

202 - CHANGES IN SITUATION**Change 3-2020****June 3, 2020****I. CHANGES IN SITUATION**

A change in situation is any change the family experiences that may affect who is included in the family unit, the family's *Work First* payment, or whether the family qualifies for **Work First Cash Assistance**. Examples **can** include a change in who lives in the home, starting and stopping employment, or a change in county residence.

- A. The family is responsible for reporting changes. When a family experiences a change in their situation, they must report the change within 10 calendar days of when they know about it. Review this requirement when the **Mutual Responsibility Agreement Core Requirements (MRA-A) (DSS-6963-A)** is signed.
- B. When a family reports a change or the agency becomes aware of new/changed information, verify the change according to the verification procedures in the *Work First Manual*. Always document the change and verification on the **Verification of Change in Situation form (DSS-1662)**.
- C. Make the change in benefits as early as the month following the month of change but no later than the second month after the change.

EXAMPLE: The caseworker is notified on January 8 that a participant began working. The caseworker must verify the new wages, send a timely notice, and enter the change into the **North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology System (NC FAST)** to be effective no later than March 1.

Changes are effective the month after the month in which the 10-day notice expires, unless the family waives their right to the 10-day notice.

NOTE: For income changes, refer to **Work First Manual Section 114**.

II. ADDING AN INDIVIDUAL TO A WORK FIRST CASE (THIS IS AN INCLUSION)

The individual to be included may be a newborn (a child 12 months of age or younger), required family unit member, or any other person who chooses to receive Work First. When adding any of these individuals to a pending application, follow instructions in [Work First Manual Section 104](#).

- A. **Schedule an interview either in the office, in the home, or by telephone** within 5 workdays of being notified the individual needs to be added. During the interview, request and set deadlines for any needed verifications. Use the [Verification of Change in Situation form](#) to record verifications. Complete the change within thirty (30) calendar days.

If the individual being added is a required family unit member and the caretaker does not **complete** the interview, terminate the case. **Refer to FAST Help Job Aid: [Closing a Case](#) for guidance. The worker must send the participant a timely notice (DSS-8110) prior to termination of Work First benefits.**

- B. If the individual is **a child**, determine whether the child is potentially subject to the family cap. If the child is subject to the family cap provision, follow the Family Cap instructions in [Work First Manual Section 106](#) to determine whether it applies. **Refer to the FAST Help Job Aid: [Adding Family Cap Exemption Evidence](#) for guidance (if applicable).**
- C. The individual must meet the **eligibility** requirements for Work First **Cash Assistance**.

NOTE: For newborns automatically eligible due to being born to a mother who received Medicaid at the time of the child's birth, citizenship and identity must be verified by the child's first birthday.

- D. When adding the individual, review personal responsibilities with the caretaker. Determine if there is any impact on the [Mutual Responsibility Agreement Core Requirements and indicate any changes](#). The participant and the worker must sign and date a new **MRA-A**. **Refer to the FAST Help Job Aid: [Adding a Person to a Cash Assistance Case](#).**

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- E. If the request for the inclusion is made by telephone, mail the [Verification of Change in Situation form](#) and the [MRA-A](#) to the family. Give the caretaker a deadline for their return.

If the forms are not returned by the deadline **and**:

1. The individual being included is a **required family unit member**; **complete and send the client a manual timely notice (DSS-8110) to terminate Work First benefits. Refer to FAST Help Job Aid: [Closing a Case](#) for guidance.**
2. The individual **is not a required family unit member**; complete and send the client a manual adequate notice (DSS-8110) that states:

"We cannot add _____ to your Work First case because _____."

- F. If appropriate, follow instructions in [Work First Manual Section 116](#) to complete a child support referral.
- G. Determining the Effective Date of Benefits for Inclusions

1. Newborn -- Birth Reported Timely

The effective date of benefits is the newborn's date of birth if the newborn lived with the family unit on that date. Otherwise, the effective date is the date the newborn began living with the family unit.

NOTE: A child that has an extended hospital stay due to medical complications after delivery, but will be released to the caretaker, is considered living with the family unit on the child's date of birth.

2. Newborn -- Birth Not Reported Timely

The effective date of benefits is the date the agency learns the child is living with the family unit.

3. Required Family Unit Member (Other Than a Newborn) -- Change Reported Timely

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The effective date of benefits is the date the individual becomes a member of the required family unit.

4. Required Family Unit Member (Other Than a Newborn) -- Change Not Reported Timely

The effective date of benefits is the date the agency learns that the individual is a family unit member.

5. Individual Who Chooses to Be Included

The effective date of benefits is the date **the recipient** requested assistance, **if the individual** qualified on that date. Otherwise, the individual cannot get Work First.

To include any **other individual** in the ongoing *Work First* case, follow the instructions in [Work First Section 104](#). **Refer to FAST Help Job Aid: [Adding a Person to a Cash Assistance Case](#)** for guidance.

NOTE: If Work First terminates while determining whether the individual qualifies, complete an open/shut so the individual can receive benefits for the time the benefits were active.

H. Sending the Appropriate Notices

- 1. If an individual qualifies for Work First, send a manual approval notice for Work First cash assistance (DSS-8108).**
- 2. If an individual is not eligible for Work First, enter the appropriate reason in NC FAST to generate an automated denial notice (DSS-8109).**
- 3. Notify the Food and Nutrition Services case manager of the change via the Work First Information Transmittal Form ([DSS-8194](#)).**

III. PROCESSING CHANGES OTHER THAN INCLUSIONS

When a change other than an inclusion occurs, take appropriate action as soon as possible but no later than the second month following the month the change is reported.

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- A. If a family member on the case becomes ineligible for Work First, remove this individual's needs and income (if applicable) as soon as possible but no later than the second month following the month the change is reported.

If the ineligible individual remains in the home, follow instructions in [Work First Manual Section 114](#) to determine how to count their income. The change in how you count the individual's income begins the month after the month of the change.

- B. Recoup any overpayment. If an underpayment is created in the family's Work First benefits, issue an adjusted payment for the month following the month of change. Refer to Fast Help Job Aid: [Cash Assistance Underpayment Processing](#) for guidance. Do not recoup an overpayment caused solely by a timely notice or processing deadline.

NOTE: When determining the payment, ensure you are using the correct number of individuals in the family unit.

Anytime a family becomes ineligible for *Work First* cash assistance, if the family has active FNS, notify the Food and Nutrition Services Unit of the change via the Work First Information Transmittal Form ([DSS-8194](#)).

IV. WHEN A FAMILY MOVES FROM ONE COUNTY TO ANOTHER WITHIN NORTH CAROLINA

Work First applicants/participants must receive benefits from the county in which they live. When a family moves from one county to another, the Work First Cash Assistance case will transfer to the other county. The Work First case will not terminate, and the applicant/participant is not required to reapply in the new county of residence.

V. WHEN A FAMILY MOVES OUT OF MY (THE ORIGINATING) COUNTY

1. For pending applications and ongoing cases, the worker will use the DSS-8146A, Notice of Information Needed to Determine Your Eligibility for WFFA, to request verification of the address change, household composition, or any additional actions or verifications required. The worker should set a deadline of no less than twelve calendar days for the applicant to complete the actions or provide the verifications.
2. If an applicant/participant moves to another county before the application is processed, the original county must continue to process the application. Once the case is approved, the active case will transfer to the participants' new county of residence effective the following month.
3. The originating county is responsible for keying participation hours, issuing the cash assistance payment for the month the move occurred and/or completing pending re-certifications prior to transferring cases.
4. The case will transfer to the new county effective the following month the worker was notified of the change of address.
5. The applicant/participant must contact the new county of residence before the effective month to notify the worker of the address change. The receiving county must reassess the participant and establish a new MRA based on county resources within 5 work days of the date the case is transferred in NC FAST. Counties should use their discretion to decide if good cause is applicable and issue the benefits during the transfer case transition period. If the applicant/participant fails to comply without good cause, the receiving county must complete the DSS- 8110, Notice of Benefits to terminate the case.
6. Notify the Food and Nutrition Services Unit of the move via the Information Transmittal (DSS-8194).

NOTE: If the family reports that they *intend* to move to another county, but they have not yet done so, tell the family to report when the move takes place.

For guidance, refer to [FAST Help Job Aid: Completing a County Transfer](#).