

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES
EFS_WF_AL-3-2017
(Work First)**

TO: COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: Work First Program Managers and Supervisors

DATE: December 20, 2017

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

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Effective January 1, 2018, recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Veteran's Benefits (VA) will receive a 2.0% Cost-of-Living Assistance (COLA) increase. The purpose of this letter is to outline procedures for implementing the Social Security, SSI and VA benefits COLA for Work First (WF) cash assistance cases. The 2018 COLA increase was automatically applied to cash cases via North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST), automated case management system. These changes will affect the January 2018 benefits.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

- A.** Social Security 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 will be provided to Work First recipients whose benefits change or terminate as a result of the COLA increase. Workers will be responsible for sending a ten (10) day timely/adequate notice (as appropriate) to affected recipients.

III. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

- A.** NC FAST applied the COLA increase to all Work First cash assistance cases and updated the Benefit Evidence on December 2, 2017. NC FAST posted a report of the impacted cases to FAST Help. Once the caseworker reviews the report generated by NC FAST, the caseworker must manually reassess impacted cases and review the new eligibility determination – the "ON HOLD DECISION." The "on hold decision" will be created as a result of the manual reassessment.
- B.** NC FAST will show both the 2017 and 2018 amounts.

C. Actions Taken Prior to January 1, 2018

For pending applications, the “old” Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts must be end dated for December 31, 2017, and the new amount with the start date of January 1, 2018 added.

For active cases already processed, NC FAST will run a batch that will end date the “old” amount December 30, 2017, and add the new amount with the start date of December 31, 2017 effective for January 1, 2018.

D. Actions to Take on/or After January 1, 2018

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 Social Security, SSA and/or VA benefit(s) payment amount(s). Update the Benefit Evidence for January 2018 in NC FAST.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective upon receipt. Please email any questions regarding this policy to DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) via the Policy Questions link located in the Integrated Eligibility Manual: <https://economicbenefits.nc.gov>.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

DL/sdm