



NC Department of Health and Human Services

Payment Accuracy SSI, SSA, and VA Income COLA Changes and Income Verifications

October 2023

CQIS In-person Regional Meeting

Cola Changes to SSA, SSI, and VA

Each year in December a Dear County Director Letter (DCDL) is sent to all 100 counties informing them of the yearly Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) changes for FNS and Work First. These changes are completed automatically in NC FAST for all SSI, SSA and VA recipients. NC FAST will increase the income evidence by the Cost-of-Living Adjustment percentage identified by the Federal Government. In 2023 this amount was 8.7%. For 2024 this amount will be 3.2%.

Cola Changes to SSA, SSI, and VA

For all FNS cases that are actively receiving benefits, NC FAST runs a batch that ends the old amount on December 31, and adds the new amount with a start date of January 1. Even though this is an automatic change completed by NC FAST the amounts may not always be correct. When completing a recertification on these cases workers must check OVS to ensure the amount in the evidence reflects the current payment amount. This is the #1 payment accuracy error.

Cola Changes to SSA, SSI, and VA

If the amount reflected on the evidence dashboard does not match the amount verified by OVS at the recertification, this amount must be updated to reflect the correct amount.

VA payments will need to be verified via award letter or by contacting your county's local VA office.

Income Verification Sources 305.05

- 1. Electronic Verification received through the Online Verification System (OVS) from the source of the income. This includes but is not limited to Social Security Income, Supplemental Security Income, The Work Number, and Unemployment.**
- 2. Documentary evidence which includes pay stubs, The Work Number, award letters, bank statements, etc.**

Note: Bank statements can be used for the purpose of verifying interest income only.

Income Verification Sources 305.05

FNS unit has primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence to support statements on the application and to resolve any questionable information, but the FNS worker must assist the applicant or household in obtaining verifications as needed or if requested by the FNS unit.

Please remember that **as needed looks different for each family we serve. Not all households will request help, case managers may need to offer help.**

Income Verification Sources 305.05

Let's look at some of the benefits to offering assistance with getting verifications for families when they apply or reapply for assistance.

- 1. Faster processing times. When you can call the income source or expense source and get the verifications instead of waiting on the verification from the FNS unit, you are able to process the case faster.**

Income Verification Sources 305.05

Let's look at some of the benefits to offering assistance with getting verifications for families when they apply or reapply for assistance. (Continued)

- 2. The family is assisted the first time preventing them from reapplying.**
- 3. Faster processing reduces foot traffic within the agency and reduces phone calls to the agency.**

Income Verification Sources 305.05

Do not require a specific type of verification. Accept any reasonable documentary evidence that adequately proves the information provided by the FNS unit.

Example 1 of adequate evidence: Ruby does not have access to computer to print paystubs online but is able to email a screenshot of the pay screen on the payroll website for the employer.

Income Verification Sources 305.05

Example 2 of adequate evidence: Jim does not receive paystubs because he is paid in cash. He does provide a letter from his boss stating he works 40 hrs. a week at \$12.00 an hour and is paid weekly.

Example 3 of adequate evidence: Abby babysits for her sister and makes \$40 a day and babysits 4-5 days a week. She does not have pay stubs but provides the worker with the telephone number to contact her sister. Worker calls and verifies information with sister of \$40 per day 4-5 days weekly.

Effects of Payment Accuracy

Payment Accuracy Impacts:

- 1. North Carolina's Case and Procedural Error Rate (CAPER).**
- 2. The families we serve.**
- 3. Your work load. If the cases are not correct when processed, this can cause you to have to work case evidence to correct the error and also may result in the need for a Program Integrity referral.**
- 4. Management Evaluation results that require a Performance Improvement Plan.**

Questions

