NC Department of Health and Human Services

Work First Time Limits and Extensions Federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) Lifting

Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist

April 2023
AGENDA

• Review of DCDL Regarding Time Limits
• 60 - Month Federal Time Limit
• 24 - Month State Time Limit
• 60 - Month State Time Limit
• Appeals and Hardship Exemptions
Time Limits
Dear County Director Letter Review

- NC FAST will post the Cash Assistance Extension Report which will be found on the FAST Help home page.
- Case manager must conduct desk reviews using the DSS-5292
- Evaluate for good cause and enter any possible exemption evidence
- End date extension evidence and issue adequate notice.
- Once all adjustments are made the case manager will end date the extension evidence to June 30, 2023
- Work First policy section 105 outlines this process in more detail.
- DCDL April 12, 2023 – EFS-WF-02-2023
Time Limits
Dear County Director Letter Review

• NC FAST will automatically close cases due to exhaustion of the time limit

**Note: Extension months used during PHE will not count towards hardship extensions if granted through a hardship hearing.

Case will terminate effective 6/30/2023
Federal 60-Month Time Limit

Beginning January 1, 1997, Work First families in North Carolina that include an adult became subject to a Federal 60-month lifetime limit on the receipt of assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant, which includes Work First Family Assistance.

This time limit should be verified by the worker and entered as countable assistance history evidence regarding the transferred months.

Note: The PHE does not effect the Federal 60-Month Time Limit.
Work First Federal 60 - Month Time Limit

Question #1:

Should the time limits be adjusted from the PHE from March 2020 through May 2023 regardless of compliance?

Answer to Question #1

The Federal 60 - month time limit cannot be adjusted. Participants have the right to request a hardship extension hearing.
Work First Federal 60 - Month Time Limit

Question #2

Will NC FAST automatically terminate cases with exhausted time limits that have the temporary suspension of time limit terminations due to COVID 19?

Answer to Question #2:

Case managers will need to end date the extension evidence and apply changes and accept decisions. Once the decision is accepted the system batch will auto close the case.
Question #3:

What is the end date of the PHE and the extension evidence?

Answer to #3:

The end date of the Federal PHE is 5/11/2023 and the end date for extension evidence is 6/30/2023.
Work First State 24 - Month Time Limit
State 24 - Month Time Limit

• Implemented August 1996
• Specific to months received in NC
• Applies to most families in North Carolina which includes a work eligible adult and who are participating with Employment Services.
• Services received which are not considered assistance do not count on the 24 – month time limit
• There are instances where individuals may be included in the payment, and although they are not able to fully participate, are considered work eligible as outlined in WF policy 103.
• Services provided to families which are NOT considered assistance do not county towards the State 24- month time limit. (WF 102)
State 24 - Month Time Limit Adjustments

- Work eligible individuals require reasonable accommodations
- The public health emergency alone is not a reason for providing an exemption to the 24-month time limit. Counties should evaluate what supportive services were available to determine if time can be removed.
- The 24 – month time limit can have time removed when work eligible individual(s) require reasonable accommodations
- Review the training module in the Learning Gateway for more in-depth information
- Resource: Entering Work First State Exemptions job aid
State 24- Month Time Limit

Question:
Should the time limit be adjusted from the PHE from March 2020 through May 2023 regardless of compliance?

Answer:
Only the State 24 - month time limit can be adjusted. Counties have some discretion in adjusting a family’s State 24 month time limit as previously discussed.

If at any time the county departments of social/human services or other community resources are not able to provide needed services, the family time limit should be adjusted.

Please note that months in which the family did not engage in employment services when the worker attempted to engage and provide services should be carefully evaluated and documented.
State 60 - Month Time Limit

- The State 60 - Month Time Limit became effective with the implementation of Cash Assistance in NC FAST.
- The State 60 - Month Time Limit is a lifetime limit of assistance in North Carolina for the family.
- Applies only to months received in North Carolina.
- Cumulative lifetime limit of assistance received in North Carolina.
State 60 - Month Time Limit

• The Federal 60-Month and State 60-Month time limits are tracked separately and do not run simultaneously.

• If an individual is subject to the Federal 60-Month or State 24-Month Time Limit they are not subject to the State 60-Month Time Limit.

• Workers should note that if a Work First participant is subject to the Federal 60-Month or State 24-Month Time Limit, they are not subject to the State 60-Month Time Limit.

• It is possible for a household with two parents to have two different time limits tracking.
  – For example, in a household where one parent is included, and a second parent is excluded from the assistance due to not meeting citizenship rules. The parent included in the assistance unit could be subject to the Federal 60-Month Time Limit and/or the State 24-Month Time Limit while the second parent is subject to the State 60-Month Time Limit.

• If a custodial parent previously not included becomes eligible to be included in the assistance unit, the State 60-Month time limit will stop and the Federal 60-Month time limit will begin.

• Refer to WF Policy Section 105 and the training modules in the NC FAST Learning Gateway for more in-depth information.
Appeals and Hardship Exemptions
Appeals

• When a family reaches the end of their Federal 60-month time limit, they may request an appeal if they believe that the limit is in error and that they still have months remaining on their time limit.

• Appeals due to errors in the time limit are handled through normal appeal processes as described in policy in the Work First Manual Section 105.
Hardship Exemptions

• A hardship exemption may be granted if a Work First family has experienced circumstances that have made leaving Cash Assistance difficult. These circumstances must be beyond the family’s control.

• As a reasonable accommodation, individuals with disabilities are entitled to assistance in requesting a hardship exemption. All families should be informed of the rights of individuals with disabilities to receive such assistance.

• Hardship exemptions can be granted for a period of time not to exceed six months at a time.
Hardship Exemption Hearings

• Families may request a hardship exemption within the last 3 months, at the end of the Federal 60-month time limit or at any time following termination after the Federal 60-month time limit was reached.

• A hardship committee must be designated by the local agency’s Board of Social Services.

• If hardship is verified, an exemption to the time limit may be granted for any number of months up to 6 months. All exemptions expire after 6 months at which time the family may request another exemption.

• Subsequent hardship exemption requests must also be heard by the hardship committee.
QUESTIONS?

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