

Continuous Quality Improvement Training

Lifting of the Federal Public Health Emergency

Question and Answer

April 2023

ABAWD

- 1 Will the state send out letters to clients letting them know their cases are closed?

Yes. NC FAST will track ABAWD eligibility for all ABAWDS within a FNS unit. NC FAST will also send all appropriate notices to the FNS households to terminate or reduce benefits when an individual has reached their 3-month time limit.

- 2 If the ABAWD requests a hearing do we extend benefits?

Per FNS 700.11 if the FNSU requests a fair hearing within the ten-day advance notice period for the Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA) continue benefits on the basis authorized immediately prior to the NOAA, as long as the certification period has not expired and the FNSU does not waive continuation of benefits.

- 3 Should counties continue to enter COVID-19 evidence for ABAWDs for applications taken on June 1st?

Yes, counties should continue to enter the COVID-19 evidence for ABAWD. NC FAST will systematically enter an end date on all work non-participation evidence titled COVID-19, including those entered by the caseworker. The end date will be the last day of the month following the month the emergency declaration is lifted.

- 4 Will a mass notice go out from the state when the end date is entered and the ABAWD months start being counted?

Yes. A mass notice will be mailed to all ABAWDs before the Public Health Emergency (PHE) ends.

- 5 Since MPW no longer exists, if someone applies for Medicaid as a pregnant individual and verification is no longer verified, can Medicaid still be proof of pregnancy for ABAWD?

If Medicaid has all the information needed to satisfy the verification requirement you can use it.

- 6 How do we verify out of state ABAWD months?

If the agency is aware that an ABAWD has moved from another state to North Carolina, the local agency should contact the other state and manually track any months received in that state.

- 7 Do we request recoded months working evidence for that time period or accept client's statement that they were working the required amount for that time frame?

The worker will need to verify the working status during the time in question to determine if months are countable or non-countable and manage the evidence appropriately for tracking purposes.

- 8 Do we back date working evidence in order to recode the months for ABAWD?

No, there is no need back date evidence, everyone will start a new time clock July 1st.

- 9 If an ABAWD uses their 3 free months but comes back to reapply and states that they were working when the case closed but is no longer working, do we need to request verification of employment or take client's statement to recode? Example: free months were 7/23-9/23. Client reapplies 11/5/23 and reports working from 8/10/23-10/1/23. Do we request all income from 8/23 to present, or just a letter from employer without income?

You will need verify the working hours for the time from when the client states they were working, you can call the employer or send DSS-8113.

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- 10** When NC FAST end dates COVID exemptions will there be something to override the ABAWD dropping out due to no ABAWD assessment? That is what it says right now if COVID evidence isn't entered, and it drops them from the case.
This question has been submitted to NC FAST for clarification and a separate communication will be sent regarding this issue.
- 11** Will there be verbiage or script for explaining ABAWD and Work Registration to clients?
Dear County Director Letter EFS-FNS-ETP-01-2023 issued on 2/23/2023 "FNS Employment & Training Screen and Referral Form, Work Requirements Script for Eligibility Workers and Consolidated Work Notice" provides information on how workers should explain work requirements as well as the documentation requirements related to this information. Attachment 2 provides the script.
- 12** ABAWD pregnancy slide indicated disability evidence, what reason would we select, or should we use pregnancy evidence?
The slide on the PowerPoint (PPT) addressing pregnancy showed a split screen image showing pregnancy evidence on the left side and disability on the right side. Pregnancy information should be entered under Pregnancy evidence on the Evidence Dashboard in NC FAST. This should be entered using the Pregnancy as an exemption from the ABAWD requirements. The pregnancy evidence should be entered when an FNS unit member is pregnant. If applicable, this will cause the pregnancy exemption to be in place.
- 13** During the presentation it was stated that if someone turns 18 in April, they are an ABAWD for April. Policy states if client is exempt for any part of the month, they are exempt for the whole month. Wouldn't the individual become an ABAWD the month after the individual's 18th birthday? FNS Policy Section 260.01 indicates that the ABAWD work requirement begins the month after the 18th birthday. For applicant households, the ABAWD work requirements for the 18th birthday are based on the member's age on the date of application.
- 14** Will it start over on 7/1/2023 for already certified cases or wait until their certification period ends?
North Carolina will restart the FNS time limit rules on July 1, 2023, for all ABAWDs. If the client is not meeting the work requirements or an exemption, their three countable months will be July, August, and September 2023.
- 15** Employer states person is out of work due to injury. Job is still being held. Can we accept employer statement for this or do we need to request a medical statement.
FNS 260.01 E.3. states clients are exempt if they are medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment. This should be confirmed by a medical professional's statement if not obvious to the staff member taking the application.
- 16** When recoding free months, will this create overpayments? If so, how do we handle this?
Managing the income evidence may cause overpayments to create in NC FAST, however policy should be followed to determine if an overpayment actually occurred. Staff should review the 130% limit for the household size to determine if the income was a reportable change, and if so, the 10-10-10 rule should be followed. If no overpayment occurred, the overpayments that are created by NC FAST can be closed out and clearly documented.
- 17** ABAWD clock will end 12/2024? On the service call I thought they said the clock would reset 7/1/2023. My thought was the reset would start a new 36-month clock.
The current 36-month period is January 2022 through December 2024. North Carolina will restart the FNS time limit rules on July 1, 2023.

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- 18** What is a legit volunteer agency? Is a local church a volunteer agency? Is there a form for the agency to fill out to verify hours?
- FNS 260.03 B.1. c. states to accept volunteer work for any legitimate public/private nonprofit, churches or other religious groups, community organizations or governmental agency or community service ordered by a court. The county should request written or verbal verification from the agency of the number of hours volunteered in that month. If verified verbally, ensure staff document thoroughly in NC FAST notes. There is not a designated form for this, the volunteer agency would just need to verify the amount of volunteer hours completed.
- 19** Do we continue to enter the COVID-19 Work Non-participation evidence for the ABAWD household members that meet no other ABAWD exemption through June 30th? Or for applications do we stop entering COVID19 evidence as of June 10th?
- Yes, you will continue to enter the Work Non-Participation for COVID-19 until the waiver ends on June 30, 2023.
- 20** Do we look back for the 3-year period when looking for recoding months for possible additional ABAWD months?
- No, you will not go back for the 3-year period to recode ABAWD months. All ABAWDs have been exempt since 2020.
- 21** Will COVID-19 ABAWDs be given notice before they start on their free months that the waiver has ended?
- Yes. A mass notice will be mailed to all ABAWDs before the PHE ends.
- 22** Regarding out of state ABAWD records- are we as the caseworker responsible for obtaining this information/ can we request on a DSS-8650?
- This would be the client responsibility to let agency know. If client does notify agency Policy 260.05 states to explain to the household that regardless of simplified reporting, the failure to report a change that effects their ABAWD status during the certification period (e.g., becoming exempt, starting work) will result in the termination of benefits for the ABAWD at the end of their 3 countable months. B. Provide the household with the DSS-8568 ABAWD explanation form.
- 23** After an ABAWD receives 3 free months without meeting requirements, can they potentially apply repeatedly and be approved for prorated months?
- Please refer to policy 260.05 B- At reapplication the worker must:
Explore each previously countable ABAWD months to determine if the ABAWD met an exemption in one of the previous months. Ask whether the applicant has completed the ABAWD work requirements within 30 consecutive days or more at any time since losing FNS eligibility, even if the applicant is not currently meeting the ABAWD work requirements. Recode any previous months as exempt or non-exempt, as applicable. If client does not meet eligibility requirements to regain eligibility, they would not be able to receive additional benefits.

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24 Do we future date ABAWD or can they report it to the review worker?

Please refer to policy 260.06: NC FAST will track ABAWD eligibility for all ABAWDS within a FNS unit. NC FAST will also send all appropriate notices to the FNS households to terminate or reduce benefits when an individual has reached their 3-month time limit.

Before the waiver ends counties need to review the ABAWD Ineligibles Without Work Non-Participation report that is published in Fast Help monthly to ensure that work non-participation evidence has been entered for all ABAWDS. When the waiver ends: NC FAST will systematically remove all countable months for ABAWDs and all ABAWDs will have 3 “countable” months available, with the first countable month being July 2023. Caseworkers will no longer enter work non-participation evidence of “COVID-19”. NC FAST will systematically end-date all COVID 19 Work Non-Participation evidence for 6/30/2023, no county action is required.

25 How would we know about ABAWD months received in another state?

At this time, it is client’s responsibility to notify agency. Policy 260.05 states: Explain to the household that regardless of simplified reporting, the failure to report a change that effects their ABAWD status during the certification period (e.g., becoming exempt, starting work) will result in the termination of benefits for the ABAWD at the end of their 3 countable months. b. Provide the household with the DSS-8568 ABAWD explanation form.

Applications

1 When taking applications starting June 11th are we applying policy that starts effective July 1st?

Any application received on or before June 30, 2023, should still be under COVID waivers following COVID rules. After waiver ends effect July 1, 2023, normal FNS policy requirements go into effect: FNS 500 SR Category & Reporting Requirements, FNS 505 SR Recertifications Requirements, FNS 510 SR Recertifications Procedures, FNS 515 SR Changes During the Certification Period System change: NC FAST will no longer automatically extend recertifications beyond June 2023. Starting July 1, 2023: Caseworkers will be responsible for completing 100% of recertifications.

Citizenship

1 When will policy be updated to reflect the non-citizen requirement? Example: Cuban/Haitian participants.

The policy will be updated as time permits.

Client’s Statement

1 At application can we accept client’s statement for shelter expenses (rent, mortgage, etc.) when evaluating for expedited FNS services?

Please refer to FNS 425.06 A: the Agency may postpone the verification of all eligibility factors except identity for expedited applications.

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Documented Alien

- 1 Do you stop counting sponsor income if the client meets the 5-year ban or if they are meeting 40 qualifying quarters?

As referenced in FNS 227.09 C. the total income of the sponsor is credited to the non-citizen until the non-citizen becomes a citizen or can be credited with 40 qualifying quarters or the sponsor dies.

Drug Felon

- 1 We have been previously advised that a CRV is treated like a Class H or I in NC and the client can regain eligibility. Is this still accurate?

Per NC DPS website Confinement in Response to Violation (CRV) centers house and provide intensive behavior modification programs for those who have committed technical violations of probation/parole. The original charge the client was convicted of that caused them to be placed on probation or parole should be reviewed to determine if the client is an ineligible drug felon, the CRV charge itself is not a drug charge.

- 2 Is there a statewide resource/website that can be used to verify federal drug convictions?

No, Counties should request OVS and follow any leads reflected there. Additionally, FNS 270.01 D. Applicants are required at application and recertification to sign a statement declaring whether any FNS unit member has been convicted of a drug-related felony committed on or after August 23, 1996. The statement is included in all state approved applications and recertification forms. Impose disqualification based on client's statement of ineligibility or upon verification through Department of Correction OVS or other reliable sources.

- 3 Is there a nationwide resource/website that can be used to verify out of state drug convictions?

No, Counties should request OVS and follow any leads reflected there. Additionally, FNS 270.01 D. Applicants are required at application and recertification to sign a statement declaring whether any FNS unit member has been convicted of a drug-related felony committed on or after August 23, 1996. The statement is included in all state approved applications and recertification forms. Impose disqualification based on client's statement of ineligibility or upon verification through Department of Correction OVS or other reliable sources.

- 4 Client has gone for assessment and treatment was recommended, would the client be approved for benefits after assessment or when recommended treatment is complete?

Per FNS Section 270.02, the Area Mental Health Authority (AMHA) determines if the controlled substance felon has met the requirement to participate. The caseworker will verify compliance before approving benefits since assessment and/or participation in a treatment program is an eligibility requirement.

- 5 Our county gets a lot of safekeeper on DOC drug charges. How should we look at this?

Refer to FNS Section 210.05 for the particulars regarding the crime. You will also need to contact the Clerk of Court for additional verification and/or validation of the classification charge. This information is necessary to determine eligibility although ultimately the burden of proof falls to the applicant. Anyone with the classification of safekeeper would not be eligible to be included in the FNS unit unless it is verified that the safekeeper classification is an H or I and the applicant has met the policy provisions for inclusion as outlined in policy (FNS Section 270.01.)

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- 6 When client's drug felony disqualification ends on 8/3/2023 do we enter that date or 8/31/2023? Using 8/3/2023 will be a split decision with two different amounts in the determinations which is usually spins to issue both amounts.
You will always end date the end of the month.
- 7 Can we send Class H and I felons a request to complete assessments after discussion of benefits terminating prior to the end of certification period or a notification letter generated to make client aware that they need to complete an assessment?
No, you will request this on your DSS-8650 when they are up for their next recertification.
- 8 Is it possible that the question on the application or recertification for felons be rephrased to read convicted of drug felony in North Carolina or any other state? The clients most of the time do not volunteer out of state information.
This request will be passed on to the FNS policy consultant in the Division of Child and Family Wellbeing for consideration. A thorough interview when the information is questionable will be helpful. Document the case record well.
- 9 What is safekeeping/CRV?
"Safekeeping" is defined as an unsentenced defendant may be admitted to prison if they are considered too dangerous to hold in a county jail while awaiting trial. They may also be admitted to prison, which can provide more security if being held in jail could pose a danger to them from other jail inmates or members of the public, or for medical care. Usually, more information is needed to determine if the individual is eligible. Consider reaching out to the court system in the county where the crime was committed and ask if they can provide you with information regarding the felony class the client was convicted of. If it cannot be determined what class felony the applicant was convicted of, they would not be eligible. CRVs are for probation or parole violations and would not permanently disqualify an individual. If the original felony was a curable felony and the participant has already completed a QSAP assessment for that charge, they would not need to repeat that process. If the client has not completed a QSAP assessment in the past for the original felony, the client would need to complete an assessment at the next recertification.
- 10 If no drug assessments for FNS or WFFA- then would client be exempt? If not, what would be the next step.
Division of Social Services has a Memorandum of Agreement with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services to reduce potential substance abuse related barriers for individuals with a Class H or I controlled substance felony applying for Work First and/or Food and Nutrition Services per NC General Statute 108A-25.2. Counties are required to provide this service. The DSS-8224 can be used to refer individuals to the Qualified Professional of Substance Abuse (QPSA) at Area Mental Health Authority (AMHA). For FNS, an individual who has been convicted of a Class H or I drug felony on or after August 23, 1996, and an assessment has not been completed to clear that conviction, the participant must comply by meeting with a QPSA at the next recertification. This begins with the ending of the PHE.
- 11 Preparing the AMHAs for assessments, will there be a notice sent to them?
Notices will not be sent to the AMHAs. The AMHAs are having quarterly meetings to prepare for the ending of the PHE.

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- 12** H & I assessment requirement, when recertifying, how long does the client have to complete the assessment before we can process the recert?
FNS 270.02 A.2. The individual cannot be determined eligible to receive FNS benefits until notice of compliance is received from the AMHA. Only the AMHA may determine if the controlled substance felon has met the requirement to participate.
- 13** Is it sufficient that our substance abuse worker gets the DSS-8219 signed when she meets with them? This form is kept in her file. Do we need a copy in the DSS file as well?
FNS 270.03 C. staff should obtain a signed DSS 8219 Consent for Release of Confidential Information. The signed release is necessary in order for the substance abuse professional to notify the county of the individual's progress with his treatment plan. This should be signed prior to referring the individual to the local AMHA for assessment.
- 14** Is a client permanently disqualified for non-class codes?
FNS 270.02 A. An individual convicted of a Class H or I felony that involved possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance committed on or after August 23, 1996, in North Carolina may reestablish eligibility for FNS benefits. All other class convictions are permanently disqualified. The agency should contact the clerk of court for the county of the drug conviction to obtain clarification on the classification of the drug charge.
- 15** If drug assessment was completed in another county, are we required to schedule another assessment with our local area mental health?
No, document verification of the assessment being completed in the other county and continue with processing the case as the client has met the requirement in FNS policy section 270.02.
- 16** Client needs to recertify for FNS and has a Class H drug felony conviction. If the client does not show up for assessment, but there are other members in the FNS unit, can the recertification be processed for the other eligible members on the case?
Yes
- 17** Customer has a DOC hit for drug related felony, but the classification is not an H or I. This customer has a DOC hit, drug related felony class "safekeeper", are they eligible or permanently disqualified?
Anyone with the classification of safekeeper would not be eligible to be included in the FNS unit unless it is verified that the safekeeper classification is an H or I and the applicant has met the policy provisions for inclusion as outlined in FNS sections 270.02 & 270.03. The class of felony would determine if there is a permanent disqualification, so you would look at the individual charges. Contact the Clerk of Court for additional verification and/or validation of the classification charge. This information is necessary to determine eligibility although ultimately the burden of proof falls to the applicant.
- 18** Client has assessment in prison. Does this cure disqualification or does it have to be done after release?
After their release.
Policy 270.02 A 1.a Individuals that were committed to custody may regain eligibility for FNS benefits six months after release from custody if all other requirements are met.
270.02 A 2.a, b the individual cannot be determined eligible to receive FNS benefits until notice of compliance is received from the Area Mental Health Authority (AMHA). Only the AMHA may determine if the controlled substance felon has met the requirement to participate.
b. Individuals already participating in drug and alcohol treatment programs must be referred to the AMHA for evaluation.

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19 Does a non-class code or CRV disqualify the client?

Policy 270.03 B. 2,3

2. Was the conviction classified as a Class H or Class I controlled substance felony charge?

Note: Individuals who have been convicted of a felony class other than H or I continue to be permanently disqualified from participating in FNS.

3. Was the conviction in North Carolina?

Note: Individuals who have been convicted outside North Carolina continue to be permanently disqualified from participating in FNS.

20 Will DOC on OVS ever show out of state convictions like OLV does?

Not at this time.

Hearings

1 Will regular hearings continue to be via telephone?

Yes, this will not change; regular hearings can continue being conducted via telephone.

Learning Gateway

1 What is the status of FNS Gateway training. When is the date of completion?

This is currently in the process of being updated. A communication will be sent as updates are completed.

Miscellaneous

1 Issues are arising with the clients requesting to apply via telephone rather than mailing, dropping off, or emailing their applications or recerts. This is causing the caseworkers to get further and further behind in their normal casework. Any suggestions on how to handle this?

Management will need to evaluate their internal processes based upon current staffing to consider the following suggestions: creating a triage team or call center to handle telephone call; develop an intake team for telephone applications, and or rotating current intake staff to handle the telephone contacts.

Monitoring

1 How will you monitor cases for text message and E notifications? Will monitors cite these cases, what would cause on of these cases to be cited?

At this time, text messages are not part of the FNS Management Evaluation. Any notice sent via e-notice will be monitored the same way a notice sent via mail is done. The notice should contain all of the information required by policy; the delivery method will just differ.

Notices

1 When will the dates on the expedited DSS-8551 postponed verification notices be corrected?

This went into the May release 5/6/2023.

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Program Integrity

- 1** Will debtors have an additional opportunity to enter into another VRA or enter into an VRA for past claims?

If the debtor has become delinquent, they will not have an opportunity to enter into another VRA. See FNS policy section 845.02, E.
- 2** Will a standard communication go out from the state to those under recoupment agreements since it has been 3 years? Or will this be caseworker responsibility to educate clients?

A notice will be sent to all households with FNS claims.
- 3** Should all IHE and AE claims just be unsubstantiated instead of worked up until May 2023 since they will be written off anyway?

Claims should continue to be established.
- 4** Would PI Investigators need to send out copies of the VRA and a reminder of the balance owed?

A notice will be sent to all debtors with FNS claims. This will be a generic notice and will not include balance owed. Debtors will be encouraged to contact their local DSS agencies for additional information.
- 5** Will a notice be sent to delinquent clients letting them know they will have to start back paying on their overpayments?

Yes
- 6** Will debtors receive notice from the state that payments will resume July 1st?

Yes
- 7** For established claims- as of 8/1/2022 Claims will be established and remain substantiated? Through December 2023 claims for PHE 3/2020-7/2022 will be written off?

Claims will be established as of 8/1/2022 will be established and substantiated. Claims already established from March 1, 2022, until the end of the PHE (5/31/2023) will be written off.
- 8** If a client gives false information and it is discovered before any receipt of benefits, can they be permanently disqualified for intentionally lying to receive benefits?

No. Disqualification Penalties must be followed. See FNS policy section 825.
- 9** Once collection letters are sent then we will start monitoring delinquency for tax intercept?

Delinquency clocks will resume effective July 1, 2023. Delinquency clocks will not restart.
- 10** Will there be any training on working PI reports since some are new to PI and have been under waivers the whole time?

This training will be held once a State PI Consultant is hired.
- 11** Are clients going to be notified regarding resending collections?

Yes

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12 Waiver approved for 4/1/2020-7/31/2022, was this extended through 4/30/2023 or later?

No. This waiver ended on 7/31/2022 and was not extended.

13 To complete a PI claim write-off, does the client need to submit a request?

Claims established between 3/1/2020 until the end of the PHE will automatically be written off. If there is a claim that was not written off by the system between 3/1/2020 and 5/31/2023, submit a helpdesk ticket.

14 If prior to COVID waivers someone was certified for TOP, will they have an opportunity to sign a VRA after blocks are removed?

No. Claim is already delinquent and certified for TOP. TOP clock will not restart.

15 Write offs end 5/11/2023- What about claims from 8/1/2022-5/31/2022 or later? Will a portion be written off?

Write-offs end on 5/31/23. Claims will be written off from 3/1/2020 until the end of the PHE (5/31/23). Claims established after 5/31/2023 will not be written off.

16 Why should investigators establish claims beginning 8/1/2022 if the state will terminate and write off the claims?

Claims should continue to be established.

17 Presentation stated once waiver ends, FNS and WFFA overpayment collections will resume, the month following the waiver ends, but the next portion states PI Investigators will resume collection of claims according to normal FNS policy guidelines effective 6/1/2023. Which date is correct?

Collection of claims resume the month following the end of the PHE which is 6/1/2023.

18 Will counties need to sign out collection letters?

A notice will be sent to all debtors with FNS claims. This will be a generic notice and will not include balance owed. Debtors will be encouraged to contact their local DSS agencies for additional information.

Recertifications

1 Are recertification workers looking at normal FNS policy for recerts received in June for July benefits?

No, the waivers remain in effect through June 30, 2023. Any recertification received on or before this date is covered under the COVID waivers.

2 Can wording for 15th on SR's be changed to say due on the 1st, considered on time until 15th? We are slammed 10th-15th. A few more coming earlier would be life changing.

Spacing is very limited on the SR form; however, your suggestions will be shared with management.

3 Will the certifications be extended in June that the CP starts in July?

Starting July 1st caseworkers will be responsible for completing 100% Recertifications, no recertifications will be extended beyond June 2023.

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- 4 Waivers ending in June 2023- is that for recertifications completed in June for July 2023?

Starting July 1st caseworkers will be responsible for completing 100% Recertifications.

- 5 Idea for processing timeliness- Late team currently for processing-30 each monthly.

Suggestion not a question

- 6 Starting July 1st will the DSS-2435 list the correct interview status for that case?

DSS-2435's should list the correct interview status, however; those recertifications that have been extended will all need an interview. Best practice will be to review case and determine if an interview is needed to follow FNS Policy.

- 7 If the interview waiver for recertifications gets extended, will we flip to even PDC? We are interviewing the same people doing only odd #s.

The interview waiver and certification period extensions are two separate waivers. If the interview waiver is extended, counties will be allowed to waive interviews at application and recertification if the criteria outlined in Dear County Director Letter EFS-FNSEP-31-2020 are met. As for the certification extension, NC FAST will no longer automatically extend recertifications past June 2023. Beginning July 1, 2023, workers will be responsible for completing 100% of the interviews required at recertification.

Students

- 1 Does a certificate program count as higher education? Example: Cosmetology, Truck Driver, Lineman, Massage.

FNS 235.02 B indicates business, technical, trade, or vocational schools that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalent for enrollment in the curriculum which normally requires high school graduation or an equivalency certificate to enroll as being institutions of higher education. Most certificate programs do not meet these requirements.

- 2 Student is eligible for work study but declined to participate, would the student be eligible for FNS if no other exemptions apply?

No, they would not be eligible after the student waiver expires if no other exemptions can be met.

- 3 Student is not taking any classes during summer break, but does plan on returning in the fall, is this person still considered a student during summer break?

Per FNS Section 235.03, A & B. Enrollment begins the first day of the school term at the institution of higher educations. Enrollment status during vacations and recess is determined based on the student's status just prior to the school break. Enrollment ends when the student graduates, is suspended, expelled, drops out, or decides not to register for the next normal term (except summer school).

- 4 Does federal work study exemption for college students continue through the summer if they only work during the semester? If so, would any income from the work study continue to count?

You will follow normal Student Policy for Work Study.

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- 5** Would hair school be considered an exemption for students? Some of them receive financial aid.
- Refer to Student Policy 235.02 and determine if the courses taken by client fall under policy to be considered exempt.
- 6** Can you give more details on an early college student? Higher learning student is it the number of college classes that they are currently enrolled or that they have completed that determines that they are higher learning. We are under the impression that they were not until they completed high school classes.
- Policy 235.02, 235.03 and 235.04
- *An institution of higher education includes online and traditional classroom studies, those include but are not limited to the following: College or university that offers degree programs regardless of whether a high school diploma is required.
- *Business, technical, trade, or vocational school that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalent for enrollment in the curriculum which normally requires high school graduation or an equivalency certificate to enroll.
- *Students attending an institution under special circumstances are considered enrolled in an institution of higher education. Some institutions make exceptions for students who the institution feels can benefit from the program offered, even though the student has not graduated from high school. If courses offered provide college level credit or the credit is transferable to other degree programs, it is considered higher education.
- Example given at regional meeting- An 18-year-old applies for FNS and is currently attending the local community college through an early college program through his high school. He is a senior and 3 of his 4 classes are college level credit classes. Student status would apply, and exemptions would need to be explored. If no exemptions apply, he is an ineligible student.
- 7** Client taking one online class is exempt but what if that one class is considered part-time/full-time per the school?
- In order to meet the conditions of an eligible student, the individual must be enrolled at least half time (policy does not say part-time) at an institution of higher learning. The institution makes the determination regarding half/full time.
- 8** Those currently under the waiver- will the change be made at the next recertification?
- Yes, that is correct.
- 9** Currently waiver exempts students that are eligible for work study but not currently participating in work study. Normal policy requires student must be participating in work study to receive benefits. Effective June 10th/July 1st are students exempt if just eligible to participate or do they actually have to participate in work study?
- Once the waiver expires, FNS 235.04 should be followed for student of higher education exemptions. FNS 235.04 K. indicates the client must be participating in a State or Federally financed work-study program during the regular school year.
- 10** Does the student have to be participating in the work study or does the student just have to be eligible to participate?
- FNS 235.04 K. indicates the client must be participating in a State or Federally financed work-study program during the regular school year.
- 11** If a student is 18 attending a middle college, we must verify student exemptions?
- The first step would be to determine if the client is considered a student of higher education. Are they enrolled in an institution of higher education and enrolled at least half time as defined by the institution of higher education? If they are taking enough college courses to be considered at least a half time student by the institution, yes exemptions should be explored.

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- 12** Client's 19-year-old daughter is enrolled and attends college in another county or state. Client's daughter is also employed/working 25 hrs. per week. Is the daughter eligible student if she resides on campus?

The daughter would be considered a separate household, question states she resides on campus in another county or state, per FNS policy section 215.02, and the 19-year-old would need to apply for benefits independently. However, if the student attends college and is able to commute home and states she returns home and eats majority of her meal at home, please use FNS policy section 212.04 to determine household composition and document the case very well to support decision. FNS policy section 235.04 addresses working hours requirements for eligible student status.

Policy 235.04 states if student is Employed for either an average of 20 hours per week or a total of 80 hours per calendar month and paid for that employment, then they would meet the exemption and would be eligible for FNS.

Policy 212.04 G. Students

If a student attends college and returns home often, the residence is determined by where the student states that he/she eats the majority of his/her meals. This only applies to students who are eligible to receive Food and Nutrition Services benefits based on the eligibility requirements in FNS 235 Student of Higher Education.

Policy 235.04 An individual who is a student of higher education is ineligible to participate in the FNS Program unless the individual meets one of the exemptions listed in this section.

C. Employed for either an average of 20 hours per week or a total of 80 hours per calendar month and paid for that employment.

D. Self-employed for an average of 20 hours per week, or a total of 80 hours per calendar month. At a minimum, earnings must at least equal minimum wage multiplied by 20 hours per week or minimum wage multiplied by 80 hours per month.

- 13** Why are Early Colleges not considered high schools when part of the requirement for entry is lower income?

Unfortunately, the income requirements for Early College have no bearing on FNS student policy. If the student is enrolled in an institution of higher education at least half time as defined by the institution of higher education or is attending an institution under special circumstances where the student has not graduated from high school and are taking courses that are college level credit or the credits are transferable to other degree programs, then FNS student policy applies. (FNS policy sections 235.01 & 235.02)

- 14** Will we address current EFC of \$0 for students at next recert since the exemption of EFC of \$0 is a work around by putting in work study evidence and documenting the EFC of \$0? NC FAST will not know the difference at this time.

Begin applying normal student policy for recertifications on July 1, 2023, or at next recert, whichever is first.

- 15** Client attends community College through Vocational Rehabilitation, would this client be an exempt student? She meets no other exemption.

FNS 235.04 I.2. states individuals assigned to or placed in an institution of higher education through the FNS E&T program, or a government sponsored employment and training program for low-income household's equivalent to an employment and training component.

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- 16** School aged children getting high school diploma and will graduate with an associate degree, this policy applies to them at the time they enroll in college classes through high school?

You must determine if this student is enrolled at least half time as defined by the institution of higher education (taking enough college courses to be determined as half time since the student is also taking high school courses). If so, then student policy would apply. (FNS policy section 235.01 & 235.02)

- 17** If 18-year-old child in home is in Early College but not officially enrolled in high school through high school, is the child considered a high school student or college student?

If the student is enrolled in an institution of higher education for at least half time as defined by that institution, then they are considered a college student. (FNS policy section 235.01)

Telephonic Signatures

- 1** When will the state hear about the permanent waivers for telephonic signatures?

A date of denial or approval cannot be provided at this time. NC DHHS will seek a permanent waiver for telephonic signature after the (PHE) ends. Further guidance will be forthcoming.

- 2** There will be no more telephonic signatures accepted after June 30th if permanent waiver is not approved, correct?

Correct.

- 3** Will telephonic signatures not be accepted after the PHE ends?

The Division will be seeking approval from USDA to make the telephonic signature a permanent waiver. When more information is available, a communication will be released.

- 4** Will telephonic signatures be extended permanently?

The Division will be seeking approval from USDA to make the telephonic signature a permanent waiver. When more information is available, a communication will be released.

- 5** For interviews phone signatures effective 7/1/2023, is that for applications and recertifications received 7/1 or later or disposed 7/1 or later?

The waiver is currently approved through June 30, 2023. At this time, effective July 1, 2023, signatures will be required on all FNS applications and recertifications received. The Division of Child and Family Well-Being has confirmed they submitted an extension request for this waiver for one year and hope to receive a response from the USDA soon. Counties will be notified once the response is received.

- 6** Will the cases in June that are approved in July need wet signatures or will telephonic signatures taken in June be valid?

Any application/recertifications received on or before June 30, 2023, should still be under COVID wavers following COVID rules.

Starting July 1, 2023: Caseworkers must resume all interviews and signatures on all applications and recertifications including those submitted by mail, email, or drop off prior to the issuance of FNS benefits. The interview may be conducted in-person, by telephone, or video conference.

Voluntary Quit

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- 1 Voluntary quit has been discouraged in the past due to numerous exemptions. Should we be applying this after exemptions have been reviewed?

Voluntary Quit policy is still active, if the client situation meets voluntary quit definition you will continue to follow FNS Policy.

Work Registration

- 1 Currently NC FAST doesn't recognize parent/caretaker in the system, which makes us have to register them as work registered. Will this change?

NC FAST sent a Postcard communication out June 2017 available in FAST Help that provided counties with instructions for entering dependent evidence for parent/child to prevent NC FAST from reading parents of dependent children as ineligible. Please follow these instructions: go to the Household Relationship evidence with the child's name in the participant column and the description is "Is the Child of <the parent eligible for the exemption>". Edit that relationship evidence to check the box in relationship details for 'Related Participant is a Dependent'. After checking eligibility and applying changes, the exempt parent will now be eligible.

- 2 If you have 2 children less than 6 years old in the home would both parents be work exempt or just one?

Only one parent can claim this exemption. (FNS policy section 240.03 B)

- 3 If 18-year-old child in home is in Early College but not officially enrolled in high school through high school, is the child under work requirements?

If they are in Early College, they are considered a student and would be exempt from Work Registration.

- 4 DSS-8569 requirement to be sent at interview. Would it be an error cited if sent out at disposition?

FNS 240.01 the DSS 8640 (now DSS 8569) must be completed and given/mailed to the FNSU at the time of interview, or if no interview is conducted, it must be given/mailed at the time of disposition in the following circumstances: Application, reapplication, and recertifications when there are non-exempt individuals or individuals that may become non-exempt during the new certification period. During the interview, ABAWD and Work Registration requirements should be discussed with the client, so the form should be given or mailed during interview completion.

- 5 We need the DSS-8569 to be auto mailed if work registration evidence is activated.

FNS 240.01 the DSS 8640 (now DSS 8569) must be completed and given/mailed to the FNSU at the time of interview, or if no interview is conducted, it must be given/mailed at the time of disposition in the following circumstances: Application, reapplication, and recertifications when there are non-exempt individuals or individuals that may become non-exempt during the new certification period. During the interview, ABAWD and Work Registration requirements should be discussed with the client, so the form should be given or mailed during interview completion.

- 6 Can NC FAST asterisk* the "Establish Disability Mode" evidence as a required field?

This request will be passed on to NC FAST.

- 7 What information is needed to verify care for an incapacitated person?

Request a medical statement if questionable. Questionable means that the caseworker doesn't see the incapacitated person to assess the need, or the caseworker has a legitimate reason to believe the client's statement is untrue. (FNS policy section 240.03 J)

- 8 When will NC FAST stop dropping 18-year-old participants and their parents off the case when the child turns 18?

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This functionality has not been implemented yet, but a task does generate. It is always encouraged for workers to add the work registration evidence for a future date until we have the functionality in place to have the child continue to remain eligible throughout the CP.

9 What verification is needed to show person is caring for an incapacitated person.

Per FNS policy section 240.03 J. Accept the FNS unit's statement about who cares for the incapacitated person.

FNS Policy 240.03 J. Caretaker of Incapacitated Person

Exempt a FNS unit member who is responsible for the care of an incapacitated person.

Incapacitated means that the person is incapable of normal activity, and the presence of another person is necessary to protect the health, safety, etc., of the incapacitated person. If questionable, request a medical statement. Questionable means that the caseworker does not see the incapacitated person to assess this need, or the caseworker has a legitimate reason to believe the client's statement is untrue. The incapacitated person does not have to be a member of the FNS unit. The incapacitated person does not have to live in the same residence as the FNS unit. Do not apply the exemption if the incapacitated person resides in another household and that household provides the care. Accept the FNS unit's statement about who cares for the incapacitated person.

10 When we future date work registration evidence, do we have to send a DSS-8569 for that date or do you mail at the time the evidence is entered?

FNS 240.01 the DSS 8640 (now DSS 8569) must be completed and given/mailed to the FNSU at the time of interview, or if no interview is conducted, it must be given/mailed at the time of disposition in the following circumstances: Application, reapplication, and recertifications when there are non-exempt individuals or individuals that may become non-exempt during the new certification period. A manual DSS 8569 can be completed to indicate the correct start date of work registration when future dating the work registration evidence if the NC FAST DSS 8569 does not give you the option to adjust the start date.