

# 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	Wake

## 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.



## FAMILY COURT INSTRUMENTAL IN CONNECTING COURTS WITH SYSTEM OF CARE

### DURHAM'S SYSTEM OF CARE

(SOC) is anchored in an integrated network of community services supported by collaboration among families, professionals, and the community. The local SOC integrates the work of education, juvenile justice, health, mental health, child welfare, family court, and other helping organizations with families through team decision-making structures that require shared responsibility and accountability to assure children have access to the services and supports needed.

### THE BASIC CONSTRUCTS:

(1) **Durham Directors** - Chairperson of the County Commissioners, the School Superintendent, Juvenile Court Judge, and Directors of Public Health, The Durham Center, DSS, and the Chief DJJDP working together to provide top-level leadership and local SOC policies; (2) the **System of Care Council** - Assistant Director level or senior staff across agencies who improve services by refining operational and policy aspects of the system; (3) the **Community Collaborative** - a broad range of agencies, public and private providers, and other family advocates who assesses needs in the community and establish effective relationships to improve local services; (4) **Child and**

**Family Teams (CFT)**, who work with each family their providers and informal support persons to develop and implement individualized family-centered service/support plans; (5) **Care Review Teams** - various public and private professionals who provide additional support to CFTs helping with complicated family situations. These team structures share responsibility and accountability to actively support CFTs to achieve meaningful outcomes within the framework of a home-and community-based System of Care.

**THE BENEFITS:** significant increases in the number children and families receiving community-based services, substantial reductions in expenditures for court-ordered care, new best practice services cross-funded among agency partners, and substantial decreases in the number of children sent to out of area residential treatment facilities. Child-serving agencies work together with families and the communities to identify and meet needs for children and families. E.g., two cross-agency Liaison positions were created to **link to District Court**, where families historically had difficulty obtaining services when and where they were needed (Court Liaison and DSS Liaison positions). Funds were pooled among the local Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Council, the local Department of Social Services and The Durham

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Center (MH/DD/SAS) to contract with a local private provider to create 'Rapid Response Homes', therapeutic family treatment homes available 7/24/365 for children in crisis. This resource allows the Child and Family Team to address the immediate crisis, develop a comprehensive plan for next steps, and avoid sending children to more restrictive settings such as hospitals, detention centers or group homes.

Durham's County Commissioners reinvested \$225,000 local savings from reduced court ordered care last year to broaden and sustain the local SOC.

Durham's SOC received two prestigious awards in 2004: the NC County Commissioner Association's Ketner Award and the NC Council for Community Program's Programs of Excellence Award.

## IN THE NEWS

**Cumberland County** Chief Judge Beth Keever, AOC Family Court Specialist Jan Hood and Fayetteville Attorney Debra Radtke recently appeared on OPEN NET, the statewide television show operated by the Department of Administration, and answered call in questions about Family Court.

The Access & Visitation program in **Cumberland County** now offers three legal clinics facilitated by family law attorneys every other month and three Pro Se packets for fathers who are paying child support but are not being allowed to visit with their children.

Jimmy Lewis, Jr. of **Durham Family Court**, was honored on June 9, 2005 as he received the *Sheila Bazemore Commemorative Award* for his exemplary service and commitment to the field of fatherhood in North Carolina During the evening banquet at the **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Men Are Nurturers Too** Statewide Fatherhood Conference.

**Wake Family Court**, the newest Family Court funded by the legislature, is busy recruiting staff, setting up offices, drafting rules through working committees and attending training.

**Buncombe County Family Court** received Federal funding to implement Access & Visitation services to non-custodial parents to enable them to spend more time with their children.

**Halifax Family Court** will be featured in an ABA article on juvenile courts of distinction.



Median Age of  
Pending Domestic Cases  
*July 2004 to June 2005:*

**Family Court Districts:**  
**113 Days**

**Non-Family Court Districts:**  
**430 Days**

For further information regarding  
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