

*MACON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES*

*WORK FIRST COUNTY PLAN*

2012-2014



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*« Partnering to promote, protect and strengthen our community. »*

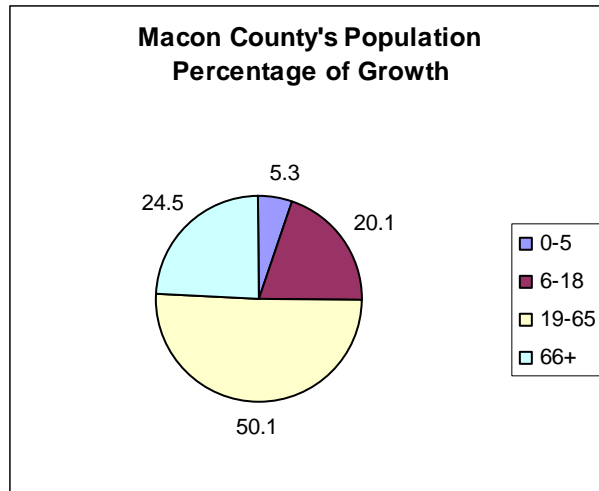
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**I. CONDITIONS WITHIN THE COUNTY**

Macon County has been one of the fastest growing counties in Western North Carolina, having experienced an influx of retirees and part-time residents. The county is located in close proximity by connecting major highways to several major metropolitan cities. Atlanta, Georgia is 127 miles to the south; Knoxville, Tennessee is 112 miles to the north; Greenville, South Carolina is 90 miles to the southeast and Asheville, North Carolina is 60 miles to the east. The county has three primary geographical locations: Franklin, the county seat, Highlands and Nantahala.

The total county population is estimated at 33,922 for 2010 with 24.5% of the population classified as elderly. Population growth of the county increases during the spring, summer and early fall months due to the seasonal residents and visitors in the area.



Our area has two hospitals, two free clinics, a locally based Air Ambulance that supports the regional medical facilities and a wide variety of medical and dental practices throughout Macon County.

The picturesque mountain setting of Macon County has made tourism the number one industry. Construction is the second leading industry, followed by manufacturing and agriculture. The unemployment rate for June 2011 was 10.2% with the average unemployment rate of the state 10.4%. One of our new businesses is Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, which presents the finest in performing arts to the region; in process is a new Super Wal-Mart which will bring more business to the county.

The most pressing problem for families in Macon County is the loss of construction jobs because of the slowing economy. Additional problems include:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Inadequate wages
- Dependable transportation
- High energy cost for heating and transportation
- Medical insurance limitations
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Difficulty in handling stress
- Teenage pregnancy
- Mental Health issues

## **II. PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP / CIVIL RIGHTS ACT**

Macon County will continue to incorporate Family Centered Practices in the daily involvement with Work First Families. This is achieved with Family Centered Practice, System of Care and Multiple Response System which has been Macon County's philosophy for many years. Each Work First applicant / recipient, as well as our Child Protective Services and Foster Care recipients are treated with respect. HR/Life Coach is trained to give each person a chance to be heard and gives us the opportunity to evaluate strengths, so as to better achieve their career choices, leading to long term employment and short term Work First.

We realize that each family has different needs and strengths; this realization helps the agency withhold unfair judgment. Our recipients are encouraged to work within their abilities according to their specific needs.

Macon County will comply with the American with Disabilities Act and provide Interpreter services in any language, as we have a full time employee on site who speaks Spanish/English fluently and interpreter phones are available for any language at each employee's disposal.

Macon County complies with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and abides by all requirements pursuant to the regulations issued in accordance to that Title.

## **III. PLANNING PROCESS**

### **A Planning Committee**



### Department of Social Services

Public notices of how to obtain and comment on the plan were announced in the Franklin Press, the Highlander, the Macon County News, and on WFSC/WNCC in Franklin and WHLC in Highlands. Review of the Plan and comments have been obtained informally from community leaders, concerned citizens and a former welfare recipient. The local planning committee members assisted in obtaining comments and will continue to meet on a regular basis to assist in implementing and revising the Plan when needed.

## IV. OUTCOMES AND GOALS FOR THE COUNTY

### A. Work First Goals

1. **Employment** – Employment Services will work with 100% of all work eligible families so that self-sufficiency will be realized and goals for the future can be met for each family.
2. **Meeting Federal Participation Rates** – Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment for 50% of all Single Parent and 90% of Two Parent Participation. Macon County has met this goal for the past twelve months as we have had Child Only cases.
3. **Providing Employment Services** – Active participation in intensive employment services for all families will be done in order to meet the participation rate and ensure that families are serviced adequately before the end of five years. Employment services will assist 80% of all Single Parents and 100% of Two Parents with job preparation and job placement with the aid of the Human Resource/Life Coach.
4. **Benefit Diversion** – For a more successful outcome, Benefit Diversion will be assessed for 4% of families to help alleviate the financial crisis and help families return to full time employment using this temporary assistance.
5. **Staying off Welfare** - 90% of Adults and their families will stay off assistances after going to work.
6. **Job Retention** – 60% of families who leave Work First for employment will continue to be employed 6 months after leaving the program. 50% of families who leave the program for employment will continue to be employed 12 months after leaving the program.

Macon County has not established outcome goals beyond those outlined by DHHS, DSS.

## V. PLANS TO ACHIEVE AND MEASURE THE OUTCOMES AND GOALS.

### A. Macon County Activities

- **Build on efforts to promote child protection, permanency and self-sufficiency for families.**

**Methodology:** Expand recruitment efforts to increase diversity of foster and adoptive parents. This agency has a full time employee who can translate and interpret information for our customers. We continue to utilize multiple-multi cultural providers to assist us with meeting the needs of children in our custody.

**Methodology:** Frequent court reviews for children in the legal custody of Macon County are practiced. Our guidelines help to identify children who would benefit from more reviews to assist with achieving permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.

**Methodology:** Our agency has developed a close working interdepartmental team that shares information and identifies all resources available to support families by working together to accomplish enhanced strategies to more firmly unify the family unit.

**Methodology:** Many of our Child Only cases represent caretakers other than the biological parent providing care for children. Some caretakers have difficulty dealing with emotional and behavioral challenged children/teens. We will enhance our Kinship Care Services for Work First Child Only Families.

**Methodology:** Macon County will assess each Child Only case in which the caretaker is not the parent. If the biological parent moves into the home, then the case will be reviewed to determine if the Work First payment should continue. It may be in the best interest of the children that the Child Only Work First case be terminated and the children placed with their biological parents.

**Methodology:** Making relocation funds available to customer. Funds are limited to \$400.00 and are available to those who meet WFFA income and eligibility requirements to relocate client to an area where a support system or employment can be found to assist client. This is limited to one time relocation per family. The Intake-worker will evaluate the family for this assistance. Caseworker may also make this recommendation after the application process has been initiated. The Work First Supervisor must approve any recommendation for this assistance. The Intake-worker will be responsible for determining the service to be purchased and complete the vendor payment request. Families who receive relocation assistance could be eligible for one night's lodging and food provided by a Transient Fund administered by the Macon County Sheriff's Department. Service Unit staff will be available to

assist with transportation needs for these clients, such as transportation to the bus station.

- **Condition of the Work First Mutual Responsibility Agreement**

**Methodology:** All families involved in Child Protective Service (CPS) and Work First that are screened to have behavioral indicators or substance abuse will be referred to Mental Health for evaluation and any subsequent treatment.

**Methodology:** Each family entering into Work First program will be evaluated by the Human Resource/Life Coach. At this point the Life Coach will determine the appropriate avenue for the client to follow; this could include, but not limited to: classes at Southwestern Community College, Finance/Budgeting Management, Mental Health program, Smoky Mountain Pregnancy Care Center Employment Security Commission or other agencies in the county. HR/Life Coach will complete the Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA) and client must agree to the conditions on the MRA. Work First participants are required to follow the recommendation of the MRA. Failure to provide verification of compliance as well as comply with conditions will result in termination of the Work First Cash Assistance.

**Methodology:** Of all adults who leave welfare for work 90% will stay off welfare. Macon County will provide transitional employment services for client who goes to work while actively participating with HR/Life Coach. These clients can receive up to six months of services after receiving their last WFFA check if income is lower than 200% of the Federal Poverty level. Services may include: a monthly follow-up by the HR/Life Coach, transportation reimbursement or assistance, case management. Support services available to active participants will also be provided to newly employed clients.

- **Continue to require a Child Support Establishment Application prior to making a Work First Cash Assistance Application.**

**Methodology:** It is vital for the family to move toward self-sufficiency and both parents of the children provide financial support for their children. All persons applying for Work First cash assistance must comply with Child Support prior to completing the Work First processing time of 45 days. Client must comply with Child Support Agent, if they do not, this will result in a denial of the Work First Application.



- **Strategy planning with potential Work First Cash Assistance Recipients.**

**Methodology:** HR/Life Coach will work with all cash recipients. All able-bodied adults who have had a recent connection to the workforce will be assessed and complete a mandatory two-week job search. HR/Life Coach will provide clients with assessment and work closely with Employment Security Commission to enable able-bodied adults to be job ready.

**Methodology:** Macon County Job-Link Center is housed at Employment Security Commission (ESC) facility. In conjunction with the HR/Life Coach, ESC will assist those workers who have had a recent loss of employment through no fault of their own, and apply for Unemployment Insurance if eligible. Also housed at ESC is the North Carolina Connector internet based, real time job matching system offering job seekers access 24/7 to look for jobs, update their profiles and request referrals when their credentials match employers' criteria.

**Methodology:** HR/Life Coach will partner with Employment Security Commission (ESC) and with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) federally funded program that provides services including employment and training activities for adults and dislocated workers, as well as youth activities. Direction is provided and focuses on people who have been dislocated from their jobs to overcome their disadvantages. Opportunities such as On the Job Training enables workers to be hired and trained for six months by employers who receive reimbursements up to 50% of the starting wages. Partner with Southwestern Community College to assist in education for a career change or assisting high school drop-outs to complete classes to complete their GED.

**Methodology:** Southwestern Community College will provide a two day assessment class at the Macon County Job-Link Center to assess each person's skills to determine if skills are transferable. Macon County Area Transit can be arranged by the HR/Life Coach to provide transportation for clients that have limited transportation. Along with transportation Life Coach will also coordinate with the Child Care caseworker for the client to receive assistance with their day care expense. If a potential applicant is determined to need Vocational Rehabilitation, a counselor is available on site at the DSS facility bi-weekly.

- **Households will meet the Federal Participation rate.**

**Methodology:** Of One Parent households 50% will be coached by the HR/Life Coach in completing the MRA to achieve a more adequate end result. Macon County will require adult parents of children over three months old to be active participants. The MRA Plan of Actions will outline client's responsibility with a minimum of 40 hours per week of countable work activities which includes pay after performance. Clients will submit a Time Card by the fifth of each month (**Attachment A**) at which time caseworker will release the WF check. HR/Life Coach will monitor, track and report clients work activities and hours.

**Methodology:** Of Two Parent households 90% will meet the participation rate. If the Two Parent household is not eligible for Benefit Diversion, or who have exhausted their B/D assistance and are not currently employed then caseworkers will schedule an appointment with the Life Coach. Within one week, HR/Life Coach will complete MRA Plan of action outlining 40 hours of countable activities, including training, to become effective upon approval of WFFA application.

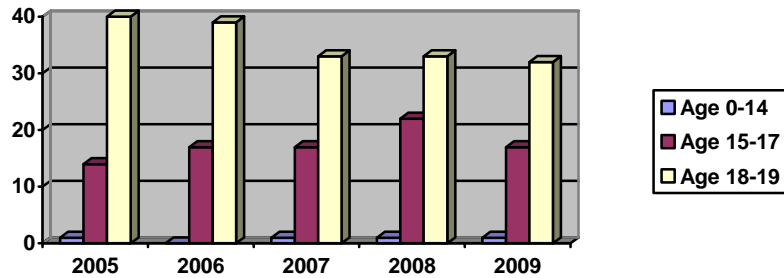
Establishing "Pay after Performance" guidelines as directed in the WFFA Manual, Section 119, XI, at least one adult must participate to be eligible for WFFA. If the client's children are all over the age of three months, it is required both parents join in the work search.

**Methodology:** In cases where medical or mental disabilities have led the family to apply for assistance, an immediate referral will be made to Vocational Rehabilitation or to the Social Security Administration Office, at the discretion of the HR/Life Coach. The family must follow through with appointments and recommendations of these agencies in order to receive WFFA. Cash assistances will be issued on a monthly basis; the HR/Life Coach will meet with these families monthly to review progress.

- **Expand efforts in reducing teen pregnancy in our community.**

**Methodology:** Macon County's teen pregnancy rate continues to be lower than the state average. Below is the data for Macon County indicating the total number of teenage pregnancies in three age groups (information supplied by Health Department). Statistics show a steady decline in the age group of 18-19 years.

See chart below.



Macon County Health Department, Smoky Mountain Pregnancy Care Center and Department of Social Services will partner together for the availability of Family Planning counseling to client to promote and emphasize the importance of birth control and family principles. Absent parents of Work First children are made aware of the importance of family principles, pregnancy prevention and how failure to plan can affect their financial goals, employment, stress, poverty and relationships.

#### B. Supportive Services.

Supportive services listed above will enable individuals to participate in activities that will lead families to self-sufficiency. Below are supportive services that will expand and develop self-confidence to support participation:

- **Case Management** – Case management means planning, directing and providing services. The workers will be responsible for working with families in the assessment, planning, directing and providing support services. Caseworkers will do documentation of progress for all Child Only families and eligible families that are searching for work. Work First Workers and Child Welfare Workers will continue to work together to define the responsibilities of each other and strive to have good communication between the agency and the families.
- **Child Care Subsidy Assistance** – We continue to prioritize Child Welfare Families in child care. In Macon County we do not have a waiting list for subsidized child care. Work First eligible families and families that received 200% services must participate in work or work related activities to ensure they comply with the program. Parent's fee will be assessed once they become employed by the Day Care caseworker.
- **Child Protective Services** – Work First and Child Protective Services will to ensure the safety of our families. Child Protective Services (CPS) works with KIDS Place, a community

agency devoted to the protection and well-being of abused and neglected children, provides a safe, non-threatening environment for investigations, medical examinations and counseling. Court Intervention Services are also available. Macon County's Child Protective Services Social Workers work closely with this agency in the investigation and treatment of abused and neglected children and their families. CPS will work with the Baptist Children Homes of NC, which is opening their Family Care Ministry at the Moody Home in Franklin, NC. The Family Care Ministry is designed to provide housing, job search assistance, money management and parenting instruction to single mothers (over 18 years of age) and their children who are homeless or facing homelessness. Each parent must agree to actively seek employment and a permanent place of residency.

- **Streamlining Eligibility Determination and Services**  
Macon County has established a process of service for clients that will serve them more quickly and efficiently. This continuum of services will emphasize intake diversion services, two-week job search for all able-body adults, job development, coaching and referrals (**Attachments B**)
- **Transportation Assistance** – We will continue to work with Macon County Transit for our Work First families so that they may successfully transition to independence. We also offer gas vouchers to these clients that have their own transportation to complete job searches or assistance until they receive their first paycheck.
- **Work Expenses** – We will assess and provide assistance with non-recurring work-related expenses such as: work clothes, tools, equipment and uniforms, etc.
- **Participation Expenses** – We will continue to assist families with uniforms, books, registration fees, etc so that they may continue to complete job readiness and find work or continue to work, thus keeping our Participation rate low.
- **Education/Training** – Continue to refer families to education facilities such as Southwestern Community College, Employment Security Commission, Job-Link, WIA programs and other agencies for Continuing Education classes.
- **Domestic Violence Service** – Continue screening and assessments of families facing domestic violence. Refer to REACH if family is in need. Utilize Domestic Violence TANF funds to support the safety, protection, financial needs and health of families and children. We continue to work closely with our Domestic Violence Agency through referrals.
- **Human Resource / Life Coach** – will help families learn to budget their finances so that they may become self-sufficient.

- **Medicaid/Health Choice** - All families are strongly encouraged to apply for Medicaid or Health Choice to help with medical expenses and medical insurance for all children under 200% of poverty.
- **Food and Nutrition Services** – All families are encouraged to apply for Food and Nutrition services.
- **American with Disabilities Act (ADA)** – Macon County DSS has always and will continue to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Interpreter Service** – Macon County DSS has a full time Spanish interpreter on staff and interpreter phone that can address every language. Macon County strives to ensure an individual with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) has equal access to benefits and services.

## VI. Administration

### A. Authority

The Macon County Board of County Commissioners has delegated the administration of the Work First program to the Macon County Department of Social Services. Nothing in the Macon County Electing Plan shall imply an entitlement to any resources or services at the disposal of Macon County and the implementation of the Electing Plan.

### B. Organization

The Department of Social Services has focused on providing services in the most efficient, customer-friendly and cost-effective manner possible. Macon County has adequate Income Maintenance staff to meet with the applicants/recipients on the day they enter the agency and take an application as needed.

Simultaneously, the One Stop/Job-Link Center was developed to better serve clients; work hours are 8:00am to 5:00pm. The Department continually assesses the needs of the community and attempts to be responsive to those needs. Employment Services and Eligibility Services are not a consolidated function. The Employment Security Commission (ESC) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) developed a plan whereby all applicants for cash assistance will register for work at the ESC/Job-Link Center. All Job-Link partners will enhance job searches and job readiness activities for WFFA participants. The partners include Employment Security Commission (ESC), Southwestern Community College (SCC), Macon Program for Progress (MPP), Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the NC Division of Vocation Rehabilitation (VR).

All partners work for the good of the families and utilize all resources in order to ensure that each WFFA family becomes self-sufficient.

Macon County will look at each family and evaluate for one-time cash assistance (Benefit Diversion) not to exceed three months cash assistance, a short term benefit that may solve the crisis for the family.

Crisis Funds are a means of energy assistance provided to families for a short term benefit that alleviates the emergency such as a utility bill disconnect notice. The total amount that a client may receive in a fiscal year is up to \$600.00.

Emergency Assistance (TANF-Emergency Assistance) provides families financial assistance with utilities, mortgages and rental assistance for families that are under 200% of Federal poverty level maximum payment is not to exceed \$400.00 in the fiscal year.

Work First Workers and Social Workers collaborate to provide the best methods to address the situation in the home such as, health, substance abuse, financial assistance, educational needs or other challenges that stand in the way of self-reliance.

### **C. Child Care**

Macon County Subsidized Child Care program will continue to prioritize Child Protective Services families, foster parents and Work First families. The Region A Partnership For Children provides funds for Work First clients in the seven western-most counties of North Carolina. The funds are allocated with the intent that no family receiving Work First would be on a waiting list for child care. Day Care Coordinator works collaboratively with local providers to find innovative child care solutions for families with special needs.

### **D. Transportation**

Services will be provided for Work First applicants, Work First active participants and those WFFA recipients newly employed for six months following employment under Employment Services transitional program if income is under 200% of Federal poverty level. The estimated allocation for this program is \$1000.00.

Work First clients falling within 200% of poverty with a recent connection to the work force within the past six months could be eligible for \$35.00 gas vouchers (**Attachment C**) to be used for job search or employment, not to exceed three vouchers in a fiscal year per household, and no more than one per month. Work First applicants are to use the vouchers for job

search or employment, attending orientation or career assessment classes. Applicants that have received gas vouchers in the past year must see the Human Resource/Life Coach before receiving the voucher. Applicants without available transportation will be referred to Macon Area Transit (MAT) by the Intake worker (**Attachment D**). These vouchers will be funded with TANF funds. Participants can be reimbursed \$.30 per mile, up to three months after starting and maintaining work and for travel expenses to work activities as outlined on the MRA Plan of Action by providing a signed travel log in a timely manner (**Attachment A**). Active participants who provide carpooling service for other WFFA participants may receive additional reimbursement, as deemed appropriate by the Work First Supervisor. A Human Resource/Life Coach will provide transportation for Work First active participants when all other transportation options have been exhausted.

Vehicle repairs can be made for WFFA active participants only if the participant is employed or is newly hired. The vehicle **MUST** be registered in the participant's name and not to exceed \$500.00 and is at the discretion of the Work First Supervisor.

#### **E. Substance Abuse Screening**

Substance Abuse Screening will be conducted as required by Federal law. Smoky Mountain Center (mental health provider) and the Department of Social Services have an agreement whereby a professional will provide screening, assessments, and referrals for treatment.

#### **F. Domestic Violence Option**

Domestic Violence Option will be provided as required by Federal law. The caseworker will screen applicants for domestic violence issues and make the appropriate referrals (**Attachment E**). All applicants will be notified of their right not to participate with Employment Services if employment would place the applicant or applicant's children in danger due to the domestic violence issue. Procedures for the clients if they are experiencing family violence are as follows:

- 1) Clients must read, understand, sign and indicate to speak to someone on the Notification of Family Violence Option form.
- 2) Caseworkers must refer clients for family violence screening or further assessment if they self-disclose, or if there are indicators of family violence present, refer to REACH of Franklin or other agencies that are equipped to work with domestic violence victims.
- 3) REACH will administer the screening and assessments for domestic violence.

- 4) If the client requests a waiver from any Work First requirements, the worker must consult with agencies concerning the request before it can be granted.

**G. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**

- A. Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds will be used for Child Welfare staff and services, Work First HR/Life Coach, Emergency Assistance, and contract services to support employment. MOE is \$168,596.00.
- B. TANF Child Welfare expenditures are budgeted at \$678,265.00 for FY 2011-2012.
- C. FY 11-12 Budgeted amounts for:
 

Child Protective Service	\$341,782.00
Work First Cash Assistance	\$25,000.00
Work First Eligibility & Program Integrity	\$32,666.00
Work First Services & Case Management	\$137,323.00
Work First Emergency Assistance	\$141,494.00

**VII. Emergency Assistance (EA)**

Emergency cash assistance will be provided to families who meet the eligibility requirements, as stated in the basic requirements of the WFFA Manual, Section 102, II, and “Emergency Assistance”. The eligibility for this program will be based on the prudent judgment of the Intake worker when determining the emergency situation. The maximum payment level for Macon County will be \$400.00 per fiscal year. This cap may be re-determined if the county declares a state of emergency due to natural disaster or severe weather. The total amount to be allocated to this program for emergency cash assistance will vary.

Emergency Assistance is designed to assist families with emergency needs and is not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs. If a family has received emergency assistance in prior fiscal year, they will be referred to the Human Resource/Life Coach for assistance. The adult caretaker will be given an interview and asked to complete a workbook which focuses on family budgeting and job skills. Emergency Assistance applications will not be approved until the adult caretaker meets with the Human Resource/Life Coach and has complied with the services offered to them. If they refuse to comply or fail to keep a scheduled appointment they will not be eligible for a period of one year.

An emergency will be defined, as failure to meet a child’s basic needs: lack of housing, notice of intent to Foreclose, court order of eviction, loss of shelter due to natural disaster or condemned property, heating, food



spoiled due to lack of refrigeration, etc. The emergency must exist as a result of a situation beyond the control of the adult caretaker such as but not limited to: lay-off from work, stolen paycheck, and unexpected car repair.

Provided services can include, but not limited to:

- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Utilities
- ◆ Vehicle repair
- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ Domestic Violence

No Emergency Assistance will be provided to applicants if the emergency cannot be alleviated, as EA is expected to alleviate the emergency. Assistance will not be provided for any medical care, regardless of whether they are covered by Medicaid.

#### **VIII. Service to Low Income Families (under 200% of Federal Poverty Level)**

Services provided to families with income at or below 200% of Federal Poverty Level are:

- ◆ Budgeting
- ◆ Support job retention
- ◆ Strengthening families
- ◆ Promote health development of parents and children

Funds available for this service are limited up to \$400.00/yr per household; therefore, services are prioritized for former Work First families (within one year of termination of WF), Child-Welfare families and one-time hardship cases as deemed appropriate by Work First Supervisor.

#### **IX. Services for Non-Custodial Parents for Work First Recipient Children.**

Macon County will not utilize TANF funds to serve non-custodial parents based on other NC counties experience with this service.

#### **X. Exemption from the Work Requirement**

To be eligible for WFFA, applicants must register with ESC, unless exempt for the following reasons: caretaker of a child less than 3 months old, Domestic Violence victim that would place the family at risk, SSI recipient and caretaker receiving Social Security Disability for a non-budget household member.

#### **XI. Innovative County Strategies**

*Provide intensive job development and job coaching*

Family Centered Services are provided to Work First applicants/recipients as a priority of achieving outcomes and goals. The Human Resource/Life Coach will provide coaching to overcome obstacles such as: financial budgeting, assisting families to learn to shop within their budget, providing vouchers for consignment clothing shops and thrift stores. Job-Link Center will partner with DSS to provide job searches, job placement and determine position for which client is best suited. The client will also assist in determining financial aid for continuing education if appropriate.

*Reviews for Child Only Cases*

Reviews for Child Only cases will be completed every two years except: child ages out, child moves out of casehead's home, or in case of death of the casehead.

*Provide career assessment for all applicants*

Southwestern Community College will assess skill level of WFFA participant using Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and career choice using the Career Decision Making System (CDMS) in classes on site. Workforce Investment Act participants may also attend the classes to meet WIA eligibility and assessment requirements.

*Provide retention assistance*

We will provide assistance to working families for up to six months after leaving welfare for work.

*Provide coordinated transportation services for clients*

Transportation assistance to promote and maintain employment as explained in Section V, B, Transportation Service.

*Time Limits for Working Participants*

Work First families with adults receiving Work First assistance for a cumulative 24 months are ineligible for 36 consecutive months following termination unless granted extension. Work First families with working adults are subject to 60 month lifetime limit. This time limit is a cumulative total that includes months of TANF assistance received in other states.

*Work with caretakers of infants*

HR/Life Coach will work with caretakers of infants when the child reaches three months of age, helping them become job ready, arrange childcare, and assist in locating employment. Like other participants, these caretakers will be eligible to receive job placement, job coaching, and retention services.

*Provide services for Mental and Physical Impairments*

HR/Life Coach provides intensive services for participants that have mental and physical impairments. We will assess the impairments; make referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation to perform the Functional Assessments or Smoky Mountain Mental Health. After this is completed depending on the severity, documentation will be gathered on medical and mental information by having participant sign consent of release. After all

information is gathered the Life Coach will partner with our local Social Security office in order to assist participants to initiate a disability claim.

*Providing Housing for Urban Development (HUD)*

Macon County DSS partners with HUD and keeps an updated list of subsidized housing in the community. We make appropriate referrals to HUD for our recipients.

*Provide information on Food Pantries in our Community*

HR/LC will make appropriate referrals to local food pantries and assist with information needed to receive items making sure that applicants also access all programs such as Food and Nutrition.

## **XII. Special Issues**

The economic conditions may impact any welfare reform effort. We continue to explore creative ways to help families take responsibility for their safety, financial well being and their personal life choices in providing for their children. We continue to focus in helping families move from poverty to self sufficiency.

## **XIII. Eligibility Criteria (Required for Electing County)**

Macon County will follow criteria established and implemented by the State for the following:

- Age limits for children
- Payment levels
- Benefit Calculation
- Sanctions
- Resource requirements (limit and countable items)
- Change in Situation
- Citizenship/Identity requirements
- Residency
- Benefit Diversion requirements

North Carolina Work First Standard Plan will be adhered to except for changes as noted below. Any future statewide policy changes will be reviewed and evaluated before Macon County implements such changes. If changes are made, the Macon County Work First Plan will be amended to incorporate changes.

- 1) Pay after Performance Program - All Work Eligible Work First Family participants will be required to participate in countable work and work related activities and complete satisfactorily to receive a Work First cash benefit check at the end of each month. Families

who fail to complete their required hours as agreed upon in their MRA are in non-compliance. Families must complete the required hours to be eligible to receive the cash assistance.

- 2) All WFFA Work Eligible individuals are required to be actively participating in work and work related activities for a total of 40 hours per week. Participation will be a combination of activities which include but not limited to employment, subsidized employment, vocational training, skills training, education, work experience, substance abuse counseling, mental health, vocational rehabilitation, job readiness/job search, etc.
- 3) We will continue to count the earned and unearned income for all household members except SSI recipients and Social Security Disability for non-required budget household members.
- 4) All WFFA applicants will have a 6 month penalty imposed for quitting a job unless "good cause" is established.
- 5) Reviews for Child Only cases will be completed every two years except: child ages out, child moves out of casehead's home, or in case of death of the casehead.
- 6) Kinship rule will be limited to the following relationships as meeting the kinship rule:
  - a) Parent, including a natural mother or father
  - b) Legal Father or Mother
  - c) Adoptive parent
  - d) Brother, sister including half brothers and sister.
  - e) Grandparents
  - f) Great Grandparents
  - g) Uncle or Aunt
  - h) Great Uncle or Great Aunt.

This relative must be providing care for the child on a day-to-day basis and be responsible for ongoing decisions regarding the child's well being. A relative who meets the above relationships must be included in the case with the child, unless they are an SSI recipient or receiving SS disability income and who is not a required member of the budget unit.

#### **XIV. Appeals Process**

A public assistance recipient or applicant has the right to appeal the decision of the Macon County Department of Social Services or the Board of County

Commissioners granting, denying, terminating or modifying assistance. Each applicant or recipient shall be notified in writing of his or her right to appeal. An example of the appeals rights notification is provided and submitted as **(Attachment F)**.

The county will follow the appeals process as stated in N.C.G. S. 108A-79 **(Attachment G)** with the exception of the state hearing officer, which will be replaced with an impartial two member team. Commissioners will appoint impartial hearing officers.

**XV. Review Prior to Expiration of Time Limits**

The process by which the county will review all Work First caseloads prior to expiration of time will follow procedures as described in Standard Work First Manual, Section 105, III & Section 105A, IV.

**XVI. Funding Requirements**

We anticipate 100% of our Work First Block Grant will be spent on Benefit Diversion, Employment Services, TANF EA, 200% services and Child Welfare services.

**XVII. Certifications**

**CERTIFICATION REQUIRED OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES  
BOARD CHAIRMAN**

As Chairman of Macon County Social Services Board, I certify that this County Plan has been reviewed and endorsed by Macon County Social Services Board at its meeting on September 21, 2011.

---

Wendy Dalton, Chairman  
Macon County Board of Social Services

**CERTIFICATION REQUIRED OF THE CHAIRMAN  
OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

As Chairman of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, I certify that this County Plan has been reviewed and approved by the Macon County Board of Commissioners at its meeting on September 13, 2011.

---

Brian McClellan, Chairman  
Macon County Board of County Commissioners



ACTIVITY/ SERVICE	HRS /WK	REQUIREMENTS

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures indicate that we have jointly developed this Plan of Action and agree to the responsibilities and conditions outlined. The policy regarding time limited benefits, requirements for check issuance, hearings, and extensions have been explained.

**Work First Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work First Worker's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

"In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, contact HHS, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 506-F, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 or call (202) 619-0403 (voice) or (202) 619-3257 (TTY). HHS is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

For all other questions or concerns, contact your local Department of Social Services.



MACON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
1832 Lakeside Drive  
Franklin, NC 28734  
828-349-2124

WORKFIRST TRANSPORTATION  
GAS VOUCHER

VOUCHER NO:

EXPIRATION DATE:

CLIENTS NAME:

WORK ACTIVITY:

I hereby grant the release of the information contained on this form to Express USA/Duncan Company in obtaining assistance with Work First transportation services. This information is to be held in confidence by Express USA/Duncan

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client's Signature

.....  
Amount Authorized (up to) \$

Redeemable at:

- Express USA - 1078 East Main St., Franklin - Open M-Sat 6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. & Sunday 12:30-8:30 p.m.
- Duncan Station #2 - Marble, NC

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Case Worker Signature

.....

*Please make sure receipts are attached to each voucher.*  
**This voucher can only be used once. Any remaining balance cannot be redeemed.**

MACON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE  
1832 Lakeside Drive  
Franklin, NC 28734  
828-349-2124

TRANSPORTATION REFERRAL

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions to Home:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant - from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
WorkFirst Active - from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
Medicaid \_\_\_\_\_ Transitional - from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

APPOINTMENT: Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Time \_\_\_\_\_  
Place \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY VIOLENCE OPTION / DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
WORK FIRST ASSESSMENT

Date of Referral: \_\_\_\_\_ Held Appointment \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

SEX: \_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Name, sex and age of children \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ Latino/Hispanic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Native American
- \_\_\_\_\_ Afro-American
- \_\_\_\_\_ Euro-American
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other



1. Have you ever felt Emotionally Abused? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

- Putting me down*
- Making me think I'm crazy*
- Making me feel bad about myself*
- Mind games*
- Calling me names*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you been Economically abused? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

- Kept me from getting job*
- Keeps me on an allowance*
- Kept me from my job*
- Takes my money*
- Make me ask for money*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you ever been Sexually abused? Tell me about it if you can. Circle key words:

- Making me do sexual things against my will*
- Treating me like a sex object*
- Physically attacking sexual parts of my body*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Has your child/children seen, heard or directly been involved in family violence? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

- Made to feel guilty about the children*
- Using children as messengers*
- Using visitation to harass me*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you ever been threatened? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

- Making or carrying out threats to do emotional harm*
- Threaten to commit suicide*
- Threatened to take the children*
- Report me to welfare*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you ever been intimidated? Tell me about it. Circle key words: (Put me in FEAR by:)

*Looks Loud voices Smashing things Destroying our property or mine*

8. Have you ever been kept isolated? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

*Controls: who I see, what I d, who I talk with, where I go.  
Questions: who I talk to, where I've been / I have to lie to him.*

9. Have you ever been physically abused? Tell me about it. Circle key words:

*Pushed, shoved, hit, slapped, choked, pulled hair, punched, kicked, grabbed, used a weapon against me, beaten, thrown me down on floor, twisted my arm, tripped me, bitten me.*

10. Did you grow up in a home with family violence? Tell me about it.

**Circle all that apply:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Was it a violent incident?<br>First time _____ Repeated _____                            | 7. Present emotional condition:<br>Good Fair Poor  |
| 2. Did violence occur in the last<br>Week Month 6 months Year ____ ago                      | 8. Is there an alcohol abuse problem in this relationship? Yes No                          |
| 3. Do you feel you are in danger now? Yes No  | 9. Is there a drug abuse problem in this relationship? Yes No                              |
| 4. Have you received medical attention?<br>Not necessary Yes No When _____<br>Where ? _____ | 10. Have the police / sheriff been involved in the history of your family violence? Yes No |
| 5. Have you left the abuser before? Yes No  | 11. Do you feel powerless / frustrated with agency help? Yes No                            |
| 6. Are you living with the abuser now? Yes No   | 12. Do you have difficulty in finishing a goal? Yes No                                     |
|   | 13. Have you lost a job due to family violence or stalking? Yes No                         |
|   | 14. Has the abuser stalked you at work? Yes No   |
|   | 15. Has the abuser stalked you in the community? Yes No                                    |

## **APPEALS RIGHTS**

### **HOW TO GET A HEARING**

If you are not satisfied with this decision, you have the right to request a hearing. The hearing will determine if the decision was correct. Your first hearing is before an impartial official of the local agency where you applied. The hearing should be held within five calendar days of your request. If you delay it, you have up to 10 more calendar days. Unless the agency holds the hearing by the 10<sup>th</sup> day, you cannot have a hearing.

If you are not satisfied with the decision, you can have a second hearing before an impartial committee of the community representatives from Macon County. You should request this hearing either orally or in writing, through the local agency where you applied.

### **YOUR RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED**

You may speak for yourself or you may have a friend, relative, or lawyer to speak for you at your hearing. You must pay for the lawyer. However, free legal service may be available in your community. Contact your worker for information or call CARELINE, toll-free, at 1-800-662-7039. TDD/Voice for the hearing impaired is also available through the CARELINE number.

### **YOUR RIGHT TO SEE YOUR RECORD**

Before your hearings, you may ask your case worker to show you and the person speaking for your case record. If you ask, you may also see any other information to be used at the hearings. You can get free copies of this information. You may also request to see this information again at your hearing.

### **DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS?**

Do you understand your rights to get a hearing? If you have any questions or need further information, please contact your worker as soon as possible.

## Article 4.

## Public Assistance and Social Services Appeals and Access to Records.

**§ 108A-79. Appeals.**

(a) A public assistance applicant or recipient shall have a right to appeal the decision of the county board of social services, county department of social services, or the board of county commissioners granting, denying, terminating, or modifying assistance, or the failure of the county board of social services or county department of social services to act within a reasonable time under the rules and regulations of the Social Services Commission or the Department. Each applicant or recipient shall be notified in writing of his right to appeal upon denial of his application for assistance and at the time of any subsequent action on his case.

(b) In cases involving termination or modification of assistance, no action shall become effective until 10 workdays after notice of this action and of the right to appeal is mailed or delivered by hand to the recipient; provided, however, termination or modification of assistance may be effective immediately upon the mailing or delivery of notice in the following circumstances:

- (1) When the modification is beneficial to the recipient; or
- (2) When federal regulations permit immediate termination or modification upon mailing or delivery of notice and the Social Services Commission or the Department of Health and Human Services promulgates regulations adopting said federal law or regulations. When federal and State regulations permit immediate termination or modification, the recipient shall have no right to continued assistance at the present level pending a hearing, as would otherwise be provided by subsection (d) of this section.

(c) The notice of action and the right to appeal shall comply with all applicable federal and State law and regulations; provided, such notice shall, at a minimum contain a clear statement of:

- (1) The action which was or is to be taken;
- (2) The reasons for which this action was or is to be taken;
- (3) The regulations supporting this action;
- (4) The applicant's or recipient's right to both a local and State level hearing, or to a State level hearing in the case of the food and nutrition services program, on the decision to take this action and the method for obtaining these hearings;
- (5) The right to be represented at the hearings by a personal representative, including an attorney obtained at the applicant's or recipient's expense;
- (6) In cases involving termination or modification of assistance, the recipient's right upon timely request to continue receiving assistance at the present level pending an appeal hearing and decision on that hearing.

An applicant or recipient may give notice of appeal by written or oral statement to the county department of social services, which shall record such notice by completing a form developed by the Department.

Such notice of appeal must be given within 60 days from the date of the action, or 90 days from the date of notification in the case of the food and nutrition services program. Failure to give timely notice of appeal constitutes a waiver of the right to a hearing except that, for good cause shown, the county department of social services may permit an appeal notwithstanding the waiver. The waiver shall not affect the right to reapply for benefits.

(d) If there is such timely appeal in cases not involving disability, in the first instance the hearing shall consist of a local appeal hearing before the county director or a designated representative of the county director, provided whoever hears the local appeal shall not have been involved directly in the initial decision giving rise to the appeal. If there is such timely appeal in cases involving disability, the county director or a designated representative of the county director shall within five days of the request for an appeal forward the request to the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department shall designate a hearing officer who shall promptly hold a hearing in the county according to the provisions of subsections (i) and (j) of this section. In cases involving termination or modification of assistance (other than cases of immediate termination or modification of assistance pursuant to subsection (b) (2) of this section), the recipient shall continue to receive assistance at the present level pending the decision at the initial hearing, whether that be the local appeal hearing decision or, in cases involving questions of disability, the Department of Health and Human Services hearing decision, provided that in order to continue receiving assistance pending the initial hearing decision the recipient must request a hearing on or before the effective date of the termination or modification of assistance.

(e) The local appeal hearing shall be held not more than five days after the request for it is received. The recipient may, for good cause shown as defined by rule or regulation of the Social Services Commission or the Department, petition the county department of social services, in writing, for a delay, but in no event shall the local appeal hearing be held more than 15 days after the receipt of the request for hearing. At the local appeal hearing:

- (1) The appellant and the county department may be represented by personal representatives, including attorneys, obtained at their expense.
- (2) The appellant or his personal representative and the county department shall present such sworn evidence and law or regulations as bear upon the case. The hearing need not be recorded or transcribed, but the director or his representative shall summarize in writing the substance of the hearing.
- (3) The appellant or his personal representative and the county department may cross-examine witnesses and present closing arguments summarizing their views of the case and the law.

- (4) Prior to and during the hearing, the appellant or his personal representative shall have adequate opportunity to examine the contents of his case file for the matter pending together with those portions of other public assistance or social services case files which pertain to the appeal, and all documents and records which the county department of social services intends to use at the hearing. Those portions of the public assistance or social services case file which do not pertain to the appeal or which are required by federal statutes or regulations or by State statutes or regulations to be held confidential shall not be released to the appellant or his personal representative. In cases where the appellant has been denied access to the public assistance or social services case file the hearing officer shall certify as part of the official record that the hearing officer has examined the case files and that no portion of those files pertain to the appeal. Such certification may be subject to judicial review as provided in subsection (k) of this section. Nothing in this section is intended to restrict an applicant or recipient access to information if that access is allowed by rules and regulations promulgated pursuant to G.S. 108A-80.
- (f) The director or his designated representative shall make the decision based upon the evidence presented at the hearing and all applicable regulations, and shall prepare a written statement of his decision citing the regulations and evidence to support it. This written statement of the decision will be served by certified mail on the appellant within five days of the local appeal hearing. If the decision terminating or modifying the appellant's benefits is affirmed, the assistance shall be terminated or modified, not earlier than the date the decision is mailed, and any assistance received during the time of the appeal is subject to recovery.
- (g) If the appellant is dissatisfied with the decision of the local appeal hearing, he may within 15 days of the mailing notification of the decision take a further appeal to the Department. However, assistance may not be received pending this further appeal. Failure to give timely notice of further appeal constitutes a waiver of the right to a hearing before an official of the Department except that, for good cause shown, the Department may issue an order permitting a review of the local appeal hearing notwithstanding the waiver. The waiver shall not affect the right to reapply for benefits.
- (h) Subsections (d)-(g) of this section shall not apply to the food and nutrition services program. The first appeal for an electronic food and nutrition benefit recipient or his representative shall be to the Department. Pending hearing, the recipient's assistance shall be continued at the present level upon timely request.
- (i) If there is an appeal from the local appeal hearing decision, or from an electronic food and nutrition benefit recipient or his representative where there is no local hearing, or if there is an appeal of a case involving questions of disability the county director shall notify the Department according to its rules and regulations. The Department shall designate a hearing officer who shall promptly hold a de novo administrative hearing in the county after giving reasonable notice of the time and place



Article 3, Chapter 150B, of the General Statutes of North Carolina; provided the Department shall adopt rules and regulations to ensure the following:

- (1) Prior to and during the hearing, the appellant or his personal representative shall have adequate opportunity to examine his case file and all documents and records which the county department of social services intends to use at the hearing together with those portions of other public assistance or social services case files which pertain to the appeal. Those portions of the public assistance or social services case files which do not pertain to the appeal or which are required by federal statutes or regulations or by State statutes or regulations to be held confidential shall not be released to the appellant or his personal representative. In cases where the appellant has been denied access to portions of the public assistance or social services case file, the hearing officer shall certify as part of the official record that the hearing officer has examined the case files and that no portion of those files pertain to the appeal. Such certification may be subject to judicial review as provided in subsection (k) of this section. Nothing in this section is intended to restrict an applicant or recipient access to information if that access is allowed by rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to G.S. 108A-80.
  - (2) At the appeal hearing, the appellant and personnel of the county department of social services may present such sworn evidence, law and regulations as bear upon the case.
  - (3) The appellant and county department shall have the right to be represented by the person of his choice, including an attorney obtained at his own expense.
  - (4) The appellant and county department shall have the right to cross-examine the other party as well as make a closing argument summarizing his view of the case and the law.
  - (5) The appeal hearing shall be recorded; however, no transcript will be prepared unless a petition for judicial review is filed pursuant to subsection (k) herein, in which case, the transcript will be made a part of the official record. In the absence of the filing of a petition for a judicial review, the recording of the appeal hearing may be erased or otherwise destroyed 180 days after the final decision is mailed.
  - (6) Notwithstanding G.S. 150B-28 or any other provision of State law, discovery shall be no more extensive or formal than that required by federal law and regulations applicable to such hearings.
- (j) After the administrative hearing, the hearing officer shall prepare a proposal for decision, citing pertinent law, regulations, and evidence, which shall be served upon the appellant and the county department of social services or their personal representatives. The appellant and the county department of social services shall have the opportunity to present oral and written arguments in opposition to or in support of

final decision. The final decision shall be based on, conform to, and set forth in detail the relevant evidence, pertinent State and federal law and regulations, and matters officially noticed. The decision shall be rendered not more than 90 days, or 45 days in the case of the food and nutrition services program, from the date of request for the hearing, unless the hearing was delayed at the request of the appellant. If the hearing was delayed at the appellant's request, the decision may only be delayed for the length of time the appellant requested a delay. The final decision shall be served upon the appellant and upon the county department of social services by certified mail, with a copy furnished to either party's attorney of record. In the absence of a petition for judicial review filed pursuant to subsection (k) herein, the final decision shall be binding upon the appellant, the county department of social services, the county board of social services, and the board of county commissioners.

(k) Any applicant or recipient who is dissatisfied with the final decision of the Department may file, within 30 days of the receipt of notice of such decision, a petition for judicial review in superior court of the county from which the case arose. Failure to file a petition within the time stated shall operate as a waiver of the right of such party to review, except that, for good cause shown, a judge of the superior court resident in the district or holding court in the county from which the case arose may issue an order permitting a review of the agency decision under this Chapter notwithstanding such waiver. The hearing shall be conducted according to the provisions of Article 4, Chapter 150B, of the North Carolina General Statutes. The court shall, on request, examine the evidence excluded at the hearing under G.S. 108A-79(e)(4) or G.S. 108A-79(i)(1) and if the evidence was improperly excluded, the court shall consider it. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, the court may take testimony and examine into the facts of the case, including excluded evidence, to determine whether the final decision is in error under federal and State law, and under the rules and regulations of the Social Services Commission or the Department of Health and Human Services. Furthermore, the court shall set the matter for hearing within 15 days from the filing of the record under G.S. 150B-47 and after reasonable written notice to the Department of Health and Human Services and the applicant or recipient. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to abrogate any rights that the county may have under Article 4 of Chapter 150B.

(l) In the event of conflict between federal law or regulations and State law or regulations, the federal law or regulations shall control. (1937, c. 288, ss. 18, 48; 1939, c. 395, s. 1; 1957, c. 100, s. 1; 1969, c. 546, s. 1; cc. 735, 754; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1219, ss. 14-18; 1979, c. 691; 1981, c. 275, s. 1; c. 419, ss. 1-3; c. 420, ss. 1-3; 1987, c. 599, ss. 1-3; c. 827, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 2007-97, s. 13.)