NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN • Governor
DEVDUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary
YVONNE COPELAND • Director, Division of Child and Family Well-Being

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Date: November 9, 2026

Attention: County Directors; Economic Services and Food and Nutrition Services Program Administrators and Supervisors

Subject: FNS Policy Manual Revision: ABAWD Age and Under-14 Exemptions Lost After Screening (FNS 260) and Work Registration After a Non-Reportable Change (FNS 240) (Change Notice FNS-CN-06-2026)

Priority: Information

Effective November 1, 2026, the Division of Child and Family Well-Being is issuing revisions to the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Policy Manual. The revisions address two situations. The first is a household member who turns age 18, or whose youngest child in the household turns age 14, after the member has been screened for ABAWD exemptions. The second is a member who loses a work registration exemption through a change that is not subject to the reporting requirements. This letter transmits the change notice that carries the revisions, together with the complete revised FNS 240 and FNS 260. It also explains why the change is being made, what it will mean for your staff, and what stays the same.

Why This Revision

A member who is 17 at application, or an adult in a household whose youngest child is 13, is exempt from the ABAWD time limit. When the birthday arrives during the certification period, policy treats that loss of exemption as a change the agency does not act on until the next recertification, because the member has not been screened for every other exemption (FNS 260.03.D.2.a). NC FAST, however, has been ending the exemption on the birthday itself, which required caseworkers to screen the member for other exemptions mid-certification. Those screenings were sometimes not completed or not completed correctly, and members were removed from cases or assigned countable months without a screening. This has been a source of Quality Control errors. The manual also did not say how to treat a birthday that falls after the date of application but before the case is approved, which left counties handling that situation differently.

These revisions, together with the NC FAST change, remove the mid-certification step that was producing the errors. A birthday alone no longer requires any caseworker action; the member stays exempt through the certification period and is screened for all exemptions at the next recertification. Work registration for a member who turns 18 follows the same timing. Changes the household reports during the certification period continue to be handled under FNS 515.

What Is Changing

One change notice is attached to implement these changes. It transmits the complete revised FNS 240 and FNS 260, so your staff can work from a single current document for each section, together with marked copies showing every addition and deletion against the current manual.

Change Notice FNS-CN-06-2026 — ABAWD Age and Under-14 Exemptions Lost After Screening (FNS 260) and Work Registration After a Non-Reportable Change (FNS 240). Exemption status based on age or on a child under age 14 is determined as of the date of

application or, at recertification, the first day of the new certification period. The revised sections provide:

- A member who is under age 18, or for whom the youngest child in the household is under age 14, on that date is exempt for the remainder of the certification period. A birthday during the certification period, including a birthday that occurs after the date of application but before the application is approved, does not end the exemption and does not begin countable months. The member is screened for all exemptions at the next recertification (FNS 260.01.B.2, 260.01.C.6, 260.03.D.2.a, 260.06.E.1).
- A member who is already age 18, or for whom the youngest child in the household is already age 14, on the date of application or the first day of the new certification period is screened for all other exemptions like any other adult. The month of the birthday remains an exempt month. If no exemption applies, countable months begin with the first full benefit month after the birthday month (FNS 260.01.B.3, 260.01.C.7).
- At recertification, a member whose exemption ended during the prior certification period is screened for all other exemptions for the new certification period (FNS 260.01.B.3, 260.01.C.7, 260.06.D.3).
- A member who loses a work registration exemption through a change that is not subject to the reporting requirements, including a 17-year-old who turns 18, is registered for work at the next recertification rather than within 10 days of the change (FNS 240.01.A.2.b). This conforms to 7 CFR 273.7(b)(2)(ii) and matches the rule FNS 240.03.B.1 already applies when a child turns six.

The change notice also replaces references to the DSS-8640 in FNS 240 with the DSS-8569 Consolidated Work Notice, which replaced it, changes the 30-day periods for regaining eligibility in FNS 260.05.A to “any 30 consecutive days,” conforming to federal regulation, and makes editorial corrections in both sections, each described in the notice.

What Does Not Change

- Households’ reporting requirements are unchanged. A birthday is not a required report for simplified reporting households under FNS 500.03.
- The DSS-8569 Consolidated Work Notice is still provided at application and recertification when a member may become non-exempt during the certification period (FNS 240.01.A.1), and when a member is registered or deregistered for work.
- The screening requirement itself is unchanged. Every adult member is screened for all exemptions at application and recertification, and countable months are never assigned to a member who has not been screened (FNS 260.02, 260.03.C).
- No review of existing cases is required. The revised sections apply to applications and recertifications processed on or after November 1, 2026.

Implementation and Support

- The attached change notice walks through the revisions section by section, and the complete revised sections are ready for your staff to use now.
- NC FAST is being updated, with release on November 8, 2026, so that the age and under-14 exemptions, once applied, remain in place through the certification period. Beginning the month after the birthday month, the Reason column in the Household Members – ABAWD section of the FNS Decision page (Household tab) will display “Retaining ABAWD Exemption for Child Turning 18 Mid Cert Period” for a member who turned 18, or “Retaining ABAWD Eligibility Mid Cert Period” for a member whose

youngest child in the household turned 14, and the month will not be a countable month. The FNS – Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Job Aid will be updated soon.

- **Existing cases.** When the change is released, NC FAST applies the retained exemption to every member whose birthday is on or after November 1, 2026; no caseworker action is needed. A case that is already on hold for another reason receives the exemption when that hold is released. Households with a member whose birthday is in November 2026 received a DSS-8553 for that birthday before the release. Each of those households will receive a DSS-8562 Effect of Change confirming that benefits continue at their current amount. The Division will notify counties whether NC FAST generates these notices or counties will be asked to send them. No other DSS-8553 will go out for one of these birthdays: NC FAST will cancel the notices already generated for later birthdays before December's notices are sent.
- These revisions will be reviewed at the SNAP Quality Assurance Stand-Up on November 18, 2026. Register at https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3691012611699948383.

Thank you for the work your teams do every day to keep these benefits both accurate and accessible. If you have any questions, please submit them to the Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist (CQIS) team at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Brian P. Hogan
Deputy Director for Nutrition
Division of Child and Family Well-Being

Attachment (1): Change Notice FNS-CN-06-2026, with the complete revised FNS 240 and FNS 260. Each revised section is provided in two forms: the final section as it will appear in the manual, and a marked copy showing each change against the current manual.