

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 4-2015
FNS Policy Clarifications and Procedural Requirements
(October 30, 2015)

(Food and Nutrition Services)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers, Supervisors and Program Integrity Supervisors

DATE: October 30, 2015

SUBJECT: FNS Policy Clarifications and Procedural Requirements

EFFECTIVE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to provide additional policy clarifications and procedural requirements as a result of the Food and Nutrition Services Management Evaluation conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in July 2015.

1. Requirements for Filing an Application
2. Interviewing Requirements
3. Scheduling FNS Interviews
4. Processing Timely Reviews
5. Fair Hearings
6. Merit Based Staff

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

1. Requirements for Filing an Application

Households must be given the opportunity to begin the application process using the DSS-8207 application form or NC FAST with name, address and signature only. Households **cannot** be required to complete any additional forms such as household fact sheet, prescreening tool, household information form, etc.

Signs must be placed in lobby/waiting areas that explain the certification processing standards and the right to file an application on the day of initial contact.

Applicants **must** be given the opportunity to apply during normal agency business hours.

2. Interviewing Requirements

During an interview, **all** questions on the application must be addressed. Any unclear and/or incomplete information **must** be explored and resolved with the household.

3. Scheduling FNS Interviews

Interviews **must** be conducted on the same day the application is filed, either in person or by telephone. If the interview cannot be conducted, provide the applicant with a DSS-8650, on the date of application which includes a specific interview date and time.

4. Processing Timely Reviews

A recertification is timely if the FNS unit submits a DSS-2435 by the 15th calendar day of the last month of the current certification period. In order to avoid uninterrupted FNS benefits, it is required that the DSS-2435 be processed by the end of the certification period if all required verifications are provided.

5. Fair Hearings

The State Appeal Request Form (*DSS-1473 Rev. 08/15*) **must** be sent, with all applicable documents/information related to the appeal to the State Hearings & Appeals Section, **within five calendar days** of receipt of the hearing request.

6. Merit Based Staff

Staff performing eligibility determination functions for Food and Nutrition Services are required to meet merit-based requirements as set forth in federal Office of Personnel Management Standards, Subpart F – Standards for Merit System of Personnel Administration; Section 900.603 (pages 579-580), which include principles of recruitment, selection and advancement, compensation, training, performance, and “fair treatment” principles of personnel management. In addition, 7 CFR 272.4(a)(1) requires that personnel used in the certification process or administration of SNAP (Food and Nutrition Services) be employed in accordance with the current standards for a merit system of personnel administration. Any questions about compliance with the merit-based requirements of FNS staff should be referred to your county Human Resources Office.

Non merit-based FNS staff shall not conduct certification interviews or certify FNS cases in NC FAST. Staff not meeting the merit-based requirements may be used to assist applicants in the application and certification process, excluding interviewing, as well as assisting in securing needed verifications. Non-merit based staff may also be used to assist with updating information related to Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents per Dear County Director Letter EFS-FNSEP-24-2015.

Policies and procedures discussed in this letter will be reviewed during the local FNS Management Evaluations scheduled for 2015-16.

Submit any questions regarding this policy to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) at ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Chief
Economic and Family Services Section