

Article 2.

Jurisdiction.

**§ 7B-200. Jurisdiction.**

(a) The court has exclusive, original jurisdiction over any case involving a juvenile who is alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent. This jurisdiction does not extend to cases involving adult defendants alleged to be guilty of abuse or neglect.

The court also has exclusive original jurisdiction of the following proceedings:

- (1) Proceedings under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children set forth in Article 38 of this Chapter.
- (2) Proceedings involving judicial consent for emergency surgical or medical treatment for a juvenile when the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or other person who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent without being awarded legal custody of the juvenile by a court refuses to consent for treatment to be rendered.
- (3) Proceedings to determine whether a juvenile should be emancipated.
- (4) Proceedings to terminate parental rights.
- (4a) Proceedings for reinstatement of parental rights.
- (5) Proceedings to review the placement of a juvenile in foster care pursuant to an agreement between the juvenile's parents or guardian and a county department of social services.
- (5a) Proceedings to review the placement of a young adult in foster care pursuant to G.S. 108A-48 and G.S. 7B-910.1.
- (6) Proceedings in which a person is alleged to have obstructed or interfered with an investigation required by G.S. 7B-302.
- (7) Proceedings involving consent for an abortion on an unemancipated minor under Article 1A, Part 2 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.
- (8) Proceedings by an underage party seeking judicial authorization to marry under Article 1 of Chapter 51 of the General Statutes.
- (9) Petitions for judicial review of a director's determination under Article 3A of this Chapter.

(b) The court shall have jurisdiction over the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker of a juvenile who has been adjudicated abused, neglected, or dependent, provided the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker has (i) been properly served with summons pursuant to G.S. 7B-406, (ii) waived service of process, or (iii) automatically become a party pursuant to G.S. 7B-401.1(c) or (d).

(c) When the court obtains jurisdiction over a juvenile as the result of a petition alleging that the juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent:

- (1) Any other civil action in this State in which the custody of the juvenile is an issue is automatically stayed as to that issue, unless the juvenile proceeding and the civil custody action or claim are consolidated pursuant to subsection (d) of this section or the court in the juvenile proceeding enters an order dissolving the stay.
- (2) If an order entered in the juvenile proceeding and an order entered in another civil custody action conflict, the order in the juvenile proceeding controls as long as the court continues to exercise jurisdiction in the juvenile proceeding.

(d) Notwithstanding G.S. 50-13.5(f), the court in a juvenile proceeding may order that any civil action or claim for custody filed in the district be consolidated with the juvenile proceeding. If a civil action or claim for custody of the juvenile is filed in another district, the court in the juvenile proceeding, for good cause and after consulting with the court in the other district, may: (i) order that the civil action or claim for custody be transferred to the county in which the juvenile proceeding is filed; or (ii) order a change of venue in the juvenile proceeding and transfer the juvenile proceeding to the county in which the civil action or claim is filed. The court in the juvenile proceeding may also proceed in the juvenile proceeding while the civil action or claim remains stayed or dissolve the stay of the civil action or claim and stay the juvenile proceeding pending a resolution of the civil action or claim. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 837, s. 1; 1985, c. 459, s. 2; 1987, c. 409, s. 2; 1995, c. 328, s. 3; c. 462, s. 2; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 23.2(c); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-62, s. 13; 2005-320, s. 1; 2005-399, s. 4; 2010-90, s. 3; 2011-295, s. 1; 2013-129, s. 2; 2017-161, s. 1.)

### **§ 7B-201. Retention and termination of jurisdiction.**

(a) When the court obtains jurisdiction over a juvenile, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years or is otherwise emancipated, whichever occurs first.

(b) When the court's jurisdiction terminates, whether automatically or by court order, the court thereafter shall not modify or enforce any order previously entered in the case, including any juvenile court order relating to the custody, placement, or guardianship of the juvenile. The legal status of the juvenile and the custodial rights of the parties shall revert to the status they were before the juvenile petition was filed, unless applicable law or a valid court order in another civil action provides otherwise. Termination of the court's jurisdiction in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding, however, shall not affect any of the following:

- (1) A civil custody order entered pursuant to G.S. 7B-911.
- (2) An order terminating parental rights.
- (3) A pending action to terminate parental rights, unless the court orders otherwise.
- (4) Any proceeding in which the juvenile is alleged to be or has been adjudicated undisciplined or delinquent.
- (5) The court's jurisdiction in relation to any new abuse, neglect, or dependency petition that is filed. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 4; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 23.2(d); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-320, s. 2.)

### **§ 7B-202. Permanency mediation.**

(a) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall establish a Permanency Mediation Program to provide statewide and uniform services to resolve issues in cases under this Subchapter in which a juvenile is alleged or has been adjudicated to be abused, neglected, or dependent, or in which a petition or motion to terminate a parent's rights has been filed. Participants in the mediation shall include the parties and their attorneys, including the guardian ad litem and attorney advocate for the child; provided, the court may allow mediation to proceed without the participation of a parent whose identity is unknown, a party who was served and has not made an appearance, or a parent, guardian, or custodian who has not been served despite a diligent attempt to serve the person. Upon a finding of good cause, the court may allow mediation to proceed without the participation of a parent who is unable to participate due to incarceration, illness, or some other

cause. Others may participate by agreement of the parties, their attorneys, and the mediator, or by order of the court.

(b) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall establish in phases a statewide Permanency Mediation Program consisting of local district programs to be established in all judicial districts of the State. The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts is authorized to approve contractual agreements for such services as executed by order of the Chief District Court Judge of a district court district, such contracts to be exempt from competitive bidding procedures under Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall promulgate policies and regulations necessary and appropriate for the administration of the program. Any funds appropriated by the General Assembly for the establishment and maintenance of permanency mediation programs under this Article shall be administered by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(c) Mediation proceedings shall be held in private and shall be confidential. Except as provided otherwise in this section, all verbal or written communications from participants in the mediation to the mediator or between or among the participants in the presence of the mediator are absolutely privileged and inadmissible in court.

(d) Neither the mediator nor any party or other person involved in mediation sessions under this section shall be competent to testify to communications made during or in furtherance of such mediation sessions; provided, there is no confidentiality or privilege as to communications made in furtherance of a crime or fraud. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as permitting an individual to obtain immunity from prosecution for criminal conduct or as excusing an individual from the reporting requirements of Article 3 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes or G.S. 108A-102.

(e) Any agreement reached by the parties as a result of the mediation, whether referred to as a "placement agreement," "case plan," or some similar name, shall be reduced to writing, signed by each party, and submitted to the court as soon as practicable. Unless the court finds good reason not to, the court shall incorporate the agreement in a court order, and the agreement shall become enforceable as a court order. If some or all of the issues referred to mediation are not resolved by mediation, the mediator shall report that fact to the court. (2006-187, s. 4(a).)

**§ 7B-203.** Reserved for future codification purposes.

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