

# Unified Family Courts of North Carolina

## Family Court Counties

Anson  
Buncombe  
Burke  
Caldwell  
Catawba  
Cumberland  
Durham  
Greene  
Halifax  
Lenoir  
Mecklenburg  
New Hanover  
Pender  
Richmond  
Stanly  
Union  
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.

### WINNING YEAR IN CASE MANAGEMENT!

#### Domestic Cases Pending Over One Year:

Family Court Districts:  
**23.5%**

Non Family Court Districts:  
**51.1%**

**For more case management  
results, see page 2.**

## DURHAM FAMILY COURT COLLABORATES TO WIN KEITNER AWARD

**D**urham County's award-winning System of Care has created a collaboration of service providers and "customers" that is worthy of the Ralph W. Ketner Productivity Award. The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners acknowledged this effort with one of only ten awards given throughout the state.

Since 2003, county expenditures for court-ordered placements for children who need specialized services have decreased from over \$700,000 to \$7,000 in 2004. The number of children receiving integrated mental health, educational, health and social services increased 45 percent between February 2003 and March 2004, from 600 children to 869 children.

The Durham Family Court personnel have been instrumental in helping change "business as usual" from an uncoordinated morass into an integrated system for the children in need of multi-agency services. "The program prevents kids from falling through the cracks and allows children and their families to get services earlier and in a less fragmented manner," says Adele Spitz Roth, from the Duke Center for Child and Family Policy.

Without the advantage of any new or additional money, the new delivery approach emphasizes family strengths and encourages the family's active involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of services for children with specialized needs. The Durham County System of Care integrates the work of education, juvenile justice, health, mental health, social services, family court, and other helping agencies. They work with families through a team decision-making structures that require shared responsibility and accountability to achieve better results for children

and their families. In the past year, there has been a 52 percent decrease in the number of Durham County youth placed in residential treatment centers, which has resulted in an increase in the number of Durham County children and youth who receive needed services in their homes or in a therapeutic foster home setting. The program is structured so that families and children only have to 'tell their story' once in order to receive comprehensive and integrated services.

Durham's County Commissioners have recently reinvested funds originally budgeted for court-ordered treatment to provide additional infrastructure support and expansion of the System of Care. Durham System of Care and Community Collaborative Organizations includes: Durham County Commissioners, Durham Public Schools, Durham Center, Durham County Public Health, Durham County Social Services, Duke Center for Child and Family Policy, Durham District Court Administrative Office of the Courts, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Strong Families of Durham.

For more information on the System of Care, contact the leadership of any of the above-mentioned organizations or Martha Kaufman at 919-560-7215 or Adele Spitz-Roth at 919-416-7502.

For further information regarding  
Family Court contact:  
Jan Hood,  
AOC Court Management Specialist at  
919-733-7107

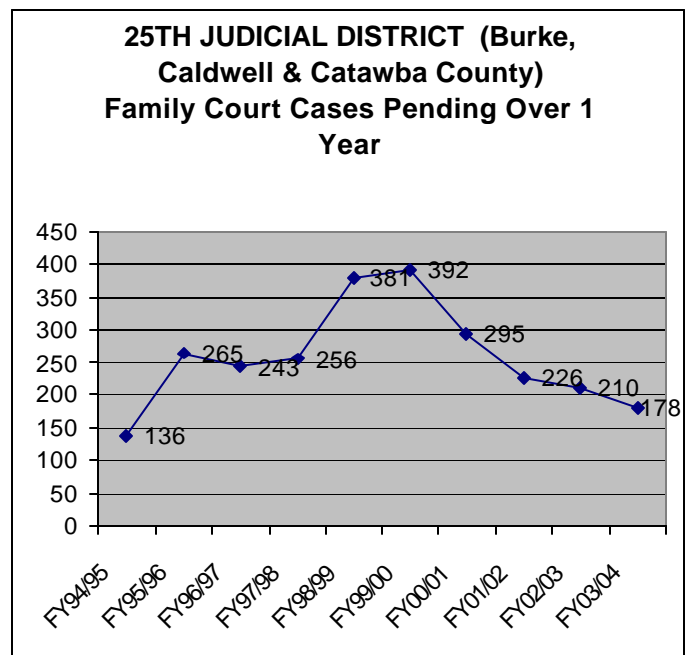
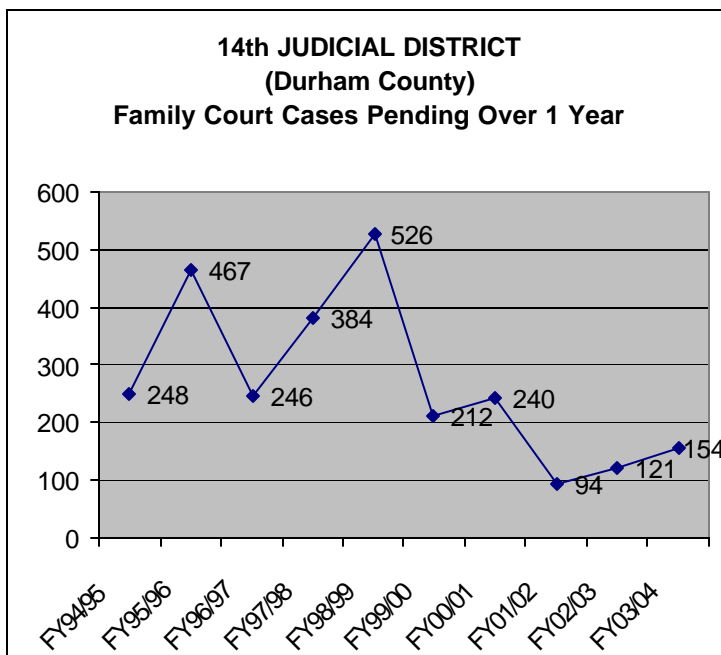
## The Honorable J. H. Corpening II, 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District: Message from the Trenches

I just wanted to recount for you a story from my [August 2004] two week session. There were two important parts. First, at calendar call on the Wednesday before the session I learned that attorneys in three cases had set mediations on the last Wednesday and Thursday of my term, even though their mediation dates had passed. I decided to let them mediate, but promised that I would handle their cases on the last two days of my term. Two of the cases were to mediate on Thursday afternoon. I learned on the following Wednesday afternoon that the mediator for one of the cases needed to try a custody case with me on Thursday and would not be able to mediate. Pat Laney, my case manager, got on the telephone and located a mediator who could conduct the mediation on Thursday afternoon. I notified the attorneys and the mediation went forward. Although the case did not settle in mediation and I had to try the case on Friday, a clear message was sent that we are committed to the mediation process and to a timely trial if mediation is unsuccessful. We finished the equitable distri-

bution and alimony claims on Friday afternoon at 5 pm. By the way the other mediation reached a settlement agreement.

The other part of the story relates to the Wednesday mediation that was not successful. On Thursday morning I had a hearing on whether to continue the trial or not, and during the course of that hearing I had to admonish an attorney about the reason for timelines and the importance of time standards. I explained to the attorneys that these rules were recommended not by judges or lawyers, but by citizens who believed that cases could be resolved in a reasonable period of time, and that all the litigants before us wanted their cases to be resolved quickly and efficiently. I explained that I was totally committed to making sure all of this happened. I noticed during my explanation that the litigants [awaiting my] next case ... were nodding their heads vigorously in agreement. Apparently taking note of my commitment to help, they promptly settled their equitable distribution and alimony claims.

### FAMILY COURT DISTRICTS REVERSE LONG TERM CASE BACKLOG



Over the past five years, cases pending over one year have **increased** 39% statewide in civil domestic. Yet Family Court districts are tackling the challenge head on and report noteworthy results in reversing the trend of backlogged cases. Check out these examples. The 14th District (Durham County) **decreased** its pending cases over the age of one year by 57%! Likewise the 25th District (Caldwell, Burke, Catawba and Caldwell Counties) **decreased** its pending cases over the age of one year by 53% over the same period.