North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST)
2033 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2033
Tel: 919-707-4000 • Fax: 919-510-4388

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Albert A. Delia, Acting Secretary

Anthony Vellucci, Director

August 15, 2012

Subject: Updated NC FAST Implementation Approach and Schedule for Hard/Soft Launch

Dear County Director of Social Services:

We want to share the latest update regarding project status and some important changes to the NC FAST implementation approach and schedule. The 4 primary Pilot Counties — Carteret, Catawba, Guilford and Johnston — went live Monday, May 21, 2012. As was the intent of a pilot approach, we learned a great deal from the pilot implementations. As a result, we adjusted the method for bringing on other counties to take advantage of the early successes of the initial Pilot Counties.

On June 18, 2012, the fifth Pilot County, Buncombe, implemented NC FAST using the new soft launch, where only new FNS applications are entered in the system. On July 23, 2012, Buncombe County progressed to the hard launch that moved them to using NC FAST for all FNS processing.

We want to thank all the Pilot Counties for accepting and surmounting the challenges associated with being a pilot; for their leadership and experiences, which proved invaluable to a successful initial NC FAST rollout; and for their input to update plans for the remaining statewide rollout. The significant lessons learned will enable the soft launch of NC FAST for all remaining counties to occur faster than originally planned.

Based on Pilot County experiences, we continue to refine and optimize the implementation approach. We saw great success with the soft launch, and found it beneficial for counties to have more experience with the system to become familiar with processing new applications prior to hard launch. We made positive adjustments to the training delivered during the pilot phase, but received consistent feedback that the amount of material covered in the full week of training is a lot, and may be more effective if delivered in smaller segments.

With valuable lessons from our 5 Pilot Counties and the key objective of getting more counties using NC FAST sooner, we are adjusting our remaining statewide implementation and training approach.

- The soft launch will be accelerated for all counties so they can begin using NC FAST sooner to process new applications.
- The hard launch will be implemented as hard launch stage 1 and hard launch stage 2.
- Training will continue to be delivered on a regional basis to minimize travel for each county, but the full week of training will now take place as 2 separate sessions. One 2.5 day session before the soft launch, and one 2.5 day session before hard launch stage 2.
- NC FAST will establish continuous regional training classes throughout the state to provide new worker and remedial training as needed.

The revised implementation and training approach is described in the following paragraphs:

Soft Launch. Prior to soft launch, the first 2.5 day training session will take place. This session will focus on NC FAST basics and how to process new applications. After training, that group of county users will soft launch and can immediately begin entering new applications into NC FAST. While FSIS remains 100% available during this time, county users are strongly encouraged to process all new applications in NC FAST, rather than in FSIS. The soft launch implementation schedule will be accelerated for all Phase 3, 4 and 5 Counties, enabling counties to begin using NC FAST sooner for new applications. This will provide adequate time for each county to learn and adapt to the new way of doing business prior to the hard launch of moving all active FSIS cases to NC FAST.

Hard Launch Stage 1. After an entire county is soft launched, NC FAST staff, DHHS DSS staff and the County DSS Director will monitor the county's progress using NC FAST for new applications. Upon continuous success using NC FAST for new applications, hard launch stage 1 will take place. At this time, FSIS will be turned OFF for new applications ONLY, while still available for recertifications and other processing required for existing cases. No additional face-to-face training will be required as staff are still processing new applications only.

Hard Launch Stage 2. Prior to stage 2, the second 2.5 day training session will take place. This session will prepare the county to complete conversion of cases from FSIS to NC FAST, process recertifications and process case changes. After the successful soft launch and hard launch stage 1 and all new FNS applications are being entered in NC FAST, a readiness assessment will be conducted to determine the appropriate timing for hard launch stage 2 for each county. At this time, all active FSIS cases will be converted into NC FAST and all FSIS processing will be turned off completely. All processing will take place in NC FAST.

Schedule. The hard launch implementation schedule will be based on each county's readiness, and published in the next few weeks. Stage 1 will occur no sooner than 1 month after all county staff have been trained, and will be planned for the 1st of the month. Stage 2 will be planned to occur mid-month.

Beginning in September, 2012, training for Phase 3, 4 and 5 Counties will be adjusted to the new 2.5 day approach. County staff will soft launch as soon as they complete the training and receive their NC FAST user IDs. Because training will be 2.5 days per user, we will conduct 2 training sessions per week and accelerate delivery of this training to all counties.

The NC FAST Implementation Team will work with each County Director and County Champion in Phase 3, 4 and 5 Counties to confirm the schedule for future training classes and begin gathering the needed information to set up each user's security profile in the system. We welcome your assistance to identify suitable classroom training locations across the state. Additional information on the revised implementation and training schedule will be provided as it becomes available.

DHHS and NC FAST Management are committed to helping increase productivity in the counties and optimizing the NC FAST rollout. We thank you for your patience as we continue to adapt and improve the implementation and training approach based on your valuable feedback. Because we believe so strongly in the benefits of NC FAST, we are confident that getting all counties using it sooner is the right approach. Be assured that NC FAST staff will continue to be available and supportive during this very important time. As always, do not hesitate to contact me or any of the NC FAST staff if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Anthony Vellucci

cc: Beth Melcher, NC DHHS, Deputy Secretary for Health Services
Maria F. Spaulding, NC DHHS, Deputy Secretary for Long-Term Care and Family Services
Dan Stewart, NC DHHS, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Business Operations
Laketha Miller, NC DHHS Controller
Michael Watson, NC DHHS Division of Medical Assistance, Director
Deborah Cassidy, NC DHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education, Director
Dennis Streets, NC DHHS Division of Aging and Adult Services, Director
Sherry Bradsher, NC DHHS Division of Social Services, Director
Karen Tomczak, NC DHHS, Chief Information Officer

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