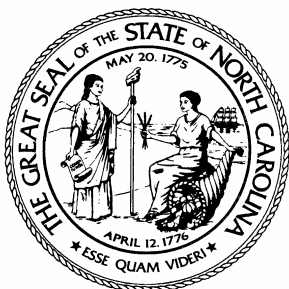


Unified Family Courts of North Carolina

Family Court Counties

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

WAKE FAMILY COURT'S SELF-SERVE CENTER

In June of 2006, the Board of Directors of the NC Bar Association Foundation, Inc. Endowment awarded \$6,360 to the 10th Judicial District Family Court to help establish a SelfServe Center to assist the many pro se (unrepresented) litigants in Wake County. The purpose of the Wake SelfServe Center is to help litigants gain meaningful access to the judicial system with an emphasis on obtaining relief in Family Law matters.

The intent of the SelfServe Center is not to increase pro se litigation, but to provide educational materials so that when a litigant decides to represent him or herself the litigant will be more educated about the court process. The Self-Serve Center complements a primary goal of Family Court, to provide information and connection to community resources to help families in crisis.

Grant funding was needed to purchase equipment and educational materials. Three computers were purchased; two are accessible to Center visitors and one is used by staff in the Center. Relevant books, such as legal dictionaries and family law-related statutes were purchased with funding and are available for visitor use. The Center also includes an area with books and toys for children who accompany litigants to the Center.

The Wake SelfServe Center opened on January 3, 2007. The Center is located next to the Family Court Office and is open Tuesday through Thursday, from 9am to 12pm. A Family Court staff mem-

ber is housed in the SelfServe Center during the hours of operation. Allocating the staff time to run the Center is a challenge, but the hope is that additional staff and judge time will be saved by having more knowledgeable litigants.

The Center currently offers the following forms: a custody complaint, an answer to a custody complaint, a motion to modify custody, and a motion for contempt. Family Court staff developed PowerPoint presentations to educate visitors on the form topics in addition to presentations on courtroom etiquette and representing yourself in court.

From January 3, 2007 through June 30, 2007, there were 271 SelfServe Center visitors with only 2 visitors having visited the Center more than once. The vast majority of visitors (76%) came to the Center to pick up the packet on child custody or visitation. In addition, 77% of Center visitors reported an annual household income of \$40,000 or less. The percentage of females to males visitors is 54% female and 46% male.

Wake Family Court is currently working on creating a website so individuals may access SelfServe Center services remotely. The Mecklenburg Family Court SelfServe Center, another SelfServe Center in the state, already has a user-friendly website that can be accessed at www.nccourts.org/Support/SelfServeCenters.asp. The Mecklenburg SelfServe Center opened in 1999 and is a model for other centers.

A special thank you to the members of the North Carolina General Assembly for funding two additional Family Court districts in the 2007-2009 state budget.

FAMILY COURT NEWS FLASHES



Buncombe Family Court: The 28th District recently finished revisions to the local Juvenile Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Rules and are now working on revising the Domestic Rules and local forms. The Family Court Administrator has also been busy working with the local Bar's pro bono committee in revising all local pro se packets and actively pursuing professionals to work as parenting coordinators. ellen.g.rose@nccourts.org

Cumberland Family Court: Mia LaMotte began as the Family Court Administrator on July 30, 2007. She relocated from Baton Rouge, Louisiana where she was part of the administration team for the East Baton Rouge Parish Juvenile Court for eleven years. **Welcome back!** Willie Christian has returned to his position as Access and Visitation Coordinator. He performed an overseas tour for the U.S. Army with the Multi-National Security Transition Command in Baghdad, Iraq for fifteen months. **THANK YOU WILLIE.** Brian Bell who performed Willie's duties as Coordinator while he was away is now working with Guardian Ad Litem as their At-Risk Youth Case Manager. mia.m.lamotte@nccourts.org

Durham Family Court: Lori Price is the new Family Court Administrator in Durham. Lori was the Family Court Administrator in Wake County and the former Wake County Court Improvement Project Director. Anita Rice has also joined the District Court Judges' Office staff as the new Custody Mediator. Anita was previously a social worker in Guilford County and, prior to that, conducted dispute resolutions and mediations as a Family Service Officer in Massachusetts. lori.m.price@nccourts.org

Halifax Family Court: Chief District Court and Family Court Judge H. Paul McCoy, Jr. has been nominated to receive a 2007 GlaxoSmithKline Child Health Recognition Award in the Individual Recognition category. This year's nominations highlight efforts made in the public health community to create a better environment. Judge McCoy was nominated by Brenda Hudson, RN, BSN, who is the Director of Nursing at the Halifax County Health Department and a member of the Family Drug Treatment Court Team. She nominated Judge McCoy because of his inspiring leadership and unending dedication in focusing on child and family health issues in both the Family Drug Treatment Court and Juvenile Court. Judge McCoy will attend the awards' luncheon on September 26th at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center in Durham. susan.w.horrell@nccourts.org

Lenoir Family Court: A local soon-to-be Eagle Scout worked with Family Court and Superior Court to create a safe kid-friendly room in the Lenoir County Courthouse. A mural was painted on the walls, and toys and furniture were donated from local businesses and citizens. mona.n.williams@nccourts.org

Mecklenburg Family Court: In collaboration with the Mecklenburg County Bar's Lawyer Referral Service and Volunteer Lawyer Program, the Mecklenburg County SelfServe Center launched an Attorney-for-the-Day Program staffed by volunteer attorneys in the fall of 2006. The program is designed to assist low-income self-represented litigants in the area of family law. Pre-screened customers who have requested advice in the area of divorce and/or child custody are linked with attorneys who provide thirty-minute consultations at no cost. The consults are conveniently conducted within the Courthouse. Over 1,000 volunteer hours were committed at the launch of the program. Preliminary evaluation results indicate a substantial level of satisfaction from the private bar. Likewise, customers conveyed gratitude for assistance in negotiating a complex and intimidating legal system. elisa.a.chinn-gary@nccourts.org

New Hanover Family Court: A Fatherhood Conference, held on May 5, was sponsored by the New Hanover County Partnership in Fatherhood, a cooperative effort between New Hanover County Family Court, New Hanover County Child Support Agency, DSS, and other community agencies. Judge J.H. Corpening, II, led a session entitled "Building and Maintaining Relationships and Trust with Teenagers," and Judge Phyllis Gorham led a session entitled "Father's in the Legal Arena". The sessions are currently aired on a local government television station. suann.n.bechtel@nccourts.org

Union Family County: With the help of college interns, District 20B researched and prepared the appropriate paperwork to establish a 501 (C) 3 status for their Family Drug Treatment Court. The District hosted a Lunch & Learn Series for paralegals to communicate issues regarding local rules and procedures. They also hosted a Clerks' breakfast meeting with the elected Clerk, Civil Assistant and Deputy Clerks and Family Court staff. The staff and judges of Judicial District 20B developed a Local Rules Committee who will be working this fall to edit and update their Local Rules. martha.s.hall@nccourts.org

Wake Family Court: Bonita Lawrence McClure began work as the new Family Court Administrator in May. Bonita has over ten years of experience in program administration and mental health. Sandra Cooper and Lauren Primato are new Case Coordinators. bonita.l.mcclure@nccourts.org

Pending Median Age of Domestic Cases
July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007:
Family Court Districts: 121 days
Non-Family Court Districts: 312 days

For Family Court information, contact:
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