

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Pat McCrory
Governor

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

November 20, 2013

Mr. Donald Arnette
Regional Administrator
United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Room 8T36
Atlanta, GA 30303

Attn: Ms. Kathy Tankersley, FNS State Systems

Re: North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST)
Response to FNS Post Implementation Review (PIR) Comments

Dear Mr. Arnette:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your letter of November 6, 2013. I understand the urgency and want to provide the immediate action required to ensure that NC DHHS and the NC FAST system meet the statutory compliance required. Please accept the following as our detailed Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

Application and Recertification Backlog

A review discussion was held on Monday, November 18, 2013 to discuss this topic. To comply with the FNS application and recertification reporting requirements for the NC FAST system the following actions have been taken:

- The following NC FAST system reports were provided to USDA on November 14, 2013 for review.
 - NC FAST Application Processing
 - NC FAST Recertification Processing
 - NC FAST Monthly Activity Trends – New Applications and Recertifications
- As a result of the review discussion it was determined that a higher level report was needed to provide the level of reporting necessary for both the applications and recertifications by county, providing the current up-to-date cases that are overdue.
- Please find attached the *NC FAST Application Processing Report* and the *NC FAST Recertification Processing Report*. These reports will be provided to USDA on a weekly basis.

www.ncdhhs.gov

Telephone 919-855-4800 • Fax 919-715-4645

Location: 101 Blair Drive • Adams Building • Raleigh, NC 27603

Mailing Address: 2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2001

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- *NC FAST Application Processing Report:* This report provides the timely and untimely new applications processed each by county with a statewide total at the bottom. Application totals are broken out between those subject to 30-day processing and those subject to expedited processing. Days are counted by calendar days.
- *NC FAST Recertification Processing Report:* This report contains all pending recertifications by county, based on how many days the recertification has been pending, with a statewide total at the bottom. Please note that this includes all pending recertifications. Days are counted by calendar days.

Local Access to NC FAST

- Counties experienced intermittent issues that were identified as a Cúram and Internet Explorer (IE) issue. The NC FAST Team worked collaboratively with county IT staff to help them switch to Google Chrome which does not exhibit the issue. IBM is continuing to work on the issue to determine the cause and a resolution. The current actions taken and estimated timeline for resolution are as follows:
 - NC FAST opened a Problem Management Record (PMR) with IBM to escalate the interoperability issue between Cúram and Internet Explorer.
 - A diagnostic tool, Fiddler2 Web Debugger, was provided by IBM to install and monitor the issue with the IE/Cúram interoperability on client PCs running IE9.
 - The findings of the diagnostic tool were provided to IBM and the current timeline for a planned issue resolution to be provided to NC FAST is targeted for the last week of November 2013.
- The NC FAST Team worked collaboratively with county staff and county IT staff to mitigate any concerns or issues related to moving staff to Google Chrome. The NC FAST Team also surveyed all 100 counties to analyze the current user experience with moving to Google Chrome. Many counties are using multiple browsers like Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox and Opera. The use of multiple browsers in the work place is becoming more common as we found in our communications with our counties. Some primary reasons for this trend are that different browsers provide different advantages. We found that most counties are providing their workers with multiple browser options to allow them to determine which browser they prefer to use for the tasks they are performing or the application they are accessing. The NC FAST Team continues to communicate with our counties during our biweekly County Champion calls to address any questions they may have related to this or other concerns. Through our continued communications with county staff and IT staff we have not heard that any additional training was required to move county staff to Google Chrome.
- The following counties are using Google Chrome for some or all of their NC FAST access:

Alamance, Alexander, Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Avery, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Brunswick, Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Camden, Carteret, Caswell, Catawba, Cherokee, Chowan, Clay, Cleveland, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Franklin, Gates, Graham, Greene, Harnett, Haywood, Henderson, Hyde, Iredell, Jackson, Jones, Lee, Lenior, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, Martin, Mcdowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Moore, Nash, Northhampton, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Pender, Perquimans, Person, Polk, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Rutherford, Sampson, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Transylvania, Tyrrell, Wake, Washington, Watauga, Wilkes, Wilson, Yadkin, and Yancey.
- Some counties are experiencing issues with NC FAST forms and reports. These counties are using IE to print their forms and reports. The NC FAST Team has been working with Altova to provide a plug-in that will allow all counties to access forms and reports through Google Chrome. This issue had a 2-part resolution: (1) Altova fixed the Altova plug-in and we have installed the update; and (2) counties used the IE plug-in for Google Chrome which worked from the onset. Eleven (11) counties have opted to not use Google Chrome, but instead are using Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera, or for various reasons are still exploring moving to the use of Google Chrome in their county. The NC FAST Team is continuing to work with IBM to mitigate the Cúram and Internet Explorer interoperability issue.

- Currently there are only three counties that reported having bandwidth issues, and all are in process of upgrading. Responses from the counties with bandwidth issues are as follows:
 - Alamance County is in the process of buying a throttle for more bandwidth.
 - Madison County continues to experience some problems with bandwidth which is being addressed by county management. We anticipate having an increase in our bandwidth within the next few weeks.
 - New Hanover County is in process of contracting with an outside agency to come to our DSS facility and provide us with a (two-day) data traffic analysis down to the port level (they will look at various components to include streaming, data, etc.). This agency will provide us with a reading prior to the start of the analysis and one after the analysis is complete. The county is also contracting with another outside agency to evaluate the cabling at DSS, which will include all components from the desktop to the port. They have identified one of their DSS workers to use as a test case for this portion of the evaluation. Cabling for this staff member will be replaced so that all components from the desktop to the port are new. Once this is complete we will compare performance before and after the new cabling, etc. is installed.
- Please find attached the *Overall NC FAST System Availability Report* providing the specific dates and times of system availability, system outages and cause of such outages. Subsequent to the USDA visit during the week of August 12-16, 2013, the only NC FAST outage was on August 26, which was a statewide network outage that affected multiple systems within North Carolina.

NC FAST Defects

- The NC FAST system will continuously have known defects that arise for regular Operations and Maintenance (O&M) support activities. All defects are given a severity level that is Critical, Major, High, Medium or Low. NC FAST system defects are analyzed and classified in a consistent and standardized manner. Defects are classified based upon the severity of the defect, including the impact to the user community. The values are included as follows:
 - **Category 1 – Critical.** An outage that results in the entire NC FAST system not being available. For example, all locations are unable to access the system due to a core infrastructure failure such as an application or database server, or a network failure within the host facility, or a core application failure such as the CGIS module not functioning. A critical outage can also be a period of time during which system performance is degraded to the point normal business functions cannot be completed even though the system is available.
 - **Category 2 – Major.** An outage in which the NC FAST system is available, but one or more of the core functions provided by the system is not operable. For example, the ability to create or view a case is available, but the Enterprise Service Bus is not available so no actions can be taken on any case.
 - **Category 3 – High.** A high priority modification is important to the success of the NC FAST system to correct an issue that prevents the use of the vital business function within the system, for multiple system users, but for which a temporary work-around is available that is (1) reasonable and mutually agreed upon by the Project Manager and Business Manager; and (2) will permit the continued operations of the system.
 - **Category 4 – Medium.** A medium priority modification has the potential to impact the NC FAST system for multiple users and reduces the operability of a widely used business function.
 - **Category 5 – Low.** Category 5 is reserved for modifications that are low in priority, such as simple spelling corrections or that impact only one or few transactions or cases. As with all NC FAST system changes, defect resolutions will use the NC FAST release management process.

The following table summarizes the four defects that were outstanding as of the last letter. All four defects have been corrected and closed.

Issue Type	Key	Summary	Fix Version/s	Created	Status	Issue Type	Key
Defect	EI-3811	PROD P26: Unhandled Server Error on worker trying to view the Nominees folder under Financials	n/a	8/2/2013 9:29	Developers unable replicate this in any scenario. Have corrected the only impacted case via a data fix. Closed defect.	Defect	<u>EI-3811</u>
Defect	EI-4032	P26 PROD: Unable to Remove a member from an active case in many situations	3.7.0, 3.10.0, 3.11.5	8/8/2013 3:20	Resolved and closed.	Defect	<u>EI-4032</u>
Defect	EI-3874	PROD P26: Allowed to Have Multiple Registered Names for a Person	3.12.0, 4.0.0	8/4/2013 11:27	Resolved and closed.	Defect	<u>EI-3874</u>
Defect	EI-3744	PROD P26: Household Members are being end-dated on PDC as of 1/1/1900	3.7.0, 3.8.5	7/31/201 3 11:25	Resolved and closed.	Defect	<u>EI-3744</u>

- For a current status of the 4,300 open Help Desk tickets as of November 18, 2013, please find attached the *Help Desk Tickets Open 11182013* document that provides the tickets and their tiers, and the *Resolved Tier Tickets USDA* document that provides the tickets' status, tier level, county, and a description of the issue.

The NC FAST Help Desk tiers promote effective use of varying skilled project staff in the ticket resolution process. Simpler tickets are resolved at Tier 1 and more complex tickets are escalated to Tiers 2 and 3. The following table provides the description of the breakout between Tier 1/Tier 2/Tier 3.

Tier 1 Help Desk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve contacts received by Tier 1 Help Desk in line with the Tier 1 service level objectives. • Document call/VM/email information using Remedy. • Escalate call/VM/email to Tier 2 as appropriate based on initial troubleshooting via Remedy ticket escalation. • Track call status through resolution, especially for Tier 3 calls that are not updated in Remedy by Tier 3 resources. • Identify and support continuous improvement opportunities to refine call Tier guidelines and processes. • Participate in post go-live conference calls to discuss NC FAST operations. • Develop Help Desk status reports. • Provide quality customer service to NC FAST users.
Tier 2 NC FAST Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and resolve items escalated from Tier 1, if possible in line with service level objectives. • Determine root cause of item in order to troubleshoot and escalate/refer (user error, lack of training, hardware/software problem). • If a software problem, determine area in which the problem resides (configuration, extension of the framework, or with the base product framework itself). • Escalate issues to Tier 3 O&M as appropriate. • Provide diagnostic help or interface with the Tier 3 O&M team as needed to resolve questions and problems and to track the final resolution. • Identify incidents that could have been resolved at Tier 1 and review in post go-live conference calls. • Identify and support continuous improvement opportunities to refine call Tier guidelines and processes.
Tier 3 O&M Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and resolve issues escalated from the Tier 2 Help Desk in line with service level objectives. • Correct errors arising from configurations, configuration extensions or interfaces. • If the issue is attributed to the hardware or operating system software, Tier 3 shall return the issue to the appropriate staff for assignment to ITS. • If the issue is attributed to problems with the base product software, Tier 3 shall return the issue to the appropriate staff to escalate to Cúram for resolution.
Tier 3 Vendor Support (Cúram)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and resolve Tier 3 issues escalated via CARE ticket, including working with Tier 2 for diagnostic help or additional troubleshooting as needed to resolve questions and problems and to track the final resolution. • Complete base product application fixes in accordance with the support agreements under contract with the state.

The following table provides sample tickets, and which tier is responsible for resolving them.

Call Tier	Sample Questions
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the fields that appear on the Caseload listing report? • How often is information passed from NC FAST to FSIS? • How often do NC FAST passwords expire? • I am working an FNS application and I am trying to submit it to my supervisor. For some reason, NC FAST is not letting me submit the case to my supervisor. What should I do? • I am looking for a case in NC FAST but can't seem to find it. I have tried several things but still can't locate it.
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just completed an eligibility interview and the results presented do not seem correct. I have consulted policy and local knowledgeable resources in my office – and they agree with my concerns. What should I do? • I need to issue an expedited payment and I can't reach anyone in finance. What should I do? • I am concerned that people in my office are not using NC FAST the way it was intended to be used. What should I do? • I am certain that my case notes are being changed without my knowledge. I have asked my supervisor and my fellow workers about it and nobody admits making changes. This involves a very sensitive case and I need to find out who made these changes. What do I do? • I am entering a narrative in NC FAST. I have questions about the proper phrasing of certain aspects of the narrative. • I was reviewing the online policy manual and noticed an apparent conflict with what we are being asked to do in NC FAST. What should I do? • I have an enhancement request. (Note: enhancement requests will be logged. However, DSS is the source for system enhancement requests through the existing change request process. The help desk will not be advertised as a mechanism to get a change in NC FAST.
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was saving my case and I received the pop-up system error message [system generated error message not tied to user error]. • I noticed a missing value in a drop down list that is required according to policy. [once the missing value has been confirmed by Tier 2] • I noticed a typographical error on an NC FAST screen.

Requested Information from USDA on August 20 and September 10, 2013

The requested information was provided to USDA on October 22, 2013. Please see the email correspondence as follows:

From: Vellucci, Anthony
Sent: Thursday, November 14, 2013 1:18 PM
To: Tankersley, Kathy - FNS
Cc: Taylor, Angela
Subject: FW: USDA Follow-up Questions

Kathy,

See below. Dean sent the responses to Veronica Barnes on 10/22. I have forwarded all the attachments as well.

Anthony Vellucci
N.C. Department of Health and Human Services
Director – Office of NC Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST)
3724 National Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612
Phone: 919-707-4002
Cell: 919-618-6520
Fax: 919-510-4388
anthony.vellucci@dhhs.nc.gov
www.ncdhhs.gov/ncfast

From: Simpson, Dean
Sent: Thursday, November 14, 2013 9:33 AM
To: Vellucci, Anthony
Subject: FW: USDA Follow-up Questions

I sent the attached files to Veronica Barnes on 10/22. I received them from Tracy on 10/7, reviewed them and then forwarded to Veronica.

Dean Simpson
NC Department of Health & Human Services
Chief, Economic & Family Services
NC Division of Social Services
820 S. Boylan Avenue
MSC 2420
Raleigh, NC 27699-2420
919-527-6330 - office
919-334-1265- fax
dean.simpson@dhhs.nc.gov
www.ncdhhs.gov/dss

From: Simpson, Dean
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2013 3:23 PM
To: 'Barnes, Veronica - FNS'
Subject: FW: USDA Follow-up Questions

Dean Simpson
NC Department of Health & Human Services
Chief, Economic & Family Services
NC Division of Social Services

November 20, 2013

820 S. Boylan Avenue
MSC 2420
Raleigh, NC 27699-2420
919-527-6330 - office
919-334-1265- fax
dean.simpson@dhhs.nc.gov
www.ncdhhs.gov/dss

From: Hicks, Tracy
Sent: Monday, October 07, 2013 8:31 AM
To: Simpson, Dean
Cc: Harrell, Connie
Subject: USDA Follow-up Questions

Dean,

I have attached SNAP State Eligibility Review Tool for your review and approval. Please use this document until I can determine if it is okay to open the Zip file.

Please pay special attention to the files listed below and respond to the items noted:

- NC FAST Response to USDA Follow-up Questions
 - o Page 4 – item C1
 - o Page 6 – item F2;RCN-8
- 0.1 State Eligibility System Review Tool with Follow-up Review Questions
 - o Review the entire document with attention paid specifically to the comments entered by Tracy Hicks. These are distinguishable by the black bar line found within the left margin of the document.
 - o Please feel free to make any other needed changes.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

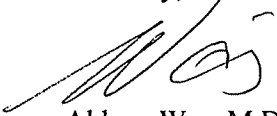
Tracy Hicks
N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Cúram Configuration Analyst Lead - Office of NC Families
Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST)
3724 National Drive
Raleigh, NC 27612
919-707-4000
tracy.hicks@dhhs.nc.gov
www.ncdhhs.gov.ncfast

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Thank you and your staff for your continued guidance and leadership in ensuring the success of this important initiative. If you have questions, please contact Anthony Vellucci, Office of NC FAST Director, at (919) 707-4002 or anthony.vellucci@dhhs.nc.gov.

November 20, 2013

Sincerely,



Aldona Wos, M.D.

Secretary

Enclosures (5): *A1 Help Desk Tickets Open 11182013.docx*
A2 Resolved Tier Tickets_USDA.xlsx
A3 NC FAST Application Processing Report.pdf
A4 NC FAST Recertification Processing Report.pdf
A5 Overall NC FAST System Availability Report.docx

cc: Robert Noonan, Administration for Children and Families, Deputy Assistant Secretary
Joseph Cooper, NC DHHS, Chief Information Officer
Sherry Bradsher, NC DHHS, Deputy Secretary for Human Services
Rob Kindsvatter, NC DHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education, Director
Dennis Streets, NC DHHS Division of Aging and Adult Services, Director
Wayne Black, NC DHHS Division of Social Services, Director
Sandra Terrell, NC DHHS Division of Medical Assistance, Acting Director
Anthony Vellucci, NC DHHS, Office of NC FAST, Director
Angela Taylor, NC DHHS, Office of NC FAST, Deputy Director

NC FAST Doc ID: 13-0086