



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: July 12, 2022

Dear County Directors of Social Services

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

Subject: Food and Nutrition Services Certification Period Extensions for August and
September 2022

Priority: Information and Action

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A waiver that allows for the automatic extension of certification periods by up to 6 months has been in effect since May 2020 to promote social distancing and ease the burden on North Carolina families as well as eligibility staff. This waiver is currently approved through September 30, 2022.

North Carolina received updated guidance on July 8, 2022, from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) clarifying that this waiver also allows for automatic extensions of certification periods up to 6 months once a recertification has been completed. This means that, for households that previously had a certification period extended as part of the COVID waivers and have now completed a recertification within the six months leading up to their certification end date, the clock restarts and these households are now eligible to have their certification period extended by up to 6 months under the COVID waiver.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

A. The following cases will be automatically extended:

Per this updated guidance, FNS cases certified for a 6-month certification period ending during the months of August 2022 or September 2022 will receive an

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automatic 6-month certification extension by NC FAST if any of the following conditions are met:

- The household's current 6-month certification period is the result of an FNS application
- The household's FNS case has not previously had their certification period extended under the COVID waiver
- The household completed an FNS recertification in the 6 months leading up to their certification end date

B. Procedures for six-month certification period cases eligible for auto extension:

- The DSS-2435 *will not* be mailed to the FNS households eligible for the automatic extension in August 2022 or September 2022 as indicated in the previous section.
- NC FAST will automatically extend the certification period by another 6 months.
- NC FAST will indicate in the system that an interview is required every 12 months and the appropriate DSS-2435 will be issued at the next recertification.

C. County FNS caseworkers will still need to complete recertifications for:

- Any case that has not had a recertification completed since their last auto-extension
- Cases with certification periods expiring at the end of August 2022 and September 2022 with certification periods of 12+ months

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

As a reminder, the following processes will continue as described in Dear County Director Letter EFS-FNS-100-2021 dated December 21, 2021:

- Interviews will continue for 50% of 6-month certification cases that are not auto-extended, applying to case numbers that end in an odd number.
- Recertifications that are on-hold are also eligible for the automatic extension if they meet criteria outlined in Section IIA of this letter. As a reminder, county staff must review the case and release the hold in order for the benefits for cases on-hold to be released. The county must send a manual DSS-8551, Notice of Eligibility, Denial or Pending Status when the hold is removed to provide the FNS household adequate notice of the certification extension.
 - As a reminder, NC FAST Help posts a monthly report under [FAST Help >Economic Services>Reports>FNS](#) showing all cases that received automatic extensions. The upcoming report can be found at COVID_AUGUST_2022_CERT_EXTNS_DSS_ONHOLD_CASES. All households receiving automatic extension for August 2022 will be

captured in this report, in the event that caseworkers need to determine which 6-month recertification cases require an interview during each month. A similar report for September 2022 will be posted.

- NC FAST Help will be posting a report called COVID_AUGUST_2022_CERT_EXTNS_DSS_System Accepted Cases that will list all cases with certification periods that were automatically extended for August 2022. This report can be used in the event households contact the county inquiring about their recertification or when their certification period ends.

The Department is working to explore additional flexibilities to support counties and to ensure families needing our services are provided benefits in a timely manner.

If you have any questions, please submit them to the Continuous Quality Improvement Team (CQI) dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

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Carla West
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