

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 5-2008
Work First Program

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Work First Program Administrators, Managers, and Supervisors

DATE: December 12, 2008

SUBJECT: County of Residence for NC CASAWORKS for Families Participants

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to clarify Work First policy as it relates to residency when a Work First recipient enrolls in a NC CASAWORKS for Families (CASAWORKS) program in a county that is not their original county of residence. Several questions have been raised by counties that have a CASAWORKS program in their county as to whether they are responsible for providing Work First Family Assistance and Work First Services or whether the county from which the recipient came is responsible for these services.

The CASAWORKS for Families model was originally developed by the Center for the Study of Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University in 1997. North Carolina adopted the CASAWORKS program in 2000. This model was designed to assist and respond to the impact of welfare reform on substance abusing families. The model proposes that the best way to help substance abusing TANF (Work First in North Carolina) families become economically self-sufficient is to provide an integrated and concurrent, gender-specific, substance abuse treatment and job readiness/training/employment program. In addition to becoming abstinent, CASAWORKS participants must seek and sustain Work First benefits, self-care, parenting, budgeting, GED, job readiness training and other services, such as services for domestic violence, legal issues or substance abuse/dependency disorders. The target population is women with a substance abuse or dependency disorders that are receiving Work First Family Assistance and have at least one child under age 12 in the home and included in the Work First case. The goal of the North Carolina CASAWORKS for Families Residential Initiative is to provide services and supports to assist chemically dependent women to achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and their family.

The Division has been involved in discussions with representatives from the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS) and the Attorney General's Office regarding the residency issues when a Work First Recipient enrolls in a CASAWORKS program in a county that was not their original county of residence for the purpose of receiving financial benefits and services. Due to the model of the CASAWORKS program, the majority of participants establish a new residency in the CASAWORKS county upon arrival in the CASAWORKS program or shortly thereafter. The program is residential, and the participant's child must live with them. The participants are required to establish a stable living arrangement as a part of the program. They are required to participate in services locally that will help them establish employment. If their children are school-aged, they must be enrolled in school in the CASAWORKS county. If the individual needs Vocation Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Rehabilitation typically serves from the unit office closest to where they reside. By the end of their twelve months in the program, many participants are employed locally and intend to remain in the county. Most of the participants have left behind in their original county of residence relationships that involved domestic violence and/or substance abuse. Part of the CASAWORKS model is to assist participants in establishing strong support systems in their new environment that are free of domestic violence and that provide a safety net for recovery from substance abuse.

The definition of legal residence for social services purposes is established by [N.C.G.S 153A-257](#). The Division, along with its partners, DMH/DD/SAS and the Attorney General's Office concluded that the CASAWORKS' participant who has the intent to remain in the CASAWORKS County upon entering the Program or shortly thereafter is consistent with the statutory definition of legal residence.

Therefore, it is best practice and the most practical solution for benefits and services to be provided by the CASAWORKS county. This will promote collaboration between the Work First Program and the CASAWORKS agency for the participant's successful experience in both programs. It also promotes efficiency in collecting participant's work participation hours, ongoing eligibility reviews, providing childcare and transportation services, assisting the participant in finding and retaining employment, and accessing all other needed services. Therefore, the county of residence becomes the county in which the participant is enrolled in CASAWORKS.

II. **IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

Apply this policy to the next review, application, or change in situation.

III. **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy is effective upon receipt of this information. Should you need additional guidance, please contact your Work First Representative.

Sincerely,



Dean Simpson, Chief
Economic and Family Services Section

DS: gbw

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Hank Bowers
Sara Mims
Work First Local Support
Local Business Liaisons