

Unified Family Courts of North Carolina

Family Court Counties

Anson	Buncombe
Burke	Caldwell
Catawba	Cumberland
Durham	Greene
Halifax	Lenoir
Mecklenburg	Montgomery
Moore	New Hanover
Pender	Pitt
Randolph	Richmond
Stanly	Union
Wake	Wayne



OUR MISSION

To help resolve cases involving children and families through combined efforts of the family, the Court and community services.

To approach each case in a way that is not overly adversarial or intrusive but always in a just, timely and efficient manner.

To be courteous, safe and accessible and to provide quality service to those in need.

DISTRICT 19B FAMILY COURT MONTGOMERY, MOORE AND RANDOLPH COUNTIES: *THE FIRST YEAR*

Family Court opened in Judicial District 19B in April of 2008. The staff was hired in the preceding months and immediately began reviewing the 1505 pending domestic cases including 898 cases that were older than one year. The Family Court Judges addressed every pending case through a cleanup calendar, administrative order or status conference until the inactive cases were closed and the active cases were scheduled. Every domestic case is now continuously calendared so that all pending cases have future court dates.

A local Family Court Advisory Committee was formed to develop the Domestic Rules. In an effort to encourage participation throughout the district, every court stakeholder was invited to join the Committee and the meetings were held in each of the three counties. The resulting rules are often referred to as the Family Court "working rules" with revisions anticipated in the near future.

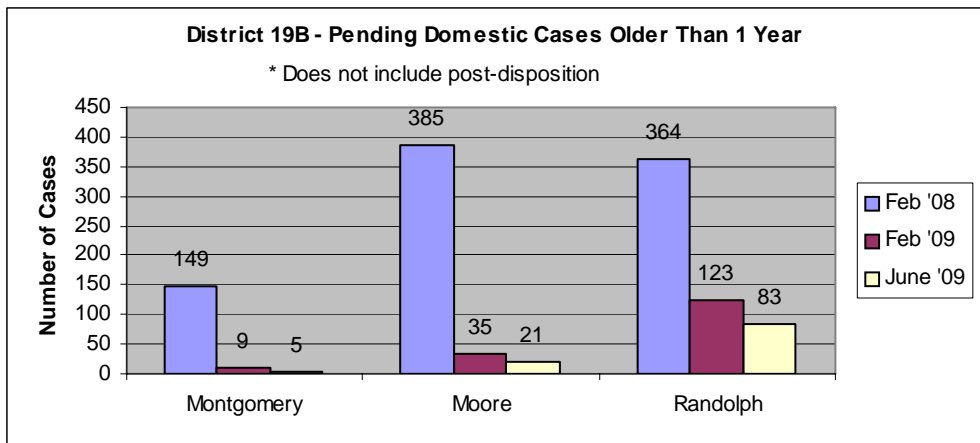
One of the biggest administrative challenges was converting sessions of Domestic Court from a calendar call system to a time certain system. The Family Court Case Coordinators now

schedule all domestic cases at a specific date and time. This is advantageous to the attorneys who can now manage their schedules around specific cases instead of being on call throughout each session of court.

Every domestic case is assigned to a judge who follows the case (and all related cases) from the beginning to the end. Caseloads are tracked with particular attention paid to cases older than one year. As a result of the administrative cleanup and continuous tracking of cases, the pending median age of domestic cases in the district has dropped from 570 days (February 2008) to 88 days (June 2009).

The first year of Family Court began under the direction of Chief District Court Judge William Neely who retired in December of 2008. Family Court continues to grow under the direction of Chief District Court Judge Michael Sabiston. The Family Court Judges are Don Creed, Jr., Scott Etheridge, Lee Gavin, James Hill, Jr., Jayrene Maness and Robert Wilkins.

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FAMILY COURT NEWS

Anson/Richmond/Stanly-Judicial District 20A: A free CLE on Substance Abuse was held in Wadesboro at the Anson County Courthouse on Friday, September 18, 2009. The presenters were Michael Bridges and Mark Crabtree from the N.C. Department of Correction, Division of Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency. The CLE focused on the basics of addiction, highlighted evidence-based best practices in treatment and illustrated recovery as a long-term process. **Tennelle.W.Hann@nccourts.org**

Buncombe-Judicial District 28: Family Court staff has collaborated this summer with the juvenile clerks and has been working diligently to bring all abuse, neglect and dependency data up to date in JWise so the use of the newly available JWise time standard reports can be maximized. Additionally, Family Court and the Custody Mediation program have added a monthly parent education/mediation orientation session in Spanish to accommodate the growing needs of the community. The Family Drug Treatment Court continues to do well, with 20 participants currently, and five on track to graduate later this month. This will be the largest graduation the program has seen since its inception!
Ellen.G.Rose@nccourts.org

Cumberland-Judicial District 12: Cumberland County Family Court conducted a day long training on August 6, 2009 for local attorneys, agencies and staff. The training topics included vicarious trauma, managing work and family, managing stress, influencing others without authority, family law update and juvenile law update. The endeavor was so well received and effective that Family Court hopes to offer these types of trainings at least twice a year for attorneys, staff and local agencies. Thank you to all of the presenters who made this workshop a tremendous success. **Mia.M.LaMotte@nccourts.org**

Greene/Lenoir/Wayne-Judicial District 8: In June, Lenoir County hosted a CLE training on social security benefits. Much was learned concerning knowing and understanding available benefits. Wayne and Lenoir Counties both had their SCOT Analysis in July and August and have completed their Action Plan for Family Drug Treatment Court. The Family Court Advisory Board met in July and formed subcommittees to begin revising local rules. **Laura.H.Smith@nccourts.org**

Halifax-Judicial District 6A: On August 31, 2009, Judicial Districts 6A and 6B participated in a CLE program sponsored by the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, Halifax County Family Court and the Bars of Judicial Districts 6A and 6B. Family Court took the lead in planning the event along with the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism. Approximately 65 attorneys and judges attended the CLE. Three hours of CLE credit were awarded for the program entitled *Professionalism in Practice: A Local Perspective*. Chief Justice Sarah Parker was the keynote speaker and delivered a timely presentation on *Professionalism in Practice*. Mel Wright, Executive Director of the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, spoke to attorneys about mentoring and professionalism and reminded them of other

services available to them from the Commission. The Hon. Brenda G. Branch and Hon. Alfred W. Kwasikpui, chief district court judges in 6A and 6B respectively, and the DAs from districts 6A and 6B, Melissa D. Pelfrey and Valerie M. Asbell, respectively, presented on *Professionalism and the Criminal Justice System*. Each bar made presentations that included *Perspective from the Bar, Perspective of a Young Attorney and Perspective from Years of Practice*. District 6A Bar President Anthony Strickland presented on behalf of the District 6A bar along with attorneys Gregory Perry and Gilbert Chichester. District 6B Bar President Mitchell McLean and attorneys Buddy Jones and Luther Culpepper, IV presented on behalf of the District 6B bar. All judges present were given the opportunity to make concluding remarks. The event was held at the Northampton County Cultural and Wellness Center in Jackson where a warm welcome was extended by the Chair of the Northampton County Commissioners, Mr. Robert V. Carter. **Susan.W.Horrell@nccourts.org**

New Hanover/Pender-Judicial District 5: Family Court Judge J.H. Corpening, II was a featured speaker at the 3rd Annual Fatherhood Conference entitled "FATHERS: The Hope and the Future" on May 30th. The Conference was sponsored by the New Hanover County Partnership for Fatherhood, which is a group of local community agencies who are dedicated to increasing the number of children that grow up with a responsible father who is active in their lives, raising public awareness of the impact of a father's presence on his children and helping all parents to understand the important role they have in their child's life. Portions of the Conference are now being broadcast on the local public access station. **Suann.N.Bechtel@nccourts.org**

Pitt-Judicial District 3A: Pitt County Family Court facilitated a program on professionalism in practice from a local perspective sponsored by the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism and Lawyers Mutual on September 17, 2009.
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Union-Judicial District 20B: Union County opened a Pro Se Clinic for Custody/Visitation on August 17, 2009. The clinic is held on the first and third Mondays in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Judicial Center and staffed by volunteer attorneys and/or judges. Over the past few months, a committee developed the forms, protocol and a PowerPoint presentation for the clinic. Two CLE opportunities and a Family and Children's Summit are planned for this fall. **Martha.S.Hall@nccourts.org**

Wake-Judicial District 10: Wake County Family Court is pleased to welcome two new judges. Judge Lori Christian has joined the Family Court in the domestic rotation and Judge James Fullwood has taken the bench in Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Court. Additionally, the Family Court has been diligently working with the Wake County Domestic Family Court Improvement Committee to revise the domestic local rules and forms. Wake County is hopeful that the new rules and forms will be implemented in the next few months. **Melissa.C.Levine@nccourts.org**

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