

Chowan, Gates and Perquimans Counties Memorandum of Agreement

The parties to this MOA agree to support the following practices and policies:

A. Judicial Specialization.

- 1) Judges assigned to hear abuse, neglect and dependency cases should receive specialized training not only on the juvenile code, but in non-legal areas such as child development, substance abuse treatment and the dynamics of domestic violence and shall attend and participate in training in these areas.
- 2) Judges assigned to hear these cases should receive certification from the Administrative Office of the Courts as a juvenile court judge.
- 3) Judges should be assigned to juvenile court for a significant length of time, preferably at least 3 years.
- 4) All efforts should be made to ensure that the same judge will hear a child welfare case from start to finish.
- 5) Judges assigned to these cases should commit to a thorough review of the child and family's situation at each hearing.

B. Quality Representation of Parties.

All attorneys representing parents through court appointment in abuse, neglect and dependency cases should agree to attend offered trainings within the district during each year. These trainings will be not only on the juvenile code, but in non-legal areas such as child development, substance abuse treatment, and the dynamics of domestic violence.

C. Active Case Flow Management.

The parties to this MOA agree to frequent and regular review of available data to determine the number of children in the local court system, whether timelines are being followed and whether agreed upon outcomes are being met. The parties also agree to use this data to identify and correct barriers that are preventing cases from having appropriate outcomes in a timely manner.

D. Court Rules.

The parties agree to conduct an annual review update of local court rules.

E. Child Planning Conferences.

The parties agree to implement Child Planning Conferences (CPCs) and to periodically update local rules for scheduling CPCs, determining and notifying the participants, identifying the issues to be discussed and determining how any agreement or failure to agree is brought to the courts attention.

F. Court Calendared Time.

In Chowan, Gates and Perquimans counties, DSS cases are calendared the same day as juvenile delinquent cases. Abuse, neglect and dependency cases shall be calendared and heard at 9:30 a.m. as these cases take precedence over all other district court matters.

G. Discovery and Court Reports.

The parties to this MOA agree to update the local rules regarding discovery and sharing of relevant records such as, but not limited to, the DSS file and medical, mental health, educational and criminal records.

H. Continuance Calendaring.

At the conclusion of each hearing, the date and time of the next hearing shall be set if the court schedule is in place. If the court schedule is not in place, the DSS attorney will note in open court the month of the next hearing and that notices will be sent out with the specific date. The juvenile clerk shall enter the information into JWISE in accordance with the Clerk's Rules of Recordkeeping.

The information shall be provided, in the memorandum of judgment, if applicable, to the parties before they leave the courtroom.

I. Timely Court Orders.

At the conclusion of a hearing in which efforts are still being made to reunify with a parent or parents, an order or a memorandum of judgment from that hearing shall be signed by the judge and distributed to all parties and counsel. The final order shall be prepared, signed and filed within 30 days of the hearing. All proposed orders shall be submitted to all counsel or parties and the court in accordance with local rules.

J. Case Planning.

When a child enters the child welfare system, case planning is used by the local Department of Social Services (DSS) to achieve the goal of the child's safety, permanency and well-being. An essential tool used in case planning is the Child and Family Team (CFT) which

conducts a structured, facilitated meeting which brings family members together so that with the support of professionals and community resources, they can create a written plan that ensures child safety and meets the family's needs. The CFT meeting concludes with the preparation of a 'Family Services Agreement' that all participants are expected to sign. The 'Family Services Agreement' contains the team's decision regarding what action must be taken and/or what services are needed to assist a family to develop the capacity and capability to assure the child's health and safety and to meet the child's well being needs.

Attorneys for the parents may attend the CFT meeting if requested by their client. The Family Services Agreement prepared as a result of the meeting shall be provided to the parents and be available to their counsel, the GAL, the attorney advocate and counsel for the Department of Social Services upon their request.

K. Collaboration.

The parties recognize and support the vital role of partnerships with each other and with other agencies and organizations in improving outcomes for abused, neglected and dependent children.

The parties to this MOA agree to serve as an Advisory Committee comprised of key players in abuse, neglect and dependency court cases. The Advisory Committee will meet regularly not only to address legal and administrative issues, but to develop both short and long term goals for the community that will improve the lives of children and their families.

L. Training.

The parties are committed to identifying unmet training needs and increase training opportunities for all key players in abuse, neglect and dependency court. To attain this goal, the parties agree to:

- a. Appoint two individuals from their county committee to serve on a district wide Training Committee. These individuals will solicit suggestions for training topics from their county multidisciplinary committee, judges, attorneys and AOC staff and present these suggestions to the District Training Committee. This information will be used to establish a local training plan, and at a minimum, the training will include an annual training event to review legislative changes and recent juvenile appellate decisions.
- b. Schedule training events to maximize participation of everyone

involved in juvenile abuse and neglect proceedings and will include topics that meet the individual needs of the local participants.

- c. Make logistical arrangements for each training event, such as arranging for adequate facilities, securing guest speakers and making arrangements to offer continuing education credits for attorneys and social workers.
- d. Provide or identify cross-training opportunities for judges, clerks, attorneys, service providers, court administration and Guardian ad Litem staff and volunteers to build effective relationships at the local level.

M. Term of Agreement.

This agreement will be effective from the date of signature and will be reviewed biennially.

N. Revisions.

Revisions of this agreement may be made upon the approval of all signatories and shall become effective upon adoption.

O. Signatures.

Signed October 19, 2009.

Melanie Corprew
Melanie Corprew, Interim Director
Chowan Co. Dept. of Social Services

Susan Chaney
Susan Chaney, Director
Perquimans Co. Dept. of Social Ser.

William Crowe
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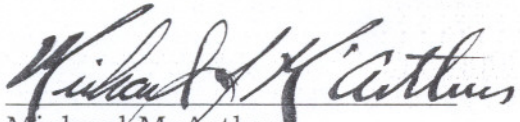
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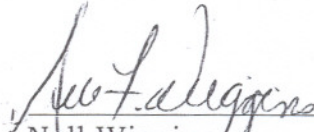
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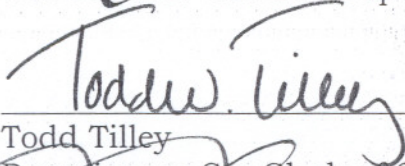
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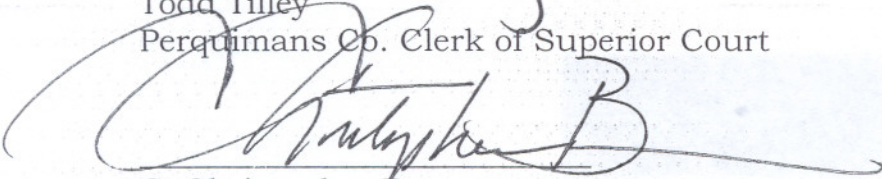
Michael McArthur
Chowan Co. Clerk of Superior Court



Nell Wiggins
Gates Co. Clerk of Superior Court



Todd Tilley
Perquimans Co. Clerk of Superior Court



C. Christopher Bean
Chief District Court Judge