Implementation of NC FAST Training and Certification Program

Session Law 2017-57, Section 11H.22.(i)

Report to

**Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services**

and

**Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Medicaid and NC Health Choice**

and

Fiscal Research Division

By

NC Department of Health and Human Services

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Table of Contents

I.   Introduction

North Carolina Session Law 2017-57, Section 11H.(g) and (i) (see *Appendix A*), directs the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to create a comprehensive training and certification program for caseworkers who utilize the North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC FAST) system to input data or make eligibility determinations for State programs. The NC FAST system was developed to improve benefit determinations for a spectrum of State programs administered by the 100 county departments of social services, including Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Medicaid, Work First, and the Child Care Subsidy program.

In January 2017, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) released a report entitled "North Carolina Medicaid Program Recipient Eligibility Determination,"[1] assessing the accuracy and timeliness of Medicaid eligibility determinations. A key recommendation of this report was to develop a more in-depth training program for caseworkers regarding the NC FAST system and monitor whether caseworkers complete the training. In June 2017, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) released a second report entitled "North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC FAST),"[2] assessing county processes and performance metrics for staffing, helpdesk, training, change management, and forced eligibility (used to override the original eligibility decision) as they relate to NC FAST Medicaid eligibility. This report recommended the development of a comprehensive, centralized NC FAST training program. Some of the areas identified for improvement included incorporating examples of real-life scenarios, testing trainee understanding, and tracking training completion.

DHHS continues to update the training program since the 2017 OSA audit. Additional training courses were developed for Long Term Care, Special Assistance, and Basic Navigation. This report contains additional information about the training program and the development of a formal NC FAST certification program for all caseworkers making eligibility determinations for State programs through NC FAST.

II.   Certification Program

NC FAST provides an online training tool located in the Learning Management System (LMS). The majority of training is currently conducted virtually through the learning portal. The certification program will be delivered through LMS.

An overview of the current training modules may be found in *Appendix B*. DHHS continues to review and revise these modules on an ongoing basis to provide more comprehensive functionality training for both basic navigation and more complex material to assist caseworkers in making accurate and timely determinations for eligibility in NC FAST. These existing modules will be the basis for the certification program.

When implemented, the certification program will build on existing training. The certification training will address NC FAST technical functionality and us, eligibility determination policy, and best practices in conducting eligibility determinations. The certification will include a process for assessing knowledge and aptidude in using the system and applying policy and best

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[1] http://www.ncauditor.net/EPSWeb/Reports/FiscalControl/FCA-2015-4440.pdf
[2] http://www.ncauditor.net/EPSWeb/Reports/InfoSystems/ISA-2016-4400.pdf

practices upon completion of the training. Periodic required refresher training will be provided and mandatory based on system or policy changes.

If caseworkers do not certify or complete required periodic training, their access to the NC FAST system will terminate within a designated time frame that includes multiple reminders to both the casework and supervisor. Caseworkers who fail the online certification program will be required to attend an in-person remedial training. DHHS will conduct these remedial trainings multiple times per year throughout the State within a reasonable travel distance from the county departments of social services.

DHHS encourages the county departments of social services to supplement this training with a pre-requisite Career Readiness Certificate that may be obtained from a local community college. The Certificate is based on established WorkKeys® assessment tests. To earn a Career Readiness Certificate, individuals undergo testing related to reading, applied math, and locating information through the WorkKeys skills assessment system (keyboarding). The training prepares county eligibility caseworkers with comprehensive knowledge needed for job readiness. Counties can contract with a local community college to provide the Career Readiness training. A list of participating community colleges may be found in *Appendix C*.

III.   Implementation Plan

As noted above, training is available now and is being improved on an ongoing basis. DHHS intends to implement the formal certification process no later than March 1, 2019. This includes the development of new training modules and knowledge and aptitude assessments. DHHS will notify county departments of social services of the effective date of implementation and instructions for employee completion. Once implemented, existing county caseworkers responsible for inputting data or making determinations for eligibility for State programs through NC FAST must complete the certification program within 18 months of implementation. New county caseworkers must complete the certification within their first three months of employment.

County departments of social services will be required to ensure that every new and existing caseworker completes the training. NC FAST will provide a monthly report of staff hired and terminated at the county level when assigning/ending roles for access to NC FAST eligibility system. This report will also include information on compliance with certification requirements.

IV.   Anticipated Costs

DHHS completed a fiscal impact of the proposed certification program.

a.   Costs to the Department

At the State level, implementation of the certification program is included in the NC FAST Operations and Maintenance budget as part of the ongoing responsibilities. The value of the effort, including 2 training staff and other associated costs, is approximately $271,000 annually. The ongoing work includes updating training modules, completing in-person trainings, and monitoring compliance, as well as software to track and monitor compliance.

b. Costs to County DSS Offices

Approximately 5,500 caseworkers conduct data entry and/or make determinations for eligibility for State programs through NC FAST, requiring this certification. The average hourly rate (including salary and benefits) of these employees is $27 per hour. DHHS projected that the total statewide value of staff time spent on certification is $7,053,750. Most counties will incorporate the certification into their caseworkers' regular job duties, but some may need to add compensatory time or paid overtime to keep other work current.

V.   Conclusion

DHHS continues its commitment to ensure county caseworkers are equipped with comprehensive training and tools to perform effectively and monitor county compliance. DHHS will continue to work with county leadership, stakeholders, and staff to provide feedback and improvements to the online and supplemental in-person training and certification program.

Appendix A: Session Law 2017-57, Section 11H.22.(g),(i)

SECTION 11H.22.(g) The Department of Health and Human Services (Department) shall design and implement a training and certification program for caseworkers utilizing North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC FAST). The training and certification program shall be available on a statewide basis, and the Department shall provide training to caseworkers at county departments of social services at a location within reasonable travel distance from the county departments of social services multiples times per year. No later than 18 months after the Department has implemented the training and certification program, the Department shall require all caseworkers inputting data or making determinations for eligibility for State programs through NC FAST to be certified. A certification may last no longer than three years before an individual is required to be recertified. The Department may adopt and amend rules to implement this training and certification program.

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SECTION 11H.22.(i) No later than March 1, 2018, the Department shall submit to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and NC Health Choice, and the Fiscal Research Division a report on the implementation of the training and certification program required under this section. The report shall include the following:

(1) A detailed outline of what the training and certification program will entail, including how many hours of training will be required for certification, how frequently recertification will be required, and how often training will be provided by the Department to the county departments of social services.
(2) A plan of implementation of the training and certification program, including a specific time line of implementation.
(3) Anticipated costs to the Department, as well as any costs to the county department of social services, of implementing the training and certification program. This should include an identification of any additional resources required by the Department or a county department of social services in order to implement the training and certification program.
(4) Any other information the Department is able to provide regarding the training and certification program development.

Appendix B: Overview of Existing Training Modules

Category Name	Course Name	Name of Activity	Duration (in hours)
Energy Assistance	EA NC FAST Core Functions	NC FAST Basic Navigation for Energy Workers WBT	0.5
		FAST Help Overview narrated presentation	0.5
		Person Search and Registration Parts 1 & 2	1
	EA Applications	Initial CIP Application (5 parts)	1.07
		Sub CIP Application (4 parts)	1.33
		Initial LIEAP Application (2 parts)	0.45
		Sub LIEAP Application (pending development)	0
	EA Provider Management	Energy Provider Management Webinar	0.28
	EA Creating Payment Requests/Processing Payments	Energy Payment Requests and Check Recording Process Webinar	0.12
	EA Supervisor Bootcamp	Supervisor Energy Bootcamp (9 parts)	1.76
Total est. time (in hours)			**7.01**
FNS/CA	FNS/CA Applications	FNS/CA Webinar (8 parts)	2.05
	Employment & Training Referral Process	E&T Webinar	0.17
Total est. time (in hours)			**2.22**
Medicaid - FCMA	MAGI	MAGI Webinar (10 parts)	1.85
Total est. time (in hours)			**1.85**
Medicaid - Adult	Long Term Care (LTC)	LTC Webinar (9 parts)	2.82
Total est. time (in hours)			**2.82**
Special Assistance	SA Applications	SA Applications Webinar (6 parts)	2.18
Total est. time (in hours)			**2.18**
SCCA	SCCA Basic Navigation	SCCA Basic Navigation WBT	0.33
		FAST Help Overview narrated presentation	0.5
	SCCA Core Functions	Person Search and Registration Parts 1 & 2	1
		Plan of Care Evidence Game	0.33
		Waiting List Management Video	0.08
		Employer Registration Video	0.04
		Funds and Payments Video	0.12

Category Name	Course Name	Name of Activity	Duration (in hours)
	SCCA Applications	SCCA Activity 1	1
		SCCA Activity 2 (4 parts)	1.58
		SCCA Activity 3 (7 parts)	0.96
		SCCA Activity 4 (4 parts)	1.35
	SCCA CoC	CoC Overview	0.15
		CoC WBT 1	1
		CoC WBT 2	1
	Recertifications	Recertifications Overview	0.13
		Activity 1 WBT	0.33
		Activity 2 WBT	0.33
	SCCA Supervisor Course	SCCA Supervisor Functions & Resources Presentation	0.2
	Provider Management	NCID Linking Introduction Video	0.1
		NCID Linking	0.17
	Funds Management	LPA Funds Management Video	0.09
		DCDEE Funds Management Video	0.1
		Funds Management Training WBT	0.33
		Funds and Payments Video	0.11
Total est. time (in hours)			**11.33**
County Supervisor Training	Supervisor Functions in NC FAST	Managing my Users	0.33
		Second-Party Review	0.33
	Using Reports in NC FAST	Reports Dashboard	0.33
Total est. time (in hours)			**0.66**
System Administrator Training	County NC FAST System Adm Training	WBT 1 - System Administration Overview	0.33
		WBT 2 - Navigating the Organizational Structure	0.08
		WBT 3 - Adding an Organizational Unit	0.08
		WBT 4 - Adding Positions to an Organizational Unit	0.16
		WBT 5 - Adding Users and Assigning to Roles	0.25
		WBT 6 - Removing Users	0.08
		WBT 7 - Cancelling a Position	0.08
		WBT 8 - Cancelling an Organization Unit	0.08
		WBT 9 - Changing a User's Security Role	0.16
		WBT 10 - Work Queue Subscriptions	0.16
		WBT 11 - Adding 2nd Party Review Percentages	0.25
Total est. time (in hours)			**1.71**

Appendix C: Career Readiness Colleges

NC FAST Community College Program

Participating Community Colleges
Alamance CC
Asheville-Buncombe TCC
Beaufort County CC
Bladen CC
Brunswick CC
Cape Fear CC
Carteret CC
Central Carolina CC
Central Piedmont CC
Cleveland CC
Craven CC
Fayetteville Tech CC
Gaston College
Guilford Tech CC
Halifax CC
Isothermal CC
Johnston CC
Lenoir CC
Martin CC
Mitchell CC
Nash CC
Pitt CC
Randolph CC
Richmond CC
Robeson CC
Rockingham CC
Sandhills CC
Southeastern CC
Surry CC
Tri-County CC
Wake Tech CC
Wayne CC