



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

November 5, 2025

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AND ADULT SERVICES SUPERVISORS, PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, AND PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: Special Assistance (SA) and Special Assistance In-Home (SAIH) Rate Adjustments for 2026, and Upcoming Pre-COLA Reports in NC FAST

REQUIRED ACTION: ☐ Information Only ☒ Time Sensitive ☒ Immediate

As per North Carolina Session Law 2022-74 and effective each January 1st, Special Assistance rates shall be adjusted using the federally approved Social Security cost-of-living change (if any) effective for the applicable year. **The federally approved Social Security cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment effective for 2026 is 2.8%.** As a result, the following Special Assistance rate changes will occur:

- effective January 1, 2026, the monthly Basic Rate for Special Assistance shall be \$1,397.00, and the Basic Maintenance Amount shall be \$1,467.00
- effective January 1, 2026, the monthly Enhanced Rate for Special Assistance shall be \$1,792.00, and the Enhanced Maintenance Amount shall be \$1,862.00

Special Assistance policy will be updated to indicate these changes, and a related Change Notice will be issued at a later date, prior to implementation of the rate changes.

Reminder: Both SA and SAIH COLAs will take place at the same time in December. Please stay apprised of all updates provided by NC FAST regarding COLA processing.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND VETERANS' CHANGES DUE TO COLA ADJUSTMENT

1. RSDI/SSI - Effective January 1, 2026, recipients of RSDI and/or SSI will receive a 2.8% COLA increase in their monthly benefits.
2. SSI Federal Benefit Rate (FBR) - Effective January 1, 2026, the SSI FBR for an individual will increase to \$994.00 per month.
3. VA Compensation and Benefits - Effective January 1, 2026, most recipients of VA compensation and benefits will receive a 2.8% COLA increase in their monthly benefit.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

NC FAST PRE-COLA REPORTS

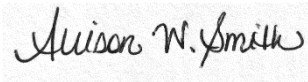
In the near future, NC FAST will provide notification regarding the posting of **Pre-COLA reports** (related to Pending Deletion/Evidence In Edit and On Hold cases). It is imperative that county staff review the *SA/SA-IH RSDI/SSI COLA* job aid in FAST Help, and follow all NC FAST guidance timely and accurately regarding these reports.

Successful and complete attention to these **Pre-COLA reports** allows NC FAST to auto-update more case records via COLA batch, *thus reducing the number of cases that Special Assistance staff must review and manually work in December.*

Helpful note: cases that are left “on hold” or with pending evidence(s) cannot be auto updated when the NC FAST COLA batch runs in December. As a result, Special Assistance staff must be mindful not to leave cases in that status (if/when possible) or they will have to **manually** review and accept the decisions on those cases as part of December COLA.

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 "Allison N. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Smith, Deputy Director
Division of Social Services,
Economic and Family Services