

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 3-2020
EFS_WF_AL-3-2020**

Work First (Amended)

TO: COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: Work First Program Managers and Supervisors

DATE: April 2, 2020

SUBJECT: Interview Process During a Federal or State Declared Natural Disaster or Emergency (Amended)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

On March 10, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order No. 116, Declaration of a State of Emergency to Coordinate Response and Protective Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19. The Department values the safety and well-being of county staff and the families they serve. To foster social distancing, the Division has updated the TANF State Plan to include the provision of telephone interviews for Work First applications, recertifications, short-term services and benefits, and Work First Employment Services.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

During periods of natural disaster or other emergencies determined by the state or federal government, the required face-to-face interview for Work First screening/assessment and Employment Services Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA)-B updates can be conducted by telephone.

The Work First Cash Assistance Application and Review Documentation Workbook (DSS-8228) can be mailed to individuals who wish to apply for Work First Cash Assistance or short-term services and benefits. Upon receipt of the DSS-8228, a telephone interview can be conducted with the applicant to complete the NC FAST Intelligent Evidence Gathering(IEG). Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements for ongoing Work First cash assistance or short-term benefits and services.

III. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

- The telephone interview must cover all the information required for completion of the NC FAST Intelligent Evidence Gathering(IEG). When the IEG is submitted, the system creates an Application PDF. The resulting document, which includes a signature page, is considered the application for cash assistance. The participant must sign the IEG to complete the application process. Follow the guidance in Work First Policy Manual Section 104 to preserve the date of application.

- Recertification interviews can be conducted by telephone. Work First recertifications must be processed within 60 calendar days prior to the last day of the current certification period.
- The Outcome Plan and an initial MRA-B must be completed within five (5) workdays of the application date for Work First. The MRA-B can be developed by telephone. Mail two copies of the MRA-B to the participant; one for the participant to keep and one to sign and return.

Good cause for failure to provide required documentation, failure to comply with the MRA-A or MRA-B must be examined case by case. Good cause is defined as:

- Disability of the caretaker;
- Disability of a child or other family member requiring the caretaker to remain at home and provide care;
- Family crisis or change including, but not limited to, death of a spouse, parent, or child, and;
- Lack of necessary childcare;
- Disruption in childcare arrangements;
- Civil leave, including jury duty, or a required court appearance;
- A significant change in the participant's work schedule by the employer;
- Loss of transportation.

Other activities will require strong documentation of good cause if one of the above reasons is not suitable. Use prudent judgment to ensure that good cause is applied reasonably and equitably to all families. Documentation must be thoroughly recorded in NC FAST on the Income Support Case Details tab.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective upon receipt. All provisions implemented will be allowed until the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted. Please email any questions regarding this policy to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST): DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

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