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**FOOD STAMP CERTIFICATION  
APPLICATIONS  
FNS 435 DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY**

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**FNS 435 DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY  
Change #09-2021  
August 9, 2021**

**435.01 ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION REQUIREMENT**

A. Required Verifications:

Verify all required eligibility factors when determining eligibility for food stamp benefits. Eligibility is determined during the interview process and during the time period prior to disposition. Use appropriate manual sections to determine eligibility factors and verification requirements. Use any acceptable form of verification to determine if the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) unit meets the following eligibility requirements:

1. Identity;
2. Residency;
3. Citizenship/Alien Status;
4. Household Size/Composition;
5. Enumeration;
6. Resources;
7. Income;
8. Student Status;
9. Voluntary Quit;
10. Work Registration/ABAWD Status;
11. Disability;
12. Controlled Substance Felons, and
13. Previous Disqualifications (QC, Controlled Substance Felons, IPV's, etc.)

B. Non-required Verifications:

The following non-required verifications are used to determine benefit levels but are not eligibility requirements.

1. Utility Expenses;

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2. Mortgage or Rental Expenses;
3. Property Taxes;
4. Property Insurance;
5. Medical Expenses;
6. Legally-Obligated Child Support Payments; **and**
7. Child Care Expenses.

**435.02 VERIFICATION REQUIREMENT**

- A. There are three sources of verification that can be used when determining eligibility. Those sources are:
  1. Documentary evidence
  2. Collateral contacts
  3. Home visits.
- B. The household has primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence to support statements on the application and to resolve any questionable information.
- C. The agency should assist the household in obtaining verification as needed.
- D. Households may supply documentary evidence in person, by mail, or through an authorized representative. The household is not required to present verification in person.
- E. Physically or electronically date stamp all verifications when received. Verifications that are not date stamp will be considered as received on the date of application or recertification.
- F. Accept **any** reasonable documentary evidence if the verification adequately proves the information provided on the application.
- G. Do not require specific types of verification. It is appropriate to request verification of wages for a specific pay period. It is not appropriate to request check stubs or wage form for a specific pay period as the required verification could be provided in many different forms.
- H. When documentary evidence cannot be obtained or is insufficient to make eligibility determination or determination of the correct benefit level, a collateral contact or home visit may be necessary.

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- I. A collateral contact may be a person named by the household, or the agency may choose a collateral contact if the collateral contact designated by the household is unacceptable. Examples of acceptable collateral contacts may include employers, landlords, social service agencies, migrant service agencies, and neighbors of the household who can be expected to provide accurate third-party verification. The agency is responsible for obtaining verification from acceptable collateral contacts.
- J. North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) case files and appropriate evidences must be documented to support eligibility, ineligibility, and benefit level determinations. Documentation must be detailed enough for a reviewer to determine the accuracy of the case file.

**435.03      REQUESTING INFORMATION AT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

- A. The worker must make at least one request for any missing non-required verifications using the DSS-8650 Notice of Information Needed to Complete your Food and Nutrition Services.
- B. The worker must make at least two requests for any missing required verifications on normal applications using the DSS-8650.
- C. It is the workers responsibility to issue both notices timely enough to expire prior to the processing deadline outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
- D. The FNS unit must be given the full 10 calendar days to provide verifications. Do not issue second notice or dispose the application prior to the expiration of the 10 calendar days.

**435.04      REQUESTING INFORMATION AT APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

**A. Normal applications missing non-required verifications only:**

- 1. Request non-required information using the DSS-8650.
  - a. Allow the FNS applicant 10 calendar days to provide the missing non-required information.
  - b. Issue the DSS-8650 timely enough to allow the 10 days to expire prior to the processing deadline as outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
- 2. If non-required information is provided, process application within five (5) days of receipt, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.

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3. If non-required information is not returned, process the application within five (5) days of expiration of the DSS-8650, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
4. If the verification is provided after the application is disposed, treat as a change in situation per FNS 515 SR Changes during Certification Period.

**Example:** FNS application was filed, and interview conducted.

The only information requested at interview was verification of the household's mortgage. The FNS household was provided a DSS-8650 to request the non-required verification and they were given 10 days to provide the information.

The 10 days expired on June the 6<sup>th</sup> and the verification was not provided. The worker may process the application on June the 7<sup>th</sup> without the required verifications.

**B. Normal applications missing required verifications only or a combination of required and non-required verifications:**

1. Request missing verifications using the DSS-8650 Notice of Information Needed to Complete your Food and Nutrition Services.
  - a. Allow the FNS applicant 10 calendar days to provide the missing verifications.
  - b. Issue the DSS-8650 timely enough to allow the 10 days to expire prior to the processing deadline as outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
2. If all verifications are provided by the 10<sup>th</sup> day, process application within five (5) days of receipt, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame.
3. If all required verifications and none or partial non-required verifications are returned, process the application within five (5) days of expiration of the DSS-8650, but no later than the deadline found in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame
4. If none or partial required verifications and none, partial, or full non-required verifications are returned you **must** request the missing required verifications **twice** before the application can be properly denied on the 30th day for failure to provide information.

After the expiration date of the first DSS-8650 take the following steps:

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- a. Check other program records before sending second DSS-8650 to avoid requesting for verification(s) already received
- b. Review for requested verification and update all evidence as required in NC FAST.
- c. Issue the second request in NC FAST for the remaining required missing verification and any non-required verifications by generating a DSS-8650.
  - i. The second DSS-8650 must have the date the required missing verification is due and the date the application will be denied
  - ii. Issue the first and second DSS-8650s timely enough to allow the 10 days to expire prior to the processing deadline as outlined in FNS 420 Normal Application Processing Time Frame. If the second DSS-8650 expiration date extends beyond the 30<sup>th</sup> day from date of application, see FNS 435.05 Delay in Requesting Verifications.

**Example:** FNS application was filed, and interview conducted. The worker requested verification of the household's monthly earned income, monthly unearned income, daycare expense, and mortgage. The FNS household was provided a DSS-8650 to request the verifications.

The 10 days expired on June the 6<sup>th</sup> and the FNS unit provided the verification of unearned income only.

Because there is still a required verification outstanding the worker must make a second request for the verification.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> the worker updates all evidences in NC FAST and generates a DSS-8650 that requests the earned income, daycare expense, and mortgage verifications. In addition to the request for verifications the worker provides the date the application will be denied if the required information is not provided.

- C. The requirement to make two separate requests does not apply to:
1. Expedited Service applications.
  2. Recertifications.
  3. Reported changes.

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**435.04 DELAY IN REQUESTING VERIFICATIONS**

- A. If the second DSS-8650's 10 calendar days extends beyond the 30<sup>th</sup> day from the date of applications.
1. The following actions must be taken on the 30th day if processing delay is **caused by the agency**:
    - a. Pend the application, **do not** deny on the 30th day. Allow the household 10 days from the second DSS-8650 to provide the required missing verification, regardless of whether the 10 days extend beyond the 30-day application processing standard.
    - b. If missing required verification is not provided, deny the application for failure to provide on the expiration of the second DSS-8650. This is an overdue application.
    - c. Upon receipt of the required missing verification, determine eligibility within five calendar days, approve or deny benefits from the date of application.
  2. The following actions must be taken on the 30th day if processing delay is caused by the household or household with a good cause reason:
    - a. Processing delay is caused by the household:
      - i. Deny the application on the 30th day if the required missing verification is not provided from the second DSS-8650.
      - ii. Upon receipt of required missing verification, determine eligibility within five calendar days. If determined eligible the household loses its entitlement to benefits in the month of application.
      - iii. Processing delay is caused by the household **and** a good cause reason exist; regulatory delay is allowable.
        - Enter appropriate reason in NC FAST and document the reason for the delay.
        - Evaluate good cause on a case-by-case basis. Regulatory delay is the only entry that prevents the case from being counted as overdue regardless of the actual processing time.