

## Adjustment Extension Briefing for USDA Leadership

### **State Agency and Region:**

North Carolina - SERO

### **What Adjustment(s) is the State Requesting:**

Extend Certification Periods and Waive Periodic Reports

### **Demonstrated Need for Extension of the Adjustment:**

- As of August 7, 2020, North Carolina has experienced 132,812 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- SNAP enrollment has increased by nearly 150,000 households and 290,433 recipients Statewide since the first week of March 2020 through the week ending on 8/2/2020. This is a 25 percentage increase in enrollment over a 5-month period. Between 3/1/2020 and 8/4/2020, NC has received 266,139 applications for Food and Nutrition Services, as compared to 244,476 (a 9 percent increase).
- There are 126,356 six-months recertifications due in September 2020 compared to 84,341 six-month recertifications in September 2019, which is a 49.82 percent increase.
- 86% of local county DSS offices continue to limit public interactions or are open for appointments only, restricting in-person interaction for customers applying for or recertifying their SNAP benefits. A number of North Carolina county social services offices agency staff do not have agency cell phones to contact clients for interviews.
- Counties are anticipating reductions in workforce, which will be difficult with the recertifications, applications being increased, and federal unemployment benefits ending.

### **How Does the State Plan to Transition to the New Normal:**

- As the COVID-19 cases decreases and the Governor moves the state into Phase 3 into normal operations, a transitional plan will be required from all 100 DSS counties, which will be reviewed by the DHHS State Office. North Carolina is a county-administered State agency. DHHS will monitor the plans and provide support to the counties.

### **Regional Recommendation:**

**Extend Certification Periods and Waive Periodic Reports for cases expiring September 2020**-SERO recommends denial of the request because there was no supplemental information to support their case, including data on the extent of recertifications backlog, staffing limitations, or transition plan to return to new normal if the certification periods for cases expiring in September were extended six months or 12 months. There are 126,356 six-month recertifications due September 2020. From previous technical assistance conference calls, SERO learned that customers do not have the ability to upload verifications into NC FAST eligibility system, and remote DSS workers do not have access to the document imaging system.