

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 6-2014  
(Work First)**

**TO:** COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION:** Work First Program Managers and Supervisors

**DATE:** December 8, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veteran's Benefits (VA) Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon Receipt

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Effective January 1, 2015, recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Veteran's Benefits (VA) will receive a 1.7% Cost-of-Living Assistance (COLA) increase. 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. North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST), the state's automated case management system has completed the conversion of ongoing Work First cash assistance cases from the Eligibility Information System (EIS). This 2015 Cost-of-Living Assistance (COLA) increase, was applied to cases via NC FAST on December 6, 2014.

**II. POLICY PROCEDURES**

Social Security and Veteran's Benefits (VA) are countable income and are included in the budget calculations. Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are not included in the Work First case or budget calculations.

All programs will be impacted by COLA. As a result, additional case observation and attention is needed.

- A. On December 6, 2014, NC FAST applied the COLA increase to all Work First Cash Assistance cases. NC FAST updated the Benefit Evidence and ran an eligibility reassessment. The affected cases went on an automatic HOLD. The case worker needs to review this HOLD decision to ensure the HOLD is due to COLA.
- B. If the change in the payment amount is due to COLA, the case worker will reject the HOLD decision.

To identify Work First cash assistance cases with Social Security, Supplemental Social Security and Veteran's Benefits, a report entitled "**DHREJA WF CASES W SSA/VA INCOME**" is available in NCXPTR. This report contains the case head's name; EIS case ID, county and the 2015 Social Security and Veteran's Benefits (VA) amounts. NC FAST will show both the 2014 and 2015 benefit amounts.

### III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Apply this policy to the next review or change in situation on or after January 1, 2015.
- B. If the increased income is not included in the first change in situation or review; any over payment that occurs in the following months is a county responsible over payment and should not be charged to the household.

Please email any questions regarding this policy to DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) at [ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Locklear". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Locklear, Acting Section Chief  
Economic and Family Services