

WHAT IS WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE?

Work First is a North Carolina public assistance program that offers **cash assistance** and **employment services** to very poor families with at least one child who is under 18 years old (under 19 if still in high school).

In addition to a small monthly check, the Work First Program offers:

- Medicaid for parents and children
- Priority for free child care
- Transitional cash assistance, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and child care assistance if you find a job while on Work First
- Help finding a job
- Education and vocational training
- Substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling if needed
- Payment of transportation costs
- Help obtaining child support from absent parents

Work First **income limits** are very low. Most families are not eligible if they work or have other income like unemployment benefits or child support or Social Security. But the income and assets of **caretakers who are not parents** (grandparents, aunts, etc) is **not** counted in determining Work First eligibility for the children in the home. Also the income and assets of an **SSI recipient** is **not** counted.

Parents are required to participate in work activities unless they are disabled or have disabled children or a child under age one. Work requirements do NOT apply to caretakers who are not parents.

A five year lifetime **time limit** and a two year time limit every five years may be applied to families receiving Work First benefits. However there is no time limit on receiving Work First benefits for children living with a non-parent or for children living with a parent receiving SSI benefits. Also you can ask for an **extension** of your time limit for good cause, such as applying for disability or difficulty finding a job.

To apply for Work First, visit the Department of Social Services (DSS) at 301 Billingsley Road or 3205 Freedom Drive. When you apply, you should try to bring (if you have them): identification, copies of your birth certificate and your children's birth certificates, copies of any court orders involving the children, your social security number, and information about your income. If you need help getting this information, ask DSS for help.

Insist on signing an application for Work First the first day you go to DSS. If your application is denied you have the right to appeal. If you need help with an appeal or have questions about what DSS told you, call Legal Services at 704-376-1600.