NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for Human Services

April 16, 2020

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

Subject: Step-By-Step Application Process for Work First Assistance

Priority: Information Only

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division of Social Services has seen a decline in the Work First applications. We know that this may be driven in part by the social distancing requirement per Executive Order No. 121 Stay at Home Order.

To help counties utilize the most streamlined process possible when processing Work First applications, policy was revised to allow telephonic interviews so that it is possible to complete the Work First (WF) application process without requiring the applicant to come to the DSS office. The required face-to-face interview for WF screenings/assessments can be conducted by telephone and counties can accept an electronic signature from the applicant/recipient.

The purpose of this letter is to explain the streamlined process to ensure that applications for Work First are processed efficiently so that applicants are provided with every opportunity to receive the assistance when eligible. Once the participant contacts the local DSS agency requesting a WF Cash Assistance Application, the local agency should take the following steps:

1. Complete the WF Cash Assistance Application and Review Documentation Workbook (DSS-8228) and Intelligent Evidence Gathering (IEG) interview while the applicant is on the telephone. While conducting the interview, the worker completes the IEG in NC FAST to protect the date of application. The telephone Interview must cover all information for completion of the NC FAST IEG and applicants must meet all eligibility requirements for WF Cash Assistance or Short-term Services and Benefits.

2. Conduct all required assessments and screenings according to policy while conducting the interview. This would include the Audit/DAST-10 (DSS-8218), Substance Use testing Notification (DSS-8218A), Learning Needs Screening Tool Waiver and Consent Agreement (DSS-5330) and assessment if needed.

3. Mail the DSS-8146A-Notice of Information Needed to Determine Your Eligibility for Work First Family Assistance, along with a self-addressed postage paid envelope, the

DSS-8228, the signature page of the IEG and required assessments for signatures. The applicant/participant must sign and return the IEG along with all required assessments/screenings to complete the application process. DocuSign or another electronic signature process may be used by the participant if this signature option is available. The signed IEG protects the date of application and completes the application process. Signatures are required for the DSS-8228 and the IEG before the WF application can be processed. If the participant does not return the DSS-8228 and the IEG signature page, along with any other requested information, the application is denied.

4. Refer to WF Policy Manual Section 104 for further guidance on required verifications.

If your county is unable to conduct the interview when the applicant/participant contacts the agency, mail the WF Cash Assistance Application and Review Documentation Workbook (DSS-8228) for completion and a signature, along with a self-addressed postage paid envelope to the client. Upon receipt of the DSS-8228, schedule an interview with the applicant/participant and follow steps 1-3 to complete the WF application process.

Please email any questions regarding this policy to the Economic and Family Services Operational Support Team (OST) to DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director

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