NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Social Services

ROY COOPER • Governor
MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary
WAYNE E. BLACK • Director

August 10, 2018

Dear County Director of Social Services:

Attention: Work First Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors

Subject: Work First Two-Parent Participation Rate

On July 18, 2018, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) notified the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services that North Carolina **did not meet** the Two-Parent Work Participation Rate **for the fourth consecutive year, including Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017, and** is subject to a financial penalty. Efforts to increase the work participation rates at the state and county level have been beneficial; however, additional efforts are needed for the state to meet the Two-Parent Work Participation Rate.

County staff have been instrumental in ensuring the quality of the data entered within the NC FAST System by evaluating the cases identified through the TANF Sample Report and Work First Participation Reports and making needed corrections to data. The review and re-evaluation of those cases within NC FAST has increased the quality and percentage of cases that meet the work participation rate for both the All-Family and Two-Parent Participation Rates.

State staff have also been working to improve the reporting tools used to make sure data collected is accurate and complete for the TANF Sample Report as well as Work Participation Reports. Together, these efforts have increased the work participation rate by an average of 10% in both the All-Family and Two-Parent categories for FFY 2017.

We need to continue this positive trend by reassessing performance, identifying issues, and making corrections. Based on feedback from ACF, one identified error has been prioritized for correction.

- **Household Relationship Evidence** – this type of evidence has been keyed incorrectly or the wrong "relationship" has been entered. For example: the relationship for a child is designated as a parent and/or adult which causes the case to be shown as a two or three parent case. This results in the case being rejected during the federal reporting process. If a child is not an emancipated minor the relationship type should be child. (see attachment)

Additionally, feedback received from counties indicated the number of hours in attendance did not match what was being recorded. Research indicates that the over utilization of Custom Activities may be the culprit. Custom Activities **do not** count towards the federal work participation rates. Workers must always utilize federal countable activities when appropriate. Custom Activities are designed to compliment countable federal activities and **must** only be used

when the worker does not want the activity to count towards the work participation rates. See Work First Manual Section 118. VII.

A Two-Parent Custom Activity Report is being developed for workers to use to evaluate if Custom Activities were created appropriately. This report will reflect Two-Parent cases with Custom Activities from **September 2017 – July 2018**. The DSS Operational Support Team will provide the report when it becomes available and the necessary technical assistance.

Worker must review their respective cases and evaluate if the Custom Activity should be a federally countable work activity or if it was created correctly and should not be counted as a federal work activity. If it is determined the Custom Activity should be a federally countable activity/component take the following steps:

- Select the appropriate activity and create the federal component for the Outcome Plan. Ensure the frequency/duration and requirements from the Custom Activity are included for the newly created federal component on the Outcome Plan. (See NC FAST Job Aid: Mapping Outcome Plan Activities to Federal Components)

- After creating the new federal activity/component, delete the Custom Activity from the Outcome Plan. Document in the case notes the reason for actions taken.

Note: Manually keying an activity or federal component in the New Action text field will not count for work participation hours. (see attachment)

The strategies below have been identified to enhance the creation of work activities and keying accuracy.

- **Entering scheduled work activities/participation hours** – Entering participation hours directly effects the work participation rates. Workers should navigate to the Activities Tab and select the participation folder. Once the worker has scheduled the participation hours, under the Work Activities Tab, the worker **must** then enter the hours in the Participation Tab. Hours can be entered by selecting “Record Daily Participation” or “Record Scheduled Attendance” or “Record Absence Period”. (see attachment)

- **Entering Attendance –** When entering attendance, workers should select the participation folder from the activity tab. Once the page displays, select the correct method, either “Record Daily Participation”, “Record Scheduled Attendance” or “Record Absence Period.” Recording scheduled attendance should be utilized when all activities have been completed as assigned. For example, Work Experience was assigned for (4) four hours each day Monday through Friday. When attendance reports are received, verify the actual attendance and enter “Recording Scheduled Attendance.”

  In this example**,** Work Experience was also assigned for (4) four hours each day Monday through Friday. The participant’s child had a doctor’s appointment and left the worksite one hour early that day. However, the participant worked an additional hour at the worksite the following day to ensure all hours were completed. In this instance, the “Record Daily Participation” option should be utilized to accurately capture the hours completed. (see attachment)

- **Utilizing Federal Activities –** Federal components/activities are readily available in NC FAST for the creation of Work First Outcome Plans. Federal component/activities are the **only** activities which count towards the federal participation rates. (See NC FAST Job Aid: Mapping Outcome Plan Activities to Federal Components)

- **Outcome Plan referrals must be created on the Work First Income Support Case** – The Outcome Plan serves as the Work First Employment Services (WFES) activity tracker. Activities recorded in the Work Participation tab are generated from the Outcome Plan directly linked to the Work First Income Support Case. It is imperative to create the WFES Outcome Plan on the open Work First Income Support Case. When the Product Delivery Case closes it is not necessary to close Income Support cases. The Income Support Case **must** remain open to allow for future applications to link to the original Income Support and Outcome Plan reference. When the Product Delivery Case closes the appropriate action is to end date all open work activities/components in the Outcome Plan. Do not close the Outcome Plan; leave it open for future use.

Resources available in NC FAST Help (**https://ncfasthelp.nc.gov**) are shown below and must be utilized to ensure accurate reporting.

- **Work First Outcome Plan Job Aid –** provides guidance for case managers to develop an Outcome Plan using NC FAST system generated activity options directly linked to federally countable hours of participation.
- **Create Household Evidence Job Aid** – provides guidance for case managers to correctly enter household evidence necessary to identify Two-Parent households.
- **Entering Work First State Exemptions Job Aid** – provides guidance for case managers to correctly enter exemption evidence to ensure participants are correctly calculated in the work participation rate.
- **Entering Participation Hours Job Aid** – provides guidance for case managers to accurately enter participation hours.
- **Mapping Outcome Plan Activities to Federal Components** – provides guidance for case managers to effectively utilize federal components/activities.

The Division along with NC FAST and the DSS Operational Support Team will present a webinar on **Friday August 17, 2018 at 1:45 pm**. The live webinar will review the information provided in the Dear County Director letter to ensure a better understanding of the federal requirements and the data entry procedures for work participation. Staff are encouraged to meet in a centralized location to view the webinar. To access the webinar, register below:

Work First Two-Parent Participation Rate and Strategies for Improvement

Join us for a webinar on Aug 17, 2018 at 1:45 PM EDT.

Register now!

DCDL: Work First Two-Parent Participation Rate and Strategies for Improvement

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. View System Requirements .

If there are questions, please contact the DSS Operational Support Team at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov .

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director

Attachment: NC FAST Screenshots
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