



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

Date: September 14, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services:

Attention: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

Subject: Suspended H and I Controlled Substance Felons Assessments during COVID-19 Pandemic (effective through October 31, 2021) and Extend Sanction Dates

Priority: Information and Action Required

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 state of emergency and continued requirement for social distancing has disrupted how services are delivered by the County Departments of Social Services, including the ability of Qualified Professionals in Substance Abuse (QPSA) to perform assessments for those Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) applicants that have H or I controlled substance felony offenses in North Carolina.

Counties are required to continue to suspend the substance abuse assessments for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) applicants and recipients that have H or I controlled substance felony offenses in North Carolina by entering a future sanction date in NC FAST when processing applications, recertifications and changes. Extend the sanction start date for cases that do not extend past the current suspension month for assessments, October 2021.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Applicant and recertified households that contain an individual with a H or I controlled substance felony are required to successfully complete and/or participate in an approved substance abuse program. This requirement is being temporarily suspended until their next recertification. The individuals must still meet their minimum 6-month minimum disqualification period per FNS 290.02 A.1.

1. The worker must explain to the FNS unit that the requirement to successfully complete an assessment with the local area mental health has not been waived. The requirement is being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be required at their next recertification.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

2. The worker must take the following actions to enter evidence and document the suspension of the requirement in NC FAST:
 - a. Enter a sanction in NC FAST using the first day of the month following the end of the certification period as the start date. Do not enter an end date.
 - b. Document in the NC FAST notes that the initial assessment was waived due to COVID-19 pandemic and the individual must comply at the next recertification. Apply normal policy as outlined in FNS 290 at the next recertification.

Example:

- If the certification period ends 1/31 the start date should be 2/1.
 - Date of application: 4/24/2020.
 - Date of conviction: 1/2/2018.
 - Certification period assigned: April 2020 to September 2020.
3. **Reminder:** refer to the report in FAST Help to extend the sanction start dates for the cases that were not extended past the current suspension month (October 2021) for assessments. The sanction start date must be changed in NC FAST by extending the sanction start date the first day of the month following the end of the certification period as the start date to prevent premature closures and allow applicants and recipients time to comply once the suspension is lifted.
 - a. Refer to the report posted in [FAST Help](#) > **Economic Services>Reports>FNS>Drug Assessments>210902 Drug Assessments**. Use the NC FAST report password to retrieve the report.
 - b. A report was posted in FAST Help September 2, 2021 which contain cases with a sanction start date for the month October 2021.
 - c. Once the sanction start dates are changed NC FAST will generate a notice. Caseworkers must ensure the correct notice is generated.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

This policy is effective upon receipt for recertifications, any pending applications, and all new applications taken up to and including October 31, 2021. If you have any questions, please submit to the Operational Support Team (OST) at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Carla West, Senior Director for Economic Security
Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services Section

CLW/vd

EFS-FNSEP-72-2021