- FNS recertifications that were scheduled to expire in September 2024 will have the certification period extended by 6 months to expire in March 2025
- FNS recertifications that were scheduled to expire in October 2024 will have the certification period extended by 6 months to expire in April 2025
- FNS recertifications that were scheduled to expire in November 2024 will have the certification period extended by 6 months to expire in May 2025

This extension applies to:

- Recertifications that are in progress as well as recertifications that have not been started
- Recertifications for households with both 6-month and 12-month certifications
- Recertifications pending closure/in suspended status or late September recertifications

NCFAST will automatically close any in-progress recertifications so that the system can then extend the certification by 6 months, caseworkers are not required to react to information reported on the form. However, if the client reports changes outside of the recertification form that result in an increase in benefits, the county must react to the change. For auditing purposes, counties should document on the recertification forms received that the certification period was extended due to Hurricane Helene and place the form in the case file. If a non-disaster county receives the recertification form for a client in a disaster county, follow the same process as above.

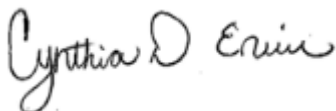
NCDHHS will send notices to impacted FNS households to inform them regarding the extension of certification period by 6 months.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

The Certification Extension Waiver applies to September, October and November 2024 recertifications statewide. If you have any questions, please submit them to the Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist (CQIS) dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

To ensure these questions receive priority response, please include "Disaster" as the subject line when submitting.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Ervin, Assistant Director, Food and Nutrition Services
Division of Child and Family Well-Being

CE/vb