



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –
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Food Program Income Guidelines Change, More People May Be Eligible in NC

FAYETTEVILLE – In these tough economic times, food costs are on the rise and many households struggle to keep healthy food on hand. The Food and Nutrition Services Program, formerly known as Food Stamps, is a federally funded program designed to help end hunger. The primary goal is to provide supplemental benefits to eligible households so they may purchase food.

On July 1, the income limit for households increased in North Carolina, meaning more people are potentially eligible. Now, families with an income of less than 200 percent of the poverty level may qualify. The income limits are available at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services web site, <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/foodstamp/>.

Another change has made the application process simpler. The county's Food and Nutrition Services Program is now paperless, according to Kim McLamb of the Cumberland County Department of Social Services. All required documents, including the applicant's picture ID, are scanned into the computer at the time of the application and returned to them. The application is registered and the processing time frame begins, which is normally around 30 days. For some of the applicants who fall into the lower income category, the time frame can be as little as seven days, McLamb said.

The program looks at all income that is received in the household, but only certain income is counted when determining eligibility for benefits. Additional information that is considered involves "resources" like bank accounts, vehicles, etc. A caseworker at Social Services can

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provide an applicant with a complete listing of what information is needed to determine eligibility.

Individuals may apply at the Department of Social Services located at 1225 Ramsey Street. The office hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Applicants should bring photo identification to the interview, and the caseworker will provide a more detailed list of any other items that are required.

For more information, call the DSS at 323-1540 or visit our Web site at www.ccdssnc.com or the State's website at www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/foodstamp/.

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