

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 15-2020
EFS_WF_AL-15-2020**

Work First Program

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Work First Program Administrators,
Managers and Supervisors

DATE: July 30, 2020

SUBJECT: Automatic Payment Process for Work First Benefit Cases
(Amended)

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 2020

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Division of Social Services temporarily modified the pay-after performance process for Work First Benefit (WFB) cases to reduce the reporting and case management responsibilities for families and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Effective April 15, 2020, North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) began automatically releasing benefit payments and will continue this process through the end 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. This letter is being amended from the original letter issued on April 9, 2020 to update information in the Implementation Procedures provided in this letter regarding the manual payment process for new applications/reapplications.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Recipients of WFB will be deemed eligible for a good cause exemption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- NC FAST will create a COVID-19 good cause exemption that will automatically release payments to the recipients without worker intervention. The COVID-19 good cause exemption will not be viewable to users.
- The payments for the benefit month of March 2020 that have not been manually released will be released by NC FAST on April 15, 2020.
- Beginning with the April benefit month, the automatic payment process will occur on the first day of each month thereafter.
- Payments for WFB cases that are on-hold will not be automatically issued. All cases with on-hold decisions that are resolved by close of business on the day the automatic payments process, will be included in the automatic release. For assistance with releasing on-hold decisions, refer to NC FAST Help job aid: Viewing On-Hold Decisions.
- WFB cases with dual-issuance status (benefit amount and job bonus payments for the same time period) will not be automatically issued. These payments will need to be released under the current dual issuance payment determination

process established by NC FAST. For assistance with issuing payments refer to NC FAST Help job aid: Issuing or Releasing Work First Benefit Payments.

- NC FAST will suspend automatic payments the end 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.

III. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

Counties will continue to process WFB applications/reapplications based on Work First Policy. Initial payments for WFB applications/reapplications must be manually issued upon approval to prevent the delay in initial benefits to newly approved recipients. Automated issuance of WFB payments will begin the month following the month the application/reapplication is approved.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

The WFB automatic payment process is effective April 15, 2020. All provisions implemented will be allowed until the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services is lifted. Submit any questions regarding this policy to the Operational Support Team (OST) at DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Locklear".

David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

DL/lmd