

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. EFS\_WF\_AL-6-2016  
ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES (Work First)**

**TO:** COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION:** Work First Program Managers and Supervisors

**DATE:** December 21, 2016

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

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon Receipt

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Effective January 1, 2017, recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veteran's Benefits (VA) will receive a .3 % 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 2017 COLA increase will be applied to cash cases via North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) automated, case management system. These changes will affect the January 2017 benefits.

NC FAST will automatically update Work First cash assistance cases to reflect the COLA increase effective January 2017.

**II. POLICY PROCEDURES**

- A.** Social Security and VA benefits are countable income and included in the 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 mass notices about the COLA. Notices will only 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 will apply the COLA increase to all Work First cash assistance cases, update the **Benefit Evidence** and **run an eligibility reassessment** effective January 2017. The affected cases will then go on an **automatic HOLD**. The worker will need to look at that **on HOLD decision**, and determine that the case is on hold due to COLA. If the HOLD decision is due to COLA, **DO NOT REJECT** that decision. Keep the HOLD decision and address the HOLD decision at recertification/review or when responding to a change in situation.

**B.** NC FAST will show both the 2016 and 2017 amounts.

**C. Actions Taken Prior to January 1, 2017**

For pending applications, the “old” Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts need to be end dated for December 31, 2016, and add start date of January 1, 2017, with the new amount.

For active cases already processed, NC FAST will run a batch that will end date the “old” amount December 30, 2016, and add new amount with start date of December 31, 2016, effective for January 1, 2017.

**D. Actions to Take On or After January 1, 2017**

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

**E. Actions on Ineligible Cases**

Cases in NC FAST that were determined to be ineligible based on these changes will be updated. If the case was deemed ineligible in error, determine the correct Social Security, SSI and/or VA payment amount. Update the Benefit Evidence for January 2017 in NC FAST.

**IV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy guidance is effective upon receipt. Please email any questions regarding this policy to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST): [ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Chief  
Economic and Family Services