

AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING

OF THE

October 27, 2021

STOKES COUNTY

3:00 p.m.

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST REMINDER:

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every board member to avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict. Does any board member have any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before board today? If so, please identify the conflict or appearance of conflict and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matter involved.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Discussion/Adjustments to the Agenda
- III. Consent Agenda
 - A. Minutes – Regular Meeting – September 22, 2021
- IV. Board Member Comments
- V. Public Comments (Maximum Allowance of Ten Minutes Per Person)
- VI. Discussion
 - A. DSS Dashboard
 - B. REDA (September 2021 Review)
 - C. Child Support Conference Call – 9/29/21
 - D. Dear County Director Letters
 1. 9/2/21 – Work First
 2. 9/2/21 – Food & Nutrition
 3. 9/10/21 – Child Welfare
 4. 9/14/21 – Food & Nutrition
 5. 9/14/21 – Child Welfare
 6. 9/16/21 – Child Welfare
 7. 9/17/21 – Child Welfare
 8. 9/20/21 – Food & Nutrition
 9. 9/21/21 – Work First
 10. 9/24/21 – Child Welfare
 11. 9/27/21 - LIEAP
 - E. Staff Compliments

VII. Action Items

A. Old Business

Reminders:

11/16/21 – 11/17/21 – Board Training from 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
in the DSS conference room

11/17/21 – Board meeting at 12:30 p.m. in the DSS conference
room

B. New Business

VIII. Adjournment

STOKES COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

MINUTES

September 22, 2021

The regular meeting of the Stokes County Board of Social Services was held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at the Social Services building in Danbury. Chairman Greg Collins called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Board members present were Chairman Collins, Vice-Chair Sandy Smith, Member Darlene Bullins, Member Ann Vance, and Member Sonya Cox. Staff present were Director Stacey Elmes, Admin. Officer Becky East, and Income Maintenance Administrator Cindy Joyce.

Chairman Collins read the Ethics and Conflict of Interest Reminder to the Board. Board members were asked if they had a conflict with any of the items listed on the agenda. No conflicts noted.

Chairman Collins asked if there were any Board members that needed to discuss or make adjustments to the agenda. Member Bullins moved to approve agenda. Member Vance seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Chairman Collins asked for approval of the consent agenda. Member Cox motioned to approve the consent agenda as presented. Vice-Chair Smith seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

There were no public comments.

Director Elmes shared that the DSS Dashboard numbers are staying pretty consistent with the exception of an increase in applications for Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid. Director Elmes shared that the agency obtained guardianship of a 21-year old on September 13th. Due to no available placement, the agency had to keep the individual at the agency through September 17th. The agency is currently providing respite care with 24-hour supervision at a local hospital with efforts being made to find placement as soon as possible.

Director Elmes stated that the agency is getting ready to start a program called LIHWAP (Low Income Household Water Assistance Program) which is a water assistance program that will last until 2023 or until funds are depleted. Income Maintenance Administrator Joyce shared that this program will cover water and sewage costs. Chairman Collins asked how clients would become aware of this program. Income Maintenance Administrator Joyce shared the state will be sending out more information and Director Elmes will be putting information in the paper and on the DSS website. IMA Joyce also noted that water and sewer companies have been contacted in the county.

Other items on the agenda for discussion were the following:

REDA (Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit - August 2021). Income Maintenance Administrator Joyce informed the Board that the agency was improving a little each month. IMA Joyce shared the agency had one internal control error during August regarding counting income incorrectly and one incorrect denial where a worker did not evaluate for Family Planning. Staff undergoes training as soon as errors are found so that hopefully they will not occur again.

Dear County Director Letters

- a. Letter dated 8/9/21. Director Elmes shared the agency had already received money from the CARES ACT to help purchase mobile scanners, printers, etc. for our child welfare workers to be able to work from home if needed. Director Elmes shared the agency is thinking about purchasing mobile hotspots, wireless printers that connect to WIFI, and possibly a signature pad for child welfare workers to use in the field.
- b. Letter dated 9/10/21 regarding LINKS Funding. Funding is available to children ages 18-26 that have been in foster care. Funding in the amount of \$68,284.00 is available to Stokes County, the children that are ages 18-21 will be able to receive \$2,500 and children ages 21-26 will be able to receive \$5,000. Director Elmes shared that she did not know if the agency could use the whole \$68,284.00 but would definitely try. The agency does not have updated information on all former foster children so it could be impossible to reach everyone. Member Cox confirmed with Director Elmes that if monies were not utilized, it would go back to the state.
- c. Letter dated 9/13/21. Director Elmes shared that the State is disbursing additional monies to counties to assist in paying Food and Nutrition workers for the increased workload during the pandemic. Food and Nutrition case worker salaries are currently paid at 50% from county and 50% from the feds so these funds will help a little with that.

Session Law

This information was shared just to inform the Board of some of the legislation that is changing and how it impacts the agency.

- ✓ House Bill 132 effective October 1, 2021 amends the juvenile code related to abuse, neglect, dependency, and termination of parental rights.
- ✓ Senate Bill 693 effective October 1, 2021 directly impacts Child Welfare reform, human trafficking notices to caretakers, implements a statewide CPS hotline, plans to increase appropriate treatment and residential settings, changes to safe and appropriate placements for children in need of mental health services, and requires public school to provide students with information and resources on child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse.
- ✓ Senate Bill 207 effective December 1, 2021 changes the definition of a neglected juvenile.

Under Old Business, Director Elmes asked if she could talk about Vaya Health for a moment. Director Elmes had a meeting on September 12th with the child welfare supervisors and the Vaya team about substance use treatment options in the county and child welfare changes. Vaya is assisting a provider in looking for a space or location such as an empty store front office or an empty office in a county building to offer substance use services including medication assistance therapy. Chairman Collins mentioned Autumn Square. Director Elmes shared Vaya is going to utilize the building across from Autumn Square that Cardinal is currently using for programming. Vaya representatives stated that the provider will start with Suboxone first and then add Methadone if needed. Director Elmes shared that Vaya intends to send additional information before going to the Board of County Commissioners with their proposal. The actual change to Vaya is proposed to occur between December 2021 and January 2022. Director Elmes mentioned there will be an onsite Embedded Care Coordinator at DSS two days a week and a licensed clinician one day per week to do mental health and substance use assessments for our children and families involved with child welfare.

Under New Business, Member Cox mentioned the Board of County Commissioners have not decided how to utilize the expected American Rescue Funds that should be coming to the county. Member Cox also mentioned that the opioid settlement is being halted because attorneys are worried about getting their payment if funds are disbursed to counties first. There is a push to try to get the Attorney General to take out the attorney share before providing funds to counties. Stokes County is waiting until things are finalized (hopefully in December) before signing any kind of acceptance for funds.

Next DSS Board meeting will be October 27, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Reminder about the November 16, 2021 and November 17, 2021 DSS Board member training from 9:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. in the DSS conference room.

The November 17, 2021 DSS Board meeting will be at 12:30 p.m. after the training.

The December 15, 2021 DSS Board meeting is at 3:00 p.m.

There being no further business, Chairman Collins asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Bullins seconded and the motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 3:29 p.m.


Secretary


Date

Stokes County DSS Dashboard 2021

	July	August	September	Qrt. Total	Annual Total
ADULT SOCIAL WORK SERVICES					
Guardianship Cases	32	31	32		
New APS Reports Received	18	20	13	51	235
APS Reports Accepted	6	9	9	24	126
Investigations Initiated Timely [Goal 95%]	100%	100%	100%		
Outreach Visits	10	8	4	22	85
In Home Aide Programs/Family Caregiver	26	29	29		
Community Alternatives Program (CAP/DA)	72	73	73		
Representative Payee	9	8	7		
SA - In-Home	60	59	59		
Placement	0	1	0		
Adult Care Homes Monitored	3	1	2		
Total Requests for CIP	26	14	40	80	377
CIP Expenditures	\$2,050	\$ 1,701	\$7,291	\$11,042	\$102,015
Total Requests for LIEAP	0	0	0	0	1226
LIEAP Expenditures	\$ -	\$ -	\$0	\$0	\$120,145
Unclaimed Bodies	0	0	1	1	3
Staff Hours Spent at Shelters	0	0	0	0	0
CHILD CARE SUBSIDY					
Children Receiving Services	236	221			
Expenditures	\$83,753	\$82,206	\$72,840	\$238,799	\$1,515,997
Waiting List	0	0	0		
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES					
3 Reports Received	45	43	48	136	653
CPS Reports Accepted	24	15	24	63	340
Children Opened	43	53	49	145	600
Open Reports	25	22	25		
Reports Substantiated/Services Needed	1	5	8		
Open Case Management	13	12	15		
Courtesy Requests	3	5	12	20	99
Substance Affected Infants Reported to DSS	3	2	2	7	30
Substance Affected Infants Accepted for Inv.	3	2	2	7	30
Reports Initiated Timely [Goal 95%]	100%	100%	94%		
Reports Completed Timely [Goal 75%]	67%	81%	75%		
Children Remaining at Home [Goal 95%]	93%	98%	96%		
CHILD SUPPORT					
Number of Children Served	1,089	1,083	1,064		
Total Collections	\$202,428	\$192,682	\$172,526	\$567,636	\$3,028,894
Paternities Established	5	5	1	11	60
New Court Orders	10	8	7	25	111
FISHING LICENSE WAIVERS					
Fishing License Waivers	9	2	3	14	54
FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES					
Total Households	3,200	3,234	3,284		
Total Individuals	6,367	6,465	6,540		
Report Card (App. Timeliness) [Goal: 95%]	99%	100%	100%		
Report Card (Recert. Timeliness) [Goal: 95%]	100%	100%	100%		
Benefits Distributed	\$ 1,501,013	\$1,462,010	\$1,471,954	\$4,434,977	\$18,813,786

2021	July	August	September	Qtr. Total	Annual Total
FOSTER CARE					
Children Entering Care	3	1	2	6	61
Total Children in Care	95	90	90		
Children Discharged	2	6	2	10	54
Children in Care Over 1 Year	50	50	51		
% Receiving a Monthly Visit [Goal 100%]	100%	100%	100%		
% Visited in the Home [Goal > 90%]	95%	95%	100%		
Foster Care 18-21	7	7	7		
Monitoring of Children No Longer in Custody	4	3	1		
Licensed Foster Homes	27	27	27		
Sanctioned Homes	0	0	0		
# of Individuals/Families Receiving Training	0	0	6 ind/3fam		
Recruitment Events Held	0	0	0	0	0
Foster Care Costs (county/state/fed)	\$110,635	\$97,810	\$85,141.57	\$293,587	\$1,519,323
Children Free For Adoption	11	8	6		
Children Open for LINKS	58	71	57		
Adoptions Completed	1	3	2	6	6
Adoption Assistance Cases	172	175	173		
Adoption Assistance Costs (fed & state)	\$9,634	\$15,125	\$16,065	\$40,824	\$267,021
MEDICAID [ADULT, FAMILY & CHILDREN'S]					
# of Cases	7,054	7,350	7,748		
Report Card (Timeliness) [Goal: 85%]	98%	98%	100%		
Public Assistance Hearings (All Areas)	0	3	2		
MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION					
Clients Served	261	241	156		
Trips Provided	1,076	1,078	971	3,125	7,600
Monthly Cost	\$26,733	\$ 35,705	\$ 42,454	\$104,892	\$531,755
PROGRAM INTEGRITY					
New Claims Established	\$3,446	\$ 19,878	\$5,198	\$28,522	\$124,946
Total Collections	\$1,849	\$1,676	\$799	\$4,324	\$17,919
Retained in County	\$355	\$427	\$461	\$1,243	\$5,267
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE					
# of Special Assistance Cases	122	132	135		
Benefits Distributed	\$47,900	\$54,717	\$52,538	\$155,155	\$790,088
SA/MH LIAISON					
Number of Referrals during the Month	9	7	10	26	181
Open Cases at end of Month	58	53	63		
VACANCIES					
Social Work	3	1	1		
Clerical/Income Maintenance/Child Support	2	2	1		
WORK FIRST					
Total Work First Cases	39	41	40		
Number of Child Only Cases	37	40	39		
Employment Cases	2	1	1		
Referrals for Drug Testing	0	0	0		
Applicants Testing Positive	0	0	0		
Benefits Distributed	\$8,432	8,613	\$9,101	\$26,146	\$168,426
OTHER					
Voter Registrations	3	4	2	9	49
Walk-In Traffic	685	744	718	2,147	10,104

Quality Assurance County Director Consultation

County	Stokes	Date	10/1/21	Type	REDA Cycle 3 Conference Call
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Quality Assurance Analyst:	Laila Watson-El				
OST Representative:	Christine Coffey				
Agency Participants:					
	<i>Name</i>			<i>Title</i>	
	Cindy Amos			IM Supervisor - FC	
	Rhonda Martin			IM Supervisor - Adult	

Purpose of Contact:
Review performance results for the REDA audit for the August 2021 Sample Month. Discuss Accuracy Rates, Error Trends, and Recommendations.

Audit Process/Process Improvement Efforts
<p style="text-align: center;">8/2021 SAMPLE MONTH:</p> <p><u>Accuracy Rates:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Eligibility Accuracy Rate: 90% → Goal: 96.8% or better Negative Eligibility Accuracy Rate: 100% → Goal: 96.8% or better → GREAT JOB!! Combined Active & Negative Internal Control Accuracy Rate: 100% → Goal: 90% or better → GOAL MET!! <p><u>Error Rates:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Eligibility Error Rate: (10 active cases reviewed with 1 eligibility error). Negative Eligibility Error Rate: 0% (10 negative cases reviewed with no eligibility errors). Combined Active/Negative Internal Control Error Rate: (20 cases reviewed with no internal control errors). <p><u>Error Trends:</u></p> <p>Active Sample</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Active eligibility error cited – Application – DOA 6/16/21, Incorrect date of application on FC application (8/19/21). Deficiency – Application - case was not cited, however date of retro application (7/14/21) differs from date of prospective application (7/8/21); since no new application was received, and the retro application resulted from a follow up telephone conversation with a/b re: application received, the retro and ongoing application dates should agree. Since a/b's benefits were not impacted case was not cited, email to county.

Quality Assurance County Director Consultation

- Deficiency – case was not cited; however, DDS decision date and end date in NCFAST re: processing time do not agree. See Adult MA-2300.XI. H. email to county.
- Deficiency - Application received in July, retro months authorized by county, April and May, continuity of coverage would kick in for June due to COVID PHE however, June was not authorized. Since no policy has been issued, the county was not cited.

Negative Sample

- No negative eligibility errors or internal control errors cited



QA Recommended Proactive Measures to Eliminate Errors:

- Refresher training regarding appropriate certification period at application.
- Review application process.

Proactive Measures taken by County:

- County has provided training to Adult and FC units re: applications that need to be evaluated for FC received from Adult Unit and must complete individual training for one IMC to complete for the Medicaid section.
- County uses emails sent by Auditor during month of audit to provide training for staff.

Recommended Training(s):

- Continue to complete applicable training found in the Learning Gateway
- Continue to reach out to OST regarding any training needs
- Continue to conduct group/section training for common error trends
- Continue to conduct one-on-one training with individual staff, as deemed appropriate, if error trends are determined to be localized.

Wrap Up Discussion:

- OST shared there has been an update in NCFAST with changes to where the DDS timer screen is located – now located under the assessment tab, additional updates to follow.
- County Administrator and IMS's have been very responsive to questions and clarifications needed during the audit. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.
- Please ensure that cases are being documented correctly when using PHE COVID-19 policy; although this is not being cited during the REDA audit, it may be cited if pulled into future audits.

Additional Information:

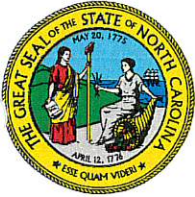
Thank you for your participation in the Consultation Meeting and for your assistance during the monthly audit!

Quality Assurance County Director Consultation

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me should you have any additional questions or concerns.

Summary prepared by: L Watson-El

Date Submitted to County: 10/4/21



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

Stacey Elmes, DSS Director
Stokes County Department of Social Services
1010 State Hwy 8
Danbury, N.C. 27016

Dear Ms. Elmes:

On September 29, 2021, Lynn, and I conducted a conference call to discuss information regarding the COVID-19 status, statistical information, information updates, and county concerns.

Incentive statistics are available through August 2021. The Total Collections goal benchmark for August is 16.66%. The unit is just below State Average for Total Collections (16.23%) at 16.05%. The unit has been able to achieve/exceed the 2021-22 goal for Cases Under Order (89.00%) at 91.02%, and Current Collection (66.25%) at 67.87%. The unit is OFF Track in the areas of Paternity (96.83%) at 91.70% and Arrears Collection (62.48%) at 36.97%. The unit is only minimally OFF track in the area of Paternity. In the area of Arrears Collection, last year at this time the unit was at 38.89%. I will continue to suggest reports that may increase incentive areas. Reports suggested/provided: Paternity reports, % of Cases with Arrears, no payment, and Undistributed Report.

Goals 2020-21					
TC	Paternity	CUO	CC	Arrears	Medical
\$2,461,257.58	96.83	89	66.72	62.48	
Current	08/21				
16.05<	91.70<	91.02>*	67.87>*	36.97<	86.10>

*-Exceeding/achieving goal

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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Self-Assessment scores are available through August 2021. The unit is currently in compliance with eight of nine areas of Self -Assessment. The unit is out of compliance in the area of Interstate at 72.41%. Compliance in these areas is 75%. This area has seen increase. All other areas have a compliance level of 82% or better. Reports suggested/provided during this call: P/F for Interstate.

Management advises that the unit is taking advantage of the virtual trainings that are being offered.

A quality review of child support cases was completed. Cases are reviewed for quality, data reliability, and supporting documents. The outcome of our follow-up monitoring is outlined below. The Stokes County Child Support office is currently performing overall at 100%. All the cases met the quality review criteria, and all cases were sent to the Child Support Managers for review.

Number of Cases Reviewed	Month	Monthly Quality Review Score	Notes	Date to Correct Case(s)
3	September	100%	Copy of QR sent to CS Managers	N/A

Due to the continued restriction of travel by Child Support Program Representatives and the fact that staff in many Child Support Offices are teleworking, making access to their hard files difficult, the quality review process will be modified for the duration of the restrictive period. Elements on the quality review will be scored based on what is available in the automated system, ACTS.

If the reviewer is unable to determine for certain how to score the above items from documentation in ACTS, the item is to be scored in error and a note will be entered in the comments section that supporting documentation is required for that line item. The county may then check for the documentation, communicate to the reviewer that it is in place, and the score will be updated.

Should you have any questions about the items discussed during my visit or addressed in this email, please email (Kenya.Newsone@dhhs.nc.gov) or call me at (336)788-5857.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Kenya Newsome
Child Support Program Representative

Cc:
Lynn Whitaker
Cindy Joyce



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

September 2, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

Subject: Work First Cash Assistance Sanctions

Priority: Effective Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Division of Social Services suspended Work First cash assistance sanctions related to work requirements beginning with the benefit month of March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. This letter provides clarity and instruction on the implementation of suspended Work First Cash Assistance Sanctions. This letter makes Administrative Letters EFS-WF-AL-5-2020, EFS-WF-AL-10-2020 and Dear County Director Letter EFS-WF-01-2021 obsolete.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Applicants and recipients with active Work First sanctions for failure to cooperate with child support and/or failure to meet work requirements are eligible to receive Work First Cash Assistance if all other eligibility requirements are met. Work First (WF) cash assistance eligibility for applications, changes or recertifications should be determined without consideration to existing Work First cash assistance sanctions.

- Active WF cash sanctions on existing cases for the following reasons must be suspended in the North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) system. The **NC FAST sanctions** related to child support and/or failure to meet work requirements are as follows:

- Non-compliance with Child Support Enforcement
- Non-compliance with MRA-B/Outcome Plan
- Non-compliance with Work Requirements
- Refused AUDIT/DAST-10 Assessment
- Fleeing Felon
- Fleeing to Avoid Prosecution
- Violating Probation or Parole
- Drug related conviction
- Positive Substance Use Test
- Failure to participate in required substance abuse treatment
- Failure to attend QPSA Appointment/Substance Use Test
- Failure to participate in required Mental Health Treatment
- School Attendance Non-compliance
- Immunization Non-compliance

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

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

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Minor Parents School Attendance Non-compliance
Job Quit

Prior to imposing a sanction, case managers should determine if good cause exists for non-compliance of the work requirement.

NOTE: Failure to attend a scheduled appointment/interview is a reason for immediate sanction and termination

- The eligibility rules for new applications in NC FAST for Cash Assistance do not capture existing sanctions for individuals. Sanction rules apply when the case is created. Sanctions related to these specific issues will need to be suspended once the case is created.
- Applicants who fail to cooperate with child support or meet the work requirements without an existing sanction in NC FAST, will not be sanctioned until the COVID-19 public health emergency period ends.
- NC FAST will produce and post a report in FAST Help that identifies active and pending closure cash assistance cases that currently have a Work First cash assistance sanction beginning with the month of March 2020 and each month thereafter until the COVID-19 public health emergency period ends. Cases terminated prior to the implementation of DCDL EFS-WF-01-2021 do not require administrative reopen.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

When the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration is lifted, NC FAST will reinstate the remaining sanction period for all cases with suspended sanctions for the specified reasons during the COVID-19 public health emergency period.

Suspended sanctions for new applications must be created and entered in NC FAST by county staff for the appropriate time frame with a future start date of 12/1/2021. NC FAST will modify the sanctions created with a future date of 12/1/2021 for the specified reasons to the appropriate sanctions period. NC FAST will update the sanctions to start effective the first of the month following the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted. Using the FAST Help report, counties must review and end date the sanctions appropriately.

Submit any questions regarding this information to the Operational Support Team (OST) at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



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

CW/kg



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

September 02, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

Subject: October Issuance of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and
Simplified Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)

Priority: Information Only

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that was signed to provide a 15% increase will end September 30, 2021 for the FNS and SNAP maximum allotments. On August 16th the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that the Thrifty Food Plan, which is used to calculate Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, had been re-evaluated. That re-evaluation has led to an historic increase in SNAP benefits for FFY 2022. Effective October 1, 2021 Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) maximum FNS allotment levels will increase by 25%. The benefit increase is a mass change and does not require a notice to implement.

The maximum allotment amounts for SNAP households will be provided as the information becomes available. Until further notice, the SNAP allotments will go back to the current rate of \$105 for the higher allotment and \$60 for the lower allotment on October 1, 2021.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

- A. NC FAST will calculate the new FNS allotment amounts automatically for any benefits issued October 1, 2021 using the increased 25% maximum allotment. Starting October 1, 2021 households will receive the following:

FNS Benefit for October 2021		
FNSU Size	Maximum Allotment	25% of Maximum Allotment
1	\$234	\$250
2	\$430	\$459
3	\$616	\$658
4	\$782	\$835
5	\$929	\$992

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6	\$1,114	\$1190
7	\$1,232	\$1316
8	\$1,408	\$1504
Each Additional Member	\$153	\$188

B. This change is considered a mass change and individual notices will not be issued. A mass notice will be issued to notify FNS households of the change. Attached are notices in both English and Spanish along with a document of the seven languages with information on how the notice can be translated. These notices and document must be displayed in all areas of the agency viewable by the general public and on the agency website from the date received through December 31, 2021.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

The changes are effective with FNS benefits issued October 1, 2021.

Submit any questions regarding this information to the Operational Support Team (OST) at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



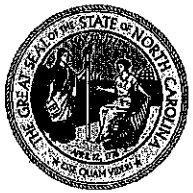
Carla West, Senior Director for Economic Security
Economic and Family Services Section

CLW/vd

Attachments (3)

Notice to Food and Nutrition Services Recipients, English and Spanish
Language Notice (seven languages)
Desk Reference English
Desk Reference Spanish

EFS-FNSEP-69-2021



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

September 10, 2021

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: Time-Limited Flexibility for use of Supplemental Chafee (LINKS) Funding

REQUIRED ACTION: ☒ Immediate

The Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 116-260) enacted on December 27, 2020, provides supplemental appropriations for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood and allows flexibility on the spending of those funds that **expires on September 30, 2021**.

Each county in North Carolina will receive a one-time increase in their LINKS allocation from the supplemental funding in the Consolidated Care Act that will be equal to twice the annual allocation they have already received for SFY 2021.

In March, the federal Administration of Children and Families (ACF) issued program instructions (ACYF-CB-PI-21-04) noting that it had heard from many young people who are in or were in foster care that they had not benefited from previous COVID relief efforts including stimulus checks. The program instructions specifically allow a portion of the supplemental funding to be used to provide unrestricted one-time financial assistance to youth/young adults to assist them in meeting their needs during the pandemic. However, the flexibility to provide assistance in this way to eligible young adults expires on **September 30, 2021**.

DHHS is instructing counties to provide assistance for this population of very vulnerable young adults. All young adults who were in foster care at age 14 or older and have not yet reached age 27 are eligible. Assessment of financial need is not required, and no county match is required.

The amounts of one-time unrestricted payments to eligible young adults which may be made under this program are as follows:

- Eligible young adults 18-20--\$2,500.00
- Eligible young adults 21-26--\$5,000.00

To assist counties in making stimulus payments, we are identifying procedures to expense a portion of the supplemental allotment to each county up front and hope to provide additional information and instructions about the upfront expensing of supplemental funding to counties within the next several days. We encourage counties who can make stimulus payments to eligible youth prior to receiving the upfront funding to do so. A template for a letter to send to potentially eligible young adults is attached.

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

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

MAILING ADDRESS: 2409 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2409

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6390 • FAX: 919-733-3052

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For tracking and reporting purposes, county departments of social services must list all eligible young adults who received these stimulus funds and the amount received on the 1571 Part II expense reports.

ACF is encouraging states not to count emergency benefits from these supplemental funds when considering recipients eligibility for other services including but not limited to TANF and Child Care.

The supplemental funding will be available to be spent through September 30, 2022, on other LINKS services; however as stated above the window for using these funds for one-time stimulus checks expires on **September 30, 2021**.

For more information, please join the upcoming LINK-Up call on Friday, September 10, 2021 at 10:00am. Follow this link to register: <https://attendee.gototraining.com/rt/3346857731495409409> using access code: 908-614-197.

If you have any questions, please contact Erin Conner, LINKS Program Coordinator at erin.conner@dhhs.nc.gov or by phone at 919-527-6351 or LeAnn McKoy, Foster Care 18-21 Coordinator at leann.mckoy@dhhs.nc.gov or by phone at (919) 527-6375. You may also contact your Regional Child Welfare Consultant.

Sincerely,

Carla McNeill

Carla McNeill, MSW
Section Chief for Permanency Planning
Division of Social Services, Child Welfare
North Carolina Department of Health and Human
Services

Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations
Richard Stegenga, Deputy Director, Business Operations
Lisa Tucker Cauley, Senior Director of Child, Family and Adult Services
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Child Protective Services and Prevention
Linda Waite, Section Chief for Licensing and Regulatory

Attachments:

- ACYF-CB-PI-21-04 (program instructions for the Consolidated Appropriations Act)
- Supplemental Chafee Calculations By County 9.9.2021
- Standardized Letter to Young Adults Template

CWS-33-2021



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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www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6300 • FAX: 919-334-1265

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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.

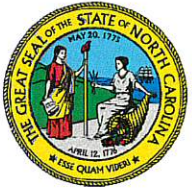
Sincerely,



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

CLW/vd

EFS-FNSEP-72-2021



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

9/14/2021

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF ADOPTION CHILD PLACING AGENCIES**

ATTENTION: ADOPTION PROGRAM MANAGERS AND ADOPTION SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM FUND

REQUIRED ACTION: ☒ Information Only

Annually, the North Carolina Division of Social Services provides baselines and program updates for the Adoption Promotion Program to the county child welfare agencies. This letter will provide the same information for the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for SFY 2021-2022.

While the purpose of this letter is to announce the baselines and programs for the Adoption Promotion Program Fund, it is just as important to recognize the dedication and partnership of the county child welfare agencies and the private child placing agencies with the NC DSS. This partnership resulted in 1,224 children and youth achieving permanency through adoption during the SFY beginning July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Thank you for your continuous dedication and support to the children and families of North Carolina.

The Adoption Promotion Program (APP) is a fee-for-service program for contracted private child placing agencies, who are licensed specifically for adoption. The participating agencies must be licensed as an adoption agency under the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Additionally, the private and county agencies must agree that Adoptive Family Readiness, Family Post Placement Support, Child Post Placement Support and Legal Services will be provided by the private agency. The Adoption Promotion Program offers a one time, year-end, proportional funding allocation for county child welfare agencies that exceed a predetermined federal baseline or complete adoptions of teens and/or sibling groups of 3 or more who are placed together for adoption under baseline.

Questions regarding the Adoption Promotion Program can be directed to Beth Riley at Beth.Riley@dhhs.nc.gov. All DSS quarterly submissions and contract agency requests for payments should be emailed directly to app.contracts@dhhs.nc.gov.

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

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Sincerely,

Carla McNeill

Carla McNeill, MSW
Section Chief for Permanency Planning
Division of Social Services, Child Welfare
North Carolina Department of Health and Human
Services

Cc: Susan G. Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations
Richard Stegenga, Deputy Director, Business Operations
Lisa T. Cauley, Senior Director for Child, Family and Adult Services
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Child Protective Services and Prevention
Linda Waite, Section Chief for Licensing and Regulatory

Attachments:

1. APP Fact Sheet for SFY 2021-2022
2. DSS – 5320 DSS Monthly Adoption Reporting Form
3. DSS – 5320A Contract Agency Monthly Adoption Reporting and Payment Form
4. DSS – 5113 Adoption Services Agreement

CWS-34-2021

**ADOPTION PROMOTION PROGRAM FUND
FACT SHEET SFY 2021-2022**

Funding for SFY 2021-2022

Private Agencies:

Total budgets for SFY 2021-2022 contracts are based on final 2021-2022 contract amounts. The total contract amount will be through 6/30/22 the end of the SFY. Private child placing agencies will coordinate with child welfare agencies to ensure the DSS-5113 Adoption Services Agreement to reflects the appropriate service areas and completed adoptions.

County Agencies

To secure the use of funds that are set-aside for SFY 2021-2022, adjustments are being made to ensure payments can occur within the fiscal year timeframes. This means for SFY 2021-2022, counties will submit adoptions completed beginning July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

**Contracted Licensed Child Placing Agencies
SFY 2021-2022**

Another Choice for Black Children

The Bair Foundation

Barium Springs dba Children's Hope Alliance

Boys and Girls Homes of NC

Children's Home Society

The Crossnore School and Children's Home

Easter Seals

Ebenezer Christian Children's Home

Falcon Children's Home & Family Services

Lutheran Family Services

Nazareth Child & Family Connection

Methodist Home for Children

Omni Visions

Seven Homes

**County Federal Baselines
SFY 2021-2022**

COUNTY	BASELINE	COUNTY	BASELINE
Alamance	20	Johnston	15
Alexander	5	Jones	1
Alleghany	8	Lee	3
Anson	2	Lenoir	3
Ashe	6	Lincoln	16
Avery	4	Macon	11
Beaufort	27	Madison	16
Bertie	0	Martin	4
Bladen	0	McDowell	20
Brunswick	11	Mecklenburg	49
Buncombe	49	Mitchell	6
Burke	39	Montgomery	6
Cabarrus	12	Moore	7
Caldwell	44	Nash	2
Camden	1	New Hanover	49
Carteret	12	Northampton	1
Caswell	3	Onslow	18
Catawba	67	Orange	19
Chatham	14	Pamlico	2
Cherokee	6	Pasquotank	2
Chowan	0	Pender	5
Clay	0	Perquimans	0
Cleveland	31	Person	9
Columbus	4	Pitt	19
Craven	4	Polk	2
Cumberland	64	Randolph	31
Currituck	3	Richmond	1
Dare	3	Robeson	26
Davidson	30	Rockingham	28
Davie	9	Rowan	11
Duplin	6	Rutherford	16
Durham	32	Sampson	6
Edgecombe	5	Scotland	1
Forsyth	19	Stanly	5
Franklin	20	Stokes	14
Gaston	37	Surry	12
Gates	0	Swain	2
Graham	1	Transylvania	3
Granville	2	Tyrell	0
Greene	3	Union	16
Guilford	84	Vance	2
Halifax	1	Wake	75
Harnett	7	Warren	0
Haywood	16	Washington	0
Henderson	21	Watauga	9
Hertford	0	Wayne	16
Hoke	4	Wilkes	33
Hyde	0	Wilson	3
Iredell	23	Yadkin	7
Jackson	3	Yancey	5



**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Social Services

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County
Operations for Human Services

September 16, 2021

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: Vaccination Guidance

REQUIRED ACTION: ☒ Immediate

PURPOSE: Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccinations for eligible youth

Child welfare has the statutory requirement to ensure safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children. Given the protection vaccines provide, it is essential that child welfare workers are informed regarding the use of COVID-19 vaccines for children and youth.

On August 23, 2021, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine received full FDA approval for use in individuals 16 years and older. The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization for use in individuals 12-15 years old and those 12 and over who may be eligible for an additional dose due to certain immunocompromised conditions. To ensure all protocols are followed, attached is the guidance document regarding the COVID-19 vaccination as it pertains to vaccine eligible youth in foster care.

If you have additional questions or would like to discuss specific circumstances, please contact your Regional Child Welfare Consultant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa T. Cauley".

Lisa T. Cauley, Senior Director of
Child, Family and Adult Services

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

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations
Carla McNeill, Section Chief for Permanency Planning
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Child Protective Services and Prevention
Linda Waite, Section Chief for Regulatory and Licensing Services

Attachments:

Child Welfare COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance for Children and Youth in Custody

CWS-36-2021

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

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<p>Purpose</p> <p>The purpose of this document is to ensure that child welfare workers are provided guidance regarding the COVID-19 vaccine as it pertains to vaccine eligible youth in foster care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 23, 2021, FDA-approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (being marketed as COMIRNATY) as a 2- dose series for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older. • Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available under EUA for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 12 through 15 years and as an additional dose in individuals 12 and over with moderate to severe immunocompromise. • Moderna and Janssen (J&J) are authorized only for adults (18 years and older) at this time. • North Carolina Session Law 2021-110 Section 9 changed the minor's consent law for vaccines granted emergency use authorization (EUA). SECTION 9. G.S. 90-21.5 reads as rewritten: "§ 90-21.5. Minor's consent sufficient for certain medical health services. (a) Any Subject to subsection (a1) of this section, any minor may give effective consent to a physician licensed to practice medicine in North Carolina for medical health services for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of (i) venereal disease and other diseases reportable under G.S. 130A-135, (ii) pregnancy, (iii) abuse of controlled substances or alcohol, and (iv) emotional disturbance. This section does not authorize the inducing of an abortion, performance of a sterilization operation, or admission to a 24-hour facility licensed under Article 2 of Chapter 122C of the General Statutes except as provided in G.S. 122C-223. This section does not prohibit the admission of a minor to a treatment facility upon his own written application in an emergency situation as authorized by G.S. 122C-223. <p>(a1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, a health care provider shall obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian prior to administering any vaccine that has been granted emergency use authorization and is not yet fully approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration to an individual under 18 years of age.</p> <p>(b) Any minor who is emancipated may consent to any medical treatment, dental and health services for himself or for his child."</p>	<p>Guidance for Permanency Planning</p> <p>Currently, youth in foster care age 12 years and above are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine is not required by state immunization rules or laws.</p> <p>Consent</p> <p>Starting August 20, 2021, North Carolina Session Law 2021-110 Section 9 requires health care providers to "obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian prior to administering any vaccine that has been granted emergency use authorization and is not yet fully approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration to an individual under 18 years of age." However, on August 23, 2021, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (marketed as COMIRNATY) received full FDA approval for use in individuals 16 years and older. According to SL 2021-110, 16 and 17 year old individuals have the legal authority to consent to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine (COMIRNATY) if they demonstrate the decisional capacity to do so. Decisional capacity is a person's ability to understand their health and health care needs and options, and to make decisions about them.</p> <p>Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization for the following:</p>
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Child Welfare Practice Guidance during COVID-19 Crisis- COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance for Children and Youth in the Custody of Local Departments of Social Services

- use in individuals ages 12-15 years old and
- Those 12 and over who may be eligible for an additional dose due to certain immunocompromised conditions.

Therefore, children who are 15 years or younger and youth under age 18 receiving an additional dose if immunocompromised must have written consent prior to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Prior to arranging for a child in its custody to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, a local Department of Social Services should review NC General Statutes 7B-505.1 and 90-21.5 which address medical consent issues for minors. Local Departments of Social Services should consult with their attorneys to determine if any legal action should be taken in cases where parental consent is not obtained.

A local Department of Social Services must consult with the child's treating health care provider for medical advice prior to COVID-19 vaccine administration to determine if there are any considerations associated for the youth based upon the youth's individual medical history. A local Department of Social Services will need to be prepared to provide the necessary information to complete the [CDC pre-vaccination checklist](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine to be administered to the youth.

If a local Department of Social Services obtains the legal authority for a foster child to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, then it should provide the Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers, which includes essential information about the vaccine, to the child, parent providing consent (if applicable), and current placement provider for the child. This required fact sheet for recipients and caregivers is available on the Pfizer and FDA websites: [Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers](#)¹. North Carolina's [COVID-19 Vaccines: Take your best shot against COVID-19](#)², the <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/teenvaxfacts>, and the [NC DHHS COVID-19 Response Team](#) site also contain helpful information about the vaccine for youth and birth parents.

For children in residential care settings that are in the custody of a local Department of Social Services, a blanket authorization for medical treatment and services should not be used as authorization for a child to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. A local Department of Social Services should only authorize for the arrangement and consent to the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine once it has obtained the appropriate written consent if required or if the child has decisional capacity to consent and does so.

Local Departments of Social Services and residential child care providers must document in the child's record:

- Its legal authority to arrange for and consent to the vaccination (written consent from parent guardian or youth providing consent)
- Discussion with the child's healthcare provider

Accessing the COVID-19 Vaccine

¹ <https://www.cvdvaccine.com/>

² [download \(ncdhhs.gov\)](#)

Child Welfare Practice Guidance during COVID-19 Crisis- COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance for Children and Youth in the Custody of Local Departments of Social Services

Here are strategies for how to locate a COVID-19 vaccination;

- The best place is to look at the [NC DHHS Find A Vaccine Portal](#).
- You can also call the NC DHHS COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center 1-888-675-4567. It's a free call.
- Another place to contact is the local county health department. There are also vaccines available at local pharmacies and more primary care offices are starting to carry COVID-19 vaccine.
- A local vaccine provider can help a youth get his/her/their shot.
- Please confirm that the vaccination site has Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine available for those individuals under 18 years of age.

Private child placing agency and Residential Child Care Provider Guidance

To ensure all protocols in the Guidance for Permanency Planning section above are followed, private child placing agency and residential child care providers should communicate any requests made for the eligible minor to be vaccinated with the child welfare worker assigned to the child from the local Department of Social Services so that it can be determined if the local Department of Social Services can consent to the vaccine.

Resources

[COVID-19 Vaccine Information | NC DHHS COVID-19 NC Vaccine Finder](#)

Additional Considerations

It is expected that for most teens, information about vaccination will be shared with parents and guardians and parental/guardian consent will be obtained for COVID-19 vaccination for youth under age 18 in cases where the parents retain their parental rights.

As stated above, local Departments of Social Services must consult with the minor's health care provider for medical advice to determine considerations associated with the COVID-19 vaccine based on the minor's individual medical history. If appropriate, parents should be invited to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination appointment.



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**

September 17, 2021

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: Time-Limited Flexibility for use of Supplemental Chafee (LINKS) Funding

REQUIRED ACTION: ☒ Immediate

The Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 116-260) enacted on December 27, 2020, provides supplemental appropriations for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood and allows flexibility on the spending of those funds that expires on September 30, 2021.

Young adults who are or were in foster care have been in foster care have experienced job loss and other impacts of the pandemic and many of them have not benefited from prior COVID relief efforts, including stimulus checks. On September 10, 2021 NC DHHS, NC DSS sent a Dear County Director letter instructing counties to provide one-time unrestricted payments to this population of very vulnerable young adults.

All young adults who are at least 18 years old and are not yet 27 and were in foster care at age 14 or older are eligible. Assessment of financial need is not required, and no county match is required.

The amounts of one-time unrestricted payments per eligible young adult which may be made under this program are as follows:

- Eligible young adults 18-20--\$2,500.00
- Eligible young adults 21-26--\$5,000.00

Required Steps

As funding for these young adults expires September 30, 2021, specific steps must be followed to ensure funds are obligated and counties are reimbursed timely. County departments of social services must complete the following steps:

1. Conduct diligent efforts to identify, locate, and reach out to eligible young adults. Diligent efforts to conduct outreach means those efforts that are reasonably likely to identify, locate, and inform young adults of these payments for which they are eligible.
2. Create a financial obligation (check requisition, purchase request, etc.) for each eligible young adult located who will be receiving the one-time unrestricted payment by September 30th, 2021. This does not require counties to cut a check by September 30th, only to create the obligation.

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

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

MAILING ADDRESS: 2409 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2409

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3. Complete the attached DSS-5217a Request for Payment of Time-Limited Supplemental LINKS Funds.
4. Submit completed DSS-5217a and copies of each check requisition via email to linksreimbursement@dhhs.nc.gov by September 30, 2021. These can be submitted at any time, they should not need to be held.

After the request forms are received NC DSS will submit to the DHHS Controller's Office for payment to counties. Counties will receive these payments through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). There is no 1571 reporting requirement for these funds.

These funds are capped, 100 percent federal funds with no county match required. Attached is a spreadsheet showing budgeted funds, per county. Counties will be reimbursed only up to their per-county budget amount. As counties are reviewing their situation, please communicate budget needs via the LINKS email so we may evaluate total funds availability and attempt to redirect funds as time allows.

If you have any questions, please contact LeAnn McKoy, Foster Care 18-21 Coordinator at leann.mckoy@dhhs.nc.gov or by phone at (919) 527-6375 or Shirley Williams, Special Programs Manager at shirley.williams@dhhs.nc.gov or by phone at (919) 527-6404. You may also contact your Regional Child Welfare Consultant.

Sincerely,

Carla McNeill

Carla McNeill, MSW
Section Chief for Permanency Planning
Division of Social Services, Child Welfare
North Carolina Department of Health and Human
Services

Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations
Richard Stegenga, Deputy Director, Business Operations
Lisa Tucker Cauley, Senior Director of Child, Family and Adult Services
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Child Protective Services and Prevention
Linda Waite, Section Chief for Licensing and Regulatory

Attachments:

- DSS-5217a Request for Payment of Time-Limited Supplemental LINKS Funds

CWS-37-2021



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

September 20, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

Subject: October 2021 Automated Supplements for active FNS households

Priority: Information Only

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

On March 18, 2020 the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 was signed to provide for the issuance of emergency allotment supplements based on a public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act related to an outbreak of COVID-19, and when a State has also issued an emergency or disaster declaration. NC DHHS elected to take this option and previously issued FNS supplements up to the maximum of the household's monthly benefit amount for March 2020 through October 2021. NC DHHS has accepted the opportunity provided by the United States Department of Agriculture to supplement October 2021 benefits up to the maximum of the household's monthly benefit amount.

II. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. AUTOMATED SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFITS:

Automated supplements will be issued for October 2021 to all FNS recipients in North Carolina up to the maximum allotment for their household size using the following guidelines:

1. The supplement is the difference between the household's actual October 2021 benefits and the maximum allotment for their household size.

Example: A household of 3 received an allotment of \$200 for October 2021. The maximum allotment for a household of 3 is \$509. The household will be issued a supplement of \$309 (\$509 - \$200 = \$309) for the month of October 2021.

2. Households who already receive the maximum allotment and did not get a supplement, will receive \$95 in emergency allotment.

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

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Example: Household's regular allotment amount is \$234. The household has received the maximum allotment. Because the difference is \$0. Since the difference is less than \$95, the household will receive an emergency allotment of \$95.

Maximum allotment	\$234
Minus Regular allotment	\$234
Difference	<u>\$ 0</u>

The household will receive supplement(s) totaling \$95

3. The household size will not include ineligible and disqualified members.

Example: A household of 3, including one ineligible member, received an allotment of \$100 for the month of October 2021. The maximum allotment for a household size of 2 is \$355. The household would be issued a supplement of \$255 (\$355 - \$100 = \$255) for the month of October 2021.

4. Households that were ineligible in October 2021 will not receive a supplement for the month as they were ineligible.
5. Households that were eligible for a prorated allotment of \$0 in October 2021 will receive a supplement for the prorated month.

Example: A household of 3 received a prorated allotment of \$0 for October 2021. The maximum allotment for a household of 3 is \$509. The household will be issued a supplement of \$509 (\$509 - \$0 = \$509) for the month of October 2021.

B. NC FAST SUPPLEMENT SCHEDULE:

NC FAST will automatically issue the October supplements to active FNS households beginning October 22, 2021. The supplements will be randomly generated and staggered every workday until all households have been supplemented. For all applications and recertifications approved subsequent to the October supplement dates, NC FAST will continue to run weekly batches to ensure they are supplemented to the max allotment for October 2021.

As a reminder, some cases are not automatically issued supplemental payments to the max allotment. For all cases that are not issued a payment, tasks are generated for the payments that are in "Cancelled" or not "fully processed" status. A list of the cases is also provided to the counties by OST. Review tasks and the list of cases OST provides in a timely manner. Make the necessary changes to ensure all active FNS households are automatically reissued payments if the case is eligible for the reissuance.

Counties should also ensure that there is an EBT Card associated with the FNS case. If there is NOT an EBT Card associated with the FNS case, reissue the EBT card to the correct address. Go to the Product Delivery Case under the financials tab and reissue the benefits that are in cancelled status.

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective October 22, 2021 for all FNS households that are active in October 2021. If you have any questions, please submit them to 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-76-2021



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
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ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for
Human Services

September 21, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

Subject: Work First Cash Assistance Application and Review Documentation Collateral Contact

Priority: Information

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Work First Policy Team is providing clarification on the Collateral Contact section of the Work First Cash Assistance Application and Review Documentation (DSS-8228); Work First Policy Sections 201, I, B2; 112, IV, B; and Verification of Household Composition (DSS-6961).

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Per Work First Policy Section 201, I, B2 at recertification the case manager is to complete the DSS-8228 with the case head/payee and obtain a signature. All questions must be answered, and a response documented.

When addressing the Collateral Contact section of the DSS-8228 the case manager may refer to the DSS-6961. If the DSS-6961 is referenced in the DSS-8228 Collateral Contact section, at monitoring the DSS-6961 must be fully completed and available for review.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

This policy revision is effective upon receipt. Counties that are currently under a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for this error will be re-evaluated at PIP review using this new guidance.

Submit any questions regarding this information 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

CW/nla

EFS-WF-07-2021

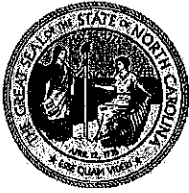
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SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County
Operations for Human Services

September 24, 2021

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR of SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS, and FISCAL STAFF

SUBJECT: FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES ANNUAL PLAN

REQUIRED ACTION: ___ Information Only **X** Time Sensitive ___ Immediate

PURPOSE: To provide county child welfare agencies with the template for the required Family Reunification Services Annual Plan, which is due by November 1, 2021.

As part of the NCDSS Monitoring Plan for Family Reunification Services funded with Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Title IVB-2), each county child welfare agency must submit an annual plan on the attached template as referenced in the DCDL_CWS_11_21 released on April 9, 2021 and the DCDL_CWS_25_21 released on July 2, 2021. The plan covers the time between June 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022. In the plan, agencies will:

- Estimate the number of children, parents, and families that they will serve.
- Project the percentage of each type of allowable services that they will offer as well as the expected internal staff members or community service providers.
- Describe why they selected this particular service(s), how they will track eligibility, maintain documentation, and list any changes from the type of services provided during the previous fiscal year.
- Have the County DSS Director sign the report.

The report is due by Monday, November 1, 2021 to Wendy Clewis at wendy.clewis@dhhs.nc.gov

NCDSS recognizes that family needs, staff members, and services providers may change during the year after the plan has been submitted. These changes should be acknowledged and explained in the county child welfare agency's Family Reunification Annual Report, which will be due on June 15, 2022.

If you have any questions, please contact Wendy Clewis at wendy.clewis@dhhs.nc.gov

Sincerely,

Kathy Stone, Section Chief for CPS and Prevention

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

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Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations
Lisa Cauley, Senior Director for Child, Family and Adult Services
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations
Carla McNeill, Section Chief of Permanency
Linda Waite, Acting Section Chief for Licensing & Regulatory

Attachments: Family Reunification Services Annual Plan Template

DCDL_CWS_38_21



**Family Reunification Services
Program Code 24 – 120 & 333
Annual Plan Template**

Instructions

Goal: On a yearly basis, the US Department of Health and Human Services and the North Carolina General Assembly allocates Promoting Safe and Stable (Title IVB-2) funds to the North Carolina Division of Social Services for the provision of Family Reunification Services, which are issued to county child welfare agencies as part of a funding authorization. Each county agency is required to submit an annual plan describing how they expect to use the funds during the current fiscal year.

This annual plan covers the allocation period of June 1 through May 30. The plan is due on **November 1, 2021**

To ask questions and/or submit report, please contact the Reunification Program Consultant via e-mail at Wendy.Clewis@dhhs.nc.gov

Service Goal:

The primary goal of family reunification services is to support the family in eliminating the conditions which led to the child's removal and to build protective factors that enable the parent(s) to provide the child(ren) with a safe and nurturing environment.

Eligibility Criteria:

- The child must be in the custody or placement authority of a county child welfare agency; AND
- The child must either be in a current out of home placement or recently moved from an out of home placement to the home of the parent/caregiver to be reunified; AND
- The child must be age birth through 17 years; AND
- The child must have the plan of reunification on the North Carolina Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement DSS – 5240.

Allowable Services and Activities:

- Individual, group, and family counseling;
- Inpatient, residential, or outpatient substance abuse treatment services;
- Mental health services;
- Assistance to address domestic violence;
- Services to provide temporary childcare and therapeutic services for families, including crisis nurseries;
- Peer-to-peer mentoring and support groups;
- Facilitation of access to and visitation of children with parents and siblings;
- Transportation to or from any of the services and activities listed above.

Timeframe:

- While the child is in out-of-home placement, there is no required time-limit on the use of Title IV-B funds for family reunification services.
- Beginning on the date the child returns home, county child welfare agencies may provide the child and their family up to 15-months of family reunification services.

Date Plan Completed: October 7, 2021

Name of County Child Welfare Agency: Stokes

Name and Title of Person Completing the Plan: Stacey Elmes, Director

Email Address and Phone Number of Person Completing the Plan: selmes@co.stokes.nc.us; 336-593-2861

PROJECTED ANNUAL OUTPUTS for FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES (PROGRAM CODE 24):

Complete the following chart with the unduplicated number of children, parents/caregivers, and families that your county agency expects to serve with 24-120 and 24-333 in the current year between June 1 and May 30?

Projected Number of Children to be Served	65
Projected Number of Parents or Caregivers to be Served	68
Projected Number of Families to be Served	37

FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED (Program Code 24-120 and 24-333):

Complete the following chart for the allowable services and activities that the county agency plans to provide.

What Family Reunification Service(s) will be provided?	Projected Percentage of Funding	Expected Internal Staff Member(s) or Community Service Provider(s) to Provide the Service
Individual, group, and family counseling	0	
Inpatient, residential, or outpatient substance abuse treatment services	0	
Mental health services	0	
Domestic violence services	0	
Services to provide temporary child care and therapeutic services for families, including crisis nurseries	0	
Peer-to-peer mentoring and support groups	0	
Facilitation of access to and visitation of children with parents and siblings	0	
Transportation to or from any of the services and activities listed above	100%	Internal staff

*** NCDSS recognizes that needs, staff members, and services providers may change during the year after the plan has been submitted. These changes should be acknowledged and explained in the county agency's annual family reunification report.*

NARRATIVE

Answer the following open-ended questions and check boxes:

1. Why did the county agency select the above family reunification service(s)?
Our agency has had an increased need in agency provided transportation and supervision of visits between foster children and their parents.
2. What type of personnel will the county agency use to provide family reunification services? (Check all that apply.)
 - ☒ Internal DSS Social Workers (24-120)
 - ☒ Internal DSS Paraprofessionals (24-333)
 - ☐ External Contracted Service Providers
3. What is the county agency's process to verify eligibility for these family reunification services?
Supervisor determines eligibility of case when custody is taken.
4. How will the county agency track family reunification services to ensure that eligible children receive eligible services for monitoring purposes? (Check all that apply.)
 - ☐ Database
 - ☐ Spreadsheet
 - ☒ Case Notes
 - ☐ Other, please list: _____
5. What written documentation for family reunification services will the county agency maintain? (Check all that apply)
 - ☐ Invoices
 - ☐ Receipts
 - ☒ Case Notes
 - ☒ Day Sheets
 - ☐ Other, please list: _____
6. Is the county agency changing the family reunification services in SFY 2022 compared to the prior year?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☒ No
7. If yes, what are the changes and why did the county agency decide to make these changes?
n/a

As the County DSS Director, I submit this reunification services plan to NCDSS for SFY 2022.

DSS Director Name: Stacey S. Elmes

DSS Director Signature: *Stacey S. Elmes*

Date: 10/7/2021



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MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for
Human Services

September 27, 2021

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Energy Administrators, Managers & Supervisors

Subject: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Block Grant Plan Revisions

Priority: Information Only

The purpose of this letter is to inform counties of revisions to the FY 2022 LIHEAP Block Grant Plan that were outlined in the DCDL-EFS-FNSEP-67-20219 (issued on August 13, 2021). Two items outlined in our FY 2022 Plan require a change in North Carolina General Statutes prior to implementation. We are actively working on seeking change to the statutes; in the meantime, our federal partners with the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) have approved our FY 2022 LIHEAP Block Grant Plan with the following two changes.

- Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) – effective October 1, 2021, the income eligibility will remain at 130% of the Federal Poverty Level and will not be increased to 150%.
- Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) – the maximum benefit amount will remain at \$600 per household and will not be increased to \$1,000.

In addition, priority group of households with individuals 60 or older or disabled receiving DAAS services can begin applying for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) benefits on December 1, 2021 instead of November 1, 2021. All other changes as outlined in the original DCDL will remain in place.

Thank you for your cooperation regarding this matter. Please contact Jasmyne.Simmons@dhhs.nc.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Carla L. West, Senior Director for Economic Security
CLW/js
EFS-FNSEP-77-2021

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Stacey S. Elmes

From: Rebecca S. Maser
Sent: Wednesday, September 29, 2021 12:10 PM
To: Stacey S. Elmes; kimber grabs
Subject: RE: Today

Thank you both so very much for the kind words.

Rebecca S Maser
Social Work Supervisor / LINKS Coordinator
Stokes County DSS

From: Stacey S. Elmes <selmes@co.stokes.nc.us>
Sent: Wednesday, September 29, 2021 6:13 AM
To: kimber grabs <kimbersgrabs@gmail.com>
Cc: Rebecca S. Maser <rmaser@co.stokes.nc.us>
Subject: Re: Today

Thank you for sharing this Kim and thank you Rebecca for the way you present yourself and represent our agency!!!

On Sep 28, 2021, at 6:18 PM, kimber grabs <kimbersgrabs@gmail.com> wrote:

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the County Network. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

While we were in DJJ court dealing with the teen, Judge Boone gave you a great complement: the breadth of knowledge and experience you bring to the court. It was when you stepped in and out, then we were struggling with ideas for the teen. Just passing it along! Kim

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Stacey S. Elmes

From: Sharon S. Bullins
Sent: Wednesday, September 29, 2021 2:46 PM
To: Stacey S. Elmes; Cynthia J. Joyce
Cc: Cindy Hodges

I just received a phone call to compliment Cindy Hodges. She wanted to make sure I knew what a wonderful worker Cindy Hodges is in doing her job. She said she has been my worker for FNS and now WF for my grandchild. She always gets things out quickly, explains things well. She "stands out to me", amazing job, just wonderful. That means a lot to her. She does not like paperwork and Cindy has always helped her. I told her I would also pass it on to the director.

Great Job, Cindy as always. Thank you for providing great customer service. !!!!!

Sharon Bullins
IM Supervisor II
PO Box 30
Danbury NC 27016
336-593-2861 ext. 1108

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Stacey S. Elmes

From: Kehoe, Jaime L. <Jaime.L.Kehoe@nccourts.org>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 3:14 PM
To: Stacey S. Elmes; Brittany Norris
Subject: Sending kudos and thanks!

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the County Network. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

I wanted to send some praise and kudos to Jessica Pinson and Kanci McKnight for doing an amazing job with their TPR cases. Jessica had 3 TPR hearings these past 2 court days and nailed all of them with her testimony and documented efforts.

Kanci also did an amazing job with her TPR case yesterday and I have seen how much work she puts into her TPR packets/timelines/documentated efforts that she has shared with GAL.

James was also very impressed with both ladies and I shared with him that I planned to reach out to you both to express our thanks and appreciation.

Thank you!



Jaime L. Kehoe
Guardian ad Litem Supervisor
North Carolina Judicial District 17B
PO Box 250
Danbury, NC 27016
North Carolina Judicial Branch
O 336-593-4415
M 336-816-1096
F 336-593-4407

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GUARDIAN AD LITEM
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT



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