

**N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services, Administrative Letter No.
16-12
Adult Services Section**

Date: December 12, 2016

Subject: Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA 2017)
and VA Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA 2017) for
Special Assistance (SA) in a Facility.

Distribution: County Directors
Special Assistance Supervisors
Adult Services Supervisors

Effective Date: January 1, 2017

I. BACKGROUND:

Effective January 1, 2017, SA facility beneficiaries will receive a 0.3% cost-of-living increase in their RSDI/SSI/VA benefits. This letter explains how the increase will affect SA benefits for individuals in facilities and the procedures for counties to follow.

SA In-Home (SA-IH) cases are exempt from counting the COLA increase until April, 2017 after the new Federal Poverty Levels are published. No action related to the COLA is needed for SA-IH cases until further notice.

II. SOCIAL SECURITY and VETERAN'S CHANGES DUE TO COLA ADJUSTMENT

A. RSDI/SSI

Effective January 1, 2017, recipients of RSDI and/or SSI will receive a 0.3% COLA increase in their monthly benefits.

B. SSI Federal Benefit Rate (FBR)

Effective January 1, 2017, the SSI federal benefit rate (FBR) for an individual will increase to \$735.00 per month.

C. Veteran's Benefits (VA)

Effective January 1, 2017, most recipients of Veteran's Benefits will receive a 0.3% COLA increase in their monthly benefit.

III. MASS CHANGE

NC Fast will create new RSDI/SSI/VA evidence and update SA facility cases to reduce the SA payment effective January 1, 2017 due to the COLA increase and terminate cases effective December 31, 2016 with payments of less than \$1.00. NC Fast will automatically accept the new decision for all cases **except** cases in an "On Hold" status. These cases will require caseworker review and acceptance of the changed decision. NC Fast will provide the name and location of the report on the NC Fast COLA communication.

IV. RECIPIENT NOTICE OF COLA

A. Timely Notice

NC Fast will generate and mail NCF 20031, SA COLA Mass Change Notice, to all active and pending closure SA case beneficiaries and their authorized representatives. (The NCF 20031 will also be sent to all active and pending closure SA-IH case beneficiaries and their authorized representatives.) The scheduled date for SA-IH NCF 20031 mailing is December 12, 2016. The Income Support Case, Case Details Tab, Communication section will be updated to document the date the NCF 20031 is sent.

B. Adequate Notice

Prior to January 1, 2017, NC Fast will generate and send DSS-8110's with the new payment amount effective January 1, 2017 and notification of termination of SA payments effective December 31, 2016. The issuance of the DSS-8110 adequate notice will not be updated on the Communication tab, instead a report will be posted on Fast Help that lists cases affected by the mass change and will serve as verification of DMA-8110, Adequate Notice issuance. NC Fast will provide the name and location of the report on the NC Fast COLA communication.

V. SA APPLICATIONS AND REDETERMINATIONS

A. Applications

Any pending application entered prior to December 10, 2016, that is under an income support case (ISC) with any active or pending closure product delivery case of any type, NC Fast will create the new RSDI/SSI/VA evidence. For applications entered prior to December 10, 2016 that is under an ISC without any type of active case or pending closure case, the

worker will need to add evidence for the time period prior to January with an end date of 12/31/2016 and the new RSDI/SSI/VA evidence with a start date of 1/1/2017. Applications entered December 10, 2016 and later, will require RSDI/SSI/VA evidence to be entered for month(s) prior to January with an end date of 12/31/2016 and the new RSDI/SSI/VA evidence with a start date of 01/01/2017.

B. Recertifications

NC Fast will also update RSDI/SSI/VA evidence for SA cases where the certification period has ended prior to January 1, 2017. When the worker completes the late recertification, the new RSDI/SSI/VA evidence with a start date of 1/1/2017 will be present.

VI. SA TERMINATED CASES AND PASSALONG EVALUATION

Cases in which the monthly payment amount is less than \$1.00 as a result of the COLA increase will be terminated. Evaluation for Passalong for SA cases terminating will be an NC Fast automated process. NC Fast will provide the name and location of the report on the NC Fast COLA communication.

Please note that NC Fast will be sending a communication to provide additional COLA guidance and COLA reports information.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact the Special Assistance listserv at specialassistance@dhhs.nc.gov .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne P. Merrill". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Suzanne P. Merrill, Director

SPM/cu