

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 7-2013
(Work First)**

TO: COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: Work First Program Managers and Supervisors

DATE: December 9, 2013

SUBJECT: Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Veteran's Benefits Cost of Living Adjustment

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to outline procedures for implementing the Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veteran's Benefits (VA) Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Work First (WF) cash assistance cases only.

Effective January 1, 2014, recipients of Social Security, SSI and VA benefits will receive a 1.5 % cost of living increase. In the past, these increases were implemented at the household's first change in situation, application or review for Work First cases. This year the increases must be applied to cases immediately via a manual process. These changes may affect the January 2014 benefits.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Individuals who receive SSI are not included in the Work First case and their SSI payment is not included in the budget. However, Social Security and VA benefits are countable income and are included in the budget calculations.

To assist workers in identifying Work First cases with Social Security and VA benefits in the Eligibility Information System (EIS), a report entitled "DHREJA WF CASES W SSA/VA INCOME" is available in NCXPTR. The report contains the case head name, EIS case ID, county, and the 2013 Social Security and VA benefit amounts. Use this report to identify the cases where workers must manually change the Social Security or VA amount. The report only identifies Social Security and VA benefits keyed in the correct fields designated for Social Security and/or VA benefits.

Counties should adhere to the procedures outlined below for the following case management systems:

A. Cases Processed in EIS

For applications and ongoing cases in EIS the worker must manually calculate the January payment to reflect the 1.5% COLA increase for WF cases. To determine the January payment, complete the following actions:

1. To calculate the revised Social Security or VA amount, multiply the current benefit by .015 (round down to the nearest dollar).
2. Send a DSS-8194 to the Food and Nutrition Services worker, if appropriate.
3. Send a manual DSS-8110, Your Benefits Are Changing, to notify the families impacted by the COLA increase. The household is entitled to a hearing if they believe benefits were improperly calculated.

4. Key a DSS-8125 using change code "55". This process must be completed no later than January 30, 2014.

B. Cases Processed in NC FAST

At this time, no Work First cases in NC FAST have been identified as being impacted by this change. If it is later determined that Work First cases in NC FAST have Social Security or VA income, complete the following actions:

1. Actions taken before January 1, 2014

For applications taken or processed prior to January 1, 2014 with Social Security or VA income, enter the old Social Security and VA payment amounts with the appropriate evidence start and end dates.

2. Actions Taken On or After January 1, 2014

Complete the case actions using the January 2014 amounts for benefits. For example, enter old SSI payment amount in December and new SSI payment amount effective January 2014 or later.

3. Review other product delivery cases in NC FAST to ensure the increase has not already been updated.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Work First recipients will not receive mass notices about the COLA increase with their payments. Notices will only be provided to Work First recipients whose benefits change or terminate as a result of the COLA increase.

Complete the steps shown above for any Work First cases not identified on the provided EIS report or by NC FAST with Social Security and VA income. If it is determined that the income for these cases was entered incorrectly on the automated budget, the cases may result in a County Responsible Overpayment and should not be charged to the household.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy guidance is effective upon receipt. Please email any questions regarding this policy to WorkFirst.Support@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Acting Section Chief
Economic and Family Services
Division of Social Services

DL/wf

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