



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

November 1, 2020

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Work First Family Assistance Supervisors and Case Managers

Subject: Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Veteran's Benefits Cost-of-Living Adjustment

Priority: Action Needed

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Effective January 1, 2021, recipients of Social Security (SSA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Veteran's Benefits (VA) will receive a **1.3%** Cost-of-Living Assistance (COLA) increase. The purpose of this letter is to outline procedures for implementing the SSA, SSI and VA benefits COLA for Work First (WF) cash assistance cases. The 2019 COLA increase will be automatically applied to cash assistance cases via North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST), automated case management system. These changes will affect the January 2021 benefits. In order to avoid a delay in the receipt of January 2021 Work First payments, Case Managers must take action effective December 1, 2020 to implement the income changes.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

- A.** SSA and VA benefits are countable income and included in budget calculations. **Individuals who receive SSI are not included in the Work First case or budget calculations.**
- B.** All programs will be impacted by COLA. As a result, additional case observation and attention is needed.
- C.** Work First recipients will not receive a mass notice about the COLA. Notices must be provided to Work First recipients if their benefits change or terminate as a result of the COLA increase. Work First Caseworkers are responsible for sending the ten (10) day timely/adequate notice (as appropriate) to affected recipients.

III. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

- A.** NC FAST will apply the COLA increase to all Work First cash assistance cases and update the Benefit Evidence. The caseworker must manually reassess impacted cases and review the

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new eligibility determination – the “ON HOLD DECISION.” NC FAST will provide a report of the impacted cases and post the report to FAST Help. NC FAST will inform caseworkers when the report is available.

B. NC FAST will show both the 2020 and 2021 amounts.

C. Actions Taken Prior to January 1, 2021

For pending applications, the “old” Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts need to be end dated for December 31, 2020 and add new amount with the start date of January 1, 2021. For active cases already processed, NC FAST will run a batch that will end date the “old” amount December 30, 2020 and add new amount with the start date of December 31, 2020 effective for January 1, 2021.

D. Actions to Take on/or After January 1, 2021

Complete/key the case information using the appropriate/correct/new amounts for benefits.

E. Actions on Ineligible Cases

Ineligible cases in NC FAST will be updated. If the case was deemed ineligible in error, determine the correct SSA and/or VA benefit(s) payment amount(s). Update the Benefit Evidence for January 2021 in NC FAST.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective January 1, 2021 however, to avoid a delay in issuing benefits, the change much take place prior to December 31, 2020. Please email any questions regarding this policy to the DSS Operational Support Team (OST) via dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director

DL/klg

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