



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Medical Assistance

Pat McCrory  
Governor

Aldona Z. Wos, M.D.  
Ambassador (Ret.)  
Secretary DHHS

Robin Gary Cummings, M.D.  
Deputy Secretary for Health Services  
Director, Division of Medical Assistance

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Dear Department of Social Services County Directors:

We have made progress in clearing many of the growing number of applications for Medicaid. However, despite our best efforts, and as everyone is aware, the number of North Carolinians awaiting processing of their Medicaid applications continues to climb. It is incumbent upon all of us to secure additional resources, maximize our business models, and implement all available technology and other tools to successfully process this growing Medicaid backlog. This letter provides urgent guidance and information on some of the key support initiatives that will help the State and Counties to assure that all pending applicants are provided with Medicaid or other health insurance benefits for which they are eligible.

We must continue to forge ahead and act decisively to rapidly reduce the mounting backlog of new applications and recertifications by prioritizing cases for disposition, using the reports provided to closely monitor and resolve application processing log jams, and taking advantage of enhanced State and Federal support. The overriding objective is to achieve the common goals of processing and recertifying Medicaid benefits to applicants/beneficiaries within the established guidelines and timeframes.\*

Over the next 90 days, our Department will work closely with our counties to support and partner in the achievement of substantial progress in reducing the backlog of Medicaid applications. Going forward, we will work closely to assure that all Medicaid applications and recertifications are completed in a timely manner.

*\*Note: The processing time for all Medicaid eligibility categories is 45 days with the exception of Medicaid for Disabled applications which is 90 days.*

**To meet the imminent August 31 target date for completion, the State urges County Directors to:**

- Review NC FAST and EIS reports on pending applications and recertifications and execute an effective plan to provide immediate and much needed relief to all impacted beneficiaries and applicants.
- Ensure Supervisors closely monitor productivity reports daily and meet or exceed daily targets.
- Ensure applications are worked on the provided reports from the oldest to the newest.
- Immediately escalate applications for individuals having an urgent medical need.
- Ensure recertifications are processed making sure that no individuals have a lapse in coverage.
- Ensure caseworkers are properly trained and follow relevant policies and procedures.
- Apprise the State, County Managers, and County Commissioners on a regular basis of the progress in backlog reduction, or lack thereof.

The ensuing sections present information that will aid your county initiatives in overcoming this significant hurdle. Note that DHHS will conduct calls and onsite visits with counties that have excessive overdue applications and recertifications.

#### **A. New Applications**

Processing of new applications is an extremely high priority since applicants do not currently receive services from Medicaid or Health Choice. County staff must complete a thorough assessment of the new applications at intake to ensure all information is obtained to process the application. Implementing a triage process at intake will ensure that all information is available for the caseworker to process applications expeditiously.

County staff must process applications using the first-in first-out (FIFO) approach. The application with the oldest application date must be processed first. There will be exceptions to FIFO for new applications, such as an applicant that has an urgent medical need. For example, an individual with a chronic medical condition such as asthma or diabetes and that requires immediate medical care or medication. These applications must be escalated for processing and completed within one (1) business day, provided all information to determine eligibility is provided by applicant.

#### **B. Recertifications**

Recertifications must also be processed using the FIFO approach. To ensure counties complete the recertifications, DHHS will continue to automatically extend current MAGI Family and Children (except Medicaid for Pregnant Women) recertifications through the next month. This will ensure individuals do not lose benefits during this period.

DHHS reports, from NC FAST and EIS will provide each county a list of recertifications from oldest to current for completion. The EIS report will be located in Xptr called Caseworker Recertification Report. The NC FAST Extended MA Recertifications can be tracked by using the Certification Extension Report located in NC FAST Help portal > Show Table of Contents > Reports. The report is sorted by county, worker name, and by oldest "original cert to date" to current. These cases will be tracked and presented during the weekly Directors call.

#### **C. Communications**

Communications are vital to ensuring the timely processing of applications and recertifications. County DSS are required to stay abreast of relevant DHHS communications. DHHS will communicate with County DSS through one or more of the following means:

- NC FAST Team communications emails, through FAST Help and within NC FAST;
- Reports from NC FAST that are accessible in the Reports Tab in NC FAST since May 12 (Traditional MA & MAD Pending Apps By Worker Detail, Cash & Refugee Cash Assistance Pending Apps By Worker Detail, and MAGI Pending Apps By Worker Detail);
- Reports from EIS accessible in Xptr (pending applications using the Adj Application Pending Report) and the new recertification report (County Caseworker Recertification Reports) to guide county staff through which recertifications must be worked first;
- Weekly County Champion/ Director calls to discuss metrics and determine if additional training is needed for Medicaid staff in NC FAST;

- Via a focused team to provide guidance to Directors on how to accomplish the work provided on the reports and through publication of Dear County Director Letters and Transmittals.

## **D. Monitoring/ Reporting**

DHHS has provided the following reports to assist county staff with tracking Medicaid applications and recertifications due for both EIS and NC FAST systems. These reports help both DHHS and County DSS to monitor progress and burn down rate.

### **I. EIS System**

#### **1. Medicaid Pending Applications:**

Medicaid applications pending currently in the EIS system can be tracked by using the Adj App Management Report located in Xptr under DHREJ Adj App Management Report. This report is updated daily with new pending applications added. The report is sorted by county, by district number, and due date and must be worked in FIFO order.

#### **2. Recertifications Due for Review:**

The Recertification Report is tracked by using the County Worker Recertification Report located in Xptr under DHREJA County Worker Recertification Report. This report is sorted by county, district and original recertification to date and worked in FIFO order.

#### **3. County Worker Overdue Report:**

DHHS has also provided an overdue report to alert county staff on open ended Medicaid cases which need a new certification period. The report can be tracked by using the County Worker Overdue Report located in Xptr under DHREJA County Worker Overdue Report. This report is sorted by county, district and original recertification to date and must be worked in FIFO order.

### **II. NC FAST System**

#### **1. Medicaid Pending Applications:**

Medicaid applications pending currently in the NC FAST system can be tracked by using the P2&6 Traditional and Pending MAGI Insurance Affordability Application Reports located in Reports Tab in NC FAST. The report is updated daily, sorted by county, worker name, and due date, and must be worked in FIFO order.

#### **2. Recertifications Due for Review:**

The NC FAST Extended MA Recertifications can be tracked by using the Certification Extension Report located in NC FAST Help portal > Show Table of Contents > Reports. The report must be worked in FIFO order and is sorted by county, worker name, and by oldest "original cert to date" to current.

**E. Enhanced State Support**

The Governor has recommended a budget adjustment for 2014 – 15 that will allow for providing NC FAST support at required levels. DHHS is creating an Operational Support Team (OST) to provide more targeted support to counties. OST staff will provide comprehensive business process support and high priority communication channels back to NC FAST system support for county Supervisors. The OST staff has program policy expertise across all programs to be included in NC FAST: Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, Work First, Energy & Crisis Intervention, Child Care and Special Assistance.

In addition, Local Support Managers (LSM) will continue to provide regular contacts and guidance to County DSS Directors. They will support Directors in utilizing tools to calculate work performance standards, implement effective business process changes, and identify the knowledge and skill sets of caseworkers, both now and in the future.


**F. Enhanced Federal Support**

With an enhanced 75% Federal Financial Participation (FFP) available for case management activities for Medicaid performed in NC FAST (retroactive to January service month), counties can achieve savings of 50% in relevant costs. Counties are strongly encouraged to immediately deploy these funds in regular and/ or temporary staff to assist in completing both Medicaid applications and recertifications. With the large number of pending applications in both NC FAST and EIS that is beyond acceptable processing times, and compounded by the growing number of Medicaid overdue recertifications and the influx of applications from the Federal marketplace, it is imperative that all available county dollars be reinvested in staff to process these cases on an accelerated basis.

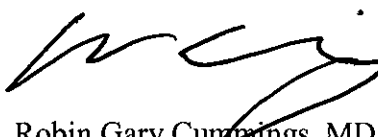
It is to our mutual advantage, and of paramount importance to all North Carolinians, to complete all overdue Medicaid applications and recertifications as quickly as possible so that we can all move forward in processing more Medicaid programs and functions in NC FAST as planned and thus further bolster the number of county Medicaid staff for which 75% FFP may be claimed. If you or your staff need assistance in calculating county funding that can be reinvested to achieve these important goals, please contact your Local Business Liaison.

DHHS appreciates the continued outstanding support from the County DSS Directors, understands the inherent challenges, and is strongly committed to helping the counties succeed in delivering Medicaid services to county residents.

Sincerely,



Wayne E. Black  
Director, Division of Social Services



Robin Gary Cummings, MD  
Deputy Secretary for Health Services  
Director, Division of Medical Assistance