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**FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES CERTIFICATION**

**APPLICATIONS**

**FNS 435 DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY**

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**Change #02-2022**

**March 1, 2022**

**435.01 ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION REQUIREMENT**

**A. Mandatory Verifications:**

Verify all mandatory eligibility factors prior to certification, denial, reduction, or termination of FNS benefits. If verification of the following is not provided the application, recertification, or change must be denied for failure to provide information.

1. Identity;
2. Residency (Non-Categorical Eligible Households only);
3. Citizenship/Alien Status;
4. Household Size/Composition;
5. Enumeration;
6. Gross Non-exempt Income.

**B. Required Verifications:**

Verify all required eligibility factors prior to certification of FNS benefits. If verification is unavailable for a required verification, the client's statement may be used as verification to deny, reduce, or terminate FNS benefits. Eligibility is determined during the interview process and during the time period prior to disposition. Use appropriate manual sections to determine eligibility factors and verification requirements. Use any acceptable form of verification to determine if the FNS unit meets the following eligibility requirements:

1. Student Status;
2. Voluntary Quit;
3. Work Registration/ABAWD Status;
4. Disability;
5. Controlled Substance Felons, and

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6. Previous Disqualifications (QC, Controlled Substance Felons, IPV's, etc.)
  7. Resources;
- C. Non-required Verifications:

The following non-required verifications are used to determine benefit levels but are not eligibility requirements.

1. Utility Expenses;
2. Mortgage or Rental Expenses;
3. Property Taxes;
4. Property Insurance;
5. Medical Expenses;
6. Legally Obligated Child Support Payments; **and**
7. Child Care Expenses.

**435.02 VERIFICATION REQUIREMENT**

- A. There are three sources of verification that can be used when determining eligibility. Those sources are:
  1. Documentary evidence
  2. Collateral contacts
  3. Home visits.
- B. The household has primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence to support statements on the application and to resolve any questionable information.
- C. The agency should assist the household in obtaining verification as needed.
- D. Households may supply documentary evidence in person, by mail, or through an authorized representative. The household is not required to present verification in person.
- E. Physically or electronically date stamp all verifications when received.
- F. Accept **any** reasonable documentary evidence if the verification adequately proves the information provided on the application.

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- G. Do not require specific types of verification. It is appropriate to request verification of wages for a specific pay period. It is not appropriate to request check stubs or wage form for a specific pay period as the mandatory verification could be provided in many different forms.
- H. When documentary evidence cannot be obtained or is insufficient to make eligibility determination or determination of the correct benefit level, a collateral contact or home visit may be necessary.
- I. A collateral contact may be a person named by the household, or the agency may choose a collateral contact if the collateral contact designated by the household is unacceptable. Examples of acceptable collateral contacts may include employers, landlords, social service agencies, migrant service agencies, and neighbors of the household who can be expected to provide accurate third-party verification. The agency is responsible for obtaining verification from acceptable collateral contacts.
- J. North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) case files and appropriate evidences must be documented to support eligibility, ineligibility, and benefit level determinations. Documentation must be detailed enough for a reviewer to determine the accuracy of the case file.

#### 435.03 REQUESTING INFORMATION AT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. The worker must provide applicant households with two (2) requests for missing verifications.
  - 1. The first request provided to the applicant household is the DSS-8650A Documents Needed to Complete Your Application. The DSS-8650A is a general information sheet that must be provided to **all** applicant households at or prior to the date of interview. If the interview is conducted over the telephone the DSS-8650A may be provided by mail. The DSS-8650A provides the household with the following information:
    - Description of the type of verifications required to process the FNS application.
    - Examples of the types of documents that can be used to verify information.
    - Time period that verifications should cover.
    - How the applicant can provide the verifications.
    - What will happen to the application if verifications are not provided.
    - How to obtain help to obtain verifications.

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The caseworker must document the first request by documenting in NC FAST the date that the DSS-8650A is provided to the applicant household.

2. The second request provided to the applicant household is the DSS-8650 FNS Notice of Information Needed. The DSS-8650 requests information that is specific to the applicant household's situation and allows the applicant household 10 calendar days to provide the verification. This second request is only required if there are missing verifications. See manual section FNS 170.09 Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Notice of Information Needed for instructions on how to complete the form.
- B. It is the workers responsibility to issue the DSS-8650 timely enough to expire prior to the processing deadline outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
- C. The FNS unit must be given the full 10 calendar days to provide verifications. Do not dispose the application prior to the expiration of the 10 calendar days.

#### 435.04 REQUESTING INFORMATION AT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

##### A. Normal applications missing non-required verifications only:

1. Request non-required information using the DSS-8650.
  - a. Allow the FNS applicant 10 calendar days to provide the missing non-required information.
  - b. Issue the DSS-8650 timely enough to allow the 10 days to expire prior to the processing deadline as outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
2. If non-required information is provided, process application within five (5) days of receipt, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
3. If non-required information is not returned, process the application within five (5) days of expiration of the DSS-8650, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
4. If the verification is provided after the application is disposed, treat as a change in situation per FNS 515 SR Changes during Certification Period.

**Example:** FNS application was filed, and interview conducted.

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The only information requested at interview was verification of the household's mortgage. The FNS household was provided a DSS-8650 to request the non-required verification and they were given 10 days to provide the information.

The 10 days expired on June the 6<sup>th</sup> and the verifications were not provided. The worker may process the application on June the 7<sup>th</sup> without the non-required verifications.

**B. Normal applications missing required (FNS 435.01 B) and/or mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) verifications only or a combination of required and/or mandatory and non-required verifications:**

1. Request missing verifications using the DSS-8650 Notice of Information Needed to Complete your Food and Nutrition Services.
  - a. Allow the FNS applicant 10 calendar days to provide the missing verifications.
  - b. Issue the DSS-8650 timely enough to allow the 10 days to expire prior to the processing deadline as outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
2. If all verifications are provided by the 10<sup>th</sup> day, process application within five (5) days of receipt, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
3. If all required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) verifications and none or partial non-required verifications are returned, process the application within five (5) days of expiration of the DSS-8650, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame
4. If the applicant household does not return all the required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) verifications no further action is required. Hold the application and deny for failure to provide information on the due date.

If the applicant household returns only part of the requested verification or returns incorrect verification it is suggested to resend the original DSS-8650 with notations to inform the applicant household that the information returned was not sufficient to process the application. Do not issue a new DSS-8650 with an additional 10 days to provide information unless there is new or changed information reported.

**NOTE:** The DSS-8650A and DSS-8650 may be provided to the applicant household at the same time.

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**435.05 DELAY IN REQUESTING VERIFICATIONS**

- A. If the DSS-8650's 10 calendar days extends beyond the 30<sup>th</sup> day from the date of applications.
1. The following actions must be taken on the 30th day if processing delay is **caused by the agency**:
    - a. Pend the application, **do not** deny on the 30th day. Allow the household 10 days from the DSS-8650 to provide the required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) verification, regardless of whether the 10 days extend beyond the 30-day application processing standard.
    - b. If missing required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) verification is not provided, deny the application for failure to provide on the expiration of the DSS-8650. This is an overdue application.
    - c. Upon receipt of the required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) missing verification, determine eligibility within five calendar days, approve or deny benefits from the date of application.
  2. The following actions must be taken on the 30th day if processing delay is caused by the household or household with a good cause reason:
    - a. Processing delay is caused by the household:
      - i. Deny the application on the 30th day if the required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) missing verification is not provided from the DSS-8650.
      - ii. Upon receipt of required (FNS 435.01 B) and mandatory (FNS 435.01 A) missing verification, determine eligibility within five calendar days. If determined eligible the household loses its entitlement to benefits in the month of application.
      - iii. Processing delay is caused by the household **and** a good cause reason exist; regulatory delay is allowable.
        - Enter appropriate reason in NC FAST and document the reason for the delay.
        - Evaluate good cause on a case-by-case basis. Regulatory delay is the only entry that prevents the case from being counted as overdue regardless of the actual processing time.

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