

Phase II - Modules 2 - 3

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FNS – Processing Changes

The upcoming sections will delve into changes, exploring their causes, reporting requirements, appropriate response times, and documentation methods.

Leverage job aids, supporting scenarios, and other resources to help students comprehend the changes in the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) program.

NOTE: *More complex scenarios are available in the folder for this module.*

What are Changes?

A change refers to any reported information during a certification period. This change can lead to an increase, decrease, or no adjustment in allotments.

The date the Change Report is received:

- The date of the change is reported by telephone, email, or fax,
- The date of the office visit to report the change
- The date of the change is reported to Work First Family Assistance (WFFA)
- The date the changed information is entered into NC FAST, and a task is created
- The date of the change is reported by a third party

NOTE: react to all changes reported by the client, even if it was not a required reportable change, for all case types.

NC FAST will generate and mail the DSS 8550 at application and recertification disposition. If NC FAST fails to generate the DSS 8550, the worker must generate and mail/give the form to the FNS unit.

The DSS 8550 provides the following information to the FNS unit:

- a) Explains the income reporting requirement for the appropriate FNS unit size and identifies the maximum income amount.
- b) It indicates that the household has no further income reporting requirements when the household's income exceeds the 130% maximum allowable gross income limit.
- c) Instructs the household to add the gross amount of all sources of income to get the total amount of monthly income (wages, WFFA, child support, SSI, unemployment benefits {UIB}, Social Security, Veterans benefits, disability payments, income of new household members, etc.) on the last day of the month.
- d) Explains that the agency will react to all changes that become known to the FNS worker from any other programs/units.

Households Required to Report Changes:

Please note the following information can change depending on updates to FNS policies.

- Households whose income is under the maximum income limit for their household size are required to report changes that put them over that maximum income limit. *This is calculated by a percentage amount.*
- Households who are over the maximum income limit for their household size are NOT required to report changes.
- FNS units are required to report changes by the 10th of the month, following the month of change.
- This reporting limit will not change during the certification period regardless of changes in household size that may occur.

Evaluating the Changes

Evaluate and react, as appropriate to the following changes, within ten calendar days of receipt of the change:

- Changes the household is required to report based on reporting requirements
- Changes known to Work First
- Changes reported directly to the FNS worker from all programs within DSS
- Changes that become known to the agency are defined as new/changed information recorded in NC FAST and a task is generated to the FNS worker

Reacting to a Change

When a change is reported:

- Determine how the change affects the FNS unit's eligibility or benefit level within **ten calendar days** of the date the change was reported to the agency.
 - If multiple changes are reported on the same day, determine the cumulative effect and act accordingly.
 - Determine if additional verification is required unless the change is considered verified upon receipt.
 - If the information is questionable, it is not considered verified upon receipt and must be verified prior to reacting to the change.
 - Verified upon receipt means that information is not questionable, and the provider is the primary source of the information but not limited to:
 - BENDEX (Beneficiary and Earnings Data Exchange), SSA (Social Security Administration) benefits and payments of Medicare premiums from the SSA.
 - SDX (State Data Exchange), SSI (Supplemental Security Income) benefit from the SSA.
 - SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements), from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS).
 - Employment and Training (E&T) compliance information, received from Division of Employment Security (DES).
 - Intentional Program Violations (IPVs), received from Program Integrity staff.
 - Non-cooperation with Quality Control (QC), received from QC staff.
 - UIB (Unemployment Insurance Benefits), received from DES.
 - Death matches, verified from Vital Records (provided monthly); or Prison matches verified from Department of Corrections (DOC) (provided quarterly).
- NOTE:** Only react to information on BENDEX and SDX unless SSA is the Primary Source of the information. SOLQ is not considered verified upon receipt since it is an inquiry.
- Send DSS-8650A if additional information is required and give the FNS unit 10 calendar days to provide.

The following Notices are used when reacting to changes:

Forms/Notices	
<i>Change Report Form –</i> DSS 8550	Sent so clients can report changes in a household's circumstances that could affect their eligibility for benefits.
<i>Effect of Change –</i> DSS 8562	Sent to notify the client of either <i>no change</i> in their benefits when the change is reported by the client or when the change results in an <i>increase</i> in benefits.

Confirmation of Voluntary Termination of Benefits – DSS 8632	Sent when the FNS unit requests in writing or verbally to reduce or terminate its benefits, or when the caseworker receives notification that the FNS unit has moved out of state.
Notice of Adverse Action – DSS 8553	Sent when a reported or discovered change <u>decreases or terminates</u> a FNS Unit’s benefits. The FNS unit must be given 10 business days’ notice before benefits can be decreased or terminated. The change can be made the month after the month in which the Notice of Adverse Action expires.
Documents Needed to Complete Your Application— DSS 8650A	Sent in addition to an interview, when an applicant applies for FNS benefits. It is given to obtain certain documentation to process the application.

Change Process

- Enter the change into NC FAST -CCE using the appropriate evidence.
- Add verifications.
- Run an Eligibility check from the Check Eligibility tab checking the applicable program.
- Toggle into the decision and verify the new ongoing monthly amount and compare it to the Trial Budget.
- Apply Changes
- Return to the Eligibility Check & view the “*Changed Decision.*” Click on the “*Coverage Period*” to make sure it is correct.
- Once the ongoing allotment has been verified as correct, click on the ellipsis and select “*Accept with Timely.*”
- This will cause the system to look at the 10-day Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA) timeframe (10 business days) and adjust the allotment start date accordingly.
- The pop-up appears. Select “Yes.”
- Navigate to the “*Determination Tab*” within the FNS PDC. Look for the “*Determination Status.*” If it shows as “*Postponed,*” note the “*Held To Date.*” This date should be the first day of the month when the change will take effect. The “*Coverage Period*” will display the ongoing amount for that specific time period.
- Generate the DSS-8553 NOAA from the Case Details Tab, Communications
 - DSS-8553 NOAA Information:
 - For System generated NOAA’s the timeframe is actually 12 working days from the date of keying because the system takes into consideration that the notice will not go out until the following day through “overnight batching.”

- When a Manual NOAA is sent, it is generated and mailed the same day, therefore the timeframe only needs to be 11 business days.
 - **NOTE:** 10 full business days and key on the 11th.
- Address any over/underpayments that are generated.
- If underpayment is valid, approve and submit for approval.
- If overpayment is valid, complete and submit a program integrity referral.
- If either the underpayment or overpayment are not valid, evaluate and address it appropriately.

Verifications

Mandatory	Required	Non-Required
If verification of the following is not provided at time of change, the case must be denied for failure to provide information.	If verification is unavailable for a required verification, the client's statement may be used as verification to deny, reduce, or terminate FNS benefits.	The following non-required verifications are used to determine benefit levels but are not eligibility requirements.
Identity	Student Status	Utility Expense
Residency (Non-Categorically Eligible HH only)	Voluntary Quit	Mortgage or Rental Expense
Citizenship/Alien Status	Work Registration/ABAWD Status	Property Taxes/Insurance
Household Size/Composition	Disability	Medical Expenses
Gross Non-exempt Income	Controlled Substance Felons/IPV	Legally Obligated Child Support Payments
Enumeration	Resources	Child Care Expenses

Helpful Chart

The following chart is a summary of the changes, however, not to be used in the place of policy. The chart indicates if verification is required or if client statement (C/S) can be used as verification unless questionable.

Action Area of Policy	Application Approval	Application Denial	Recertification Approval	Recertification Denial	Change (Increase or Termination)
Mandatory Verifications:					
Identity	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Residency	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Citizenship / Alien Status	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Household Size	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Household Composition	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Enumeration	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Gross Non- exempt Income	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Required Verifications:					
Student Status	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Voluntary Quit	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Work Registration	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Disability	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Controlled Substance Felon	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Previous Disqualifications	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S
Resources	Required	C/S	Required	C/S	C/S

No Change In Eligibility or Benefit

1. **Obtain Necessary Verifications:** Refer to the relevant manual section to determine the required verifications for processing the change.
2. **Notify the FNS Unit:** If the change does not impact on the FNS unit's eligibility or benefits, use the Effect of Change Notice (DSS-8562) to inform the FNS unit that their allotment remains unchanged.
3. **Reporting Requirements:** If the FNS unit did not report the change (e.g., the change was reported by the Work First Unit), a notice to the household is not required. An Effect of Changes notice is only necessary if the change is reportable.

Documentation

Documentation is crucial when working on FNS (Food and Nutrition Services) cases for several reasons:

1. **Accuracy and Consistency:** Proper documentation ensures that all information is accurate and consistent, which is essential for making fair and informed decisions regarding eligibility and benefits.
2. **Accountability:** It provides a clear record of actions taken and decisions made, which is important for accountability and transparency. This is especially critical in case of audits or reviews.

3. **Compliance:** Documentation helps ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. It serves as proof that all required procedures and guidelines have been followed.
4. **Communication:** It facilitates effective communication among team members and with the FNS unit. Clear documentation helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures everyone is on the same page.
5. **Historical Record:** Maintaining a detailed record of changes and actions taken over time is important for tracking the history of a case. This can be useful for future references or if issues arise.
6. **Support for Decisions:** Well-documented cases provide the necessary support for decisions made, which can be crucial if a decision is challenged or needs to be reviewed.

Utilize the tools and resources available to allow students to practice this process.

Cited Sources

NC FAST Phase I Training Curriculum

Buncombe County Department of Social Services Training Curriculum

NCDHHS Energy Programs Policy Manuals [EP Policies/Manuals – NCDHHS Policies and Manuals](#)

NC FAST HELP

https://ncfasthelp.nc.gov/FN_B/FN_B/server/general/projects/FAST_Help/FAST_Help.htm