NC FAST news

North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology

Introducing new technological tools and business processes to improve how DHHS and county departments of social services deliver services and benefits to North Carolina families in need.

June 2011

Program Director's View by Anthony Vellucci

Let me begin by saying "Thank You" to all 100 counties for their ongoing commitment to NC FAST. Their continued support and participation in this important initiative remains essential for program success.

In April 2011, I attended the annual Cúram Software International User Conference held in Washington, D.C. DHHS has contracted with Cúram Software to provide the case management software framework for NC FAST, and with Accenture to integrate and implement the software.

The conference offered NC FAST an opportunity to network with other Cúram users. We were able to share strategies, lessons learned and best practices. We also discussed case studies from local, state and provincial government agencies around the globe, and Cúram's road map for future products.

During the conference, DHHS was presented with the 2011 Enterprise Ireland Award for Innovation in Social Enterprise Management. The award recognizes excellence in service delivery transformation, leading to improved service delivery and client outcomes.

North Carolina is ahead of most states in implementing a statewide case management system. Several states have contacted us for guidance and information. In April, the Alabama Medicaid Agency visited

NC FAST to learn more about our Program, the state's eligibility process and the Cúram software.

Earlier this year, DHHS decided to upgrade to version 6.0 of the Cúram software, released in April 2011. The new version will provide more benefits to users when the software is rolled out. Page 7 lists examples of improvements that will make it easier for users to do their work.

NC FAST is on schedule to implement Project 1, Global Case Management and Food and Nutrition Services. The go-live date for Pilot Production is February 1, 2012. The schedule for implementation may be refined if issues are identified during testing, which begins September 2011.

The North Carolina map on page 12 identifies the six planned deployment regions (by county) for Project 1 implementation and training.

Project 2 & 6, Eligibility Information System, is already under way and on schedule. The Pilot Production go-live date is planned for February 1, 2013.

The very aggressive schedule set for these first two projects is designed to deliver the most benefits to our users as soon as possible.

Business Update

Working in Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) vs. Working in NC FAST

From the caseworker's point of view, working in NC FAST will be different when compared to entering and tracking cases in FSIS. The differences are many, so let's review some of the basics.

Using FSIS	Using NC FAST Case Management System
1. Case information is entered using very few screens and many alpha and numeric codes.	Case information is entered using a series of screens called "pages" in greater detail and almost no codes.
2. Cases are maintained for the FNS Program only.	NC FAST will begin with the FNS Program, then add other income support programs and be able to determine eligibility for many programs at the same time.
3. Income, resources and household details are for the FNS case only.	Income, resources and other information will be shared among various program applications to ensure availability across programs.
4. Verification details are documented in the FNS case file only.	Verifications will be documented in NC FAST in much greater detail.
5. Entry options for the various fields are provided in the FSIS User Manual.	Entry options for the various fields will be provided in dropdown format with all allowable choices displayed.
6. Reports and other queries are available primarily in XPTR, with some in Data Warehouse.	Reports and other queries will be available primarily from Data Warehouse. Several management reports will be produced from NC FAST using a Dashboard View concept; for example, a manager's high-level view of all their workers and each case status.
7. The only system-generated notice is the Notice of Approval, Denial or Pending Status.	Most notices will be system-produced, with the option to print locally if needed.
8. Cases must be manually identified and required second-party reviews completed.	NC FAST will identify cases requiring second-party review and notify supervisors to complete them prior to processing.
9. Caseworkers must complete paper applications and re-certifications, then key the information.	Caseworkers will enter the application, then review and change details directly so that NC FAST can make the eligibility determination.
10. Caseworkers must use policy to determine eligibility for household members (aliens, ABAWDs, drug felons, etc.), and key the correct eligible/ineligible code for each person.	Based on information gathered in response to questions stored in the system, NC FAST will use detailed rules to determine eligibility for each household member.
11. The Tuesday Report and the Cases Due for Redetermination Report are the primary workload tracking reports.	NC FAST will display worklist tasks and notifications for each worker to help track a wide variety of "to-do" tasks, such as pending verifications, information gathered by another worker that may affect a case, and due dates.

Project Highlights

☀ Project 1: Global Case Management and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)

Project 1 is on schedule to begin Pilot Production on February 1, 2012, and to meet its completion date of November 2012, when all its functionality will have been rolled out to all 100 counties. This functionality includes:

- Global reception – logging of clients and hand-off to a worker for the interview.
- Screening, intake and assessment for FNS.
- Eligibility determination and benefit delivery for FNS.
- Legacy System replacement: Food Stamp Information System (FSIS).

For the project, all requirements have been defined; the detailed fit gap analysis (difference between the out of the box Cúram software and the NC FAST software requirements) is complete; and the planning and design documentation for what the software will look like and do is nearly complete. Soon, the team will begin building and configuring the system code, followed by intensive testing, before final acceptance and pilot of the Project 1 functionality. The pilot counties have already become involved in some of these activities, providing insight and input from the user community.

☀ Project 2 & 6: Eligibility Information System (EIS)

Project 2 & 6 is on schedule to begin Pilot Production on February 1, 2013, and to meet its completion date of January 2014, when all its functionality will have been rolled out to all 100 counties. This functionality includes:

Part 1: Screening and Intake for Work First (TANF), Medicaid, Special Assistance and Refugee Assistance

- Screening, intake and assessment for Work First (TANF), Medicaid, Refugee Assistance and Special Assistance.
- Basic calculations for Work First (TANF), Medicaid, Refugee Assistance and Special Assistance.
- Replacement of the 8124/8125 user interface to EIS.

**Part 2: Eligibility for Work First (TANF), Medicaid, Special Assistance and Refugee Assistance**

- Eligibility determination and benefit delivery for Work First (TANF), Medicaid, Refugee Assistance and Special Assistance.
- SSI Medicaid (1634) processing, including State Data Exchange (SDX) exception processing.
- Quarterly reporting for Work First (TANF) and Transitional Medicaid.
- Legacy System replacement: Employment Program Information System (EPIS), EIS, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-Data Collection System (TANF-DCS).

For the project, all requirements have been defined, the detailed fit gap analysis is complete, and development of the software planning and design documentation has begun.

*** For detailed project updates refer to the EAC Presentation on the NC FAST website. ***

ePASS

Electronic Pre-Assessment Screening Service (ePASS) is an easy to use web-based application that lets individuals check if they are eligible for several North Carolina benefits and services. ePASS provides secure online access for individuals to self-screen and apply for a range of assistance programs or services. ePASS is especially convenient for those who prefer to use it from the privacy of their home or who may not be able to go to a county agency during normal business hours.

www.ePASS.nc.gov
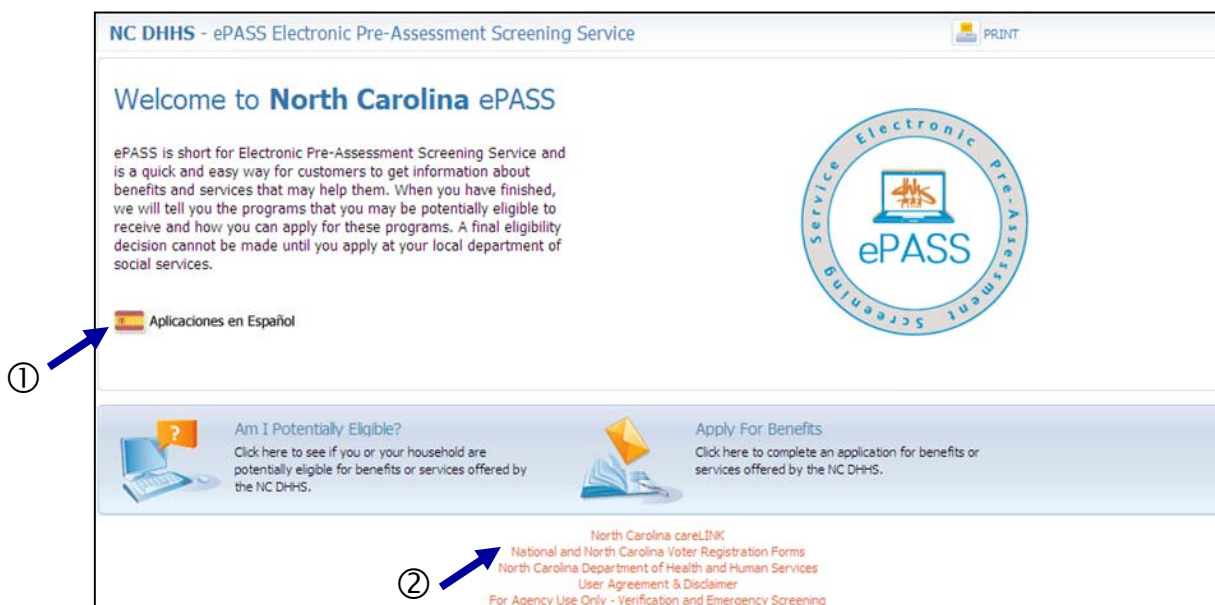
What's new with ePASS?

The ePASS Welcome page now offers:

- (arrow #1 on ePASS screenshot)
  A graphic link in Spanish to a webpage in Spanish containing links to the Directory of NC County Departments of Social Services, the FNS application, the Medicaid/Health Check/NC Health Choice Spanish application for children, and the Medicaid/Health Check/NC Health Choice Spanish application for persons over age 19.

- (arrow #2 on ePASS screenshot)
  A National and North Carolina Voter Registration Forms link to the NC Voter Registration Forms page; within this page is a link to forms in English and Spanish.

What are some benefits of ePASS?

- Saves time by completing the online screening and application before individuals go to their county agency, identifying beforehand if they are potentially eligible for benefits or services.

- Provides a list of documents individuals must bring to the county agency. This minimizes unnecessary return trips to the agency, and streamlines both the interview and eligibility determination processes.

- Improves efficiency, flexibility and effectiveness for county agencies by simplifying intake, reducing workload, and lowering costs by streamlining the application process. Applicants no longer need to wait in line if they are not potentially eligible or have not brought all required documentation.

What is the status of ePASS?

ePASS is being developed in 3 phases. Features from Phase 1 and Phase 2 are now available.

Phase 1 includes:

- Quick and easy screening for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Simplified Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), and Emergency Assistance (EA) to determine an individual's potential eligibility.
- Full screening for FNS and EA includes more comprehensive questions to perform a detailed assessment of an individual's potential eligibility.
- A list of documents and other requirements an individual must provide the caseworker when applying for benefits; and links to and from NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), NC Department of Social Services (DSS), NCareLINK and other websites.

Phase 2 includes:

- Allowing individuals to answer detailed FNS interview questions.
- Printing the FNS application and then mailing, faxing or taking it to their county agency.

What's next for ePASS?

Plans for Phase 2 include:

- Medicaid screening and application intake.

Plans for Phase 3 include enabling individuals to:

- Submit the FNS application electronically to their county agency.
- Check their application status.
- Schedule an appointment with a caseworker.
- Perform online re-certification.

While face to face interviews are still required, application processing can begin the moment an individual electronically submits the application online.

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ePASS continues to be successful. NC FAST is pleased to report the following metrics.

ePASS Metrics for May 2011

FNS Screenings: 6587

FNS Applications: 3397

EA Screenings: 2010

Quick Screenings: 5183

ePASS Metrics, 2011 Year to Date

FNS Screenings: 29,375

FNS Applications: 14,728

EA Screenings: 9,295

Quick Screenings: 22,668

We want to hear from you!

After you've had a chance to use ePASS, we encourage you to give us your comments.

Please send comments or questions to ncfast@dhhs.nc.gov and let us know what you think.

Please report technical issues regarding ePASS, by calling the FNS Customer Service Center at 1-888-622-7328 or 1-877-452-2514 (TTY dedicated).

On the Technology Front

The NC FAST Architecture and Infrastructure Team is helping to meet NC FAST goals in many ways, including improving access and reuse of information, and modernizing processing of that information within NC FAST. Two tools used by the team are: ESB and NIEM standards.

Crossing Technical Boundaries — Enterprise Service Bus (ESB)

ESB technology enables the NC FAST system to access and update information that exists for clients across program, system and technical boundaries. Using ESB, the NC FAST system can present and process more information from other systems in real time or in the background while NC FAST users do other tasks.

With NC FAST implementation of the FNS and Medicaid programs, over 100 different types of interfaces with other systems will be enabled. ESB allows access to information used for different purposes. For example, ESB enables reporting and policy analysis, and verification to trigger worker review tasks and activity in other programs.

Real-time system interfaces implemented to support FNS processing include:

- ACTS — Automated Collection and Tracking System

- BENDEX — Beneficiary Data Exchange

- CIP — Crisis Intervention Program

- CNDS — Common Name Data Service

- DMV — Division of Motor Vehicles

- EPICS — Enterprise Program Integrity Control System

- ESC — Employment Security Commission

- SSA — Social Security Administration

ESB also reduces IT staff programming and maintenance efforts to integrate NC FAST with other systems. ESB is particularly helpful in reducing the amount of maintenance and support required when NC FAST or other systems are modified. For example, ESB provides new or enhanced functionality to operate on modernized technology.

ESB capabilities include:

- Handling access security.

- Validating requests processed through ESB as valid or invalid.

- Transforming data from one format to another.

- Accessing information in DHHS legacy and county systems, and systems in other departments or external federal or service providers.

- Providing usage accounting and audit logging automatically and in a consistent manner, which improves the controls and security of the client's information.

In the future, ESB may be used to securely access or provide access to other information systems, such as for health or employer information.

During rollout of the NC FAST system, which over time will consolidate and replace many separate DHHS legacy systems, ESB will play a valuable role in helping NC FAST and the old legacy systems work together. As part of the NC FAST modernization effort ESB is a valuable tool to help workers, providers and clients become more interconnected.

Standardizing Information Formats — National Information Exchange Model (NIEM)

NC FAST uses NIEM standards to exchange information between the new NC FAST system and other government systems. The types of information shared in the initial NC FAST system releases are primarily verification and client data in electronic format.

NIEM standardizes formats as information moves between systems, by defining what information is stored and how it is stored. In this way, the standards enable more effective sharing and reuse of government and human services data.

NIEM standards were developed by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security. NIEM-based information exchanges are used in all 50 states. They are also used in other human service agencies to standardize for transactions like Medicaid re-certifications, FNS applications, and access to client demographic information and financial information.

The information sharing processes defined by NIEM standards offer an important part of the health information exchange landscape.

Using these standards together with the new ESB technology, the NC FAST system will be able to access and share better quality information more responsively and with less effort. In the future, NC FAST will be able to communicate more effectively with specialized provider, hospital, utility, financial and employer systems.

NC FAST will continue to build on new capabilities, with the potential to one day securely exchange electronic documents, photos, images, recordings and social media information, as well as other information types with partner systems.

Cúram Version 6.0 Improvements for Users

Some improvements in V6 over the previous Cúram software version that are important from a business/user perspective are:

♦ Improved user interface
  ✓ Individually customizable homepage.
  ✓ Improved evidence workspace. Makes working with evidence quicker and easier.
  ✓ Persistent environment across logins. Tabs remain open and context is preserved.
  ✓ Navigation is easier. Fewer clicks to move around. Opened tabs define the workspace.
  ✓ Results of background tasks now accessible from originating page. No need to open separate windows.
  ✓ Graphical elements such as charts that display information in an easily viewed format.

♦ Application process based on defined scripts.

♦ Advice/Advisor provides hints and information that is context and data-driven; such as listing evidence needed to complete an application based on what has already been entered.

♦ V6 uses a new rules infrastructure that:
  ✓ Displays eligibility data in simple tables.
  ✓ Is simpler for a caseworker or business analyst to understand.

♦ V6 will incorporate the new federal Health Care Reform policies and interfaces, which the previous version does not.

County Readiness

Spotlight on the Pilots

County Readiness Team Works with Pilot Counties to Prepare for "Go-Live"

Pilot counties are scheduled to implement Project 1 for Global Case Management and FNS on February 1, 2012. The four pilot counties are Carteret, Catawba, Guilford and Johnston. The two back-up pilot counties are Union and Buncombe.

The main responsibility of the NC FAST County Readiness Team is to work directly with counties to ensure successful implementation of NC FAST at the local level. In the months leading up to February 2012, the pilot counties and County Readiness Team will identify and correct issues that may adversely impact successful implementation.

The County Readiness Team visited all six pilot counties during February and March 2011. One of the most important tasks during these visits was to identify the county staff person who would serve as County Champion. The County Champion will be the primary contact between the NC FAST Program and the local department of social services.

The visits also provided an opportunity to begin reviewing minimum system requirements and recommendations to support the NC FAST System. The team initiated a review of each county's business processes in order to identify where processes might change as a result of implementing Project 1; for example, office operations and procedures to ensure work is completed.

Critical to the NC FAST discussion with the counties has been the development of a Change Discussion Guide. The Guide will document changes to standard county processes, as well as operational impacts affecting county offices. From this Guide, and research necessary in its development, counties will better understand the processes that will be new, processes that must change, or processes that will no longer be needed once NC FAST is implemented.

During June 2011, the County Readiness Team conducted local presentations that served as the primary briefings for pilot county line staff. The team also worked with each County Champion to identify a County Technical Champion. The Technical Champion's main responsibility will be to initiate planning tasks to confirm that county network, security and workstations meet the minimum NC FAST system requirements.

To the degree necessary, the team will work with the pilot counties to identify staff to participate in testing the county side of the Case Management Interface and Synchronization (CMIS) system.

Implementation and planning activities will continue during July through August 2011. These will involve further collaboration between the County Readiness Team and County Champions to gather information around county operations, and refine the Change Discussion Guide to be specific for each county.

Webinars will be scheduled and led by the team for each pilot county to provide implementation and NC FAST details for county personnel.

Pilot counties will also begin the process of conversion data clean-up to ensure integrity of the data that will ultimately be moved from the Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) to NC FAST.

Minimum NC FAST System Requirements and System Recommendations:

This information was published in NC FAST Dear County Director Letter (DCDL) #11-0009 on April 15, 2011.

The DCDL is available at:

www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/dcdl/index.htm

At the bottom of the page, click the link for "NCFAST" under Links to other division DCDLs.

Countdown to NC FAST Implementation

The NC FAST County Readiness Team has been working with the four pilot and two back-up pilot counties to prepare for NC FAST implementation.

A large part of preparation is ensuring that state and county partners understand the roles and responsibilities that each assumes as Project 1 moves forward.

The County Readiness Team relies on the Statement of Assurances and Expectations (SAE) as the official road map to help counties understand the implementation goals and requirements. Although the SAE is not a binding contract, it does serve to highlight the mutual assurances and expectations of both parties: DHHS and the county department of social services.

Components of the SAE are divided into 2– to 3-month intervals that clearly define the NC FAST and pilot county activities. The timeline details specific tasks for both parties for the period April 2011, through January 2012, the month prior to pilot "go-live."

The key dedicated county roles are County Champion and County Technical Champion. County Champions will have the larger role of the two, serving as primary contact with the NC FAST Program for implementation readiness activities. Technical Champions will serve as the key contact at the county level for technical issues (local hardware and software resources) related to county readiness activities.

On the NC FAST side, six County Readiness Liaisons are working with the pilot counties, serving as their primary contact to NC FAST. Two State Readiness Leads are also available to monitor overall implementation readiness across all the counties.

Readiness activities in the coming months will include:

- Communicating anticipated changes with county staff through local presentation or "road show" briefings.

- Participation in web-based training, webinars and seminars.

- Continued assessment of county processes.

- Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) data cleansing activities to ensure the integrity of conversion information being moved from FSIS to NC FAST.

Pilot county personnel will also have the opportunity to participate in User Acceptance Testing (UAT) before NC FAST is implemented.

The final, critical phase of preparation the month prior to rollout will involve detailed classroom training for end users to ensure the successful transition from working in a FSIS environment to an NC FAST environment.

During the 6 months following deployment, the County Readiness Team and County Champions will be engaged in rollout support activities.

The County Readiness Team activities will focus on:

- Providing Help Desk Support for NC FAST end users.

- Providing a forum for sharing best practices among system users.

- Identifying and directing needs for enhancements and system-related problems to appropriate parties.

- Providing counties with updated training materials for new county personnel.

- Serving as a conduit for issues and concerns from the user community.

County Champions will continue to serve as local onsite support for system users, gather and submit the required post-implementation data, coordinate training for new county personnel, and share lessons learned and best practices that emerge during the pilot experience.

Expert Interview

"I worked at Newport News, VA Social Services when the ADAPT, a 'knowledge-based' computer system, was piloted for the financial service programs. It helped to streamline the intake and case management process using computer automation.

My experience was that it made the process much more efficient and effective as a tool to 'work harder with less.' I felt more job satisfaction and less stress by utilizing increased automation and believe that NC FAST will be a much welcome system of doing business at DSS in North Carolina."

Cindy Everhart
Quality Assurance
Guilford County DSS

Suzanne Harlow
FNS IMC II
Johnston County DSS

"I am very excited about NC FAST. Having worked in another state that was automated, I know how much more simplified case management can be. NC FAST will allow case managers to effectively manage larger caseloads with fewer errors.

Automation eliminates the time it takes to process a case, eliminates the time a client must spend in an interview, and allows the client to get their benefits quicker. It also allows a case manager to be more thorough, provides a safety net from simple human errors, and delivers more accurate benefits in less time.

I believe once NC FAST is up and running, case managers will be thinking, 'I never realized I didn't have to work so hard to accomplish the same outcome' and asking, 'Why didn't we do this sooner?'"

New Terminology!

We'd like to introduce some of the terms used by NC FAST that might be new to you.

Alert: A message intended to inform a system's users about a condition that is approaching the boundaries or is outside an acceptable value.

Claimant: The person completing an application for food assistance; the applicant, client, customer or recipient who is applying for and receiving the benefit.

Dashboard: A view of Evidence where all Evidence Types can be displayed and accessed for viewing, updating, etc.

Evidence: Information requested or received by the local agency to determine the claimant's eligibility for benefits.

Nominee: The case participant in whose name the benefits are issued.

Notification: An informational message delivered to a user's NC FAST Inbox that usually requires no response.

Product: A benefit, such as Food and Nutrition Services or a liability, such as an overpayment.

Prompt: A real-time message to the user to take a certain action that is transmitted in the form of pop-up messages or a block of text at the top of the screen.

Prospect Person: An individual who has supplied insufficient information to be registered as a Person or someone the agency does not wish to register as a Person.

Tag: The process of entering a Special Caution for a Person with behavioral, health or safety issues that is viewable by other users.

Task: An actionable message that is delivered to a user's NC FAST Inbox, which notifies the user of outstanding actions to be taken on a case within a specified timeframe.

Training Preview

Project 1 End-User Training

The NC FAST training approach is designed to prepare both state and county staff to effectively use the NC FAST case management system. The training will be delivered in a timely manner to compliment system rollout in each county.

The first NC FAST end-user training courses will be offered for Project 1, which focuses on functionality for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and global case management data that crosses multiple programs.

All FNS program staff—including caseworkers, system and administrative support, supervisors and administrators—will be scheduled to attend. Training will be tailored to address the needs of the user based on the roles assigned.

NC FAST will deliver creative, dynamic training that allows for a smooth transition to the new system and processes. The training strategy relies on a combination of web-based and instructor-led training.

Web-Based Training

Web-based training will consist of separate online courses that are contained in a Learning Management System (LMS) application, available over the Internet.

They are intended to help prepare users for the content to be covered in the classroom. As they serve as prerequisites to the classroom training, they must be completed before users attend the instructor-led sessions.

The courses provide an overview of key NC FAST features and benefits. The courses are self-paced, meaning that each user can take them at his or her own speed, and as often as needed to review and learn the material.

Web-based training will be available two months prior to when NC FAST is scheduled to go-live in a county, and one month prior to the classroom training.

Instructor-Led Training

Instructor-led training will take place in the month prior to the NC FAST go-live date for each county.

The 100 counties have been geographically grouped into several deployment regions, as shown on the map on page 12. Training will be offered at central locations within each region. Training sites are being identified that minimize participant drive times to and from the training site.

For most NC FAST users, classroom training will be one week in duration, and will provide ample opportunity for hands-on practice with the new system.

More Information

Additional information on the NC FAST training approach will be provided on the NC FAST website and in upcoming Newsletter issues, as well as through county readiness activities.

NC FAST Word Search

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T N E M E G A N A M E S A C D D W A D T E N E
N O I T A C I F I T O N C N J R O Y C J P O C
A T C X U C D F X R S P P K I M A E J R F M N
W J R S N E V H C Q F E K R T J P O O K R I E
I N T E G R A T E D C A S E O S B M B G A N D
T Y O C L A I M A N T T A C O D P K A H U E I
K I P Z X A W F T B P P T R Z T U T L E S E V
B L Q C Z Y R P R H S O P M A R U C V F B A E
J A T H R R P S S X A D K C V U K I T P N O D
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Can you find these words?

ALERT	NOMINEE
CASEMANAGEMENT	NOTIFICATION
CLAIMANT	PRODUCT
CURAM	PROMPT
DASHBOARD	PROSPECT
EVIDENCE	TAG
INTEGRATEDCASE	TASK

Phases for County Implementation Rollout

The map shows the 6 planned deployment regions for Project 1 implementation and training. Pilot and back-up pilot counties are shown in white. NC FAST is working with a new version of the base software, and will begin testing in September 2011, at which point the implementation schedule may be refined as needed.
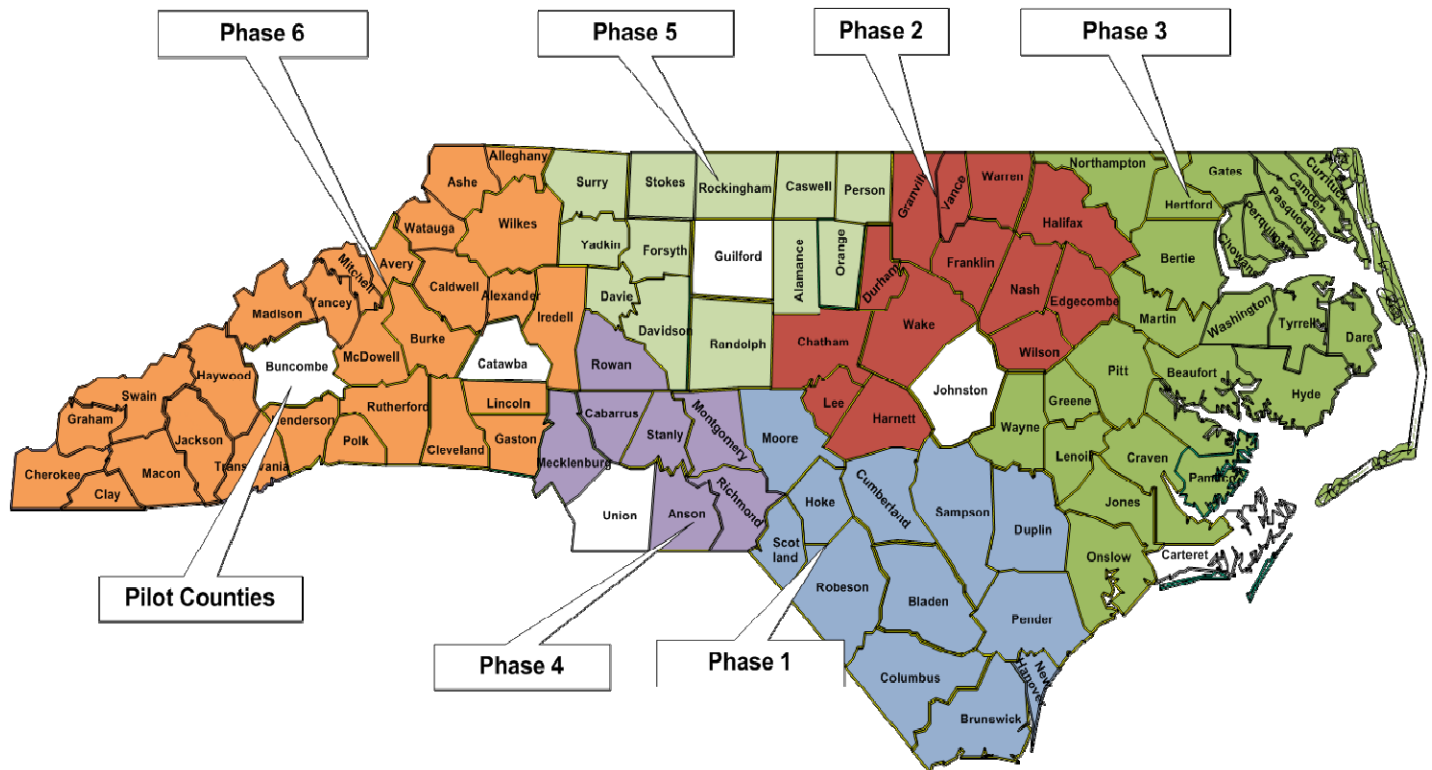
Upcoming Events

Late June- Mid-July	Implementation Phase 1 Introductory Meetings, with County Leadership at Phase 1 county offices
August	Kick-off meetings for all Phase 1 FNS county staff
	Implementation Phase 2 Introductory Meetings, with County Leadership at Phase 2 county offices
Sept. 16	NC FAST Update, NCSSA Regional Meeting, North Piedmont District (Dobson)

Contact Us

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