

Unified Family Courts of North Carolina



For more information, click: <http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/CPrograms/Family/Default.asp>

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY COURTS

Family Courts provide a constructive and effective approach to very tough problems.

Justice Robin Hudson
North Carolina Supreme Court

Family Court (1) allows families to access the court system in an environment that is "family friendly" and supportive; (2) reduces processing time and costs; and, (3) improves compliance with court directives.

Sharon Kugelmass, Ph.D.
Mecklenburg County

I was a family law practitioner for over twelve years and before Family Courts were established. I can confirm that long delays were the norm before the Family Courts were established. Our family court judges need all the resources possible since their work effects the lives of thousands of children. Comprehensive and efficient access to justice for these families in crisis has a positive effect not only for the present but for years in the future.

Attorney Ellen B. Hancox
North Carolina State Bar

In the eyes of a child, time is a critical factor. A month can seem a year. Four months an eternity. Being deliberate and swift in making decisions about a child's permanence is CRITICAL. The data clearly shows that the Family Court is a much more time efficient process for children and families.

Executive Director Frank Crawford
Youth Homes

Unified Family Courts: Improving Justice for Families and Children in North Carolina

Since its inception in 1999, Family Court has helped families resolve difficult legal issues of divorce, child custody, child support and property distribution in a timely and respectful manner; increased judicial expertise in areas of substantive law and social dynamics affecting families; developed and expanded services providing access to the courts; and decreased the time expended from filing an action to final resolution.

- As of May 1, 2009, the median age of a pending case in a Family Court district was 84 days. The median age of a case filed in a non-family court district is 288 days.
- The "One Family - One Judge" model is employed to consolidate multiple court cases involving the same family before one judge resulting in early resolution of issues, fewer court hearings a family must attend and consistency in judicial decision-making.
- Every family case filed is assigned to a Family Court judge who is specially trained to deal with issues affecting children and families, including child development, cultural competence, substance abuse, domestic violence, family dynamics, and ADR.
- The "One Family - One Judge" model is employed to consolidate multiple court cases involving the same family before one judge resulting in early resolution of issues, fewer court hearings a family must attend and consistency in judicial decision-making.
- Family Court hearings and trials are scheduled by case managers rather than attorneys and are monitored from filing to disposition to ensure that they are resolved within established time standards (ranging from 30 days to one year depending on the issue).
- Strict policies have been executed whereby Family Court judges grant fewer continuances resulting in timely stabilization of the family.
- The inclusion of Alternate Dispute Resolution have afforded families a less adversarial and more affordable method of settling disputes.
- Family Court has increased the number of referrals to intervention services such as custody mediation, separating parent education classes, counseling and treatment programs, supervised visitation and exchanges for visitation, psychological and custody evaluations, and the use of Parenting Coordinators to negotiate family disputes.