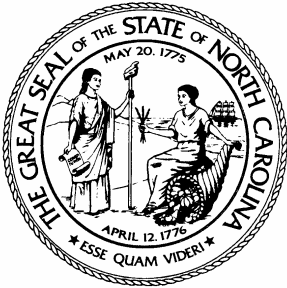


# Unified Family Courts of North Carolina

## 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.

## YOUTH SAFETY SUMMIT AND OTHER COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS IN NEW HANOVER/PENDER COUNTIES

**New Hanover County Family Court** is partnering with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and other local sponsors to present a Youth Safety Summit on September 22, 2006. The Summit is designed to increase the violence awareness of youth and adults participating in the Summit. The program begins with a trip by local elementary students to the New Hanover County Courthouse where the students will meet local public officials and then participate in a “mock trial” authored and presided over by **Family Court Judge J.H. Corpensing, II.**

The students will then travel by bus to UNCW for interactive, grade appropriate activities planned by local agencies that will teach personal safety skills, self awareness, appropriate responses to bullying, and teamwork. The adults participating in the Summit will eat with the students at UNCW before the students return to school. Dr. Sharon Cooper, Forensic Pediatrician, will present to the adults in the afternoon on violence in today’s world. New Hanover County District Court Judge Rebecca Blackmore will also present a program at the Summit entitled “Gangs in the Community and the Courtroom”. The Summit concludes with monologues from “Hope”, a play about violence, presented by the Dreams Center for Arts Education, an arts education after-school “safe haven” for children. This after-school “safe haven” enables the children to experience the joy of creative expression in a safe and nurturing environment.

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**New Hanover County Family Court** presented its first CLE approved “Lunch and Learn” for members of the Family Law Bar on June 7, 2006. Two local psychologists presented a program on psychological issues that arise in family law cases, including child custody evaluations and psychological evaluations. The Lunch and Learn also included a discussion of the role of a parent coordinator in ongoing custody cases. See NC General Statutes §50-90 through 100.


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**New Hanover County Family Court Judges**, together with the New Hanover County Schools, Sheriff’s Department, Department of Juvenile Justice, District Attorney’s office, Department of Social Services, Southeastern Center for Mental Health and the Wilmington Police Department partnered to establish a “Judicial Attendance Council”. The Council was established to promote attendance by identifying the obstacles to school attendance and matching resources with the family to remove the obstacles. The Council also exists to demonstrate the commitment of the community to school attendance, especially at the elementary school level. 34 students and parents were referred to the Council during the 2005-2006 school year. Of the 34 students, 29 were elementary school age.


For more information about these programs you may contact Suann Bechtel at [suann.n.bechtel@nccourts.org](mailto:suann.n.bechtel@nccourts.org).


## Family Court News Flashes


 In January 2006, **Buncombe's Family Court** presented a free 2-hour continuing legal education seminar, *Permanency Mediation - Practice, Protocols, and Legal Perspectives*. A permanency mediation referral can take place when children are removed from their family and placed in alternative care. Mediation empowers families to participate in creating the safety plan, possibly reduces the time in court, and hopefully decreases the length of time to a permanent plan for children. Because there can be 10-16+ people involved in any session, a co-mediation model has been adopted and mediations can take an average of four hours to complete. The legal seminar preceded the first referral of what are now 12 cases of which 75% were successfully resolved. [aleece.m.hiller@nccourts.org](mailto:aleece.m.hiller@nccourts.org)

 **Catawba County Family Court (District 25)** and Solutions of Hickory, PA are collaborating to create and offer a pilot education program for children, ages 9-12, whose parents are involved in court-ordered custody mediation. Thanks to the therapists at Solutions, grant funds have been procured to cover the costs of materials. The therapists' and staff at Solutions will donate their time to register families and conduct the classes. *The Divorce "411": Kids Learning to Handle Parents during Divorce* will begin in September and will be offered free of charge while parents are involved in Custody Mediation Orientation. The **25<sup>th</sup> District** is also working with Catawba Valley Legal Services to create a bi-monthly Divorce Clinic for pro se litigants. The goal of the clinic is education, with the intended outcome to increase the number of pro se litigants who know enough about legal procedures to successfully complete their divorce. [a.j.coutu@nccourts.org](mailto:a.j.coutu@nccourts.org)

 **Cumberland County Family Court** will be hosting two (2) CLE'S for attorneys this fall; a CLE on Court-ordered custody evaluations will be held on September 26; the second CLE will cover the new DWI legislation and will be held on November 16. [lisa.m.stolarski@nccourts.org](mailto:lisa.m.stolarski@nccourts.org)

 **Lenoir, Wayne and Greene Counties (District 8)** are in the process of a gang assessment to determine the extent of the gang problem in the district. A task force consisting of local school systems, law enforcement, DJJDP, the faith community, and non-profit agencies has been formed to work with Family Court to conduct the assessment. [mona.n.williams@nccourts.org](mailto:mona.n.williams@nccourts.org)

 **Union County**, District 20B, has received funding through the Court Improvement Project to implement their Family Drug Treatment Court, a court for substance abusing parents who have lost custody of their children. The program is called Union Families in Recovery Staying Together or U-FIRST. After more than a year's planning, the local multi-disciplinary team was pleased to hold their first court August 16<sup>th</sup>. [martha.s.hall@nccourts.org](mailto:martha.s.hall@nccourts.org)

 **Wake County** has received funding from the North Carolina Bar Association Foundation, Inc. Endowment to establish a "SelfServe Center." The SelfServe Center will assist low-income persons, who do not qualify for Legal Aid, in gaining access to the judicial system with an emphasis on obtaining relief in Family Court matters. [lori.m.price@nccourts.org](mailto:lori.m.price@nccourts.org)

### Case Management

**Domestic Cases Median Age**

*July 2006-August 2006*

**Family Court Districts: 141 days**

**Non-Family Court Districts: 329 days**

For Family Court information, contact:

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AOC Court Management Specialists