

Chapter 7B.

Juvenile Code.

SUBCHAPTER I. ABUSE, NEGLECT, DEPENDENCY.

Article 1.

Purposes; Definitions; Limitation.

§ 7B-100. Purpose.

This Subchapter shall be interpreted and construed so as to implement the following purposes and policies:

- (1) To provide procedures for the hearing of juvenile cases that assure fairness and equity and that protect the constitutional rights of juveniles and parents;
- (2) To develop a disposition in each juvenile case that reflects consideration of the facts, the needs and limitations of the juvenile, and the strengths and weaknesses of the family.
- (3) To provide for services for the protection of juveniles by means that respect both the right to family autonomy and the juveniles' needs for safety, continuity, and permanence; and
- (4) To provide standards for the removal, when necessary, of juveniles from their homes and for the return of juveniles to their homes consistent with preventing the unnecessary or inappropriate separation of juveniles from their parents.
- (5) To provide standards, consistent with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, P.L. 105-89, for ensuring that the best interests of the juvenile are of paramount consideration by the court and that when it is not in the juvenile's best interest to be returned home, the juvenile will be placed in a safe, permanent home within a reasonable amount of time. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2003-140, s. 5.)

§ 7B-101. Definitions.

As used in this Subchapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words have the listed meanings:

- (1) Abused juveniles. – Any juvenile less than 18 years of age (i) who is found to be a minor victim of human trafficking under G.S. 14-43.15 or unlawful sale, surrender, or purchase of a minor under G.S. 14-43.14 or (ii) whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker:
 - a. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the juvenile a serious physical injury by other than accidental means;
 - b. Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the juvenile by other than accidental means;
 - c. Uses or allows to be used upon the juvenile cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior;
 - d. Commits, permits, or encourages the commission of a violation of the following laws by, with, or upon the juvenile: a sexually violent offense as provided in G.S. 14-208.6(5); crime against nature, as provided in G.S. 14-177; preparation of obscene photographs, slides, or motion

pictures of the juvenile, as provided in G.S. 14-190.5; dissemination of obscene material to the juvenile as provided in G.S. 14-190.7 and G.S. 14-190.8; and displaying or disseminating material harmful to the juvenile as provided in G.S. 14-190.14 and G.S. 14-190.15.

- e. Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the juvenile; serious emotional damage is evidenced by a juvenile's severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward himself or others;
 - f. Encourages, directs, or approves of delinquent acts involving moral turpitude committed by the juvenile; or
 - g. Commits or allows to be committed an offense under G.S. 14-43.11 (human trafficking), G.S. 14-43.12 (involuntary servitude), or G.S. 14-43.13 (sexual servitude) against the child.
- (2) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 1, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (3) Caretaker. – Any person other than a parent, guardian, or custodian who has responsibility for the health and welfare of a juvenile in a residential setting. A person responsible for a juvenile's health and welfare means a stepparent; foster parent; an adult member of the juvenile's household; an adult entrusted with the juvenile's care; a potential adoptive parent during a visit or trial placement with a juvenile in the custody of a department; any person such as a house parent or cottage parent who has primary responsibility for supervising a juvenile's health and welfare in a residential child care facility or residential educational facility; or any employee or volunteer of a division, institution, or school operated by the Department of Health and Human Services. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to impose a legal duty of support under Chapter 50 or Chapter 110 of the General Statutes. The duty imposed upon a caretaker as defined in this subdivision shall be for the purpose of this Subchapter only.
- (4) Clerk. – Any clerk of superior court, acting clerk, or assistant or deputy clerk.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 1, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (6) Court. – The district court division of the General Court of Justice.
- (7) Court of competent jurisdiction. – A court having the power and authority of law to act at the time of acting over the subject matter of the cause.
- (7a) Criminal history. – A local, State, or federal criminal history of conviction or pending indictment of a crime, whether a misdemeanor or a felony, involving violence against a person.
- (8) Custodian. – The person or agency that has been awarded legal custody of a juvenile by a court.
- (8a) Department. – Each county's child welfare agency. Unless the context clearly implies otherwise, when used in this Subchapter, "department" or "department of social services" shall refer to the county agency providing child welfare services, regardless of the name of the agency or whether the county has consolidated human services, pursuant to G.S. 153A-77 and shall include a regional social services department created pursuant to Part 2B of Article 1 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes.

- (9) Dependent juvenile. – A juvenile in need of assistance or placement because (i) the juvenile has no parent, guardian, or custodian responsible for the juvenile's care or supervision or (ii) the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian is unable to provide for the juvenile's care or supervision and lacks an appropriate alternative child care arrangement.
- (10) Director. – The director of the department of social services in the county in which the juvenile resides or is found, or the director's representative as authorized in G.S. 108A-14.
- (11) District. – Any district court district as established by G.S. 7A-133.
- (11a) Division. – The Division of Social Services of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- (11d) Family assessment response. – A response to selected reports of child neglect and dependency as determined by the Director using a family-centered approach that is protection and prevention oriented and that evaluates the strengths and needs of the juvenile's family, as well as the condition of the juvenile.
- (11h) Investigative assessment response. – A response to reports of child abuse and selected reports of child neglect and dependency as determined by the Director using a formal information gathering process to determine whether a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent.
- (12) Judge. – Any district court judge.
- (13) Judicial district. – Any district court district as established by G.S. 7A-133.
- (14) Juvenile. – A person who has not reached the person's eighteenth birthday and is not married, emancipated, or a member of the Armed Forces of the United States.
- (14a) **(Effective April 1, 2026 – see note)** Legal counsel for the department. – An attorney representing the department in proceedings under this Subchapter, regardless of whether the attorney is a county attorney, department attorney, or contract attorney.
- (15) Neglected juvenile. – Any juvenile less than 18 years of age (i) who is found to be a minor victim of human trafficking under G.S. 14-43.15 or (ii) whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker does any of the following:
 - a. Does not provide proper care, supervision, or discipline.
 - b. Has abandoned the juvenile, except where that juvenile is a safely surrendered infant as defined in this Subchapter.
 - c. Has not provided or arranged for the provision of necessary medical or remedial care.
 - d. Or whose parent, guardian, or custodian has refused to follow the recommendations of the Juvenile and Family Team made pursuant to Article 27A of this Chapter.
 - e. Creates or allows to be created a living environment that is injurious to the juvenile's welfare.
 - f. Has participated or attempted to participate in the unlawful transfer of custody of the juvenile under G.S. 14-321.2.
 - g. Has placed the juvenile for care or adoption in violation of law.

In determining whether a juvenile is a neglected juvenile, it is relevant whether that juvenile lives in a home where another juvenile has died as a result of suspected abuse or neglect or lives in a home where another juvenile has been subjected to abuse or neglect by an adult who regularly lives in the home.

- (15a) Nonrelative kin. – An individual having a substantial relationship with the juvenile. In the case of a juvenile member of a State-recognized tribe as set forth in G.S. 143B-407(a), nonrelative kin also includes any member of a State-recognized tribe or a member of a federally recognized tribe, whether or not there is a substantial relationship with the juvenile.
- (15b) Non-surrendering parent. – A parent of a safely surrendered infant other than the parent who physically surrenders the parent's infant pursuant to Article 5A of this Subchapter.
- (16) Petitioner. – The individual who initiates court action, whether by the filing of a petition or of a motion for review alleging the matter for adjudication.
- (16a) Post-adoption contact agreement and order. – A voluntary mediated agreement that is approved by a district court judge and incorporated into a district court order under Article 9 of this Subchapter that allows specifically described post-adoption contact with a child, including visitation, sharing of information, and communication such as the exchange of letters, electronic communication, and telephone contact.
- (17) Prosecutor. – The district attorney or assistant district attorney assigned by the district attorney to juvenile proceedings.
- (18) Reasonable efforts. – The diligent use of preventive or reunification services by a department of social services when a juvenile's remaining at home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time. If a court of competent jurisdiction determines that the juvenile is not to be returned home, then reasonable efforts means the diligent and timely use of permanency planning services by a department of social services to develop and implement a permanent plan for the juvenile.
- (18a) Relative. – An individual directly related to the juvenile by blood, marriage, or adoption, including, but not limited to, a grandparent, sibling, aunt, or uncle.
- (18b) Responsible individual. – A parent, guardian, custodian, caretaker, or individual responsible for subjecting a juvenile to human trafficking under G.S. 14-43.11, 14-43.12, or 14-43.13, who abuses or seriously neglects a juvenile.
- (18c) Return home or reunification. – Placement of the juvenile in the home of either parent or placement of the juvenile in the home of a guardian or custodian from whose home the child was removed by court order.
- (19) Safe home. – A home in which the juvenile is not at substantial risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect.
- (19a) Safely surrendered infant. – An infant reasonably believed to be not more than 30 days of age and without signs of abuse or neglect who is voluntarily delivered to an individual in accordance with Article 5A of this Subchapter by the infant's parent who does not express an intent to return for the infant. In determining whether there are signs of neglect, the act of surrendering the infant, in and of itself, does not constitute neglect.

- (19b) Serious neglect. – Conduct, behavior, or inaction of the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker that evidences a disregard of consequences of such magnitude that the conduct, behavior, or inaction constitutes an unequivocal danger to the juvenile's health, welfare, or safety, but does not constitute abuse.
- (20) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 1, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (21) Substantial evidence. – Relevant evidence a reasonable mind would accept as adequate to support a conclusion.
- (21a) Surrendering parent. – A parent who physically surrenders the parent's infant pursuant to Article 5A of this Subchapter.
- (22) Working day. – Any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday when the courthouse is closed for transactions.

The singular includes the plural, the masculine singular includes the feminine singular and masculine and feminine plural unless otherwise specified. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 336; c. 359, s. 2; c. 469, ss. 1-3; c. 716, s. 1; 1985, c. 648; c. 757, s. 156(q); 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 16; 1987, c. 162; c. 695; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, ss. 36, 37; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 815, s. 1; 1991, c. 258, s. 3; c. 273, s. 11; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 3; 1993, c. 324, s. 1; c. 516, ss. 1-3; 1997-113, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 3; 1997-390, s. 3.2; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1997-506, s. 30; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 1, 18; 1999-190, s. 1; 1999-318, s. 1; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 1; 2005-399, s. 1; 2009-38, s. 1; 2010-90, ss. 1, 2; 2011-183, s. 2; 2012-153, s. 2; 2013-129, s. 1; 2013-368, s. 16; 2015-123, s. 1; 2015-136, s. 1; 2015-181, s. 21; 2016-94, s. 12C.1(d); 2016-115, s. 3; 2017-41, s. 4.3; 2018-68, s. 8.1(a), (b); 2018-75, s. 5(a); 2018-145, s. 11(d); 2019-33, s. 1; 2019-245, s. 6(a); 2021-100, s. 1(a); 2021-123, s. 5(a); 2021-132, s. 1(a); 2023-14, s. 6.2(b); 2025-16, ss. 1.1, 1.10(a).)

§ 7B-102. Limitation.

Raising a juvenile consistent with the juvenile's biological sex, or referring to a juvenile consistent with the juvenile's biological sex, shall not be a basis supporting the filing of a petition supporting abuse or neglect under this Subchapter. This section shall not be construed to authorize or allow any other acts or omissions prohibited by this Subchapter that would constitute abuse or neglect, including abandonment or the creation of an injurious environment. (2025-59, s. 1(b).)

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. When there is an automatic stay, the court shall ensure that a notice is filed in the stayed action if the county and case file number are made known to the court. The notice shall be on a printed form created by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, include notice of the stay, and provide the county and case file number for the action under this Article.
- (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; 2019-33, s. 2.)

§ 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, until the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years or is otherwise emancipated, or upon the juvenile's death, 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; 2025-16, s. 1.2(a).)

§ 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.

§ 7B-204. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-205. Reserved for future codification purposes.

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§ 7B-299. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Article 3.

Screening of Abuse and Neglect Complaints.

§ 7B-300. Protective services.

The director of the department of social services in each county of the State shall establish protective services for juveniles alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent.

Protective services shall include the screening of reports, the performance of an assessment using either a family assessment response or an investigative assessment response, casework, or other counseling services to parents, guardians, or other caretakers as provided by the director to help the parents, guardians, or other caretakers and the court to prevent abuse or neglect, to improve the quality of child care, to be more adequate parents, guardians, or caretakers, and to preserve and stabilize family life. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 359, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 1; 1997-506, s. 31; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 2; 2015-123, s. 2.)

§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-123, s. 3, effective January 1, 2016. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 2; 1993, c. 516, s. 4; 1997-506, s. 32; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 3; 2013-52, s. 7; 2015-123, s. 3.)

§ 7B-302. Assessment by director; military affiliation; access to confidential information; notification of person making the report.

(a) When a report of abuse, neglect, or dependency is received, the director of the department of social services shall make a prompt and thorough assessment, using either a family assessment response or an investigative assessment response, in order to ascertain the facts of the case, including collecting information concerning the military affiliation of the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker of the juvenile alleged to have been abused or neglected, the extent of the abuse or neglect, and the risk of harm to the juvenile, in order to determine whether protective services should be provided or the complaint filed as a petition. When the report alleges abuse, the director shall immediately, but no later than 24 hours after receipt of the report, initiate the assessment. When the report alleges neglect or dependency, the director shall initiate the assessment within 72 hours following receipt of the report. When the report alleges abandonment of a juvenile or unlawful transfer of custody under G.S. 14-321.2, the director shall immediately initiate an assessment. When the report alleges abandonment, the director shall also take appropriate steps to assume temporary custody of the juvenile, and take appropriate steps to secure an order for nonsecure custody of the juvenile. The assessment and evaluation shall include a visit to the place where the juvenile resides, except when the report alleges abuse or neglect in a child care facility as defined in Article 7 of Chapter 110 of the General Statutes. When the report alleges abandonment, the assessment shall include a request from the director to law enforcement officials to investigate through the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons and other national and State resources whether the juvenile is a missing child.

(a1) All information received by the department of social services, including the identity of the reporter, shall be held in strictest confidence by the department, except under the following circumstances:

- (1) The department shall disclose confidential information to any federal, State, or local government entity or its agent, or any private child placing or adoption agency licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services, in order to protect a juvenile from abuse or neglect. The disclosure of confidential information pursuant to this subdivision shall include sharing information with the appropriate military authority if the director finds evidence that a juvenile may have been abused or neglected and the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker of the juvenile alleged to have been abused or neglected has a military affiliation. Any confidential information disclosed to any federal, State, or local government entity or its agent under this subsection shall remain confidential with the other entity or its agent and shall only be redisclosed for purposes directly connected with carrying out that entity's mandated responsibilities.
- (1a) The department shall disclose confidential information regarding the identity of the reporter to any federal, State, or local government entity or its agent with a court order. The department may only disclose confidential information regarding the identity of the reporter to a federal, State, or local government entity or its agent without a court order when the entity demonstrates a need for the reporter's name to carry out the entity's mandated responsibilities.
- (2) The juvenile's guardian ad litem or the juvenile, including a juvenile who has reached age 18 or been emancipated is authorized to review the record and request all or part of the record unless prohibited by federal law. The department shall provide electronic or written copies of the requested information within a reasonable period of time.
- (3) A district or superior court judge of this State presiding over a civil matter in which the department of social services is not a party may order the department to release confidential information, after providing the department with reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard and then determining that the information is relevant and necessary to the trial of the matter before the court and unavailable from any other source. This subdivision shall not be construed to relieve any court of its duty to conduct hearings and make findings required under relevant federal law, before ordering the release of any private medical or mental health information or records related to substance abuse or HIV status or treatment. The department of social services may surrender the requested records to the court, for in camera review, if the surrender is necessary to make the required determinations.
- (4) A district or superior court judge of this State presiding over a criminal or delinquency matter shall conduct an in camera review prior to releasing to the defendant or juvenile any confidential records maintained by the department of social services, except those records the defendant or juvenile is entitled to pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection.
- (5) The department may disclose confidential information to a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker in accordance with G.S. 7B-700 of this Subchapter.
 - (a2) If the director, at any time after receiving a report that a juvenile may be abused, neglected, or dependent, determines that the juvenile's legal residence is in another county, the director shall promptly notify the director in the county of the juvenile's residence, and the two directors shall coordinate efforts to ensure that appropriate actions are taken.

(a3) Except where prohibited by federal law, including state plan requirements within federal programs, and notwithstanding other applicable State law, any of the following may request access to confidential information and records maintained pursuant to this Article by the Department or a county department of social services:

- (1) An individual member of the North Carolina General Assembly.
- (2) A joint legislative oversight committee of the North Carolina General Assembly.

A request made pursuant to this subsection shall be made to the Department or to the director of a county department of social services. The request shall be limited to purposes necessary for oversight of programs related to child protective services. Upon receiving a request pursuant to this subsection, the Department shall coordinate with the county department of social services to obtain all necessary information or records responsive to the request. A county department of social services shall provide the Department with all information and records, or copies of records, as requested. If the request is made to the director of a county department of social services, the Department shall assist the director of the county department of social services in fulfilling the request and providing all necessary information or records in accordance with this subsection. Upon receipt of a request from an individual member of the North Carolina General Assembly, the Department shall make the confidential information and records available for inspection and examination at the county department of social services. Upon the request of a joint legislative oversight committee, the Department shall assist the director of the county department of social services with sharing the confidential information and records with the requesting committee in a closed session in accordance with G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1).

The confidential information or records shared pursuant to this subsection shall be the minimum necessary to satisfy the request. A member of the North Carolina General Assembly or joint legislative oversight committee shall not retain copies of any part of the information and records or take photographs or create electronic images of any information and records reviewed pursuant to a request under this subsection. All information and records shared pursuant to this subsection shall be withheld from public inspection and maintained in a confidential manner. The following information shall remain confidential and shall not be shared or disclosed in response to a request for information and records made pursuant to this subsection:

- (1) The identity of a reporter.
- (2) Juvenile court records as set forth in Article 29 of Subchapter III of this Chapter and Article 30 of Subchapter III of this Chapter.

(a4) Any violation of subsection (a3) of this section shall be punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(a5) The disclosure of confidential information pursuant to subsection (a3) of this section may only be requested for information received or created by the agency on or after the effective date of this section.

(b) When a report of a juvenile's death as a result of suspected maltreatment or a report of suspected abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile in a noninstitutional setting is received, the director of the department of social services shall immediately ascertain if other juveniles live in the home, and, if so, initiate an assessment in order to determine whether they require protective services or whether immediate removal of the juveniles from the home is necessary for their protection. When a report of a juvenile's death as a result of maltreatment or a report of suspected abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile in an institutional setting such as a residential child care facility or residential educational facility is received, the director of the department of social

services shall immediately ascertain if other juveniles remain in the facility subject to the alleged perpetrator's care or supervision, and, if so, assess the circumstances of those juveniles in order to determine whether they require protective services or whether immediate removal of those juveniles from the facility is necessary for their protection.

(c) **(Effective until April 1, 2026 – see note)** If the assessment indicates that abuse, neglect, or dependency has occurred, the director shall decide whether immediate removal of the juvenile or any other juveniles in the home is necessary for their protection. If immediate removal does not seem necessary, the director shall immediately provide or arrange for protective services. If the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker refuses to accept the protective services provided or arranged by the director, the director shall sign a petition seeking to invoke the jurisdiction of the court for the protection of the juvenile or juveniles.

(c) **(Effective April 1, 2026 – see note)** If the assessment indicates that abuse, neglect, or dependency has occurred, the director shall decide whether immediate removal of the juvenile or any other juveniles in the home is necessary for their protection. If immediate removal does not seem necessary, the director shall immediately provide or arrange for protective services. If the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker refuses to accept the protective services provided or arranged by the director, the director shall sign a petition and if the legal counsel for the department has not also signed the petition, the director shall attest that the petition has been reviewed by the legal counsel for the department. The petition shall allege the applicable facts to invoke the jurisdiction of the court for the protection of the juvenile or juveniles.

(d) **(Effective until April 1, 2026 – see note)** If immediate removal seems necessary for the protection of the juvenile or other juveniles in the home, the director shall sign a petition that alleges the applicable facts to invoke the jurisdiction of the court. Where the assessment shows that it is warranted, a protective services worker may assume temporary custody of the juvenile for the juvenile's protection pursuant to Article 5 of this Chapter.

(d) **(Effective April 1, 2026 – see note)** If immediate removal seems necessary for the protection of the juvenile or other juveniles in the home, the director shall sign a petition and if the legal counsel for the department has not also signed the petition, the director shall attest that the petition has been reviewed by the legal counsel for the department. The petition shall allege the applicable facts to invoke the jurisdiction of the court. Where the assessment shows that it is warranted, a protective services worker may assume temporary custody of the juvenile for the juvenile's protection pursuant to Article 5 of this Chapter.

(d1) Whenever a juvenile is removed from the home of a parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, or adult relative entrusted with the juvenile's care due to physical abuse, the director shall conduct a thorough review of the background of the alleged abuser or abusers. This review shall include a criminal history check and a review of any available mental health records. If the review reveals that the alleged abuser or abusers have a history of violent behavior against people, the director shall petition the court to order the alleged abuser or abusers to submit to a complete mental health evaluation by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist.

(e) In performing any duties related to the assessment of the report or the provision or arrangement for protective services, the director may consult with any public or private agencies or individuals, including the available State or local law enforcement officers who shall assist in the assessment and evaluation of the seriousness of any report of abuse, neglect, or dependency when requested by the director. The director or the director's representative may make a written demand for any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in the director's opinion be relevant to the assessment or provision of protective services. Upon the director's or the director's

representative's request and unless protected by the attorney-client privilege, any public or private agency or individual shall provide access to and copies of this confidential information and these records to the extent permitted by federal law and regulations. If a custodian of criminal investigative information or records believes that release of the information will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek an order from a court of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information. In such an action, the custodian of the records shall have the burden of showing by a preponderance of the evidence that disclosure of the information in question will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought pursuant to this paragraph shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in the actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

(f) Within five working days after receipt of the report of abuse, neglect, or dependency, the director shall give written notice to the person making the report, unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether the report was accepted for assessment, the basis for that decision, and whether the report was referred to the appropriate State or local law enforcement agency. In the event the director decides not to accept the report for an assessment, the person making the report shall be informed in writing of the procedures necessary to request a review by the Division of the director's decision. A request for review shall be made within five working days of receipt of the written notification. The Division shall review the director's decision within five working days of receiving a request for review and may affirm the decision or direct the department to initiate an assessment of the report. Nothing in this section shall prevent the person making the report from requesting a review by the director of the department and from the director conducting such a review.

(g) Within five working days after completion of the protective services assessment, the director shall give subsequent written notice to the person making the report, unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether there is a finding of abuse, neglect, or dependency, whether the county department of social services is taking action to protect the juvenile, and what action it is taking, including whether or not a petition was filed. The person making the report shall be informed of procedures necessary to request a review by the prosecutor or Division of the director's decision not to file a petition. A request for review by the prosecutor or Division shall be made within five working days of receipt of the second notification. The second notification shall include notice that, if the person making the report is not satisfied with the director's decision, the person may request review of the decision by the prosecutor or Division within five working days of receipt. The person making the report may waive the person's right to this notification, and no notification is required if the person making the report does not identify himself to the director.

(h) The director or the director's representative may not enter a private residence for assessment purposes without at least one of the following:

- (1) The reasonable belief that a juvenile is in imminent danger of death or serious physical injury.
- (2) The permission of the parent or person responsible for the juvenile's care.
- (3) The accompaniment of a law enforcement officer who has legal authority to enter the residence.
- (4) An order from a court of competent jurisdiction. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1985, c. 205; 1991, c. 593, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 3; 1993, c. 516, s. 5; 1995, c. 411, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 3.1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 2, 19;

1999-190, s. 2; 1999-318, s. 2; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-291, s. 1; 2003-304, s. 4.1; 2005-55, s. 4; 2006-205, s. 1; 2009-311, s. 1; 2012-153, s. 6; 2015-123, s. 4; 2016-94, s. 12C.1(e); 2016-115, s. 4; 2017-102, s. 2; 2019-201, s. 3(a); 2021-100, s. 2; 2021-132, s. 1(c); 2025-16, ss. 1.3(a), 1.10(c), (d).)

§ 7B-302.1. Conflicts of interest.

(a) A conflict of interest shall exist when the reported abuse, neglect, or dependency involves any of the following:

- (1) An employee of the county department of social services.
- (2) A relative of an employee of the child welfare division of the county department of social services.
- (3) A relative of an employee of the county department of social services outside of the child welfare division when, in the professional judgment of the director, the county department of social services has a conflict of interest.
- (4) A foster parent supervised by the county department of social services.
- (5) The county manager, an assistant county manager, a member of the Board of County Commissioners, or a member of the county's governing board for social services, as defined in G.S. 108A-1.
- (6) A caretaker in a sole-source contract group home.
- (7) A juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker who has been determined to be an incompetent adult and subject to guardianship under Chapter 35A of the General Statutes and is a ward, as defined in G.S. 35A-1101, of that county department of social services.
- (8) A juvenile in the custody of the department who is also a parent or caretaker.
- (9) A juvenile who is subject to a new report of abuse or neglect arising from events that occurred while in the custody of the department.
- (10) A perceived conflict of interest that is identified through the professional judgment of the director of the county department of social services.

(b) The director of the county department of social services that receives the report where the conflict exists shall request that another county department conduct the assessment. The director shall notify the Division of the conflict of interest and the county that accepted the report for assessment.

(c) If the director makes requests of two or more other counties, and if no other county is willing or able to accept the case for assessment, then the county director where the conflict exists shall notify the Division. The Division shall evaluate the conflict and make the following determinations:

- (1) The Division shall evaluate the conflict and determine whether the county with the conflict is able to manage the case by implementing measures to sufficiently obviate the conflict.
- (2) If the Division determines the conflict cannot be managed in the county that receives the report, the Division shall appoint another county department that shall assume management of the case. The county with the conflict of interest bears the financial responsibility of the case unless otherwise agreed upon by the counties involved in the conflict of interest.

(d) The county department of social services with the conflict of interest shall inform, in writing, the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker of the conflict and the county that assumes the

management of the case. The written notice shall include the contact information for the constituent concern line at the Division.

(e) If the county department of social services has a conflict of interest at the time of the report or any time while managing the case and the county department of social services does not refer the case to another county, a parent, guardian, custodian, caretaker, juvenile, or their representative may seek to have the case transferred to another county by contacting the constituent concern line at the Division, and the Division shall apply this section. (2025-16, s. 1.4(a).)

§ 7B-303. Interference with assessment.

(a) **(Effective until April 1, 2026 – see note)** If any person obstructs or interferes with an assessment required by G.S. 7B-302, the director may file a petition naming that person as respondent and requesting an order directing the respondent to cease the obstruction or interference. The petition shall contain the name and date of birth and address of the juvenile who is the subject of the assessment; shall include a concise statement of the basis for initiating the assessment, shall specifically describe the conduct alleged to constitute obstruction of or interference with the assessment; and shall be verified.

(a) **(Effective April 1, 2026 – see note)** If any person obstructs or interferes with an assessment required by G.S. 7B-302, the director may sign and file a petition naming that person as respondent and requesting an order directing the respondent to cease the obstruction or interference. The petition shall contain the name and date of birth and address of the juvenile who is the subject of the assessment; shall include a concise statement of the basis for initiating the assessment, shall specifically describe the conduct alleged to constitute obstruction of or interference with the assessment; and shall be verified. If the legal counsel for the department has not also signed the petition, the director shall attest that the petition has been reviewed by the legal counsel for the department.

(b) For purposes of this section, obstruction of or interference with an assessment means refusing to disclose the whereabouts of the juvenile, refusing to allow the director to have personal access to the juvenile, refusing to allow the director to observe or interview the juvenile in private, refusing to allow the director access to confidential information and records upon request pursuant to G.S. 7B-302, refusing to allow the director to arrange for an evaluation of the juvenile by a physician or other expert, or other conduct that makes it impossible for the director to carry out the duty to assess the juvenile's condition.

(c) Upon filing of the petition, the court shall schedule a hearing to be held not less than five days after service of the petition and summons on the respondent. Service of the petition and summons and notice of hearing shall be made as provided by the Rules of Civil Procedure on the respondent; the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker; and any other person determined by the court to be a necessary party. If at the hearing on the petition the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent, without lawful excuse, has obstructed or interfered with an assessment required by G.S. 7B-302, the court may order the respondent to cease such obstruction or interference. The burden of proof shall be on the petitioner.

(d) If the director has reason to believe that the juvenile is in need of immediate protection or assistance, the director shall so allege in the petition and may seek an ex parte order from the court. If the court, from the verified petition and any inquiry the court makes of the director, finds probable cause to believe both that the juvenile is at risk of immediate harm and that the respondent is obstructing or interfering with the director's ability to assess the juvenile's condition, the court

may enter an ex parte order directing the respondent to cease the obstruction or interference. The order shall be limited to provisions necessary to enable the director to conduct an assessment sufficient to determine whether the juvenile is in need of immediate protection or assistance. Within 10 days after the entry of an ex parte order under this subsection, a hearing shall be held to determine whether there is good cause for the continuation of the order or the entry of a different order. An order entered under this subsection shall be served on the respondent along with a copy of the petition, summons, and notice of hearing.

(e) The director may be required at a hearing under this section to reveal the identity of any person who made a report of suspected abuse, neglect, or dependency as required by G.S. 7B-301.

(f) An order entered pursuant to this section is enforceable by civil or criminal contempt as provided in Chapter 5A of the General Statutes. (1987, c. 409, s. 1; 1993, c. 516, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 5; 2025-16, ss. 1.3(b), 1.10(e).)

§ 7B-304: Repealed by Session Laws 2003, c. 140, s. 1, effective June 4, 2003.

§ 7B-305. Request for review by prosecutor or Division.

The person making the report shall have five working days, from receipt of the decision of the director of the department of social services not to petition the court, to notify the prosecutor or constituent concern line at the Division that the person is requesting a review. The entity receiving the request for review shall notify the person making the report and the director of the time and place for the review, and the director shall immediately transmit to the entity receiving the request a copy of a summary of the assessment. Nothing precludes the person making a report from requesting a review from both the prosecutor and the Division. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 6; 2025-16, s. 1.3(c).)

§ 7B-306. Review by prosecutor or Division.

(a) The prosecutor or Division, respectively, receiving the request for review shall conduct the review. Within two business days of receiving a request for review, the reviewing entity shall notify the other entity that a request for review has been made. The other entity may also conduct a review. Reviews may be conducted as an independent or shared review and the entities may consult with one another as part of a review. The reviewing entity shall review the director's determination that a petition should not be filed within 20 days after receipt of a request for review made in accordance with G.S. 7B-305. The review shall include conferences with the person making the report, the protective services worker, the juvenile, if practicable, and other persons known to have pertinent information about the juvenile or the juvenile's family.

(b) At the conclusion of the review, a reviewing entity may take any of the following actions:

- (1) Affirm the decision made by the director.
- (2) Request the appropriate local law enforcement agency to investigate the allegations.
- (3) Direct the director to file a petition. If both entities conduct a review and either entity directs that a petition be filed, the director shall file a petition. The Division may also direct the director to take a specific action to provide protective services. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 7; 1993, c. 516, s. 7; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2025-16, s. 1.3(d).)

§ 7B-307. Duty of director to report evidence of abuse, neglect; investigation by local law enforcement; notification to appropriate military authority; notification of Department of Health and Human Services.

(a) If the director finds evidence that a juvenile may have been abused as defined by G.S. 7B-101, the director shall make an immediate oral and subsequent written report of the findings to the district attorney or the district attorney's designee and the appropriate local law enforcement agency, including notifying the appropriate military authority that there is evidence of abuse or neglect of a juvenile by a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker with that military affiliation, within 48 hours after receipt of the report. The local law enforcement agency shall immediately, but no later than 48 hours after receipt of the information, initiate and coordinate a criminal investigation with the protective services assessment being conducted by the county department of social services. Upon completion of the investigation, the district attorney shall determine whether criminal prosecution is appropriate and may request the director or the director's designee to appear before a magistrate.

If the director receives information that a juvenile may have been physically harmed in violation of any criminal statute by any person other than the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, the director shall make an immediate oral and subsequent written report of that information to the district attorney or the district attorney's designee and to the appropriate local law enforcement agency within 48 hours after receipt of the information. The local law enforcement agency shall immediately, but no later than 48 hours after receipt of the information, initiate a criminal investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, the district attorney shall determine whether criminal prosecution is appropriate.

If the report received pursuant to G.S. 7B-301 involves abuse or neglect of a juvenile or child maltreatment, as defined in G.S. 110-105.3, in child care, the director shall notify the Department of Health and Human Services within 24 hours or on the next working day of receipt of the report.

The director of the department of social services shall submit a report of alleged abuse, neglect, or dependency cases or child fatalities that are the result of alleged maltreatment to the central registry under the policies adopted by the Social Services Commission.

(b), (c) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-123, s. 5, effective January 1, 2016. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 199; 1985, c. 757, s. 156(s)-(u); 1991, c. 593, s. 2; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 4; 1993, c. 516, s. 8; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1997-506, s. 33; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 7; 2015-123, s. 5; 2019-201, s. 3(b).)

§ 7B-308. Authority of medical professionals in abuse cases.

(a) Any physician or administrator of a hospital, clinic, or other medical facility to which a suspected abused juvenile is brought for medical diagnosis or treatment shall have the right, when authorized by the chief district court judge of the district or the judge's designee, to retain physical custody of the juvenile in the facility when the physician who examines the juvenile certifies in writing that the juvenile who is suspected of being abused should remain for medical treatment or that, according to the juvenile's medical evaluation, it is unsafe for the juvenile to return to the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker. This written certification must be signed by the certifying physician and must include the time and date that the judicial authority to retain custody is given. Copies of the written certification must be appended to the juvenile's medical and judicial records and another copy must be given to the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker. The right to retain custody in the facility shall exist for up to 12 hours from the time and date contained in the written certification.

(b) Immediately upon receipt of judicial authority to retain custody, the physician, the administrator, or that person's designee shall so notify the director of social services for the county in which the facility is located. The director shall treat this notification as a report of suspected abuse and shall immediately begin an assessment of the case.

(1) If the assessment reveals (i) that it is the opinion of the certifying physician that the juvenile is in need of medical treatment to cure or alleviate physical distress or to prevent the juvenile from suffering serious physical injury, and (ii) that it is the opinion of the physician that the juvenile should for these reasons remain in the custody of the facility for 12 hours, but (iii) that the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker cannot be reached or, upon request, will not consent to the treatment within the facility, the director shall within the initial 12-hour period file a juvenile petition alleging abuse and setting forth supporting allegations and shall seek a nonsecure custody order. A petition filed and a nonsecure custody order obtained in accordance with this subdivision shall come on for hearing under the regular provisions of this Subchapter unless the director and the certifying physician together voluntarily dismiss the petition.

(2) In all cases except those described in subdivision (1) above, the director shall conduct the assessment and may initiate juvenile proceedings and take all other steps authorized by the regular provisions of this Subchapter. If the director decides not to file a petition, the physician, the administrator, or that person's designee may ask the prosecutor or Division to review this decision according to the provisions of G.S. 7B-305 and G.S. 7B-306.

(c) If, upon hearing, the court determines that the juvenile is found in a county other than the county of legal residence, in accord with G.S. 153A-257, the juvenile may be transferred, in accord with G.S. 7B-903(2), to the custody of the department of social services in the county of residence.

(d) If the court, upon inquiry, determines that the medical treatment rendered was necessary and appropriate, the cost of that treatment may be charged to the parents, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, or, if the parents are unable to pay, to the county of residence in accordance with G.S. 7B-903 and G.S. 7B-904.

(e) Except as otherwise provided, a petition begun under this section shall proceed in like manner with petitions begun under G.S. 7B-302.

(f) The procedures in this section are in addition to, and not in derogation of, the abuse and neglect reporting provisions of G.S. 7B-301 and the temporary custody provisions of G.S. 7B-500. Nothing in this section shall preclude a physician or administrator and a director of social services from following the procedures of G.S. 7B-301 and G.S. 7B-500 whenever these procedures are more appropriate to the juvenile's circumstances. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 716, s. 2; 1995, c. 255, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 8; 2025-16, s. 1.3(e).)

§ 7B-309. Immunity of persons reporting and cooperating in an assessment.

Anyone who makes a report pursuant to this Article; cooperates with the county department of social services in a protective services assessment; testifies in any judicial proceeding resulting from a protective services report or assessment; provides information or assistance, including medical evaluations or consultation in connection with a report, investigation, or legal intervention pursuant to a good-faith report of child abuse or neglect; or otherwise participates in the program

authorized by this Article; is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed for that action provided that the person was acting in good faith. In any proceeding involving liability, good faith is presumed. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, s. 469, s. 8; 1993, c. 516, s. 9; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 9; 2019-240, s. 18.)

§ 7B-310. Privileges not grounds for failing to report or for excluding evidence.

No privilege shall be grounds for any person or institution failing to report that a juvenile may have been abused, neglected, or dependent, even if the knowledge or suspicion is acquired in an official professional capacity, except when the knowledge or suspicion is gained by an attorney from that attorney's client during representation only in the abuse, neglect, or dependency case. No privilege, except the attorney-client privilege, shall be grounds for excluding evidence of abuse, neglect, or dependency in any judicial proceeding (civil, criminal, or juvenile) in which a juvenile's abuse, neglect, or dependency is in issue nor in any judicial proceeding resulting from a report submitted under this Article, both as this privilege relates to the competency of the witness and to the exclusion of confidential communications. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 323, s. 1; 1993, c. 514, s. 3; c. 516, s. 10; 1995, c. 509, s. 133; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-311. Central registry; responsible individuals list.

(a) The Department of Health and Human Services shall maintain a central registry of abuse, neglect, and dependency cases and child fatalities that are the result of alleged maltreatment that are reported under this Article in order to compile data for appropriate study of the extent of abuse and neglect within the State and to identify repeated abuses of the same juvenile or of other juveniles in the same family. This data shall be furnished by county directors of social services to the Department of Health and Human Services and shall be confidential, subject to rules adopted by the Social Services Commission providing for its use for study and research and for other appropriate disclosure. Data shall not be used at any hearing or court proceeding unless based upon a final judgment of a court of law.

(b) The Department shall also maintain a list of responsible individuals. The Department may provide information from this list to child caring institutions, child placing agencies, group home facilities, and other providers of foster care, child care, or adoption services that need to determine the fitness of individuals to care for or adopt children. The name of an individual who has been identified as a responsible individual shall be placed on the responsible individuals list only after one of the following:

- (1) The individual is properly notified pursuant to G.S. 7B-320 and fails to file a petition for judicial review in a timely manner.
- (2) The court determines that the individual is a responsible individual as a result of a hearing on the individual's petition for judicial review.
- (3) The individual is criminally convicted as a result of the same incident involved in an investigative assessment response.

(c) It is unlawful for any public official or public employee to knowingly and willfully release information from either the central registry or the responsible individuals list to a person who is not authorized to receive the information. It is unlawful for any person who is authorized to receive information from the central registry or the responsible individuals list to release that information to an unauthorized person. It is unlawful for any person who is not authorized to receive information from the central registry or the responsible individuals list to access or attempt

to access that information. A person who commits an offense described in this subsection is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

(d) The Social Services Commission shall adopt rules regarding the operation of the central registry and responsible individuals list, including procedures for each of the following:

- (1) Filing data.
- (2) Notifying an individual that the individual has been determined by the director to be a responsible individual.
- (3) Correcting and expunging information.
- (4) Determining persons who are authorized to receive information from the responsible individuals list.
- (5) Releasing information from the responsible individuals list to authorized requestors.
- (6) Gathering statistical information.
- (7) Keeping and maintaining information placed in the registry and on the responsible individuals list.
- (8) Repealed by Session Laws 2010-90, s. 4, effective July 11, 2010. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1993, c. 516, s. 11; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-399, s. 2; 2010-90, s. 4; 2013-129, s. 3.)

§ 7B-312: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-313: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-314: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-315: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-316: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-317: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-318: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-319: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Article 3A.

Judicial Review; Responsible Individuals List.

§ 7B-320. Notification to individual determined to be a responsible individual.

(a) After the completion of an investigative assessment response that results in a determination of abuse or serious neglect and the identification of a responsible individual, the director shall personally deliver written notice of the determination to the identified individual in an expeditious manner.

(a1) If the director determines that the juvenile is the victim of human trafficking by an individual other than the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, the director shall cooperate with the local law enforcement agency and district attorney to determine the safest way, if possible, to provide notification to the identified responsible individual. If the director does not

provide notification in accordance with this subsection, the director shall document the reason and basis for not providing the notification.

The director shall not provide notification to the responsible individual or proceed further under this Article if notification is likely to cause any of the following to occur:

- (1) Cause mental or physical harm or danger to the juvenile.
 - (2) Undermine an ongoing or future criminal investigation.
 - (3) Jeopardize the State's ability to prosecute the identified responsible individual.
- (b) If personal written notice is not made within 15 days of the determination and the director has made diligent efforts to locate the identified individual, the director shall send the notice to the individual by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, and addressed to the individual at the individual's last known address.
- (c) The notice shall include all of the following:
- (1) A statement informing the individual of the nature of the investigative assessment response and whether the director determined abuse or serious neglect or both.
 - (1a) A statement that the individual has been identified as a responsible individual.
 - (2) A statement summarizing the substantial evidence supporting the director's determination without identifying the reporter or collateral contacts.
 - (3) A statement informing the individual that unless the individual petitions for judicial review, the individual's name will be placed on the responsible individuals list as provided in G.S. 7B-311, and that the Department of Health and Human Services may provide information from this list to child caring institutions, child placing agencies, group home facilities, and other providers of foster care, child care, or adoption services that need to determine the fitness of individuals to care for or adopt children.
 - (4) A clear description of the actions the individual must take to seek judicial review of the director's determination.
- (d) In addition to the notice, the director shall provide the individual with a copy of a petition for judicial review form. (2005-399, s. 3; 2010-90, s. 5; 2013-129, s. 4; 2019-33, s. 3; 2021-132, s. 2(a).)

§ 7B-321: Repealed by Session Laws 2010-90, s. 6, effective July 11, 2010.

§ 7B-322: Repealed by Session Laws 2010-90, s. 6, effective July 11, 2010.

§ 7B-323. Petition for judicial review; district court.

(a) Within 15 days of the receipt of notice of the director's determination under G.S. 7B-320(a) or (b), an individual may file a petition for judicial review with the district court of the county in which the abuse or serious neglect report arose. The request shall be by a petition for judicial review filed with the appropriate clerk of court's office with a copy delivered in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the director who determined the abuse or serious neglect and identified the individual as a responsible individual. The petition for judicial review shall contain the name, date of birth, and address of the individual seeking judicial review, the name of the juvenile who was the subject of the determination of abuse or serious neglect, and facts that invoke the jurisdiction of the court. Failure to timely file a petition for judicial review

constitutes a waiver of the individual's right to a district court hearing and to contest the placement of the individual's name on the responsible individuals list.

(a) If the director cannot show that the individual has received actual notice, the director shall not place the individual on the responsible individuals list until an ex parte hearing is held at which a district court judge determines that the director made diligent efforts to find the individual. A finding that the individual is evading service is relevant to the determination that the director made diligent efforts.

(b) The clerk of court shall maintain a separate docket for judicial review actions. Upon the filing of a petition for judicial review, the clerk shall calendar the matter for hearing within 45 days from the date the petition is filed at a session of district court hearing juvenile matters or, if there is no such session, at the next session of juvenile court. The clerk shall send notice of the hearing to the petitioner and to the director who determined the abuse or serious neglect and identified the individual as a responsible individual. Upon the request of a party, the court shall close the hearing to all persons, except officers of the court, the parties, their witnesses, and law enforcement investigating the same allegations. At the hearing, the director shall have the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence the abuse or serious neglect and the identification of the individual seeking judicial review as a responsible individual. The hearing shall be before a judge without a jury. The rules of evidence applicable in civil cases shall apply. However, the court, in its discretion, may permit the admission of any reliable and relevant evidence, including, but not limited to, child medical evaluation reports and child and family evaluation reports that the director relied on to make the determination that abuse or serious neglect occurred, if the general purposes of the rules of evidence and the interests of justice will best be served by its admission.

(b1) Upon receipt of a notice of hearing for judicial review, the director who identified the individual as a responsible individual shall review all records, reports, and other information gathered during the investigative assessment response. If after a review, the director determines that there is not sufficient evidence to support a determination that the individual abused or seriously neglected the juvenile and is a responsible individual, the director shall prepare a written statement of the director's determination and either deliver the statement personally to the individual seeking judicial review or send the statement by first-class mail. The director shall also give written notice of the director's determination to the clerk to be placed in the court file, and the judicial review hearing shall be cancelled with notice of the cancellation given by the clerk to the petitioner.

(c) At the hearing, the following rights of the parties shall be preserved:

- (1) The right to present sworn evidence, law, or rules that bear upon the case.
- (2) The right to represent themselves or obtain the services of an attorney at their own expense.
- (3) The right to subpoena witnesses, cross-examine witnesses of the other party, and make a closing argument summarizing the party's view of the case and the law.

(d) Within 30 days after completion of the hearing, the court shall enter an order containing findings of fact and conclusions of law. The clerk shall serve a copy of the order on each party or the party's attorney of record. If the court concludes that the director has not established by a preponderance of the evidence abuse or serious neglect or the identification of the responsible individual, the court shall reverse the director's determination and order the director not to place the individual's name on the responsible individuals list. If the court concludes that the director has established by a preponderance of the evidence abuse or serious neglect and the identification of

the individual seeking judicial review as a responsible individual, the court shall order the director to place the individual's name on the responsible individuals list, consistent with the court's order.

(e) Notwithstanding any time limitations contained in this section or the provisions of G.S. 7B-324(a)(4), upon the filing of a petition for judicial review by an individual identified by a director as a responsible individual, the district court of the county in which the abuse or neglect report arose may review a director's determination of abuse or serious neglect if less than one year has passed since the person's placement on the responsible individuals list and if the review serves the interests of justice or for good cause. If the district court undertakes such a review, a hearing shall be held pursuant to this section at which the director shall have the burden of establishing by a preponderance of the evidence abuse or serious neglect and the identification of the individual seeking judicial review as a responsible individual. If the court concludes that the director has not established by a preponderance of the evidence abuse or serious neglect or the identification of the responsible individual, the court shall reverse the director's determination and order the director to expunge the individual's name from the responsible individuals list.

(f) A party may appeal the district court's decision under G.S. 7A-27(b)(2). (2005-399, s. 3; 2010-90, s. 7; 2013-129, s. 5; 2015-247, s. 7; 2019-33, s. 4; 2025-16, s. 1.19(a).)

§ 7B-324. Persons ineligible to petition for judicial review.

(a) An individual who has been identified by a director as a responsible individual is not eligible for judicial review if any of the following apply:

- (1) The individual is criminally convicted as a result of the same incident. The district attorney shall inform the director of the result of the criminal proceeding.
- (2) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 6, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2010-90, s. 8, effective July 11, 2010.
- (4) After proper notice, the individual fails to file a petition for judicial review with the district court in a timely manner.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2010-90, s. 8, effective July 11, 2010.

(a1) If the individual is criminally convicted as a result of the same incident after the petition for judicial review is filed, the court shall dismiss the petition for judicial review with prejudice.

(b) If an individual seeking judicial review is named as a respondent in a juvenile court case or a defendant in a criminal court case resulting from the same incident, the district court judge may stay the judicial review proceeding. (2005-399, s. 3; 2010-90, s. 8; 2013-129, s. 6; 2019-33, s. 5.)

§ 7B-325. Petition for expungement.

(a) A person whose name has been placed on the responsible individuals list may file a petition for expungement of the individual's name from the responsible individuals list if at least one of the following conditions is satisfied:

- (1) At least one year has passed since the person was placed on the responsible individuals list without judicial review, though eligible for review.
- (2) At least five years have passed since the person was placed on the responsible individuals list after judicial review.
- (3) At least eight years have passed since the person, who was criminally convicted as a result of the same incident that placed the person on the responsible

individuals list completed their sentence, complied with all post-release conditions and has not subsequently been convicted of any felony or misdemeanor other than a traffic violation under a jurisdiction in this State or any other United States jurisdiction. No person is eligible to petition for expungement of the individual's name from the responsible individuals list under this subsection if the conviction is related to sexual abuse of a child, human trafficking, or a child fatality related to abuse or neglect.

(b) The petition for expungement shall be filed with the district court of the county in which the abuse or serious neglect report arose. A copy shall be delivered in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the director of the county department of social services of that county. The petition for expungement shall contain the name, date of birth, and address of the individual seeking expungement, the name of the juvenile who was the subject of the determination of abuse or serious neglect, and facts that invoke the jurisdiction of the court.

(c) The clerk of court shall maintain a separate docket for expungement actions. Upon the filing of a petition for expungement, the clerk shall calendar the matter for hearing within 45 days from the date the petition is filed at a session of district court hearing juvenile matters or, if there is no such session, at the next session of juvenile court. The clerk shall send notice of the hearing to the petitioner and to the director of the county department of social services that determined the abuse or serious neglect and identified the individual as a responsible individual. Upon the request of a party, the court shall close the hearing to all persons, except officers of the court, the parties, and their witnesses. The hearing shall be before a judge without a jury. The burden shall be upon the petitioner and all findings of fact shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, or testimony or evidence from any person that is not a party that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary.

(d) At the hearing, the following rights of the parties shall be preserved:

- (1) The right to present sworn evidence, law, or rules that bear upon the case.
- (2) The right to represent themselves or obtain the services of an attorney at their own expense.
- (3) The right to subpoena witnesses, cross-examine witnesses of the other party, and make a closing argument summarizing the party's view of the case and the law. The juvenile who was the subject of the abuse or serious neglect shall not be required to participate in the proceeding.

(e) In considering whether to grant a petition filed under this section, the court shall consider all of the following:

- (1) The nature of the abuse or serious neglect based on documentation maintained by the county department of social services.
- (2) The amount of time since the placement on the responsible individuals list.
- (3) Any activities that would reflect upon the person's changed behavior or circumstances, such as therapy, employment, or education.
- (4) Any other circumstances relevant to whether the petition should be granted.

(f) The court may grant the petition if the court finds, by the preponderance of the evidence, that there is little likelihood that the petitioner will be a future perpetrator of child abuse or neglect.

(g) Within 30 days after completion of the hearing, the court shall enter an order containing findings of fact and conclusions of law. The clerk shall serve a copy of the order on each party or

the party's attorney of record. If the court concludes that the petition should be granted, the court shall order the director to expunge the individual's name from the responsible individuals list.

(h) A party may appeal the district court's decision under G.S. 7A-27(b)(2). (2025-16, s. 1.19(b).)

§ 7B-326: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-327: Reserved for future codification purposes.

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Article 4.

Venue; Petitions.

§ 7B-400. Venue.

(a) A proceeding in which a juvenile is alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent may be commenced in the judicial district in which the juvenile resides or is present at the time the petition is filed. If a regional social services department includes counties in more than one judicial district, the department shall file in the judicial district where the child resides or was present when the report required by G.S. 7B-301 was received. Notwithstanding G.S. 153A-257, the absence of a juvenile from the juvenile's home pursuant to a protection plan during an assessment or the provision of case management services by a department of social services shall not change the original venue if it subsequently becomes necessary to file a juvenile petition.

(b) When the director in one county conducts an assessment pursuant to G.S. 7B-302 in another county because a conflict of interest exists, the director in the county conducting the assessment may file a resulting petition in either county.

(c) For good cause, the court may grant a motion for a change of venue before adjudication. A pre-adjudication change of venue shall not affect the identity of the petitioner, unless a conflict of interest arising under G.S. 7B-302.1 necessitates a substitution of parties.

(d) Any change of venue after adjudication shall be pursuant to G.S. 7B-900.1. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2009-311, s. 2; 2013-129, s. 7; 2017-41, s. 4.4; 2025-16, s. 1.4(b).)

§ 7B-401. Pleading and process.

(a) The pleading in an abuse, neglect, or dependency action is the petition. The process in an abuse, neglect, or dependency action is the summons.

(b) If the court has retained jurisdiction over a juvenile whose custody was granted to a parent and there are no periodic judicial reviews of the placement, the provisions of Article 8 of this subchapter shall apply to any subsequent report of abuse, neglect, or dependency determined by the director of social services to require court action pursuant to G.S. 7B-302. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2013-129, s. 8.)

§ 7B-401.1. Parties.

(a) Petitioner. – Only a county director of social services or the director's authorized representative may file a petition alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent. The petitioner shall remain a party until the court terminates its jurisdiction in the case.

(b) Parents. – The juvenile's parent shall be a party unless one of the following applies:

(1) The parent's rights have been terminated.

(2) The parent has relinquished the juvenile for adoption, or safely surrendered the infant and has not sought the return of the infant prior to the filing of a termination of parental rights, unless the court orders that the parent be made a party.

(3) The parent has been convicted under G.S. 14-27.21, 14-27.22, 14-27.23, or 14-27.24 for an offense that resulted in the conception of the juvenile.

(c) Guardian. – A person who is the child's court-appointed guardian of the person or general guardian when the petition is filed shall be a party. A person appointed as the child's guardian pursuant to G.S. 7B-600 shall automatically become a party but only if the court has found that the guardianship is the permanent plan for the juvenile.

(d) Custodian. – A person who is the juvenile's custodian, as defined in G.S. 7B-101(8), when the petition is filed shall be a party. A person to whom custody of the juvenile is awarded in the juvenile proceeding shall automatically become a party but only if the court has found that the custody arrangement is the permanent plan for the juvenile.

(e) Caretaker. – A caretaker shall be a party only if (i) the petition includes allegations relating to the caretaker, (ii) the caretaker has assumed the status and obligation of a parent, or (iii) the court orders that the caretaker be made a party.

(e1) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-16, s. 1.5, effective October 1, 2025, and applicable to all actions pending or filed on or after that date.

(e2) Grandparent. – A grandparent is not a party to the case and shall be allowed to intervene if one of the following applies:

(1) Both parents of the juvenile are deceased.

(2) One parent of the juvenile is deceased and no other parent is known.

(3) One parent of the juvenile is deceased and any other parent's rights have been terminated.

(f) The Juvenile. – The juvenile shall be a party.

(g) Removal of a Party. – After an adjudication, if a guardian, custodian, or caretaker is a party, the court may discharge that person from the proceeding, making the person no longer a party, if the court finds that the person's continuation as a party is not necessary to meet the juvenile's needs and that removal of the person as a party is in the best interests of the juvenile.

(h) Intervention. – Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1103(b) and subsection (e2) of this section, the court shall not allow intervention by a person who is not the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. The court may allow intervention by (i) a current caretaker or current foster parent, as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(9a), providing care for the juvenile only if the current caretaker or current foster parent has authority to file a petition to terminate the parental rights of the juvenile's parents under G.S. 7B-1103, or (ii) another county department of social services that has an interest in the proceeding. This section shall not prohibit the court from consolidating a juvenile proceeding with a civil action or claim for custody pursuant to G.S. 7B-200.

(i) Young Adult in Foster Care. – In proceedings held pursuant to G.S. 7B-910.1, the young adult in foster care and the director of the department of social services are parties.

(2013-129, s. 9; 2015-136, s. 2; 2015-181, s. 22; 2015-241, s. 12C.9(h); 2015-264, s. 33(a); 2016-94, s. 12C.1(f); 2023-14, s. 6.2(c); 2024-33, s. 25(a); 2025-16, s. 1.5.)

§ 7B-402. Petition.

(a) The petition shall contain the name, date of birth, address of the juvenile, the name and last known address of each party as determined by G.S. 7B-401.1, and allegations of facts sufficient to invoke jurisdiction over the juvenile. The petition may contain information on more than one juvenile when the juveniles are from the same home and are before the court for the same reason.

(b) The petition, or an affidavit attached to the petition, shall contain the information required by G.S. 50A-209.

(c) Sufficient copies of the petition shall be prepared so that copies will be available for each party named in the petition, except the juvenile, and for the juvenile's guardian ad litem, the social worker, and any person determined by the court to be a necessary party.

(d) If the petition is filed in a county other than the county of the juvenile's residence, the petitioner shall provide a copy of the petition and any notices of hearing to the director of the department of social services in the county of the juvenile's residence. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 9; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2004-128, s. 11; 2005-320, s. 3; 2009-311, s. 3; 2010-90, s. 9; 2013-129, s. 10.)

§ 7B-403. Receipt of reports; filing of petition.

(a) **(Effective until April 1, 2026 – see note)** All reports concerning a juvenile alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent shall be referred to the director of the department of social services for screening. Thereafter, if it is determined by the director that a report should be filed as a petition, the petition shall be drawn by the director, verified before an official authorized to administer oaths, and filed by the clerk, recording the date of filing.

(a) **(Effective April 1, 2026 – see note)** All reports concerning a juvenile alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent shall be referred to the director of the department of social services for screening. Thereafter, if it is determined by the director that a report should be filed as a petition, the petition shall be reviewed by the legal counsel for the department, signed by the director, and verified before an official authorized to administer oaths, and filed by the clerk, recording the date of filing. If the legal counsel for the department has not also signed the petition, the director shall attest that the petition has been reviewed by the legal counsel for the department.

(b) A decision of the director of social services not to file a report as a petition shall be reviewed by the prosecutor or Division pursuant to G.S. 7B-306. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, ss. 10, 11; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2025-16, ss. 1.3(f), 1.10(f).)

§ 7B-404. Immediate need for petition when clerk's office is closed.

(a) When the office of the clerk is closed, a magistrate shall accept for filing the following:

- (1) A petition alleging a juvenile to be abused, neglected, or dependent.
- (2) A petition alleging the obstruction of or interference with an assessment required by G.S. 7B-302.

(b) The authority of the magistrate under this section is limited to emergency situations when a petition must be filed to obtain a nonsecure custody order or an order under G.S. 7B-303. Any nonsecure custody order or order under G.S. 7B-303 that is approved pursuant to G.S. 7B-502 when the office of the clerk is closed shall be effective and enforceable after the order is signed by a

judicial official. Any petition accepted for filing under this section shall be delivered to the clerk's office for processing as soon as that office is open for business. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 409, s. 3; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 10; 2017-161, s. 2; 2025-16, s. 1.6(c).)

§ 7B-405. Commencement of action.

An action is commenced by the filing of a petition in the clerk's office when that office is open or by the acceptance of a juvenile petition by a magistrate when the clerk's office is closed, which shall constitute filing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2017-161, s. 3.)

§ 7B-406. Issuance of summons.

(a) Immediately after a petition has been filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, the clerk shall issue a summons to each party named in the petition, except the juvenile, requiring them to appear for a hearing at the time and place stated in the summons. A copy of the petition shall be attached to each summons. Service of the summons shall be completed as provided in G.S. 7B-407, but the parent of the juvenile shall not be deemed to be under a disability even though the parent is a minor.

(b) A summons shall be on a printed form supplied by the Administrative Office of the Courts and shall include each of the following:

- (1) Notice of the nature of the proceeding.
- (2) Notice of any right to counsel and information about how a parent may seek the appointment of counsel prior to a hearing if provisional counsel is not identified.
- (2a) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 11, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (3) Notice that, if the court determines at the hearing that the allegations of the petition are true, the court will conduct a dispositional hearing to consider the needs of the juvenile and enter an order designed to meet those needs and the objectives of the State.
- (4) Notice that the dispositional order or a subsequent order:
 - a. May remove the juvenile from the custody of the parent, guardian, or custodian.
 - b. May require that the juvenile receive medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment and that the parent participate in the treatment.
 - c. May require the parent to undergo psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment or counseling for the purpose of remedying the behaviors or conditions that are alleged in the petition or that contributed to the removal of the juvenile from the custody of that person.
 - d. May order the parent to pay for treatment that is ordered for the juvenile or the parent.
 - e. May, upon proper notice and hearing and a finding based on the criteria set out in G.S. 7B-1111, terminate the parental rights of the respondent parent.

(c) The summons shall advise the parent that upon service, jurisdiction over that person is obtained and that failure to comply with any order of the court pursuant to G.S. 7B-904 may cause the court to issue a show cause order for contempt.

(d) A summons shall be directed to the person summoned to appear and shall be delivered to any person authorized to serve process. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 2; 1995, c. 328, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 1; 2001-208, s. 1; 2001-487, s. 101; 2004-128, s. 12; 2010-90, s. 10; 2013-129, s. 11.)

§ 7B-407. Service of summons.

The summons shall be served under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4, upon the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, not less than five days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing. The time for service may be waived in the discretion of the court.

If service by publication under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j1), or service in a foreign country under Rule 4(j3), is required, the cost of the service by publication shall be advanced by the petitioner and may be charged as court costs as the court may direct. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2003-304, s. 1; 2013-129, s. 12; 2017-161, s. 4.)

§ 7B-408. Copy of petition and notices to guardian ad litem.

Immediately after a petition has been filed alleging that a juvenile is abused or neglected, the clerk shall provide a copy of the petition and any notices of hearings to the local guardian ad litem office. (2003-140, s. 6)

§ 7B-409: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-410: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-411: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-412: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-413: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Article 5.

Temporary Custody; Nonsecure Custody; Custody Hearings.

§ 7B-500. Taking a juvenile into temporary custody; civil and criminal immunity.

(a) Temporary custody means the taking of physical custody and providing personal care and supervision until a court order for nonsecure custody can be obtained. A juvenile may be taken into temporary custody without a court order by a law enforcement officer or a department of social services worker if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent and that the juvenile would be injured or could not be taken into custody if it were first necessary to obtain a court order. If a department of social services worker takes a juvenile into temporary custody under this section, the worker may arrange for the placement, care, supervision, and transportation of the juvenile.

(b) The process for taking into temporary custody a safely surrendered infant is as provided under Article 5A of this Subchapter.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-14, s. 6.2(d), effective October 1, 2023, and applicable to infants safely surrendered on or after that date.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-14, s. 6.2(d), effective October 1, 2023, and applicable to infants safely surrendered on or after that date.

(e) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-14, s. 6.2(d), effective October 1, 2023, and applicable to infants safely surrendered on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1985, c. 408, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 27, s. 2; 1995, c. 391, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-291, s. 2; 2021-182, s. 3(a); 2023-14, s. 6.2(d).)

§ 7B-501. Duties of person taking juvenile into temporary custody.

(a) A person who takes a juvenile into custody without a court order under G.S. 7B-500 shall proceed as follows, except that the person shall proceed in accordance with G.S. 7B-522 for a safely surrendered infant:

- (1) Notify the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker that the juvenile has been taken into temporary custody and advise the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker of the right to be present with the juvenile until a determination is made as to the need for nonsecure custody. Failure to notify the parent that the juvenile is in custody shall not be grounds for release of the juvenile.
- (2) Release the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker if the person having the juvenile in temporary custody decides that continued custody is unnecessary.
- (3) The person having temporary custody shall communicate with the director of the department of social services who shall consider prehearing diversion. If the decision is made to file a petition, the director shall contact the judge or person delegated authority pursuant to G.S. 7B-502 for a determination of the need for continued custody.

(b) A juvenile taken into temporary custody under this Article shall not be held for more than 12 hours, or for more than 24 hours if any of the 12 hours falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, unless:

- (1) A petition or motion for review has been filed by the director of the department of social services, and
- (2) An order for nonsecure custody has been entered by the court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 335, ss. 1, 2; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 17, s. 1; c. 27, s. 3; 1995, c. 391, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2023-14, s. 6.2(e).)

§ 7B-502. Authority to issue custody orders; delegation.

(a) In the case of any juvenile alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the court, the court may order that the juvenile be placed in nonsecure custody pursuant to criteria set out in G.S. 7B-503 when custody of the juvenile is necessary. The order for nonsecure custody may be entered ex parte. Unless the petition is being filed pursuant to G.S. 7B-404, telephonic communication that the department will be seeking nonsecure custody shall be given to counsel, or if unavailable, to a partner or employee at the attorney's office when any of the following occur:

- (1) The department has received written notification that a respondent has counsel for the juvenile matter.
- (2) The respondent is represented by counsel in a juvenile proceeding within the same county involving another juvenile of the respondent.

Notice is not required to provisional counsel appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-602.

(b) Any district court judge shall have the authority to issue nonsecure custody orders pursuant to G.S. 7B-503, once the action is commenced with the filing of a juvenile petition under

G.S. 7B-405. The chief district court judge may delegate the court's authority to any magistrate by administrative order which shall be filed in the office of the clerk of superior court. Each county shall have available at all times a judge or delegated magistrate with whom the department may request nonsecure custody of a juvenile or juveniles. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 425; 1983, c. 590, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2015-136, s. 3; 2025-16, s. 1.6(a).)

§ 7B-503. Criteria for nonsecure custody.

(a) When a request is made for nonsecure custody, the court shall first consider release of the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, relative, guardian, custodian, or other responsible adult. An order for nonsecure custody shall be made only when there is a reasonable factual basis to believe the matters alleged in the petition are true, and any of the following apply:

- (1) The juvenile has been abandoned.
- (2) The juvenile has suffered physical injury, sexual abuse, or serious emotional damage as defined by G.S. 7B-101(1)e.
- (3) The juvenile is exposed to a substantial risk of physical injury or sexual abuse because the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker has created the conditions likely to cause injury or abuse or has failed to provide, or is unable to provide, adequate supervision or protection.
- (4) The juvenile is in need of medical treatment to cure, alleviate, or prevent suffering serious physical harm which may result in death, disfigurement, or substantial impairment of bodily functions, and the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker is unwilling or unable to provide or consent to the medical treatment.
- (5) The parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker consents to the nonsecure custody order.
- (6) The juvenile is a runaway and consents to nonsecure custody.

A juvenile alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent shall be placed in nonsecure custody only when there is a reasonable factual basis to believe that there are no other reasonable means available to protect the juvenile. In no case shall a juvenile alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent be placed in secure custody.

(b) Whenever a petition is filed under G.S. 7B-302(d1), the court shall rule on the petition prior to returning the child to a home where the alleged abuser or abusers are or have been present. If the court finds that the alleged abuser or abusers have a history of violent behavior against people, the court shall order the alleged abuser or abusers to submit to a complete mental health evaluation by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist. The court may order the alleged abuser or abusers to pay the cost of any mental health evaluation required under this section. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 426, ss. 1-4; c. 526; 1983, c. 590, ss. 2-6; 1987, c. 101; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 3; 1989, c. 550; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-318, s. 4; 1999-456, s. 60; 2011-295, s. 2; 2019-33, s. 6.)

§ 7B-504. Order for nonsecure custody.

The custody order shall be in writing and shall direct a law enforcement officer or other authorized person to take physical custody of the juvenile and to make due return on the order. A copy of the order shall be given to the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker by the official executing the order.

An officer receiving an order for custody which is complete and regular on its face may execute it in accordance with its terms. If the court finds on the basis of the petition and request for

nonsecure custody or the testimony of the petitioner that a less intrusive remedy is not available, the court may authorize a law enforcement officer to enter private property to take physical custody of the juvenile. If required by exigent circumstances of the case, the court may authorize a law enforcement officer to make a forcible entry at any hour. The officer is not required to inquire into the regularity or continued validity of the order and shall not incur criminal or civil liability for its due service. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1989, c. 124; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2015-43, s. 1.)

§ 7B-505. Placement while in nonsecure custody.

(a) A juvenile meeting the criteria set out in G.S. 7B-503 may be placed in nonsecure custody with the department of social services or a person designated in the order, including the parent from whom the juvenile was not removed. The department with placement responsibility is authorized to place the juvenile for temporary residential placement in any of the following:

- (1) A licensed foster home or a home otherwise authorized by law to provide such care.
- (2) A facility operated by the department of social services.
- (2a) A facility licensed to provide care to juveniles.
- (3) Any other home or facility, including the home of a parent, relative, nonrelative kin, or other person with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile, approved by the court and designated in the order.

The department shall not place a juvenile in any unlicensed facility or any facility that is not licensed to provide care for juveniles without the sanction of the court and so designated in the order prior to such placement being made.

(a1) If juvenile siblings are removed from the home and placed in the nonsecure custody of a county department of social services, the director shall make reasonable efforts to place the juvenile siblings in the same home. The director is not required to make reasonable efforts under this subsection if the director documents that placing the juvenile siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the juvenile siblings. If, after making reasonable efforts, the director is unable to place the juvenile siblings in the same home, the director shall make reasonable efforts to provide frequent sibling visitation and ongoing interaction between the juvenile siblings, unless the director documents that frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the juvenile siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the juvenile siblings.

(b) The court shall order the department of social services to make diligent efforts to notify relatives and other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile that the juvenile is in nonsecure custody and of any hearings scheduled to occur pursuant to G.S. 7B-506, unless the court finds the notification would be contrary to the best interests of the juvenile. The department of social services shall use due diligence to identify and notify adult relatives and other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile within 30 days after the initial order removing custody. The department shall file with the court information regarding attempts made to identify and notify adult relatives of the juvenile and persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile. In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody under this section, the court shall first consider whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision in a safe home, then the court shall order placement of the juvenile with the relative unless the court finds that placement with the relative would be contrary to the best interests of the juvenile.

(c) If the court does not place the juvenile with a relative, the court may consider whether nonrelative kin or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile are willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. The court may order the department to notify the juvenile's State-recognized tribe of the need for nonsecure custody for the purpose of locating relatives or nonrelative kin for placement. The court may order placement of the juvenile with nonrelative kin if the court finds the placement is in the juvenile's best interests.

(c1) If the court does not place the juvenile with a relative, the court may consider whether an appropriate former foster parent, nonrelative kin, or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile are willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. The court may order the department to notify the juvenile's State-recognized tribe of the need for nonsecure custody for the purpose of locating relatives or nonrelative kin for placement. The court may order placement of the juvenile with nonrelative kin if the court finds the placement is in the juvenile's best interests.

(d) In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody under this section, the court shall also consider whether it is in the juvenile's best interest to remain in the juvenile's community of residence. In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody under this section, the court shall consider the Indian Child Welfare Act, Pub. L. No. 95-608, 25 U.S.C. §§ 1901, et seq., as amended, and the Howard M. Metzenbaum Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-382, 108 Stat. 4056, as amended, as they may apply. Placement of a juvenile with a relative outside of this State must be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, Article 38 of this Chapter. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 639, ss. 1, 2; 1997-390, s. 4; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 3, 20; 1999-456, s. 60; 2002-164, s. 4.7; 2013-129, s. 13; 2015-135, s. 2.2; 2015-136, s. 4; 2017-161, s. 5; 2021-100, s. 3; 2021-132, s. 1(d); 2025-16, s. 1.11(c).)

§ 7B-505.1. Consent for medical care for a juvenile placed in nonsecure custody of a department of social services.

(a) Unless the court orders otherwise, when a juvenile is placed in the nonsecure custody of a county department of social services, the director may arrange for, provide, or consent to any of the following:

- (1) Routine medical and dental care or treatment, including, but not limited to, treatment for common pediatric illnesses and injuries that require prompt intervention.
- (2) Emergency medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or mental health care or treatment.
- (3) Testing and evaluation in exigent circumstances.

(b) When placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody of a county department of social services pursuant to G.S. 7B-502, the court may authorize the director to consent to a Child Medical Evaluation upon written findings that demonstrate the director's compelling interest in having the juvenile evaluated prior to the hearing required by G.S. 7B-506.

(c) The director shall obtain authorization from the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian to consent to all care or treatment not covered by subsection (a) or (b) of this section, except that the court may authorize the director to provide consent after a hearing at which the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the care, treatment, or evaluation requested is in the juvenile's best interest. Care and treatment covered by this subsection includes:

- (1) Prescriptions for psychotropic medications.
- (2) Participation in clinical trials.

- (3) Immunizations when it is known that the parent has a bona fide religious objection to the standard schedule of immunizations.
- (4) Child Medical Evaluations not governed by subsection (b) of this section, comprehensive clinical assessments, or other mental health evaluations.
- (5) Surgical, medical, or dental procedures or tests that require informed consent.
- (6) Psychiatric, psychological, or mental health care or treatment that requires informed consent.

(d) For any care or treatment provided, the director shall make reasonable efforts to promptly notify the parent, guardian, or custodian that care or treatment will be or has been provided and give the parent or guardian frequent status reports on the juvenile's treatment and the care provided. Upon request of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, the director shall make available to the parent, guardian, or custodian any results or records of the aforementioned evaluations, except when prohibited by G.S. 122C-53(d). The results of a Child Medical Evaluation shall only be disclosed according to the provisions of G.S. 7B-700.

(e) Except as prohibited by federal law, the department may disclose confidential information deemed necessary for the juvenile's assessment and treatment to a health care provider serving the juvenile.

(f) Unless the court has ordered otherwise, except as prohibited by federal law, a health care provider shall disclose confidential information about a juvenile to a director of a county department of social services with custody of the juvenile and a parent, guardian, or custodian. A child medical evaluation performed by a health care provider rostered with the North Carolina Child Medical Evaluation Program shall be governed by subsection (d) of this section and G.S. 108A-75.4. (2015-136, s. 5; 2016-94, s. 12C.1(f1); 2017-161, s. 6; 2023-96, s. 1(b).)

§ 7B-506. Hearing to determine need for continued nonsecure custody.

(a) No juvenile shall be held under a nonsecure custody order for more than seven calendar days without a hearing on the merits or a hearing to determine the need for continued custody. A hearing on nonsecure custody conducted under this subsection may be continued for up to 10 business days with the consent of the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker and, if appointed, the juvenile's guardian ad litem. In addition, the court may require the consent of additional parties or may schedule the hearing on custody despite a party's consent to a continuance. In every case in which an order has been entered by a magistrate exercising authority delegated pursuant to G.S. 7B-502, a hearing to determine the need for continued custody shall be conducted on the day of the next regularly scheduled session of district court in the city or county where the order was entered if such session precedes the expiration of the applicable time period set forth in this subsection: Provided, that if such session does not precede the expiration of the time period, the hearing may be conducted at another regularly scheduled session of district court in the district where the order was entered.

(b) At a hearing to determine the need for continued custody, the court shall receive testimony and shall allow the parties the right to introduce evidence, to be heard in the person's own behalf, and to examine witnesses. The petitioner shall bear the burden at every stage of the proceedings to provide clear and convincing evidence that the juvenile's placement in custody is necessary. The court shall not be bound by the usual rules of evidence at such hearings.

(c) The court shall be bound by criteria set forth in G.S. 7B-503 in determining whether continued custody is warranted.

(c1) In determining whether continued custody is warranted, the court shall consider the opinion of the mental health professional who performed an evaluation under G.S. 7B-503(b) before returning the juvenile to the custody of that individual.

(d) If the court determines that the juvenile meets the criteria in G.S. 7B-503 and should continue in custody, the court shall issue an order to that effect. The order shall be in writing with appropriate findings of fact and signed and entered within 30 days of the completion of the hearing. The findings of fact shall include the evidence relied upon in reaching the decision and purposes which continued custody is to achieve.

(e) If the court orders at the hearing required in subsection (a) of this section that the juvenile remain in custody, a subsequent hearing on continued custody shall be held within seven business days of that hearing, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays when the courthouse is closed for transactions, and pending a hearing on the merits, hearings thereafter shall be held at intervals of no more than 30 calendar days.

(f) Hearings conducted under subsection (e) of this section may be waived only with the consent of the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, and, if appointed, the juvenile's guardian ad litem.

The court may require the consent of additional parties or schedule a hearing despite a party's consent to waiver.

(g) In addition to the hearings required under this section, any party may schedule a hearing on the issue of placement.

(g1) The provisions of G.S. 7B-905.1 shall apply to determine visitation.

(h) At each hearing to determine the need for continued custody, the court shall determine the following:

(1) Inquire as to the identity and location of any missing parent and whether paternity is at issue. The court shall include findings as to the efforts undertaken to locate the missing parent and to serve that parent, as well as efforts undertaken to establish paternity when paternity is an issue. The order may provide for specific efforts aimed at determining the identity and location of any missing parent, as well as specific efforts aimed at establishing paternity.

(2) Inquire about efforts made to identify and notify relatives as potential resources for placement or support and as to whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision in a safe home, then the court shall order temporary placement of the juvenile with the relative unless the court finds that placement with the relative would be contrary to the best interests of the juvenile. In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody under this section, the court shall consider the Indian Child Welfare Act, Pub. L. No. 95-608, 25 U.S.C. §§ 1901, et seq., as amended, and the Howard M. Metzenbaum Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-382, 108 Stat. 4056, as amended, as they may apply. Placement of a juvenile with a relative outside of this State must be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children set forth in Article 38 of this Chapter.

(2a) If the court does not place the juvenile with a relative, the court may consider whether nonrelative kin or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the

juvenile in a safe home. The court may order the department to notify the juvenile's State-recognized tribe of the need for nonsecure custody for the purpose of locating relatives or nonrelative kin for placement. The court may order placement of the juvenile with nonrelative kin or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile if the court finds the placement is in the juvenile's best interests.

- (3) Inquire as to whether there are other juveniles remaining in the home from which the juvenile was removed and, if there are, inquire as to the specific findings of the assessment conducted under G.S. 7B-302 and any actions taken or services provided by the director for the protection of the other juveniles. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 13; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 4; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 27, s. 1; 1997-390, ss. 5, 6; 1998-229, s. 4; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 4.1, 21; 1999-318, s. 5; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, ss. 16, 24; 2001-487, s. 101; 2003-337, s. 9; 2005-55, s. 11; 2007-276, s. 1; 2013-129, s. 14; 2015-136, s. 6; 2017-161, s. 7; 2025-16, s. 1.6(b).)

§ 7B-507. Juvenile placed in nonsecure custody of a department of social services.

(a) An order placing or continuing the placement of a juvenile in the nonsecure custody of a county department of social services:

- (1) Shall contain a finding that the juvenile's continuation in or return to the juvenile's own home would be contrary to the juvenile's health and safety.
- (2) Shall contain specific findings as to whether a county department of social services has made reasonable efforts to prevent the need for placement of the juvenile. In determining whether efforts to prevent the placement of the juvenile were reasonable, the juvenile's health and safety shall be the paramount concern. The court may find that efforts to prevent the need for the juvenile's placement were precluded by an immediate threat of harm to the juvenile. A finding that reasonable efforts were not made by a county department of social services shall not preclude the entry of an order authorizing the juvenile's placement when the court finds that placement is necessary for the protection of the juvenile.
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 7, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (4) Shall specify that the juvenile's placement and care are the responsibility of the county department of social services and that the department is to provide or arrange for the foster care or other placement of the juvenile, unless after considering the department's recommendations, the court orders a specific placement the court finds to be in the juvenile's best interests.
- (5) May order services or other efforts aimed at returning the juvenile to a safe home.

(b) through (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 7, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date. (1998-229, ss. 4.1, 21.1; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-487, s. 2; 2005-398, s. 1; 2011-295, s. 3; 2013-129, s. 15; 2013-378, s. 1; 2015-136, s. 7.)

§ 7B-508. Telephonic communication authorized.

All communications, notices, orders, authorizations, and requests authorized or required by G.S. 7B-501, 7B-503, and 7B-504 may be made by telephone when other means of communication are impractical. A copy of the petition shall be provided to the judge or magistrate who is delegated authority by G.S. 7B-502 by any appropriate secure method, including hand delivery, fax, or encrypted electronic means, or through the court's electronic filing system. All written orders pursuant to telephonic communication shall bear the name and the title of the person requesting and receiving telephonic approval, the name and title of the judge or magistrate approving the initial nonsecure custody order, the signature and the title of the clerk or magistrate who accepted the petition for filing, and the hour and the date of the authorization. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 13; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 4; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 27, s. 1; 1997-390, ss. 5, 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 4; 1999-456, s. 60; 2025-16, s. 1.7.)

Article 5A.

Safe Surrender of Infants.

§ 7B-520. Purpose; limitations.

(a) Purpose. – The purpose of this Article is to protect newborn infants by providing a safe alternative for a parent who, in a crisis or in desperation, may physically abandon or harm his or her newborn and to provide information for the parent regarding the parent's rights and alternatives.

(b) Limitations. – The provisions of this Article apply exclusively to safely surrendered infants as defined in G.S. 7B-101(19a). No person or agency shall act under the provisions of this Article if it is determined that any of the following are true:

- (1) A surrendered infant is reasonably believed to be more than 30 days old.
- (2) The infant shows signs of abuse or neglect.
- (3) There is reason to believe the individual surrendering the infant was not the infant's parent.
- (4) At the time the infant was surrendered, there was reason to believe the parent intended to return for the infant. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-521. Persons to whom infant may be surrendered.

The following individuals shall, without a court order, take into temporary custody an infant reasonably believed to be not more than 30 days of age that is voluntarily delivered to the individual by the infant's parent who does not express an intent to return for the infant:

- (1) A health care provider, as defined under G.S. 90-21.11, who is on duty or at a hospital or at a local or district health department or at a nonprofit community health center.
- (2) A first responder who is on duty, including a law enforcement officer, a certified emergency medical services worker, or a firefighter.
- (3) A social services worker who is on duty or at a local department of social services. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a); 2024-34, s. 5(a).)

§ 7B-522. Duties of person taking safely surrendered infant into temporary custody.

An individual who takes an infant into temporary custody under G.S. 7B-521 shall perform any act necessary to protect the physical health and well-being of the infant and immediately notify the department of social services in the county where the infant is surrendered. The individual may inquire as to the parents' identities, the date of birth of the infant, any relevant medical history, and the parents' marital status and may advise the parent that if the parent provides that information, it

may facilitate the adoption of the child. However, the individual shall notify the parent that the parent is not required to provide the information. The individual, if practical, shall provide the surrendering parent with written information created by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, as set forth in G.S. 7B-528. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-523. Immunity for those receiving infant.

An individual to whom an infant was surrendered under G.S. 7B-521 is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as a result of any omission or action taken pursuant to the requirements of this Article as long as that individual was acting in good faith. The immunity established by this section does not extend to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-524. Confidentiality of information and records.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this section, unless a parent consents to its release, an individual who takes an infant into temporary custody under this Article and any facility involved in the care of the infant at the time the infant is taken into temporary custody shall keep information regarding the surrendering parent's identity confidential.

(b) An individual taking an infant into temporary custody under this Article shall provide to the director of the department of social services any information known about the infant, the infant's parents, including their identity, any medical history, and the circumstances of surrender.

(c) All information about the surrendering parent's identity that is received or obtained by the department of social services shall not be disclosed except for (i) notice to local law enforcement pursuant to G.S. 7B-525(b)(3), (ii) contact with the non-surrendering parent, or (iii) as otherwise ordered by a court of this State.

(d) All information received by the department of social services related to the circumstances of the infant's safe surrender and the infant's condition shall be held in strictest confidence and shall not be disclosed except as provided in this section.

- (1) The director may consult with and share information that the director determines is necessary or relevant to the case with (i) a health care provider that provided medical treatment to the safely surrendered infant before, at the time of, or after the safe surrender, (ii) a placement provider, including a foster care placement or pre-adoptive placement, for the infant, (iii) a court exercising jurisdiction over an adoption proceeding for the infant, and (iv) any agency that a court in an adoption proceeding requires to conduct a preplacement assessment, report to the court, or equivalent.
- (2) A guardian ad litem appointed in a termination of parental rights proceeding resulting from the infant's safe surrender may examine and obtain written copies of the record.
- (3) A district or superior court judge of this State presiding over a civil, criminal, or delinquency matter in which the department of social services is not a party may order the department to release confidential information after providing the department with reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard and then determining that the information is relevant and necessary to the trial of the matter before the court and unavailable from any other source. The department of social services shall surrender the requested records to the court, which shall conduct an in-camera review prior to releasing the confidential records.

(e) This section shall not apply if the department determines the juvenile is not a safely surrendered infant or is the victim of a crime. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-525. Social services response.

(a) A director of a department of social services who receives a safely surrendered infant pursuant to this Article has, by virtue of the surrender, the surrendering parent's rights to legal and physical custody of the infant without obtaining a court order. A county department of social services to whom an infant has been safely surrendered may, after the notice by publication set forth in G.S. 7B-526 has been initiated, apply ex parte to the district court for an order finding that the infant has been safely surrendered and confirming that the county department of social services has legal custody of the minor for the purposes of obtaining a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, a social security number, or federal and State benefits for the minor.

(b) The director of social services receiving the infant shall do the following in an expeditious manner:

- (1) Ascertain from a health care provider that the surrendered infant is, to a reasonable medical certainty, not more than 30 days old and without signs of abuse or neglect. If both conditions are not satisfied, the provisions of the Article do not apply and the director shall treat the infant as a juvenile who has been reported to be an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile.
- (2) Make an inquiry of the person who received the infant as a safe surrender whether the surrendering parent was provided with information in accordance with G.S. 7B-526 and document the response.
- (3) Notify law enforcement of the safely surrendered infant and provide law enforcement with information necessary to investigate through the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons and other national and State resources whether the infant is a missing child.
- (4) Contact the non-surrendering parent when their identity is known to inform the non-surrendering parent that the infant was surrendered.
- (5) Respond to any inquiry by a non-surrendering parent about whether their child was safely surrendered.
- (6) When a surrendering or non-surrendering parent seeks custody of the infant, arrange for genetic marker testing of that parent and the infant if there is uncertainty as to parentage.
- (7) After 60 days from the date of surrender, if the surrendering parent has not sought to regain custody of the infant and the infant is not placed with the non-surrendering parent, initiate a termination of parental rights for the surrendering parent under G.S. 7B-1111(a)(7).

(c) Where the non-surrendering parent's identity is known and the non-surrendering parent has been contacted and located by the director of the department of social services, the director shall place custody of the safely surrendered infant with the non-surrendering parent, and any custodial rights of the department of social services shall terminate only if all of the following apply:

- (1) There exists the rebuttable presumption the non-surrendering parent is the safely surrendered infant's parent through (i) the child's legitimation through marriage or (ii) genetic marker testing arranged by the director to establish

parentage that indicates the probability of parentage is ninety-seven percent (97%) or higher.

- (2) The non-surrendering parent asserts their parental rights to their child.
- (3) The director does not have cause to suspect the infant is an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile due to the circumstances created by the non-surrendering parent.

(d) Where the identity of the non-surrendering parent is known by the director and the director has cause to suspect the infant may be an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile due to circumstances created by the non-surrendering parent, the director shall proceed as if there was a report of abuse, neglect, or dependency in accordance with G.S. 7B-302. The surrendering parent shall not be part of the department assessment conducted under G.S. 7B-302. If a petition alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency is filed with the district court pursuant to G.S. 7B-302, in accordance with G.S. 7B-401.1(b), the surrendering parent shall not be a party unless the court orders otherwise or a surrendering parent comes forward to regain custody of the child.

(e) If the surrendering parent seeks to regain custody of the infant, the provision of G.S. 7B-527(a) shall apply. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a); 2024-34, s. 6(a).)

§ 7B-526. Notice by publication of the safely surrendered infant.

(a) Within 14 days from the date of the safe surrender of an infant, the director shall provide notice by publication as specified in subsection (b) of this section that an infant has been surrendered and taken into custody by the department of social services.

(b) The notice shall be published in a newspaper qualified for legal advertising in accordance with G.S. 1-597 and G.S. 1-598 and published in the county in which the surrender was made and in any other county that the director has reason to believe either parent may be residing. The publication shall be once a week for three successive weeks. The notice shall state each of the following:

- (1) The infant was surrendered by a person claiming to be the infant's mother or father who did not express an intent to return for the infant and that the infant was surrendered to an individual pursuant to G.S. 7B-521 by specifying (i) the profession of the individual authorized to accept the surrendered infant, (ii) the name and location of the facility at which the infant was surrendered, and (iii) the date of surrender.
- (2) The physical characteristics of the infant at the time of surrender.
- (3) The infant is now in the physical and legal custody of the department of social services in the county where the infant was surrendered.
- (4) The surrendering mother or father has the right to request the infant's return to their custody by contacting the department of social services in the county that the infant was surrendered before the department initiates an action to terminate their parental rights in district court. If the surrendering parent seeks to regain custody of the infant from the department of social services, the director shall treat the infant as a juvenile who has been reported as a neglected juvenile and requires that the director conduct an assessment, at which point, the surrendering parent's rights to have his or her identity be confidential no longer apply.
- (5) The department is making efforts to identify, locate, and contact the non-surrendering parent. The non-surrendering parent has the right to contact

the department of social services to inquire about and seek custody of the infant. The department may place the infant with the non-surrendering parent, terminating the department's custodial rights to the infant, when that parent's identity and location are known and there is no cause to suspect the infant is an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile due to circumstances created by the non-surrendering parent.

- (6) Each parent has the right to contact the department of social services in the county where the infant was surrendered.
- (7) If neither parent seeks the infant's custody from the department of social services or executes a relinquishment for adoption within 60 days of the date of the surrender, which shall be stated clearly on the notice, the department will initiate a court action to terminate both parents' parental rights. Unless the court orders otherwise, the notice of the petition to terminate parental rights will be published in the same newspaper with the court name "In re Baby Doe."
- (8) How to contact the department of social services about the safely surrendered infant and the parents' rights.

(c) If a termination of parental rights for the safely surrendered infant is commenced, an affidavit of the publisher of the notice by this section shall be filed with the court at the preliminary hearing required by G.S. 7B-1105.1. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-527. Rights of surrendering parent.

(a) Right to Regain Custody. – Prior to the filing of a termination of parental rights petition under Article 11 of this Subchapter, a surrendering parent has the right to contact the county department of social services where the infant was surrendered and request the infant's return to his or her custody. The director shall treat any such request as a report of neglect and comply with the provisions of G.S. 7B-302.

(b) Right of Relinquishment. – The safe surrender of an infant under this Article does not preclude the surrendering parent from executing a relinquishment of their parental rights for adoption with the local department of social services which received the safely surrendered infant.

(c) Immunity. – A parent surrendering an infant pursuant to this Article is immune from any civil liability or criminal prosecution in accordance with G.S. 14-322.3 as long as the surrendering parent was acting in good faith. The immunity established by this section does not extend to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-528. Information to surrendering parent.

(a) The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall create printable and downloadable information about infant safe surrender and the rights of the parents. The information shall be written in a user-friendly manner and translated to commonly spoken and read languages in this State. The Division shall post the information on its website and make the information available for distribution to agencies where persons identified in G.S. 7B-521 are on duty and to other agencies that request the information.

(b) The information shall explain each of the following:

- (1) Who is a safely surrendered infant, surrendering parent, and non-surrendering parent.

- (2) The requirements for how a safe surrender of an infant may occur under this Article.
- (3) The right to have the surrendering parent's identity remain confidential with the exception of communicating with the non-surrendering parent, known medical providers who provided treatment to the infant prior to the safe surrender, law enforcement for purposes of a missing child assessment, or a court order.
- (4) The information set forth in G.S. 7B-526(b)(3) through (b)(8).
- (5) That the information contains a relevant medical history form for the infant that would assist the department of social services in obtaining any necessary medical services for the infant and in facilitating the infant's placement, including adoption. Completing the form is optional.
- (6) An explanation that services may be available to the surrendering parent and infant accompanied by contact information for the local department of social services.

(c) The Division shall create a printable and downloadable medical history form as referred to in subsection (b) of this section, and the form must include instructions on how to complete it and where to return it. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a).)

§ 7B-529. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-530. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-531. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-532. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-533. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-534. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Article 5B.

Safe Babies Court.

§ 7B-535. General provisions for safe babies court.

(a) Purpose. – The purpose of this Article is to establish safe babies court to improve the long-term well-being of parents, children, and families involved with the department of social services and the juvenile court by providing them with trauma-informed support and services and to achieve timely permanence, reduce generational trauma, and eliminate maltreatment.

(b) Referral. – The Administrative Office of the Courts shall set the criteria and referral process for a juvenile court matter to enroll into a safe babies court.

(c) Limitations. – Nothing contained in this Article shall confer a right or an expectation of a right of participation in safe babies court to a party involved in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding. A party's participation in safe babies court is voluntary.

(d) Permanency and Hearings. – Nothing contained in this Article shall alter any requirements or limit the court's authority to conduct hearings under this Subchapter. (2024-33, s. 13.)

§ 7B-536. Safe babies court records and information.

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) AOC Director. – The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- (2) Coordinators. – Judicial branch staff assigned to facilitate safe babies court by coordinating family team meetings with participants and service providers, setting regular judicial status conferences for safe babies court, documenting information related to safe babies court and its participants, maintaining data and records to demonstrate program outcomes, administration of safe babies court, data analysis, and other related duties.
- (3) De-identified record. – A record with all of the following types of information omitted, removed, or redacted:
 - a. The names, addresses, dates of birth, and employer name and address of any parties to the juvenile action, including any juvenile alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the court.
 - b. The names and addresses of service providers for any member of the family or the juvenile's placement provider.
 - c. The names and addresses of the juvenile placement.
 - d. Identifying information as defined in subdivisions (1) through (9) and (11) through (14) of G.S. 14-113.20(b).
- (4) Participant. – A party to a juvenile proceeding who is participating in safe babies court.
- (5) Party. – As determined by G.S. 7B-401.1.
- (6) Record. – All recorded information, data, and documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by safe babies court coordinators that is not filed in the juvenile court record in the custody of the clerk of superior court.
- (7) Safe babies court. – The innovative court program implementing a community engagement and systems change initiative focused on improving how the courts, department of social services, and related child-serving organizations work together to improve and expedite services for young families with at least one child who is no more than 3 years of age involved in juvenile actions alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency.

(b) Records Custodian. – The AOC Director shall be the legal custodian of safe babies court records. Safe babies court coordinators may have access to and use of safe babies court records for purposes of performing their job duties.

(c) Not Public Record. – Safe babies court records are not public records as defined by G.S. 132-1. Safe babies court records may only be disclosed as follows:

- (1) The AOC Director, in the Director's sole discretion, may authorize the disclosure and redisclosure of de-identified safe babies court records without an order of the court.
- (2) Upon a written motion in the juvenile proceeding by any party requesting safe babies court records related to the juvenile proceeding and notice to the other parties and the AOC Director pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5, the AOC Director shall provide copies of the requested records in-camera to the court. The court shall conduct an in-camera review and hold a hearing. The court may order

disclosure of the safe babies court records to any party upon a showing of good cause.

(d) Coordinators Privilege. – Safe baby coordinators shall not be competent to testify in the juvenile proceeding. Any communications, information, documents, or other materials made or received in the course of performing job duties related to safe babies court shall be privileged except that there is no privilege for communications made in furtherance of a crime or fraud, or for matters that require mandatory reporting. 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 this Chapter, Article 39 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes, G.S. 108A-102, or G.S. 110-105.4.

(e) Guardian Ad Litem Information. – The Office of Guardian ad Litem Services and any appointed guardian ad litem may share information at safe babies court meetings as it deems in the best interests of the juvenile. (2024-33, s. 13.)

§ 7B-537: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-538: Reserved for future codification purposes.

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§ 7B-540: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-541: Reserved for future codification purposes.

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Article 6.

Basic Rights.

§ 7B-600. Appointment of guardian.

(a) In any case when no parent appears in a hearing with the juvenile or when the court finds it would be in the best interests of the juvenile, the court may appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile. The guardian shall operate under the supervision of the court with or without bond and shall file only such reports as the court shall require. The guardian shall have the care, custody, and control of the juvenile or may arrange a suitable placement for the juvenile and may represent the juvenile in legal actions before any court. The guardian may consent to certain actions on the part of the juvenile in place of the parent including (i) marriage, (ii) enlisting in the Armed Forces of the United States, and (iii) enrollment in school. The guardian may also consent to any necessary remedial, psychological, medical, or surgical treatment for the juvenile. The authority of the guardian shall continue until the guardianship is terminated by court order, until the juvenile is emancipated pursuant to Article 35 of Subchapter IV of this Chapter, or until the juvenile reaches the age of majority.

(b) In any case where the court has determined that the appointment of a relative or other suitable person as guardian of the person for a juvenile is the permanent plan for the juvenile and appoints a guardian under this section, the guardian becomes a party to the proceeding. The court may appoint co-guardians of the juvenile. The court may terminate the permanent guardianship only if (i) the court finds that the relationship between the guardian and the juvenile is no longer in the juvenile's best interest, (ii) the guardian is unfit, (iii) the guardian has neglected a guardian's duties, (iv) the guardian is unwilling or unable to continue assuming a guardian's duties, or (v) the circumstances of subsection (b2) of this section apply.

(b1) If a party files a motion under G.S. 7B-906.1 or G.S. 7B-1000, the court may, prior to conducting a review hearing, do one or more of the following:

- (1) Order the county department of social services to conduct an investigation and file a written report of the investigation regarding the performance of the guardian of the person of the juvenile and give testimony concerning its investigation.
- (2) Utilize the community resources in behavioral sciences and other professions in the investigation and study of the guardian.
- (3) Ensure that a guardian ad litem has been appointed for the juvenile in accordance with G.S. 7B-601 and has been notified of the pending motion or petition.
- (4) Take any other action necessary in order to make a determination in a particular case.

(b2) When co-guardians have been appointed as the permanent plan for the juvenile and the relationship between the permanent co-guardians dissolves, any party may file a motion under G.S. 7B-906.1. The court shall consider the needs of the juvenile and enter an order addressing the guardianship and whether the guardianship is in the best interest of the juvenile. The court may maintain the juvenile's placement under review or order any disposition authorized by G.S. 7B-903. The court may terminate the permanent guardianship of both or one of the co-guardians based on the dissolution of the relationship of the co-guardians and the best interest of the juvenile. The court may maintain the co-guardianship and modify the order to address physical

and legal custody of the juvenile, including placement, visitation, and decision making between the co-guardians. The court shall consider whether custody rather than guardianship is in the juvenile's best interests and, if so, enter an order pursuant to G.S. 7B-911.

(c) If the court appoints an individual guardian of the person pursuant to this section, the court shall verify that the person being appointed as guardian of the juvenile understands the legal significance of the appointment and will have adequate resources to care appropriately for the juvenile. The fact that the prospective guardian has provided a stable placement for the juvenile for at least six consecutive months is evidence that the person has adequate resources. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 7; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-124, s. 1; 2003-140, s. 9(a); 2011-183, s. 3; 2011-295, s. 4; 2013-129, s. 16; 2019-33, s. 7(a); 2025-16, s. 1.8.)

§ 7B-601. Appointment and duties of guardian ad litem.

(a) When in a petition a juvenile is alleged to be abused or neglected, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the juvenile. When a juvenile is alleged to be dependent, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the juvenile. The juvenile is a party in all actions under this Subchapter. The guardian ad litem and attorney advocate have standing to represent the juvenile in all actions under this Subchapter where they have been appointed. The appointment shall be made pursuant to the program established by Article 12 of this Chapter unless representation is otherwise provided pursuant to G.S. 7B-1202 or G.S. 7B-1203. The appointment shall terminate when the permanent plan has been achieved for the juvenile and approved by the court. The court may reappoint the guardian ad litem pursuant to a showing of good cause upon motion of any party, including the guardian ad litem, or of the court. In every case where a nonattorney is appointed as a guardian ad litem, an attorney shall be appointed in the case in order to assure protection of the juvenile's legal rights throughout the proceeding. The duties of the guardian ad litem program shall be to make an investigation to determine the facts, the needs of the juvenile, and the available resources within the family and community to meet those needs; to facilitate, when appropriate, the settlement of disputed issues; to offer evidence and examine witnesses at adjudication; to explore options with the court at the dispositional hearing; to conduct follow-up investigations to insure that the orders of the court are being properly executed; to report to the court when the needs of the juvenile are not being met; and to protect and promote the best interests of the juvenile until formally relieved of the responsibility by the court.

(b) The court may authorize the guardian ad litem to accompany the juvenile to court in any criminal action wherein the juvenile may be called on to testify in a matter relating to abuse.

(c) The guardian ad litem has the authority to obtain any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in the guardian ad litem's opinion be relevant to the case. No privilege other than the attorney-client privilege may be invoked to prevent the guardian ad litem and the court from obtaining such information. The confidentiality of the information or reports shall be respected by the guardian ad litem, and no disclosure of any information or reports shall be made to anyone except by order of the court or unless otherwise provided by law. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 528; 1983, c. 761, s. 159; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 5; 1993, c. 537, s. 1; 1995, c. 324, s. 21.13; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-432, s. 1; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-602. Parent's right to counsel; guardian ad litem.

(a) In cases where the juvenile petition alleges that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, the parent has the right to counsel and to appointed counsel in cases of indigency unless that person waives the right. When a petition is filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or

dependent, the clerk shall appoint provisional counsel for each parent named in the petition in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services, shall indicate the appointment on the juvenile summons or attached notice, and shall provide a copy of the petition and summons or notice to the attorney. At the first hearing, the court shall dismiss the provisional counsel if the respondent parent:

- (1) Does not appear at the hearing;
- (2) Does not qualify for court-appointed counsel;
- (3) Has retained counsel; or
- (4) Waives the right to counsel.

The court shall confirm the appointment of counsel if subdivisions (1) through (4) of this subsection are not applicable to the respondent parent.

The court may reconsider a parent's eligibility and desire for appointed counsel at any stage of the proceeding.

(a1) A parent qualifying for appointed counsel may be permitted to proceed without the assistance of counsel only after the court examines the parent and makes findings of fact sufficient to show that the waiver is knowing and voluntary. The court's examination shall be reported as provided in G.S. 7B-806.

(b) In addition to the right to appointed counsel set forth above, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17, to represent a parent who is under the age of 16 years. On motion of any party or on the court's own motion, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem for a parent who is 16 or 17 years old and who is not married or otherwise emancipated. The appointment of a guardian ad litem under this subsection shall not affect the minor parent's entitlement to a guardian ad litem pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 in the event that the minor parent is the subject of a separate juvenile petition.

(c) On motion of any party or on the court's own motion, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem for a parent who is incompetent in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17.

(d) The parent's counsel shall not be appointed to serve as the guardian ad litem and the guardian ad litem shall not act as the parent's attorney. Communications between the guardian ad litem appointed under this section and the parent and between the guardian ad litem and the parent's counsel shall be privileged and confidential to the same extent that communications between the parent and the parent's counsel are privileged and confidential.

(e) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 17, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 14; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-144, s. 16; 2001-208, s. 2; 2001-487, s. 101; 2005-398, s. 2; 2011-326, s. 12(a); 2013-129, s. 17; 2021-100, s. 4; 2025-16, s. 1.9.)

§ 7B-603. Payment of court-appointed attorney or guardian ad litem.

(a) An attorney or guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 shall be paid a reasonable fee fixed by the court or by direct engagement for specialized guardian ad litem services through the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(a1) The court may require payment of the fee for an attorney or guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 from a person other than the juvenile as provided in G.S. 7A-450.1, 7A-450.2, and 7A-450.3. In no event shall the parent or guardian be required to pay the fees for a court-appointed attorney or guardian ad litem in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding unless the juvenile has been adjudicated to be abused, neglected, or dependent or, in a proceeding to terminate parental rights, unless the parent's rights have been terminated. If the party is ordered

to reimburse the State for attorney or guardian ad litem fees and fails to comply with the order at the time of disposition, the court shall file a judgment against the party for the amount due the State.

(b) An attorney or guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-602 or pursuant to any other provision of the Juvenile Code for which the Office of Indigent Defense Services is responsible for providing counsel shall be paid a reasonable fee in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services.

(b1) The court may require payment of the fee for an attorney appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-602 or G.S. 7B-1101.1 from the respondent. In no event shall the respondent be required to pay the fees for a court-appointed attorney in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding unless the juvenile has been adjudicated to be abused, neglected, or dependent or, in a proceeding to terminate parental rights, unless the respondent's rights have been terminated. At the dispositional hearing or other appropriate hearing, the court shall make a determination whether the respondent should be held responsible for reimbursing the State for the respondent's attorneys' fees. This determination shall include the respondent's financial ability to pay.

If the court determines that the respondent is responsible for reimbursing the State for the respondent's attorneys' fees, the court shall so order. If the respondent does not comply with the order at the time of disposition, the court shall file a judgment against the respondent for the amount due the State.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2005-254, s. 2, effective October 1, 2005, and applicable to the appointment of counsel on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 726, ss. 2, 3; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 6; 1991, c. 575, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-144, s. 17; 2005-254, s. 2., 2014-115, s. 21; 2017-158, s. 25.)

§ 7B-604. (Effective April 1, 2026) Legal counsel for department.

(a) The county department of social services shall be represented by legal counsel for the department in proceedings governed by this Subchapter.

(b) Prior to representing the county department of social services in proceedings governed by this Subchapter, legal counsel for the department shall complete a minimum of six hours of training addressing State and federal child welfare law and procedures.

(c) The Division in consultation with (i) representatives of county directors and (ii) legal counsel for the department who are department attorneys shall establish ongoing training and practice standards that apply to legal counsel for the department. (2025-16, s. 1.10(b).)

Article 7.

Discovery.

§ 7B-700. Sharing of information; discovery.

(a) Sharing of Information. – A department of social services is authorized to share with any other party information relevant to the subject matter of an action pending under this Subchapter. However, this subsection does not authorize the disclosure of the identity of the reporter or any uniquely identifying information that would lead to the discovery of the reporter's identity in accordance with G.S. 7B-302 or the identity of any other person where the agency making the information available determines that the disclosure would be likely to endanger the life or safety of the person.

(b) Local Rules. – The chief district court judge may adopt local rules or enter an administrative order addressing the sharing of information among parties and the use of discovery.

(c) Discovery. – Any party may file a motion for discovery. The motion shall contain a specific description of the information sought and a statement that the requesting party has made a reasonable effort to obtain the information pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section or that the information cannot be obtained pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section. The motion shall be served upon all parties pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5. The motion shall be heard and ruled upon within 10 business days of the filing of the motion. The court may grant, restrict, defer, or deny the relief requested. Any order shall avoid unnecessary delay of the hearing, establish expedited deadlines for completion, and conform to G.S. 7B-803.

(d) Protective Order. – Any party served with a motion for discovery may request that the discovery be denied, restricted, or deferred and shall submit, for in camera inspection, the document, information, or materials the party seeks to protect. If the court enters any order granting relief, copies of the documents, information, or materials submitted in camera shall be preserved for appellate review in the event of an appeal.

(e) Redisclosure. – Information obtained through discovery or sharing of information under this section may not be redisclosed if the redisclosure is prohibited by State or federal law.

(f) Guardian Ad Litem. – Unless provided otherwise by local rules, information or reports obtained by the guardian ad litem pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 are not subject to disclosure pursuant to this subsection, except that reports and records shall be shared with all parties before submission to the court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2009-311, s. 4.)

Article 8.

Hearing Procedures.

§ 7B-800. Amendment of petition.

The court, in its discretion, may permit a petition to be amended. The court shall direct the manner in which an amended petition shall be served and the time allowed for a party to prepare after the petition has been amended. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2010-90, s. 11.)

§ 7B-800.1. Pre-adjudication hearing.

- (a) Prior to the adjudicatory hearing, the court shall consider the following:
- (1) Retention or release of provisional counsel.
 - (2) Identification of the parties to the proceeding.
 - (3) Whether paternity has been established or efforts made to establish paternity, including the identity and location of any missing parent.
 - (4) Whether relatives, parents, or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile have been identified and notified as potential resources for placement or support.
 - (5) Whether all summons, service of process, and notice requirements have been met.
 - (5a) Whether the petition has been properly verified and invokes jurisdiction.
 - (6) Any pretrial motions, including (i) appointment of a guardian ad litem in accordance with G.S. 7B-602, (ii) discovery motions in accordance with G.S. 7B-700, (iii) amendment of the petition in accordance with G.S. 7B-800, or (iv) any motion for a continuance of the adjudicatory hearing in accordance with G.S. 7B-803.
 - (7) Any other issue that can be properly addressed as a preliminary matter.

(b) The pre-adjudication hearing may be combined with a hearing on the need for nonsecure custody or any pretrial hearing or conducted in accordance with local rules.

(c) The parties may enter stipulations in accordance with G.S. 7B-807 or enter a consent order in accordance with G.S. 7B-801. (2013-129, s. 18; 2014-16, s. 1; 2015-135, s. 2.3; 2015-136, s. 8.)

§ 7B-801. Hearing.

(a) At any hearing authorized or required under this Subchapter, the court in its discretion shall determine whether the hearing or any part of the hearing shall be closed to the public. In determining whether to close the hearing or any part of the hearing, the court shall consider the circumstances of the case, including, but not limited to, the following factors:

- (1) The nature of the allegations against the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian or caretaker;
- (2) The age and maturity of the juvenile;
- (3) The benefit to the juvenile of confidentiality;
- (4) The benefit to the juvenile of an open hearing; and
- (5) The extent to which the confidentiality afforded the juvenile's record pursuant to G.S. 132-1.4(l) and G.S. 7B-2901 will be compromised by an open hearing.

(b) No hearing or part of a hearing shall be closed by the court if the juvenile requests that it remain open.

(b1) Nothing in this Subchapter precludes the court in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding from entering a consent adjudication order, disposition order, review order, or permanency planning order when each of the following apply:

- (1) All parties are present or represented by counsel, who is present and authorized to consent.
- (2) The juvenile is represented by counsel.
- (3) The court makes sufficient findings of fact.

(c) The adjudicatory hearing shall be held in the district at such time and place as the chief district court judge shall designate, but no later than 60 days from the filing of the petition unless the judge pursuant to G.S. 7B-803 orders that it be held at a later time. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 5, 22; 1999-456, s. 60; 2011-295, s. 5.)

§ 7B-802. Conduct of hearing.

The adjudicatory hearing shall be a judicial process designed to adjudicate the existence or nonexistence of any of the conditions alleged in a petition. In the adjudicatory hearing, the court shall protect the rights of the juvenile and the juvenile's parent to assure due process of law. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-803. Continuances.

The court may, for good cause, continue the hearing for as long as is reasonably required to receive additional evidence, reports, or assessments that the court has requested, or other information needed in the best interests of the juvenile and to allow for a reasonable time for the parties to conduct expeditious discovery. Otherwise, continuances shall be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when necessary for the proper administration of justice or in the best interests of the juvenile. Resolution of a pending criminal charge against a respondent arising out of the same transaction or occurrence as the juvenile petition shall not be the sole extraordinary

circumstance for granting a continuance. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 9; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2013-129, s. 19.)

§ 7B-804. Rules of evidence.

Where the juvenile is alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent, the rules of evidence in civil cases shall apply. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 17; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-805. Quantum of proof in adjudicatory hearing.

The allegations in a petition alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2010-90, s. 12; 2013-129, s. 20.)

§ 7B-806. Record of proceedings.

All adjudicatory and dispositional hearings shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic or mechanical means. Records shall be reduced to a written transcript only when timely notice of appeal has been given. The court may order that other hearings be recorded. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-807. Adjudication.

(a) If the court finds from the evidence, including stipulations by a party, that the allegations in the petition have been proven by clear and convincing evidence, the court shall so state. A record of specific stipulated adjudicatory facts shall be made by either reducing the facts to a writing, signed by each party stipulating to them and submitted to the court; or by reading the facts into the record, followed by an oral statement of agreement from each party stipulating to them. If the court finds that the allegations have not been proven, the court shall dismiss the petition with prejudice, and if the juvenile is in nonsecure custody, the juvenile shall be released to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker.

(a1) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 21, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

(b) The adjudicatory order shall be in writing and shall contain appropriate findings of fact and conclusions of law. The order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, s. 17; 2001-487, s. 101; 2005-398, s. 3; 2010-90, s. 13; 2011-295, s. 6; 2013-129, s. 21.)

§ 7B-808. Predisposition report.

(a) The court shall proceed to the dispositional hearing upon receipt of sufficient social, medical, psychiatric, psychological, and educational information. No predisposition report shall be submitted to or considered by the court prior to the completion of the adjudicatory hearing. The court may proceed with the dispositional hearing without receiving a predisposition report if the court makes a written finding that a report is not necessary.

(b) The director of the department of social services shall prepare the predisposition report for the court containing the results of any mental health evaluation under G.S. 7B-503, a placement plan, and a treatment plan the director deems appropriate to meet the juvenile's needs.

(c) The chief district court judge may adopt local rules or make an administrative order addressing the sharing of the reports among parties, including an order that prohibits disclosure of the report to the juvenile if the court determines that disclosure would not be in the best interest of the juvenile. Such local rules or administrative order may not:

- (1) Prohibit a party entitled by law to receive confidential information from receiving that information.
- (2) Allow disclosure of any confidential source protected by statute. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2003-140, s. 2; 2004-203, s. 17.)

Article 9.

Dispositions.

§ 7B-900. Purpose.

The purpose of dispositions in juvenile actions is to design an appropriate plan to meet the needs of the juvenile and to achieve the objectives of the State in exercising jurisdiction. If possible, the initial approach should involve working with the juvenile and the juvenile's family in their own home so that the appropriate community resources may be involved in care, supervision, and treatment according to the needs of the juvenile. Thus, the court should arrange for appropriate community-level services to be provided to the juvenile and the juvenile's family in order to strengthen the home situation. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-900.1. Post adjudication venue.

(a) At any time after adjudication, the court on its own motion or motion of any party may transfer venue to a different county, regardless of whether the action could have been commenced in that county, if the court finds that the forum is inconvenient, that transfer of the action to the other county is in the best interest of the juvenile, and that the rights of the parties are not prejudiced by the change of venue.

(b) Before ordering that a case be transferred to another county, the court shall find that the director of the department of social services in the county in which the action is pending and the director in the county to which transfer is contemplated have communicated about the case and that:

- (1) The two directors are in agreement with respect to each county's responsibility for providing financial support for the juvenile and services for the juvenile and the juvenile's family; or
- (2) The Director of the Division of Social Services or the Director's designee has made that determination pursuant to G.S. 153A-257(d).

(c) When the court transfers a case to a different county, the court shall join or substitute as a party to the action the director of the department of social services in the county to which the case is being transferred and, if the juvenile is in the custody of the department of social services in the county in which the action is pending, shall transfer custody to the department of social services in the county to which the case is being transferred. The director of the department of social services in the county to which the case is being transferred must be given notice and an opportunity to be

heard before the court enters an order pursuant to this subsection. However, the director may waive the right to notice and a hearing.

(d) Before ordering that a case be transferred to a different district, the court shall communicate with the chief district court judge or a judge presiding in juvenile court in the district to which the transfer is contemplated explaining the reasons for the proposed transfer. If the judge in the district to which the transfer is proposed makes a timely objection to the transfer, either verbally or in writing, the court shall order the transfer only after making detailed findings of fact that support a conclusion that the juvenile's best interests require that the case be transferred.

(e) Before ordering that a case be transferred to another county, the court shall consider relevant factors, which may include:

- (1) The current residences of the juvenile and the parent, guardian, or custodian and the extent to which those residences have been and are likely to be stable.
- (2) The reunification plan or other permanent plan for the juvenile and the likely effect of a change in venue on efforts to achieve permanence for the juvenile expeditiously.
- (3) The nature and location of services and service providers necessary to achieve the reunification plan or other permanent plan for the juvenile.
- (4) The impact upon the juvenile of the potential disruption of an existing therapeutic relationship.
- (5) The nature and location of witnesses and evidence likely to be required in future hearings.
- (6) The degree to which the transfer would cause inconvenience to one or more parties.
- (7) Any agreement of the parties as to which forum is most convenient.
- (8) The familiarity of the departments of social services, the courts, and the local offices of the guardian ad litem with the juvenile and the juvenile's family.
- (9) Any other factor the court considers relevant.

(f) The order transferring venue shall be in writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days from completion of the hearing. The order shall identify the next court action and specify the date within which the next hearing shall be held. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(g) The clerk shall transmit to the court in the county to which the case is being transferred a copy of the complete record of the case within three business days after entry of the order transferring venue.

Upon receiving a case that has been transferred from another county, the clerk shall promptly satisfy the following:

- (1) Assign an appropriate file number to the case.
- (2) Ensure that any necessary appointments of new attorneys or guardians ad litem are made.
- (3) Calendar the next court action as set forth in the order transferring venue and give appropriate notice to all parties. (2009-311, s. 5.)

§ 7B-901. Initial dispositional hearing.

(a) The dispositional hearing shall take place immediately following the adjudicatory hearing and shall be concluded within 30 days of the conclusion of the adjudicatory hearing. The dispositional hearing may be informal and the court may consider written reports or other evidence concerning the needs of the juvenile. The juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian shall have the right to present evidence, and they may advise the court concerning the disposition they believe to be in the best interests of the juvenile. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, including testimony or evidence from any person who is not a party, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile and the most appropriate disposition.

(b) At the dispositional hearing, the court shall inquire as to the identity and location of any missing parent and whether paternity is at issue. The court shall include findings of the efforts undertaken to locate the missing parent and to serve that parent and efforts undertaken to establish paternity when paternity is an issue. The order may provide for specific efforts in determining the identity and location of any missing parent and specific efforts in establishing paternity. The court shall also inquire about efforts made to identify and notify relatives, parents, or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile, as potential resources for placement or support.

(c) If the disposition order places a juvenile in the custody of a county department of social services, the court shall direct that reasonable efforts for reunification as defined in G.S. 7B-101 shall not be required if the court makes written findings of fact pertaining to any of the following, unless the court concludes that there is compelling evidence warranting continued reunification efforts:

- (1) A court of competent jurisdiction determines or has determined that aggravated circumstances exist because the parent has committed or encouraged the commission of, or allowed the continuation of, any of the following upon the juvenile:
 - a. Sexual abuse.
 - b. Chronic physical or emotional abuse.
 - c. Torture.
 - d. Abandonment.
 - e. Chronic or toxic exposure to alcohol or controlled substances that causes impairment of or addiction in the juvenile.
 - f. Any other act, practice, or conduct that increased the enormity or added to the injurious consequences of the abuse or neglect.
- (2) A court of competent jurisdiction has terminated involuntarily the parental rights of the parent to another child of the parent.
- (3) A court of competent jurisdiction determines or has determined that (i) the parent has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of another child of the parent; (ii) has aided, abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child or another child of the parent; (iii) has committed a felony assault resulting in serious bodily injury to the child or another child of the parent; (iv) has committed sexual abuse against the child or another child of the parent; or (v) has been required to register as a sex offender on any government-administered registry.

(d) When the court determines that reunification efforts are not required, the court shall order concurrent permanent plans as soon as possible, after providing each party with a reasonable

opportunity to prepare and present evidence. The court shall schedule a permanency planning hearing within 30 days to address the permanent plans in accordance with G.S. 7B-906.1 and G.S. 7B-906.2. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 18; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2003-62, s. 1; 2005-398, s. 4; 2007-276, s. 2; 2011-295, s. 7; 2013-129, s. 22; 2015-135, s. 2.4; 2015-136, s. 9; 2015-264, s. 34(a); 2016-94, s. 12C.1(g); 2018-86, s. 2; 2019-33, s. 8; 2021-100, s. 5.)

§ 7B-902: Repealed by Session Laws 2011-295, s. 8, effective October 1, 2011, and applicable to actions filed on or pending on or after that date.

§ 7B-903. Dispositional alternatives for abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile.

(a) The following alternatives for disposition shall be available to any court exercising jurisdiction, and the court may combine any of the applicable alternatives when the court finds the disposition to be in the best interests of the juvenile:

- (1) Dismiss the case or continue the case in order to allow the parent, guardian, custodian, caretaker or others to take appropriate action.
- (2) Require that the juvenile be supervised in the juvenile's own home by the department of social services in the juvenile's county or by another individual as may be available to the court, subject to conditions applicable to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker as the court may specify.
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 10, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (4) Place the juvenile in the custody of a parent, relative, private agency offering placement services, or some other suitable person. If the court determines that the juvenile should be placed in the custody of an individual other than a parent, the court shall verify that the person receiving custody of the juvenile understands the legal significance of the placement and will have adequate resources to care appropriately for the juvenile. The fact that the prospective custodian has provided a stable placement for the juvenile for at least six consecutive months is evidence that the person has adequate resources.
- (5) Appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile as provided in G.S. 7B-600.
- (6) Place the juvenile in the custody of the department of social services in the county of the juvenile's residence. In the case of a juvenile who has legal residence outside the State, the court may place the juvenile in the physical custody of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile is found so that agency may return the juvenile to the responsible authorities in the juvenile's home state. The department is authorized to place the juvenile in any of the following:
 - a. A licensed foster home or home otherwise authorized by law to provide such care.
 - b. A facility operated by the department of social services.
 - c. A facility licensed to provide care to juveniles.
 - d. Any other home approved by the department, including the home of a relative, nonrelative kin, or other person with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile.

The department shall not place a juvenile in any unlicensed facility or any facility that is not licensed to provide care for juveniles without the sanction of the court and so designated in the order prior to such placement being made.

(a1) In placing a juvenile in out-of-home care under this section, the court shall first consider whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision in a safe home, then the court shall order placement of the juvenile with the relative unless the court finds that the placement is contrary to the best interests of the juvenile. In placing a juvenile in out-of-home care under this section, the court shall also consider whether it is in the juvenile's best interest to remain in the juvenile's community of residence. Placement of a juvenile with a relative outside of this State must be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

(a2) An order under this section placing or continuing the placement of the juvenile in out-of-home care shall contain a finding that the juvenile's continuation in or return to the juvenile's own home would be contrary to the juvenile's health and safety.

(a3) An order under this section placing the juvenile in out-of-home care shall contain specific findings as to whether the department has made reasonable efforts to prevent the need for placement of the juvenile. In determining whether efforts to prevent the placement of the juvenile were reasonable, the juvenile's health and safety shall be the paramount concern.

The court may find that efforts to prevent the need for the juvenile's placement were precluded by an immediate threat of harm to the juvenile. A finding that reasonable efforts were not made by a county department of social services shall not preclude the entry of an order authorizing the juvenile's placement when the court finds that placement is necessary for the protection of the juvenile.

(a4) If the court does not place the juvenile with a relative, the court may consider whether nonrelative kin or other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile are willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. The court may order the department to notify the juvenile's State-recognized tribe of the need for custodial care for the purpose of locating relatives or nonrelative kin for placement. The court may order placement of the juvenile with nonrelative kin if the court finds the placement is in the juvenile's best interests.

(b) When the court has found that a juvenile has suffered physical abuse and that the individual responsible for the abuse has a history of violent behavior against people, the court shall consider the opinion of the mental health professional who performed an evaluation under G.S. 7B-503(b) before returning the juvenile to the custody of that individual.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 10, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

(d) The court may order that the juvenile be examined by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other qualified expert as may be needed for the court to determine the needs of the juvenile. Upon completion of the examination, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the juvenile is in need of medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment and who should pay the cost of the treatment. The county manager, or such person who shall be designated by the chairman of the county commissioners, of the juvenile's residence shall be notified of the hearing and allowed to be heard. Subject to G.S. 7B-903.1, if the court finds the juvenile to be in need of medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment, the court shall permit the parent or other responsible persons to arrange for treatment. If the parent declines or is unable to make necessary arrangements, the court may order the needed treatment, surgery, or

care and the court may order the parent to pay the cost of the care pursuant to G.S. 7B-904. If the court finds the parent is unable to pay the cost of treatment, the court shall order the county to arrange for treatment of the juvenile and to pay for the cost of the treatment. The county department of social services shall recommend the facility that will provide the juvenile with treatment.

(e) If the court determines that the juvenile may be mentally ill or developmentally disabled, the court may order the county department of social services to coordinate with the appropriate representative of the area mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services authority or other managed care organization responsible for managing public funds for mental health and developmental disabilities to develop a treatment plan for the juvenile. The court shall not commit a juvenile directly to a State hospital or developmental center for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and orders purporting to commit a juvenile directly to a State hospital or developmental center for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities shall be void and of no effect. If the court determines that institutionalization is the best service for the juvenile, admission shall be with the voluntary consent of the parent, guardian, or custodian. If the parent, guardian, or custodian refuses to consent to admission to a mental hospital or developmental center for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the signature and consent of the court may be substituted for that purpose. A State hospital or developmental center for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities that refuses admission to a juvenile referred for admission by a court, or discharges a juvenile previously admitted on court referral prior to completion of treatment, shall submit to the court a written report setting out the reasons for denial of admission or discharge and setting out the juvenile's diagnosis, indications of mental illness or intellectual and developmental disabilities, indications of need for treatment, and a statement as to the location of any facility known to have a treatment program for the juvenile in question. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 19; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1991, c. 636, s. 19(a); 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 3; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 6, 23; 1999-318, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2002-164, s. 4.8; 2003-140, s. 9(b); 2015-136, s. 10; 2019-33, s. 7(b); 2021-132, s. 1(e); 2025-16, s. 1.11(b).)

§ 7B-903.1. Juvenile placed in custody of a department of social services.

(a) Except as prohibited by federal law, the director of a county department of social services with custody of a juvenile shall be authorized to make decisions about matters not addressed herein that are generally made by a juvenile's custodian, including, but not limited to, educational decisions and consenting to the sharing of the juvenile's information. The court may delegate any part of this authority to the juvenile's parent, foster parent, or another individual.

(b) When a juvenile is in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services, the placement provider may, in accordance with G.S. 131D-10.2A, provide or withhold permission, without prior approval of the court or county department of social services, to allow a juvenile to participate in normal childhood activities. If such authorization is not in the juvenile's best interest, the court shall set out alternative parameters for approving normal childhood activities.

(c) If a juvenile is removed from the home and placed in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services, the director shall not allow unsupervised visitation with or return physical custody of the juvenile to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker from whom the juvenile was removed without a hearing. Before a county department of social services may recommend unsupervised visits or return of physical custody of the juvenile, whichever occurs first, to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker from whom the juvenile was

removed, a county department of social services shall first observe that parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker with the juvenile for at least two visits that support the recommendation. Each observation visit shall consist of an observation of not less than one hour with the juvenile, shall be conducted at least seven days apart, and shall occur within 30 days of the hearing at which the department of social services makes the recommendation. A department of social services shall provide documentation of any observation visits that it conducts at the hearing for the court's consideration as to whether unsupervised visits or physical custody, whichever occurs first, should be granted to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker from whom the juvenile was removed. Before custody of the juvenile can be returned to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker from whom the juvenile was removed, the court must find that the juvenile will receive proper care and supervision in a safe home. Before unsupervised visitation between the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker from whom the juvenile was removed and the juvenile can occur, the court must find that the unsupervised visits are in the best interest of the juvenile.

(c1) If juvenile siblings are removed from the home and placed in the nonsecure custody of a county department of social services, the director shall make reasonable efforts to place the juvenile siblings in the same home. The director is not required to make reasonable efforts under this subsection if the director documents that placing the juvenile siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the juvenile siblings. If, after making reasonable efforts, the director is unable to place the juvenile siblings in the same home, the director shall make reasonable efforts to provide frequent sibling visitation and ongoing interaction between the juvenile siblings, unless the director documents that frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the juvenile siblings would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the juvenile siblings.

(d) When a county department of social services having custody or placement responsibility of a juvenile intends to change the juvenile's placement, the department shall give the guardian ad litem for the juvenile notice of its intention unless precluded by emergency circumstances from doing so. Where emergency circumstances exist, the department of social services shall notify the guardian ad litem or the attorney advocate within 72 hours of the placement change, unless local rules require notification within a shorter time period.

(e) When a juvenile is placed in the custody of a county department of social services, the provisions of G.S. 7B-505.1 apply. (2015-135, s. 2.5; 2015-136, s. 11; 2017-41, s. 10; 2021-100, s. 6; 2021-132, s. 1(f); 2025-16, s. 1.11(a).)

§ 7B-903.2. Emergency motion for placement and payment.

(a) If the requirements of G.S. 122C-142.2(b) through (f1) are not satisfied, a party to the juvenile case, the hospital where the juvenile is currently located, the local management entity/managed care organization, or the prepaid health plan may make a limited appearance for the sole purpose of filing a motion in the district court in the county with jurisdiction over the juvenile in the abuse, neglect, and dependency matter regarding the juvenile's continued stay in the hospital.

(b) The motion shall contain a specific description of the requirements of G.S. 122C-142.2(b) through (f1) which were not satisfied.

(b1) Information regarding any failure of a hospital to reasonably cooperate in providing access to the juvenile under G.S. 122C-142.2 may be provided to the court as evidence in a hearing on a motion made under this section of a defense for the alleged violation by the county department or local management entity/managed care organization or prepaid health plan.

(c) The motion shall be served on all parties to the juvenile proceeding pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5. The motion shall also be served upon the hospital where the juvenile is receiving services, the local management entity/managed care organization or prepaid health plan for the juvenile, and the Division, in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4. The hospital and the local management entity/managed care organization or prepaid health plan for the juvenile, upon service of the motion, shall automatically become a party to the juvenile proceeding for the limited purpose of participating in hearings held in relation to and for complying with orders entered by the court pursuant to this section. The Division, as supervising principal of the local county department of social services, shall be provided the opportunity to be heard in any hearing on any motion filed under this subsection.

(d) Upon request of the movant, the department of social services shall provide the movant with the case file number, the juvenile's name, and the addresses of all parties and attorneys in the juvenile matter, to the extent necessary to effectuate service pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Nothing in this section shall require the department of social services to provide the name and address of the juvenile who is a party to the action.

(e) Within 10 business days of when the motion is served or the next scheduled juvenile court session, whichever occurs later, the motion shall be heard in the district court with jurisdiction over the juvenile in the abuse, neglect, and dependency matter. The rules of evidence in civil cases shall apply. Any person or party served with notice of the motion pursuant to subsection (b) of this section may request to be heard by the court and present evidence. The hearing shall be conducted in accordance with G.S. 7B-801.

(f) The court shall make written findings of fact and conclusions of law, including whether:

- (1) The movant established by clear and convincing evidence that the juvenile met hospital discharge criteria.
- (2) The responsible party has not satisfied the requirements of G.S. 122C-142.2(b) through (f1).

(g) When the court finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that the juvenile has met hospital discharge criteria and that the responsible party has not satisfied the requirements of G.S. 122C-142.2(b) through (f1), the court may order any of the following:

- (1) That the responsible party pay reasonable hospital charges of the juvenile's continued stay at the hospital. The reasonable charges shall be limited to those incurred after the date the juvenile met hospital discharge criteria.
- (2) That the responsible party pay for any damage to property caused by the juvenile incurred after the date the juvenile met hospital discharge criteria.
- (3) That the responsible party satisfy the requirements of G.S. 122C-142.2(b) through (f1).
- (4) Any relief the court finds appropriate.

(h) The order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 72 hours following the completion of the hearing. The clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing for review within 30 days of entry of the order.

(i) If at any time after the motion is filed, the juvenile is discharged from the hospital and placed by the director, the court shall dismiss the motion. The dismissal shall not preclude a separate cause of action for monetary damages.

(j) All parties to the hearing shall bear their own costs. (2021-132, s. 5(b); 2025-16, s. 1.12(a).)

§ 7B-904. Authority over parents of juvenile adjudicated as abused, neglected, or dependent.

(a) If the court orders medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment pursuant to G.S. 7B-903, the court may order the parent or other responsible parties to pay the cost of the treatment or care ordered.

(b) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing if the court finds that it is in the best interests of the juvenile for the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care to be directly involved in the juvenile's treatment, the court may order the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care to participate in medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment of the juvenile. The cost of the treatment shall be paid pursuant to G.S. 7B-903.

(c) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing the court may determine whether the best interests of the juvenile require that the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care undergo psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment or counseling directed toward remediating or remedying behaviors or conditions that led to or contributed to the juvenile's adjudication or to the court's decision to remove custody of the juvenile from the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care. If the court finds that the best interests of the juvenile require the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care undergo treatment, it may order that individual to comply with a plan of treatment approved by the court or condition legal custody or physical placement of the juvenile with the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care upon that individual's compliance with the plan of treatment. The court may order the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care to pay the cost of treatment ordered pursuant to this subsection. In cases in which the court has conditioned legal custody or physical placement of the juvenile with the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care upon compliance with a plan of treatment, the court may charge the cost of the treatment to the county of the juvenile's residence if the court finds the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care is unable to pay the cost of the treatment. In all other cases, if the court finds the parent, guardian, custodian, stepparent, adult member of the juvenile's household, or adult entrusted with the juvenile's care is unable to pay the cost of the treatment ordered pursuant to this subsection, the court may order that individual to receive treatment currently available from the area mental health program that serves the parent's catchment area.

(c1) If the court has ordered an individual to comply with a plan of treatment for substance use disorder, including opioid dependency, that individual shall not be in violation of the terms or conditions of that part of the court's order if he or she is compliant with medication-assisted treatment. For the purposes of this subsection, "medication-assisted treatment" means the use of pharmacological medications administered, dispensed, and prescribed in a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) accredited and certified opioid treatment program (OTP) or by a certified practitioner licensed in this State to practice medicine, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a whole patient approach to the treatment of substance use disorders.

(d) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing, when legal custody of a juvenile is vested in someone other than the juvenile's parent, if the court finds that the parent is able to do so and that payment would be in the best interest of the child, the court may order that the parent pay a reasonable sum that will cover, in whole or in part, the support of the juvenile after the order is entered. If the court requires the payment of child support, the amount of the payments shall be determined as provided in G.S. 50-13.4(c). If the court places a juvenile in the custody of a county department of social services and if the court finds that the parent is unable to pay the cost of the support required by the juvenile, the cost shall be paid by the county department of social services in whose custody the juvenile is placed, provided the juvenile is not receiving care in an institution owned or operated by the State or federal government or any subdivision thereof.

(d1) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing, the court may order the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker over whom the court has personal jurisdiction do any of the following:

- (1) Attend and participate in parental responsibility classes if those classes are available in the judicial district in which the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker resides.
- (2) Provide, to the extent that person is able to do so, transportation for the juvenile to keep appointments for medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment ordered by the court if the juvenile remains in or is returned to the home.
- (3) Take appropriate steps to remedy conditions in the home that led to or contributed to the juvenile's adjudication or to the court's decision to remove custody of the juvenile from the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker.

(e) Upon motion of a party or upon the court's own motion, the court may issue an order directing the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker over whom the court has personal jurisdiction to appear and show cause why the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker should not be found or held in civil or criminal contempt for willfully failing to comply with an order of the court. Chapter 5A of the General Statutes shall govern contempt proceedings initiated pursuant to this section. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 837, ss. 2, 3; 1987, c. 598, s. 2; 1989, c. 218; c. 529, s. 7; 1995, c. 328, s. 2; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 4; 1997-456, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-318, s. 7; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, s. 3; 2001-487, s. 101; 2021-100, s. 7; 2025-16, s. 1.14(a).)

§ 7B-905. Dispositional order.

(a) The dispositional order shall be in writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days from the completion of the hearing, and shall contain appropriate findings of fact and conclusions of law. The court shall state with particularity, both orally and in the written order of disposition, the precise terms of the disposition including the kind, duration, and the person who is responsible for carrying out the disposition and the person or agency in whom custody is vested. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-100, s. 8, effective October 1, 2021, and repealed by Session Laws 2021-132, s. 1(j), effective October 1, 2021, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

(c), (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-136, s. 12, effective October 1, 2015, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 10; 1991, c. 434, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 8; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 24; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, ss. 4, 18; 2001-487, s. 101; 2005-398, s. 5; 2011-295, s. 9; 2013-129, s. 23; 2015-136, s. 12; 2021-100, s. 8; 2021-132, s. 1(j).)

§ 7B-905.1. Visitation.

(a) An order that removes custody of a juvenile from a parent, guardian, or custodian or that continues the juvenile's placement outside the home shall provide for visitation that is in the best interests of the juvenile consistent with the juvenile's health and safety, including no visitation. The court may specify in the order conditions under which visitation may be suspended.

(b) If the juvenile is placed or continued in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services, the court may order the director to arrange, facilitate, and supervise a visitation plan expressly approved or ordered by the court. The plan shall indicate the minimum frequency and length of visits and whether the visits shall be supervised. Unless the court orders otherwise, the director shall have discretion to determine who will supervise visits when supervision is required, to determine the location of visits, and to change the day and time of visits in response to scheduling conflicts, illness of the child or party, or extraordinary circumstances. The director shall promptly communicate a limited and temporary change in the visitation schedule to the affected party. Any ongoing change in the visitation schedule shall be communicated to the party in writing and state the reason for the change.

If the director makes a good faith determination that the visitation plan is not consistent with the juvenile's health and safety, the director may temporarily suspend all or part of the visitation plan. The director shall not be subject to any motion to show cause for this suspension but shall expeditiously file a motion for review and request that a hearing be scheduled within 30 days. However, no motion or notice of hearing is required if a review or permanency planning hearing is already scheduled to be heard within 30 days of the suspension.

(b1) When visitation, whether supervised or unsupervised, is ordered between a juvenile who is placed in or continued in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services and a parent, a parent's positive result from a drug screen alone is insufficient to deny the parent court-ordered visitation with the juvenile. For parents with unsupervised visitation that have a positive result from a drug screen, the department of social services shall expeditiously file a motion for review and request that a hearing be scheduled within 30 days for the court to review the visitation plan to ensure the safety of the child. While the motion is pending, the director may temporarily impose supervision requirements to all or part of the visitation plan. The director shall promptly communicate the limited and temporary change in the visitation plan to the affected party. Nothing in this subsection prevents a visit from being cancelled if, at the time that visitation between the parent and the juvenile occurs, a parent is under the influence of drugs or alcohol and exhibits behavior that may create an unsafe environment for a child, or the parent appears to be actively impaired.

(c) If the juvenile is placed or continued in the custody or guardianship of a relative or other suitable person, any order providing for visitation shall specify the minimum frequency and length of the visits and whether the visits shall be supervised. The court may authorize additional visitation as agreed upon by the respondent and custodian or guardian.

(d) If the court waives permanency planning hearings and retains jurisdiction, all parties shall be informed of the right to file a motion for review of any visitation plan entered pursuant to

this section. Upon motion of any party and after proper notice and a hearing, the court may establish, modify, or enforce a visitation plan that is in the juvenile's best interest. Prior to or at the hearing, the court may order the department and guardian ad litem to investigate and make written recommendations as to appropriate visitation and give testimony concerning its recommendations. For resolution of issues related to visitation, the court may order the parents, guardian, or custodian to participate in custody mediation where there is a program established pursuant to G.S. 7A-494. In referring a case to custody mediation, the court shall specify the issue or issues for mediation, including, but not limited to, whether or not visitation shall be supervised and whether overnight visitation may occur. Custody mediation shall not permit the participants to consent to a change in custody. A copy of any agreement reached in custody mediation shall be provided to all parties and counsel and shall be approved by the court. The provisions of G.S. 50-13.1(d) through (f) apply to this section. (2013-129, s. 24; 2019-33, s. 9; 2021-100, s. 9; 2021-132, s. 1(g).)

§ 7B-905.2. Transportation of high-risk juveniles.

(a) The director of a county department of social services who has invoked the jurisdiction of the court under this Article, and who is serving as custodian over a juvenile, is authorized to make a written request to a high-risk juvenile transporter to transport a high-risk juvenile upon determining assistance with placement responsibilities for the juvenile is necessary. If a high-risk juvenile transporter agrees to provide transportation pursuant to this section, transportation shall be provided in the county in which the juvenile resides but is not limited to transportation within that county. For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

- (1) High-risk juvenile. – A juvenile who is under 18 years of age who has been abused or neglected, who has serious emotional, mental, or behavioral disturbances that pose a risk of harm to self or others, and who resides outside of a residential placement due to the serious emotional, mental, or behavioral disturbances.
- (2) High-risk juvenile transporter. – A law enforcement agency, the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety, or the Department of Adult Correction and includes the designated staff of those agencies.

(b) In providing transportation as required by this section, a high-risk juvenile transporter may use reasonable force to restrain the high-risk juvenile if it appears necessary to protect the high-risk juvenile transporter or other individuals. Any use of restraints shall be as reasonably determined by the high-risk juvenile transporter to be necessary under the circumstances for the safety of the high-risk juvenile, the high-risk juvenile transporter, or other persons.

(c) No high-risk juvenile transporter providing transportation of a high-risk juvenile may be held criminally or civilly liable for assault, false imprisonment, or other torts or crimes on account of reasonable measures taken under the authority of this Article. Additionally, a high-risk juvenile transporter is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as a result of any omission or action taken pursuant to the requirements of this section, provided the high-risk juvenile transporter was acting in good faith. The immunity established by this subsection does not extend to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable.

(d) The director of the county department of social services may enter into a "transportation agreement" with a high-risk juvenile transporter to establish requirements, procedures, and guidelines for transporting high-risk juveniles. The cost and expenses of

transporting a high-risk juvenile pursuant to this section are the responsibility of the county department of social services having custody of the high-risk juvenile. (2023-134, s. 9J.13.)

§ 7B-906: Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 25, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

§ 7B-906.1. Review and permanency planning hearings.

(a) The court shall conduct a review or permanency planning hearing within 90 days from the date of the initial dispositional hearing held pursuant to G.S. 7B-901. Review or permanency planning hearings shall be held at least every six months thereafter. If custody has not been removed from a parent, guardian, or custodian at initial disposition, the hearing shall be designated as a review hearing. If custody has been removed from a parent, guardian, or custodian at initial disposition, the hearing shall be designated as a permanency planning hearing.

(b) The director of social services shall make a timely request to the clerk to calendar each hearing at a session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters. The clerk shall give 15 days' notice of the hearing and its purpose to (i) the parents, (ii) the juvenile if 12 years of age or more, (iii) the guardian, (iv) the person providing care for the juvenile, (v) the custodian or agency with custody, (vi) the guardian ad litem, and (vii) any other person or agency the court may specify. The department of social services shall either provide to the clerk the name and address of the person providing care for the juvenile for notice under this subsection or file written documentation with the clerk that the juvenile's current care provider was sent notice of hearing. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to make the person providing care for the juvenile a party to the proceeding solely based on receiving notice and the right to be heard.

(c) At each hearing, the court shall consider information from the parents, the juvenile, the guardian, any person with whom the juvenile is placed, the custodian or agency with custody, the guardian ad litem, and any other person or agency that will aid in the court's review. The court shall provide any person with whom the child is placed the opportunity to address the court regarding the juvenile's well-being. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, or testimony or evidence from any person that is not a party, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile and the most appropriate disposition.

(d) At each hearing, the court shall consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding those that are relevant:

- (1) Services which have been offered to prevent the removal or reunite the juvenile with either parent whether or not the juvenile resided with the parent at the time of removal or the guardian or custodian from whom the child was removed.
- (1a) Reports on the juvenile's continuation in the home of the parent, guardian, or custodian; and the appropriateness of the juvenile's continuation in that home. If the juvenile is removed from the custody of a parent, guardian, or custodian at a review hearing, the court shall schedule a permanency planning hearing within 30 days of the review.
- (2) Reports on visitation that has occurred and whether there is a need to create, modify, or enforce an appropriate visitation plan in accordance with G.S. 7B-905.1.
- (3) Whether efforts to reunite the juvenile with either parent clearly would be unsuccessful or inconsistent with the juvenile's health or safety and need for a

safe, permanent home within a reasonable period of time. The court shall consider efforts to reunite regardless of whether the juvenile resided with the parent, guardian, or custodian at the time of removal.

- (4) Reports on the placements the juvenile has had, the appropriateness of the juvenile's current foster care placement, and the goals of the juvenile's foster care plan, including the role the current foster parent will play in the planning for the juvenile.
- (5) If the juvenile is 16 or 17 years of age, a report on an independent living assessment of the juvenile and, if appropriate, an independent living plan developed for the juvenile.
- (6) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-132, s. 1(h), effective October 1, 2021, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.
- (7) Any other criteria the court deems necessary.

(d1) At any review hearing, the court may maintain the juvenile's placement under review or order a different placement, appoint an individual guardian of the person pursuant to G.S. 7B-600, or order any disposition authorized by G.S. 7B-903, including the authority to place the child in the custody of either parent or any relative found by the court to be suitable and found by the court to be in the best interests of the juvenile. An order that removes the juvenile from a parent, guardian, or custodian shall only be made if the court finds that after the completion of the initial disposition or the prior review hearing either of the following:

- (1) At least one factor under G.S. 7B-503(a)(1) through (a)(4) has occurred, or at least one factor specified in G.S. 7B-901(c) has occurred and the juvenile has experienced or is at substantial risk of experiencing physical or emotional harm as a result.
- (2) The parent, guardian, or custodian consents to the order of removal.

(d2) The purpose of review hearings is to review the progress of the parent, guardian, or custodian with their court-ordered services. The parent, guardian, or custodian shall (i) complete court-ordered services within 12 months from the date of the filing of the petition, (ii) demonstrate that the circumstances precipitating the department's involvement with the family have been resolved to the satisfaction of the court, and (iii) provide a safe home for the juvenile. Absent extraordinary circumstances, when the parent, guardian, or custodian has successfully completed the court-ordered services and the juvenile is residing in a safe home, the court shall terminate its jurisdiction in accordance with this subsection or G.S. 7B-911.

(e) At any permanency planning hearing where the juvenile is not placed with a parent, the court shall additionally consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding those that are relevant:

- (1) Whether it is possible for the juvenile to be placed with a parent within the next six months and, if not, why such placement is not in the juvenile's best interests.
- (2) Where the juvenile's placement with a parent is unlikely within six months, whether legal guardianship or custody with a relative or some other suitable person should be established and, if so, the rights and responsibilities that should remain with the parents.
- (3) Where the juvenile's placement with a parent is unlikely within six months, whether adoption should be pursued and, if so, any barriers to the juvenile's adoption, including when and if termination of parental rights should be considered.

- (4) Where the juvenile's placement with a parent is unlikely within six months, whether the juvenile should remain in the current placement, or be placed in another permanent living arrangement and why.
- (5) Whether the county department of social services has since the initial permanency plan hearing made reasonable efforts to implement the permanent plan for the juvenile.
- (6) Any other criteria the court deems necessary.

(f) In the case of a juvenile who is in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services and has been in placement outside the home for 12 of the most recent 22 months, or a court of competent jurisdiction has determined that the parent (i) has abandoned the child, (ii) has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of another child of the parent, or (iii) has aided, abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child or another child of the parent, the director of the department of social services shall initiate a proceeding to terminate the parental rights of the parent unless the court finds any of the following:

- (1) The primary permanent plan for the juvenile is guardianship or custody with a relative or some other suitable person.
- (2) The court makes specific findings as to why the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights is not in the best interests of the child.
- (3) The department of social services has not provided the juvenile's family with services the department deems necessary when reasonable efforts are still required to enable the juvenile's return to a safe home.

(g) At the conclusion of each permanency planning hearing, the court shall make specific findings as to the best permanent plans to achieve a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time.

(h) The order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(i) At any permanency planning hearing, the court may maintain the juvenile's placement under review or order a different placement, appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-600, or order any disposition authorized by G.S. 7B-903, including the authority to place the child in the custody of either parent or any relative found by the court to be suitable and found by the court to be in the best interests of the juvenile.

(j) If the court determines that the juvenile shall be placed in the custody of an individual other than a parent or appoints an individual guardian of the person pursuant to G.S. 7B-600, the court shall verify that the person receiving custody or being appointed as guardian of the juvenile understands the legal significance of the placement or appointment and will have adequate resources to care appropriately for the juvenile. The fact that the prospective custodian or guardian has provided a stable placement for the juvenile for at least six consecutive months is evidence that the person has adequate resources.

(k) If at any time a juvenile has been removed from a parent and legal custody is awarded to either parent or findings are made in accordance with subsection (n) of this section, the court shall

be relieved of the duty to conduct permanency planning hearings. The court shall not refuse to conduct a permanency planning hearing if a party files a motion seeking the hearing.

(k1) The court shall not refuse to conduct a review hearing if a party files a motion seeking the review hearing.

(l) If the court orders or continues the juvenile's placement in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services, the provisions of G.S. 7B-903.1 shall apply to any order entered under this section.

(m) If the court finds that a proceeding to terminate the parental rights of the juvenile's parents is necessary in order to perfect the primary permanent plan for the juvenile, the director of the department of social services shall file a petition to terminate parental rights within 60 calendar days from the date of the entry of the order unless the court makes written findings regarding why the petition cannot be filed within 60 days. If the court makes findings to the contrary, the court shall specify the time frame in which any needed petition to terminate parental rights shall be filed.

(n) Notwithstanding other provisions of this Article, the court may waive the holding of permanency planning hearings required by this section, may require written reports to the court by the agency or person holding custody in lieu of permanency planning hearings, or order that permanency planning hearings be held less often than every six months if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence each of the following:

- (1) The juvenile has resided in the placement for a period of at least one year or the parties are in agreement and the court enters a consent order pursuant to G.S. 7B-801(b1).
- (2) The placement is stable and continuation of the placement is in the juvenile's best interests.
- (3) Neither the juvenile's best interests nor the rights of any party require that permanency planning hearings be held every six months.
- (4) All parties are aware that the matter may be brought before the court for review at any time by the filing of a permanency planning or modification motion or on the court's own motion.
- (5) The court order has designated the relative or other suitable person as the juvenile's permanent custodian or guardian of the person.

The court may not waive or refuse to conduct a hearing if a party files a motion seeking the hearing. However, if a guardian of the person has been appointed for the juvenile and the court has also made findings in accordance with subsection (n) of this section that guardianship is the permanent plan for the juvenile, the court shall apply the criteria of G.S. 7B-600(b).

(o) Permanency planning hearings under this section shall be replaced by post termination of parental rights' placement review hearings when required by G.S. 7B-908. (2013-129, s. 26; 2015-136, ss. 13, 17; 2016-94, s. 12C.1(g1); 2017-161, s. 8; 2019-33, s. 10; 2021-100, s. 10; 2021-132, s. 1(h); 2025-16, s. 1.13(a).)

§ 7B-906.2. Permanent plans; concurrent planning.

(a) At any permanency planning hearing pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1, the court shall adopt one or more of the following permanent plans the court finds is in the juvenile's best interest:

- (1) Reunification as defined by G.S. 7B-101.
- (2) Adoption under Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes.
- (3) Guardianship pursuant to G.S. 7B-600(b).
- (4) Custody to a relative or other suitable person.

- (5) Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) pursuant to G.S. 7B-912.
 - (6) Reinstatement of parental rights pursuant to G.S. 7B-1114.
- (a1) Concurrent planning shall continue until (i) a permanent plan is or has been achieved or (ii) reunification is not identified as a permanent plan as provided for in subsection (b) of this section.
- (b) At any permanency planning hearing where the court is ordering reunification as a permanent plan, the court shall adopt concurrent permanent plans and shall identify the primary plan and secondary plan. Reunification shall be a primary or secondary plan unless the court relieved the department of making reunification efforts at initial disposition under G.S. 7B-901(c), previously made written findings under G.S. 7B-906.1(d)(3), the permanent plan is or has been achieved, or the court makes written findings that reunification efforts clearly would be unsuccessful or would be inconsistent with the juvenile's health or safety. The finding that reunification efforts clearly would be unsuccessful or inconsistent with the juvenile's health or safety may be made at any permanency planning hearing, and if made, shall eliminate reunification as a plan. When reunification has been eliminated as a permanent plan, concurrent planning is not required. Unless permanence has been achieved, the court shall order the county department of social services to make efforts toward finalizing the primary and secondary permanent plans and may specify efforts that are reasonable to timely achieve permanence for the juvenile.
- (b1) When a juvenile is not being reunified with a parent, guardian, or custodian, prior to any change in placement for the juvenile, the department shall file a motion before the court and request that a hearing be held within 30 days when all of the following criteria exist:
- (1) The juvenile is in the custody of a county department of social services.
 - (2) The juvenile has resided with the caretaker for the preceding 12 consecutive months, and the caretaker objects to the removal.
 - (3) The current caretaker is one of the following individuals:
 - a. A relative caretaker.
 - b. A nonrelative caretaker, and there are no relatives who are willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home.
 - (4) The court-ordered primary or secondary permanent plan is adoption.
 - (5) The current caretaker objects to the removal and has notified the department of their desire to adopt the juvenile.

The clerk shall give notice of the hearing to the parties, the parties' attorneys, and the current caretaker. The department of social services shall either provide to the clerk the name and address of the juvenile's current caretaker for notice under this subsection or file written documentation with the clerk that the juvenile's current caretaker was sent notice of hearing. The court shall provide the current caretaker the opportunity to address the court, present evidence, cross-examine witnesses, and be represented by an attorney at the caretaker's own expense. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to make the current caretaker a party to the proceeding. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, or testimony or evidence from any person that is not a party, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile. At the hearing to review the change of placement, the court shall determine whether it is in the best interests of the juvenile to be removed. This subsection shall not apply to cases when there are allegations of abuse or neglect of the juvenile while under the care and supervision of the current caretaker.

(c) Unless reunification efforts were previously ceased, at each permanency planning hearing the court shall make a finding about whether the reunification efforts of the county department of social services were reasonable. In every subsequent permanency planning hearing held pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1, the court shall make written findings about the efforts the county department of social services has made toward the primary permanent plan and any secondary permanent plans in effect prior to the hearing. The court shall make a conclusion about whether efforts to finalize the permanent plan were reasonable to timely achieve permanence for the juvenile.

(d) At any permanency planning hearing under subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the court shall make written findings as to each of the following, which shall demonstrate the degree of success or failure toward reunification:

- (1) Whether the parent is making adequate progress within a reasonable period of time under the plan.
- (2) Whether the parent is actively participating in or cooperating with the plan, the department, and the guardian ad litem for the juvenile.
- (3) Whether the parent remains available to the court, the department, and the guardian ad litem for the juvenile.
- (4) Whether the parent is acting in a manner inconsistent with the health or safety of the juvenile.

(e) If the juvenile is 14 years of age or older, the court shall make written findings in accordance with G.S. 7B-912(a), regardless of the juvenile's permanent plan.

(f) When a permanent plan of guardianship or custody is achieved, the court shall advise the guardian or custodian of the right to seek child support after the order awarding permanent guardianship or custody has been entered. (2015-136, s. 14; 2016-94, s. 12C.1(h); 2019-33, s. 11; 2021-100, s. 11; 2021-132, s. 1(k); 2025-16, s. 1.13(b).)

§ 7B-907: Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 25, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

§ 7B-908. Post termination of parental rights' placement court review.

(a) The purpose of each placement review is to ensure that every reasonable effort is being made to provide for the permanent plan for the juvenile who has been placed in the custody of a county director or licensed child-placing agency, which is consistent with the juvenile's best interests. At each review hearing the court may consider information from the department of social services, the licensed child-placing agency, the guardian ad litem, the child, the person providing care for the child, and any other person or agency the court determines is likely to aid in the review. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile and the most appropriate disposition.

(b) The court shall conduct a placement review not later than six months from the date of the termination hearing when both parents' parental rights have been terminated by a petition or motion brought by any person or agency designated in G.S. 7B-1103(a)(2) through (6), or one parent's parental rights have been terminated by court order and the other parent's parental rights have been relinquished under Chapter 48 of the General Statutes, and a county director or licensed child-placing agency has custody of the juvenile. The court shall conduct reviews every six months thereafter until the juvenile is the subject of a decree of adoption:

- (1) No more than 30 days and no less than 15 days prior to each review, the clerk shall give notice of the review to the juvenile if the juvenile is at least 12 years of age, the legal custodian or guardian of the juvenile, the person providing care for the juvenile, the guardian ad litem, if any, and any other person or agency the court may specify. The department of social services shall either provide to the clerk the name and address of the person providing care for the child for notice under this subsection or file written documentation with the clerk that the child's current care provider was sent notice of hearing. Only the juvenile, the legal custodian or guardian of the juvenile, the person providing care for the juvenile, and the guardian ad litem may participate in the review hearings, except as otherwise directed by the court. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to make the person a party to the proceeding solely based on receiving notice and the right to be heard. Any individual whose parental rights have been terminated or has executed a relinquishment that is no longer revocable shall not be considered a party to the proceeding unless an appeal of the order terminating parental rights is pending, and a court has stayed the order pending the appeal.
 - (2) If a guardian ad litem for the juvenile has not been appointed previously by the court in the termination proceeding, the court, at the initial six-month review hearing, may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the juvenile. The court may continue the case for such time as is necessary for the guardian ad litem to become familiar with the facts of the case.
- (c) The court shall consider at least the following in its review and make written findings regarding the following that are relevant:
- (1) The adequacy of the permanency plans developed by the county department of social services or a licensed child-placing agency for a permanent placement in the juvenile's best interests and the efforts of the department or agency to implement the plans.
 - (2) Whether the juvenile has been listed for adoptive placement with NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network or any other child-specific recruitment program or whether there is an exemption to listing that the court finds is in the child's best interest.
 - (3) The efforts previously made by the department or agency to find a permanent placement for the juvenile.
 - (4) Whether the current placement is in the juvenile's best interest.
- (d) The court, after making findings of fact, shall do one of the following it finds to be in the best interests of the child:
- (1) Affirm the county department's or child placing agency's plan.
 - (2) Order a different plan designated in G.S. 7B-906.2(a).
- (d1) The court may (i) order concurrent permanent plans if the court finds concurrent permanency planning to be in the best interests of the juvenile and (ii) specify efforts that are necessary to accomplish a permanent plan designated in subdivisions (1) or (2) of subsection (d) of this section that is in the best interests of the juvenile. If a juvenile is not placed with prospective adoptive parents as selected in G.S. 7B-1112.1, the court may order a placement that the court finds to be in the juvenile's best interest after considering the department's recommendations.

(e) If the juvenile is the subject of a decree of adoption prior to the date scheduled for the review, within 10 days of receiving notice that the adoption decree has been entered, the department of social services shall file with the court and serve on any guardian ad litem for the juvenile written notice of the entry. The adoption decree shall not be filed in the court file. The review hearing shall be cancelled with notice of said cancellation given by the clerk to all persons previously notified.

(e1) The order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification regarding the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-295, s. 10, effective October 1, 2011, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date. (1983, c. 607, s. 1; 1993, c. 537, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 9, 26; 1999-456, s. 60; 2003-62, s. 4; 2005-398, s. 8; 2007-276, s. 5; 2009-311, s. 8; 2011-295, s. 10; 2013-129, s. 27; 2017-161, s. 9; 2019-33, s. 12; 2021-100, s. 12.)

§ 7B-909. Review of agency's plan for placement.

(a) The director of social services or the director of the licensed private child-placing agency shall promptly notify the clerk to calendar the case for review of the department's or agency's plan for the juvenile at a session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters if the juvenile is in the custody of the department or agency and has not become the subject of a decree of adoption within six months following relinquishment of the juvenile for adoption by a parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem under the provisions of Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-276, s. 6, effective October 1, 2007.

(b1) If the court finds on motion of a department of social services or licensed child-placing agency that a consent or relinquishment for adoption necessary for the juvenile to be adopted cannot be obtained, and that no further steps are being taken to terminate the parental rights of the parent from whom consent or relinquishment has not been obtained, the court may order, upon finding that it is in the juvenile's best interest, that any relinquishment for adoption signed by a parent who has surrendered the child for adoption shall be voided pursuant to G.S. 48-3-707(a)(4). Before voiding any relinquishment under this subsection, the court shall require the county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency to give at least 15 days' notice to the relinquishing parent whose rights will be restored. The relinquishing parent shall have the right to be heard on (i) whether the relinquishment should be voided and (ii) the parent's plan to provide for the juvenile if the relinquishment is voided. If after due diligence the relinquishing parent cannot be located, the notice of hearing shall be deposited in the United States mail, return receipt requested, and sent to the address of the parent given in the relinquishment. The date of receipt of the notice is deemed the date of delivery or last attempted delivery.

(c) Notification of the court under this section shall be by a petition for review or motion for review, if the court is exercising jurisdiction over the juvenile. The review shall be conducted within 30 days following the filing of the petition for review unless the court shall otherwise direct. The court shall conduct reviews every six months until the juvenile is the subject of a decree of adoption. However, further reviews are not required after the voiding of a relinquishment under

subsection (b1) of this section. The initial review and all subsequent reviews, except a review hearing under subsection (b1) of this section, shall be conducted pursuant to G.S. 7B-908. Any individual whose parental rights have been terminated or who has relinquished the juvenile for adoption under the provisions of Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes shall not be considered a party to the review unless an appeal of the order terminating parental rights is pending, and a court has stayed the order pending the appeal. (1983, c. 607, s. 2; 1993, c. 537, s. 4; 1995, c. 457, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 9; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-398, s. 9; 2007-276, s. 6; 2013-129, s. 28; 2013-236, s. 1; 2013-410, s. 27.)

§ 7B-909.1. Relinquishment to a department of social services.

Before the relinquishment of a juvenile to a department of social services for the purpose of adoption may be executed by a parent who is a respondent in an action under this Subchapter and (i) whose retained counsel has entered a notice of appearance or (ii) who has an attorney whose provisional appointment has been confirmed by the court, each of the following shall occur:

- (1) Notice shall be given by any reasonable and timely means of communication to the parent's counsel or, if such counsel is unavailable, to the partner or employee at the attorney's office that the department has made arrangements for the parent to execute a relinquishment at a specific date, time, and location.
- (2) The parent shall be advised of the right to seek the advice of the parent's counsel prior to executing the relinquishment and to have the parent's counsel present while executing the relinquishment. (2019-33, s. 13.)

§ 7B-909.2. Post-adoption contact agreements; orders from minors in department of social services custody.

(a) Prior to executing a relinquishment, the parent or parents of a minor adoptee who is in the custody of a county department of social services pursuant to an order entered under this Subchapter and the prospective adoptive parent or parents may voluntarily participate in a court-approved mediation program to reach a voluntarily mediated post-adoption contact agreement. The court with jurisdiction over the proceeding involving the minor under this Subchapter may make the referral to mediation when the county department notifies the court it would accept a relinquishment that specifies the prospective adoptive parent or parents. A biological parent who has not reached 18 years of age shall have legal capacity to enter a post-adoption contact agreement and shall be as fully bound by the agreement and order as if the biological parent had attained 18 years of age.

(b) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall develop and make available appropriate standardized forms for implementation of this section.

(c) Jurisdiction and venue for approval of such agreement shall be before the district court with jurisdiction over the proceeding involving the minor under this Subchapter.

(d) Other people may be invited to participate in the mediation by mutual consent of the parent or parents executing a relinquishment and the prospective adoptive parent or parents. However, these invitees shall not be parties to any agreement reached during that mediation and shall not receive copies of any agreement.

(e) Mediation proceedings and information relating to those proceedings under this section shall be confidential. Information or the statements of any person participating in the mediation shall not be disclosed or used in any subsequent proceeding. Regardless, evidence that would otherwise be admissible at trial shall not be rendered inadmissible as a result of its use in a

mediation proceeding. Except for the voluntary mediated agreement, there shall be no record made of any mediation proceedings under this section and the mediator shall destroy all of his or her notes immediately after the mediation.

(f) The voluntarily mediated agreement shall be reviewed by the court having jurisdiction of the minor under this Subchapter within two business days of when the agreement is signed to determine whether the agreement should be incorporated into a court order.

(g) To be approved by the court, a voluntarily mediated agreement shall be signed under oath by the parties or accompanied by an affidavit made under oath that affirmatively states that the agreement was entered into knowingly and voluntarily and is not the product of coercion, fraud, or duress. The affidavit may be executed jointly or separately. The agreement shall contain the following statements:

- (1) This agreement is entered into pursuant to this section.
- (2) Any breach, modification, invalidation, or termination of the agreement, or any part of it, shall not affect the validity of the relinquishment or the final decree of adoption.
- (3) The parties acknowledge that either the parent or prospective adoptive parents who have entered into the agreement have the right to seek enforcement as set forth in G.S. 7B-909.3.
- (4) The parties have not relied on any representations other than those contained in the agreement.

(h) The court shall not enter an order to approve the post-adoption contact agreement unless the agreement is in writing and executed prior to or as part of the relinquishment. When the court approves the post-adoption contact agreement:

- (1) The court shall enter a post-adoption contact agreement and order and instruct the clerk to treat the order as an initiation of a civil action for custody.
- (2) The court shall designate the caption of the action and the parties to the action. The civil filing fee is waived unless the court orders one or more of the parties to pay the filing fee for a civil action into the office of the clerk of superior court.
- (3) The post-adoption contact agreement and order shall constitute a custody determination, and any motion to enforce, modify, or terminate the order shall be filed in the newly created civil action and is governed by G.S. 7B-909.3. The Administrative Office of the Courts may adopt rules and shall develop and make available appropriate forms for establishing a civil file to implement this section and G.S. 7B-909.3.
- (4) The record of the civil action shall be withheld from public inspection and may only be examined by the parties to the civil action and their attorneys, the minor adoptee, or by order of the court.

(i) A post-adoption contact agreement and order shall automatically terminate on the date the child turns 18 years of age or is otherwise emancipated. (2025-16, s. 1.18(a).)

§ 7B-909.3. Modification, enforcement, and termination of a post-adoption contact agreement and order; no right to appeal; rights of adoptive parents.

(a) A party to a court-approved post-adoption contact agreement and order may seek to modify, enforce, or terminate the agreement by filing a motion in the civil action created pursuant to G.S. 7B-909.2(h). Issues set forth in the motion shall be set for mediation unless the court waives mediation for good cause. A court order for modification, enforcement, or termination of

the terms of the voluntarily mediated agreement shall be the sole remedies for breach of the agreement.

(b) In a proceeding under this section, the persons who executed the post-adoption contact agreement are the sole parties to the action. The court shall not allow intervention by any other person or agency. The parties shall not be entitled to the appointment of counsel but may retain counsel at their own expense.

(c) The court may modify the terms of the post-adoption contact agreement and order if the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that there has been a material and substantial change in the circumstances and that the modification is in the best interests of the child. A court-imposed modification of a previously approved agreement may limit, restrict, condition, decrease, or terminate the sharing of information and contact between the former parent or parents and the child, but in no event shall a court-imposed modification serve to expand, enlarge, or increase the amount of contact between the former parent or parents and the child. The court also may impose appropriate sanctions consistent with its equitable powers but not inconsistent with this section, including the power to issue restraining orders.

(d) If the court finds that an action brought under this section was wholly insubstantial, frivolous, and not advanced in good faith, the court may award attorneys' fees and costs to the prevailing parties.

(e) A party subject to an order under this section has no right to appeal the order.

(f) Nothing contained in this section or G.S. 7B-909.2 shall be construed to abrogate the rights of the adoptive parent or parents to make decisions on behalf of the child, except as provided in the court-approved post-adoption contact agreement and order. (2025-16, s. 1.18(b).)

§ 7B-910. Review of voluntary foster care placements.

(a) The court shall review the placement of any juvenile in foster care made pursuant to a voluntary agreement between the juvenile's parents or guardian and a county department of social services and shall make findings from evidence presented at a review hearing with regard to:

- (1) The voluntariness of the placement;
- (2) The appropriateness of the placement;
- (3) Whether the placement is in the best interests of the juvenile; and
- (4) The services that have been or should be provided to the parents, guardian, foster parents, and juvenile, as the case may be, either (i) to improve the placement or (ii) to eliminate the need for the placement.

(b) The court may approve the continued placement of the juvenile in foster care on a voluntary agreement basis, disapprove the continuation of the voluntary placement, or direct the department of social services to petition the court for legal custody if the placement is to continue.

(c) An initial review hearing shall be held not more than 90 days after the juvenile's placement and shall be calendared by the clerk for hearing within such period upon timely request by the director of social services. An additional review hearing shall be held 90 days thereafter and any review hearings at such times as the court shall deem appropriate and shall direct, either upon its own motion or upon written request of the parents, guardian, foster parents, or director of social services. A juvenile placed under a voluntary agreement between the juvenile's parent or guardian and the county department of social services shall not remain in placement more than six months without the filing of a petition alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency.

(d) The clerk shall give at least 15 days' advance written notice of the initial and subsequent review hearings to the parents or guardian of the juvenile, to the juvenile if 12 or more years of age,

to the director of social services, and to any other persons whom the court may specify. (1983, c. 607, s. 2; 1993, c. 537, s. 4; 1995, c. 457, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, s. 21; 2001-487, s. 101.)

§ 7B-910.1. Review of voluntary foster care placements with young adults.

(a) The court shall review the placement of a young adult in foster care authorized by G.S. 108A-48(c) when the director of social services and a young adult who was in foster care as a juvenile enter into a voluntary placement agreement. The review hearing shall be held not more than 90 days from the date the agreement was executed, and the court shall make findings from evidence presented at this review hearing with regard to all of the following:

- (1) Whether the placement is in the best interest of the young adult in foster care.
- (2) The services that have been or should be provided to the young adult in foster care to improve the placement.
- (3) The services that have been or should be provided to the young adult in foster care to further the young adult's educational or vocational ambitions, if relevant.

(b) Upon written request of the young adult or the director of social services, the court may schedule additional hearings to monitor the placement and progress toward the young adult's educational or vocational ambitions.

(c) No guardian ad litem under G.S. 7B-601 will be appointed to represent the young adult in the initial or any subsequent hearing.

(d) The clerk shall give written notice of the initial and any subsequent review hearings to the young adult in foster care and the director of social services at least 15 days prior to the date of the hearing.

(e) When the young adult elects to terminate the agreement, the agreement may be terminated without a return to court. When the department elects to terminate the agreement over the objection of the young adult, the department shall file a motion to bring the matter back before the court for resolution. (2015-241, s. 12C.9(g); 2017-161, s. 10; 2021-100, s. 13.)

§ 7B-911. Civil child custody order.

(a) Upon placing custody with a parent or other appropriate person, the court shall determine whether or not jurisdiction in the juvenile proceeding should be terminated and custody of the juvenile awarded to a parent or other appropriate person pursuant to G.S. 50-13.1, 50-13.2, 50-13.5, and 50-13.7.

(b) When the court enters a custody order under this section, the court shall either cause the order to be filed in an existing civil action relating to the custody of the juvenile or, if there is no other civil action, instruct the clerk to treat the order as the initiation of a civil action for custody.

If the order is filed in an existing civil action and the person to whom the court is awarding custody is not a party to that action, the court shall order that the person be joined as a party and that the caption of the case be changed accordingly. The order shall resolve any pending claim for custody and shall constitute a modification of any custody order previously entered in the action.

If the court's order initiates a civil action, the court shall designate the parties to the action and determine the most appropriate caption for the case. The civil filing fee is waived unless the court orders one or more of the parties to pay the filing fee for a civil action into the office of the clerk of superior court. The order shall constitute a custody determination, and any motion to enforce or modify the custody order shall be filed in the newly created civil action in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 50 of the General Statutes. The Administrative Office of the Courts may

adopt rules and shall develop and make available appropriate forms for establishing a civil file to implement this section.

- (c) When entering an order under this section, the court shall satisfy the following:
 - (1) Make findings and conclusions that support the entry of a custody order in an action under Chapter 50 of the General Statutes or, if the juvenile is already the subject of a custody order entered pursuant to Chapter 50, makes findings and conclusions that support modification of that order pursuant to G.S. 50-13.7.
 - (2) Make the following findings:
 - a. There is not a need for continued State intervention on behalf of the juvenile through a juvenile court proceeding.
 - b. At least six months have passed since the court made a determination that the juvenile's placement with the person to whom the court is awarding custody is the permanent plan for the juvenile, though this finding is not required if the court is awarding custody to a parent or to a person with whom the child was living when the juvenile petition was filed. (2005-320, s. 4; 2013-129, s. 29.)

§ 7B-912. Juveniles 14 years of age and older; Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

(a) In addition to the permanency planning requirements under G.S. 7B-906.1, at every permanency planning hearing for a juvenile in the custody of a county department of social services who has attained the age of 14 years, the court shall inquire and make written findings regarding each of the following:

- (1) The services provided to assist the juvenile in making a transition to adulthood.
- (2) The steps the county department of social services is taking to ensure that the foster family or other licensed placement provider follows the reasonable and prudent parent standard as provided in G.S. 131D-10.2A.
- (3) Whether the juvenile has regular opportunities to engage in age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities.

(b) At or before the permanency planning hearing immediately following the juvenile's seventeenth birthday and at each permanency planning hearing thereafter, the court shall (i) inquire as to whether the juvenile has a copy of the juvenile's birth certificate, Social Security card, health insurance information, drivers license or other identification card, any educational or medical records the juvenile requests, and information about how the juvenile may participate in the foster care 18-21 program authorized by G.S. 108A-48, and (ii) determine the person or entity that should assist the juvenile in obtaining these documents before the juvenile attains the age of 18 years.

(b1) The department shall include in its report to the court at every hearing after the juvenile's seventeenth birthday all of the following information:

- (1) The department's efforts to identify and secure viable placement options for when the juvenile attains the age of 18 years.
- (2) A list of appropriate adults who can serve as resources for the juvenile when the juvenile attains the age of 18 years.
- (3) Contact information of the person responsible for overseeing voluntary foster care placements with young adults in the county department of social services with custody or placement responsibility of the juvenile and in the county

department of social services in the county where the juvenile plans to reside at the age of 18 years.

- (4) If appropriate, whether the juvenile has information about how he or she may maintain contact with his or her siblings, parents, or relatives when the juvenile attains the age of 17 years.
- (5) Whether the department has provided the juvenile with a point of contact to secure Medicaid and maintain physical and mental health services for which the juvenile will be eligible when the juvenile attains the age of 18 years.
- (6) Whether the department has provided the juvenile with information about educational, vocational, or job plans for when the juvenile attains the age of 18 years.

(c) If the court finds each of the following conditions applies, the court shall approve Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) as defined by P.L. 113-183, as the juvenile's primary permanent plan:

- (1) The juvenile is 16 or 17 years old.
- (2) The county department of social services has made diligent efforts to place the juvenile permanently with a parent or relative or in a guardianship or adoptive placement.
- (3) Compelling reasons exist that it is not in the best interest of the juvenile to be placed permanently with a parent or relative or in a guardianship or adoptive placement.
- (4) APPLA is the best permanency plan for the juvenile.

(d) If the court approves APPLA as the juvenile's permanent plan, the court shall, after questioning the juvenile, make written findings addressing the juvenile's desired permanency outcome. (2015-135, s. 2.6; 2015-136, s. 15; 2021-100, ss. 14, 15.)

Article 10.

Modification and Enforcement of Dispositional Orders; Appeals.

§ 7B-1000. Authority to modify.

(a) Upon motion in the cause or petition, and after notice, the court may conduct a modification hearing to determine whether the order of the court is in the best interests of the juvenile. The court may modify the order in light of changes in circumstances or the needs of the juvenile and address the issues raised in the motion that do not require a review or permanency planning hearing pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1.

(b) In any case where the court finds the juvenile to be abused, neglected, or dependent, the jurisdiction of the court to modify any order or disposition made in the case shall continue during the minority of the juvenile, until terminated by order of the court, or until the juvenile is otherwise emancipated.

(c) When a motion is filed to conduct a modification hearing under this section and the guardian ad litem appointed through G.S. 7B-601 has been previously released, the court shall reappoint a guardian ad litem and an attorney advocate. The clerk shall provide the motion and any notice of hearing to the guardian ad litem and the attorney advocate. The hearing on the motion shall not take place until the guardian ad litem and the attorney advocate have been reappointed.

(d) When a motion is filed to conduct a modification hearing under this section and counsel for respondent parents appointed through G.S. 7B-602 has been released, the court shall appoint provisional counsel in accordance with G.S. 7B-602.

(e) The order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-124, s. 3; 2013-129, s. 30; 2021-100, s. 16.)

§ 7B-1001. Right to appeal.

(a) In a juvenile matter under this Subchapter, only the following final orders may be appealed directly to the Court of Appeals:

- (1) Any order finding absence of jurisdiction.
- (2) Any order, including the involuntary dismissal of a petition, which in effect determines the action and prevents a judgment from which appeal might be taken.
- (3) Any initial order of disposition and the adjudication order upon which it is based.
- (4) Any order, other than a nonsecure custody order, that changes legal custody of a juvenile.
- (5) An order under G.S. 7B-906.2(b) eliminating reunification, as defined by G.S. 7B-101(18c), as a permanent plan by either of the following:
 - a. A parent who is a party and:
 1. Has preserved the right to appeal the order in writing within 30 days after entry and service of the order.
 2. A termination of parental rights petition or motion has not been filed within 65 days of entry and service of the order.
 3. A notice of appeal of the order eliminating reunification is filed within 30 days after the expiration of the 65 days.
 - b. A party who is a guardian or custodian with whom reunification is not a permanent plan.
- (6) Repealed by Session Laws 2017-41, s. 8(a), and Session Laws 2017-102, s. 40(f), effective January 1, 2019, and applicable to appeals filed on or after that date.
- (7) Any order that terminates parental rights or denies a petition or motion to terminate parental rights.
- (8) An order eliminating reunification as a permanent plan under G.S. 7B-906.2(b), if all of the following conditions are satisfied:
 - a. The right to appeal the order eliminating reunification has been preserved in writing within 30 days of entry and service of the order.
 - b. A motion or petition to terminate the parent's rights is filed within 65 days of entry and service of the order eliminating reunification and both of the following occur:
 1. The motion or petition to terminate rights is heard and granted.
 2. The order terminating parental rights is appealed in a proper and timely manner.

- c. A separate notice of appeal of the order eliminating reunification is filed within 30 days after entry and service of a termination of parental rights order.

(a1) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-18, s. 2, effective July 1, 2021, and applicable to appeals filed on or after that date.

(a2) In an appeal filed pursuant to subdivision (a)(8) of this section, the Court of Appeals shall review the order eliminating reunification together with an appeal of the order terminating parental rights. If the order eliminating reunification is vacated or reversed, the order terminating parental rights shall be vacated.

(b) Notice of appeal and notice to preserve the right to appeal shall be given in writing by a proper party as defined in G.S. 7B-1002 and shall be made within 30 days after entry and service of the order in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 58.

(c) Notice of appeal shall be signed by both the appealing party and counsel for the appealing party, if any. In the case of an appeal by a juvenile, notice of appeal shall be signed by the guardian ad litem attorney advocate. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, s. 25; 2001-487, s. 101; 2005-398, s. 10; 2011-295, s. 11; 2013-129, s. 31; 2015-136, s. 16; 2017-7, s. 4; 2017-41, s. 8(a); 2017-102, s. 40(f); 2019-33, s. 14(a); 2021-18, s. 2; 2021-100, s. 1(b); 2021-132, s. 1(b).)

§ 7B-1002. Proper parties for appeal.

Appeal from an order permitted under G.S. 7B-1001 may be taken by:

- (1) A juvenile acting through the juvenile's guardian ad litem previously appointed under G.S. 7B-601.
- (2) A juvenile for whom no guardian ad litem has been appointed under G.S. 7B-601. If such an appeal is made, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17 for the juvenile for the purposes of that appeal.
- (3) A county department of social services.
- (4) A parent, a guardian appointed under G.S. 7B-600 or Chapter 35A of the General Statutes, or a custodian as defined in G.S. 7B-101 who is a nonprevailing party.
- (5) Any party that sought but failed to obtain termination of parental rights. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-398, s. 11.)

§ 7B-1003. Disposition pending appeal.

(a) During an appeal of an order entered under this Subchapter, the trial court may enforce the order unless the trial court or an appellate court orders a stay.

(b) Pending disposition of an appeal, unless directed otherwise by an appellate court or subsection (c) of this section applies, the trial court shall:

- (1) Continue to exercise jurisdiction and conduct hearings under this Subchapter with the exception of Article 11 of the General Statutes; and
- (2) Enter orders affecting the custody or placement of the juvenile as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile.

(c) Pending disposition of an appeal of an order entered under Article 11 of this Chapter where the petition for termination of parental rights was not filed as a motion in a juvenile matter initiated under Article 4 of this Chapter, the court may enter a temporary order affecting the custody or placement of the juvenile as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile.

Upon the affirmation of the order of adjudication or disposition of the court in a juvenile case by the Court of Appeals, or by the Supreme Court in the event of an appeal, the court shall have authority to modify or alter its original order of adjudication or disposition as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile to reflect any adjustment made by the juvenile or change in circumstances during the period of time the case on appeal was pending, provided that if the modifying order be entered ex parte, the court shall give notice to interested parties to show cause, if there be any, within 10 days thereafter, as to why the modifying order should be vacated or altered.

(d) When the court has found that a juvenile has suffered physical abuse and that the individual responsible for the abuse has a history of violent behavior, the court shall consider the opinion of the mental health professional who performed the evaluation under G.S. 7B-503(b) before returning the juvenile to the custody of that individual pending resolution of an appeal.

(e) The provisions of G.S. 7B-903.1 shall apply to any order entered during an appeal that provides for the placement or continued placement of a juvenile in foster care. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 12; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-318, s. 8; 1999-456, s. 60; 2001-208, s. 27; 2001-487, s. 101; 2003-140, s. 8; 2005-398, s. 12; 2019-33, s. 14(b).)

§ 7B-1004. Disposition after appeal.

When an order of the court is affirmed by the Court of Appeals or by the Supreme Court, the trial court may modify or alter the original order as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile to reflect any change in circumstances during the period of time the appeal was pending. If the modifying order is entered ex parte, the court shall give notice to interested parties to show cause within 10 days thereafter as to why the modifying order should be vacated or altered. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-398, s. 13.)

Article 11.

Termination of Parental Rights.

§ 7B-1100. Legislative intent; construction of Article.

The General Assembly hereby declares as a matter of legislative policy with respect to termination of parental rights:

- (1) The general purpose of this Article is to provide judicial procedures for terminating the legal relationship between a juvenile and the juvenile's biological or legal parents when the parents have demonstrated that they will not provide the degree of care which promotes the healthy and orderly physical and emotional well-being of the juvenile.
- (2) It is the further purpose of this Article to recognize the necessity for any juvenile to have a permanent plan of care at the earliest possible age, while at the same time recognizing the need to protect all juveniles from the unnecessary severance of a relationship with biological or legal parents.
- (3) Action which is in the best interests of the juvenile should be taken in all cases where the interests of the juvenile and those of the juvenile's parents or other persons are in conflict.
- (4) This Article shall not be used to circumvent the provisions of Chapter 50A of the General Statutes, the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 110, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-223, s. 5; 1999-456, s. 60.)

§ 7B-1101. Jurisdiction.

The court shall have exclusive original jurisdiction to hear and determine any petition or motion relating to termination of parental rights to any juvenile who resides in, is found in, or is in the legal or actual custody of a county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency in the district at the time of filing of the petition or motion. The court shall have jurisdiction to terminate the parental rights of any parent irrespective of the age of the parent. Provided, that before exercising jurisdiction under this Article, the court shall find that it has jurisdiction to make a child-custody determination under the provisions of G.S. 50A-201, 50A-203, or 50A-204. The court shall have jurisdiction to terminate the parental rights of any parent irrespective of the state of residence of the parent. Provided, that before exercising jurisdiction under this Article regarding the parental rights of a nonresident parent, the court shall find that it has jurisdiction to make a child-custody determination under the provisions of G.S. 50A-201 or G.S. 50A-203, without regard to G.S. 50A-204 and that process was served on the nonresident parent pursuant to G.S. 7B-1106. Provided, further, that the clerk of superior court shall have jurisdiction for adoptions under Chapter 48 of the General Statutes. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 110, s. 7; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1206, s. 1; 1981, c. 996, s. 1; 1983, c. 89, s. 1; 1995, c. 457, s. 3; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-223, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-144, s. 18; 2000-183, s. 2; 2003-140, s. 4; 2005-398, s. 14; 2007-152, s. 1.)

§ 7B-1101.1. Parent's right to counsel; guardian ad litem.

(a) The parent has the right to counsel, and to appointed counsel in cases of indigency, unless the parent waives the right. The fees of appointed counsel shall be borne by the Office of Indigent Defense Services. When a petition is filed, unless the parent is already represented by counsel, the clerk shall appoint provisional counsel for each respondent parent named in the petition in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services, shall indicate the appointment on the juvenile summons, and shall provide a copy of the summons and petition to the attorney. At the first hearing after service upon the respondent parent, the court shall dismiss the provisional counsel if the respondent parent:

- (1) Does not appear at the hearing;
- (2) Does not qualify for court-appointed counsel;
- (3) Has retained counsel; or
- (4) Waives the right to counsel.

The court shall confirm the appointment of counsel if subdivisions (1) through (4) of this subsection are not applicable to the respondent parent. The court may reconsider a parent's eligibility and desire for appointed counsel at any stage of the proceeding.

(a1) A parent qualifying for appointed counsel may be permitted to proceed without the assistance of counsel only after the court examines the parent and makes findings of fact sufficient to show that the waiver is knowing and voluntary. This examination shall be reported as provided in G.S. 7B-806.

(b) In addition to the right to appointed counsel under subsection (a) of this section, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17, to represent any parent who is under the age of 18 years and who is not married or otherwise emancipated.

(c) On motion of any party or on the court's own motion, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem for a parent who is incompetent in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 17.

(d) The parent's counsel shall not be appointed to serve as the guardian ad litem and the guardian ad litem shall not act as the parent's attorney. Communications between the guardian ad

litem appointed under this section and the parent and between the guardian ad litem and the parent's counsel shall be privileged and confidential to the same extent that communications between the parent and the parent's counsel are privileged and confidential.

(e) Repealed by Session Laws 2013-129, s. 32, effective October 1, 2013, and applicable to actions filed or pending on or after that date.

(f) The fees of a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to this section shall be borne by the Office of Indigent Defense Services when the court finds that the respondent is indigent. In other cases, the fees of the court-appointed guardian ad litem shall be a proper charge against the respondent if the respondent does not secure private legal counsel. (2005-398, s. 15; 2009-311, s. 9; 2011-326, s. 12(b); 2012-194, s. 41; 2013-129, s. 32; 2021-100, s. 17.)

§ 7B-1102. Pending child abuse, neglect, or dependency proceedings.

(a) When the district court is exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile and the juvenile's parent in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding, a person or agency specified in G.S. 7B-1103(a) may file in that proceeding a motion for termination of the parent's rights in relation to the juvenile.

(b) A motion pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and the notice required by G.S. 7B-1106.1 shall be served in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5(b), except:

- (1) Service must be in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4, if one of the following applies:
 - a. The person or agency to be served was not served originally with summons.
 - b. The person or agency to be served was served originally by publication that did not include notice substantially in conformity with the notice required by G.S. 7B-406(b)(4)e.
 - c. Two years has elapsed since the date of the original action.
- (2) In any case, the court may order that service of the motion and notice be made pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4.

For purposes of this section, the parent of the juvenile shall not be deemed to be under disability even though the parent is a minor.

(b1) If a parent who is served under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4, with a motion under this section has an attorney of record, a copy of the motion and the notice served upon the parent shall also be sent to the parent's attorney.

(c) When a petition for termination of parental rights is filed in the same district in which there is pending an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding involving the same juvenile, the court on its own motion or motion of a party may consolidate the action pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 42. (1998-229, ss. 9.1, 26.1; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 3; 2011-332, s. 4.1.)

§ 7B-1103. Who may file a petition or motion.

(a) A petition or motion to terminate the parental rights of either or both parents to his, her, or their minor juvenile may only be filed by one or more of the following:

- (1) Either parent seeking termination of the right of the other parent.
- (2) Any person who has been judicially appointed as the guardian of the person of the juvenile.

- (3) Any county department of social services, consolidated county human services agency, or licensed child-placing agency to whom custody of the juvenile has been given by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (4) Any county department of social services, consolidated county human services agency, or licensed child-placing agency to which the juvenile has been surrendered for adoption by one of the parents or by the guardian of the person of the juvenile, pursuant to G.S. 48-3-701.
- (5) Any person with whom the juvenile has resided for a continuous period of 18 months or more next preceding the filing of the petition or motion.
- (6) Any guardian ad litem appointed to represent the minor juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 who has not been relieved of this responsibility.
- (7) Any person who has filed a petition for adoption pursuant to Chapter 48 of the General Statutes.
- (8) A grandparent of the juvenile if all known parents are deceased and the motion is to terminate the parental rights of an unknown parent.

(b) Any person or agency that may file a petition under subsection (a) of this section may intervene in a pending abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding for the purpose of filing a motion to terminate parental rights.

(c) **(See Editor's note)** No person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.21, 14-27.22, 14-27.23, or 14-27.24 and the conception of the juvenile may file a petition to terminate the parental rights of another with respect to that juvenile. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1983, c. 870, s. 1; 1985, c. 758, s. 1; 1987, c. 371, s. 2; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 690, s. 4; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 9.1; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 4; 2004-128, s. 13; 2015-181, s. 23; 2015-264, s. 33(b); 2021-132, s. 1(l); 2024-33, s. 25(b).)

§ 7B-1104. Petition or motion.

The petition, or motion pursuant to G.S. 7B-1102, shall be verified by the petitioner or movant and shall be entitled "In Re (last name of juvenile), a minor juvenile", who shall be a party to the action, and shall set forth such of the following facts as are known; and with respect to the facts which are unknown the petitioner or movant shall so state:

- (1) The name of the juvenile as it appears on the juvenile's birth certificate, the date and place of birth, and the county where the juvenile is presently residing.
- (2) The name and address of the petitioner or movant and facts sufficient to identify the petitioner or movant as one authorized by G.S. 7B-1103 to file a petition or motion.
- (3) **(See Editor's note)** The name and address of the parents of the juvenile. If the name or address of one or both parents is unknown to the petitioner or movant, the petitioner or movant shall set forth with particularity the petitioner's or movant's efforts to ascertain the identity or whereabouts of the parent or parents. The information may be contained in an affidavit attached to the petition or motion and incorporated therein by reference. A person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.21, 14-27.22, 14-27.23, or 14-27.24 and the conception of the juvenile need not be named in the petition.
- (4) The name and address of any person who has been judicially appointed as guardian of the person of the juvenile.

- (5) The name and address of any person or agency to whom custody of the juvenile has been given by a court of this or any other state; and a copy of the custody order shall be attached to the petition or motion.
- (6) Facts that are sufficient to warrant a determination that one or more of the grounds for terminating parental rights exist.
- (7) That the petition or motion has not been filed to circumvent the provisions of Article 2 of Chapter 50A of the General Statutes, the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 110, s. 8; 1981, c. 469, s. 23; 1987, c. 550, s. 15; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-223, s. 7; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 5; 2004-128, s. 14; 2009-38, s. 2; 2015-181, s. 24; 2015-264, s. 33(c).)

§ 7B-1105. Preliminary hearing; unknown parent.

(a) If either the name or identity of any parent whose parental rights the petitioner seeks to terminate is not known to the petitioner, the court shall, within 10 days from the date of filing of the petition, or during the next term of court in the county where the petition is filed if there is no court in the county in that 10-day period, conduct a preliminary hearing to ascertain the name or identity of such parent.

(b) The court may, in its discretion, inquire of any known parent of the juvenile concerning the identity of the unknown parent and may order the petitioner to conduct a diligent search for the parent. Should the court ascertain the name or identity of the parent, it shall enter a finding to that effect; and the parent shall be summoned to appear in accordance with G.S. 7B-1106.

(c) Notice of the preliminary hearing need be given only to the petitioner who shall appear at the hearing, but the court may cause summons to be issued to any person directing the person to appear and testify.

(d) If the court is unable to ascertain the name or identity of the unknown parent, the court shall order publication of notice of the termination proceeding and shall specifically order the place or places of publication and the contents of the notice which the court concludes is most likely to identify the juvenile to such unknown parent. The notice shall be published in a newspaper qualified for legal advertising in accordance with G.S. 1-597 and G.S. 1-598 and published in the counties directed by the court, once a week for three successive weeks. Provided, further, the notice shall:

- (1) Designate the court in which the petition is pending;
- (2) Be directed to "the father (mother) (father and mother) of a male (female) juvenile born on or about _____ in _____ County, _____, _____, respondent";

(date)

(city)

(State)
- (3) Designate the docket number and title of the case (the court may direct the actual name of the title be eliminated and the words "In Re Doe" substituted therefor);
- (4) State that a petition seeking to terminate the parental rights of the respondent has been filed;

- (5) Direct the respondent to answer the petition within 30 days after a date stated in the notice, exclusive of such date, which date so stated shall be the date of first publication of notice and be substantially in the form as set forth in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j1); and
- (6) State that the respondent's parental rights to the juvenile will be terminated upon failure to answer the petition within the time prescribed.

Upon completion of the service, an affidavit of the publisher shall be filed with the court.

(e) The court shall issue the order required by subsections (b) and (d) of this section within 30 days from the date of the preliminary hearing unless the court shall determine that additional time for investigation is required.

(f) Upon the failure of the parent served by publication pursuant to subsection (d) of this section to answer the petition within the time prescribed, the court shall issue an order terminating all parental rights of the unknown parent.

(g) No summons shall be required for a parent whose name or identity is unknown and who is served by publication as provided in this section. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1987, c. 282, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2011-295, s. 12; 2018-68, s. 5.1.)

§ 7B-1105.1. Preliminary hearing; safely surrendered infant.

(a) Within 10 days from the date of filing of a petition to terminate the parental rights of a surrendering or non-surrendering parent of a safely surrendered infant, or during the next term of court in the county where the petition is filed if there is no court in the county in that 10-day period, the court shall conduct a preliminary hearing to address the infant's safe surrender. The preliminary hearing shall be recorded and shall be closed unless the surrendering parent appears and requests that it be open. The purpose of the hearing shall be to ascertain the circumstances of the safe surrender in order to determine any efforts that should be made to ascertain the identity and location of either parent and to establish appropriate notice regarding termination of parental rights proceedings.

(b) The court shall inquire of the director of the department of social services as to all of the following:

- (1) The circumstances of the safe surrender.
- (2) Whether, at the time of surrender, the surrendering parent was provided the information pursuant to G.S. 7B-528.
- (3) Whether notice of a safe surrender was made by publication as required by G.S. 7B-526. An affidavit of the publisher of that notice shall be filed with the court at this preliminary hearing.
- (4) Whether either parent has made any efforts to contact the department of social services and the nature of those contacts.
- (5) Whether the identities or locations of either parent are known to the director of the department of social services.

(c) The court shall determine whether any diligent efforts are required to identify or locate the surrendering parent considering the need to protect the confidentiality of that parent's identity and the parent's due process rights. The court may specify the type of diligent efforts the department of social services is required to take. The court shall determine whether the surrendering parent shall be served pursuant to Rule 4 of the Rules of Civil Procedure and, if so, may specify the type of service that must be provided in lieu of Rule 4 whether the parent shall be served by publication in accordance with subsection (e) of this section.

(d) When the identity of the non-surrendering parent is known, the court shall order service pursuant to Rule 4 of the Rules of Civil Procedure. When the non-surrendering parent's identity is not known, service shall be by publication in accordance with subsection (e) of this section.

(e) The court shall specifically order the place or places of publication and the contents of the notice that the court concludes is most likely to identify the juvenile to either of the juvenile's parents without including the name of the surrendering parent. The notice shall be published in a newspaper qualified for legal advertising in accordance with G.S. 1-597 and G.S. 1-598 and published in the counties directed by the court, including in the county where the local department of social services that received the safely surrendered infant is located and where the parent is residing, if known, once a week for three successive weeks. The notice shall do each of the following:

- (1) Designate the court in which the petition is pending.
- (2) Be directed to "the mother (father) (mother and father) of a male (female) juvenile born on or about _____ and if known in _____ (date) _____ (hospital or health care facility where the infant was born.) _____ (County), _____ (City), _____, respondent."
(State)
- (3) Designate the docket number and title of the case which shall be "In re Baby Doe."
- (4) State that the infant was surrendered by a person claiming to be the infant's mother or father who did not express an intent to return for the infant and that the infant was surrendered to an individual pursuant to G.S. 7B-521 by specifying (i) the profession of the person authorized to accept the surrendered infant, (ii) the facility at which the infant was surrendered, and (iii) the date of surrender.
- (5) State the physical characteristics of the infant at the time of the surrender.
- (6) State that a petition seeking to terminate the parental rights of the respondent has been filed and the purpose of the termination hearing.
- (7) Notice that if the parent is indigent, the parent is entitled to appointed counsel and may contact the clerk immediately to request counsel.
- (8) State the date and time of the pretrial hearing pursuant to G.S. 7B-1108.1 and notice that the parent may attend the hearing.
- (9) Direct the respondent to file with the clerk a written answer to the petition within 30 days after a date stated in the notice, exclusive of such date, which date so stated shall be the date of first publication of notice and be substantially in the form as set forth in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j1).
- (10) State that if the parent fails to answer the petition within the time prescribed and the court determines the ground for termination has been proved and that termination of that parent's rights is in the best interests of the juvenile, the respondent's parental rights to the juvenile will be terminated.

Upon completion of the service by publication, an affidavit of the publisher shall be filed with the court.

(f) The court shall issue the order required by this section within 30 days from the date of the preliminary hearing unless the court shall determine that additional time for investigation is required.

(g) No summons is required for a parent who is served by publication. (2023-14, s. 6.2(f).)

§ 7B-1106. Issuance of summons.

(a) Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1105, upon the filing of the petition, the court shall cause a summons to be issued. The summons shall be directed to the following persons or agency, not otherwise a party petitioner, who shall be named as respondents:

- (1) The parents of the juvenile. However, a summons does not need to be directed to or served upon any parent who, under Chapter 48 of the General Statutes, has irrevocably relinquished the juvenile to a county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency or to any parent who has consented to the adoption of the juvenile by the petitioner.
- (2) Any person who has been judicially appointed as guardian of the person of the juvenile.
- (3) The custodian of the juvenile appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (4) Any county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency to whom a juvenile has been released by one parent pursuant to Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes or any county department of social services to whom placement responsibility for the child has been given by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-38, s. 3, effective May 27, 2009.

The summons shall notify the respondents to file a written answer within 30 days after service of the summons and petition. Service of the summons shall be completed as provided under the procedures established by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4. Prior to service by publication under G.S. 1A-1, the court shall make findings of fact that a respondent cannot otherwise be served despite diligent efforts made by petitioner for personal service. The court shall approve the form of the notice before it is published. The parent of the juvenile shall not be deemed to be under a disability even though the parent is a minor.

(a1) If a guardian ad litem has been appointed for the juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 and has not been relieved of responsibility or if the court appoints a guardian ad litem for the juvenile after the petition is filed, a copy of all pleadings and other papers required to be served shall be served on the juvenile's guardian ad litem or attorney advocate pursuant to procedures established under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5.

(a2) If an attorney has been appointed for a respondent pursuant to G.S. 7B-602 and has not been relieved of responsibility, a copy of all pleadings and other papers required to be served on the respondent shall be served on the respondent's attorney pursuant to procedures established under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5.

(b) The summons shall be issued for the purpose of terminating parental rights pursuant to the provisions of subsection (a) of this section and shall include:

- (1) The name of the minor juvenile;
- (2) Notice that a written answer to the petition must be filed with the clerk who signed the petition within 30 days after service of the summons and a copy of the petition, or the parent's rights may be terminated;

- (3) Notice that any counsel appointed previously and still representing the parent in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding shall continue to represent the parent unless otherwise ordered by the court;
- (4) Notice that if the parent is indigent and is not already represented by appointed counsel, the parent is entitled to appointed counsel, that provisional counsel has been appointed, and that the appointment of provisional counsel shall be reviewed by the court at the first hearing after service;
- (5) Notice that the date, time, and place of any pretrial hearing pursuant to G.S. 7B-1108.1 and the hearing on the petition will be mailed by the petitioner upon filing of the answer or 30 days from the date of service if no answer is filed; and
- (6) Notice of the purpose of the hearing and notice that the parents may attend the termination hearing.

(c) If a county department of social services, not otherwise a party petitioner, is served with a petition alleging that the parental rights of the parent should be terminated pursuant to G.S. 7B-1111, the department shall file a written answer and shall be deemed a party to the proceeding. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1981, c. 966, s. 2; 1983, c. 581, ss. 1, 2; 1995, c. 457, s. 4; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 10, 27; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 13; 2001-208, s. 28; 2001-487, s. 101; 2009-38, s. 3; 2009-311, s. 10; 2011-295, s. 13; 2013-129, s. 33; 2017-161, s. 11.)

§ 7B-1106.1. Notice in pending child abuse, neglect, or dependency cases.

(a) Upon the filing of a motion pursuant to G.S. 7B-1102, the movant shall prepare a notice directed to each of the following persons or agency, not otherwise a movant:

- (1) The parents of the juvenile. However, notice does not need to be directed to or served upon any parent who, under Chapter 48 of the General Statutes, has irrevocably relinquished the juvenile to a county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency or to any parent who has consented to the adoption of the juvenile by the movant.
- (2) Any person who has been judicially appointed as guardian of the person of the juvenile.
- (3) The custodian of the juvenile appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (4) Any county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency to whom a juvenile has been released by one parent pursuant to Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes or any county department of social services to whom placement responsibility for the juvenile has been given by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- (5) The juvenile's guardian ad litem or attorney advocate, if one has been appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 and has not been relieved of responsibility.
- (6) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-38, s. 4, effective May 27, 2009.

The notice shall notify the person or agency to whom it is directed to file a written response within 30 days after service of the motion and notice. Service of the motion and notice shall be completed as provided under G.S. 7B-1102(b).

- (b) The notice required by subsection (a) of this section shall include all of the following:
- (1) The name of the minor juvenile.

- (2) Notice that a written response to the motion must be filed with the clerk within 30 days after service of the motion and notice, or the parent's rights may be terminated.
- (3) Notice that any counsel appointed previously and still representing the parent in an abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding will continue to represent the parents unless otherwise ordered by the court.
- (4) Notice that if the parent is indigent, the parent is entitled to appointed counsel and if the parent is not already represented by appointed counsel the parent may contact the clerk immediately to request counsel.
- (5) Notice that the date, time, and place of any pretrial hearing pursuant to G.S. 7B-1108.1 and the hearing on the motion will be mailed by the moving party upon filing of the response or 30 days from the date of service if no response is filed.
- (6) Notice of the purpose of the hearing and notice that the parents may attend the termination hearing.

(c) If a county department of social services, not otherwise a movant, is served with a motion seeking termination of a parent's rights, the director shall file a written response and shall be deemed a party to the proceeding. (2000-183, s. 6; 2009-38, s. 4; 2009-311, s. 11.)

§ 7B-1107. Failure of parent to answer or respond.

Upon the failure of a respondent parent to file written answer to the petition or written response to the motion within 30 days after service of the summons and petition or notice and motion, or within the time period established for a defendant's reply by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j1) if service is by publication, the court may issue an order terminating all parental and custodial rights of that parent with respect to the juvenile; provided the court shall order a hearing on the petition or motion and may examine the petitioner or movant or others on the facts alleged in the petition or motion. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 525, s. 3; 1987, c. 282, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 10; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 7.)

§ 7B-1108. Answer or response of parent; appointment of guardian ad litem for juvenile.

(a) Any respondent may file a written answer to the petition or written response to the motion. Only a district court judge may grant an extension of time in which to answer or respond. The answer or response shall admit or deny the allegations of the petition or motion and shall set forth the name and address of the answering respondent or the respondent's attorney.

(b) If an answer or response denies any material allegation of the petition or motion, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the juvenile to represent the best interests of the juvenile, unless the petition or motion was filed by the guardian ad litem pursuant to G.S. 7B-1103, or a guardian ad litem has already been appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601. A licensed attorney shall be appointed to assist those guardians ad litem who are not attorneys licensed to practice in North Carolina. The appointment, duties, and payment of the guardian ad litem shall be the same as in G.S. 7B-601 and G.S. 7B-603, but in no event shall a guardian ad litem who is trained and supervised by the guardian ad litem program be appointed to any case unless the juvenile is or has been the subject of a petition for abuse, neglect, or dependency or with good cause shown the local guardian ad litem program consents to the appointment.

(c) In proceedings under this Article, the appointment of a guardian ad litem shall not be required except, as provided above, in cases in which an answer or response is filed denying

material allegations, or as required under G.S. 7B-1101; but the court may, in its discretion, appoint a guardian ad litem for a juvenile, either before or after determining the existence of grounds for termination of parental rights, in order to assist the court in determining the best interests of the juvenile.

(d) If a guardian ad litem has previously been appointed for the juvenile under G.S. 7B-601, and the appointment of a guardian ad litem could also be made under this section, the guardian ad litem appointed under G.S. 7B-601, and any attorney appointed to assist that guardian, shall also represent the juvenile in all proceedings under this Article and shall have the duties and payment of a guardian ad litem appointed under this section, unless the court determines that the best interests of the juvenile require otherwise. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1331, s. 3; 1983, c. 870, s. 2; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 851, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 8; 2003-140, s. 7; 2009-311, s. 12; 2011-295, s. 14.)

§ 7B-1108.1. Pretrial hearing.

(a) The court shall conduct a pretrial hearing. However, the court may combine the pretrial hearing with the adjudicatory hearing on termination in which case no separate pretrial hearing order is required. At the pretrial hearing, the court shall consider the following:

- (1) Retention or release of provisional counsel.
- (2) Whether a guardian ad litem should be appointed for the juvenile, if not previously appointed.
- (3) Whether all summons, service of process, and notice requirements have been met.
- (4) Any pretrial motions.
- (5) Any issues raised by any responsive pleading, including any affirmative defenses.
- (6) Any other issue which can be properly addressed as a preliminary matter.

(b) Written notice of the pretrial hearing shall be in accordance with G.S. 7B-1106 and G.S. 7B-1106.1. (2009-311, s. 13.)

§ 7B-1109. Adjudicatory hearing on termination.

(a) The hearing on the termination of parental rights shall be conducted by the court sitting without a jury and shall be held in the district at such time and place as the chief district court judge shall designate, but no later than 90 days from the filing of the petition or motion unless the judge pursuant to subsection (d) of this section orders that it be held at a later time. Reporting of the hearing shall be as provided by G.S. 7A-198 for reporting civil trials.

(b) The court shall inquire whether the juvenile's parents are present at the hearing and, if so, whether they are represented by counsel. If the parents are not represented by counsel, the court shall inquire whether the parents desire counsel but are indigent. In the event that the parents desire counsel but are indigent as defined in G.S. 7A-450(a) and are unable to obtain counsel to represent them, counsel shall be appointed to represent them in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services. The court shall grant the parents such an extension of time as is reasonable to permit their appointed counsel to prepare their defense to the termination petition or motion.

(c) The court may, upon finding that reasonable cause exists, order the juvenile to be examined by a psychiatrist, a licensed clinical psychologist, a physician, a public or private agency, or any other expert in order that the juvenile's psychological or physical condition or needs may be

ascertained or, in the case of a parent whose ability to care for the juvenile is at issue, the court may order a similar examination of any parent of the juvenile.

(d) The court may for good cause shown continue the hearing for up to 90 days from the date of the initial petition in order to receive additional evidence including any reports or assessments that the court has requested, to allow the parties to conduct expeditious discovery, or to receive any other information needed in the best interests of the juvenile. Continuances that extend beyond 90 days after the initial petition shall be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when necessary for the proper administration of justice, and the court shall issue a written order stating the grounds for granting the continuance.

(e) The court shall take evidence, find the facts, and shall adjudicate the existence or nonexistence of any of the circumstances set forth in G.S. 7B-1111 which authorize the termination of parental rights of the respondent. The adjudicatory order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the termination of parental rights hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(f) The burden in such proceedings shall be upon the petitioner or movant and all findings of fact shall be based on clear and convincing evidence. The rules of evidence in civil cases shall apply. No husband-wife or physician-patient privilege shall be grounds for excluding any evidence regarding the existence or nonexistence of any circumstance authorizing the termination of parental rights. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 669, s. 1; 1981, c. 966, s. 3; Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1331, s. 3; 1983, c. 870, s. 2; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 851, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-144, s. 19; 2000-183, s. 9; 2001-208, ss. 7, 22; 2001-487, s. 101; 2003-304, s. 2; 2005-398, s. 16; 2011-295, s. 15; 2013-129, s. 34; 2025-16, s. 1.14(b).)

§ 7B-1110. Determination of best interests of the juvenile.

(a) After an adjudication that one or more grounds for terminating a parent's rights exist, the court shall determine whether terminating the parent's rights is in the juvenile's best interest. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the best interests of the juvenile. In each case, the court shall consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding the following that are relevant:

- (1) The age of the juvenile.
- (2) The likelihood of adoption of the juvenile.
- (3) Whether the termination of parental rights will aid in the accomplishment of the permanent plan for the juvenile.
- (4) The bond between the juvenile and the parent.
- (5) The quality of the relationship between the juvenile and the proposed adoptive parent, guardian, custodian, or other permanent placement.
- (6) Any relevant consideration.

Any order shall be reduced to writing, signed, and entered no later than 30 days following the completion of the termination of parental rights hearing. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters

following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(b) Should the court conclude that, irrespective of the existence of one or more circumstances authorizing termination of parental rights, the best interests of the juvenile require that rights should not be terminated, the court shall dismiss the petition or deny the motion, but only after setting forth the facts and conclusions upon which the dismissal or denial is based.

(c) Should the court determine that circumstances authorizing termination of parental rights do not exist, the court shall dismiss the petition or deny the motion, making appropriate findings of fact and conclusions.

(d) Counsel for the petitioner or movant shall serve a copy of the termination of parental rights order upon the guardian ad litem for the juvenile, if any, and upon the juvenile if the juvenile is 12 years of age or older.

(e) The court may tax the cost of the proceeding to any party. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1131, s. 1; 1983, c. 581, s. 3; c. 607, s. 3; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 10; 2001-208, s. 23; 2001-487, s. 101; 2005-398, s. 17; 2011-295, s. 16.)

§ 7B-1111. Grounds for terminating parental rights.

(a) The court may terminate the parental rights upon a finding of one or more of the following:

- (1) The parent has abused or neglected the juvenile. The juvenile shall be deemed to be abused or neglected if the court finds the juvenile to be an abused juvenile within the meaning of G.S. 7B-101 or a neglected juvenile within the meaning of G.S. 7B-101.
- (2) The parent has willfully left the juvenile in foster care or placement outside the home for more than 12 months without showing to the satisfaction of the court that reasonable progress under the circumstances has been made in correcting those conditions which led to the removal of the juvenile. No parental rights, however, shall be terminated for the sole reason that the parents are unable to care for the juvenile on account of their poverty.
- (3) The juvenile has been placed in the custody of a county department of social services, a licensed child-placing agency, a child-caring institution, or a foster home, and the parent has for a continuous period of six months immediately preceding the filing of the petition or motion willfully failed to pay a reasonable portion of the cost of care for the juvenile although physically and financially able to do so.
- (4) One parent has been awarded custody of the juvenile by judicial decree or has custody by agreement of the parents, and the other parent whose parental rights are sought to be terminated has for a period of one year or more next preceding the filing of the petition or motion willfully failed without justification to pay for the care, support, and education of the juvenile, as required by the decree or custody agreement.
- (5) The father of a juvenile born out of wedlock has not, prior to the filing of a petition or motion to terminate parental rights, done any of the following:
 - a. Filed an affidavit of paternity in a central registry maintained by the Department of Health and Human Services. The petitioner or movant

shall inquire of the Department of Health and Human Services as to whether such an affidavit has been so filed and the Department's certified reply shall be submitted to and considered by the court.

- b. Legitimated the juvenile pursuant to provisions of G.S. 49-10, G.S. 49-12.1, or filed a petition for this specific purpose.
 - c. Legitimated the juvenile by marriage to the mother of the juvenile.
 - d. Provided substantial financial support or consistent care with respect to the juvenile and mother.
 - e. Established paternity through G.S. 49-14, 110-132, 130A-101, 130A-118, or other judicial proceeding.
- (6) That the parent is incapable of providing for the proper care and supervision of the juvenile, such that the juvenile is a dependent juvenile within the meaning of G.S. 7B-101, and that there is a reasonable probability that the incapability will continue for the foreseeable future. Incapability under this subdivision may be the result of substance abuse, intellectual disability, mental illness, organic brain syndrome, or any other cause or condition that renders the parent unable or unavailable to parent the juvenile and the parent lacks an appropriate alternative child care arrangement.
- (7) The parent has willfully abandoned the juvenile for at least six consecutive months immediately preceding the filing of the petition or motion, or the parent has voluntarily abandoned an infant as a safely surrendered infant pursuant to Article 5A of this Subchapter for at least 60 consecutive days immediately preceding the filing of the petition or motion.
- (8) The parent has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of another child of the parent or other child residing in the home; has aided, abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter of the child, another child of the parent, or other child residing in the home; has committed a felony assault that results in serious bodily injury to the child, another child of the parent, or other child residing in the home; or has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of the other parent of the child. The petitioner has the burden of proving any of these offenses in the termination of parental rights hearing by (i) proving the elements of the offense or (ii) offering proof that a court of competent jurisdiction has convicted the parent of the offense, whether or not the conviction was by way of a jury verdict or any kind of plea. If the parent has committed the murder or voluntary manslaughter of the other parent of the child, the court shall consider whether the murder or voluntary manslaughter was committed in self-defense or in the defense of others, or whether there was substantial evidence of other justification.
- (9) The parental rights of the parent with respect to another child of the parent have been terminated involuntarily by a court of competent jurisdiction and the parent lacks the ability or willingness to establish a safe home. This ground shall not apply to a parent whose parental rights were terminated as a result of the other child being a safely surrendered infant.
- (10) Where the juvenile has been relinquished to a county department of social services or a licensed child-placing agency for the purpose of adoption or placed with a prospective adoptive parent for adoption; the consent or

relinquishment to adoption by the parent has become irrevocable except upon a showing of fraud, duress, or other circumstance as set forth in G.S. 48-3-609 or G.S. 48-3-707; termination of parental rights is a condition precedent to adoption in the jurisdiction where the adoption proceeding is to be filed; and the parent does not contest the termination of parental rights.

- (11) The parent has been convicted of a sexually related offense under Chapter 14 of the General Statutes that resulted in the conception of the juvenile.

(b) The burden in these proceedings is on the petitioner or movant to prove the facts justifying the termination by clear and convincing evidence. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1979, c. 669, s. 2; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1088, s. 2; c. 1206, s. 2; 1983, c. 89, s. 2; c. 512; 1985, c. 758, ss. 2, 3; c. 784; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 941, s. 1; 1997-390, ss. 1, 2; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, ss. 11, 28; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 11; 2001-208, s. 6; 2001-291, s. 3; 2001-487, s. 101; 2003-140, s. 3; 2005-146, s. 1; 2007-151, s. 1; 2007-484, s. 26(a); 2012-40, s. 1; 2013-129, s. 35; 2018-47, s. 2; 2023-14, s. 6.2(g).)

§ 7B-1112. Effects of termination order.

An order terminating the parental rights completely and permanently terminates all rights and obligations of the parent to the juvenile and of the juvenile to the parent arising from the parental relationship, except that the juvenile's right of inheritance from the juvenile's parent shall not terminate until a final order of adoption is issued. The parent is not thereafter entitled to notice of proceedings to adopt the juvenile and may not object thereto or otherwise participate therein:

- (1) If the juvenile had been placed in the custody of or released for adoption by one parent to a county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency and is in the custody of the agency at the time of the filing of the petition or motion, including a petition or motion filed pursuant to G.S. 7B-1103(a)(6), that agency shall, upon entry of the order terminating parental rights, acquire all of the rights for placement of the juvenile, except as otherwise provided in G.S. 7B-908(d), as the agency would have acquired had the parent whose rights are terminated released the juvenile to that agency pursuant to the provisions of Part 7 of Article 3 of Chapter 48 of the General Statutes, including the right to consent to the adoption of the juvenile.
- (2) Except as provided in subdivision (1) above, upon entering an order terminating the parental rights of one or both parents, the court may place the juvenile in the custody of the petitioner or movant, or some other suitable person, or in the custody of the department of social services or licensed child-placing agency, as may appear to be in the best interests of the juvenile. (1977, c. 879, s. 8; 1983, c. 870, s. 3; 1995, c. 457, s. 5; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 11; 1999-456, s. 60; 2000-183, s. 12; 2011-295, s. 17; 2012-194, s. 2.)

§ 7B-1112.1. Selection of adoptive parents.

The process of selection of specific adoptive parents shall be the responsibility of and within the discretion of the county department of social services or licensed child-placing agency. In selecting the adoptive parents, any current placement provider wanting to adopt the child shall be considered. The guardian ad litem may request information from and consult with the county department or child-placing agency concerning the selection process. If the guardian ad litem requests information about the selection process, the county shall provide the information within

five business days. The county department of social services shall notify the guardian ad litem and the foster parents of the selection of prospective adoptive parents within 10 days of the selection and before the filing of the adoption petition. If the guardian ad litem disagrees with the selection of adoptive parents or the foster parents want to adopt the juvenile and were not selected as adoptive parents, the guardian ad litem or foster parents shall file a motion within 10 days of the department's notification and schedule the case for hearing on the next juvenile calendar. The department shall not change the juvenile's placement to the prospective adoptive parents unless the time period for filing a motion has expired and no motion has been filed. The Department shall provide a copy of a motion for judicial review of adoption selection to the foster parents not selected. Nothing in this section shall be construed to make the foster parents a party to the proceeding solely based on receiving notification and the right to be heard by filing a motion. In hearing any motion, the court shall consider the recommendations of the agency and the guardian ad litem and other facts related to the selection of adoptive parents. The court shall then determine whether the proposed adoptive placement is in the juvenile's best interests. (2011-295, s. 18; 2013-129, s. 36.)

§ 7B-1113: Repealed by Session Laws 2005-398, s. 18, effective October 1, 2005.

§ 7B-1114. Reinstatement of parental rights.

(a) A juvenile whose parent's rights have been terminated, the guardian ad litem attorney, the parent whose rights have been terminated, or a county department of social services with custody of the juvenile may file a motion to reinstate the parent's rights if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) The juvenile is at least 12 years of age or, if the juvenile is younger than 12, the motion alleges extraordinary circumstances requiring consideration of the motion.
- (2) The juvenile does not have a legal parent, is not in an adoptive placement, and is not likely to be adopted within a reasonable period of time.
- (3) The order terminating parental rights was entered at least three years before the filing of the motion, unless the court has found or the juvenile's attorney advocate and the county department of social services with custody of the juvenile stipulate that the juvenile's permanent plan is no longer adoption.

(b) If a motion could be filed under subsection (a) of this section and the parent whose rights have been terminated contacts the county department of social services with custody of the juvenile or the juvenile's guardian ad litem regarding reinstatement of the parent's rights, the department or the guardian ad litem shall notify the juvenile that the juvenile has a right to file a motion for reinstatement of parental rights.

(c) If a motion to reinstate parental rights is filed and the juvenile does not have a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the best interests of the juvenile. The appointment, duties, and payment of the guardian ad litem and the guardian ad litem attorney shall be the same as in G.S. 7B-601 and G.S. 7B-603.

(d) The party filing a motion to reinstate parental rights shall serve the motion on each of the following who is not the movant:

- (1) The juvenile.
- (2) The juvenile's guardian ad litem or the guardian ad litem attorney.
- (3) The county department of social services with custody of the juvenile.

- (4) The former parent whose rights the motion seeks to have reinstated.

A former parent is not entitled to appointed counsel but may retain counsel at the former parent's own expense.

(d1) The movant shall ask the clerk to calendar the case for a pretrial hearing within 10 days from the filing of the motion at a session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters. The court shall consider all of the following:

- (1) The identification of the parties.
- (2) Whether the motion meets the criteria of subsection (a) of this section.
- (3) The appointment of a guardian ad litem in accordance with subsection (c) of this section.
- (4) Discovery and related issues, including what information from the court file and records of the county department of social services and the guardian ad litem the former parent has the right to have access to.
- (5) Any other issue that can be properly addressed as a preliminary matter.

If the court determines the motion does not meet subdivision (2) of this subsection, the court shall dismiss the motion.

(e) The movant shall ask the clerk to calendar the case for a preliminary hearing on the motion for reinstatement of parental rights within 60 days of the filing of the motion at a session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters. The movant shall give at least 15 days' notice of the hearing and state its purpose to the persons listed in subdivisions (d)(1) through (d)(4) of this section. In addition, the movant shall send a notice of the hearing to the juvenile's placement provider. Nothing in this section shall be construed to make the juvenile's placement provider a party to the proceeding based solely on being served with the motion or receiving notice and the right to be heard.

(f) Unless ordered sooner by the court at the pretrial hearing, at least seven days before the preliminary hearing, the department of social services and the juvenile's guardian ad litem shall provide to the court and the other parties reports that address the factors specified in subsection (g) of this section.

(g) At the preliminary hearing and any subsequent hearing on the motion, the court shall consider information from the county department of social services with custody of the juvenile, the juvenile, the juvenile's guardian ad litem, the juvenile's former parent whose parental rights are the subject of the motion, the juvenile's placement provider, and any other person or agency that may aid the court in its review. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile and whether reinstatement is in the juvenile's best interest. The court shall consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding the following that are relevant:

- (1) What efforts were made to achieve adoption or a permanent guardianship.
- (2) Whether the parent whose rights the motion seeks to have reinstated has remedied the conditions that led to the juvenile's removal and termination of the parent's rights.
- (3) Whether the juvenile would receive proper care and supervision in a safe home if placed with the parent.
- (4) The age and maturity of the child and the ability of the child to express the child's preference.

- (5) The parent's willingness to resume contact with the juvenile and to have parental rights reinstated.
- (6) The juvenile's willingness to resume contact with the parent and to have parental rights reinstated.
- (7) Services that would be needed by the juvenile and the parent if the parent's rights were reinstated.
- (8) Any other criteria the court deems necessary.

(h) At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, the court shall either dismiss the motion or order that the juvenile's permanent plan become reinstatement of parental rights. If the court does not dismiss the motion, the court shall conduct interim hearings at least every six months until the motion is granted or dismissed. Interim hearings may be combined with posttermination of parental rights review hearings required by G.S. 7B-908. At each interim hearing, the court shall assess whether the plan of reinstatement of parental rights continues to be in the juvenile's best interest and whether the department of social services has made reasonable efforts to achieve the permanent plan.

(i) At any hearing under this section, after making proper findings of fact and conclusions of law, the court may do one of the following:

- (1) Enter an order for visitation in accordance with G.S. 7B-905.1.
- (2) Order that the juvenile be placed in the former parent's home and supervised by the department of social services either directly or, when the former parent lives in a different county, through coordination with the county department of social services in that county, or by other personnel as may be available to the court, subject to conditions applicable to the former parent as the court may specify. Any order authorizing placement with the former parent shall specify that the juvenile's placement and care remain the responsibility of the county department of social services with custody of the juvenile and that the department is to provide or arrange for the placement of the juvenile.

(j) The court shall either dismiss or grant a motion for reinstatement of parental rights within 12 months from the date the motion was filed, unless the court makes written findings why a final determination cannot be made within that time. If the court makes such findings, the court shall specify the time frame in which a final order shall be entered.

(k) An order reinstating parental rights restores all rights, powers, privileges, immunities, duties, and obligations of the parent as to the juvenile, including those relating to custody, control, and support of the juvenile. If a parent's rights are reinstated, the court shall be relieved of the duty to conduct periodic reviews.

(l) An order shall be entered no later than 30 days following the completion of any hearing pursuant to this section. If the order is not entered within 30 days following completion of the hearing, the clerk of court for juvenile matters shall schedule a subsequent hearing at the first session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters following the 30-day period to determine and explain the reason for the delay and to obtain any needed clarification as to the contents of the order. The order shall be entered within 10 days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

(m) The granting of a motion for reinstatement of parental rights does not vacate or otherwise affect the validity of the original order terminating parental rights.

(n) A parent whose rights are reinstated pursuant to this section is not liable for child support or the costs of any services provided to the juvenile for the period from the date of the order

terminating the parent's rights to the date of the order reinstating the parent's rights. (2011-295, s. 18; 2013-129, s. 37; 2025-16, s. 1.14(d).)

Article 12.

Guardian ad Litem Program.

§ 7B-1200. Office of Guardian ad Litem Services established.

There is established within the Administrative Office of the Courts an Office of Guardian ad Litem Services to provide services in accordance with G.S. 7B-601 to abused, neglected, or dependent juveniles involved in judicial proceedings and to assure that all participants in these proceedings are adequately trained to carry out their responsibilities. Each local program shall consist of volunteer guardians ad litem, at least one program attorney, a program coordinator who is a paid State employee, and any clerical staff as the Administrative Office of the Courts in consultation with the local program deems necessary. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall adopt rules and regulations necessary and appropriate for the administration of the program. (1983, c. 761, s. 160; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 32; c. 1090, s. 7; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1201. Implementation and administration.

(a) Local Programs. – The Administrative Office of the Courts shall, in cooperation with each chief district court judge and other personnel in the district, implement and administer the program mandated by this Article. Where a local program has not yet been established in accordance with this Article, the district court district shall operate a guardian ad litem program approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(b) Advisory Committee Established. – The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts shall appoint a Guardian ad Litem Advisory Committee consisting of at least five members to advise the Office of Guardian ad Litem Services in matters related to this program. The members of the Advisory Committee shall receive the same per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses as members of State boards and commissions generally. (1983, c. 761, s. 160; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 33; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1202. Conflict of interest or impracticality of implementation.

If a conflict of interest prohibits a local program from providing representation to an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile, the court may appoint any member of the district bar to represent the juvenile. If the Administrative Office of the Courts determines that within a particular district court district the implementation of a local program is impractical, or that an alternative plan meets the conditions of G.S. 7B-1203, the Administrative Office of the Courts shall waive the establishment of the program within the district. (1983, c. 761, s. 160; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 34; c. 1090, s. 8; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1203. Alternative plans.

A district court district shall be granted a waiver from the implementation of a local program if the Administrative Office of the Courts determines that the following conditions are met:

- (1) An alternative plan has been developed to provide adequate guardian ad litem services for every juvenile consistent with the duties stated in G.S. 7B-601; and
- (2) The proposed alternative plan will require no greater proportion of State funds than the district court district's abuse and neglect caseload represents to the State's abuse and neglect caseload. Computation of abuse and neglect caseloads

shall include such factors as the juvenile population, number of substantiated abuse and neglect reports, number of abuse and neglect petitions, number of abused and neglected juveniles in care to be reviewed pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1, nature of the district's district court caseload, and number of petitions to terminate parental rights.

When an alternative plan is approved pursuant to this section, the Administrative Office of the Courts shall retain authority to monitor implementation of the said plan in order to assure compliance with the requirements of this Article and G.S. 7B-601. In any district court district where the Administrative Office of the Courts determines that implementation of an alternative plan is not in compliance with the requirements of this section, the Administrative Office of the Courts may implement and administer a program authorized by this Article. (1983, c. 761, s. 160; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 35; 1998-202, s. 6; 2013-129, s. 38.)

§ 7B-1204. Civil liability of volunteers.

Any volunteer participating in a judicial proceeding pursuant to the program authorized by this Article shall not be civilly liable for acts or omissions committed in connection with the proceeding if the volunteer acted in good faith and was not guilty of gross negligence. (1983, c. 761, s. 160; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 13.

Prevention of Abuse and Neglect.

§ 7B-1300. Purpose.

It is the expressed intent of this Article to make the prevention of abuse and neglect, as defined in G.S. 7B-101, a priority of this State and to establish the Children's Trust Fund as a means to that end. (1983, c. 894, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1301. Program on Prevention of Abuse and Neglect.

(a) The Department of Health and Human Services, through the Division of Social Services, shall implement the Program on Prevention of Abuse and Neglect. The Division of Social Services shall provide the staff and support services for implementing this program.

(b) In order to carry out the purposes of this Article:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-451, s. 10.43(b), effective July 1, 2009.

(2) The Division of Social Services shall review applications and contract with public or private nonprofit organizations, agencies, schools, or with qualified individuals to operate community-based educational and service programs designed to prevent the occurrence of abuse and neglect. Every contract entered into by the Division of Social Services shall contain provisions that at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total funding required for a program be provided by the administering organization in the form of in-kind or other services and that a mechanism for evaluation of services provided under the contract be included in the services to be performed. In addition, every proposal to the Division of Social Services for funding under this Article shall include assurances that the proposal has been forwarded to the local department of social services for comment so that the Division of Social Services may consider coordination and duplication of effort on the local level.

- (3) The Division of Social Services shall develop appropriate guidelines and criteria for awarding contracts under this Article. These criteria shall include, but are not limited to: documentation of need within the proposed geographical impact area; diversity of geographical areas of programs funded under this Article; demonstrated effectiveness of the proposed strategy or program for preventing abuse and neglect; reasonableness of implementation plan for achieving stated objectives; utilization of community resources including volunteers; provision for an evaluation component that will provide outcome data; plan for dissemination of the program for implementation in other communities; and potential for future funding from private sources.
- (4) The Division of Social Services shall develop guidelines for regular monitoring of contracts awarded under this Article in order to maximize the investments in prevention programs by the Children's Trust Fund and to establish appropriate accountability measures for administration of contracts.
- (5) The Division of Social Services shall develop a State plan for the prevention of abuse and neglect for submission to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) To assist in implementing this Article, the Division of Social Services may accept contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise from persons, associations, or corporations. All monies received by the Division of Social Services from contributions, grants, or gifts and not through appropriation by the General Assembly shall be deposited in the Children's Trust Fund. Disbursements of the funds shall be on the authorization of the Department of Health and Human Services. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue control, the funds are subject in all respects to State law and regulations, but no appropriation is required to permit expenditure of the funds.

(d) Programs contracted for under this Article are intended to prevent abuse and neglect of juveniles. Abuse and neglect prevention programs are defined to be those programs and services which impact on juveniles and families before any substantiated incident of abuse or neglect has occurred. These programs may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Community-based educational programs on prenatal care, perinatal bonding, child development, basic child care, care of children with special needs, and coping with family stress; and
- (2) Community-based programs relating to crisis care, aid to parents, and support groups for parents and their children experiencing stress within the family unit.

(e) No more than twenty percent (20%) of each year's total awards may be utilized for funding State-level programs to coordinate community-based programs. (1983, c. 894, s. 1; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 677, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2009-451, s. 10.43(b).)

§ 7B-1302. Children's Trust Fund.

(a) There is established a fund to be known as the "Children's Trust Fund," in the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, which shall be funded by a portion of the marriage license fee under G.S. 161-11.1 and a portion of the special license plate fee under G.S. 20-81.12. The money in the Fund shall be used by the Division of Social Services to fund abuse and neglect prevention programs so authorized by this Article.

(b) The Department of Health and Human Services shall report annually on revenues and expenditures of the Children's Trust Fund to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental

Operations. (1983, c. 894, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-277, s. 5; 2004-124, s. 7.33(b); 2009-451, s. 10.43(c); 2010-31, s. 10.20A(a).)

Article 14.

North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention System.

§ 7B-1400. Declaration of public policy.

The General Assembly finds that it is the public policy of this State to prevent the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles. The General Assembly further finds that the prevention of the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles is a community responsibility; that professionals from disparate disciplines have responsibilities for children or juveniles and have expertise that can promote their safety and well-being; and that multidisciplinary reviews of the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles can lead to a greater understanding of the causes and methods of preventing these deaths. It is, therefore, the intent of the General Assembly, through this Article, to establish a statewide multidisciplinary, multiagency child fatality prevention system. The purpose of the system is to assess the records of child deaths in North Carolina from birth up until a child's eighteenth birthday, and with respect to these cases, to study data and prevention strategies related to child abuse, neglect, and death, and to utilize multidisciplinary teams to review these deaths in order to (i) develop a communitywide approach to the problem of child abuse and neglect, (ii) understand the causes and contributing factors of childhood deaths, (iii) identify any gaps or deficiencies that may exist in the delivery of services to children and their families by public agencies that are designed to prevent future child abuse, neglect, or death, (iv) identify and aid in facilitating the implementation of evidence-driven strategies to prevent child death and promote child well-being, and (v) make and implement recommendations for changes to laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of our children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1993, c. 321, s. 285(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1401. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f), as amended by Session Laws 2024-1, s. 3.6(a), and as amended by Session Laws 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d), effective July 1, 2025.
- (1a) Child Fatality Prevention System. – The statewide system comprised of the following:
 - a. Local Teams.
 - b. The North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force as established in this Article.
 - c. The State Office.
 - d. Medical examiner child fatality staff.
- (2) Local Team. – A multidisciplinary child death review team that is either a single or multicounty team responsible for performing any type of review pursuant to this Article.
- (2a) Medical examiner child fatality staff. – Staff within the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner whose primary responsibilities involve reviewing, investigating, training, educating, or supporting death investigations into child

fatalities that fall under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner pursuant to G.S. 130A-383.

- (2b) National Fatality Review Case Reporting System or NFR-CRS. – The web-based system used by a majority of states to provide child death review teams with a simple method for capturing, analyzing, and reporting on the full set of information shared at a child death or serious injury review.
- (2c) State Office. – The State Office of Child Fatality Prevention established under Part 4C of Article 3 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes.
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f), effective October 3, 2023, as amended by Session Laws 2024-1, s. 3.6(a), and as amended by Session Laws 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d), effective July 1, 2025.
- (4) Task Force. – The North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f), effective October 3, 2023, as amended by Session Laws 2024-1, s. 3.6(a), and as amended by Session Laws 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d), effective July 1, 2025. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1993, c. 321, s. 285(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1402. Task Force – creation; membership; vacancies.

(a) There is created the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force within the Department of Health and Human Services for budgetary purposes only.

(b) The Task Force shall be composed of 36 members, 12 of whom shall be ex officio members, four of whom shall be appointed by the Governor, 10 of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and 10 of whom shall be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The ex officio members other than the Chief Medical Examiner may designate representatives from their particular departments, divisions, or offices to represent them on the Task Force. In making appointments or designating representatives, appointing authorities and ex officio members shall use best efforts to select members or representatives with sufficient knowledge and experience to effectively contribute to the issues examined by the Task Force and, to the extent possible, to reflect the geographical, political, gender, and racial diversity of this State. The members shall be as follows:

- (1) The Chief Medical Examiner.
- (2) The Attorney General.
- (3) The Director of the Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services.
- (4) The Director of the State Bureau of Investigation.
- (5) The Director of the Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Human Services.
- (6) The chair of the Council for Women and Youth Involvement.
- (7) The Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- (8) The Chairman of the State Board of Education.
- (9) The Director of the Division of Child and Family Well-Being, Department of Health and Human Services.
- (10) The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- (11) The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

- (11a) The Director of the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety.
- (12) A director of a county department of social services, appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the President of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services.
- (13) A representative from a Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or safe infant sleep counseling and education program, appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the Director of the Maternal and Child Health Section of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- (14) A representative from the NC Child, appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the President of the organization.
- (15) A director of a local department of health, appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of the President of the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors.
- (16) A representative from a private group, other than NC Child, that advocates for children, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives upon recommendation of private child advocacy organizations.
- (17) A pediatrician, licensed to practice medicine in North Carolina, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives upon recommendation of the North Carolina Pediatric Society.
- (18) A representative from the North Carolina League of Municipalities, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives upon recommendation of the League.
- (18a) A representative from the North Carolina Domestic Violence Commission, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives upon recommendation of the Director of the Commission.
- (19) One public member, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (20) A county or municipal law enforcement officer, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate upon recommendation of organizations that represent local law enforcement officers.
- (21) A district attorney, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate upon recommendation of the President of the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys.
- (22) A representative from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate upon recommendation of the Association.
- (22a) A representative from the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate upon recommendation of the Executive Director of the Coalition.
- (23) One public member, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (24) Five members of the Senate, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and five members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) All members of the Task Force are voting members. Vacancies in the appointed membership shall be filled by the appointing officer who made the initial appointment. Terms shall be two years. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, s. 169(b); 1993, c. 321, s.

285(a); 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 769, s. 27.8(d); 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 17, s. 3.2; 1997-443, s. 11A.98; 1997-456, s. 27; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-212, s. 12.44(a), (b); 2004-186, s. 5.1; 2016-94, s. 32.5(h); 2020-78, s. 4F.1(a); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(bb); 2023-65, s. 3.1; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1402.5. Task Force – organization; committees, leadership, policies and procedures; public meetings.

(a) Committees. – The Task Force shall carry out its duties through the work of the following three committees:

- (1) A Perinatal Health Committee to address healthy pregnancies, births, and infants.
- (2) An Unintentional Death Prevention Committee to address the prevention of deaths resulting from unintentional causes such as motor vehicle or bicycle accidents, poisoning, burning, or drowning.
- (3) An Intentional Death Prevention Committee to address the prevention of deaths resulting from intentional causes such as homicide, suicide, abuse, or neglect; and to address the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

(b) Committee Recommendations. – Each Committee shall develop and submit recommendations to the Task Force for consideration. Recommendations shall become final upon the majority vote of the Task Force.

(c) Leadership. – The leadership of the Task Force and its committees shall be organized as follows:

- (1) Task Force chair or cochair. – Task Force members shall elect by a majority vote a chair or two cochair from among its membership. The Task Force chair or cochair shall serve for a term of two years and are not subject to term limits.
- (2) Committee cochair. – Task Force members shall elect by a majority vote of the Task Force two cochair per committee, at least one of whom shall be a Task Force member and one of whom may be a nonmember with expertise in the subject matter of the committee. The committee cochair shall serve for a term of two years and are not subject to term limits.
- (3) Staff. – The Task Force chair or cochair shall work with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to hire or designate staff to coordinate the work of the Task Force and its committees. The Secretary shall determine placement of such staff within the Department. In addition to general coordination of the work of the Task Force, Task Force staff may do the following:
 - a. Educate organizations and individuals, including members of the General Assembly, about the work of the Task Force and its recommendations.
 - b. Serve as a representative of the Task Force.
 - c. Assist the Task Force chair in working to advance Task Force recommendations.
 - d. Assist in any way the Task Force chair or committee cochair deem necessary in carrying out the duties of the Task Force.

(d) Policies and Procedures. – The Task Force chair or cochair, committee cochair, and director or coordinator shall develop, and from time to time revise as necessary, policies and

procedures to facilitate the efficient and effective operations of the Task Force. These policies and procedures and any recommended revisions become effective upon approval by a majority vote of the Task Force. The policies and procedures shall address, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) The Task Force study process.
- (2) Nominations for leadership positions.
- (3) Committee membership, including any participation by individuals who are not members of the Task Force.
- (4) Conflicts of interest. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1403. Task Force – duties.

The Task Force shall do all of the following:

- (1) Undertake a study of the incidences and causes of child deaths in this State as well as evidence-driven strategies for preventing future child deaths, abuse, and neglect. The study shall include at least all of the following: analysis of child deaths by age, cause, and geographic distribution;
 - a. Aggregate information from child death reviews compiled by the State Office addressing data on child deaths, the identification of systemic problems, and Local Team recommendations for prevention strategies or changes in law or policy.
 - b. A data analysis of all child deaths by age, cause, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic distribution.
 - c. Information from subject matter experts that informs the understanding of the causes of child deaths; strategies to prevent child deaths, abuse, and neglect; or a combination of these.
- (2) Advise the State Office of Child Fatality Prevention with respect to the operation of an effective statewide system for multidisciplinary review of child deaths and the implementation of evidence-driven strategies to prevent child deaths, abuse, and neglect.
- (3) Receive and consider reports from the State Office addressing aggregate data, information, findings, and recommendations resulting from Local Team reviews of child deaths, the functioning of any aspect of the statewide Child Fatality Prevention System, and any other type of report the Task Force deems relevant to carrying out its duties under this Article.
- (4) Develop recommendations for changes in law, policy, rules, or the implementation of evidence-driven prevention strategies to be included in the annual report required by G.S. 7B-1412.
- (5) Perform any other studies, evaluations, or determinations the Task Force considers necessary to carry out its mandate. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 17, s. 3.2; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-212, s. 12.44(a), (c); 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1404. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1405. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1406. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1406.5. Local Teams; county work.

(a) Local Team for Each County. – Each county in the State shall have its own Local Team or participate in a multicounty Local Team, as determined in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Participation in a Single County Versus Multicounty Local Team. – Each county's local board of county commissioners shall evaluate and determine whether the county will have its own Local Team or be part of a multicounty team. This determination shall be made through consulting all of the following:

- (1) The director of the local health department.
- (2) The director of the local departments of social services, or if applicable, the consolidated human services director.
- (3) The guidance created by the State Office that addresses the formation and implementation of single versus multicounty teams and includes a model agreement to be used between or among counties who agree to be part of a multicounty team.

(c) Mandatory Review of Deaths. – Each Local Team shall review all child deaths of resident children under age 18 in the county or counties comprising the Local Team that fall under one of the following categories of death:

- (1) Undetermined causes.
- (2) Unintentional injury.
- (3) Violence.
- (4) Motor vehicle incidents.
- (5) Pursuant to criteria set forth in G.S. 7B-1407.5, deaths related to child maltreatment or child deaths involving a child or child's family who was reported or known to child protective services.
- (6) Sudden unexpected infant death.
- (7) Suicide.
- (8) Deaths not expected in the next six months.
- (9) Additional infant deaths according to the criteria established by the State Office under G.S. 7B-1407.6.

For cases in which a Local Team is uncertain whether a death falls under a category specified in subdivisions (1) through (9) of this subsection, the State Office shall consult with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and appropriate medical professionals to make that determination.

(d) Permissive Review of Deaths. – Each Local Team may review child deaths that fall outside the categories specified in subdivisions (1) through (9) of subsection (c) of this section.

(e) Permissive Review of Active Child Protective Services Cases. – At the request of a director of a local department of social services and pursuant to G.S. 7B-1410(b), a Local Team may elect to review an active case in which a child or children are being served by child protective services. The Local Team is not required to make findings or create reports based upon such reviews. However, the Local Team may develop recommendations based on such reviews to be submitted to the citizen review panel serving the area in which the Local Team is located and may also include in its recommendations to boards of county commissioners pursuant to G.S. 7B-1407.10(d) recommendations stemming from the review of such cases.

(f) Periodic Training and Best Practices. – Local Teams shall participate in periodic training provided by the State Office. Local Teams shall make every effort to employ best practices in conducting child death reviews, gathering information, selecting participants, and making reports as outlined in guidance provided by the State Office. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a.); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1407. Local Teams; composition and leadership.

(a) Each Local Team shall consist of representatives of public and nonpublic agencies in the community that provide services to children and their families and other individuals who represent the community.

(b) Each Local Team shall consist of the following persons:

- (1) The director of the county department of social services or the director of the consolidated human services agency, or the director's designee, who shall be a member of senior management.
- (1a) A staff member of the county department of social services or of the consolidated human services agency, appointed by the county department of social services or the consolidated human services agency.
- (2) A local law enforcement officer, appointed by the board of county commissioners.
- (3) An attorney from the district attorney's office, appointed by the district attorney.
- (4) The executive director of the local community action agency, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services, or the executive director's designee.
- (5) The superintendent of each local school administrative unit located in the county, or the superintendent's designee.
- (6) A member of the county board of social services, appointed by the chair of that board.
- (7) A local mental health professional, appointed by the director of the area authority established under Chapter 122C of the General Statutes.
- (8) The local guardian ad litem coordinator, or the coordinator's designee.
- (9) The director of the local department of public health, or the director's designee, who shall be a member of senior management.
- (10) A local health care provider, appointed by the local board of health.
- (11) An emergency medical services provider or firefighter, appointed by the board of county commissioners.
- (12) A district court judge, appointed by the chief district court judge in that district.
- (13) A county medical examiner, appointed by the Chief Medical Examiner.
- (14) A representative of a local child care facility or Head Start program, appointed by the director of the county department of social services.
- (15) A parent of a child who died before reaching the child's eighteenth birthday, to be appointed by the board of county commissioners.

(c) The chair of the Local Team may invite additional individuals to participate on the Local Team on an ad hoc basis for a specific review if the chair believes the individual's subject matter expertise or position within an organization will enhance the ability of the Local Team to conduct an effective review. The chair may select ad hoc members from outside of the county or counties served by the Local Team. As a condition of participating in a specific review, each ad hoc

member is required to sign the same confidentiality statement signed by a Local Team member and is subject to the provisions of G.S. 7B-1413.

(d) One or more members of the State Office staff may serve as an ex officio member of any Local Team. Vacancies on a Local Team shall be filled by the original appointing authority.

(e) Each Local Team shall elect a member to serve as chair at the Team's pleasure.

(f) Each Local Team shall meet as frequently as necessary to fulfill the requirements imposed by this Article, but no less than twice per year.

(g) The chair of each Local Team shall schedule the time and place of meetings and shall prepare the agenda. Prior to presiding over a Local Team meeting, the chair shall participate in the appropriate training provided by the State Office. (1993, c. 321, s. 285(a); 1997-443, s. 11A.100; 1997-456, s. 27; 1997-506, s. 52; 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d); 2025-27, s. 4.1(a).)

§ 7B-1407.5. Review of child maltreatment deaths and deaths of children known to child protective services.

(a) In addition to any other applicable requirements of this Article, the requirements of this section apply specifically to child deaths when any of the following are true:

- (1) The decedent was known to be reported as being abused or neglected under G.S. 7B-301 regardless of the disposition of such report.
- (2) There was a known report involving child abuse or neglect under G.S. 7B-301 within the three-year period preceding the time of a child's death that involved the child's family regardless of the disposition of the report.
- (3) The decedent or decedent's family was involved with child protective services within three years preceding a child's death.
- (4) Available information indicates a possibility that child abuse or neglect, as defined in G.S. 7B-101, may be a direct or contributing cause of the child's death.

(b) The State Office shall do all of the following with respect to child death reviews that meet any of the criteria specified in subsection (a) of this section:

- (1) Develop policies, procedures, and tools that address the effective reviews of this category of child deaths, based on best practices and available resources.
- (2) Provide technical assistance by State Office staff to Local Teams which may include assistance with coordinating the review, information gathering, determination of necessary participants, meeting procedures and facilitation, development of recommendations, and drafting of reports.
- (3) Within the limitations of State and federal law, develop an appropriate process and procedure for the creation and release of reports resulting from reviews of deaths by Local Teams under this section that address the following:
 - a. Findings and recommendations related to improving coordination between local and State entities with respect to child death cases that include any of the facts described in subdivisions (a)(1) through (a)(3) of this section.
 - b. Information disclosed pursuant to G.S. 7B-2902.
 - c. Information the State is required to disclose under federal law.

- (4) Develop and implement a process to follow up on the implementation status of recommendations related to a particular agency and, where feasible, work to help facilitate the advancement of these recommendations.
 - (5) Work with the Division of Social Services, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the State Center for Health Statistics, and other relevant experts and agencies to develop and implement the following:
 - a. A system for the State Office to identify child fatalities to be reviewed under this section.
 - b. A system for defining, identifying, and including in North Carolina's child fatality data information the State is required to report to the federal government about child deaths resulting from child maltreatment. This system shall include the use of Local Teams.
 - (6) Work with the Division of Social Services to determine the manner in which information from internal fatality reviews conducted by the Division of Social Services can appropriately inform Local Team reviews of these cases.
 - (7) Work with the Division of Social Services to determine the manner in which information from reviews conducted under this section can be shared with the citizen review panels established under G.S. 108A-15.20.
- (c) Local Teams have the following powers and duties with respect to reviews that fall under this section:
- (1) To conduct reviews that align with the policies and procedures developed by the State Office for reviews and to seek technical assistance from the State Office as necessary to conduct reviews.
 - (2) To conduct, as determined necessary by the Local Team, interviews of any individuals determined to have pertinent information about a death under review and to examine any written materials containing pertinent information, except that the Local Team may not (i) contact or interview family members of the decedent or (ii) conduct an interview or take any other action that would interfere with an investigation by a law enforcement agency or the duties of a district attorney.
 - (3) To work with the State Office to produce a report appropriate for public release pursuant to sub-subdivision (b)(3)a. of this section that addresses the findings and recommendations developed pursuant to sub-subdivision (b)(3)a. of this section related to improving coordination between local and State entities. These findings shall not be admissible as evidence in any civil or administrative proceedings against individuals or entities that participate in reviews conducted under this section. In accordance with G.S. 7B-2902, the Local Team shall consult with the appropriate district attorney prior to the public release of a report. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1407.6. Review of infant deaths.

The State Office shall consult with perinatal health experts as well as participants in reviews of infant deaths to develop criteria to be used by Local Teams to identify at least a subset of additional infant deaths subject to review that fall outside the categories of required reviews specified in subdivisions (1) through (9) of G.S. 7B-1406.5(c). The criteria shall take into account leading causes of infant death, including short gestation, low birthweight, and perinatal complications, and

shall be updated at least biannually based on emerging information and data. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§§ 7B-1407.7 through 7B-1407.9. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-1407.10. Team findings and reporting.

(a) For each child death reviewed, the Local Team shall make findings addressing at least the following:

- (1) Significant challenges faced by the child or family, the systems with which they interacted, and the response to the incident.
- (2) Notable positive elements in the case that may have promoted resiliency in the child or family, the systems with which they interacted, and the response to the incident.
- (3) Recommendations and initiatives that could be implemented at the State or local level to prevent deaths from similar causes or circumstances in the future.
- (4) Whether the cause or a contributing cause of the death was related to child abuse or neglect as defined by G.S. 7B-101.

(b) For each required review of a child's death pursuant to G.S. 7B-1406.5(c), information about the case, including circumstances surrounding the death as well as the Local Team's findings, shall be entered into the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System (NFR-CRS) pursuant to G.S. 7B-1413.5. Local Teams shall make every effort to gather and report information that is collected through any applicable data field in the NFR-CRS, unless State Office guidelines direct otherwise.

(c) For each permissive review of a child's death pursuant to G.S. 7B-1406.5(d), the Local Team may, but is not required to, enter case review information into the NFR-CRS.

(d) Local Teams shall annually submit a report to the board of county commissioners that includes recommendations, if any, for systemic improvements and needed resources to address identified gaps and deficiencies in the existing system. Local Teams shall simultaneously provide a copy of this report to the State Office. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1407.15. Duties of medical examiner child fatality staff.

(a) Medical examiner child fatality staff shall work collaboratively with the State Office and Local Teams to carry out the purposes of the Child Fatality Prevention System and are required to do at least all of the following:

- (1) Provide Local Teams with access to completed medical examiner reports for purposes of review.
- (2) Enter relevant information from medical examiner reports on specific child deaths into the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System.
- (3) Respond to State Office or Task Force requests for data or reports related to aggregate information on medical jurisdiction child deaths tracked by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.
- (4) Serve as subject matter experts and offer training to law enforcement personnel related to child death scene investigation and reporting.

(b) Nothing in this Article shall be construed to limit the role or responsibilities of medical examiner child fatality staff as assigned by the Chief Medical Examiner. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1408. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1409. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1410. Duties of the director of the local department of health; director of the county department of social services; or consolidated health and human services director for counties with consolidated human services.

(a) In addition to any other duties as a member of the Local Team, the director of the local department of health shall do the following:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f), as amended by Session Laws 2024-1, s. 3.6(a), and as amended by Session Laws 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d), effective July 1, 2025.
- (1a) Serve along with the Local Team chair as a liaison between the State Office and the Local Team to communicate information.
- (2) Maintain records, including minutes of all official meetings, lists of participants for each meeting of the Local Team, and signed confidentiality statements required under G.S. 7B-1413, in compliance with applicable rules and law.
- (3) Provide staff support for reviews.
- (4) Report quarterly to the local board of health, or as required by the board, on the activities of the Local Team.

(b) In addition to any other duties as a member of the Local Team, the director of the local department of social services shall do the following:

- (1) Serve along with the Local Team chair as a liaison between the State Office and the Local Team to communicate information with respect to cases reviewed under G.S. 7B-1406.5(e) or G.S. 7B-1407.5.
- (2) Provide staff support for cases reviewed under G.S. 7B-1406.5(e) or G.S. 7B-1407.5.
- (3) Report quarterly to the county board of social services, or as required by the board, on the activities of the Team.
- (4) Determine whether and when to request the Local Team or a citizen review panel to review an active child protective services case pursuant to G.S. 7B-1406.5(e) and G.S. 108A-15.20. (1993, c. 321, s. 285(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1411. Repealed by Session Laws 2023-134, s. 9H.15(h), effective July 1, 2025.

§ 7B-1412. Task Force – reports.

Within the first week of the convening or reconvening of the General Assembly, the Task Force shall report annually to the Governor, the General Assembly, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees on Health and Human Services, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The report shall contain at least all of the following:

- (1) A summary of the conclusions and recommendations for each of the Task Force's duties.
- (2) A summary of activities and functioning of the Child Fatality Prevention System as a whole.
- (3) Any other recommendations for changes to any law, rule, or policy, or for the implementation of evidence-driven prevention strategies that it has determined will promote the safety and well-being of children. Any recommendations of changes to law, rule, or policy shall be accompanied by specific legislative or policy proposals. The Task Force may request assistance from the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly in developing fiscal notes or other fiscal information to accompany these recommendations. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, s. 169(a); 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 769, s. 27.8(a); 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 17, ss. 3.1, 3.2; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-212, s. 12.44(a), (d); 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1413. Access to records.

(a) The Local Teams, the Task Force, and the State Office staff providing to Local Teams technical assistance with a review shall have access to all medical records, hospital records, and records maintained by this State, any county, or any local agency the Local Teams, the Task Force, or the State Office deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this Article, including police investigations data, medical examiner investigative data, health records, mental health records, and social services records. Access to records granted by this subsection is subject to and limited by all relevant federal and State laws whenever applicable. The Task Force, the Local Teams, and the State Office staff shall not, as part of the reviews authorized under this Article, contact, question, or interview the child, the parent of the child, or any other family member of the child whose record is being reviewed. Any member of a Local Team may share, only in an official meeting of that Local Team, any information available to that member that the Local Team needs to carry out its duties.

(a1) If a Local Team, the Task Force, or the State Office has requested information that it is entitled to receive under this Article and it has not received such information within 30 days after the request, the requesting entity may apply for a court order to compel disclosure of the information. The application shall state the factors supporting the need for an order compelling disclosure. The requesting entity shall file the application in the district court of the county where the review is being conducted, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue any orders compelling disclosure. The district courts shall schedule any actions brought under this section for immediate hearing, and the appellate courts shall give priority to appeal proceedings in these actions.

(b) Meetings of the Local Teams are not subject to the provisions of Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. However, the Local Teams may hold periodic public meetings to discuss, in a general manner not revealing confidential information about children and families, the findings of their reviews and their recommendations for preventive actions. In the case of the death of a child from suspected abuse or neglect and pursuant to federal law, Local Teams may make certain information public according to G.S. 7B-1407.5(b)(3). Minutes of all public meetings, excluding those of executive sessions, shall be kept in compliance with Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. Any minutes or any other information generated during any closed session shall be sealed from public inspection.

(c) All information and records otherwise confidential under federal or State law that are acquired or created by the Local Teams, the Task Force, and the State Office in the exercise of their duties are confidential; are not public records as defined by G.S. 132-1; are not subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in any proceedings; and may only be disclosed as necessary to carry out the purposes of the Local Teams, the Task Force, and the State Office, or as otherwise required by law. No member of a Local Team, nor any person who attends a meeting of the Local Team, may testify in any proceeding about what transpired at the meeting, about information presented at the meeting, or about opinions formed by the person as a result of the meetings. This subsection shall not, however, prohibit a person from testifying in a civil or criminal action about matters within that person's independent knowledge. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, citizen review panels shall have access to information related to child deaths and child death reviews or reviews of active child protective services cases conducted under this Article, when such information is relevant to citizen review panel purposes connected to evaluating the provision of child protective services.

(d) Each member of a Local Team and invited participant shall sign a statement indicating an understanding of and adherence to confidentiality requirements, including the possible civil or criminal consequences of any breach of confidentiality.

(e) Cases receiving child protective services at the time of review by a Local Team shall have an entry in the child's protective services record to indicate that the case was received by that Team. Additional entry into the record shall be at the discretion of the director of the county department of social services.

(f) The Social Services Commission shall adopt rules to implement this section in connection with reviews conducted under G.S. 7B-1407.5. The Commission for Public Health shall adopt rules to implement this section in connection with Local Teams. In particular, these rules shall allow information generated by an executive session of a Local Team to be accessible for administrative or research purposes only. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1993, c. 321, s. 285(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2007-182, s. 1.3; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1413.5. Participation in the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System.

(a) Local Teams, the State Office, and medical examiner child fatality staff shall utilize the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System (NFR-CRS) for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and reporting on information learned through child death reviews in a manner consistent with this Article. Use of other data systems in addition to the use of the NFR-CRS is not prohibited so long as the use of other data systems does not conflict with this Article or other applicable laws.

(b) The State Office shall provide the necessary coordination, training, management, and technical assistance to support North Carolina's full and effective participation in the NFR-CRS and shall work with Local Teams and the national administrators of the NFR-CRS to help ensure effective and appropriate use of the system.

(c) The State Office shall provide policies, guidelines, and training for Local Teams that address the use of the NFR-CRS, including (i) appropriate information protection and sharing consistent with applicable State and federal laws, (ii) who is authorized to access the NFR-CRS, and (iii) requirements for accessing the NFR-CRS. (2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

§ 7B-1414. Administration; funding.

(a) To the extent of funds available and consistent with G.S. 7B-1402.5(c)(3), the chairs of the Task Force shall work with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to hire or designate staff or consultants to assist the Task Force and its committees in completing their duties.

(b) Nonlegislative members, staff, and consultants of the Task Force shall receive travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 138-5 or G.S. 138-6, as appropriate. Legislative members of the Task Force shall receive travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 120-3.1.

(c) With the approval of the Legislative Services Commission, legislative staff and space in the Legislative Building and the Legislative Office Building may be made available to the Task Force. (1991, c. 689, s. 233(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(f); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

SUBCHAPTER II. UNDISCIPLINED AND DELINQUENT JUVENILES.

Article 15.

Purposes; Definitions.

§ 7B-1500. Purpose.

This Subchapter shall be interpreted and construed so as to implement the following purposes and policies:

- (1) To protect the public from acts of delinquency.
- (2) To deter delinquency and crime, including patterns of repeat offending:
 - a. By providing swift, effective dispositions that emphasize the juvenile offender's accountability for the juvenile's actions; and
 - b. By providing appropriate rehabilitative services to juveniles and their families.
- (3) To provide an effective system of intake services for the screening and evaluation of complaints and, in appropriate cases, where court intervention is not necessary to ensure public safety, to refer juveniles to community-based resources.
- (4) To provide uniform procedures that assure fairness and equity; that protect the constitutional rights of juveniles, parents, and victims; and that encourage the court and others involved with juvenile offenders to proceed with all possible speed in making and implementing determinations required by this Subchapter. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1501. Definitions.

In this Subchapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words have the listed meanings. The singular includes the plural, unless otherwise specified:

- (1) Chief court counselor. – The person responsible for administration and supervision of juvenile intake, probation, and post-release supervision in each judicial district, operating under the supervision of the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety.
- (2) Clerk. – Any clerk of superior court, acting clerk, or assistant or deputy clerk.
- (3) Community-based program. – A program providing nonresidential or residential treatment to a juvenile under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court in the community where the juvenile's family lives. A community-based program

- may include specialized foster care, family counseling, shelter care, and other appropriate treatment.
- (4) Court. – The district court division of the General Court of Justice.
 - (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2001-490, s. 2.1, effective June 30, 2001.
 - (6) Custodian. – The person or agency that has been awarded legal custody of a juvenile by a court.
 - (7) Delinquent juvenile. –
 - a. Any juvenile who, while less than 16 years of age but at least 10 years of age, commits a crime or infraction under State law or under an ordinance of local government, including violation of the motor vehicle laws, or who commits indirect contempt by a juvenile as defined in G.S. 5A-31.
 - b. Any juvenile who, while less than 18 years of age but at least 16 years of age, commits a crime or an infraction under State law or under an ordinance of local government, excluding the offenses in sub-sub-subdivisions 1. and 2. of this sub-subdivision, or who commits indirect contempt by a juvenile as defined in G.S. 5A-31. Offenses excluded from the definition of delinquent juvenile when committed while less than 18 years of age but at least 16 years of age include the following:
 - 1. All violations of the motor vehicle laws under Chapter 20 of the General Statutes.
 - 2. Any offense punishable as a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, together with any offense based on the same act or transaction or on a series of acts or transactions connected together or constituting parts of a single scheme or plan of that offense, and any greater or lesser included offense of that offense.
 - c. Any juvenile who, while less than 10 years of age but at least 8 years of age, commits a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, E, F, or G felony under State law.
 - d. Any juvenile who, while less than 10 years of age but at least 8 years of age, commits a crime or an infraction under State law or under an ordinance of local government, including violation of the motor vehicle laws, and has been previously adjudicated delinquent.
 - (8) Detention. – The secure confinement of a juvenile under a court order.
 - (9) Detention facility. – A facility approved to provide secure confinement and care for juveniles. Detention facilities include both State and locally administered detention homes, centers, and facilities.
 - (10) District. – Any district court district as established by G.S. 7A-133.
 - (10a) Division. – The Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety created under Article 13 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes.
 - (11) Holdover facility. – A place in a jail which has been approved by the Department of Health and Human Services as meeting the State standards for detention as required in G.S. 153A-221 providing close supervision where the juvenile cannot converse with, see, or be seen by the adult population.

- (12) House arrest. – A requirement that the juvenile remain at the juvenile's residence unless the court or the juvenile court counselor authorizes the juvenile to leave for school, counseling, work, or other similar specific purposes, provided the juvenile is accompanied in transit by a parent, legal guardian, or other person approved by the juvenile court counselor.
- (13) Intake. – The process of screening and evaluating a complaint alleging that a juvenile is delinquent or undisciplined to determine whether the complaint should be filed as a petition.
- (14) Interstate Compact on Juveniles. – An agreement ratified by 50 states and the District of Columbia providing a formal means of returning a juvenile, who is an absconder, escapee, or runaway, to the juvenile's home state, and codified in Article 28 of this Chapter.
- (15) Judge. – Any district court judge.
- (16) Judicial district. – Any district court district as established by G.S. 7A-133.
- (17) Juvenile. – Except as provided in subdivisions (7) and (27) of this section, any person who has not reached the person's eighteenth birthday and is not married, emancipated, or a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. Wherever the term "juvenile" is used with reference to rights and privileges, that term encompasses the attorney for the juvenile as well.
- (17a) Juvenile consultation. – The provision of services to a vulnerable juvenile and to the parent, guardian, or custodian of a vulnerable juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-1706.1. Juvenile consultation cases are subject to confidentiality laws provided in Subchapter III of this Chapter.
- (18) Juvenile court. – Any district court exercising jurisdiction under this Chapter.
- (18a) Juvenile court counselor. – A person responsible for intake services and court supervision services to juveniles under the supervision of the chief court counselor.
- (19) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 137, s. 2, effective July 20, 2000.
- (20) Petitioner. – The individual who initiates court action by the filing of a petition or a motion for review alleging the matter for adjudication.
- (21) Post-release supervision. – The supervision of a juvenile who has been returned to the community after having been committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center.
- (22) Probation. – The status of a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent, is subject to specified conditions under the supervision of a juvenile court counselor, and may be returned to the court for violation of those conditions during the period of probation.
- (23) Prosecutor. – The district attorney or an assistant district attorney.
- (24) Protective supervision. – The status of a juvenile who has been adjudicated undisciplined and is under the supervision of a juvenile court counselor.
- (24a) Severe emotional disturbance. – A diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified within the DSM-5 that resulted in functional impairment which substantially interferes with or limits the child's role or functioning in family, school, or community activities in a person who is under the age of 18.

- (25) Teen court program. – A community resource for the diversion of cases in which a juvenile has allegedly committed certain offenses for hearing by a jury of the juvenile's peers, which may assign the juvenile to counseling, restitution, curfews, community service, or other rehabilitative measures.
- (26) Repealed by Session Laws 2001-95, s. 1, effective May 18, 2001.
- (27) Undisciplined juvenile. –
- a. A juvenile who, while less than 16 years of age but at least 10 years of age, is unlawfully absent from school; or is regularly disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away from home for a period of more than 24 hours; or
 - b. A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years of age and who is regularly disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away from home for a period of more than 24 hours.
- (27a) Victim. – Any individual or entity against whom a crime or infraction is alleged to have been committed by a juvenile based on reasonable grounds that the alleged facts are true. For purposes of Article 17 of this Chapter, the term may also include a parent, guardian, or custodian of a victim under the age of 18 years of age.
- (27b) Vulnerable juvenile. –
- a. Any juvenile who, while less than 10 years of age but at least 6 years of age, commits a crime or infraction under State law or under an ordinance of local government, including violation of the motor vehicle laws, and is not a delinquent juvenile.
 - b. Any juvenile who, while less than 10 years of age but at least 6 years of age, commits an act within the boundaries of a military installation that is a crime or infraction under State law and is not a delinquent juvenile.
- (28) Wilderness program. – A rehabilitative residential treatment program in a rural or outdoor setting.
- (29) Youth development center. – A secure residential facility authorized to provide long-term treatment, education, and rehabilitative services for delinquent juveniles committed by the court to the Division. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 336; c. 359, s. 2; c. 469, ss. 1-3; c. 716, s. 1; 1985, c. 648; c. 757, s. 156(q); 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 16; 1987, c. 162; c. 695; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, ss. 36, 37; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 815, s. 1; 1991, c. 258, s. 3; c. 273, s. 11; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 3; 1993, c. 324, s. 1; c. 516, ss. 1-3; 1997-113, s. 1; 1997-390, ss. 3, 3.2; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1997-506, s. 30; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 1; 2000-137, s. 2; 2001-95, ss. 1, 2, 5; 2001-487, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.1; 2007-168, s. 2; 2009-545, s. 1; 2009-547, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2011-183, s. 4; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(a); 2017-186, s. 2(j); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 1(a); 2021-123, ss. 5(b), 8(a); 2021-180, ss. 19C.9(y), (cc); 2022-73, s. 5(c); 2022-73, s. 5(c); 2024-17, s. 1.)

Article 16.

Jurisdiction.

§ 7B-1600. Jurisdiction over undisciplined juveniles.

(a) The court has exclusive, original jurisdiction over any case involving a juvenile who is alleged to be undisciplined. For purposes of determining jurisdiction, the age of the juvenile at the time of the alleged offense governs.

(b) When the court obtains jurisdiction over a juvenile under this section, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court, the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years, or the juvenile is emancipated.

(c) The court has jurisdiction over the parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile who is under the jurisdiction of the court pursuant to this section, if the parent, guardian, or custodian has been served with a summons pursuant to G.S. 7B-1805. (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.)

§ 7B-1601. Jurisdiction over delinquent juveniles.

(a) The court has exclusive, original jurisdiction over any case involving a juvenile who is alleged to be delinquent. For purposes of determining jurisdiction, the age of the juvenile at the time of the alleged offense governs.

(b) When the court obtains jurisdiction over a juvenile alleged to be delinquent for an offense committed prior to the juvenile reaching the age of 16 years, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years, except as provided otherwise in this Article.

(b1) When the court obtains jurisdiction over a juvenile alleged to be delinquent for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 19 years, except as provided otherwise in this Article. If the offense was committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 20 years, except as provided otherwise in this Article.

(c) When delinquency proceedings for a juvenile alleged to be delinquent for an offense committed prior to the juvenile reaching the age of 16 years cannot be concluded before the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years, the court retains jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition.

(c1) When delinquency proceedings for a juvenile alleged to be delinquent for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age cannot be concluded before the juvenile reaches the age of 19 years, the court retains jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition. When delinquency proceedings for a juvenile alleged to be delinquent for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age cannot be concluded before the juvenile reaches the age of 20 years, the court retains jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition.

(d) When the court has not obtained jurisdiction over a juvenile before the juvenile reaches the age of 18, for a felony and any related misdemeanors the juvenile allegedly committed on or after the juvenile's thirteenth birthday and prior to the juvenile's sixteenth birthday, the court has

jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition.

(d1) When the court has not obtained jurisdiction over a juvenile before the juvenile reaches the age of 19, for a felony and related misdemeanors the juvenile allegedly committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age, the court has jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition. When the court has not obtained jurisdiction over a juvenile before the juvenile reaches the age of 20, for a felony and related misdemeanors the juvenile allegedly committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age but less than 18 years of age, the court has jurisdiction for the sole purpose of conducting proceedings pursuant to Article 22 of this Chapter and either transferring the case to superior court for trial as an adult or dismissing the petition.

(e) The court has jurisdiction over delinquent juveniles in the custody of the Division and over proceedings to determine whether a juvenile who is under the post-release supervision of the juvenile court counselor has violated the terms of the juvenile's post-release supervision.

(f) The court has jurisdiction over persons 18 years of age or older who are under the extended jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

(g) The court has jurisdiction over the parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile who is under the jurisdiction of the court pursuant to this section if the parent, guardian, or custodian has been served with a summons pursuant to G.S. 7B-1805. (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; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.2; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2017-57, s. 16D.4(b); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2021-123, s. 1(b).)

§ 7B-1602. Extended jurisdiction over a delinquent juvenile under certain circumstances.

(a) When a juvenile is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for an offense that would be first degree murder pursuant to G.S. 14-17, first-degree forcible rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.21, first-degree statutory rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.24, first-degree forcible sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.26, or first-degree statutory sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.29 if committed by an adult, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first.

(b) When a juvenile is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for an offense committed under the age of 16 that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subsection (a) of this section, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 19 years, whichever occurs first.

(c) When a juvenile is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subsection (a) of this section, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 20 years, whichever occurs first.

(d) When a juvenile is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for an offense committed while at least 17 years of age that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subsection (a) of this section, jurisdiction shall continue until terminated by order of the court or until the juvenile reaches the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 4; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess.,

c. 18, s. 23.2(d); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2015-181, s. 25; 2021-123, s. 1(c).)

§ 7B-1603. Jurisdiction in certain circumstances.

The court has exclusive original jurisdiction of all 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 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 in which a juvenile has been ordered pursuant to G.S. 5A-32(b) to appear and show cause why the juvenile should not be held in contempt. (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; 2007-168, s. 3.)

§ 7B-1604. Limitations on juvenile court jurisdiction.

(a) Any juvenile, including a juvenile who is under the jurisdiction of the court, who commits a criminal offense on or after the juvenile has reached the age of 18 years is subject to prosecution as an adult. A juvenile who is emancipated shall be prosecuted as an adult for the commission of a criminal offense.

(b) A juvenile shall be prosecuted as an adult for any criminal offense the juvenile commits after a district or superior court conviction if either of the following applies:

- (1) The juvenile has previously been transferred to and convicted in superior court.
- (2) The juvenile has previously been convicted in either district or superior court for a felony or a misdemeanor. Violations of the motor vehicle laws punishable as a misdemeanor or infraction shall not be considered a conviction for the purposes of this subsection unless the conviction is for an offense involving impaired driving as defined by G.S. 20-4.01(24a). (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 4; 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; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(c); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 2.)

§ 7B-1605. Jurisdiction over certain delinquent juveniles.

When concurrent jurisdiction has been established pursuant to G.S. 104-11.1(b), the court has exclusive original jurisdiction over any case involving a juvenile who is alleged to be delinquent as the result of an act committed within the boundaries of a military installation that is a crime or infraction under State law. (2022-73, s. 5(b).)

Article 17.

Screening of Delinquency, Undisciplined, and Vulnerable Complaints.

§ 7B-1700. Intake services.

The chief court counselor, under the direction of the Division, shall establish intake services in each judicial district of the State for all delinquency and undisciplined cases and all complaints against vulnerable juveniles.

The purpose of intake services shall be to determine from available evidence whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the facts alleged are true, to determine whether the facts alleged constitute a delinquent or undisciplined offense within the jurisdiction of the court, to determine whether the facts alleged are sufficiently serious to warrant court action, and to obtain assistance from community resources when court referral is not necessary or allowed. The juvenile court counselor shall not engage in field investigations to substantiate complaints or to produce supplementary evidence but may refer complainants to law enforcement agencies for those purposes. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.3; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1700.1. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency.

Any time a juvenile court counselor or any person has cause to suspect that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, or has died as the result of maltreatment, the juvenile court counselor or the person shall make a report to the county department of social services as required by G.S. 7B-301. (2009-311, s. 14.)

§ 7B-1701. Preliminary inquiry.

(a) When a complaint is received against a juvenile at least 10 years of age, the juvenile court counselor shall make a preliminary determination as to whether the juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the court as a delinquent or undisciplined juvenile. If the juvenile court counselor finds that the facts contained in the complaint do not state a case within the jurisdiction of the court, that legal sufficiency has not been established, or that the matters alleged are frivolous, the juvenile court counselor, without further inquiry, shall refuse authorization to file the complaint as a petition.

If a complaint against the juvenile has not been previously received, as determined by the juvenile court counselor, the juvenile court counselor shall make reasonable efforts to meet with the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian if the offense is divertible.

When requested by the juvenile court counselor, the prosecutor shall assist in determining the sufficiency of evidence as it affects the quantum of proof and the elements of offenses.

The juvenile court counselor, without further inquiry, shall authorize the complaint to be filed as a petition if the juvenile court counselor finds reasonable grounds to believe that the juvenile has committed one of the following nondivertible offenses:

- (1) Murder;
- (2) First-degree rape or second degree rape;
- (3) First-degree sexual offense or second degree sexual offense;
- (4) Arson;
- (5) Any violation of Article 5, Chapter 90 of the General Statutes that would constitute a felony if committed by an adult;
- (6) First degree burglary;
- (7) Crime against nature; or
- (8) Any felony which involves the willful infliction of serious bodily injury upon another or which was committed by use of a deadly weapon.

(b) When a complaint is received against a juvenile less than 10 years of age, the juvenile court counselor shall make a preliminary determination as to whether the juvenile is a vulnerable juvenile or is within the jurisdiction of the court as a delinquent juvenile. If the juvenile court counselor determines the juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the court as a delinquent juvenile, the juvenile court counselor shall proceed with the complaint pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. If the juvenile court counselor determines the juvenile is a vulnerable juvenile, the juvenile court counselor shall handle the complaint as a juvenile consultation for a vulnerable juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 251, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.4; 2015-58, s. 2.1; 2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1702. Evaluation.

Upon a finding of legal sufficiency, except in cases involving nondivertible offenses set out in G.S. 7B-1701(a), the juvenile court counselor shall determine whether a complaint should be filed as a petition, the juvenile diverted pursuant to G.S. 7B-1706, or the case resolved without further action. In making the decision, the counselor shall consider criteria provided by the Department and shall conduct a gang assessment for juveniles who are 12 years of age or older. The intake process shall include the following steps if practicable:

- (1) Interviews with the complainant and the victim if someone other than the complainant;
- (2) Interviews with the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) Interviews with persons known to have relevant information about the juvenile or the juvenile's family.

Interviews required by this section shall be conducted in person unless it is necessary to conduct them by telephone. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 5; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.5; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2017-57, s. 16D.4(ee); 2017-197, s. 5.4; 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 3; 2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1703. Evaluation decision.

(a) The juvenile court counselor shall complete evaluation of a complaint within 15 days of receipt of the complaint, with an extension for a maximum of 15 additional days at the discretion of the chief court counselor. The juvenile court counselor shall decide within this time period whether a complaint shall be filed as a juvenile petition, handled as a juvenile consultation for a vulnerable juvenile, or handled in some other manner authorized by this Article.

(b) Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1706, if the juvenile court counselor determines that a complaint should be filed as a petition, the counselor shall file the petition as soon as practicable, but in any event within 15 days after the complaint is received, with an extension for a maximum of 15 additional days at the discretion of the chief court counselor. The juvenile court counselor shall assist the complainant when necessary with the preparation and filing of the petition, shall include on it the date and the words "Approved for Filing", shall sign it, and shall transmit it to the clerk of superior court.

(c) If the juvenile court counselor determines that a petition should not be filed or the complaint handled as a juvenile consultation, the juvenile court counselor shall notify the complainant and the victim, if the complainant is not the victim, immediately in writing with specific reasons for the decision, whether or not legal sufficiency was found, and whether the matter was closed or diverted and retained, and shall include notice of the complainant's and victim's right to have the decision reviewed by the prosecutor. The juvenile court counselor shall sign the complaint after indicating on it:

- (1) The date of the determination;
- (2) The words "Not Approved for Filing"; and
- (3) Whether the matter is "Closed" or "Diverted and Retained".

Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1706, any complaint not approved for filing as a juvenile petition or handled as a juvenile consultation shall be destroyed by the juvenile court counselor after holding the complaint for a temporary period to allow review as provided in G.S. 7B-1705.

(d) If the juvenile court counselor determines that a complaint should be handled as a juvenile consultation, the juvenile court counselor shall obtain referral information. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.6; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(t); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1704. Request for review by prosecutor.

The complainant and the victim have ten working days unless waived by the district attorney, from receipt of the juvenile court counselor's decision not to approve the filing of a petition, to request review by the prosecutor. The juvenile court counselor shall notify the prosecutor immediately of such request and shall transmit to the prosecutor a copy of the complaint. The prosecutor shall notify the complainant, the victim, and the juvenile court counselor of the time and place for the review. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.7; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(u); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2024-17, s. 11.5.)

§ 7B-1705. Review of determination that petition should not be filed.

No later than 20 days after the complainant and the victim are notified, the prosecutor shall review the juvenile court counselor's determination that a juvenile petition should not be filed. Review shall include conferences with the complainant, the victim, and the juvenile court counselor. At the conclusion of the review, the prosecutor shall: (i) affirm the decision of the juvenile court counselor or direct the filing of a petition and (ii) notify the complainant and the victim of the prosecutor's action. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.8; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(v); 2018-142, s. 23(b).)

§ 7B-1706. Diversion plans and referral.

(a) Unless the offense is one in which a petition is required by G.S. 7B-1701(a), upon a finding of legal sufficiency the juvenile court counselor may divert the juvenile pursuant to a diversion plan, which may include referring the juvenile to any of the following resources:

- (1) An appropriate public or private resource;
- (2) Restitution;
- (3) Community service;
- (4) Victim-offender mediation;
- (5) Regimented physical training;
- (6) Counseling;
- (7) A teen court program, as set forth in subsection (c) of this section.

As part of a diversion plan, the juvenile court counselor may enter into a diversion contract with the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian.

(b) Unless the offense is one in which a petition is required by G.S. 7B-1701(a), upon a finding of legal sufficiency the juvenile court counselor may enter into a diversion contract with the juvenile and the parent, guardian, or custodian; provided, a diversion contract requires the consent of the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. A diversion contract shall:

- (1) State conditions by which the juvenile agrees to abide and any actions the juvenile agrees to take;
- (2) State conditions by which the parent, guardian, or custodian agrees to abide and any actions the parent, guardian, or custodian agrees to take;
- (3) Describe the role of the juvenile court counselor in relation to the juvenile and the parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (4) Specify the length of the contract, which shall not exceed six months;
- (5) Indicate that all parties understand and agree that:
 - a. The juvenile's violation of the contract may result in the filing of the complaint as a petition; and
 - b. The juvenile's successful completion of the contract shall preclude the filing of a petition.

After a diversion contract is signed by the parties, the juvenile court counselor shall provide copies of the contract to the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. The juvenile court counselor shall notify any agency or other resource from which the juvenile or the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian will be seeking services or treatment pursuant to the terms of the contract. At any time during the term of the contract if the juvenile court counselor determines that the juvenile has failed to comply substantially with the terms of the contract, the juvenile court counselor may file the complaint as a petition. Unless the juvenile court counselor has filed the complaint as a petition, the juvenile court counselor shall close the juvenile's file in regard to the diverted matter within six months after the date of the contract.

(c) If a teen court program has been established in the district, the juvenile court counselor, upon a finding of legal sufficiency, may refer to a teen court program, any case in which a juvenile has allegedly committed an offense that would be an infraction or misdemeanor if committed by an adult. However, the juvenile court counselor shall not refer a case to a teen court program if the juvenile is alleged to have committed any of the following offenses:

- (1) Driving while impaired under G.S. 20-138.1, 20-138.2, 20-138.3, 20-138.5, or 20-138.7, or any other motor vehicle violation;
- (2) A Class A1 misdemeanor;
- (3) An assault in which a weapon is used; or
- (4) A controlled substance offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, other than simple possession of a Schedule VI drug or alcohol.

(d) The juvenile court counselor shall maintain diversion plans and contracts entered into pursuant to this section to allow juvenile court counselors to determine when a juvenile has had a complaint diverted previously. Diversion plans and contracts are not public records under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, shall not be included in the clerk's record pursuant to G.S. 7B-3000, and shall be withheld from public inspection or examination. Diversion plans and contracts shall be destroyed when the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years or when the juvenile is no longer under the jurisdiction of the court, whichever is longer.

(e) No later than 60 days after the juvenile court counselor diverts a juvenile, the juvenile court counselor shall determine whether the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian have complied with the terms of the diversion plan or contract. In making this determination, the juvenile court counselor shall contact any referral resources to determine whether the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian complied with any recommendations for treatment or services made by the resource. If the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian have not complied, the juvenile court counselor shall reconsider the

decision to divert and may authorize the filing of the complaint as a petition within 10 days after making the determination. If the juvenile court counselor does not file a petition, the juvenile court counselor may continue to monitor the case for up to six months from the date of the diversion plan or contract. At any point during that time period if the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian fail to comply, the juvenile court counselor shall reconsider the decision to divert and may authorize the filing of the complaint as a petition. After six months, the juvenile court counselor shall close the diversion plan or contract file. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.9; 2019-41, s. 1; 2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1706.1. Juvenile consultation services.

A juvenile court counselor shall serve a vulnerable juvenile under a juvenile consultation for up to six months providing case management services. An extension of juvenile consultation services may be made for up to three months at the approval of the chief court counselor. As part of case management services, the juvenile court counselor shall provide screenings, assessments, community resources, and programming to the juvenile and the parent, legal guardian, or custodian. (2021-123, s. 5(c).)

§ 7B-1707. Direct contempt by juvenile.

The preceding sections of this Article do not apply when a juvenile is ordered pursuant to G.S. 5A-32(b) to appear and show cause why the juvenile should not be held in contempt. (2007-168, s. 4.)

Article 18.

Venue; Petition; Summons.

§ 7B-1800. Venue.

(a) A proceeding in which a juvenile is alleged to be delinquent or undisciplined shall be commenced and adjudicated in the district in which the offense is alleged to have occurred. When a proceeding is commenced in a district other than that of the juvenile's residence, the court shall proceed to adjudication in that district and, if the juvenile is in residential treatment or foster care in that district, the court shall conduct the dispositional hearing in that district as well, unless the judge enters an order, supported by findings of fact, that a transfer would serve the ends of justice or is in the best interests of the juvenile.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (a) of this section, after adjudication, the following procedures shall be available to the court:

- (1) The court may transfer the proceeding to the court in the district where the juvenile resides for disposition.
- (2) Where the proceeding is not transferred under subdivision (1) of this section, the court shall immediately notify the chief district court judge in the district in which the juvenile resides. If the chief district court judge requests a transfer within five days after receipt of notification, the court shall transfer the proceeding.
- (3) Where the proceeding is not transferred under subdivision (1) or (2) of this section, the court, upon motion of the juvenile, shall transfer the proceeding to the court in the district where the juvenile resides for disposition. The court shall advise the juvenile of the juvenile's right to transfer under this section. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2004-155, s. 1.)

§ 7B-1801. Pleading and process.

The pleading in a juvenile action is the petition. The process in a juvenile action is the summons. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1802. Petition.

The petition shall contain the name, date of birth, and address of the juvenile and the name and last known address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. The petition shall allege the facts that invoke jurisdiction over the juvenile. The petition shall not contain information on more than one juvenile.

A petition in which delinquency is alleged shall contain a plain and concise statement, without allegations of an evidentiary nature, asserting facts supporting every element of a criminal offense and the juvenile's commission thereof with sufficient precision clearly to apprise the juvenile of the conduct which is the subject of the allegation.

Sufficient copies of the petition shall be prepared so that copies will be available for the juvenile, for each parent if living separate and apart, for the guardian or custodian if any, for the juvenile court counselor, for the prosecutor, and for any person determined by the court to be a necessary party. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 9; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.10.)

§ 7B-1803. Receipt of complaints; filing of petition.

(a) All complaints concerning a juvenile alleged to be delinquent or undisciplined shall be referred to the juvenile court counselor for screening and evaluation. Thereafter, if the juvenile court counselor determines that a petition should be filed, the petition shall be drawn by the juvenile court counselor or the clerk, signed by the complainant, and verified before an official authorized to administer oaths. If the circumstances indicate a need for immediate attachment of jurisdiction and if the juvenile court counselor is out of the county or otherwise unavailable to receive a complaint and to draw a petition when it is needed, the clerk shall assist the complainant in communicating the complaint to the juvenile court counselor by telephone and, with the approval of the juvenile court counselor, shall draw a petition and file it when signed and verified. A copy of the complaint and petition shall be transmitted to the juvenile court counselor.

(b) If review is requested pursuant to G.S. 7B-1704, the prosecutor shall review a complaint and any decision of the juvenile court counselor not to authorize that the complaint be filed as a petition. If the prosecutor, after review, authorizes a complaint to be filed as a petition, the prosecutor shall prepare the complaint to be filed by the clerk as a petition, recording the day of filing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, ss. 10, 11; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.11; 2012-172, s. 1.)

§ 7B-1804. Commencement of action.

(a) An action is commenced by the filing of a petition in the clerk's office when that office is open, or by a magistrate's acceptance of a petition for filing pursuant to subsection (b) of this section when the clerk's office is closed.

(b) When the office of the clerk is closed and the juvenile court counselor requests a petition alleging a juvenile to be delinquent or undisciplined, a magistrate may draw and verify the petition and accept it for filing, which acceptance shall constitute filing. The magistrate's authority under this subsection is limited to emergency situations when a petition is required in order to obtain a secure or nonsecure custody order. Any petition accepted for filing under this subsection

shall be delivered to the clerk's office for processing as soon as that office is open for business. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 409, s. 3; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.12.)

§ 7B-1805. Issuance of summons.

(a) Immediately after a petition has been filed alleging that a juvenile is undisciplined or delinquent, the clerk shall issue a summons to the juvenile and to the parent, guardian, or custodian requiring them to appear for a hearing at the time and place stated in the summons. A copy of the petition shall be attached to each summons.

(b) A summons shall be on a printed form supplied by the Administrative Office of the Courts and shall include:

- (1) Notice of the nature of the proceeding and the purpose of the hearing scheduled on the summons.
- (2) Notice of any right to counsel and information about how to seek the appointment of counsel prior to a hearing.
- (3) Notice that, if the court determines at the adjudicatory hearing that the allegations of the petition are true, the court will conduct a dispositional hearing and will have jurisdiction to enter orders affecting substantial rights of the juvenile and of the parent, guardian, or custodian, including orders that:
 - a. Affect the juvenile's custody;
 - b. Impose conditions on the juvenile;
 - c. Require that the juvenile receive medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment and that the parent participate in the treatment;
 - d. Require the parent to undergo psychiatric, psychological, or other treatment or counseling;
 - e. Order the parent to pay for treatment that is ordered for the juvenile or the parent; and
 - f. Order the parent to pay support for the juvenile for any period the juvenile does not reside with the parent or to pay attorneys' fees or other fees or expenses as ordered by the court.
- (4) Notice that the parent, guardian, or custodian shall be required to attend scheduled hearings and that failure without reasonable cause to attend may result in proceedings for contempt of court.
- (5) Notice that the parent, guardian, or custodian shall be responsible for bringing the juvenile before the court at any hearing the juvenile is required to attend and that failure without reasonable cause to bring the juvenile before the court may result in proceedings for contempt of court.

(c) The summons shall advise the parent, guardian, or custodian that upon service, jurisdiction over the parent, guardian, or custodian is obtained and that failure of the parent, guardian, or custodian to appear or bring the juvenile before the court without reasonable cause or to comply with any order of the court pursuant to Article 27 of this Chapter may cause the court to issue a show cause order for contempt. The summons shall contain the following language in bold type:

"TO THE PARENT(S), GUARDIAN(S), OR CUSTODIAN(S): YOUR FAILURE TO APPEAR IN COURT FOR A SCHEDULED HEARING OR TO COMPLY WITH AN ORDER OF THE COURT MAY RESULT IN A FINDING OF CRIMINAL CONTEMPT. A PERSON HELD IN

CRIMINAL CONTEMPT MAY BE SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT OF UP TO 30 DAYS, A FINE NOT TO EXCEED FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$500.00) OR BOTH."

(d) A summons shall be directed to the person summoned to appear and shall be delivered to any person authorized to serve process. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 2; 1995, c. 328, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1806. Service of summons.

The summons and petition shall be personally served upon the parent, the guardian, or custodian and the juvenile not less than five days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing. The time for service may be waived in the discretion of the court. A law enforcement officer or juvenile court counselor may serve and complete juvenile process under this section and as provided in G.S. 143B-831. A defense of lack of personal jurisdiction or insufficiency of service of process is waived if a parent, guardian, or custodian and juvenile avail themselves to the court and an objection is not raised at the initial court appearance.

If the parent, guardian, or custodian entitled to receive a summons cannot be found by a diligent effort, the court may authorize service of the summons and petition by mail or by publication. The cost of the service by publication shall be advanced by the petitioner and may be charged as court costs as the court may direct.

The court may issue a show cause order for contempt against a parent, guardian, or custodian who is personally served and fails without reasonable cause to appear and to bring the juvenile before the court.

The provisions of G.S. 15A-301(a), (c), (d), and (e) relating to criminal process apply to juvenile process; provided the period of time for return of an unserved summons is 30 days. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-114, s. 4(a).)

§ 7B-1807. Notice to parent and juvenile of scheduled hearings.

The clerk shall give to all parties, including both parents of the juvenile, the juvenile's guardian or custodian, and any other person who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent without being awarded legal custody of the juvenile by a court, five days' written notice of the date and time of all scheduled hearings unless the party is notified in open court or the court orders otherwise. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-1808. First appearance for felony cases.

(a) A juvenile who is alleged in the petition to have committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, including in a matter that has been removed from superior court pursuant to G.S. 15A-960, shall be summoned to appear before the court for a first appearance within 10 days of the filing of the petition. If the juvenile is in secure or nonsecure custody, the first appearance shall take place at the initial hearing required by G.S. 7B-1906. Unless the juvenile is in secure or nonsecure custody, the court may continue the first appearance to a time certain for good cause.

(b) At the first appearance, the court shall:

- (1) Inform the juvenile of the allegations set forth in the petition;
- (2) Determine whether the juvenile has retained counsel or has been assigned counsel;
- (3) If applicable, inform the juvenile of the date of the probable cause hearing, which shall be within 15 days of the first appearance; and

- (4) Inform the parent, guardian, or custodian that the parent, guardian, or custodian is required to attend all hearings scheduled in the matter and may be held in contempt of court for failure to attend any scheduled hearing.

If the juvenile is not represented by counsel, counsel for the juvenile shall be appointed in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Services. (1998-202, s. 6; 2000-144, s. 20; 2001-487, s. 4; 2024-17, s. 2(a).)

Article 19.

Temporary Custody; Secure and Nonsecure Custody; Custody Hearings.

§ 7B-1900. Taking a juvenile into temporary custody.

Temporary custody means the taking of physical custody and providing personal care and supervision until a court order for secure or nonsecure custody can be obtained. A juvenile may be taken into temporary custody without a court order under the following circumstances:

- (1) By a law enforcement officer if grounds exist for the arrest of an adult in identical circumstances under G.S. 15A-401(b).
- (2) By a law enforcement officer or a juvenile court counselor if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the juvenile is an undisciplined juvenile.
- (3) By a law enforcement officer, by a juvenile court counselor, by a member of the Black Mountain Center, Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, and Juvenile Evaluation Center Joint Security Force established pursuant to G.S. 122C-421, or by personnel of the Division if there are reasonable grounds to believe the juvenile is an absconder from any residential facility operated by the Division or from an approved detention facility. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1985, c. 408, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 27, s. 2; 1995, c. 391, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.13; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l).)

§ 7B-1901. Duties of person taking juvenile into temporary custody.

(a) A person who takes a juvenile into custody without a court order under G.S. 7B-1900(1) or (2) shall proceed as follows:

- (1) Notify the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian that the juvenile has been taken into temporary custody and advise the parent, guardian, or custodian of the right to be present with the juvenile until a determination is made as to the need for secure or nonsecure custody. Failure to notify the parent, guardian, or custodian that the juvenile is in custody shall not be grounds for release of the juvenile.
- (2) Release the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian if the person having the juvenile in temporary custody decides that continued custody is unnecessary. In the case of a juvenile unlawfully absent from school, if continued custody is unnecessary, the person having temporary custody may deliver the juvenile to the juvenile's school or, if the local city or county government and the local school board adopt a policy, to a place in the local school administrative unit.
- (3) If the juvenile is not released, request that a petition be drawn pursuant to G.S. 7B-1803 or G.S. 7B-1804. Once the petition has been drawn and verified, the person shall communicate with the juvenile court counselor. If the juvenile

court counselor approves the filing of the petition, the juvenile court counselor shall contact the judge or the person delegated authority pursuant to G.S. 7B-1902 if other than the juvenile court counselor, for a determination of the need for continued custody.

(b) A juvenile taken into temporary custody under this Article shall not be held for more than 12 hours, or for more than 24 hours if any of the 12 hours falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, unless a petition or motion for review has been filed and an order for secure or nonsecure custody has been entered.

(c) A person who takes a juvenile into custody under G.S. 7B-1900(3), after receiving an order for secure custody, shall transport the juvenile to the nearest approved facility providing secure custody. The person then shall contact the administrator of the facility from which the juvenile absconded, who shall be responsible for returning the juvenile to that facility.

(d) A person who takes an individual who is 21 years of age or older into temporary custody for an offense committed when the individual was a juvenile shall proceed in accordance with this Chapter. If, pursuant to the criteria in G.S. 7B-1903(b), secure custody is ordered for any person 21 years of age or older who falls within the jurisdiction of the court, pursuant to G.S. 7B-1601(d) or G.S. 7B-1601(d1), the order shall designate that the person be temporarily detained in the county jail where the charges arose. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 335, ss. 1, 2; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 17, s. 1; c. 27, s. 3; 1995, c. 391, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.14; 2019-186, s. 4.)

§ 7B-1902. Authority to issue custody orders; delegation.

In the case of any juvenile alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the court, when the court finds it necessary to place the juvenile in custody, the court may order that the juvenile be placed in secure or nonsecure custody pursuant to criteria set out in G.S. 7B-1903.

Any district court judge may issue secure and nonsecure custody orders pursuant to G.S. 7B-1903. The chief district court judge may delegate the court's authority to the chief court counselor or the chief court counselor's counseling staff by administrative order filed in the office of the clerk of superior court. The administrative order shall specify which persons may be contacted for approval of a secure or nonsecure custody order. The chief district court judge shall not delegate the court's authority to detain or house juveniles in holdover facilities pursuant to G.S. 7B-1905 or G.S. 7B-2513.

Any superior court judge may issue a secure custody order pursuant to G.S. 7B-1903 when a juvenile matter that has been transferred to superior court is remanded to district court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(d) or when the superior court has ordered the removal of a case to juvenile court pursuant to G.S. 15A-960. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 425; 1983, c. 590, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2021-123, s. 3(b); 2024-17, s. 3(a).)

§ 7B-1903. Criteria for secure or nonsecure custody.

(a) When a request is made for nonsecure custody, the court shall first consider release of the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or other responsible adult. An order for nonsecure custody shall be made only when there is a reasonable factual basis to believe the matters alleged in the petition, indictment, or information are true, and that either of the following circumstances exists:

(1) The juvenile is a runaway and consents to nonsecure custody.

- (2) The juvenile meets one or more of the criteria for secure custody, but the court finds it in the best interests of the juvenile that the juvenile be placed in a nonsecure placement.

(b) When a request is made for secure custody, the court may order secure custody only where the court finds there is a reasonable factual basis to believe that the juvenile committed the offense as alleged in the petition, indictment, or information, and that one of the following circumstances exists:

- (1) The juvenile is charged with a felony and has demonstrated that the juvenile is a danger to property or persons.
- (2) The juvenile has demonstrated that the juvenile is a danger to persons and is charged with either (i) a misdemeanor at least one element of which is assault on a person or (ii) a misdemeanor in which the juvenile used, threatened to use, or displayed a firearm or other deadly weapon.
- (2a) The juvenile has demonstrated that the juvenile is a danger to persons and is charged with a violation of G.S. 20-138.1 or G.S. 20-138.3.
- (3) The juvenile has willfully failed to appear on a pending delinquency or criminal charge or on charges of violation of probation or post-release supervision, providing the juvenile was properly notified.
- (4) A delinquency or criminal charge is pending against the juvenile, and there is reasonable cause to believe the juvenile will not appear in court.
- (5) The juvenile is an absconder from (i) any residential facility operated by the Division or any detention facility in this State or (ii) any comparable facility in another state.
- (6) There is reasonable cause to believe the juvenile should be detained for the juvenile's own protection because the juvenile has recently suffered or attempted self-inflicted physical injury. In such case, the juvenile must have been refused admission by one appropriate hospital, and the period of secure custody is limited to 24 hours to determine the need for inpatient hospitalization. If the juvenile is placed in secure custody, the juvenile shall receive continuous supervision and a physician shall be notified immediately.
- (7) The juvenile is alleged to be undisciplined by virtue of the juvenile's being a runaway and is inappropriate for nonsecure custody placement or refuses nonsecure custody, and the court finds that the juvenile needs secure custody for up to 24 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and State holidays, to evaluate the juvenile's need for medical or psychiatric treatment or to facilitate reunion with the juvenile's parents, guardian, or custodian.
- (8) The juvenile is alleged to be undisciplined and has willfully failed to appear in court after proper notice; the juvenile shall be brought to court as soon as possible and in no event should be held more than 24 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and State holidays.

(c) When a juvenile has been adjudicated delinquent, the court may order secure custody pending the dispositional hearing or pending placement of the juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-2506. As long as the juvenile remains in secure custody, further hearings to determine the need for continued secure custody shall be held at intervals of no more than 10 calendar days but may be waived for no more than 30 calendar days only with the consent of the juvenile, through counsel for

the juvenile, either orally in open court or in writing. The order for continued secure custody shall be in writing with appropriate findings of fact.

(d) The court may order secure custody for a juvenile who is alleged to have violated the conditions of the juvenile's probation or post-release supervision, but only if the juvenile is alleged to have committed acts that damage property or injure persons.

(e) If the criteria for secure custody as set out in subsection (b), (c), or (d) of this section are met, the court may enter an order directing an officer or other authorized person to assume custody of the juvenile and to take the juvenile to the place designated in the order. If, pursuant to the criteria in subsection (b) of this section, secure custody is ordered for any person 18 years of age or older who falls within the jurisdiction of the court, pursuant to G.S. 7B-1601(d) or G.S. 7B-1601(d1), the order may designate that the person be temporarily detained in the county jail where the charges arose.

(f) If the court finds that there is a need for an evaluation of a juvenile for medical or psychiatric treatment pursuant to subsection (b) of this section and that juvenile is under 10 years of age and does not have a pending delinquency charge, the law enforcement officer or other authorized person assuming custody of the juvenile shall not use physical restraints during the transport of the juvenile to the place designated in the order, unless in the discretion of the officer or other authorized person, the restraints are reasonably necessary for the safety of the officer, authorized person, or the juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 426, ss. 1-4; c. 526; 1983, c. 590, ss. 2-6; 1987, c. 101; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 3; 1989, c. 550; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-158, s. 1; 2007-493, s. 31; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2012-172, s. 3; 2015-58, s. 3.1; 2019-186, s. 5; 2025-54, s. 10(a).)

§ 7B-1904. Order for secure or nonsecure custody.

(a) The custody order shall be in writing and shall direct a law enforcement officer or juvenile court counselor to assume custody of the juvenile and to make due return on the order.

(b) An initial order for secure custody may be issued following the filing of the petition and before the juvenile has been served with the petition pursuant to G.S. 7B-1806. The official executing the order shall give a copy of the order to the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. If the juvenile has not been served with the petition upon being detained, the juvenile shall be served with the petition no more than 72 hours after the juvenile has been detained. If the order is for nonsecure custody, the official executing the order shall also give a copy of the petition and order to the person or agency with whom the juvenile is being placed. If the order is for secure custody, copies of the petition and custody order shall accompany the juvenile to the detention facility or holdover facility of the jail. A message of the Department of Public Safety stating that a juvenile petition and secure custody order relating to a specified juvenile are on file in a particular county shall be authority to detain the juvenile in secure custody until a copy of the juvenile petition and secure custody order can be forwarded to the juvenile detention facility. The copies of the juvenile petition and secure custody order shall be transmitted to the detention facility no later than 72 hours after the initial detention of the juvenile.

(c) An initial order for secure custody may be issued when the superior court has ordered the removal of a case to juvenile court pursuant to G.S. 15A-960. The official executing the order shall give a copy of the order to the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. If the order is for nonsecure custody, the official executing the order shall also give a copy of the order to remove the case from superior court and nonsecure custody order to the person or agency with whom the juvenile is being placed. If the order is for secure custody, copies of the order to remove

the case from superior court and the custody order shall accompany the juvenile to the detention facility or holdover facility of the jail. A message of the Department of Public Safety stating that an order to remove the case from superior court and secure custody order relating to a specified juvenile are on file in a particular county shall be authority to detain the juvenile in secure custody until copies of both orders can be forwarded to the juvenile detention facility. The copies of the order to remove the case from superior court and the secure custody order shall be transmitted to the detention facility no later than 72 hours after the initial detention of the juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1989, c. 124; 1998-202, s. 6; 2009-311, s. 15; 2014-100, s. 17.1(t); 2023-114, s. 6(a); 2024-17, s. 8; 2025-54, s. 10(b).)

§ 7B-1904.5. Execution of secure custody order by law enforcement officer.

(a) [Execution of Order. –] A law enforcement officer receiving an order for custody which is complete and regular on its face may execute it in accordance with its terms and need not inquire into its regularity or continued validity nor does the law enforcement officer incur criminal or civil liability for its execution.

(b) Entry on Private Premises or Vehicle and Use of Force. – A law enforcement officer may enter a private premises or a vehicle to take a juvenile into custody when all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) The law enforcement officer has in the law enforcement officer's possession a secure custody order or a copy of the order, provided that a law enforcement officer may utilize a copy of a secure custody order only if the original order is in the possession of a member of a law enforcement agency located in the county where the law enforcement officer is employed and the law enforcement officer verifies with the agency that the order is current and valid.
- (2) The law enforcement officer has reasonable cause to believe the juvenile to be taken into custody is present in the premises or vehicle.
- (3) The law enforcement officer has given, or made a reasonable effort to give, notice of the law enforcement officer's authority and purpose to an occupant of the premises or vehicle, unless there is reasonable cause to believe that the giving of such notice would present a danger to the life or safety of any person.

A law enforcement officer may use force to enter the premises or vehicle if the law enforcement officer believes that admittance is being denied or unreasonably delayed or if the law enforcement officer is authorized under subdivision (3) of this subsection to enter without giving notice of the law enforcement officer's authority and purpose. (2023-114, s. 6(b).)

§ 7B-1905. Place of secure or nonsecure custody.

(a) A juvenile meeting the criteria set out in G.S. 7B-1903(a), may be placed in nonsecure custody with a department of social services or a person designated in the order for temporary residential placement in:

- (1) A licensed foster home or a home otherwise authorized by law to provide such care;
- (2) A facility operated by a department of social services; or
- (3) Any other home or facility approved by the court and designated in the order.

In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody, the court shall first consider whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision, the court shall

order placement of the juvenile with the relative unless the court finds that placement with the relative would be contrary to the best interest of the juvenile. Placement of a juvenile outside of this State shall be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children set forth in Article 38 of this Chapter.

(b) Pursuant to G.S. 7B-1903(b), (c), or (d), a juvenile may be temporarily detained in an approved detention facility. It shall be unlawful for a sheriff or any unit of government to operate a juvenile detention facility unless the facility meets the standards and rules adopted by the Department of Public Safety and has been approved by the Division of Juvenile Justice for operation as a juvenile detention facility.

(c) A juvenile who has allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult may be detained in secure custody in a holdover facility up to 72 hours, if the court, based on information provided by the juvenile court counselor, determines that no acceptable alternative placement is available and the protection of the public requires the juvenile be housed in a holdover facility.

(d) If, pursuant to the criteria in G.S. 7B-1903(b), secure custody is ordered for any person 18 years of age or older who falls within the jurisdiction of the court, pursuant to G.S. 7B-1601(d) or G.S. 7B-1601(d1), the person may be temporarily detained in the county jail where the charges arose. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 639, ss. 1, 2; 1997-390, s. 4; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 3; 1999-423, s. 14; 2001-490, s. 2.15; 2012-172, s. 4; 2019-186, s. 6; 2021-180, s. 19C.9(dd).)

§ 7B-1906. Secure or nonsecure custody hearings.

(a) No juvenile shall be held under a secure custody order for more than five calendar days or under a nonsecure custody order for more than seven calendar days without a hearing on the merits or an initial hearing to determine the need for continued custody. A hearing conducted under this subsection may not be continued or waived. In every case in which an order has been entered by an official exercising authority delegated pursuant to G.S. 7B-1902, a hearing to determine the need for continued custody shall be conducted on the day of the next regularly scheduled session of district court in the city or county where the order was entered if the session precedes the expiration of the applicable time period set forth in this subsection. If the session does not precede the expiration of the time period, the hearing may be conducted at another regularly scheduled session of district court in the district where the order was entered.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, as long as the juvenile remains in secure or nonsecure custody, further hearings to determine the need for continued secure custody shall be held at intervals of no more than 30 calendar days unless any party requests, or the court orders, an earlier hearing in which case the court shall schedule a hearing within 10 calendar days of the request. A subsequent hearing on continued nonsecure custody shall be held within seven business days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays when the courthouse is closed for transactions, of the initial hearing required in subsection (a) of this section and hearings thereafter shall be held at intervals of no more than 30 calendar days. In the case of a juvenile alleged to be delinquent, further hearings may be waived only with the consent of the juvenile, through counsel for the juvenile.

(b1) Further hearings to determine the need for secure custody shall be held at intervals of no more than 30 calendar days for a juvenile who satisfies either of the following criteria:

- (1) Was 16 years of age or older at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, E, F, or G felony if committed by an adult.
- (2) Was 13, 14, or 15 years of age at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class A felony if committed by an adult.

Further hearings may be waived only with the consent of the juvenile, through counsel for the juvenile. Upon request of the juvenile, through counsel for the juvenile, and for good cause as determined by the court, further hearings to determine the need for secure custody may be held at intervals of 10 days.

(b2) A hearing to determine the need for continued secure custody shall be held no more than 10 calendar days following the issuance of a secure custody order on remand of the matter from superior court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(d) or on removal of the matter from superior court pursuant to G.S. 15A-960. A hearing conducted under this subsection may not be continued or waived. Subsequent hearings on the need for continued secure custody shall be held pursuant to subsection (b1) of this section. The district court has authority to modify any secure custody order pursuant to the provisions of this section following the issuance of that order by the superior court.

(b3) When the capacity of the juvenile to proceed is questioned pursuant to G.S. 7B-2401.2(a), further hearings to determine the need for secure custody shall be held at intervals of no more than 30 calendar days from the date of the motion. Further hearings may be waived only with the consent of the juvenile through counsel for the juvenile. Upon request of the juvenile, through counsel for the juvenile, and for good cause as determined by the court, further hearings to determine the need for secure custody may be held at intervals of 10 days.

(c) The court shall determine whether a juvenile who is alleged to be delinquent has retained counsel or has been assigned counsel; if the juvenile is not represented by counsel, counsel for the juvenile shall be appointed in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services.

(d) At a hearing to determine the need for continued custody, the court shall receive testimony and shall allow the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian an opportunity to introduce evidence, to be heard in their own behalf, and to examine witnesses. The State shall bear the burden at every stage of the proceedings to provide clear and convincing evidence that restraints on the juvenile's liberty are necessary and that no less intrusive alternative will suffice. The court shall not be bound by the usual rules of evidence at the hearings.

(e) The court shall be bound by criteria set forth in G.S. 7B-1903 in determining whether continued custody is warranted.

(f) The court may impose appropriate restrictions on the liberty of a juvenile who is released from secure custody, including:

- (1) Release on the written promise of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian to produce the juvenile in court for subsequent proceedings;
- (2) Release into the care of a responsible person or organization;
- (3) Release conditioned on restrictions on activities, associations, residence, or travel if reasonably related to securing the juvenile's presence in court; or
- (4) Any other conditions reasonably related to securing the juvenile's presence in court.

(g) If the court determines that the juvenile meets the criteria in G.S. 7B-1903 and should continue in custody, the court shall issue an order to that effect. The order shall be in writing with

appropriate findings of fact. The findings of fact shall include the evidence relied upon in reaching the decision and the purposes which continued custody is to achieve.

(h) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-47, s. 10(a), effective June 18, 2021, and applicable to proceedings occurring on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 13; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 4; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 27, s. 1; 1997-390, ss. 5, 6; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 4; 2000-144, s. 21; 2003-337, s. 10; 2019-186, s. 7; 2021-47, s. 10(a); 2021-123, s. 3(c); 2023-75, s. 1(a); 2023-114, s. 5(c); 2024-17, ss. 2(b), 5.)

§ 7B-1907. Telephonic communication authorized.

All communications, notices, orders, authorizations, and requests authorized or required by G.S. 7B-1901, 7B-1903, and 7B-1904 may be made by telephone when other means of communication are impractical. All written orders pursuant to telephonic communication shall bear the name and the title of the person communicating by telephone, the signature and the title of the official entering the order, and the hour and the date of the authorization. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 20.

Basic Rights.

§ 7B-2000. Juvenile's right to counsel; presumption of indigence.

(a) A juvenile alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the court has the right to be represented by counsel in all proceedings. Counsel for the juvenile shall be appointed in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services, unless counsel is retained for the juvenile, in any proceeding in which the juvenile is alleged to be (i) delinquent or (ii) in contempt of court when alleged or adjudicated to be undisciplined.

(b) All juveniles shall be conclusively presumed to be indigent, and it shall not be necessary for the court to receive from any juvenile an affidavit of indigency. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-144, s. 22.)

§ 7B-2001. Appointment of guardian.

In any case when no parent, guardian, or custodian appears in a hearing with the juvenile or when the court finds it would be in the best interests of the juvenile, the court may appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile. The guardian shall operate under the supervision of the court with or without bond and shall file only such reports as the court shall require. Unless the court orders otherwise, the guardian:

- (1) Shall have the care, custody, and control of the juvenile or may arrange a suitable placement for the juvenile.
- (2) May represent the juvenile in legal actions before any court.
- (3) May consent to certain actions on the part of the juvenile in place of the parent or custodian, including (i) marriage, (ii) enlisting in the Armed Forces of the United States, and (iii) enrollment in school.
- (4) May consent to any necessary remedial, psychological, medical, or surgical treatment for the juvenile.

The authority of the guardian shall continue until the guardianship is terminated by court order, until the juvenile is emancipated pursuant to Subchapter IV of this Chapter, or until the juvenile reaches the age of majority. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 7; 1998-202, s. 6; 2011-183, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2002. Payment of court-appointed attorney.

An attorney appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-2000 or pursuant to any other provision of this Subchapter shall be paid a reasonable fee in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services. The court may require payment of the attorneys' fees from a person other than the juvenile as provided in G.S. 7A-450.1, 7A-450.2, and 7A-450.3. A person who does not comply with the court's order of payment may be found in civil contempt as provided in G.S. 5A-21. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 726, ss. 2, 3; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 6; 1991, c. 575, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-144, s. 23.)

Article 20A.

Rights of Victims of Delinquent Acts.

§ 7B-2051. Definitions.

(a) The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Court proceeding. – Any open hearing authorized or required by this Subchapter and any closed hearing or portion of a closed hearing in which the victim, in accordance with G.S. 7B-2402, is permitted to be present. The term shall not include the first appearance described in G.S. 7B-1808 if the juvenile is in secure or nonsecure custody. If it is known by the juvenile court counselor and the district attorney's office that (i) the juvenile and the victim have a personal relationship as defined in G.S. 50B-1(b) and (ii) the hearing may result in the juvenile's release from custody, efforts will be made to contact the victim.
 - (2) Family member. – A spouse, child, parent, guardian, legal custodian, sibling, or grandparent of the victim. The term does not include the accused.
 - (3) Felony property offense. – An offense that, if committed by an adult, would constitute a felony violation of one of the following:
 - a. Subchapter IV of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
 - b. Subchapter V of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
 - (4) Offense against the person. – An offense against or involving the person of the victim that, if committed by an adult, would constitute a violation of one of the following:
 - a. Subchapter III of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
 - b. Subchapter VII of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
 - c. Article 39 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
 - d. Chapter 20 of the General Statutes, if an element of the act of delinquency involves impairment of the defendant, or injury or death to the victim.
 - e. A valid protective order under G.S. 50B-4.1, including, but not limited to, G.S. 14-134.3 and G.S. 14-269.8.
 - f. Article 35 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes, if the elements of the act of delinquency involve communicating a threat or stalking.
 - g. An offense that triggers the enumerated victims' rights, as required by the North Carolina Constitution.
 - (5) Victim. – A person against whom there is probable cause to believe a juvenile has committed an offense against the person or a felony property offense.
- (b) If the victim is a minor or is legally incapacitated, a parent, guardian, or legal custodian may assert the victim's rights under this Article. The accused may not assert the victim's right. If the

victim is deceased, then a family member, in the order set forth in the definition contained in this section, may assert the victim's rights under this Article, with the following limitations:

- (1) The guardian or legal custodian of a deceased minor has priority over a family member.
- (2) The right contained in G.S. 15A-834 may only be exercised by the personal representative of the victim's estate.

(c) An individual entitled to exercise the victim's rights as the appropriate family member in accordance with this section may designate any family member to act on behalf of the victim.

(d) An individual who, in the determination of the district attorney's office, would not act in the best interests of the victim shall not be entitled to assert or exercise the victim's rights. An individual may petition the court to review this determination by the district attorney's office. (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2052. Victim's rights.

(a) A victim of a juvenile offense shall be treated with dignity and respect by the juvenile justice system.

(b) A victim has the following rights:

- (1) The right, upon request, to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of court proceedings of the juvenile.
- (2) The right, upon request, to be present at court proceedings of the juvenile.
- (3) The right to be reasonably heard at court proceedings involving the adjudication, disposition, or release of the juvenile.
- (4) The right to receive restitution in a reasonably timely manner, when ordered by the court.
- (5) The right to be given information about the offense, how the juvenile justice system works, the rights of victims, and the availability of services for victims.
- (6) The right, upon request, to receive information about the adjudication of the juvenile or disposition of the case.
- (7) The right, upon request, to receive notification of the escape or release of the juvenile.
- (8) The right to reasonably confer with the district attorney's office.

(c) This Article does not create a claim for damages against the State, any county or municipality, or any State or county agencies, instrumentalities, officers, or employees. (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2053. Responsibilities of the district attorney's office.

(a) Within 72 hours of the filing of a petition, the district attorney's office shall provide the victim with the following information:

- (1) The victim's rights under this Article, including the right to reasonably confer with the district attorney's office.
- (2) The responsibilities of the district attorney's office under this Article.
- (3) The steps generally taken by the district attorney's office in cases involving juvenile offenses.
- (4) Suggestions on what the victim should do if threatened or intimidated by the juvenile or someone acting on the juvenile's behalf.

- (5) The name and telephone number of a victim and witness assistant in the district attorney's office whom the victim may contact for further information.
- (6) A list of each right enumerated under G.S. 7B-2052(b).
- (7) Information about any other rights afforded to victims by law.

(b) On a form provided by the district attorney's office for this purpose, the victim shall indicate whether the victim requests to receive notices of some, all, or none of the court proceedings included under this Article. The form shall also indicate whether the victim wishes to receive information about the adjudication and disposition of the case. If the victim elects to receive notices or information by requesting it on the form provided, the victim shall be responsible for notifying the district attorney's office of any changes in the victim's address and telephone number or other contact information. The victim may alter the request for notification or information at any time by notifying the district attorney's office and completing the form provided by the district attorney's office.

(c) The district attorney's office shall make every effort to ensure that a victim's personal information is not disclosed unless otherwise required by law. The district attorney's office shall inform the victim that personal information such as the victim's telephone number, home address, and bank account number are not relevant in every case, and that the victim may request the district attorney to object to that line of questioning when appropriate.

(d) The district attorney's office shall offer the victim the opportunity to reasonably confer with an attorney in the district attorney's office to obtain the views of the victim about, at a minimum, dismissal, plea or negotiations, disposition, and any dispositional alternatives.

(e) Notwithstanding Articles 30 and 31 of Subchapter III of this Chapter, the district attorney's office shall notify the victim of the date, time, and place of court proceedings as requested by the victim under subsection (b) of this section. All notices required to be given by the district attorney's office shall be reasonable, accurate, and timely and shall be given in a manner that is reasonably calculated to be received by the victim prior to the date of the court proceeding. The district attorney's office shall consider all hearings open, pursuant to G.S. 7B-2402, for the purpose of providing notice to the victim. The district attorney shall inform the victim if the entire hearing has been closed to the victim by the court. The district attorney's office may provide the required notification electronically or by telephone, unless the victim requests otherwise. The notifications required by this section shall be documented by the district attorney's office.

(f) Whenever practical, the district attorney's office shall provide a secure waiting area during court proceedings that does not place the victim in close proximity to the juvenile or the juvenile's family.

(g) Prior to the dispositional hearing, the district attorney's office shall notify the victim that the victim may request in writing to be notified (i) in advance of the juvenile's scheduled release date, if the juvenile is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center or (ii) in the event that the juvenile escapes, if the juvenile is being held in secure custody or is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center.

(h) At the dispositional hearing, the prosecutor shall submit to the court a form containing the victim's request for further notices under subsection (g) of this section and any necessary identifying information about the victim, if applicable. The chief court counselor shall include the form with the final disposition and commitment transmitted to the Division, and the form shall be maintained by the Division as a confidential file. The victim shall be responsible for notifying the Division of any changes in the victim's address and telephone number.

(i) Notwithstanding Articles 30 and 31 of Subchapter III of this Chapter, following the completion of the dispositional hearing, the district attorney's office shall provide the victim with information about the adjudication and disposition of the juvenile as requested by the victim pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053(b). The information provided shall be limited to (i) whether or not the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent, and if so, the offense classification, the dispositions available to the court as provided in G.S. 7B-2508, and (ii) no-contact orders as they relate to the victim, and (iii) any order for restitution. (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2054. Responsibilities of judicial officials.

(a) In any court proceeding subject to this Article in which the victim may be present, the court shall inquire as to whether a victim is present and wishes to be heard and, if so, shall grant the victim an opportunity to be reasonably heard. The right to be reasonably heard may be exercised, at the victim's discretion, through an oral statement, submission of a written statement, or submission of an audio or video statement.

(b) In the event that an entire hearing has been closed to the victim by the court, the victim shall have the opportunity to be heard by the court regarding the right to be present, if the court has not previously provided this opportunity to the victim.

(c) A judge notified by the clerk of court that a victim has filed a motion alleging a violation of the rights provided in this Article shall review the motion. The judge involved in the proceeding that gave rise to the rights in question may, on the judge's own motion, recuse himself or herself if justice requires it, and report the recusal to the Administrative Office of the Courts. The judge, or a judge appointed by the Administrative Office of the Courts in the event of recusal, shall dispose of the motion or set the motion for hearing as required by G.S. 7B-2058.

(d) The court shall make every effort to provide a secure waiting area during court proceedings that does not place the victim in close proximity to the juvenile or the juvenile's family. (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2055. Responsibilities of the Division of Juvenile Justice.

(a) Notwithstanding Articles 30 and 31 of Subchapter III of this Chapter, if a victim has requested to be notified of the juvenile's release pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053, at least 45 days before releasing to post-release supervision a juvenile who was committed to the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety for placement in a youth development center, the Division shall notify the victim as requested. The notification shall include only the juvenile's initials, offense, date of commitment, projected release date, and any no-contact release conditions related to the victim.

(b) When determining whether a juvenile is ready for release pursuant to G.S. 7B-2514, the Division shall provide the victim an opportunity to be reasonably heard by the Division and shall consider the victim's views regarding release of the juvenile. If the Division determines that the juvenile is ready for release, the victim's views shall be considered during the post-release supervision planning conference process.

(c) Notwithstanding Articles 30 and 31 of Subchapter III of this Chapter, if a victim has requested in writing to be notified of the juvenile's escape pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053, within 24 hours of the time the juvenile escapes from a youth development center or from secure custody, the Division shall notify the victim. If, pursuant to G.S. 7B-3102, disclosure of information about the escaped juvenile will be released to the public, the Division may provide to the victim the same information that will be released to the public, but the Division shall make a reasonable effort to

notify the victim prior to releasing the information to the public. The Division shall notify the victim within 24 hours of the juvenile's return to custody, even if the juvenile is returned to custody before the notification of escape is required.

(d) When a form is included with the final disposition and commitment pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053(h), or when the victim has otherwise filed a written request for notification with the Division, the Division shall notify the victim of the procedure for alleging a failure of the Division to notify the victim as required by this section. (2019-216, s. 10; 2021-180, s. 19C.9(ee).)

§ 7B-2056. Right to restitution.

A victim has the right to receive restitution when ordered by the court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2506(4) and G.S. 7B-2506(22). (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2057. Confidentiality of a juvenile record.

No rights under this Article provide grounds for a victim to examine or obtain confidential juvenile records. In providing notice or information to any victim, no agency, department, or official shall permit a victim to examine or obtain copies of any part of the juvenile record. Except as provided in G.S. 7B-2055(c), any agency, department, or official that provides a victim written notice or information under this Article shall not identify the juvenile by name in the notice or information, but shall identify the juvenile by the juvenile's first and last initials only. This Article shall not be construed to require or permit disclosing to any victim any information contained in juvenile records except as specifically provided. (2019-216, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2058. Enforcement of rights.

(a) A victim may assert the rights provided in this Article pursuant to Section 37 of Article I of the North Carolina Constitution. In no event shall any underlying proceeding be subject to undue delay for the enforcement provided in this section. The procedure by which a victim may assert the rights provided under this Article shall be by motion to the court of jurisdiction. For the purposes of this section, the term "victim" includes the following individuals acting on behalf of the victim:

- (1) The victim's attorney.
- (2) The prosecutor, at the request of the victim.
- (3) A parent, guardian, or legal custodian, if the victim is a minor or is legally incapacitated, as provided in G.S. 7B-2051.
- (4) A family member, if the victim is deceased, as provided in G.S. 7B-2051.

(b) A victim may allege a violation of the rights provided in this Article by filing a motion with the office of the clerk of superior court. The motion must be filed within the same proceeding giving rise to the rights in question.

(c) If the motion involves an allegation that the district attorney failed to comply with the rights of a victim provided by this Article, the victim must first file a written complaint with the district attorney, to afford the district attorney an opportunity to resolve the issue stated in the written complaint in a timely manner.

(d) A victim has the right to consult with an attorney regarding an alleged violation of the rights provided in this Article, but the victim does not have the right to counsel provided by the State.

(e) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall create a form to serve as the motion to enable a victim to allege a violation of the rights provided in this Article. The form will indicate

what specific right has allegedly been violated. The form will also provide the victim the opportunity to describe the substance of the alleged violation in detail. If the motion involves an allegation that the district attorney failed to comply with the rights of a victim provided in this Article, the victim must attach a copy of the written complaint previously filed with the district attorney as required by subsection (c) of the section.

(f) The clerk of superior court of each county shall provide the form necessary to enable a victim to allege a violation of the rights provided in this Article. No fees shall be assessed for the filing of this motion. A copy of the motion required in subsection (b) of this section shall be given to the prosecutor if other than the elected District Attorney, the elected District Attorney, and the judge involved in the criminal proceeding that gave rise to the rights in question.

(g) The judge shall review the motion and dispose of it or set it for hearing in a timely manner. Review may include conferring with the victim, the prosecutor if other than the District Attorney, and the District Attorney, in order to inquire as to compliance with this Article. At the conclusion of the review, the judge shall dispose of the motion or set the motion for hearing.

(h) If the judge fails to review the motion and dispose of it or set it for a hearing in a timely manner, a victim may petition the North Carolina Court of Appeals for a writ of mandamus. The petition shall be filed without unreasonable delay. The court for good cause shown may shorten the time for filing a response.

(i) The failure or inability of any person to provide a right or service under this Article, including a service provided through the Statewide Automated Victim Assistance and Notification System established by the Governor's Crime Commission, may not be used by a juvenile, by any other accused, or by any victim or family member of a victim, as a ground for relief in any criminal, juvenile, or other civil proceeding, except as provided in Section 37 of Article I of the North Carolina Constitution. (2019-216, s. 10.)

Article 21.

Law Enforcement Procedures in Delinquency Proceedings.

§ 7B-2100. Role of the law enforcement officer.

A law enforcement officer who takes a juvenile into temporary custody should select the most appropriate course of action to the situation, the needs of the juvenile, and the protection of the public safety. The officer may:

- (1) Release the juvenile, with or without first counseling the juvenile;
- (2) Release the juvenile to the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) Refer the juvenile to community resources;
- (4) Seek a petition; or
- (5) Seek a petition and request a custody order. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2101. Interrogation procedures.

(a) Any juvenile, who is less than 16 years of age, in custody must be advised of all of the following prior to questioning:

- (1) That the juvenile has a right to remain silent.
- (2) That any statement the juvenile does make can be and may be used against the juvenile.
- (3) That the juvenile has a right to have a parent, guardian, or custodian present during questioning.

- (4) That the juvenile has a right to consult with an attorney and that one will be appointed for the juvenile if the juvenile is not represented and wants representation.
- (a1) Any juvenile, who is 16 years of age or older, in custody must be advised of all of the following prior to questioning:
- (1) That the juvenile has a right to remain silent.
 - (2) That any statement the juvenile does make can be and may be used against the juvenile.
 - (3) That the juvenile has a right to have a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker present during questioning.
 - (4) That the juvenile has a right to consult with an attorney and that one will be appointed for the juvenile if the juvenile is not represented and wants representation.
- (a2) If a juvenile, who is 16 years of age or older, requests that a parent, guardian, or custodian be present during questioning, law enforcement shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent, guardian, or custodian. If the parent, guardian, or custodian is not available, a caretaker can be present during questioning.
- (b) When the juvenile is less than 16 years of age, no in-custody admission or confession resulting from interrogation may be admitted into evidence unless the confession or admission was made in the presence of the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or attorney. If an attorney is not present, the parent, guardian, or custodian as well as the juvenile must be advised of the juvenile's rights as set out in subsection (a) of this section; however, a parent, guardian, or custodian may not waive any right on behalf of the juvenile.
- (c) If the juvenile indicates in any manner and at any stage of questioning pursuant to this section that the juvenile does not wish to be questioned further, the officer shall cease questioning.
- (d) Before admitting into evidence any statement resulting from custodial interrogation, the court shall find that the juvenile knowingly, willingly, and understandingly waived the juvenile's rights.
- (e) For the purposes of this section, "caretaker" means any person other than a parent, guardian, or custodian who has responsibility for the health and welfare of a juvenile in a residential setting. A person responsible for a juvenile's health and welfare means a stepparent, a foster parent, an adult member of the juvenile's household, an adult entrusted with the juvenile's care, a potential adoptive parent during a visit or trial placement with a juvenile in the custody of a department, any person such as a house parent or cottage parent who has primary responsibility for supervising a juvenile's health and welfare in a residential child care facility or residential educational facility, or any employee or volunteer of a division, institution, or school operated by the Department of Health and Human Services. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2015-58, s. 1.1; 2023-114, s. 3(a).)

§ 7B-2102. Fingerprinting and photographing juveniles.

(a) A law enforcement officer or agency shall fingerprint and photograph a juvenile who was 10 years of age or older at the time the juvenile allegedly committed a nondivertible offense as set forth in G.S. 7B-1701(a), when a complaint has been prepared for filing as a petition and the juvenile is in physical custody of law enforcement or the Division.

(a1) A county juvenile detention facility shall photograph a juvenile who has been committed to that facility. The county detention facility shall release any photograph it makes or

receives pursuant to this section to the Division, upon the Division's request. The duty of confidentiality in subsection (d) of this section applies to the Division, except as provided in G.S. 7B-3102.

(b) If a law enforcement officer or agency does not take the fingerprints or a photograph of the juvenile pursuant to subsection (a) of this section or the fingerprints or photograph have been destroyed pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, a law enforcement officer or agency shall fingerprint and photograph a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent if the juvenile was 10 years of age or older at the time the juvenile committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult.

(c) A law enforcement officer, facility, or agency who fingerprints or photographs a juvenile pursuant to this section shall do so in a proper format for transfer to the State Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. After the juvenile, who was 10 years of age or older at the time of the offense, is adjudicated delinquent of an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, fingerprints obtained pursuant to this section shall be transferred to the State Bureau of Investigation and placed in the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) to be used for all investigative and comparison purposes, and may be entered into a local fingerprint database for the same purposes, if the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction is served by a secure crime laboratory facility that maintains a local fingerprint database. Photographs obtained pursuant to this section shall be placed in a format approved by the State Bureau of Investigation and may be used for all investigative or comparison purposes. The State Bureau of Investigation shall release any photograph it receives pursuant to this section to the Division, upon the Division's request. The duty of confidentiality in subsection (d) of this section applies to the Division, except as provided in G.S. 7B-3102.

(d) Fingerprints and photographs taken pursuant to this section are not public records under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, shall not be included in the clerk's record pursuant to G.S. 7B-3000, shall be withheld from public inspection or examination, and shall not be eligible for expunction pursuant to G.S. 7B-3200. Fingerprints and photographs taken pursuant to this section shall be maintained separately from any juvenile record, other than the electronic file maintained by the State Bureau of Investigation.

(d1) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-458, s. 1, effective October 1, 2007.

(e) If a juvenile is fingerprinted and photographed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the custodian of records shall destroy all fingerprints and photographs at the earlier of the following:

- (1) The juvenile court counselor or prosecutor does not file a petition against the juvenile within one year of fingerprinting and photographing the juvenile pursuant to subsection (a) of this section;
- (2) The court does not find probable cause pursuant to G.S. 7B-2202; or
- (3) The juvenile is not adjudicated delinquent of any offense that would be a felony or a misdemeanor if committed by an adult.

The chief court counselor shall notify the local custodian of records, and the local custodian of records shall notify any other record-holding agencies, when a decision is made not to file a petition, the court does not find probable cause, or the court does not adjudicate the juvenile delinquent. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 23.2(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.16; 2003-297, s. 2; 2007-458, ss. 1, 3(a), (b); 2011-145, s. 19.1(1); 2019-243, s. 19.5; 2021-123, s. 5(d).)

§ 7B-2103. Authority to issue nontestimonial identification order where juvenile alleged to be delinquent.

Except as provided in G.S. 7B-2102 or G.S. 15A-284.52(c1), nontestimonial identification procedures shall not be conducted on any juvenile without a court order issued pursuant to this Article unless the juvenile has been charged as an adult or transferred to superior court for trial as an adult in which case procedures applicable to adults, as set out in Articles 14 and 23 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes, shall apply. A nontestimonial identification order authorized by this Article may be issued by any judge of the district court or of the superior court upon request of a prosecutor. As used in this Article, "nontestimonial identification" means identification by fingerprints, palm prints, footprints, measurements, blood specimens, urine specimens, saliva samples, hair samples, or other reasonable physical examination, handwriting exemplars, voice samples, photographs, and lineups or similar identification procedures requiring the presence of a juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 454, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2019-47, s. 1.)

§ 7B-2104. Time of application for nontestimonial identification order.

A request for a nontestimonial identification order may be made prior to taking a juvenile into custody or after custody and prior to the adjudicatory hearing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 454, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2105. Grounds for nontestimonial identification order.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a nontestimonial identification order may issue only on affidavit or affidavits sworn to before the court and establishing the following grounds for the order:

- (1) That there is probable cause to believe that an offense has been committed that would be a felony if committed by an adult;
- (2) That there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the juvenile named or described in the affidavit committed the offense; and
- (3) That the results of specific nontestimonial identification procedures will be of material aid in determining whether the juvenile named in the affidavit committed the offense.

(b) A nontestimonial identification order to obtain a blood specimen from a juvenile may issue only on affidavit or affidavits sworn to before the court and establishing the following grounds for the order:

- (1) That there is probable cause to believe that an offense has been committed that would be a felony if committed by an adult;
- (2) That there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile named or described in the affidavit committed the offense; and
- (3) That there is probable cause to believe that obtaining a blood specimen from the juvenile will be of material aid in determining whether the juvenile named in the affidavit committed the offense. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1997-80, s. 11; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2106. Issuance of order.

Upon a showing that the grounds specified in G.S. 7B-2105 exist, the judge may issue an order following the same procedure as in the case of adults under G.S. 15A-274, 15A-275, 15A-276, 15A-277, 15A-278, 15A-279, 15A-280, and 15A-282. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2107. Nontestimonial identification order at request of juvenile.

A juvenile in custody for or charged with an offense which if committed by an adult would be a felony offense may request that nontestimonial identification procedures be conducted. If it appears that the results of specific nontestimonial identification procedures will be of material aid to the juvenile's defense, the judge to whom the request was directed must order the State to conduct the identification procedures. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1997-80, s. 12; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2108. Destruction of records resulting from nontestimonial identification procedures.

The results of any nontestimonial identification procedures shall be retained or disposed of as follows:

- (1) If a petition is not filed against a juvenile who has been the subject of nontestimonial identification procedures, all records of the evidence shall be destroyed.
- (2) If the juvenile is not adjudicated delinquent or convicted in superior court following transfer, all records resulting from a nontestimonial order shall be destroyed. Further, in the case of a juvenile who is under 13 years of age and who is adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be less than a felony if committed by an adult, all records shall be destroyed.
- (3) If a juvenile 13 years of age or older is adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, all records resulting from a nontestimonial order may be retained in the court file. Special precautions shall be taken to ensure that these records will be maintained in a manner and under sufficient safeguards to limit their use to inspection by law enforcement officers for comparison purposes in the investigation of a crime.
- (4) If the juvenile is transferred to and convicted in superior court, all records resulting from nontestimonial identification procedures shall be processed as in the case of an adult.
- (5) Any evidence seized pursuant to a nontestimonial order shall be retained by law enforcement officers until further order is entered by the court.
- (6) Destruction of nontestimonial identification records pursuant to this section shall be performed by the law enforcement agency having possession of the records. Following destruction, the law enforcement agency shall make written certification to the court of the destruction. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 22, s. 28; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2109. Penalty for willful violation.

Any person who willfully violates provisions of this Article which prohibit conducting nontestimonial identification procedures without an order issued by the court shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 5; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 22.

Probable Cause Hearing and Transfer Hearing.

§ 7B-2200. Transfer of jurisdiction of a juvenile under the age of 16 to superior court.

(a) Discretionary Transfer. – Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 7B-2200.5, after notice, hearing, and a finding of probable cause the court may, upon motion of the prosecutor or the juvenile's attorney or upon its own motion, transfer jurisdiction over a juvenile to superior court if the juvenile was at least 13 years of age but less than 16 years of age at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a felony, other than a Class A felony, if committed by an adult.

(b) Mandatory Transfer. – The court shall transfer the case to superior court for trial as in the case of adults if the felony the juvenile allegedly committed constitutes a Class A felony and (i) the court finds probable cause or (ii) upon notice of the return of a true bill of indictment as provided in G.S. 7B-2202.5.

(c) Remand to District Court. – In any case where jurisdiction over a juvenile has been transferred to superior court, upon joint motion of the prosecutor and the juvenile's attorney, the superior court shall remand the case to district court. The prosecutor shall provide the chief court counselor or his or her designee with a copy of the joint motion prior to submitting the motion to the court. The superior court shall expunge the superior court record in accordance with G.S. 15A-145.8 at the time of remand and, if the juvenile meets the criteria established in G.S. 7B-1903, may issue an order for secure custody upon the request of a prosecutor. The prosecutor shall provide a copy of any issued secure custody order to the chief court counselor or his or her designee, as soon as possible and no more than 24 hours after the order is issued. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 842, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 22, s. 25; 1998-202, s. 6; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(d); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2023-114, s. 1(b); 2024-17, s. 2(c).)

§ 7B-2200.1: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2200.2: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2200.3: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2200.4: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2200.5. Transfer of jurisdiction of a juvenile at least 16 years of age to superior court.

(a) If a juvenile was 16 years of age or older at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class F or G felony if committed by an adult, the court shall transfer jurisdiction over the juvenile to superior court for trial as in the case of adults unless the prosecutor declines to prosecute in superior court as provided in subsection (a1) of this section after either of the following:

- (1) Notice to the juvenile of the return of a true bill of indictment as provided in G.S. 7B-2202.5.
- (2) Notice, hearing, and a finding of probable cause that the juvenile committed an offense that constitutes a Class F or G felony if committed by an adult.

(a1) The prosecutor may decline to prosecute in superior court a matter that would otherwise be subject to mandatory transfer pursuant to subsection (a) of this section if the juvenile has allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class F or G felony if committed by an adult. If the prosecutor declines to prosecute the matter in superior court, jurisdiction over the juvenile shall remain in juvenile court following a finding of probable cause pursuant to G.S. 7B-2202. Prior to adjudication, the prosecutor may choose to transfer the matter pursuant to subsection (a) of this

section if the juvenile has allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class F or G felony if committed by an adult.

(b) If the juvenile was 16 years of age or older at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class H or I felony if committed by an adult, after notice, hearing, and a finding of probable cause, the court may, upon motion of the prosecutor or the juvenile's attorney or upon its own motion, transfer jurisdiction over a juvenile to superior court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2203.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2024-17, s. 2(d), effective December 1, 2024, and applicable to offenses committed on or after that date.

(d) In any case where jurisdiction over a juvenile has been transferred to superior court, upon joint motion of the prosecutor and the juvenile's attorney, the superior court shall remand the case to district court. The prosecutor shall provide the chief court counselor or his or her designee with a copy of the joint motion prior to submitting the motion to the court. The superior court shall expunge the superior court record in accordance with G.S. 15A-145.8 at the time of remand, and, if the juvenile meets the criteria established in G.S. 7B-1903, may issue an order for secure custody upon the request of a prosecutor. The prosecutor shall provide a copy of any secure custody order issued to the chief court counselor or his or her designee, as soon as possible and no more than 24 hours after the order is issued. (2017-57, s. 16D.4(e); 2017-197, s. 5.3; 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 8(a); 2021-123, ss. 3(d), 4; 2023-114, s. 1(a); 2024-17, s. 2(d).)

§ 7B-2201. Fingerprinting and DNA sample from juvenile transferred to superior court.

(a) When jurisdiction over a juvenile is transferred to the superior court, the juvenile shall be fingerprinted and the juvenile's fingerprints shall be sent to the State Bureau of Investigation.

(b) When jurisdiction over a juvenile is transferred to the superior court, a DNA sample shall be taken from the juvenile if any of the offenses for which the juvenile is transferred are included in the provisions of G.S. 15A-266.3A. (1981, c. 862, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2010-94, s. 13.)

§ 7B-2202. Probable cause hearing.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 7B-2200 and G.S. 7B-2200.5 and in matters that have been removed from superior court pursuant to G.S. 15A-960, the prosecutor shall calendar the date of the probable cause hearing and the court shall provide notice and conduct a hearing to determine probable cause in all felony cases in which a juvenile was 13 years of age or older when the offense was allegedly committed. Except as otherwise provided in this section, the hearing shall be conducted within 15 days of the date of the juvenile's first appearance. The court may continue the hearing for good cause.

(b) At the probable cause hearing:

- (1) A prosecutor shall represent the State;
- (2) The juvenile shall be represented by counsel;
- (3) The juvenile may testify, call, and examine witnesses, and present evidence; and
- (4) Each witness shall testify under oath or affirmation and be subject to cross-examination.

(b1) A probable cause hearing conducted in any case in which a juvenile was 13, 14, or 15 years of age at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class A felony if committed by an adult or in any case in which a juvenile was 16 or 17 years of age at the time the juvenile allegedly committed an offense that would be a Class F or G felony if committed by an

adult shall be conducted within 90 days of the date of the juvenile's first appearance. The court may continue the hearing for good cause.

(c) The State shall by nonhearsay evidence, or by evidence that satisfies an exception to the hearsay rule, show that there is probable cause to believe that the offense charged has been committed and that there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile committed it, except:

- (1) A report or copy of a report made by a physicist, chemist, firearms identification expert, fingerprint technician, or an expert or technician in some other scientific, professional, or medical field, concerning the results of an examination, comparison, or test performed in connection with the case in issue, when stated in a report by that person, is admissible in evidence;
- (2) If there is no serious contest, reliable hearsay is admissible to prove value, ownership of property, possession of property in a person other than the juvenile, lack of consent of the owner, possessor, or custodian of property to the breaking or entering of premises, chain of custody, and authenticity of signatures.

(d) Counsel for the juvenile may waive in writing the right to the hearing and stipulate to a finding of probable cause.

(e) If probable cause is found and transfer to superior court is not required by G.S. 7B-2200 or G.S. 7B-2200.5, upon motion of the prosecutor or the juvenile's attorney or upon its own motion, the court shall either proceed to a transfer hearing or set a date for that hearing. If the juvenile has not received notice of the intention to seek transfer at least five days prior to the probable cause hearing, the court, at the request of the juvenile, shall continue the transfer hearing.

(f) If the court does not find probable cause for a felony offense, the court shall:

- (1) Dismiss the proceeding, or
- (2) If the court finds probable cause to believe that the juvenile committed a lesser included offense that would constitute a misdemeanor if committed by an adult, either proceed to an adjudicatory hearing or set a date for that hearing. The adjudicatory hearing shall be a separate hearing. The court may continue the adjudicatory hearing for good cause. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, ss. 15, 16; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 22, s. 26; 1998-202, s. 6; 2015-58, s. 1.2; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(f); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 8(b); 2023-114, s. 1(c); 2024-17, s. 2(e).)

§ 7B-2202.5. Indictment return appearance.

(a) The prosecutor must immediately notify the court if a true bill of indictment is returned for an offense (i) that constitutes a Class A felony if committed by an adult that was allegedly committed when the juvenile was at least 13 years of age but less than 16 years of age or (ii) that constitutes a Class F or G felony if committed by an adult that was allegedly committed when the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 18 years of age.

(b) The court shall calendar the matter for an appearance within five business days of the date the true bill of indictment was returned. At the appearance, the court shall determine only if notice of a true bill of indictment charging the commission of an offense identified in subsection (a) of this section was provided in accordance with G.S. 15A-630. If the court finds that such notice was provided, the court shall (i) transfer jurisdiction over the juvenile to superior court for trial as in the case of adults and (ii) determine conditions of pretrial release, as required by G.S. 7B-2204. (2024-17, s. 2(f).)

§ 7B-2203. Transfer hearing.

(a) At the transfer hearing, the prosecutor and the juvenile may be heard and may offer evidence, and the juvenile's attorney may examine any court or probation records, or other records the court may consider in determining whether to transfer the case.

(b) In the transfer hearing, the court shall determine whether the protection of the public and the needs of the juvenile will be served by transfer of the case to superior court and shall consider the following factors:

- (1) The age of the juvenile;
- (2) The maturity of the juvenile;
- (3) The intellectual functioning of the juvenile;
- (4) The prior record of the juvenile;
- (5) Prior attempts to rehabilitate the juvenile;
- (6) Facilities or programs available to the court prior to the expiration of the court's jurisdiction under this Subchapter and the likelihood that the juvenile would benefit from treatment or rehabilitative efforts;
- (7) Whether the alleged offense was committed in an aggressive, violent, premeditated, or willful manner; and
- (8) The seriousness of the offense and whether the protection of the public requires that the juvenile be prosecuted as an adult.

(c) Any order of transfer shall specify the reasons for transfer. When the case is transferred to superior court, the superior court has jurisdiction over that felony, any offense based on the same act or transaction or on a series of acts or transactions connected together or constituting parts of a single scheme or plan of that felony, and any greater or lesser included offense of that felony.

(d) If the court does not transfer the case to superior court, the court shall either proceed to an adjudicatory hearing or set a date for that hearing. The adjudicatory hearing shall be a separate hearing. The court may continue the adjudicatory hearing for good cause. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 532, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 22, s. 27; 1998-202, s. 6; 2015-58, s. 1.3.)

§ 7B-2204. Right to pretrial release; detention.

(a) Once the order of transfer has been entered, the juvenile has the right to pretrial release as provided in G.S. 15A-533 and G.S. 15A-534. The release order shall specify the person or persons to whom the juvenile may be released. Pending release, the court shall order that the juvenile be detained in a detention facility while awaiting trial. Personnel of the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety, or personnel approved by the Division, shall transport the juvenile from the detention facility to court.

(b) The court may order the juvenile to be held in a holdover facility at any time the presence of the juvenile is required in court for pretrial hearings or trial, if the court finds that it would be inconvenient to return the juvenile to the detention facility. Personnel of the Division, or personnel approved by the Division, shall transport the juvenile from the holdover facility to court and shall transport the juvenile back to the detention center.

(c) If the juvenile reaches the age of 18 years while awaiting the completion of proceedings in superior court, the juvenile shall be transported by personnel of the Division, or personnel approved by the Division, to the custody of the sheriff of the county where the charges arose.

(d) Should the juvenile be found guilty, or enter a plea of guilty or no contest to a criminal offense in superior court and receive an active sentence, then immediate transfer to the Division of

Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction shall be ordered. Until the juvenile is transferred to the Division of Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction, the juvenile may be detained in a holdover facility or detention facility approved by the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety.

(e) The juvenile may be kept by the Division of Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction as a safekeeper until the juvenile is placed in an appropriate correctional program. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 144; 1991, c. 352, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2011-145, s. 19.1(h); 2017-186, s. 2(k); 2019-186, s. 9; 2021-123, s. 2; 2021-180, s. 19C.9(ff); 2023-114, s. 4(e); 2025-25, s. 3.)

Article 23.

Discovery.

§ 7B-2300. Disclosure of evidence by petitioner.

(a) Statement of the Juvenile. – Upon motion of a juvenile alleged to be delinquent, the court shall order the petitioner:

- (1) To permit the juvenile to inspect and copy any relevant written or recorded statements within the possession, custody, or control of the petitioner made by the juvenile or any other party charged in the same action; and
- (2) To divulge, in written or recorded form, the substance of any oral statement made by the juvenile or any other party charged in the same action.

(b) Names of Witnesses. – Upon motion of the juvenile, the court shall order the petitioner to furnish the names of persons to be called as witnesses. A copy of the record of witnesses under the age of 16 shall be provided by the petitioner to the juvenile upon the juvenile's motion if accessible to the petitioner.

(c) Documents and Tangible Objects. – Upon motion of the juvenile, the court shall order the petitioner to permit the juvenile to inspect and copy books, papers, documents, photographs, motion pictures, mechanical or electronic recordings, tangible objects, or portions thereof:

- (1) Which are within the possession, custody, or control of the petitioner, the prosecutor, or any law enforcement officer conducting an investigation of the matter alleged; and
- (2) Which are material to the preparation of the defense, are intended for use by the petitioner as evidence, or were obtained from or belong to the juvenile.

(d) Reports of Examinations and Tests. – Upon motion of a juvenile, the court shall order the petitioner to permit the juvenile to inspect and copy results of physical or mental examinations or of tests, measurements, or experiments made in connection with the case, within the possession, custody, or control of the petitioner. In addition upon motion of a juvenile, the court shall order the petitioner to permit the juvenile to inspect, examine, and test, subject to appropriate safeguards, any physical evidence or a sample of it or tests or experiments made in connection with the evidence in the case if it is available to the petitioner, the prosecutor, or any law enforcement officer conducting an investigation of the matter alleged, and if the petitioner intends to offer the evidence at trial.

(e) Except as provided in subsections (a) through (d) of this section, this Article does not require the production of reports, memoranda, or other internal documents made by the petitioner, law enforcement officers, or other persons acting on behalf of the petitioner in connection with the investigation or prosecution of the case or of statements made by witnesses or the petitioner to anyone acting on behalf of the petitioner.

(f) Nothing in this section prohibits a petitioner from making voluntary disclosures in the interest of justice. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2301. Disclosure of evidence by juvenile.

(a) Names of Witnesses. – Upon motion of the petitioner, the court shall order the juvenile to furnish to the petitioner the names of persons to be called as witnesses.

(b) Documents and Tangible Objects. – If the court grants any relief sought by the juvenile under G.S. 7B-2300, upon motion of the petitioner, the court shall order the juvenile to permit the petitioner to inspect and copy books, papers, documents, photographs, motion pictures, mechanical or electronic recordings, tangible objects, or portions thereof which are within the possession, custody, or control of the juvenile and which the juvenile intends to introduce in evidence.

(c) Reports of Examinations and Tests. – If the court grants any relief sought by the juvenile under G.S. 7B-2300, upon motion of the petitioner, the court shall order the juvenile to permit the petitioner to inspect and copy results of physical or mental examinations or of tests, measurements, or experiments made in connection with the case within the possession and control of the juvenile which the juvenile intends to introduce in evidence or which were prepared by a witness whom the juvenile intends to call if the results relate to the witness's testimony. In addition, upon motion of a petitioner, the court shall order the juvenile to permit the petitioner to inspect, examine, and test, subject to appropriate safeguards, any physical evidence or a sample of it if the juvenile intends to offer the evidence or tests or experiments made in connection with the evidence in the case. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2302. Regulation of discovery; protective orders.

(a) Upon written motion of a party and a finding of good cause, the court may at any time order that discovery or inspection be denied, restricted, or deferred.

(b) The court may permit a party seeking relief under subsection (a) of this section to submit supporting affidavits or statements to the court for in camera inspection. If thereafter the court enters an order granting relief under subsection (a) of this section, the material submitted in camera must be available to the Court of Appeals in the event of an appeal. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2303. Continuing duty to disclose.

If a party, subject to compliance with an order issued pursuant to this Article, discovers additional evidence prior to or during the hearing or decides to use additional evidence, and if the evidence is or may be subject to discovery or inspection under this Article, the party shall promptly notify the other party of the existence of the additional evidence or of the name of each additional witness. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 24.

Hearing Procedures.

§ 7B-2400. Amendment of petition.

The court may permit a petition to be amended when the amendment does not change the nature of the offense alleged. If a motion to amend is allowed, the juvenile shall be given a reasonable opportunity to prepare a defense to the amended allegations. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2401. No proceedings when juvenile is not capable to proceed.

(a) No juvenile may be transferred to superior court for trial as an adult, adjudicated delinquent or undisciplined, or subject to disposition for an offense in juvenile court, including a violation of probation, when, by reason of mental disorder, intellectual disability, neurological disorder, traumatic or acquired brain injury, or developmental immaturity, the juvenile is unable to understand the nature and object of the proceedings against the juvenile, to comprehend the juvenile's own situation in reference to the proceedings, or to assist in the juvenile's own defense in a rational or reasonable manner.

(b) This section does not prevent the court from going forward with any motions which can be handled by counsel without the assistance of the juvenile.

(c) This section does not apply to individuals over whom the juvenile court has jurisdiction pursuant to G.S. 7B-1601(d) through (d1) nor to any juvenile who is subject to transfer by indictment pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200 and G.S. 7B-2200.5(a)(1). Capacity to proceed under these circumstances shall not be addressed by the juvenile court. Capacity to proceed may be raised pursuant to Article 56 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes if the superior court obtains jurisdiction of the proceeding. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-114, s. 5(a).)

§ 7B-2401.1. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Developmental immaturity. – Incomplete development or delay associated with chronological age, which manifests as a functional limitation in one or more domains, including cognitive, emotional, and social development.
- (2) Division. – The Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Department of Public Safety.
- (3) Forensic evaluation. – A forensic evaluation is a full examination by a forensic evaluator using evidence-based psychological tools to determine if a juvenile has the capacity to proceed. This evaluation shall consist of a review of all available prior mental health and educational records of the juvenile and IQ testing and may include other developmentally appropriate testing for juveniles deemed relevant by the forensic evaluator.
- (4) Forensic evaluation report. – The written report, by a forensic evaluator, that contains the information required by G.S. 7B-2401.3.
- (5) Incapacity to proceed. – By reason of mental disorder, intellectual disability, neurological disorder, traumatic or acquired brain injury, or developmental immaturity, the juvenile is unable to understand the nature and object of the proceedings against the juvenile, to comprehend the juvenile's own situation in reference to the proceedings, or to assist in the juvenile's own defense in a rational or reasonable manner.
- (6) Remediation. – Services directed only at facilitating the attainment of capacity to proceed for a juvenile who the court finds is incapable to proceed. Such term may include mental health treatment to reduce interfering symptoms, specialized psychoeducational programming, or a combination of these interventions. (2023-114, s. 5(b).)

§ 7B-2401.2. Procedures to determine capacity; hearing procedures; evidence.

(a) The question of capacity of the juvenile to proceed may be raised at any time on motion by the prosecutor, the juvenile, the juvenile's attorney, or the court. The motion shall detail the specific conduct that leads the moving party to question the juvenile's capacity to proceed.

(b) When the capacity of the juvenile to proceed is questioned, the court may appoint one or more forensic evaluators qualified by the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct forensic evaluations for juveniles to examine the juvenile and return a forensic evaluation report. Reports so prepared are admissible at the hearing. The court may call any expert so appointed to testify at the hearing with or without the request of either party. This subsection shall not be construed to limit the juvenile's right to retain his or her own expert or the State's right to obtain its own expert.

(c) At any time in the case of a juvenile that allegedly committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, the court may order the juvenile to a State facility for the mentally ill for observation and treatment for the period, not to exceed 60 days, necessary to determine the juvenile's capacity to proceed. If a juvenile is ordered to a State facility without first having an examination pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the judge shall make a finding that an examination pursuant to this subsection would be more appropriate to determine the juvenile's capacity. The Division shall return the juvenile to the county when notified that the evaluation has been completed. The director of the facility shall direct his or her report on the juvenile's condition to the juvenile's attorney and to the clerk of superior court, who shall bring it to the attention of the court. The report is admissible at the hearing.

(d) The forensic evaluation shall be completed within 30 days of the date the forensic evaluation was ordered, consistent with this section. The court may extend the time for completion of the forensic evaluation for good cause shown. The forensic evaluation report shall be provided to the court as follows:

- (1) The report in a case of a juvenile who is alleged to have committed an offense that would be a misdemeanor if committed by an adult shall be completed and provided to the court no later than 10 days following the completion of the evaluation for a juvenile.
- (2) The report in the case of a juvenile who is alleged to have committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult shall be completed and provided to the court no later than 30 days following the completion of the evaluation.
- (3) In cases where the juvenile challenges the determination made by the court-ordered evaluator and the court orders an independent evaluation, that evaluation and report to the court must be completed within 60 days of the entry of the order by the court.

The court may, for good cause shown, extend the time for the provision of the forensic evaluation report to the court for up to 30 additional days. The court may renew an extension of time for an additional 30 days upon request of the State or the juvenile prior to the expiration of the previous extension. In no case shall the court grant extensions totaling more than 120 days beyond the time periods otherwise provided in this subsection.

(e) Any report made to the court pursuant to this section shall be forwarded to the clerk of superior court in a sealed envelope addressed to the attention of a presiding judge, with a covering statement to the clerk of the fact of the examination of the juvenile and any conclusion as to whether the juvenile has or lacks capacity to proceed. If the juvenile is being held in the custody of the Division, the clerk shall send a copy of the covering statement to the Division. The Division and any persons employed by the Division shall maintain the copy of the covering statement as a

confidential record. A copy of the full report shall be forwarded to the juvenile's counsel. If the question of the juvenile's capacity to proceed is raised at any time, a copy of the full report must be forwarded to the prosecutor. Until the question of the juvenile's capacity is raised, the full report to the court shall be kept under such conditions as are directed by the court, and its contents shall not be revealed except the report and the relevant confidential information previously ordered released under G.S. 7B-2401.3(c) shall be released to the program where the juvenile is receiving remediation services and as directed by the court. Any report made to the court pursuant to this section shall be maintained as a confidential record.

(f) For any juvenile who is alleged to be delinquent and is less than 12 years of age, the court shall inquire of the prosecutor and the juvenile's attorney regarding the juvenile's capacity to proceed the first time the juvenile appears in court. If the prosecutor or the juvenile's attorney requests additional time to determine whether it is necessary to raise the question of the juvenile's capacity to proceed, the court shall allow the question of capacity to be raised at any time pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(g) An order for a forensic evaluation shall stay juvenile proceedings, with the exception of hearings to review the need for continued nonsecure or secure custody and proceedings related to the transfer of jurisdiction by indictment pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(a), until capacity has been determined pursuant to this Subchapter.

(h) When the capacity of the juvenile to proceed is questioned, the court shall hold a hearing to determine the juvenile's capacity to proceed. If an evaluation is ordered pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the hearing shall be held upon receipt of the forensic evaluation report. The clerk shall provide notice to the juvenile and the prosecutor in accordance with G.S. 7B-1807. The order of the court shall contain findings of fact to support its determination of the juvenile's capacity to proceed. The parties may stipulate that the juvenile is capable to proceed but shall not be allowed to stipulate that the juvenile lacks capacity to proceed. If the court finds the juvenile is capable to proceed, the juvenile proceedings shall no longer be stayed, and the court shall set a date for such further proceedings. If the juvenile's capacity to proceed is contested, the juvenile bears the burden of proving the juvenile is incapable to proceed by a preponderance of the evidence. At a contested hearing, the State and the juvenile may call witnesses and present evidence. Nothing in this subsection may be construed to prohibit the State or the juvenile from calling other expert witnesses to testify at a capacity hearing. If appropriate, the court may order remediation services in accordance with G.S. 7B-2401.4.

(i) A juvenile who has been found incapable to proceed by the court shall not be subject to transfer, adjudication, disposition, or modification of disposition so long as the incapacity exists pursuant to this Article.

(j) If the court orders a forensic evaluation, the court shall order that the evaluation be conducted in the least restrictive environment, considering the best interests of the juvenile and the safety of the public. The forensic evaluation may be conducted in any location in this State. The forensic evaluation may be conducted outside of this State for juveniles in residential facilities on an individual basis as indicated by the order of the court.

(k) The Division shall arrange for the transportation of juveniles who are confined in secure custody to the ordered location of the forensic evaluation. (2023-114, s. 5(b); 2024-17, s. 6(a).)

§ 7B-2401.3. Juvenile forensic evaluation credentialing; conducting forensic evaluations; written reports; compensation of experts.

(a) The Department of Health and Human Services shall designate and oversee a credentialing body which will set and maintain the minimum standards to qualify professionals who are court-appointed to conduct forensic evaluations as ordered pursuant to G.S. 7B-2401.2. The credentialing body shall determine that a qualified professional has demonstrated knowledge and experience with age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate methods for evaluating juvenile functional capacities to proceed. This subsection shall not be construed to limit the juvenile's right to retain his or her own expert.

(b) Qualified professionals who have been conducting forensic evaluations of juveniles prior to enactment of this section shall be deemed to possess the minimum requirements to become an evaluator. Such qualified professionals shall be required to satisfy the qualification standards developed by the Department of Health and Human Services within 12 months of the adoption of those standards pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(c) A presiding district court judge of this State who orders an examination pursuant to G.S. 7B-2401.2 shall order the release of relevant confidential information to the forensic evaluator, including the juvenile petition, orders for secure or nonsecure custody, the law enforcement incident report, the juvenile's delinquency history, detention records, any prior medical and mental health records of the juvenile, and any school records of the juvenile after providing the juvenile with reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard and then determining that the information is relevant and necessary to the hearing of the matter before the court and unavailable from any other source. This subsection shall not be construed to relieve any court of its duty to conduct hearings and make findings required under relevant federal law before ordering the release of any private medical or mental health information or records related to substance abuse or HIV status or treatment. The records may be surrendered to the court for in camera review if surrender is necessary to make the required determinations. The records shall be withheld from public inspection and, except as provided in this subsection, may be examined only by order of the court.

(d) No statement or disclosure made by the juvenile during the forensic evaluation regarding the juvenile's responsibility for a criminal act that can result either in an adjudication of delinquency or transfer of a matter to superior court for trial as an adult is admissible in any juvenile or criminal proceeding against the juvenile or defendant. The forensic evaluation shall not include any such statement.

(e) The forensic evaluator shall consider all of the following as part of the forensic evaluation:

- (1) Whether the juvenile is capable to proceed, incapable to proceed, or incapable to proceed with an ability to attain capacity in the foreseeable future with remediation services.
- (2) The basis of the juvenile's incapacity, to include mental disorder, intellectual disability, neurological disorder, traumatic or acquired brain injury, or developmental immaturity.
- (3) The capacity of the juvenile to do any of the following:
 - a. Appreciate the allegations against the juvenile.
 - b. Appreciate the range and nature of allowable dispositions that may be imposed in the proceedings against the juvenile.
 - c. Understand the roles of the participants and the adversary nature of the legal process.
 - d. Disclose to counsel facts pertinent to the proceedings at issue.

- e. Display appropriate courtroom behavior.
 - f. Testify regarding the relevant issues.
 - g. Make reasonable and rational decisions.
 - h. Assist in the juvenile's defense in a rational manner.
 - i. Any other factors that the forensic evaluator deems to be relevant.
- (f) Written forensic reports submitted to the court shall consist of and contain all of the following:
- (1) Identify the specific matters referred to the forensic evaluator by the juvenile court for evaluation.
 - (2) Include notification to the juvenile of the nature, purpose, and anticipated use or uses of the examination and applicable limits of confidentiality.
 - (3) Describe the procedures, techniques, and tests used in the forensic evaluation of the juvenile and the purposes of each.
 - (4) Describe the considerations considered by the forensic evaluator.
 - (5) State any clinical observations, findings, and opinions of the forensic evaluator on each issue referred to the forensic evaluator for evaluation by the court and specifically indicate any issues on which the forensic evaluator was unable to give an opinion.
 - (6) Identify the sources of information used by the forensic evaluator and present the factual basis for any clinical observations, findings, and opinions of the forensic evaluator.
 - (7) Address any other issues ordered by the court.
- (g) If a forensic evaluator is of the opinion that a juvenile is incapable to proceed, the written forensic report shall contain all of the additional information:
- (1) Any recommended treatment or education needed for the juvenile to attain capacity, if any.
 - (2) The likelihood that the juvenile will attain capacity in the foreseeable future because of the recommended treatment or education.
 - (3) An assessment of the probable duration of the treatment or education required to attain capacity.
 - (4) If the forensic evaluator recommends treatment for the juvenile to attain capacity, a recommendation as to the least restrictive environment in which services can be provided to the juvenile.

(h) Any forensic evaluator appointed by the court to conduct a forensic evaluation, ordered pursuant to G.S. 7B-2401.2, shall receive a reasonable fee for such service. The fee shall be determined for each forensic evaluation by the appointing court, in accordance with reimbursement guidelines maintained by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. If any such forensic evaluator is required to appear as a witness in any hearing held pursuant to this section, the forensic evaluator shall receive reimbursement for expenses according to guidelines maintained by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. (2023-114, s. 5(b).)

§ 7B-2401.4. Remediation.

(a) The purpose of remediation ordered pursuant to this section shall be for the juvenile to attain capacity to proceed.

(b) When the court finds the juvenile incapable to proceed, and substantially likely to attain capacity in the foreseeable future, the court may order remediation services. The remediation services shall be based on the recommendations from the forensic evaluation.

(c) Remediation services shall be provided in the least restrictive environment considering the best interests of the juvenile and the safety of the public. In addition, the court shall consider the following when determining where services may be rendered:

- (1) Whether there is probable cause to believe the allegations in the petition are true.
- (2) The nature of the incapacity.
- (3) The juvenile's age or developmental maturity.
- (4) The nature of the act alleged to have been committed and the seriousness of the offense.
- (5) The availability and appropriateness of programming in the juvenile's community.
- (6) Supervision needs and level of available community supervision or alternatives such as family members, custodians, guardians, and community-based programs.
- (7) Any prior treatment or interventions provided to the juvenile.
- (8) Any other relevant factors not previously specified.

(d) When the juvenile is found incapable to proceed based on mental disorder, intellectual disability, neurological disorder, or traumatic or acquired brain injury but substantially likely to attain capacity, and the court finds that all available less restrictive alternatives are inappropriate, the court may enter an order in accordance with G.S. 7B-2401.5 for the juvenile to be assessed for an involuntary commitment pursuant to Chapter 122C of the General Statutes.

(e) An order for remediation services shall contain all of the following:

- (1) Written findings of fact regarding the least restrictive environment for the remediation services.
- (2) If the court order allows for secure confinement pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, the maximum time for placement in a secure facility shall be pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

(f) If the court finds that the juvenile is incapable of proceeding and substantially likely to attain capacity in the foreseeable future, the court shall enforce the following time limitations on remediation services. In the case of a probation violation, the underlying offense shall serve as the most serious offense as used in this section:

- (1) If the most serious offense alleged in the petition is first degree murder (G.S. 14-17), first-degree forcible rape (G.S. 14-27.21), first-degree statutory rape (G.S. 14-27.24), first-degree forcible sexual offense (G.S. 14-27.26), or first-degree statutory sexual offense (G.S. 14-27.29) if committed by an adult, remediation shall not exceed 36 months beyond the original finding of incapacity to proceed or the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601, whichever occurs sooner.
- (2) If the most serious offense alleged in the petition is a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection, remediation shall not exceed 12 months beyond the original finding of incapacity to proceed, or the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601, whichever occurs sooner. The court for good

cause may grant an extension of up to 12 months for remediation. If an extension is granted, remediation shall not exceed 24 months beyond the original finding of incapacity to proceed, or the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601, whichever occurs sooner.

- (3) If the most serious offense alleged in the petition is a Class F, G, H, or I felony or any misdemeanor if committed by an adult, remediation shall not exceed six months beyond the original finding of incapacity to proceed, or the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601, whichever occurs sooner. The court for good cause may grant an extension of up to six months for remediation. If an extension is granted, remediation shall not exceed 12 months beyond the original finding of incapacity to proceed, or the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601, whichever occurs sooner.
- (4) In no case shall the court grant extensions of time for the remediation services beyond the maximum jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601.

(g) The Division shall be responsible for the provision of psychoeducation remediation programming and working with community partners to secure any additional services recommended in the forensic evaluation report. The Division is authorized to contract with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or any other qualified educational organization to develop and conduct related trainings and curriculum.

The remediation service provider shall provide reports to the court at least every 90 days. Any report made to the court pursuant to this subsection shall be forwarded to the clerk of superior court addressed to the attention of the presiding judge. A report provided under this subsection shall include all of the following:

- (1) The dates of any services provided to the juvenile.
- (2) A summary of the juvenile's attendance and participation.
- (3) Information about the juvenile's progress in the areas that were found to be relevant to the juvenile's incapacity, including education regarding court procedures and stabilization or improvement of symptoms leading to functional impairments.

No statement or disclosure made by the juvenile during the remediation services regarding the juvenile's responsibility for a criminal act that can result either in an adjudication of delinquency or transfer of a matter to superior court for trial as an adult is admissible in any juvenile or criminal proceeding against the juvenile or defendant. All remediation progress reports, summaries, and notes shall not include any such statement.

The court shall hold a hearing within 30 days of receipt of the remediation progress report to review the remediation services. The remediation review hearing may be informal, and the court may consider all remediation progress reports. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine if remediation services should continue or reassessment of capacity is warranted. The juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian shall have an opportunity to present evidence, and they may advise the court concerning the remediation services. The order of the court may be amended or supplemented only as provided in this Subchapter and only after notice and a hearing.

(h) If the court determines that reassessment of capacity is warranted, the court shall order a new forensic evaluation. This forensic evaluation shall be performed by the original forensic evaluator when possible and comply with the requirements of G.S. 7B-2401.3. Any initial forensic

evaluation or reevaluation shall be conducted independently of the remediation services and shall not be conducted by the remediation specialist for the juvenile.

(i) If, at any time during the remediation treatment, the remediation service provider finds that the juvenile has likely completed the requirements of the remediation services, the remediation service provider shall provide written notification to the court, the prosecutor, and the juvenile's attorney within two business days regarding this finding. A copy of any remediation report or reports shall be forwarded to the court and to the juvenile's attorney. The court may order the release of a remediation report to the prosecutor after providing the juvenile with reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard and then determining that the information is relevant and necessary to the hearing of the matter before the court and unavailable from any other source. This subsection shall not be construed to relieve any court of its duty to conduct hearings and make findings required under relevant federal law before ordering the release of any private medical or mental health information or records related to substance abuse or HIV status or treatment. The records shall be withheld from public inspection and, except as provided in this subsection, may be examined only by order of the court. The juvenile's matter shall be returned to court within a reasonable time, and not more than 30 days after the completion of remediation services, for review or further proceedings. (2024-17, s. 7(a).)

§ 7B-2401.5. Involuntary commitment; dismissal; seal records.

(a) When the court finds that a juvenile is incapable to proceed and not likely to attain capacity in the foreseeable future, the court may conduct an additional hearing, as the court determines to be necessary, to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the juvenile meets the criteria for involuntary commitment under Part 7 of Article 5 of Chapter 122C of the General Statutes. If the presiding judge finds reasonable grounds to believe that the juvenile meets the criteria, the judge shall make findings of fact and issue a custody order in the same manner upon the same grounds and with the same effect as an order issued by a clerk or magistrate pursuant to G.S. 122C-261. Proceedings thereafter are in accordance with Part 7 of Article 5 of Chapter 122C of the General Statutes. If the juvenile allegedly committed a violent crime, including a crime involving assault with a deadly weapon, the judge's custody order shall require a law enforcement officer to take the juvenile directly to a 24-hour facility as described in G.S. 122C-252. The order must also indicate that the juvenile allegedly committed a violent crime and that the juvenile was found incapable of proceeding. Evidence used at the hearing regarding capacity to proceed is admissible in the involuntary civil commitment proceedings. No juvenile committed under this section may be placed in a situation where the juvenile will for any purpose come in contact with adults.

(b) When the court finds that a juvenile is incapable to proceed and not likely to attain capacity in the foreseeable future, the court shall dismiss the petition.

(c) The prosecutor may voluntarily dismiss with leave any allegations stated in the petition, pursuant to G.S. 7B-2404, prior to the termination of the jurisdiction of the court as provided in G.S. 7B-1601.

(d) After the completion of all capacity hearings or after a juvenile has been found not to be substantially likely to be restored to or to attain capacity in the foreseeable future, the court shall direct the clerk to seal all forensic evaluations, remediation reports, and any other records pertaining to the capacity of the juvenile, pursuant to G.S. 7B-3000(c). Any records sealed pursuant to this subsection may be opened or inspected only by order of the court or for appellate review. (2023-114, s. 5(b); 2024-17, s. 9(a).)

§ 7B-2402. Open hearings.

All hearings authorized or required pursuant to this Subchapter shall be open to the public unless the court closes the hearing or part of the hearing for good cause, upon motion of a party or its own motion. If the court closes the hearing or part of the hearing to the public, the court may allow any victim, member of a victim's family, law enforcement officer, witness or any other person directly involved in the hearing to be present at the hearing.

In determining good cause to close a hearing or part of a hearing, the court shall consider the circumstances of the case, including, but not limited to, the following factors:

- (1) The nature of the allegations against the juvenile;
- (2) The age and maturity of the juvenile;
- (3) The benefit to the juvenile of confidentiality;
- (4) The benefit to the public of an open hearing; and
- (5) The extent to which the confidentiality of the juvenile's file will be compromised by an open hearing.

No hearing or part of a hearing shall be closed by the court if the juvenile requests that it remain open. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2402.1. Restraint of juveniles in courtroom.

At any hearing authorized or required by this Subchapter, the judge may subject a juvenile to physical restraint in the courtroom only when the judge finds the restraint to be reasonably necessary to maintain order, prevent the juvenile's escape, or provide for the safety of the courtroom. Whenever practical, the judge shall provide the juvenile and the juvenile's attorney an opportunity to be heard to contest the use of restraints before the judge orders the use of restraints. If restraints are ordered, the judge shall make findings of fact in support of the order. (2007-100, s. 1.)

§ 7B-2403. Adjudicatory hearing.

The adjudicatory hearing shall be held within a reasonable time in the district at the time and place the chief district court judge designates. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2404. Participation of the prosecutor; voluntary dismissal.

(a) A prosecutor shall represent the State in contested delinquency hearings including first appearance, detention, probable cause, transfer, adjudicatory, dispositional, probation revocation, post-release supervision, and extended jurisdiction hearings.

(b) A prosecutor may dismiss any allegations stated in a juvenile petition with or without leave by entering an oral dismissal in open court at any time or by filing a written dismissal with the clerk. The juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, and the juvenile's counsel shall be notified of the dismissal by the prosecutor either in open court or by being served with the written dismissal. In addition, the written dismissal shall be served on (i) the chief court counselor or his or her designee and (ii) if the juvenile is being held in a detention center, the director of the detention center. If the prosecutor dismisses the petition with leave because of the failure of the juvenile to appear in court, the prosecutor may refile the petition if the juvenile is apprehended or apprehension is imminent. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 12; 1998-202, s. 6; 2015-58, s. 2.2.)

§ 7B-2405. Conduct of the adjudicatory hearing.

The adjudicatory hearing shall be a judicial process designed to determine whether the juvenile is undisciplined or delinquent. In the adjudicatory hearing, the court shall protect the following rights of the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian to assure due process of law:

- (1) The right to written notice of the facts alleged in the petition;
- (2) The right to counsel;
- (3) The right to confront and cross-examine witnesses;
- (4) The privilege against self-incrimination;
- (5) The right of discovery; and
- (6) All rights afforded adult offenders except the right to bail, the right of self-representation, and the right of trial by jury. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2406. Continuances.

The court for good cause may continue the hearing for as long as is reasonably required to receive additional evidence, reports, or assessments that the court has requested, or other information needed in the best interests of the juvenile and to allow for a reasonable time for the parties to conduct expeditious discovery. Otherwise, continuances shall be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when necessary for the proper administration of justice or in the best interests of the juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 9; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2407. When admissions by juvenile may be accepted.

(a) The court may accept an admission from a juvenile only after first addressing the juvenile personally and:

- (1) Informing the juvenile that the juvenile has a right to remain silent and that any statement the juvenile makes may be used against the juvenile;
- (2) Determining that the juvenile understands the nature of the charge;
- (3) Informing the juvenile that the juvenile has a right to deny the allegations;
- (4) Informing the juvenile that by the juvenile's admissions the juvenile waives the juvenile's right to be confronted by the witnesses against the juvenile;
- (5) Determining that the juvenile is satisfied with the juvenile's representation; and
- (6) Informing the juvenile of the most restrictive disposition on the charge.

(b) By inquiring of the prosecutor, the juvenile's attorney, and the juvenile personally, the court shall determine whether there were any prior discussions involving admissions, whether the parties have entered into any arrangement with respect to the admissions and the terms thereof, and whether any improper pressure was exerted. The court may accept an admission from a juvenile only after determining that the admission is a product of informed choice.

(c) The court may accept an admission only after determining that there is a factual basis for the admission. This determination may be based upon any of the following information: a statement of the facts by the prosecutor; a written statement of the juvenile; sworn testimony which may include reliable hearsay; or a statement of facts by the juvenile's attorney. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2408. Rules of evidence.

If the juvenile denies the allegations of the petition, the court shall proceed in accordance with the rules of evidence applicable to criminal cases. In addition, no statement made by a juvenile to the juvenile court counselor during the preliminary inquiry and evaluation process shall be

admissible prior to the dispositional hearing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, ch. 469, s. 17; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.17.)

§ 7B-2408.1: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2408.2: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2408.3: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2408.4: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2408.5. Motion to suppress evidence in adjudicatory hearings; procedure; appeal.

(a) A motion to suppress evidence in court made before the adjudicatory hearing must be in writing and a copy of the motion must be served upon the State. The motion must state the grounds upon which it is made. The motion must be accompanied by an affidavit containing facts supporting the motion. The affidavit may be based upon personal knowledge, or upon information and belief, if the source of the information and the basis for the belief are stated. The State may file an answer denying or admitting any of the allegations. A copy of the answer must be served on the juvenile's counsel or the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, if the juvenile has no counsel.

(b) The judge must summarily grant the motion to suppress evidence if:

- (1) The motion complies with the requirements of subsection (a) of this section, it states grounds which require exclusion of the evidence, and the State concedes the truth of allegations of fact which support the motion; or
- (2) The State stipulates that the evidence sought to be suppressed will not be offered in evidence in any juvenile proceeding.

(c) The judge may summarily deny the motion to suppress evidence if:

- (1) The motion does not allege a legal basis for the motion; or
- (2) The affidavit does not as a matter of law support the ground alleged.

(d) If the motion is not determined summarily, the judge must make the determination after a hearing and finding of facts. Testimony at the hearing must be under oath.

(e) A motion to suppress made during the adjudicatory hearing may be made in writing or orally and may be determined in the same manner as when made before the adjudicatory hearing.

(f) The judge must set forth in the record his or her findings of facts and conclusions of law.

(g) An order finally denying a motion to suppress evidence may be reviewed upon an appeal of a final order of the court in a juvenile matter.

(h) The provisions of G.S. 15A-974 shall apply to this section. (2015-58, s. 1.4.)

§ 7B-2409. Quantum of proof in adjudicatory hearing.

The allegations of a petition alleging the juvenile is delinquent shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The allegations in a petition alleging undisciplined behavior shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2410. Record of proceedings.

All adjudicatory and dispositional hearings and hearings on probable cause and transfer to superior court shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic or mechanical means.

Records shall be reduced to a written transcript only when timely notice of appeal has been given. The court may order that other hearings be recorded. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2411. Adjudication.

If the court finds that the allegations in the petition have been proved as provided in G.S. 7B-2409, the court shall so state in a written order of adjudication, which shall include, but not be limited to, the date of the offense, the misdemeanor or felony classification of the offense, and the date of adjudication. If the court finds that the allegations have not been proved, the court shall dismiss the petition with prejudice and the juvenile shall be released from secure or nonsecure custody if the juvenile is in custody. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2009-545, s. 4.)

§ 7B-2412. Legal effect of adjudication of delinquency.

An adjudication that a juvenile is delinquent or commitment of a juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center shall neither be considered conviction of any criminal offense nor cause the juvenile to forfeit any citizenship rights. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l).)

§ 7B-2413. Predisposition investigation and report.

The court shall proceed to the dispositional hearing upon receipt of the predisposition report. A risk and needs assessment, containing information regarding the juvenile's social, medical, psychiatric, psychological, and educational history, as well as any factors indicating the probability of the juvenile committing further delinquent acts, shall be conducted for the juvenile and shall be attached to the predisposition report. In cases where no predisposition report is available and the court makes a written finding that a report is not needed, the court may proceed with the dispositional hearing. No predisposition report or risk and needs assessment of any child alleged to be delinquent or undisciplined shall be made prior to an adjudication that the juvenile is within the juvenile jurisdiction of the court unless the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, or the juvenile's attorney files a written statement with the juvenile court counselor granting permission and giving consent to the predisposition report or risk and needs assessment. No predisposition report shall be submitted to or considered by the court prior to the completion of the adjudicatory hearing. The court shall permit the juvenile to inspect any predisposition report, including any attached risk and needs assessment, to be considered by the court in making the disposition unless the court determines that disclosure would seriously harm the juvenile's treatment or rehabilitation or would violate a promise of confidentiality. Opportunity to offer evidence in rebuttal shall be afforded the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian at the dispositional hearing. The court may order counsel not to disclose parts of the report to the juvenile or the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian if the court finds that disclosure would seriously harm the treatment or rehabilitation of the juvenile or would violate a promise of confidentiality given to a source of information. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-423, s. 13; 2001-490, s. 2.18.)

§ 7B-2414. When jeopardy attaches.

Jeopardy attaches in an adjudicatory hearing when the court begins to hear evidence. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 25.

Dispositions.

§ 7B-2500. Purpose.

The purpose of dispositions in juvenile actions is to design an appropriate plan to meet the needs of the juvenile and to achieve the objectives of the State in exercising jurisdiction, including the protection of the public. The court should develop a disposition in each case that:

- (1) Promotes public safety;
- (2) Emphasizes accountability and responsibility of both the parent, guardian, or custodian and the juvenile for the juvenile's conduct; and
- (3) Provides the appropriate consequences, treatment, training, and rehabilitation to assist the juvenile toward becoming a nonoffending, responsible, and productive member of the community. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2501. Dispositional hearing.

(a) The dispositional hearing may be informal, and the court may consider written reports or other evidence concerning the needs of the juvenile. The court may consider any evidence, including hearsay evidence as defined in G.S. 8C-1, Rule 801, that the court finds to be relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of the juvenile and the most appropriate disposition.

(b) The juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian shall have an opportunity to present evidence, and they may advise the court concerning the disposition they believe to be in the best interests of the juvenile.

(c) In choosing among statutorily permissible dispositions, the court shall select the most appropriate disposition both in terms of kind and duration for the delinquent juvenile. Within the guidelines set forth in G.S. 7B-2508, the court shall select a disposition that is designed to protect the public and to meet the needs and best interests of the juvenile, based upon:

- (1) The seriousness of the offense;
- (2) The need to hold the juvenile accountable;
- (3) The importance of protecting the public safety;
- (4) The degree of culpability indicated by the circumstances of the particular case; and
- (5) The rehabilitative and treatment needs of the juvenile indicated by a risk and needs assessment.

(d) The court may dismiss the case, or continue the case for no more than six months in order to allow the family an opportunity to meet the needs of the juvenile through more adequate home supervision, through placement in a private or specialized school or agency, through placement with a relative, or through some other plan approved by the court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 18; 1998-202, s. 6; 2003-62, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2502. Evaluation and treatment of undisciplined and delinquent juveniles.

(a) In any case, the court may order that the juvenile be examined by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other qualified expert as may be needed for the court to determine the needs of the juvenile. Upon the completion of the examination, the court may conduct a hearing to determine whether the juvenile is in need of medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment, and the court may order the juvenile to comply with any evaluation or treatment recommended by the examination.

(a1) In the case of a juvenile adjudicated delinquent for committing an offense that involves the possession, use, sale, or delivery of alcohol or a controlled substance, the court shall require the juvenile to be tested for the use of controlled substances or alcohol within 30 days of the adjudication. In the case of any juvenile adjudicated delinquent, the court may, if it deems it necessary, require the juvenile to be tested for the use of controlled substances or alcohol. The results of these initial tests conducted pursuant to this subsection shall be used for evaluation and treatment purposes only. In placing a juvenile in out-of-home care under this section, the court shall also consider whether it is in the juvenile's best interest to remain in the juvenile's community of residence.

(a2) In the case of a juvenile who has been identified with a suspected mental illness through the use of a validated screening instrument or other evidence presented to the court, or a suspected developmental disability or intellectual disability, that has been adjudicated delinquent, the court shall order that the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety make a referral for a comprehensive clinical assessment or equivalent mental health assessment, unless the court finds a comprehensive clinical assessment or equivalent mental health assessment has been conducted within the last 90 days before the disposition hearing. An assessment ordered by a court under this subsection shall evaluate the developmental, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of the juvenile.

(a3) If an assessment is ordered by the court under subsection (a2) of this section or if an assessment has been conducted within the last 90 days before the disposition hearing, the court shall review the comprehensive clinical assessment or equivalent mental health assessment prior to the disposition in the case. If the court finds sufficient evidence that the juvenile has severe emotional disturbance, as defined in G.S. 7B-1501(24a), or a developmental disability, as defined in G.S. 122C-3(12a), or intellectual disability, as defined in G.S. 122C-3(17a), that, in the court's discretion, substantially contributed to the juvenile's delinquent behavior, and the juvenile is eligible for a Juvenile Justice Level 3 disposition and/or is recommended for a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) placement, the court shall order a care review team to be convened by the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety and assigned to the case.

(a4) If a care review team is assigned to a case by the court under subsection (a3) of this section, the care review team shall develop a recommendation plan for appropriate services and resources that address the identified needs of the juvenile. The care review team shall submit a recommendation to the court within 30 calendar days of the date of the court order convening the care review team. The court shall review the recommendation plan when determining the juvenile's disposition in accordance with G.S. 7B-2501(c). A care review team shall consist of, at a minimum, all of the following:

- (1) The juvenile.
- (2) The juvenile's parents, guardian, or custodian.
- (3) Representatives from the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety.
- (4) A representative from the local management entity/managed care organization or prepaid health plan (PHP) in which the juvenile is enrolled.
- (5) Representatives from any State agency or local department of social services that is currently providing services to the juvenile or the juvenile's family.

(b) If the juvenile does not have health insurance coverage for the recommended treatment, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine who should pay the cost of the assessment,

evaluation or treatment pursuant to this section. The county manager, or any other person who is designated by the chair of the board of county commissioners, of the county of the juvenile's residence shall be notified of the hearing, and allowed to be heard. The court shall permit the parent, guardian, custodian, or other responsible persons to arrange for evaluation or treatment. If the parent, guardian, or custodian declines or is unable to make necessary arrangements, the court may order the needed evaluation or treatment, surgery, or care, and the court may order the parent to pay the cost of the care pursuant to Article 27 of this Chapter. If the court finds the parent or funding from the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety is unable to pay the cost of evaluation or treatment, the court shall order the county to arrange for evaluation or treatment of the juvenile and to pay for the cost of the evaluation or treatment.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-123, s. 8(b), effective December 1, 2021, and applicable to petitions filed on or after that date.

(d) A juvenile shall not be committed directly to a State hospital or State developmental center, and orders purporting to commit a juvenile directly to a State hospital or State developmental center, except for an examination to determine capacity to proceed, are void and of no effect. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 19; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1991, c. 636, s. 19(a); 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 3; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 6; 2002-164, s. 4.9; 2019-76, s. 11; 2021-123, s. 8(b); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(vvvv); 2021-189, s. 5.1(j); 2023-114, s. 4(b).)

§ 7B-2503. Dispositional alternatives for undisciplined juveniles.

The following alternatives for disposition shall be available to the court exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile who has been adjudicated undisciplined. In placing a juvenile in out-of-home care under this section, the court shall also consider whether it is in the juvenile's best interest to remain in the juvenile's community of residence. The court may combine any of the applicable alternatives when the court finds it to be in the best interests of the juvenile:

- (1) In the case of any juvenile who needs more adequate care or supervision or who needs placement, the judge may do any of the following:
 - a. Require that the juvenile be supervised in the juvenile's own home by a department of social services in the juvenile's county of residence, a juvenile court counselor, or other personnel as may be available to the court, subject to conditions applicable to the parent, guardian, or custodian or the juvenile as the judge may specify.
 - b. Place the juvenile in the custody of a parent, guardian, custodian, relative, private agency offering placement services, or some other suitable person.
 - c. If the director of the department of social services has received notice and an opportunity to be heard, place the juvenile in the custody of a department of social services in the county of the juvenile's residence, or in the case of a juvenile who has legal residence outside the State, in the physical custody of a department of social services in the county where the juvenile is found so that agency may return the juvenile to the responsible authorities in the juvenile's home state. An order placing a juvenile in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services shall contain a finding that the juvenile's continuation in the juvenile's own home would be contrary to the

juvenile's best interest. This placement shall be reviewed in accordance with G.S. 7B-906.1. A parent who is indigent is entitled to court-appointed counsel for representation in the hearings held pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1 unless the parent makes a knowing and voluntary waiver of the right to counsel.

- (2) Place the juvenile under the protective supervision of a juvenile court counselor for a period of up to three months, with an extension of an additional three months in the discretion of the court.
- (3) Excuse the juvenile from compliance with the compulsory school attendance law when the court finds that suitable alternative plans can be arranged by the family through other community resources for one of the following:
 - a. An education related to the needs or abilities of the juvenile including vocational education or special education;
 - b. A suitable plan of supervision or placement; or
 - c. Some other plan that the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 19; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1991, c. 636, s. 19(a); 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 3; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 6; 2001-208, s. 8; 2001-487, s. 101; 2001-490, s. 2.19; 2002-164, s. 4.10; 2009-311, s. 16; 2013-129, s. 39; 2017-161, s. 12; 2019-33, s. 15(a).)

§ 7B-2504. Conditions of protective supervision for undisciplined juveniles.

The court may place a juvenile on protective supervision pursuant to G.S. 7B-2503 so that the juvenile court counselor may (i) assist the juvenile in securing social, medical, and educational services and (ii) visit and work with the family as a unit to ensure the juvenile is provided proper supervision and care. The court may impose any combination of the following conditions of protective supervision that are related to the needs of the juvenile, including:

- (1) That the juvenile shall remain on good behavior and not violate any laws;
- (2) That the juvenile attend school regularly;
- (3) That the juvenile maintain passing grades in up to four courses during each grading period and meet with the juvenile court counselor and a representative of the school to make a plan for how to maintain those passing grades;
- (4) That the juvenile not associate with specified persons or be in specified places;
- (5) That the juvenile abide by a prescribed curfew;
- (6) That the juvenile report to a juvenile court counselor as often as required by a juvenile court counselor;
- (7) That the juvenile be employed regularly if not attending school; and
- (8) That the juvenile satisfy any other conditions determined appropriate by the court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.20.)

§ 7B-2505. Violation of protective supervision by undisciplined juvenile.

(a) On motion of the juvenile court counselor or the juvenile, or on the court's own motion, the court may review the progress of any juvenile on protective supervision at any time during the period of protective supervision. When the motion is filed during the period of protective supervision and either alleges a violation of protective supervision or seeks an extension of

protective supervision as permitted by G.S. 7B-2503(2), the court's review may occur within a reasonable time after the period of protective supervision ends, and the court shall have jurisdiction to enter an order under this section. The conditions or duration of protective supervision may be modified only as provided in this Subchapter and only after notice and a hearing.

(b) If the court, after notice and a hearing, finds by the greater weight of the evidence that the juvenile has violated the conditions of protective supervision set by the court, the court may do one or more of the following:

- (1) Continue or modify the conditions of protective supervision.
- (2) Order any disposition authorized by G.S. 7B-2503.
- (3) Notwithstanding the time limitation in G.S. 7B-2503(2), extend the period of protective supervision for up to three months. (1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.21; 2012-172, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2506. Dispositional alternatives for delinquent juveniles.

The court exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent may use the following alternatives in accordance with the dispositional structure set forth in G.S. 7B-2508:

- (1) In the case of any juvenile under the age of 18 years who needs more adequate care or supervision or who needs placement, the judge may do any of the following:
 - a. Require that a juvenile be supervised in the juvenile's own home by the department of social services in the juvenile's county, a juvenile court counselor, or other personnel as may be available to the court, subject to conditions applicable to the parent, guardian, or custodian or the juvenile as the judge may specify.
 - b. Place the juvenile in the custody of a parent, guardian, custodian, relative, private agency offering placement services, or some other suitable person.
 - c. If the director of the county department of social services has received notice and an opportunity to be heard, place the juvenile in the custody of the department of social services in the county of the juvenile's residence, or in the case of a juvenile who has legal residence outside the State, in the physical custody of a department of social services in the county where the juvenile is found so that agency may return the juvenile to the responsible authorities in the juvenile's home state. An order placing a juvenile in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services shall contain a finding that the juvenile's continuation in the juvenile's own home would be contrary to the juvenile's best interest. This placement shall be reviewed in accordance with G.S. 7B-906.1. A parent who is indigent is entitled to court-appointed counsel for representation in the hearings held pursuant to G.S. 7B-906.1 unless the parent makes a knowing and voluntary waiver of the right to counsel.
- (2) Excuse a juvenile under the age of 16 years from compliance with the compulsory school attendance law when the court finds that suitable alternative plans can be arranged by the family through other community resources for one of the following:

- a. An education related to the needs or abilities of the juvenile including vocational education or special education;
 - b. A suitable plan of supervision or placement; or
 - c. Some other plan that the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile.
- (3) Order the juvenile to cooperate with a community-based program, an intensive substance abuse treatment program, or a residential or nonresidential treatment program. Participation in the programs shall not exceed 12 months.
 - (4) Require restitution, full or partial, up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00), payable within a 12-month period to any person who has suffered loss or damage as a result of the offense committed by the juvenile. The court may determine the amount, terms, and conditions of the restitution. If the juvenile participated with another person or persons, all participants may be jointly and severally responsible for the payment of restitution; however, the court shall not require the juvenile to make restitution if the juvenile satisfies the court that the juvenile does not have, and could not reasonably acquire, the means to make restitution.
 - (5) Impose a fine related to the seriousness of the juvenile's offense. If the juvenile has the ability to pay the fine, it shall not exceed the maximum fine for the offense if committed by an adult.
 - (6) Order the juvenile to perform up to 100 hours supervised community service consistent with the juvenile's age, skill, and ability, specifying the nature of the work and the number of hours required. The work shall be related to the seriousness of the juvenile's offense and in no event may the obligation to work exceed 12 months.
 - (7) Order the juvenile to participate in the victim-offender reconciliation program.
 - (8) Place the juvenile on probation under the supervision of a juvenile court counselor, as specified in G.S. 7B-2510.
 - (9) Order that the juvenile shall not be licensed to operate a motor vehicle in the State of North Carolina for as long as the court retains jurisdiction over the juvenile or for any shorter period of time. The clerk of court shall notify the Division of Motor Vehicles of that order.
 - (10) Impose a curfew upon the juvenile.
 - (11) Order that the juvenile not associate with specified persons or be in specified places.
 - (12) Impose confinement on an intermittent basis in an approved detention facility. Confinement shall be limited to not more than five 24-hour periods, the timing and imposition of which is determined by the court in its discretion.
 - (13) Order the juvenile to cooperate with placement in a wilderness program.
 - (14) Order the juvenile to cooperate with placement in a residential treatment facility, an intensive nonresidential treatment program, an intensive substance abuse program, or in a group home other than a multipurpose group home operated by a State agency.
 - (15) Place the juvenile on intensive probation under the supervision of a juvenile court counselor.
 - (16) Order the juvenile to cooperate with a supervised day program requiring the juvenile to be present at a specified place for all or part of every day or of certain

days. In determining whether to order a juvenile to a particular supervised day program, the court shall consider the structure and operations of the program and whether that program will meet the needs of the juvenile. The court also may require the juvenile to comply with any other reasonable conditions specified in the dispositional order that are designed to facilitate supervision.

- (17) Order the juvenile to participate in a regimented training program.
- (18) Order the juvenile to submit to house arrest.
- (19) Suspend imposition of a more severe, statutorily permissible disposition with the provision that the juvenile meet certain conditions agreed to by the juvenile and specified in the dispositional order. The conditions shall not exceed the allowable dispositions for the level under which disposition is being imposed.
- (20) Order that the juvenile be confined in an approved juvenile detention facility for a term of up to 14 24-hour periods, which confinement shall not be imposed consecutively with intermittent confinement pursuant to subdivision (12) of this section at the same dispositional hearing. The timing and imposition of this confinement shall be determined by the court in its discretion.
- (21) Order the residential placement of a juvenile in a multipurpose group home operated by a State agency.
- (22) Require restitution of more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00), full or partial, payable within a 12-month period to any person who has suffered loss or damage as a result of an offense committed by the juvenile. The court may determine the amount, terms, and conditions of restitution. If the juvenile participated with another person or persons, all participants may be jointly and severally responsible for the payment of the restitution; however, the court shall not require the juvenile to make restitution if the juvenile satisfies the court that the juvenile does not have, and could not reasonably acquire, the means to make restitution.
- (23) Order the juvenile to perform up to 200 hours supervised community service consistent with the juvenile's age, skill, and ability, specifying the nature of work and the number of hours required. The work shall be related to the seriousness of the juvenile's offense.
- (24) Commit the juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center in accordance with G.S. 7B-2513 for a period of not less than six months. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, ss. 19, 20; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1991, c. 353, s. 1; 636, s. 19(a); 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 4; 1993, c. 369, s. 1; c. 462, s. 1; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 3; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 6; 1999-444, s. 1; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2001-179, s. 2; 2001-208, s. 9; 2001-487, s. 101; 2001-490, s. 2.22; 2009-311, s. 17; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2013-129, s. 40; 2015-58, s. 3.2; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(g); 2017-161, s. 13; 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-33, s. 15(b); 2024-17, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2507. Delinquency history levels.

(a) Generally. – The delinquency history level for a delinquent juvenile is determined by calculating the sum of the points assigned to each of the juvenile's prior adjudications or convictions and to the juvenile's probation status, if any, that the court finds to have been proved in

accordance with this section. For the purposes of this section, a prior adjudication is an adjudication of an offense that occurs before the adjudication of the offense before the court.

(b) Points. – Points are assigned as follows:

- (1) For each prior adjudication of a Class A through E felony offense, 4 points.
- (2) For each prior adjudication of a Class F through I felony offense or Class A1 misdemeanor offense, 2 points.
- (2a) For each prior conviction of a Class A through E felony offense, 4 points.
- (2b) For each prior conviction of a Class F through I felony or Class A1 misdemeanor offense, excluding conviction of the motor vehicle laws, 2 points.
- (2c) For each prior misdemeanor conviction of impaired driving (G.S. 20-138.1), impaired driving in a commercial vehicle (G.S. 20-138.2), and misdemeanor death by vehicle (G.S. 20-141.4(a2)), 2 points.
- (3) For each prior adjudication of a Class 1, 2, or 3 misdemeanor offense, 1 point.
- (3a) For each prior conviction of a Class 1, 2, or 3 misdemeanor offense, excluding conviction for violation of the motor vehicle laws, 1 point.
- (4) If the juvenile was on probation at the time of offense, 2 points.

No points shall be assigned for a prior adjudication that a juvenile is in direct contempt of court or indirect contempt of court.

(c) Delinquency History Levels. – The delinquency history levels are:

- (1) Low – No more than 1 point.
- (2) Medium – At least 2, but not more than 3 points.
- (3) High – At least 4 points.

In determining the delinquency history level, the classification of a prior offense is the classification assigned to that offense at the time the juvenile committed the offense for which disposition is being ordered.

(d) Multiple Prior Adjudications or Convictions Obtained in One Court Session. – For purposes of determining the delinquency history level, if a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent or convicted for more than one offense in a single session of district court or more than one offense in a single superior court during one calendar week, only the adjudication or conviction for the offense with the highest point total is used.

(e) Classification of Prior Adjudications or Convictions From Other Jurisdictions. – Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, an adjudication or conviction occurring in a jurisdiction other than North Carolina is classified as a Class I felony if the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred classifies the offense as a felony, or is classified as a Class 3 misdemeanor if the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred classifies the offense as a misdemeanor. If the juvenile proves by the preponderance of the evidence that an offense classified as a felony in the other jurisdiction is substantially similar to an offense that is a misdemeanor in North Carolina, the adjudication or conviction is treated as that class of misdemeanor for assigning delinquency history level points. If the State proves by the preponderance of the evidence that an offense classified as either a misdemeanor or a felony in the other jurisdiction is substantially similar to an offense in North Carolina that is classified as a Class I felony or higher, the adjudication or conviction is treated as that class of felony for assigning delinquency history level points. If the State proves by the preponderance of the evidence that an offense classified as a misdemeanor in the other jurisdiction is substantially similar to an offense classified as a Class A1 misdemeanor in North Carolina, the adjudication or conviction is treated as a Class A1 misdemeanor for assigning delinquency history level points.

(f) Proof of Prior Adjudications or Convictions. – A prior adjudication or conviction shall be proved by any of the following methods:

- (1) Stipulation of the parties.
- (2) An original or copy of the court record of the prior adjudication or conviction.
- (3) A copy of records maintained by the Department of Public Safety or by the Division.
- (4) Any other method found by the court to be reliable.

The State bears the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that a prior adjudication or conviction exists and that the juvenile before the court is the same person as the juvenile named in the prior adjudication or conviction. The original or a copy of the court records or a copy of the records maintained by the Department of Public Safety or of the Division, bearing the same name as that by which the juvenile is charged, is prima facie evidence that the juvenile named is the same person as the juvenile before the court, and that the facts set out in the record are true. For purposes of this subsection, "a copy" includes a paper writing containing a reproduction of a record maintained electronically on a computer or other data processing equipment, and a document produced by a facsimile machine. The prosecutor shall make all feasible efforts to obtain and present to the court the juvenile's full record. Evidence presented by either party at trial may be utilized to prove prior adjudications or convictions. If asked by the juvenile, the prosecutor shall furnish the juvenile's prior adjudications or convictions to the juvenile within a reasonable time sufficient to allow the juvenile to determine if the record available to the prosecutor is accurate. (1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2007-168, s. 5; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2014-100, s. 17.1(q); 2015-58, s. 2.3; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(h); 2018-142, s. 23(b).)

§ 7B-2508. Dispositional limits for each class of offense and delinquency history level.

(a) Offense Classification. – The offense classifications are as follows:

- (1) Violent – Adjudication of a Class A through E felony offense;
- (2) Serious – Adjudication of a Class F through I felony offense or a Class A1 misdemeanor;
- (3) Minor – Adjudication of a Class 1, 2, or 3 misdemeanor or adjudication of indirect contempt by a juvenile.

(b) Delinquency History Levels. – A delinquency history level shall be determined for each delinquent juvenile as provided in G.S. 7B-2507.

(c) Level 1 – Community Disposition. – A court exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent and for whom the dispositional chart in subsection (f) of this section prescribes a Level 1 disposition may provide for evaluation and treatment under G.S. 7B-2502 and for any of the dispositional alternatives contained in subdivisions (1) through (13) and (16) of G.S. 7B-2506. In determining which dispositional alternative is appropriate, the court shall consider the needs of the juvenile as indicated by the risk and needs assessment contained in the predisposition report, the appropriate community resources available to meet those needs, and the protection of the public.

(d) Level 2 – Intermediate Disposition. – A court exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent and for whom the dispositional chart in subsection (f) of this section prescribes a Level 2 disposition may provide for evaluation and treatment under G.S. 7B-2502 and for any of the dispositional alternatives contained in subdivisions (1) through (23) of G.S. 7B-2506, but shall provide for at least one of the intermediate dispositions authorized in subdivisions (13) through (23) of G.S. 7B-2506. However, notwithstanding any other provision

of this section, a court may impose a Level 3 disposition if the juvenile has previously received a Level 3 disposition in a prior juvenile action. In determining which dispositional alternative is appropriate, the court shall consider the needs of the juvenile as indicated by the risk and needs assessment contained in the predisposition report, the appropriate community resources available to meet those needs, and the protection of the public.

(e) Level 3 – Commitment. – A court exercising jurisdiction over a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent and for whom the dispositional chart in subsection (f) of this section prescribes a Level 3 disposition shall commit the juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center in accordance with G.S. 7B-2506(24). However, a court may impose a Level 2 disposition rather than a Level 3 disposition if the court submits written findings on the record that substantiate extraordinary needs on the part of the offending juvenile.

(f) Dispositions for Each Class of Offense and Delinquency History Level; Disposition Chart Described. – The authorized disposition for each class of offense and delinquency history level is as specified in the chart below. Delinquency history levels are indicated horizontally on the top of the chart. Classes of offense are indicated vertically on the left side of the chart. Each cell on the chart indicates which of the dispositional levels described in subsections (c) through (e) of this section are prescribed for that combination of offense classification and delinquency history level:

DELINQUENCY HISTORY

OFFENSE

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
VIOLENT	Level 2 or 3	Level 3	Level 3
SERIOUS	Level 1 or 2	Level 2	Level 2 or 3
MINOR	Level 1	Level 1 or 2	Level 2.

(g) Notwithstanding subsection (f) of this section, a juvenile who has been adjudicated for a minor offense may be committed to a Level 3 disposition if the juvenile has been adjudicated of four or more prior offenses. For purposes of determining the number of prior offenses under this subsection, each successive offense is one that was committed after adjudication of the preceding offense.

(g1) Notwithstanding subsection (f) of this section, if a juvenile is adjudicated for an offense that the court finds beyond a reasonable doubt was committed as part of criminal gang activity as defined in G.S. 7B-2508.1, the juvenile shall receive a disposition one level higher than would otherwise be provided for the class of offense and delinquency history level.

(h) If a juvenile is adjudicated of more than one offense during a session of juvenile court, the court shall consolidate the offenses for disposition and impose a single disposition for the consolidated offenses. The disposition shall be specified for the class of offense and delinquency history level of the most serious offense. (1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2001-179, s. 1; 2007-168, s. 6; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2017-57, s. 16D.4(gg); 2017-197, s. 5.4; 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-186, s. 10.)

§ 7B-2508.1. Criminal gang activity.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Criminal gang. – Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that (i) has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts and (ii) shares a common name, identification, signs, symbols, tattoos, graffiti, attire, or other distinguishing characteristics, including common activities, customs, or

- behaviors. The term shall not include three or more persons associated in fact, whether formal or informal, who are not engaged in criminal gang activity.
- (2) Criminal gang activity. – The commission of, attempted commission of, or solicitation, coercion, or intimidation of another person to commit (i) any offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes or (ii) any offense under Chapter 14 of the General Statutes except Article 9, 22A, 40, 46, or 59 thereof, and further excepting G.S. 14-82, 14-145, 14-183, 14-184, 14-186, 14-190.9, 14-247, 14-248, or 14-313 thereof, and either of the following conditions is met:
- a. The offense is committed with the intent to benefit, promote, or further the interests of a criminal gang or for the purposes of increasing a person's own standing or position within a criminal gang.
 - b. The participants in the offense are identified as criminal gang members acting individually or collectively to further any criminal purpose of a criminal gang.
- (3) Criminal gang member. – Any person who meets three or more of the following criteria:
- a. The person admits to being a member of a criminal gang.
 - b. The person is identified as a criminal gang member by a reliable source, including a parent or a guardian.
 - c. The person has been previously involved in criminal gang activity.
 - d. The person has adopted symbols, hand signs, or graffiti associated with a criminal gang.
 - e. The person has adopted the display of colors or the style of dress associated with a criminal gang.
 - f. The person is in possession of or linked to a criminal gang by physical evidence, including photographs, ledgers, rosters, written or electronic communications, or membership documents.
 - g. The person has tattoos or markings associated with a criminal gang.
 - h. The person has adopted language or terminology associated with a criminal gang.
 - i. The person appears in any form of social media to promote a criminal gang. (2017-57, s. 16D.4(hh); 2017-197, s. 5.4; 2018-142, s. 23(b).)

§ 7B-2509. Registration of certain delinquent juveniles.

In any case in which a juvenile, who was at least 11 years of age at the time of the offense, is adjudicated delinquent for committing a violation of G.S. 14-27.6 (attempted rape or sexual offense), G.S. 14-27.21 (first-degree forcible rape), G.S. 14-27.22 (second-degree forcible rape), G.S. 14-27.24 (first-degree statutory rape), G.S. 14-27.26 (first-degree forcible sexual offense), G.S. 14-27.27 (second-degree forcible sexual offense), or G.S. 14-27.29 (first-degree statutory sexual offense), the judge, upon a finding that the juvenile is a danger to the community, may order that the juvenile register in accordance with Part 4 of Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes. (1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 11; 2015-181, s. 26.)

§ 7B-2510. Conditions of probation; violation of probation.

(a) In any case where a juvenile is placed on probation pursuant to G.S. 7B-2506(8), the juvenile court counselor shall have the authority to visit the juvenile where the juvenile resides. The court may impose conditions of probation that are related to the needs of the juvenile and that are reasonably necessary to ensure that the juvenile will lead a law-abiding life, including:

- (1) That the juvenile shall remain on good behavior.
- (2) That the juvenile shall not violate any laws.
- (3) That the juvenile shall not violate any reasonable and lawful rules of a parent, guardian, or custodian.
- (4) That the juvenile attend school regularly.
- (5) That the juvenile maintain passing grades in up to four courses during each grading period and meet with the juvenile court counselor and a representative of the school to make a plan for how to maintain those passing grades.
- (6) That the juvenile not associate with specified persons or be in specified places.
- (7) That the juvenile:
 - a. Refrain from use or possession of any controlled substance included in any schedule of Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, the Controlled Substances Act;
 - b. Refrain from use or possession of any alcoholic beverage regulated under Chapter 18B of the General Statutes; and
 - c. Submit to random drug testing.
- (8) That the juvenile abide by a prescribed curfew.
- (9) That the juvenile submit to a warrantless search at reasonable times.
- (10) That the juvenile possess no firearm, explosive device, or other deadly weapon.
- (11) That the juvenile report to a juvenile court counselor as often as required by the juvenile court counselor.
- (12) That the juvenile make specified financial restitution or pay a fine in accordance with G.S. 7B-2506(4), (5), and (22).
- (13) That the juvenile be employed regularly if not attending school.
- (14) That the juvenile satisfy any other conditions determined appropriate by the court.

(b) In addition to the regular conditions of probation specified in subsection (a) of this section, the court may, at a dispositional hearing or any subsequent hearing, order the juvenile to comply, if directed to comply by the chief court counselor, with one or more of the following conditions:

- (1) Perform up to 20 hours of community service;
- (2) Submit to substance abuse monitoring and treatment;
- (3) Participate in a life skills or an educational skills program administered by the Division;
- (4) Cooperate with electronic monitoring; and
- (5) Cooperate with intensive supervision.

However, the court shall not give the chief court counselor discretion to impose the conditions of either subsection (4) or (5) of this section unless the juvenile is subject to Level 2 dispositions pursuant to G.S. 7B-2508 or subsection (d) of this section.

(c) An order of probation shall remain in force for a period not to exceed one year from the date entered. Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c1) of this section, prior to expiration of

an order of probation, the court may extend it for an additional period of one year after notice and a hearing, if the court finds that the extension is necessary to protect the community or to safeguard the welfare of the juvenile. At the discretion of the court, the hearing to determine to extend probation may occur after the expiration of an order of probation at the next regularly scheduled court date or if the juvenile fails to appear in court.

(c1) Prior to expiration of an order of probation entered for an adjudication of an offense that would be a Class A, B1, or B2 felony if committed by an adult, the court may extend the term of probation for additional periods of up to one year after notice and a hearing, if the court finds that the extension is necessary to protect the community or to safeguard the welfare of the juvenile. The total period of probation entered for an adjudication of an offense that would be a Class A, B1, or B2 felony if committed by an adult shall not exceed three years. At the discretion of the court, the hearing to determine to extend probation may occur after the expiration of an order of probation at the next regularly scheduled court date or if the juvenile fails to appear in court.

(d) On motion of the juvenile court counselor, the juvenile, the prosecutor, or on the court's own motion, the court may review the progress of any juvenile on probation at any time during the period of probation or at the end of probation. The conditions or duration of probation may be modified only as provided in this Subchapter and only after notice and a hearing.

(e) If the court, after notice and a hearing, finds by the greater weight of the evidence that the juvenile has violated the conditions of probation set by the court, the court may continue the original conditions of probation, modify the conditions of probation, or, except as provided in subsection (f) of this section, order a new disposition. In the court's discretion, the court may order a new disposition at the next higher level on the disposition chart or order a term of confinement in a secure juvenile detention facility for up to twice the term authorized by G.S. 7B-2508, in addition to any other Level 2 dispositional option.

(f) A court shall not order a Level 3 disposition for violation of the conditions of probation by a juvenile adjudicated delinquent for an offense classified as minor under G.S. 7B-2508. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 20; 1991, c. 353, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 4; 1993, c. 369, s. 1; c. 462, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, ss. 2.23, 2.24; 2011-145, s. 19.1(1); 2015-58, s. 2.4; 2025-93, s. 8(a).)

§ 7B-2511. Termination of probation.

At the end of or at any time during probation, the court may terminate probation by written order upon finding that there is no further need for supervision. Except for cases that involve a victim as defined in Article 20A of this Chapter, the finding and order terminating probation may be entered in chambers in the absence of the juvenile and may be based on a report from the juvenile court counselor or, at the election of the court, the order may be entered with the juvenile present after notice and a hearing. In cases involving a victim as defined in Article 20A of this Chapter, the order may be entered with the juvenile present after notice and a hearing. If a victim has requested to be notified of court proceedings pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053, the Division of Juvenile Justice shall provide notice to the victim, and the court shall provide the prosecutor, the victim, or the person who may assert the victim's rights as set forth in Article 20A of this Chapter the opportunity to be heard at the hearing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.25; 2025-93, s. 8(b).)

§ 7B-2512. Dispositional order.

(a) The dispositional order shall be in writing and shall contain appropriate findings of fact and conclusions of law. The court shall state with particularity, both orally and in the written order of disposition, the precise terms of the disposition including the kind, duration, and the person who is responsible for carrying out the disposition and the person or agency in whom custody is vested.

(b) The court shall include information at the time of issuing the dispositional order, either orally in court or in writing, on the expunction of juvenile records as provided for in G.S. 7B-3200 that are applicable to the dispositional order. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 10; 1991, c. 434, s. 1; 1997-390, s. 8; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 7; 2015-58, s. 2.5.)

§ 7B-2513. Commitment of delinquent juvenile to Division.

(a) Pursuant to G.S. 7B-2506 and G.S. 7B-2508, the court may commit a delinquent juvenile who is at least 10 years of age to the Division for placement in a youth development center. Commitment shall be for an indefinite term of at least six months.

(a1) For an offense the juvenile committed prior to reaching the age of 16 years, the term shall not exceed:

- (1) The twenty-first birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be first-degree murder pursuant to G.S. 14-17, first-degree forcible rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.21, first-degree statutory rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.24, first-degree forcible sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.26, or first-degree statutory sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.29 if committed by an adult;
- (2) The nineteenth birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection; or
- (3) The eighteenth birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense other than an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.

(a2) For an offense the juvenile committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age, the term shall not exceed:

- (1) The twenty-first birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be first degree murder pursuant to G.S. 14-17, first-degree forcible rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.21, first-degree statutory rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.24, first-degree forcible sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.26, or first-degree statutory sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.29 if committed by an adult;
- (2) The twentieth birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection; or
- (3) The juvenile's nineteenth birthday if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense other than an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.

(a3) For an offense the juvenile committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age, the term shall not exceed:

- (1) The twenty-first birthday of the juvenile if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult; or
- (2) The juvenile's twentieth birthday if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense other than an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.

(a4) No juvenile shall be committed to a youth development center beyond the minimum six-month commitment for a period of time in excess of the maximum term of imprisonment for which an adult in prior record level VI for felonies or in prior conviction level III for misdemeanors could be sentenced for the same offense, except when the Division pursuant to G.S. 7B-2515 determines that the juvenile's commitment needs to be continued for an additional period of time to continue care or treatment under the plan of care or treatment developed under subsection (f) of this section. At the time of commitment to a youth development center, the court shall determine the maximum period of time the juvenile may remain committed before a determination must be made by the Division pursuant to G.S. 7B-2515 and shall notify the juvenile of that determination.

(b) The court may commit a juvenile to a definite term of not less than six months and not more than two years if the court finds that the juvenile is 14 years of age or older, has been previously adjudicated delinquent for two or more felony offenses, and has been previously committed to a youth development center.

(c) The chief court counselor shall have the responsibility for transporting the juvenile to the youth development center designated by the Division. The juvenile shall be accompanied to the youth development center by a person of the same sex.

(d) The chief court counselor shall ensure that the records requested by the Division accompany the juvenile upon transportation for admittance to a youth development center or, if not obtainable at the time of admission, are sent to the youth development center within 15 days of the admission. If records requested by the Division for admission do not exist, to the best knowledge of the chief court counselor, the chief court counselor shall so stipulate in writing to the youth development center. If such records do exist, but the chief court counselor is unable to obtain copies of them, a district court may order that the records from public agencies be made available to the youth development center. Records that are confidential by law shall remain confidential and the Division shall be bound by the specific laws governing the confidentiality of these records. All records shall be used in a manner consistent with the best interests of the juvenile.

(e) A commitment order accompanied by information requested by the Division shall be forwarded to the Division. The Division shall place the juvenile in the youth development center that would best provide for the juvenile's needs and shall notify the committing court. The Division may assign a juvenile committed for delinquency to any institution of the Division or licensed by the Division, which program is appropriate to the needs of the juvenile.

The Division, after assessment of the juvenile, may provide commitment services to the juvenile in a program not located in a youth development center or detention facility. If the Division recommends that commitment services for the juvenile are to be provided in a setting that is not located in a youth development center or detention facility, the Division shall file a motion, along with information about the recommended services for the juvenile, with the committing court prior to placing the juvenile in the identified commitment program. The Division shall send notice of the motion to the District Attorney, the juvenile, and the juvenile's attorney. Upon receipt of the motion filed by the Division, the court may enter an order without the appearance of witnesses and without hearing if the court determines that the identified commitment program is

appropriate and a hearing is not necessary. The court must hold a hearing if the juvenile or the juvenile's attorney requests a hearing. If the court notifies the Division of its intent to hold a hearing, the date for that hearing shall be set by the court and the Division shall place the juvenile in a youth development center or detention facility until the determination of the court at that hearing.

(f) When the court commits a juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center, the Division shall prepare a plan for care or treatment within 30 days after assuming custody of the juvenile.

(g) Commitment of a juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center does not terminate the court's continuing jurisdiction over the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian. Commitment of a juvenile to the Division for placement in a youth development center transfers only physical custody of the juvenile. Legal custody remains with the parent, guardian, custodian, agency, or institution in whom it was vested.

(h) Pending placement of a juvenile with the Division, the court may house a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult in a holdover facility up to 72 hours if the court, based on the information provided by the juvenile court counselor, determines that no acceptable alternative placement is available and the protection of the public requires that the juvenile be housed in a holdover facility.

(i) A juvenile who is committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center shall be tested for the use of controlled substances or alcohol. The results of this initial test shall be incorporated into the plan of care as provided in subsection (f) of this section and used for evaluation and treatment purposes only.

(j) Repealed by Session Laws 2019-216, s. 15, effective August 31, 2019, and applicable to offenses and acts of delinquency committed on or after that date. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 133, s. 2; 1987, c. 100; c. 372; 1991, c. 434, ss. 2, 3; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, s. 2; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-423, s. 1; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2001-490, s. 2.26; 2003-53, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2015-181, s. 27; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(i); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-216, s. 15; 2021-123, s. 1(a).)

§ 7B-2514. Post-release supervision planning; release.

(a) The Division shall be responsible for evaluation of the progress of each juvenile at least once every six months as long as the juvenile remains in the care of the Division. Any determination that the juvenile should remain in the care of the Division for an additional period of time shall be based on the Division's determination that the juvenile requires additional treatment or rehabilitation pursuant to G.S. 7B-2515. If the Division determines that a juvenile is ready for release, the Division shall initiate a post-release supervision planning process. The post-release supervision planning process shall be defined by rules and regulations of the Division, but shall include the following:

- (1) Written notification shall be given to the court that ordered commitment.
- (2) A post-release supervision planning conference shall be held involving as many as possible of the following: the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, juvenile court counselors who have supervised the juvenile on probation or will supervise the juvenile on post-release supervision, and staff of the facility that found the juvenile ready for release. The planning conference shall include personal contact and evaluation rather than telephonic notification.

- (3) The planning conference participants shall consider, based on the individual needs of the juvenile and pursuant to rules adopted by the Division, placement of the juvenile in any program under the auspices of the Division, including the juvenile court services programs that, in the judgment of the Division, would be appropriate transitional placement, pending release under G.S. 7B-2513.

(b) The Division shall develop the plan in writing and base the terms on the needs of the juvenile and the protection of the public. Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b1) of this section, every plan shall require the juvenile to complete at least 90 days, but not more than one year, of post-release supervision.

(b1) Every plan developed for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, or C felony if committed by an adult shall require the juvenile to complete three years of post-release supervision. The Division shall develop the plan in writing and base the terms on the needs of the juvenile and the protection of the public.

(c) The Division shall release a juvenile under a plan of post-release supervision at least 90 days prior to one of the following:

- (1) Completion of the juvenile's definite term of commitment.
- (2) The juvenile's twenty-first birthday if the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be first-degree murder pursuant to G.S. 14-17, first-degree forcible rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.21, first-degree statutory rape pursuant to G.S. 14-27.24, first-degree forcible sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.26, or first-degree statutory sexual offense pursuant to G.S. 14-27.29 if committed by an adult.
- (3) If the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense that would be a Class B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult, other than an offense set forth in G.S. 7B-1602(a):
 - a. The juvenile's nineteenth birthday, if the juvenile committed the offense prior to reaching the age of 16 years.
 - b. The juvenile's twentieth birthday, if the juvenile committed the offense while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age.
 - c. The juvenile's twenty-first birthday, if the juvenile committed the offense while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age.
- (4) If the juvenile has been committed to the Division for an offense other than an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult:
 - a. The eighteenth birthday of the juvenile, if the juvenile committed the offense prior to reaching the age of 16 years.
 - b. The nineteenth birthday of the juvenile, if the juvenile committed the offense while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age.
 - c. The twentieth birthday of the juvenile, if the juvenile committed the offense while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age.

(d) Notwithstanding Articles 30 and 31 of Subchapter III of this Chapter, and in addition to any notice to the victim required pursuant to G.S. 7B-2055, at least 45 days before releasing to post-release supervision a juvenile who was committed for a Class A or B1 felony, the Division shall notify by first-class mail at the last known address all of the following:

- (1) The juvenile.
- (2) The juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian.
- (3) The district attorney of the district where the juvenile was adjudicated.
- (4) The head of the enforcement agency that took the juvenile into custody.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2019-216, s. 11, effective August 31, 2019, and applicable to offenses and acts of delinquency committed on or after that date.

The notification shall include only the juvenile's name, offense, date of commitment, and date proposed for release. A copy of the notice shall be sent to the appropriate clerk of superior court for placement in the juvenile's court file.

(e) The Division may release a juvenile under an indefinite commitment to post-release supervision only after the juvenile has been committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for a period of at least six months.

(f) A juvenile committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center for a definite term shall receive credit toward that term for the time the juvenile spends on post-release supervision.

(g) A juvenile on post-release supervision shall be supervised by a juvenile court counselor. Post-release supervision shall be terminated by order of the court. For plans developed pursuant to subsection (b1) of this section, post-release supervision may be terminated with the juvenile present after notice and a hearing. If a victim has requested to be notified of court proceedings pursuant to G.S. 7B-2053, the Division of Juvenile Justice shall provide notice to the victim, and the court shall provide the prosecutor, the victim, or the person who may assert the victim's rights as set forth in Article 20A of this Chapter the opportunity to be heard at the hearing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983, c. 133, s. 1; c. 276, s. 1; 1989, c. 235; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 23.2(e); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2001-490, ss. 2.27, 2.28; 2011-145, s. 19(1); 2015-181, s. 28; 2019-216, s. 11; 2021-123, s. 1(d); 2025-93, s. 8(c).)

§ 7B-2515. Notification of extended commitment; plan of treatment.

(a) In determining whether a juvenile who was committed to the Division for an offense that was committed prior to the juvenile reaching the age of 16 years should be released before the juvenile's 18th birthday, the Division shall consider the protection of the public and the likelihood that continued placement will lead to further rehabilitation. If the Division does not intend to release the juvenile prior to the juvenile's eighteenth birthday, or if the Division determines that the juvenile's commitment should be continued beyond the maximum commitment period as set forth in G.S. 7B-2513(a4), the Division shall notify the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian in writing at least 30 days in advance of the juvenile's eighteenth birthday or the end of the maximum commitment period, of the additional specific commitment period proposed by the Division, the basis for extending the commitment period, and the plan for future care or treatment.

(a1) In determining whether a juvenile who was committed to the Division for an offense that was committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age should be released before the juvenile's nineteenth birthday, the Division shall consider the protection of the public and the likelihood that continued placement will lead to further rehabilitation. If the Division does not intend to release the juvenile prior to the juvenile's nineteenth birthday, or if the Division determines that the juvenile's commitment should be continued beyond the maximum commitment period as set forth in G.S. 7B-2513(a4), the Division shall notify the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian in writing, at least 30 days in advance of the juvenile's nineteenth birthday or the end of the maximum commitment period, of

the additional specific commitment period proposed by the Division, the basis for extending the commitment period, and the plan for future care or treatment.

(a2) In determining whether a juvenile who was committed to the Division for an offense that was committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age but less than 18 years of age should be released before the juvenile's twentieth birthday, the Division shall consider the protection of the public and the likelihood that continued placement will lead to further rehabilitation. If the Division does not intend to release the juvenile prior to the juvenile's twentieth birthday, or if the Division determines that the juvenile's commitment should be continued beyond the maximum commitment period as set forth in G.S. 7B-2513(a4), the Division shall notify the juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian in writing, at least 30 days in advance of the juvenile's twentieth birthday or the end of the maximum commitment period, of the additional specific commitment period proposed by the Division, the basis for extending the commitment period, and the plan for future care or treatment.

(b) The Division shall modify the plan of care or treatment developed pursuant to G.S. 7B-2513(f) to specify (i) the specific goals and outcomes that require additional time for care or treatment of the juvenile; (ii) the specific course of treatment or care that will be implemented to achieve the established goals and outcomes; and (iii) the efforts that will be taken to assist the juvenile's family in creating an environment that will increase the likelihood that the efforts to treat and rehabilitate the juvenile will be successful upon release. If appropriate, the Division may place the juvenile in a setting other than a youth development center.

(c) The juvenile and the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian may request a review by the court of the Division's decision to extend the juvenile's commitment pursuant to this section, in which case the court shall conduct a review hearing. The court may modify the Division's decision and the juvenile's maximum commitment period. If the juvenile or the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian does not request a review of the Division's decision, the Division's decision shall become the juvenile's new maximum commitment period. (1998-202, s. 6; 1998-217, s. 57(1); 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2017-57, s. 16D.4(j); 2018-142, s. 23(b).)

§ 7B-2516. Revocation of post-release supervision.

(a) On motion of the juvenile court counselor providing post-release supervision or motion of the juvenile, or on the court's own motion, and after notice, the court may hold a hearing to review the progress of any juvenile on post-release supervision at any time during the period of post-release supervision. With respect to any hearing involving allegations that the juvenile has violated the terms of post-release supervision, the juvenile:

- (1) Shall have reasonable notice in writing of the nature and content of the allegations in the motion, including notice that the purpose of the hearing is to determine whether the juvenile has violated the terms of post-release supervision to the extent that post-release supervision should be revoked;
 - (2) Shall be represented by an attorney at the hearing;
 - (3) Shall have the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses; and
 - (4) May admit, deny, or explain the violation alleged and may present proof, including affidavits or other evidence, in support of the juvenile's contentions.
- A record of the proceeding shall be made and preserved in the juvenile's record.

(b) If the court determines by the greater weight of the evidence that the juvenile has violated the terms of post-release supervision, the court may revoke the post-release supervision or make any other disposition authorized by this Subchapter.

(c) If the court revokes post-release supervision, the juvenile shall be returned to the Division for placement in a youth development center for an indefinite term of at least 90 days, provided, however, that no juvenile shall remain committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center past the maximum term of commitment allowed pursuant to G.S. 7B-2513(a1), 7B-2513(a2), and 7B-2513(a3). (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s.3; 2001-95, s. 5; 2001-490, s. 2.29; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2015-181, s. 29; 2021-123, s. 1(e).)

§ 7B-2517. Transfer authority of Governor.

The Governor may order transfer of any person less than 18 years of age from any jail or penal facility of the State to one of the residential facilities operated by the Division in appropriate circumstances, provided the Governor shall consult with the Division concerning the feasibility of the transfer in terms of available space, staff, and suitability of program.

When an inmate, committed to the Division of Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction, is transferred by the Governor to a residential program operated by the Division, the Division may release the juvenile based on the needs of the juvenile and the best interests of the State. Transfer shall not divest the probation or parole officer of the officer's responsibility to supervise the inmate on release. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2011-145, ss. 19.1(h), (l); 2017-186, s. 2(l); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(p).)

Article 26.

Modification and Enforcement of Dispositional Orders; Appeals.

§ 7B-2600. Authority to modify or vacate.

(a) Upon motion in the cause or petition, and after notice, the court may conduct a review hearing to determine whether the order of the court is in the best interests of the juvenile, and the court may modify or vacate the order in light of changes in circumstances or the needs of the juvenile.

(b) In a case of delinquency, the court may reduce the nature or the duration of the disposition on the basis that it was imposed in an illegal manner or is unduly severe with reference to the seriousness of the offense, the culpability of the juvenile, or the dispositions given to juveniles convicted of similar offenses.

(c) In any case where the court finds the juvenile to be undisciplined, the jurisdiction of the court to modify any order or disposition made in the case shall continue during the minority of the juvenile or until terminated by order of the court.

(d) In any case where the court finds the juvenile to be delinquent, the jurisdiction of the court to modify any order or disposition made in the case shall continue until one of the following first occurs:

- (1) Unless subdivision (4) of this subsection applies, the juvenile reaches the age of 18 for an offense committed prior to the juvenile reaching the age of 16.
- (2) Unless subdivision (4) of this subsection applies, the juvenile reaches the age of 19 for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 16 years of age but less than 17 years of age.
- (3) Unless subdivision (4) of this subsection applies, the juvenile reaches the age of 20 for an offense committed while the juvenile was at least 17 years of age.
- (4) The juvenile reaches the maximum term of commitment as authorized pursuant to G.S. 7B-2513(a1), 7B-2513(a2), and 7B-2513(a3), if the juvenile was committed to the Division for placement in a youth development center.

- (5) Termination by order of the court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2015-181, s. 30; 2021-123, s. 1(f).)

§ 7B-2601. Request for modification for lack of suitable services.

If the Division finds that any juvenile committed to the Division's care is not suitable for its program, the Division may make a motion in the cause so that the court may make an alternative disposition that is consistent with G.S. 7B-2508. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l).)

§ 7B-2602. Right to appeal.

Upon motion of a proper party as defined in G.S. 7B-2604, review of any final order of the court in a juvenile matter under this Article shall be before the Court of Appeals. Notice of appeal shall be given in open court at the time of the hearing or in writing within 10 days after entry of the order. However, if no disposition is made within 60 days after entry of the order, written notice of appeal may be given within 70 days after such entry. A final order shall include:

- (1) Any order finding absence of jurisdiction;
- (2) Any order which in effect determines the action and prevents a judgment from which appeal might be taken;
- (3) Any order of disposition after an adjudication that a juvenile is delinquent or undisciplined; or
- (4) Any order modifying custodial rights. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2603. Right to appeal transfer decision.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 7B-2602, any order transferring jurisdiction of the district court in a juvenile matter to the superior court may be appealed to the superior court, except for an order that transfers a Class A felony pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200(b) or a Class F or G felony pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(a), for a hearing on the record. Notice of the appeal must be given in open court or in writing within 10 days after entry of the order of transfer in district court. Entry of an order shall be treated in the same manner as entry of a judgment under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 58 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. The clerk of superior court shall provide the district attorney with a copy of any written notice of appeal filed by the attorney for the juvenile. Upon expiration of the 10 day period in which an appeal may be entered, if an appeal has been entered and not withdrawn, the clerk shall transfer the case to the superior court docket. The superior court shall, within a reasonable time, review the record of the transfer hearing for abuse of discretion by the juvenile court in the issue of transfer. The superior court shall not review the findings as to probable cause for the underlying offense.

(b) Once an order of transfer has been entered by the district court, the juvenile has the right to be considered for pretrial release as provided in G.S. 15A-533 and G.S. 15A-534. Any detention of the juvenile pending release shall be in accordance with G.S. 7B-2204.

(c) If an appeal of the transfer order is taken, the superior court shall enter an order either (i) remanding the case to the juvenile court for adjudication or (ii) upholding the transfer order. If the superior court remands the case to juvenile court for adjudication and the juvenile has been granted pretrial release provided in G.S. 15A-533 and G.S. 15A-534, the obligor shall be released from the juvenile's bond upon the district court's review of whether the juvenile shall be placed in secure or nonsecure custody as provided in G.S. 7B-1903.

(d) The superior court order shall be an interlocutory order, and the issue of transfer may be appealed to the Court of Appeals only after the juvenile has been convicted in superior court. The issue of transfer may be appealed to the Court of Appeals in any case involving the transfer of a Class A felony pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200(b) or a Class F or G felony pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(a), only after the juvenile has been convicted in superior court. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-309, s. 2; 1999-423, s. 2; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(k); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2024-17, s. 2(g).)

§ 7B-2604. Proper parties for appeal.

(a) An appeal may be taken by the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, a county, or the State.

(b) The State's appeal is limited to the following orders in delinquency or undisciplined cases:

- (1) An order finding a State statute to be unconstitutional; and
- (2) Any order which terminates the prosecution of a petition by upholding the defense of double jeopardy, by holding that a cause of action is not stated under a statute, or by granting a motion to suppress.

(c) A county's appeal is limited to orders in which the county has been ordered to pay for medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment of a juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7B-2502, or other medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment of a parent pursuant to G.S. 7B-2702. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2003-171, s. 1.)

§ 7B-2605. Disposition pending appeal.

Pending disposition of an appeal, the release of the juvenile, with or without conditions, should issue in every case unless the court orders otherwise. For compelling reasons which must be stated in writing, the court may enter a temporary order affecting the custody or placement of the juvenile as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile or the State. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 12; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2606. Disposition after appeal.

Upon the affirmation of the order of adjudication or disposition of the court by the Court of Appeals or by the Supreme Court in the event of an appeal, the court shall have authority to modify or alter the original order of adjudication or disposition as the court finds to be in the best interests of the juvenile to reflect any adjustment made by the juvenile or change in circumstances during the period of time the appeal was pending. If the modifying order is entered ex parte, the court shall give notice to interested parties to show cause within 10 days thereafter as to why the modifying order should be vacated or altered. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 27.

Authority over Parents of Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent or Undisciplined.

§ 7B-2700. Appearance in court.

The parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court shall attend the hearings of which the parent, guardian, or custodian receives notice. The court may excuse the appearance of either or both parents or the guardian or custodian at a particular hearing or all hearings. Unless so excused, the willful failure of a parent, guardian, or custodian to attend a

hearing of which the parent, guardian, or custodian has notice shall be grounds for contempt. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2701. Parental responsibility classes.

The court may order the parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile who has been adjudicated undisciplined or delinquent to attend parental responsibility classes if those classes are available in the judicial district in which the parent, guardian, or custodian resides. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2702. Medical, surgical, psychiatric, or psychological evaluation or treatment of juvenile or parent.

(a) If the court orders medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment pursuant to G.S. 7B-2502, the court may order the parent or other responsible parties to pay the cost of the treatment or care ordered.

(b) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing, if the court finds that it is in the best interests of the juvenile for the parent to be directly involved in the juvenile's evaluation or treatment, the court may order that person to participate in medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment of the juvenile. The cost of the evaluation or treatment shall be paid pursuant to G.S. 7B-2502.

(c) At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing, the court may determine whether the best interests of the juvenile require that the parent undergo psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment or counseling directed toward remedying behaviors or conditions that led to or contributed to the juvenile's adjudication or to the court's decision to remove custody of the juvenile from the parent. If the court finds that the best interests of the juvenile require the parent undergo evaluation or treatment, it may order that person to comply with a plan of evaluation or treatment approved by the court or condition legal custody or physical placement of the juvenile with the parent upon that person's compliance with the plan of evaluation or treatment.

(d) In cases in which the court has ordered the parent of the juvenile to comply with or undergo evaluation or treatment, the court may order the parent to pay the cost of evaluation or treatment ordered pursuant to this subsection. In cases in which the court has conditioned legal custody or physical placement of the juvenile with the parent upon the parent's compliance with a plan of evaluation or treatment, the court may charge the cost of the evaluation or treatment to the county of the juvenile's residence if the court finds the parent is unable to pay the cost of the evaluation or treatment. In all other cases, if the court finds the parent is unable to pay the cost of the evaluation or treatment ordered pursuant to this subsection, the court may order the parent to receive evaluation or treatment currently available from the area mental health program that serves the parent's catchment area. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 19; 1983, c. 837, ss. 2, 3; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1987, c. 598, s. 2; 1989, c. 218; c. 529, s. 7; 1991, c. 636, s. 19(a); 1995, c. 328, s. 2; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, ss. 3, 4; 1997-456, s. 1; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2703. Compliance with orders of court.

(a) The court may order the parent, guardian, or custodian, to the extent that person is able to do so, to provide transportation for a juvenile to keep an appointment with a juvenile court counselor or to comply with other orders of the court.

(b) The court may order a parent, guardian, or custodian to cooperate with and assist the juvenile in complying with the terms and conditions of probation or other orders of the court. (1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.30.)

§ 7B-2704. Payment of support or other expenses; assignment of insurance coverage.

At the dispositional hearing or a subsequent hearing, if the court finds that the parent is able to do so, the court may order the parent to:

- (1) Pay a reasonable sum that will cover in whole or in part the support of the juvenile. If the court requires the payment of child support, the amount of the payments shall be determined as provided in G.S. 50-13.4;
- (2) Pay a fee for probation supervision or residential facility costs;
- (3) Assign private insurance coverage to cover medical costs while the juvenile is in secure detention, youth development center, or other out-of-home placement; and
- (4) Pay appointed attorneys' fees.

All money paid by a parent pursuant to this section shall be paid into the office of the clerk of superior court.

If the court places a juvenile in the custody of a county department of social services and if the court finds that the parent is unable to pay the cost of the support required by the juvenile, the cost shall be paid by the county department of social services in whose custody the juvenile is placed, provided the juvenile is not receiving care in an institution owned or operated by the State or federal government or any subdivision thereof. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 469, s. 19; 1983, c. 837, ss. 2, 3; 1985, c. 589, s. 5; c. 777, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 863, s. 2; 1987, c. 598, s. 2; 1989, c. 218; c. 529, s. 7; 1991, c. 636, s. 19(a); 1995, c. 328, s. 2; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 609, ss. 3, 4; 1997-456, s. 1; 1997-516, s. 1A; 1998-202, s. 6; 1998-229, s. 6; 2000-144, s. 24; 2001-95, s. 5.)

§ 7B-2705. Employment discrimination unlawful.

No employer may discharge, demote, or deny a promotion or other benefit of employment to any employee because the employee complies with the provisions of this Article. The Commissioner of Labor shall enforce the provisions of this section according to Article 21 of Chapter 95 of the General Statutes, including the rules and regulations issued pursuant to that Article. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2706. Contempt for failure to comply.

Upon motion of the juvenile court counselor or prosecutor or upon the court's own motion, the court may issue an order directing the parent, guardian, or custodian to appear and show cause why the parent, guardian, or custodian should not be found or held in civil or criminal contempt for willfully failing to comply with an order of the court. Chapter 5A of the General Statutes shall govern contempt proceedings initiated pursuant to this Article. (1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.31.)

Article 27A.

Authority Over Parents, Guardians, or Custodians of Vulnerable Juveniles Who Are Receiving Juvenile Consultation Services.

§ 7B-2715. Attend all scheduled meetings with juvenile court counselor.

The parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile being provided services through a juvenile consultation shall attend all scheduled meetings with the juvenile court counselor provided sufficient notice of the meeting was given to the parent, guardian, or custodian. (2021-123, s. 5(e).)

§ 7B-2716. Attend parental responsibility classes.

The juvenile court counselor may direct the parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile who is being provided services through a juvenile consultation to attend parental responsibility classes if those classes are available in the district in which the parent, guardian, or custodian resides. (2021-123, s. 5(e).)

§ 7B-2717. Medical, surgical, psychiatric, or psychological evaluation or treatment of vulnerable juveniles who are receiving juvenile consultation services or parents.

(a) The juvenile court counselor shall work with the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services to obtain for the juvenile any medical, surgical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment as needed or recommended as part of the juvenile consultation process. The juvenile court counselor shall work with the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile and other funding resources to find a means for paying for such services, including helping the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile to apply for benefits under the North Carolina Medicaid program.

(b) The juvenile court counselor, with written recommendations of a qualified physician, surgeon, or mental health provider, shall advise the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services to be directly involved in the juvenile's evaluation or treatment and participate in medical, psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment of the juvenile if it is determined to be in the best interests of the juvenile.

(c) The juvenile court counselor may recommend that the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services undergo psychiatric, psychological, or other evaluation or treatment or counseling with written orders or recommendations from a qualified mental or physical health provider directed toward remedying behaviors or conditions that led to or contributed to the juvenile's receipt of a juvenile consultation.

(d) With written orders or recommendations from a qualified mental or physical health provider, the juvenile court counselor may recommend that the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services seek funding through the Division of Juvenile Justice and/or the local management entity and managed care organization that serves the catchment area to pay the cost of any evaluation or treatment recommended for the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile. (2021-123, s. 5(e); 2022-74, s. 9D.15(d).)

§ 7B-2718. Compliance with recommendations of the juvenile court counselor for juveniles receiving juvenile consultation services.

(a) In cases in which the juvenile court counselor is providing juvenile consultation services, the juvenile court counselor may transport the parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services and the juvenile receiving juvenile consultation services, to the extent the juvenile court counselor is able to do so, to keep an appointment or to comply with the recommendations of the juvenile court counselor.

(b) In all cases in which the juvenile court counselor is providing juvenile consultation services, the juvenile court counselor shall work collaboratively with the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile, the Department of Social Services, the local management entity or

managed care organization, the local education authority, and all other community stakeholders involved with the juvenile and family. This will be identified as the Juvenile and Family Team, and all local community agencies involved with the juvenile and family shall be invited to all meetings scheduled with the juvenile and parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile.

(c) If a parent, guardian, or custodian of a juvenile refuses to follow the recommendations of the Juvenile and Family Team, and this refusal puts the juvenile at risk of abuse, neglect, or dependency, the juvenile court counselor shall report to the Department of Social Services who may file an abuse, neglect, or dependency petition pursuant to G.S. 7B-403. (2021-123, s. 5(e).)

Article 28.

Interstate Compact on Juveniles.

§§ 7B-2800 through 7B-2827: Repealed by Session Laws 2005-194, s. 2. See editor's note.

§§ 7B-2800 through 7B-2827: Repealed by Session Laws 2005-194, s. 2. See editor's note.

§§ 7B-2800 through 7B-2827: Repealed by Session Laws 2005-194, s. 2. See editor's note.

§ 7B-2828: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2829: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2830: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2831: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2832: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2833: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2834: Reserved for future codification purposes.

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§ 7B-2889: Reserved for future codification purposes.

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§ 7B-2897: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2898: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 7B-2899: Reserved for future codification purposes.

SUBCHAPTER III. JUVENILE RECORDS.

Article 29.

Records and Social Reports of Cases of Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency.

§ 7B-2900. Definitions.

The definitions of G.S. 7B-101 and G.S. 7B-1501 apply to this Subchapter. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-2901. Confidentiality of records.

(a) The clerk shall maintain a complete record of all juvenile cases filed in the clerk's office alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency. The records shall be withheld from public inspection and, except as provided in this subsection, may be examined only by order of the court. The record shall include the summons, petition, custody order, court order, written motions, the electronic or mechanical recording of the hearing, and other papers filed in the proceeding. The recording of the hearing shall be reduced to a written transcript only when notice of appeal has been timely given. After the time for appeal has expired with no appeal having been filed, the recording of the hearing may be erased or destroyed upon the written order of the court or in accordance with a retention schedule approved by the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources under G.S. 121-5(c).

The following persons may examine the juvenile's record maintained pursuant to this subsection and obtain copies of written parts of the record without an order of the court:

- (1) The person named in the petition as the juvenile;
- (2) The guardian ad litem;
- (3) The county department of social services; and

- (4) The juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, or the attorney for the juvenile or the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian.

(b) The Director of the Department of Social Services shall maintain a record of the cases of juveniles under protective custody by the Department or under placement by the court, which shall include family background information; reports of social, medical, psychiatric, or psychological information concerning a juvenile or the juvenile's family; interviews with the juvenile's family; or other information which the court finds should be protected from public inspection in the best interests of the juvenile. The records maintained pursuant to this subsection may be examined only in the following circumstances:

- (1) The juvenile's guardian ad litem or the juvenile, including a juvenile who has reached age 18 or been emancipated, is authorized to review the record and request all or part of the record unless prohibited by federal law. The department shall provide electronic or written copies of the requested information within a reasonable period of time.
- (2) A district or superior court judge of this State presiding over a civil matter in which the department is not a party may order the department to release confidential information, after providing the department with reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard and then determining that the information is relevant and necessary to the trial of the matter before the court and unavailable from any other source. This subsection shall not be construed to relieve any court of its duty to conduct hearings and make findings required under relevant federal law before ordering the release of any private medical or mental health information or records related to substance abuse or HIV status or treatment. The department may surrender the requested records to the court, for in camera review, if surrender is necessary to make the required determinations.
- (3) A district or superior court judge of this State presiding over a criminal or delinquency matter shall conduct an in camera review before releasing to the defendant or juvenile any confidential records maintained by the department of social services, except those records the defendant or juvenile is entitled to pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.
- (4) The department may disclose confidential information to a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker in accordance with G.S. 7B-700.

(c) In the case of a child victim, the court may order the sharing of information among such public agencies as the court deems necessary to reduce the trauma to the victim.

(d) The court's entire record of a proceeding involving consent for an abortion on an unemancipated minor under Article 1A, Part 2 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes is not a matter of public record, shall be maintained separately from any juvenile record, shall be withheld from public inspection, and may be examined only by order of the court, by the unemancipated minor, or by the unemancipated minor's attorney or guardian ad litem. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 297; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 1; 1995, c. 462, s. 4; c. 509, s. 5; 1997-459, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-208, s. 10; 2001-487, s. 101; 2009-311, s. 18; 2017-158, s. 23; 2021-100, s. 18.)

§ 7B-2902. Disclosure in child fatality or near fatality cases.

(a) The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Child fatality. – The death of a child from suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment.

- (2) Findings and information. – A written summary, as allowed by subsections (c) through (f) of this section, of actions taken or services rendered by a public agency following receipt of information that a child might be in need of protection. The written summary shall include any of the following information the agency is able to provide:
 - a. The dates, outcomes, and results of any actions taken or services rendered.
 - b. The results of any review by a local child fatality review team, or any public agency.
 - c. Confirmation of the receipt of all reports, accepted or not accepted by the county department of social services, for investigation of suspected child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, including confirmation that investigations were conducted, the results of the investigations, a description of the conduct of the most recent investigation and the services rendered, and a statement of basis for the department's decision.
- (3) Near fatality. – A case in which a physician determines that a child is in serious or critical condition as the result of sickness or injury caused by suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment.
- (4) Public agency. – Any agency of State government or its subdivisions as defined in G.S. 132-1(a).

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law and subject to the provisions of subsections (c) through (f) of this section, a public agency shall disclose to the public, upon request, the findings and information related to a child fatality or near fatality if:

- (1) A person is criminally charged with having caused the child fatality or near fatality; or
- (2) The district attorney has certified that a person would be charged with having caused the child fatality or near fatality but for that person's prior death.

(c) Nothing herein shall be deemed to authorize access to the confidential records in the custody of a public agency, or the disclosure to the public of the substance or content of any psychiatric, psychological, or therapeutic evaluations or like materials or information pertaining to the child or the child's family unless directly related to the cause of the child fatality or near fatality, or the disclosure of information that would reveal the identities of persons who provided information related to the suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment of the child.

(d) Within five working days from the receipt of a request for findings and information related to a child fatality or near fatality, a public agency shall consult with the appropriate district attorney and provide the findings and information unless the agency has a reasonable belief that release of the information:

- (1) Is not authorized by subsections (a) and (b) of this section;
- (2) Is likely to cause mental or physical harm or danger to a minor child residing in the deceased or injured child's household;
- (3) Is likely to jeopardize the State's ability to prosecute the defendant;
- (4) Is likely to jeopardize the defendant's right to a fair trial;
- (5) Is likely to undermine an ongoing or future criminal investigation; or
- (6) Is not authorized by federal law and regulations.

(e) Any person whose request is denied may apply to the appropriate superior court for an order compelling disclosure of the findings and information of the public agency. The application

shall set forth, with reasonable particularity, factors supporting the application. The superior court shall have jurisdiction to issue such orders. Actions brought pursuant to this section shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in such actions shall be accorded priority by the appellate courts. After the court has reviewed the specific findings and information, in camera, the court shall issue an order compelling disclosure unless the court finds that one or more of the circumstances in subsection (d) of this section exist.

(f) Access to criminal investigative reports and criminal intelligence information of public law enforcement agencies and confidential information in the possession of the local teams, and the Child Fatality Task Force, shall be governed by G.S. 132-1.4 and G.S. 7B-1413 respectively. Nothing herein shall be deemed to require the disclosure or release of any information in the possession of a district attorney.

(g) Any public agency or its employees acting in good faith in disclosing or declining to disclose information pursuant to this section shall be immune from any criminal or civil liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed for such action.

(h) Nothing herein shall be deemed to narrow or limit the definition of "public records" as set forth in G.S. 132-1(a). (1997-459, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2023-134, s. 9H.15(g); 2024-1, s. 3.6(a); 2024-57, s. 2B.2(d).)

Article 30.

Juvenile Records and Social Reports of Delinquency and Undisciplined Cases.

§ 7B-3000. Juvenile court records.

(a) The clerk shall maintain a complete record of all juvenile cases filed in the clerk's office to be known as the juvenile record. The record shall include the summons and petition, any secure or nonsecure custody order, any electronic or mechanical recording of hearings, and any written motions, orders, or papers filed in the proceeding.

(b) All juvenile records shall be withheld from public inspection and, except as provided in this subsection, may be examined only by order of the court. Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the following persons may examine the juvenile's record and obtain copies of written parts of the record without an order of the court:

- (1) The juvenile or the juvenile's attorney;
- (2) The juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, or the authorized representative of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) The prosecutor;
- (4) Court counselors; and
- (5) Probation officers in the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry of the Department of Adult Correction, as provided in subsection (e1) of this section and in G.S. 15A-1341(e).

Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the prosecutor may, in the prosecutor's discretion, share information obtained from a juvenile's record with magistrates and law enforcement officers sworn in this State, but may not allow a magistrate or law enforcement officer to photocopy any part of the record. A prosecutor shall share information with a victim only as provided in Article 20A of this Chapter and shall not allow a victim to examine or photocopy any part of the record.

(c) The court may direct the clerk to "seal" any portion of a juvenile's record. The clerk shall secure any sealed portion of a juvenile's record in an envelope clearly marked "SEALED: MAY BE EXAMINED ONLY BY ORDER OF THE COURT", or with similar notice, and shall

permit examination or copying of sealed portions of a juvenile's record only pursuant to a court order specifically authorizing inspection or copying.

(d) Any portion of a juvenile's record consisting of an electronic or mechanical recording of a hearing shall be transcribed only when notice of appeal has been timely given and shall be copied electronically or mechanically, only by order of the court. After the time for appeal has expired with no appeal having been filed, the court may enter a written order directing the clerk to destroy the recording of the hearing, or the recording may be destroyed in accordance with a retention schedule approved by the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources under G.S. 121-5(c).

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if the defendant in a criminal proceeding involving a Class A1 misdemeanor or a felony was less than 21 years of age at the time of the offense, information obtained pursuant to subsection (b) of this section regarding the juvenile's record of an adjudication of delinquency for an offense that would be a Class A1 misdemeanor or a felony if committed by an adult, where the adjudication occurred after the defendant reached 13 years of age, may be used by law enforcement, the magistrate, the courts, and the prosecutor for pretrial release, plea negotiating decisions, and plea acceptance decisions. Information obtained regarding any juvenile record shall remain confidential and shall not be placed in any public record.

(e1) When a person is subject to probation supervision under Article 82 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes, for an offense that was committed while the person was less than 25 years of age, that person's juvenile record of an adjudication of delinquency for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult may be examined without a court order by the probation officer in the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry assigned to supervise the person for the purpose of assessing risk related to supervision.

Each judicial district manager in the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry shall designate a staff person in each county to obtain from the clerk, at the request of the probation officer assigned to supervise the person, any juvenile records authorized to be examined under this subsection. The judicial district manager shall inform the clerk in each county, in writing, of the designated staff person in the county. The designated staff person shall transfer any juvenile records obtained to the probation officer assigned to supervise the person.

Any copies of juvenile records obtained pursuant to this subsection shall continue to be withheld from public inspection and shall not become part of the public record in any criminal proceeding. Any copies of juvenile records shall be destroyed within 30 days of termination of the person's period of probation supervision. Any other information in the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry records, relating to a person's juvenile record, shall remain confidential and shall be maintained or destroyed pursuant to guidelines established by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the maintenance and destruction of Division of Community Supervision and Reentry records.

(f) The juvenile's record of an adjudication of delinquency for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult may be used in a subsequent criminal proceeding against the juvenile either under G.S. 8C-1, Rule 404(b), or to prove an aggravating factor at sentencing under G.S. 15A-1340.4(a), 15A-1340.16(d), or 15A-2000(e). The record may be so used only by order of the court in the subsequent criminal proceeding, upon motion of the prosecutor, after an in camera hearing to determine whether the record in question is admissible.

(g) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, a juvenile's record shall be destroyed only as authorized by G.S. 7B-3200 or by rules adopted by the Administrative Office of

the Courts. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 297; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 1; 1995, c. 462, s. 4; c. 509, s. 5; 1997-459, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2002-159, s. 26; 2009-372, s. 1; 2009-545, s. 2; 2011-145, s. 19.1(h), (k); 2011-277, s. 1; 2012-83, s. 17; 2015-241, s. 14.30(s); 2017-158, s. 24; 2017-186, s. 2(m); 2019-216, s. 12; 2021-180, s. 19C.9(v), (v1).)

§ 7B-3001. Other records relating to juveniles.

(a) The chief court counselor shall maintain a record of all cases of juveniles under supervision of juvenile court counselors, to be known as the juvenile court counselor's record. The juvenile court counselor's record shall include the juvenile's delinquency record; consultations with law enforcement that did not result in the filing of a complaint; family background information; reports of social, medical, psychiatric, or psychological information concerning a juvenile or the juvenile's family; probation reports; interviews with the juvenile's family; the results of the gang assessment; or other information the court finds should be protected from public inspection in the best interests of the juvenile.

(a1) To assist at the time of investigation of an incident that could result in the filing of a complaint, upon request, a juvenile court counselor shall share with a law enforcement officer sworn in this State information from the juvenile court counselor's record related to a juvenile's delinquency record or prior consultations with law enforcement. A law enforcement officer may not obtain copies of any part of the record, and all information shared pursuant to this subsection shall be withheld from public inspection as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Unless jurisdiction of the juvenile has been transferred to superior court, all law enforcement records and files concerning a juvenile shall be kept separate from the records and files of adults and shall be withheld from public inspection. The following persons may examine and obtain copies of law enforcement records and files concerning a juvenile without an order of the court:

- (1) The juvenile or the juvenile's attorney;
- (2) The juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or the authorized representative of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) The prosecutor;
- (4) Juvenile court counselors; and
- (5) Law enforcement officers sworn in this State.

Otherwise, the records and files may be examined or copied only by order of the court.

(c) All records and files maintained by the Division pursuant to this Chapter shall be withheld from public inspection. The following persons may examine and obtain copies of the Division records and files concerning a juvenile without an order of the court:

- (1) The juvenile and the juvenile's attorney;
- (2) The juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or the authorized representative of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (3) Professionals in the agency who are directly involved in the juvenile's case; and
- (4) Juvenile court counselors.

Otherwise, the records and files may be examined or copied only by order of the court. The court may inspect and order the release of records maintained by the Division.

(d) When the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry of the Department of Adult Correction is authorized to access a juvenile record pursuant to G.S. 7B-3000(e1), the Division may, at the request of the Division of Community of Supervision and Reentry, notify the Division of Community of Supervision and Reentry that there is a juvenile record of an adjudication of

delinquency for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult for a person subject to probation supervision under Article 82 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes and may notify the Division of Community of Supervision and Reentry of the county or counties where the adjudication of delinquency occurred. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 297; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 1; 1995, c. 462, s. 4; c. 509, s. 5; 1997-459, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.32; 2009-372, s. 2; 2009-545, s. 3; 2011-145, s. 19.1(h), (k), (l); 2017-57, s. 16D.4(x), (ii); 2017-186, s. 2(n); 2017-197, s. 5.4; 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(v), (v1).)

Article 31.

Disclosure of Juvenile Information.

§ 7B-3100. Disclosure of information about juveniles.

(a) The Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety, after consultation with the Conference of Chief District Court Judges, shall adopt rules designating certain local agencies that are authorized to share information concerning juveniles in accordance with the provisions of this section. Agencies so designated shall share with one another, upon request and to the extent permitted by federal law and regulations, information that is in their possession that is relevant to (i) any assessment of a report of child abuse, neglect, or dependency or the provision or arrangement of protective services in a child abuse, neglect, or dependency case by a local department of social services pursuant to the authority granted under Chapter 7B of the General Statutes, (ii) any case in which a petition is filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, dependent, undisciplined, or delinquent, or (iii) any case in which a vulnerable juvenile is receiving juvenile consultation services. Agencies shall continue to share information until (i) the protective services case is closed by the local department of social services, (ii) if a petition is filed, until the juvenile is no longer subject to the jurisdiction of juvenile court, or (iii) if a vulnerable juvenile is receiving juvenile consultation services, until the juvenile consultation is closed. Agencies that may be designated as "agencies authorized to share information" include local mental health facilities, local health departments, local departments of social services, local law enforcement agencies, local school administrative units, the district's district attorney's office, the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety, and the Office of Guardian ad Litem Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts, and, pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 7B-3000(e1), the Division of Community Supervision and Reentry of the Department of Adult Correction. Any information shared among agencies pursuant to this section shall remain confidential, shall be withheld from public inspection, and shall be used only for the protection of the juvenile and others or to improve the educational opportunities of the juvenile, and shall be released in accordance with the provisions of the Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act as set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. Nothing in this section or any other provision of law shall preclude any other necessary sharing of information among agencies. Nothing herein shall be deemed to require the disclosure or release of any information in the possession of a district attorney.

(b) Disclosure of information concerning any juvenile under investigation, alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the court, or receiving juvenile consultation services that would reveal the identity of that juvenile is prohibited except that publication of pictures of runaways is permitted with the permission of the parents and except as provided in Article 20A of this Chapter and G.S. 7B-3102.

(c) The juvenile's guardian ad litem attorney advocate appointed pursuant to G.S. 7B-601 may share confidential information about the juvenile with the juvenile's attorney appointed or retained pursuant to G.S. 7B-2000. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1987, c. 297; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 1;

1995, c. 462, s. 4; c. 509, s. 5; 1997-459, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2006-205, s. 2; 2007-458, s. 4; 2009-372, s. 3; 2011-145, s. 19.1(h), (k), (l); 2017-186, s. 2(o); 2019-33, s. 16; 2019-216, s. 13; 2021-123, s. 5(f); 2021-180, s. 19C.9(gg).)

§ 7B-3101. Notification of schools when juveniles are alleged or found to be delinquent.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 7B-3000, the juvenile court counselor shall deliver verbal and written notification of any of the following actions to the principal of the school that the juvenile attends:

- (1) A petition is filed under G.S. 7B-1802 that alleges delinquency for an offense that would constitute a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult. The principal of the school shall make an individualized decision related to the status of the student during the pendency of the matter and not have an automatic suspension policy.
- (2) The court transfers jurisdiction over a juvenile to the superior court under G.S. 7B-2200.5 or G.S. 7B-2200 for an offense that would constitute a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.
- (3) The court dismisses under G.S. 7B-2411 the petition that alleges delinquency for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.
- (4) The court issues a dispositional order under Article 25 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes including, but not limited to, an order of probation that requires school attendance, concerning a juvenile alleged or found delinquent for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult.
- (5) The court modifies or vacates any order or disposition under G.S. 7B-2600 concerning a juvenile alleged or found delinquent for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.

Notification of the school principal in person or by telephone shall be made before the beginning of the next school day. Delivery shall be made as soon as practicable but at least within five days of the action. Delivery shall be made in person or by certified mail. Notification that a petition has been filed shall describe the nature of the offense. Notification of a dispositional order, a modified or vacated order, or a transfer to superior court shall describe the court's action and any applicable disposition requirements. As used in this subsection, the term "offense" does not include any offense under Chapter 20 of the General Statutes.

(b) If the principal of the school the juvenile attends returns any notification as required by G.S. 115C-404, and if the juvenile court counselor learns that the juvenile is transferring to another school, the juvenile court counselor shall deliver the notification to the principal of the school to which the juvenile is transferring. Delivery shall be made as soon as practicable and shall be made in person or by certified mail.

(c) Principals shall handle any notification delivered under this section in accordance with G.S. 115C-404.

(d) For the purpose of this section, "school" means any public or private school in the State that is authorized under Chapter 115C of the General Statutes. (1997-443, s. 8.29(e); 1998-202, s. 6; 2017-57, s. 16D.4(l); 2018-142, s. 23(b); 2019-177, s. 2; 2024-17, s. 4(a); 2025-70, s. 10.)

§ 7B-3102. Disclosure of information about juveniles who escape.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 7B-2102(d) or any other law to the contrary, within 24 hours of the time a juvenile escapes from custody the Division shall release to the public the juvenile's first name, last initial, and photograph; the name and location of the institution from which the juvenile escaped, or if the juvenile's escape was not from an institution, the circumstances and location of the escape; and if deemed appropriate a statement, based on the juvenile's record, of the level of concern of the Division as to the juvenile's threat to self or to others, if the juvenile escapes from a detention facility, secure custody, or a youth development center and the juvenile has been adjudicated delinquent. The determination of the level of threat posed by a juvenile who escapes from custody shall be made by the Deputy Commissioner of Juvenile Justice or the Deputy Commissioner's designee.

(b) When a juvenile escapes from a detention facility or secure custody, the Division may release to the public within 24 hours the juvenile's first name, last initial, and photograph; the name and location of the institution from which the juvenile escaped, or if the juvenile's escape was not from an institution, the circumstances and location of the escape; and a statement, based on the juvenile's record, of the level of concern of the Division as to the juvenile's threat to self or to others if both of the following apply:

- (1) The juvenile is alleged to have committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult.
- (2) The Division determines, based on the juvenile's record, that the juvenile presents a danger to self or others.

(c) If a juvenile subject to subsection (a) or (b) of this section is returned to custody before the disclosure required or permitted is made, the Division shall not make the disclosure.

(d) The Division shall maintain a photograph of every juvenile in its custody.

(e) Before information is released to the public under this section, the Division shall make a reasonable effort to notify a parent, legal guardian, or custodian of the juvenile, and shall also make a reasonable effort to provide notification to the victim in accordance with G.S. 7B-2055. (2007-458, s. 2; 2008-169, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2015-41, s. 1; 2019-216, s. 14.)

§ 7B-3103. Disclosure of information about juveniles for public safety reasons.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 7B-2102(d) or any other provision of law to the contrary, a court may order the Division or any law enforcement agency within the State to release to the public the information contained in subsection (b) of this section if a court makes all of the following findings in a written order:

- (1) A petition has been filed alleging that the juvenile has committed at least one offense that would subject the juvenile to transfer to superior court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200 or G.S. 7B-2200.5.
- (2) There is a judicial determination, based on the juvenile's record or the nature of the alleged offense or offenses, that the juvenile presents a danger to self or others.
- (3) There is a judicial determination that good cause exists for the disclosure.

(b) The following information about a juvenile subject to a public disclosure under subsection (a) of this section may be released to the public:

- (1) The juvenile's first name, last name, and photograph.
- (2) Any offense in a juvenile petition alleged to have been committed by the juvenile.
- (3) Whether a secure custody order has been issued for the juvenile.

(4) A statement, based on the juvenile's record or the nature of the alleged offense and the level of concern of the Division or law enforcement agency, as to the juvenile's threat to self or others.

(c) If a juvenile who is the subject of an order entered under subsection (a) of this section is taken into custody before the required disclosure is made to the public, the Division or law enforcement agency shall not make the disclosure. If the juvenile who is the subject of an order entered under subsection (a) of this section or a disclosure pursuant to subsection (e) of this section is taken into custody, then all released information must be removed from any publicly available law enforcement agency or Division website or social media account controlled by the law enforcement agency or Division.

(d) Before the information contained in subsection (b) of this section is released to the public, the Division or law enforcement agency shall make a reasonable effort to notify a parent, legal guardian, or custodian of the juvenile.

(e) Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (d) of this section, when exigent circumstances exist, the Division or any law enforcement agency within the State may release the information contained in subsection (b) of this section. If information is released pursuant to this subsection, the releasing party must seek an order as provided by subsection (a) of this section as soon as reasonably practicable, but no later than the first available session of a court in the county after the release of information. If a court does not issue an order as provided by subsection (a) of this section at the next available session of court, all released information must be removed from any publicly available law enforcement agency or Division website or social media account controlled by the law enforcement agency or Division. (2023-114, s. 2(a).)

Article 32.

Expunction of Juvenile Records.

§ 7B-3200. Expunction of records of juveniles alleged or adjudicated delinquent and undisciplined.

(a) Any person who has attained the age of 18 years may file a petition in the court where the person was adjudicated undisciplined for expunction of all records of that adjudication.

(b) Any person who has attained the age of 18 years may file a petition in the court where the person was adjudicated delinquent for expunction of all records of that adjudication provided:

(1) The offense for which the person was adjudicated would have been a crime other than a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult.

(1a) The person has been released from juvenile court jurisdiction.

(2) At least 18 months have elapsed since the person was released from juvenile court jurisdiction, and the person has not subsequently been adjudicated delinquent or convicted as an adult of any felony or misdemeanor other than a traffic violation under the laws of the United States or the laws of this State or any other state.

The requirements set forth in subdivision (2) of this subsection shall not apply to a person whose participation in the offense was a result of having been a victim of human trafficking as defined in G.S. 14-43.10 or a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons as defined in the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 22 U.S.C. § 7102.

Records relating to an adjudication for an offense that would be a Class A, B1, B2, C, D, or E felony if committed by an adult shall not be expunged.

(c) The petition shall contain, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- (1) An affidavit by the petitioner that includes all of the following statements:
 - a. That the petitioner has been of good behavior since the adjudication.
 - b. If the petition is based on a delinquency adjudication, that the petitioner has been released from juvenile court jurisdiction and has not subsequently been adjudicated delinquent or convicted as an adult of any felony or misdemeanor other than a traffic violation under the laws of the United States, or the laws of this State or any other state.
 - c. If the petitioner is not subject to the requirements set forth in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, the affidavit shall state that the petitioner was adjudicated delinquent for an offense the petitioner participated in as a result of having been a victim of human trafficking as defined in G.S. 14-43.10 or a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons as defined in the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 22 U.S.C. § 7102.
- (2) Verified affidavits of two persons, who are not related to the petitioner or to each other by blood or marriage, that they know the character and reputation of the petitioner in the community in which the petitioner lives and that the petitioner's character and reputation are good.
- (3) A statement that the petition is a motion in the cause in the case wherein the petitioner was adjudicated delinquent or undisciplined.

The petition shall be served upon the district attorney in the district wherein adjudication occurred. The district attorney shall have 10 days thereafter in which to file any objection thereto and shall be duly notified as to the date of the hearing on the petition.

(d) If the court, after hearing, finds that the petitioner satisfies the conditions set out in subsections (a) or (b) of this section, the court shall order and direct the clerk and all law enforcement agencies to expunge their records of the adjudication including all references to arrests, complaints, referrals, petitions, and orders.

(e) The clerk shall forward a certified copy of the order to the sheriff, chief of police, or other law enforcement agency.

(f) Records of a juvenile adjudicated delinquent or undisciplined being maintained by the chief court counselor, an intake counselor, or a juvenile court counselor shall be retained or disposed of as provided by the Division, except that no records shall be destroyed before the juvenile reaches the age of 18 or 18 months have elapsed since the person was released from juvenile court jurisdiction, whichever occurs last.

(g) Records of a juvenile adjudicated delinquent or undisciplined being maintained by personnel at a residential facility operated by the Division, shall be retained or disposed of as provided by the Division, except that no records shall be destroyed before the juvenile reaches the age of 18 or 18 months have elapsed since the person was released from juvenile court jurisdiction, whichever occurs last.

(h) Any person who was alleged to be delinquent as a juvenile and has attained the age of 16 years, or was alleged to be undisciplined as a juvenile and has attained the age of 18 years, may file a petition in the court in which the person was alleged to be delinquent or undisciplined, for expunction of all juvenile records of the juvenile having been alleged to be delinquent or undisciplined if the court dismissed the juvenile petition without an adjudication that the juvenile was delinquent or undisciplined. The petition shall be served on the chief court counselor in the district where the juvenile petition was filed. The chief court counselor shall have 10 days

thereafter in which to file a written objection in the court. If no objection is filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. If an objection is filed or the court so directs, a hearing shall be scheduled and the chief court counselor shall be notified as to the date of the hearing. If the court finds at the hearing that the petitioner satisfies the conditions specified herein, the court shall order the clerk and the appropriate law enforcement agencies to expunge their records of the allegations of delinquent or undisciplined acts including all references to arrests, complaints, referrals, juvenile petitions, and orders. The clerk shall forward a certified copy of the order of expunction to the sheriff, chief of police, or other appropriate law enforcement agency, and to the chief court counselor, and these specified officials shall immediately destroy all records relating to the allegations that the juvenile was delinquent or undisciplined.

(i) The clerk of superior court in each county in North Carolina shall, as soon as practicable after each term of court in the clerk's county, file with the Administrative Office of the Courts, the names of those persons granted an expunction under the provisions of this section, and the Administrative Office of the Courts shall maintain a confidential file containing the names of persons granted an expunction. The information contained in such file shall be disclosed only to judges of the General Court of Justice of North Carolina for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person charged with an offense has been previously granted an expunction. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1989, c. 186; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 2; 1995, c. 509, s. 6; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 2000-137, s. 3; 2001-490, s. 2.33; 2011-145, s. 19.1(l); 2019-158, s. 4(d).)

§ 7B-3201. Effect of expunction.

(a) Whenever a juvenile's record is expunged, with respect to the matter in which the record was expunged, the juvenile who is the subject of the record and the juvenile's parent may not be held thereafter under any provision of any laws to be guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a false statement by reason of the person's failure to recite or acknowledge such record or response to any inquiry made of the person for any purpose.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, in any delinquency case if the juvenile is the defendant and chooses to testify or if the juvenile is not the defendant and is called as a witness, the juvenile may be ordered to testify with respect to whether the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1037, s. 7; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3202. Notice of expunction.

Upon expunction of a juvenile's record, the clerk shall send a written notice to the juvenile at the juvenile's last known address informing the juvenile that the record has been expunged and with respect to the matter involved, the juvenile may not be held thereafter under any provision of any laws to be guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a false statement by reason of the juvenile's failure to recite or acknowledge such record or response to any inquiry made of the juvenile for any purpose except that upon testifying in a delinquency proceeding, the juvenile may be required by a court to disclose that the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1037, s. 8; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 33.

Computation of Recidivism Rates.

§ 7B-3300: Repealed by Session Laws 2005-276, s. 14.19(c), effective July 1, 2005.

SUBCHAPTER IV. PARENTAL AUTHORITY; EMANCIPATION.

Article 34.

Parental Authority over Juveniles.

§ 7B-3400. Juvenile under 18 subject to parents' control.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any juvenile under 18 years of age, except as provided in G.S. 7B-3402 and G.S. 7B-3403, shall be subject to the supervision and control of the juvenile's parents. (1969, c. 1080, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3401. Definitions.

The definitions of G.S. 7B-101 and G.S. 7B-1501 apply to this Subchapter. (1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3402. Exceptions.

This Article shall not apply to any juvenile under the age of 18 who is married or who is serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, or who has been emancipated. (1969, c. 1080, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6; 2011-183, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3403. No criminal liability created.

This Article shall not be interpreted to place any criminal liability on a parent, guardian, or custodian for any act of the juvenile 16 years of age or older. (1969, c. 1080, s. 3; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3404. Enforcement.

The provisions of this Article may be enforced by the parent, guardian, custodian, or person who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent without being awarded legal custody of the juvenile by a court to the juvenile by filing a civil action in the district court of the county where the juvenile can be found or the county of the plaintiff's residence. Upon the institution of such action by a verified complaint, alleging that the defendant juvenile has left home or has left the place where the juvenile has been residing and refuses to return and comply with the direction and control of the plaintiff, the court may issue an order directing the juvenile personally to appear before the court at a specified time to be heard in answer to the allegations of the plaintiff and to comply with further orders of the court. Such orders shall be served by the sheriff upon the juvenile and upon any other person named as a party defendant in such action. At the time of the issuance of the order directing the juvenile to appear, the court may in the same order, or by separate order, order the sheriff to enter any house, building, structure, or conveyance for the purpose of searching for the juvenile and serving the order and for the purpose of taking custody of the person of the juvenile in order to bring the juvenile before the court. Any order issued at said hearing shall be treated as a mandatory injunction and shall remain in full force and effect until the juvenile reaches the age of 18, or until further orders of the court. Within 30 days after the hearing on the original order, the juvenile, or anyone acting in the juvenile's behalf, may file a verified answer to the complaint. Upon the filing of an answer by or on behalf of the juvenile, any district court judge holding court in the county or district court district as defined in G.S. 7A-133 where the action was instituted shall have jurisdiction to hear the matter, without a jury, and to make findings of fact, conclusions of law, and render judgment thereon. Appeals from the district court to the Court of Appeals shall be allowed as in civil actions generally. The district court issuing the original order or the district court hearing the matter after answer has been filed shall also have authority to order that any person named defendant in the order or judgment shall not harbor, keep, or allow the defendant juvenile to remain on the person's premises or in the person's home. Failure of any defendant to comply with the terms of said order or judgment shall be punishable as for contempt.

(1969, c. 1080, s. 4; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 108; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1031, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 35.

Emancipation.

§ 7B-3500. Who may petition.

Any juvenile who is 16 years of age or older and who has resided in the same county in North Carolina or on federal territory within the boundaries of North Carolina for six months next preceding the filing of the petition may petition the court in that county for a judicial decree of emancipation. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3501. Petition.

The petition shall be signed and verified by the petitioner and shall contain the following information:

- (1) The full name of the petitioner and the petitioner's birth date, and state and county of birth;
- (2) A certified copy of the petitioner's birth certificate;
- (3) The name and last known address of the parent, guardian, or custodian;
- (4) The petitioner's address and length of residence at that address;
- (5) The petitioner's reasons for requesting emancipation; and
- (6) The petitioner's plan for meeting the petitioner's needs and living expenses which plan may include a statement of employment and wages earned that is verified by the petitioner's employer. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3502. Summons.

A copy of the filed petition along with a summons shall be served upon the petitioner's parent, guardian, or custodian who shall be named as respondents. The summons shall include the time and place of the hearing and shall notify the respondents to file written answer within 30 days after service of the summons and petition. In the event that personal service cannot be obtained, service shall be in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j). (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3503. Hearing.

The court, sitting without a jury, shall permit all parties to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. The petitioner has the burden of showing by a preponderance of the evidence that emancipation is in the petitioner's best interests. Upon finding that reasonable cause exists, the court may order the juvenile to be examined by a psychiatrist, a licensed clinical psychologist, a physician, or any other expert to evaluate the juvenile's mental or physical condition. The court may continue the hearing and order investigation by a juvenile court counselor or by the county department of social services to substantiate allegations of the petitioner or respondents.

No husband-wife or physician-patient privilege shall be grounds for excluding any evidence in the hearing. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2001-490, s. 2.34.)

§ 7B-3504. Considerations for emancipation.

In determining the best interests of the petitioner and the need for emancipation, the court shall review the following considerations:

- (1) The parental need for the earnings of the petitioner;
- (2) The petitioner's ability to function as an adult;
- (3) The petitioner's need to contract as an adult or to marry;
- (4) The employment status of the petitioner and the stability of the petitioner's living arrangements;
- (5) The extent of family discord which may threaten reconciliation of the petitioner with the petitioner's family;
- (6) The petitioner's rejection of parental supervision or support; and
- (7) The quality of parental supervision or support. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3505. Final decree of emancipation.

After reviewing the considerations for emancipation, the court may enter a decree of emancipation if the court determines:

- (1) That all parties are properly before the court or were duly served and failed to appear and that time for filing an answer has expired;
- (2) That the petitioner has shown a proper and lawful plan for adequately providing for the petitioner's needs and living expenses;
- (3) That the petitioner is knowingly seeking emancipation and fully understands the ramifications of the act; and
- (4) That emancipation is in the best interests of the petitioner.

The decree shall set out the court's findings.

If the court determines that the criteria in subdivisions (1) through (4) are not met, the court shall order the proceeding dismissed. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3506. Costs of court.

The court may tax the costs of the proceeding to any party or may, for good cause, order the costs remitted.

The clerk may collect costs for furnishing to the petitioner a certificate of emancipation which shall recite the name of the petitioner and the fact of the petitioner's emancipation by court decree and shall have the seal of the clerk affixed thereon. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3507. Legal effect of final decree.

As of entry of the final decree of emancipation:

- (1) The petitioner has the same right to make contracts and conveyances, to sue and to be sued, and to transact business as if the petitioner were an adult.
- (2) The parent, guardian, or custodian is relieved of all legal duties and obligations owed to the petitioner and is divested of all rights with respect to the petitioner.
- (3) The decree is irrevocable.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, a decree of emancipation shall not alter the application of G.S. 14-326.1 or the petitioner's right to inherit property by intestate succession. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3508. Appeals.

Any petitioner, parent, guardian, or custodian who is a party to a proceeding under this Article may appeal from any order of disposition to the Court of Appeals provided that notice of appeal is given in open court at the time of the hearing or in writing within 10 days after entry of the order. Entry of an order shall be treated in the same manner as entry of a judgment under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 58 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. Pending disposition of an appeal, the court may enter a temporary order affecting the custody or placement of the petitioner as the court finds to be in the best interests of the petitioner or the State. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-309, s. 3.)

§ 7B-3509. Application of common law.

A married juvenile is emancipated by this Article. All other common-law provisions for emancipation are superseded by this Article. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 36.

Judicial Consent for Emergency Surgical or Medical Treatment.

§ 7B-3600. Judicial authorization of emergency treatment; procedure.

A juvenile in need of emergency treatment under Article 1A of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, whose physician is barred from rendering necessary treatment by reason of parental refusal to consent to treatment, may receive treatment with court authorization under the following procedure:

- (1) The physician shall sign a written statement setting out:
 - a. The treatment to be rendered and the emergency need for treatment;
 - b. The refusal of the parent, guardian, custodian, or person who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent without being awarded legal custody of the juvenile by a court to consent to the treatment; and
 - c. The impossibility of contacting a second physician for a concurring opinion on the need for treatment in time to prevent immediate harm to the juvenile.
- (2) Upon examining the physician's written statement prescribed in subdivision (1) of this section and finding:
 - a. That the statement is in accordance with this Article, and
 - b. That the proposed treatment is necessary to prevent immediate harm to the juvenile.The court may issue a written authorization for the proposed treatment to be rendered.
- (3) In acute emergencies in which time may not permit implementation of the written procedure set out in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this section, the court may authorize treatment in person or by telephone upon receiving the oral statement of a physician satisfying the requirements of subdivision (1) of this section and upon finding that the proposed treatment is necessary to prevent immediate harm to the juvenile.
- (4) The court's authorization for treatment overriding parental refusal to consent should not be given without attempting to offer the parent an opportunity to state the reasons for refusal; however, failure of the court to hear the parent's objections shall not invalidate judicial authorization under this Article.
- (5) The court's authorization for treatment under subdivisions (1) and (2) of this section shall be issued in duplicate. One copy shall be given to the treating

physician and the other copy shall be attached to the physician's written statement and filed as a juvenile proceeding in the office of the clerk of court.

- (6) The court's authorization for treatment under subdivision (3) of this section shall be reduced to writing as soon as possible, supported by the physician's written statement as prescribed in subdivision (1) of this section and shall be filed as prescribed in subdivision (5) of this section.

The court's authorization for treatment under this Article shall have the same effect as parental consent for treatment.

Following the court's authorization for treatment and after giving notice to the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian the court shall conduct a hearing in order to provide for payment for the treatment rendered. The court may order the parent or other responsible parties to pay the cost of treatment. If the court finds the parent is unable to pay the cost of treatment, the cost shall be a charge upon the county when so ordered.

This Article shall operate as a remedy in addition to the provisions in G.S. 7B-505.1 and G.S. 7B-903.1. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6; 2017-161, s. 14.)

SUBCHAPTER V. PLACEMENT OF JUVENILES.

Article 37.

Placing or Adoption of Juvenile Delinquents or Dependents.

§ 7B-3700. Consent required for bringing child into State for placement or adoption.

(a) No person, agency, association, institution, or corporation shall bring or send into the State any child for the purpose of giving custody of the child to some person in the State or procuring adoption by some person in the State without first obtaining the written consent of the Department of Health and Human Services.

(b) The person with whom a child is placed for either of the purposes set out in subsection (a) of this section shall be responsible for the child's proper care and training. The Department of Health and Human Services or its agents shall have the same right of visitation and supervision of the child and the home in which it is placed as in the case of a child placed by the Department or its agents as long as the child shall remain within the State and until the child shall have reached the age of 18 years or shall have been legally adopted. (1931, c. 226, s. 1; 1947, c. 609, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3701. Bond required.

The Social Services Commission may, in its discretion, require of a person, agency, association, institution, or corporation which brings or sends a child into the State with the written consent of the Department of Health and Human Services, as provided by G.S. 7B-3700, a continuing bond in a penal sum not in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) with such conditions as may be prescribed and such sureties as may be approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. Said bond shall be made in favor of and filed with the Department of Health and Human Services with the premium prepaid by the said person, agency, association, institution, or corporation desiring to place such child in the State. (1931, c. 226, s. 2; 1947, c. 609, s. 2; 1969, c. 982; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3702. Consent required for removing child from State.

No child shall be taken or sent out of the State for the purpose of placing the child in a foster home or in a child-caring institution without first obtaining the written consent of the Department

of Health and Human Services. The foster home or child-caring institution in which the child is placed shall report to the Department of Health and Human Services at such times as the Department of Health and Human Services may direct as to the location and well-being of such child until the child shall have reached the age of 18 years or shall have been legally adopted. (1931, c. 226, s. 3; 1947, c. 609, s. 3; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3703. Violation of Article a misdemeanor.

Every person acting for himself or for an agency who violates any of the provisions of this Article or who shall intentionally make any false statements to the Social Services Commission or the Secretary or an employee thereof acting for the Department of Health and Human Services in an official capacity in the placing or adoption of juvenile delinquents or dependents shall, upon conviction thereof, be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. (1931, c. 226, s. 7; 1957, c. 100, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1993, c. 539, s. 823; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3704. Definitions.

The term "Department" wherever used in this Article shall be construed to mean the Department of Health and Human Services. The term "Secretary" wherever used in this Article shall be construed to mean the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. (1931, c. 226, s. 8; 1957, c. 100, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3705. Application of Article.

None of the provisions of this Article shall apply when a child is brought into or sent into, or taken out of, or sent out of the State, by the guardian of the person of such child, or by a parent, stepparent, grandparent, uncle or aunt of such child, or by a brother, sister, half brother, or half sister of such child, if such brother, sister, half brother, or half sister is 18 years of age or older. (1947, c. 609, s. 5; 1971, c. 1231, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 6.)

Article 38.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

§ 7B-3800. Adoption of Compact.

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is hereby enacted into law and entered into with all other jurisdictions legally joining therein in a form substantially as contained in this Article. It is the intent of the General Assembly that Article 37 of this Chapter shall govern interstate placements of children between North Carolina and any other jurisdictions not a party to this Compact. It is the intent of the General Assembly that Chapter 48 of the General Statutes shall govern the adoption of children within the boundaries of North Carolina.

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE AND POLICY.

It is the purpose and policy of the party states to cooperate with each other in the interstate placement of children to the end that:

(a) Each child requiring placement shall receive the maximum opportunity to be placed in a suitable environment and with persons or institutions having appropriate qualifications and facilities to provide a necessary and desirable degree and type of care.

(b) The appropriate authorities in a state where a child is to be placed may have full opportunity to ascertain the circumstances of the proposed placement, thereby promoting full compliance with applicable requirements for the protection of the child.

(c) The proper authorities of the state from which the placement is made may obtain the most complete information on the basis of which to evaluate a projected placement before it is made.

(d) Appropriate jurisdictional arrangements for the care of children will be promoted.

Article II. Definitions.

As used in this Compact:

(a) "Child" means a person who, by reason of minority, is legally subject to parental, guardianship or similar control.

(b) "Sending agency" means a party state officer or employee thereof; a subdivision of a party state, or officer or employee thereof; a court of a party state; a person, corporation, association, charitable agency or other entity which sends, brings, or causes to be sent or brought any child to another party state.

(c) "Receiving state" means the state to which a child is sent, brought, or caused to be sent or brought, whether by public authorities or private persons or agencies, and whether for placement with state or local public authorities of [or] for placement with private agencies or persons.

(d) "Placement" means the arrangement for the care of a child in a family free or boarding home or in a child-caring agency or institution but does not include any institution caring for the mentally ill, mentally defective, or epileptic or any institution primarily educational in character, and any hospital or other medical facility.

(e) "Appropriate public authorities" as used in Article III shall, with reference to this State, mean the Department of Health and Human Services and said agency shall receive and act with reference to notices required by Article III.

(f) "Appropriate authority in the receiving state" as used in paragraph (a) of Article V shall, with reference to this State, means the Secretary.

(g) "Executive head" as used in Article VII means the Governor.

Article III. Conditions for Placement.

(a) No sending agency shall send, bring, or cause to be sent or brought into any other party state any child for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption unless the sending agency shall comply with each and every requirement set forth in this Article and with the applicable laws of the receiving state governing the placement of children therein.

(b) Prior to sending, bringing, or causing any child to be sent or brought into a receiving state for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption, the sending agency shall furnish the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state written notice of the intention to send, bring, or place the child in the receiving state. The notice shall contain:

(1) The name, date, and place of birth of the child.

(2) The identity and address or addresses of the parents or legal guardian.

(3) The name and address of the person, agency or institution to or with which the sending agency proposes to send, bring, or place the child.

(4) A full statement of the reasons for such proposed action and evidence of the authority pursuant to which the placement is proposed to be made.

(c) Any public officer or agency in a receiving state which is in receipt of a notice pursuant to paragraph (b) of this Article may request of the sending agency, or any other appropriate officer or agency of or in the sending agency's state, and shall be entitled to receive therefrom, such supporting or additional information as it may deem necessary under the circumstances to carry out the purpose and policy of this Compact.

(d) The child shall not be sent, brought, or caused to be sent or brought into the receiving state until the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state shall notify the sending agency, in writing, to the effect that the proposed placement does not appear to be contrary to the interests of the child.

Article IV. Penalty for Illegal Placement.

The sending, bringing, or causing to be sent or brought into any receiving state of a child in violation of the terms of this Compact shall constitute a violation of the laws respecting the placement of children of both the state in which the sending agency is located or from which it sends or brings the child and of the receiving state. Such violation may be punished or subjected to penalty in either jurisdiction in accordance with its laws. In addition to liability for any such punishment or penalty, any such violation shall constitute full and sufficient grounds for the suspension or revocation of any license, permit, or other legal authorization held by the sending agency which empowers or allows it to place, or care for children.

Article V. Retention of Jurisdiction.

(a) The sending agency shall retain jurisdiction over the child sufficient to determine all matters in relation to the custody, supervision, care, treatment, and disposition of the child which it would have had if the child had remained in the sending agency's state, until the child is adopted, reaches majority, becomes self-supporting or is discharged with the concurrence of the appropriate authority in the receiving state. Such jurisdiction shall also include the power to effect or cause the return of the child or its transfer to another location and custody pursuant to law. The sending agency shall continue to have financial responsibility for support and maintenance of the child during the period of the placement. Nothing contained herein shall defeat a claim of jurisdiction by a receiving state sufficient to deal with an act of delinquency or crime committed therein.

(b) When the sending agency is a public agency, it may enter into an agreement with an authorized public or private agency in the receiving state providing for the performance of one or more services in respect of such case by the latter as agent for the sending agency.

(c) Nothing in this Compact shall be construed to prevent a private charitable agency authorized to place children in the receiving state from performing services or acting as agent in that state for a private charitable agency of the sending state; nor to prevent the agency in the receiving state from discharging financial responsibility for the support and maintenance of a child who has been placed on behalf of the sending agency without relieving the responsibility set forth in paragraph (a) hereof.

Article VI. Institutional Care of Delinquent Children.

A child adjudicated delinquent may be placed in an institution in another party jurisdiction pursuant to this Compact, but no such placement shall be made unless the child is given a court

hearing on notice to the parent or guardian with opportunity to be heard, prior to the child's being sent to such other party jurisdiction for institutional care and the court finds that:

- (1) Equivalent facilities for the child are not available in the sending agency's jurisdiction; and
- (2) Institutional care in the other jurisdiction is in the best interests of the child and will not produce undue hardship.

Article VII. Compact Administrator.

The executive head of each jurisdiction party to this Compact shall designate an officer who shall be general coordinator of activities under this Compact in the officer's jurisdiction and who, acting jointly with like officers of other party jurisdictions, shall have power to promulgate rules and regulations to carry out more effectively the terms and provisions of this Compact.

Article VIII. Limitations.

This Compact shall not apply to: (a) the sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state by the child's parent, stepparent, grandparent, adult brother or sister, adult uncle or aunt, or the child's guardian and leaving the child with any such relative or nonagency guardian in the receiving state. (b) Any placement, sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state pursuant to any other interstate compact to which both the state from which the child is sent or brought and the receiving state are party, or to any other agreement between said states which has the force of law.

Article IX. Enactment and Withdrawal.

This Compact shall be open to joinder by any state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and, with the consent of Congress, the government of Canada or any province thereof. It shall become effective with respect to any such jurisdiction when such jurisdiction has enacted the same into law. Withdrawal from this Compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing the same, but shall not take effect until two years after the effective date of such statute and until written notice of the withdrawal has been given by the withdrawing state to the governor of each other party jurisdiction. Withdrawal of a party state shall not affect the rights, duties, and obligations under this Compact of any sending agency therein with respect to a placement made prior to the effective date of withdrawal.

Article X. Construction and Severability.

The provisions of this Compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate the purposes thereof. The provisions of this Compact shall be severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence, or provision of this Compact is declared to be contrary to the constitution of any party state or of the United States or the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person, or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this Compact and the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person, or circumstance shall not be affected thereby. If this Compact shall be held contrary to the constitution of any state party thereto, the Compact shall remain in full force and effect as to the remaining states and in full force and effect as to the state affected as to all

severable matters. (1971, c. 453, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1983, c. 454, s. 8; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-423, s. 3.)

§ 7B-3801. Financial responsibility under Compact.

Financial responsibility for any child placed pursuant to the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Article V thereof in the first instance. However, in the event of partial or complete default of performance thereunder, the provisions of any other state laws fixing responsibility for the support of children also may be invoked. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3802. Agreements under Compact.

The officers and agencies of this State and its subdivisions having authority to place children are hereby empowered to enter into agreements with appropriate officers or agencies of or in other party states pursuant to paragraph (b) of Article V of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Any such agreement which contains a financial commitment or imposes a financial obligation on this State or subdivision or agency thereof shall not be binding unless it has the approval in writing of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in the case of the State and of the county director of social services in the case of a county or other subdivision of the State. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1973, c. 476, s. 138; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3803. Visitation, inspection or supervision.

Any requirements for visitation, inspection or supervision of children, homes, institutions or other agencies in another party state which may apply under the laws of this State shall be deemed to be met if performed pursuant to an agreement entered into by appropriate officers or agencies of this State or a subdivision thereof as contemplated by paragraph (b) of Article V of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3804. Compact to govern between party states.

The provisions of Article 37 of this Chapter shall not apply to placements made pursuant to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3805. Placement of delinquents.

Any court having jurisdiction to place delinquent children may place such a child in an institution or in another state pursuant to Article VI of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and shall retain jurisdiction as provided in Article V thereof. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3806. Compact Administrator.

The Governor is hereby authorized to appoint a Compact Administrator in accordance with the terms of said Article VII. (1971, c. 453, s. 2; 1998-202, s. 6.)

§ 7B-3807: Repealed by Session Laws 2021-100, s. 19, effective October 1, 2021.

§ 7B-3808. Action for Interstate Compact administrator to forward a request.

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children office at the Department of Health and Human Services has the authority to request supporting or additional information necessary to

carry out the purpose and policy of the compact and to require assurance that the placement meets all applicable North Carolina placement statutes. Any sending agency that intends to place a child into and out of North Carolina shall submit a complete request to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children office at the Department of Health and Human Services. To be considered a complete request, the submission must comply with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children regulations and include any supporting additional information that the Department of Health and Human Services or the receiving state deems necessary. Unless otherwise provided by the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children regulations, when the Department of Health and Human Services receives an incomplete request, the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide either the sending agency in North Carolina or the receiving state with written notice of the specific information needed to process the request and shall allow the sending agency 10 business days from the date of the notice to submit the requested information. If after the expiration of the 10 business days the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children office at the Department of Health and Human Services does not receive the requested information or the sending agency does not withdraw its request, the request shall be deemed expired. (2019-172, s. 12.)

Article 39.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance.

§ 7B-3900. Legislative findings and purposes.

(a) Finding adoptive families for children, for whom state assistance is desirable pursuant to G.S. 108A-49 and G.S. 108A-50, and assuring the protection of the interests of the children affected during the entire assistance period require special measures when the adoptive parents move to another state or are residents of another state. Additionally, the provision of medical and other necessary services for children receiving State assistance encounters special difficulties when the provision of services takes place in another state.

(b) In recognition of the need for special measures, the General Assembly authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to enter into interstate agreements with agencies of other states for the protection of children on behalf of whom adoption assistance is being provided by the Department of Health and Human Services and to provide procedures for interstate adoption assistance payments, including payments for medical services. (1999-190, s. 5.)

§ 7B-3901. Definitions.

Unless the context requires otherwise, as used in this Article:

- (1) "Adoption assistance state" means the state that is a signatory to an adoption assistance agreement in a particular case.
- (2) "Residence state" means the state where the child is living.
- (3) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or any territory or possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. (1999-190, s. 5.)

§ 7B-3902. Compacts authorized.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services may develop, participate in the development of, negotiate, and enter into one or more interstate compacts on behalf of this State

with other states to implement this Article. When entered into, and for so long as it remains in force, such a compact shall have the full force and effect of law. (1999-190, s. 5.)

§ 7B-3903. Content of compacts.

- (a) A compact under this Article shall contain all of the following provisions:
 - (1) A provision making it available for joinder by all states.
 - (2) A provision for withdrawal from the compact upon written notice to the parties, with a period of at least one year between the date of the notice and effective date of the withdrawal.
 - (3) A requirement that the protections afforded by or under the compact continue in force for the duration of the adoption assistance and apply to all children and their adoptive parents who, on the effective date of the withdrawal, are receiving adoption assistance from a party state other than the state in which they are a resident and have their principal place of abode.
 - (4) A requirement that each instance of adoption assistance to which the compact applies be covered by an adoption assistance agreement in writing between the adoptive parents and the state child welfare agency of the state which undertakes to provide the adoption assistance and that any such agreement be expressly for the benefit of the adopted child and enforceable by the adoptive parents and the state child welfare agency providing the adoption assistance.
 - (5) Any other provisions appropriate to implement the proper administration of the compact.
- (b) A compact entered into under this Article may contain any of the following provisions:
 - (1) Provisions establishing procedures and entitlement to medical and other necessary social services for the child in accordance with applicable laws, even though the child and the adoptive parents are in a state other than the one responsible for or providing the services or the funds to defray part or all of the expense thereof.
 - (2) Any other provisions appropriate or incidental to the proper administration of the compact. (1999-190, s. 5.)

§ 7B-3904. Medical assistance.

(a) A child with special needs who is a resident of this State who is the subject of an adoption assistance agreement with another state shall be accepted as being entitled to receive medical assistance certification from this State upon the filing in the department of social services of the county in which the child resides a certified copy of the adoption assistance agreement obtained from the adoption assistance state.

(b) The Division of Health Benefits shall consider the holder of a medical assistance certification under this section to be entitled to the same medical benefits under the laws of this State as any other holder of a medical assistance certification and shall process and make payment on claims on account of that holder in the same manner and under the same conditions and procedures that apply to other recipients of medical assistance.

(c) The provisions of this section apply only to medical assistance for children under adoption assistance agreements from states that have entered into a compact with this State under which the other state provides medical assistance to children with special needs under adoption assistance agreements made by this State. (1999-190, s. 5; 2019-81, s. 15(a).)

§ 7B-3905. Federal participation.

The Department of Health and Human Services, in connection with the administration of this Article and any compact entered into pursuant to this Article, shall include the provision of adoption assistance and medical assistance for which the federal government pays some or all of the cost in any state plan made pursuant to the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272), Titles IV (E) and XIX of the Social Security Act and any other applicable federal laws. The Department shall apply for and administer all relevant federal aid in accordance with law. (1999-190, s. 5.)

§ 7B-3906. Compact Administrator.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services may appoint a Compact Administrator who shall be the general coordinator of activities under this Compact in this State and who, acting jointly with like officers of other party states, may promulgate rules to carry out more effectively the terms and provisions of this Compact. (1999-190, s. 5.)

Article 40.

Interstate Compact for Juveniles.

§ 7B-4000. (For effective date – see note) Short title.

This Article may be cited as "The Interstate Compact for Juveniles". (2005-194, s. 1.)

§ 7B-4001. Governor to execute Compact; form of Compact.

The Governor of North Carolina is authorized and directed to execute a Compact on behalf of the State of North Carolina with any state of the United States legally joining therein in the form substantially as follows:

"Article I.

Purpose.

(a) The compacting states to this Interstate Compact recognize that each state is responsible for the proper supervision or return of juveniles, delinquents, and status offenders who are on probation or parole and who have absconded, escaped, or run away from supervision and control and in so doing have endangered their own safety and the safety of others. The compacting states also recognize that each state is responsible for the safe return of juveniles who have run away from home and in doing so have left their state of residence. The compacting states also recognize that Congress, by enacting the Crime Control Act, 4 U.S.C. § 112 (1965), has authorized and encouraged compacts for cooperative efforts and mutual assistance in the prevention of crime.

(b) It is the purpose of this Compact, through means of joint and cooperative action among the compacting states to:

- (1) Ensure that the adjudicated juveniles and status offenders subject to this Compact are provided adequate supervision and services in the receiving state as ordered by the adjudicating judge or parole authority in the sending state;
- (2) Ensure that the public safety interests of the citizens, including the victims of juvenile offenders, in both the sending and receiving states are adequately protected;
- (3) Return juveniles who have run away, absconded, or escaped from supervision or control, or have been accused of an offense to the state requesting their return;

- (4) Make contracts for the cooperative institutionalization in public facilities in member states for delinquent youth needing special services;
- (5) Provide for the effective tracking and supervision of juveniles;
- (6) Equitably allocate the costs, benefits, and obligations of the compacting states;
- (7) Establish procedures to manage the movement between states of juvenile offenders released to the community under the jurisdiction of courts, juvenile departments, or any other criminal or juvenile justice agency which has jurisdiction over juvenile offenders;
- (8) Ensure immediate notice to jurisdictions where defined offenders are authorized to travel or to relocate across state lines;
- (9) Establish procedures to resolve pending charges (detainers) against juvenile offenders prior to transfer or release to the community under the terms of this Compact;
- (10) Establish a system of uniform data collection on information pertaining to juveniles subject to this Compact that allows access by authorized juvenile justice and criminal justice officials and regular reporting of Compact activities to heads of state executive, judicial, and legislative branches and juvenile and criminal justice administrators;
- (11) Monitor compliance with rules governing interstate movement of juveniles and initiate interventions to address and correct noncompliance;
- (12) Coordinate training and education regarding the regulation of interstate movement of juveniles for officials involved in such activity; and
- (13) Coordinate the implementation and operation of the Compact with the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision, and other compacts affecting juveniles particularly in those cases where concurrent or overlapping supervision issues arise.

(c) It is the policy of the compacting states that the activities conducted by the Interstate Commission created herein are the formation of public policies and therefore are public business. Furthermore, the compacting states shall cooperate and observe their individual and collective duties and responsibilities for the prompt return and acceptance of juveniles subject to the provisions of this Compact. The provisions of this Compact shall be reasonably and liberally construed to accomplish the purposes and policies of the Compact.

Article II.

Definitions.

As used in this Compact, unless the context clearly requires a different construction:

- (1) "Bylaws" means those bylaws established by the Interstate Commission for its governance or for directing or controlling its actions or conduct.
- (2) "Compact Administrator" means the individual in each compacting state appointed pursuant to the terms of this Compact responsible for the administration and management of the state's supervision and transfer of juveniles subject to the terms of this Compact, the rules adopted by the Interstate Commission, and policies adopted by the State Council under this Compact.
- (3) "Compacting State" means any state which has enacted the enabling legislation for this Compact.

- (4) "Commissioner" means the voting representative of each compacting state appointed pursuant to Article III of this Compact.
- (5) "Court" means any court having jurisdiction over delinquent, neglected, or dependent children.
- (6) "Deputy Compact Administrator" means the individual, if any, in each compacting state appointed to act on behalf of a Compact Administrator pursuant to the terms of this Compact responsible for the administration and management of the state's supervision and transfer of juveniles subject to the terms of this compact, the rules adopted by the Interstate Commission, and policies adopted by the State Council under this Compact.
- (7) "Interstate Commission" means the Interstate Commission for Juveniles created by Article III of this Compact.
- (8) "Juvenile" means any person defined as a juvenile in any member state or by the rules of the Interstate Commission, including:
 - a. Accused Delinquent. – A person charged with an offense that, if committed by an adult, would be a criminal offense;
 - b. Adjudicated Delinquent. – A person found to have committed an offense that, if committed by an adult, would be a criminal offense;
 - c. Accused Status Offender. – A person charged with an offense that would not be a criminal offense if committed by an adult;
 - d. Adjudicated Status Offender. – A person found to have committed an offense that would not be a criminal offense if committed by an adult; and
 - e. Nonoffender. – A person in need of supervision who has not been accused or adjudicated a status offender or delinquent.
- (9) "Noncompacting State" means any state which has not enacted the enabling legislation for this Compact.
- (10) "Probation" or "Parole" means any kind of supervision or conditional release of juveniles authorized under the laws of the compacting states.
- (11) "Rule" means a written statement by the Interstate Commission promulgated pursuant to Article VI of this Compact that is of general applicability, implements, interprets, or prescribes a policy or provision of the Compact, or an organizational, procedural, or practice requirement of the Commission, and has the force and effect of statutory law in a compacting state, and includes the amendment, repeal, or suspension of an existing rule.
- (12) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia or its designee, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas Islands.

Article III.

Interstate Commission for Juveniles.

(a) The compacting states hereby create the "Interstate Commission for Juveniles." The Commission shall be a body corporate and joint agency of the compacting states. The Commission shall have all the responsibilities, powers, and duties set forth herein, and such additional powers as may be conferred upon it by subsequent action of the respective legislatures of the compacting states in accordance with the terms of this Compact.

(b) The Interstate Commission shall consist of commissioners appointed by the appropriate appointing authority in each state pursuant to the rules and requirements of each compacting state and in consultation with the State Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision created hereunder. The Commissioner shall be the compact administrator, deputy compact administrator, or designee from that state who shall serve on the Interstate Commission in such capacity under or pursuant to the applicable law of the compacting state.

(c) In addition to the commissioners who are the voting representatives of each state, the Interstate Commission shall include individuals who are not commissioners, but who are members of interested organizations. Such noncommissioner members must include a member of the national organizations of governors, legislators, state chief justices, attorneys general, Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision, Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, juvenile justice and juvenile corrections officials, and crime victims. All noncommissioner members of the Interstate Commission shall be ex officio, nonvoting members. The Interstate Commission may provide in its bylaws for such additional ex officio, nonvoting members, including members of other national organizations, in such numbers as shall be determined by the Commission.

(d) Each compacting state represented at any meeting of the Commission is entitled to one vote. A majority of the compacting states shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, unless a larger quorum is required by the bylaws of the Interstate Commission.

(e) The Commission shall meet at least once each calendar year. The chairperson may call additional meetings and, upon the request of a simple majority of the compacting states, shall call additional meetings. Public notice shall be given of all meetings, and meetings shall be open to the public.

(f) The Interstate Commission shall establish an executive committee, which shall include commission officers, members, and others as determined by the bylaws. The executive committee shall have the power to act on behalf of the Interstate Commission during periods when the Interstate Commission is not in session, with the exception of rulemaking and/or amendment to the Compact. The executive committee shall oversee the day-to-day activities of the administration of the Compact managed by an executive director and Interstate Commission staff, administer enforcement and compliance with the provisions of the Compact, its bylaws and rules, and perform other duties as directed by the Interstate Commission or set forth in the bylaws.

(g) Each member of the Interstate Commission shall have the right and power to cast a vote to which that compacting state is entitled and to participate in the business and affairs of the Interstate Commission. A member shall vote in person and shall not delegate a vote to another compacting state. However, a commissioner, in consultation with the state council, shall appoint another authorized representative, in the absence of the commissioner from that state, to cast a vote on behalf of the compacting state at a specified meeting. The bylaws may provide for members' participation in meetings by telephone or other means of telecommunication or electronic communication.

(h) The Interstate Commission's bylaws shall establish conditions and procedures under which the Interstate Commission shall make its information and official records available to the public for inspection or copying. The Interstate Commission may exempt from disclosure any information or official records to the extent they would adversely affect personal privacy rights or proprietary interests.

(i) Public notice shall be given of all meetings, and all meetings shall be open to the public, except as set forth in the Rules or as otherwise provided in the Compact. The Interstate

Commission and any of its committees may close a meeting to the public where it determines by two-thirds vote that an open meeting would be likely to:

- (1) Relate solely to the Interstate Commission's internal personnel practices and procedures;
- (2) Disclose matters specifically exempted from disclosure by statute;
- (3) Disclose trade secrets or commercial or financial information which is privileged or confidential;
- (4) Involve accusing any person of a crime or formally censuring any person;
- (5) Disclose information of a personal nature where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- (6) Disclose investigative records compiled for law enforcement purposes;
- (7) Disclose information contained in or related to examination, operating, or condition reports prepared by, or on behalf of or for the use of, the Interstate Commission with respect to a regulated person or entity for the purpose of regulation or supervision of such person or entity;
- (8) Disclose information, the premature disclosure of which would significantly endanger the stability of a regulated person or entity; or
- (9) Specifically relate to the Interstate Commission's issuance of a subpoena or its participation in a civil action or other legal proceeding.

(j) For every meeting closed pursuant to this provision, the Interstate Commission's legal counsel shall publicly certify that, in the legal counsel's opinion, the meeting may be closed to the public and shall reference each relevant exemptive provision. The Interstate Commission shall keep minutes which shall fully and clearly describe all matters discussed in any meeting and shall provide a full and accurate summary of any actions taken, and the reasons therefor, including a description of each of the views expressed on any item and the record of any roll call vote (reflected in the vote of each member on the question). All documents considered in connection with any action shall be identified in the minutes.

(k) The Interstate Commission shall collect standardized data concerning the interstate movement of juveniles as directed through its rules which shall specify the data to be collected, the means of collection and data exchange, and reporting requirements. Such methods of data collection, exchange, and reporting shall insofar as is reasonably possible conform to up-to-date technology and coordinate its information functions with the appropriate repository of records.

Article IV.

Powers and Duties of the Interstate Commission.

- (a) The Interstate Commission shall have the following powers and duties:
- (1) To provide for dispute resolution among compacting states.
 - (2) To promulgate rules to effect the purposes and obligations as enumerated in this Compact, which shall have the force and effect of statutory law and shall be binding in the compacting states to the extent and in the manner provided in this Compact.
 - (3) To oversee, supervise, and coordinate the interstate movement of juveniles subject to the terms of this Compact and any bylaws adopted and rules promulgated by the Interstate Commission.
 - (4) To enforce compliance with the Compact provisions, the rules promulgated by the Interstate Commission, and the bylaws, using all necessary and proper means including, but not limited to, the use of judicial process.

- (5) To establish and maintain offices which shall be located within one or more of the compacting states.
- (6) To purchase and maintain insurance and bonds.
- (7) To borrow, accept, hire, or contract for services of personnel.
- (8) To establish and appoint committees and hire staff which it deems necessary for the carrying out of its functions including, but not limited to, an executive committee as required by Article III of this Compact, which shall have the power to act on behalf of the Interstate Commission in carrying out its powers and duties hereunder.
- (9) To elect or appoint such officers, attorneys, employees, agents, or consultants, and to fix their compensation, define their duties, and determine their qualifications; and to establish the Interstate Commission's personnel policies and programs relating to, inter alia, conflicts of interest, rates of compensation, and qualifications of personnel.
- (10) To accept any and all donations and grants of money, equipment, supplies, materials, and services, and to receive, utilize, and dispose of them.
- (11) To lease, purchase, accept contributions or donations of, or otherwise to own, hold, improve, or use any property, real, personal, or mixed.
- (12) To sell, convey, mortgage, pledge, lease, exchange, abandon, or otherwise dispose of any property, real, personal, or mixed.
- (13) To establish a budget and make expenditures and levy dues as provided in Article VIII of this Compact.
- (14) To sue and be sued.
- (15) To adopt a seal and bylaws governing the management and operation of the Interstate Commission.
- (16) To perform such functions as may be necessary or appropriate to achieve the purposes of this Compact.
- (17) To report annually to the legislatures, governors, judiciary, and state councils of the compacting states concerning the activities of the Interstate Commission during the preceding year. Such reports shall also include any recommendations that may have been adopted by the Interstate Commission.
- (18) To coordinate education, training, and public awareness regarding the interstate movement of juveniles for officials involved in such activity.
- (19) To establish uniform standards of the reporting, collecting, and exchanging of data.

(b) The Interstate Commission shall maintain its corporate books and records in accordance with the bylaws.

Article V.

Organization and Operation of the Interstate Commission.

(a) Bylaws. – The Interstate Commission shall, by a majority of the members present and voting, within 12 months after the first Interstate Commission meeting, adopt bylaws to govern its conduct as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of the Compact, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Establishing the fiscal year of the Interstate Commission;
- (2) Establishing an executive committee and such other committees as may be necessary;

- (3) Providing for the establishment of committees governing any general or specific delegation of any authority or function of the Interstate Commission;
- (4) Providing reasonable procedures for calling and conducting meetings of the Interstate Commission and ensuring reasonable notice of each such meeting;
- (5) Establishing the titles and responsibilities of the officers of the Interstate Commission;
- (6) Providing a mechanism for concluding the operations of the Interstate Commission and the return of any surplus funds that may exist upon the termination of the Compact after the payment and/or reserving of all of its debts and obligations;
- (7) Providing "start-up" rules for initial administration of the Compact; and
- (8) Establishing standards and procedures for compliance and technical assistance in carrying out the Compact.

(b) **Officers and Staff.** – The Interstate Commission shall, by a majority of the members, elect annually from among its members a chairperson and a vice-chairperson, each of whom shall have such authority and duties as may be specified in the bylaws. The chairperson or, in the chairperson's absence or disability, the vice-chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Interstate Commission. The officers so elected shall serve without compensation or remuneration from the Interstate Commission; provided that, subject to the availability of budgeted funds, the officers shall be reimbursed for any ordinary and necessary costs and expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties and responsibilities as officers of the Interstate Commission.

The Interstate Commission shall, through its executive committee, appoint or retain an executive director for such period, upon such terms and conditions and for such compensation as the Interstate Commission may deem appropriate. The executive director shall serve as secretary to the Interstate Commission, but shall not be a member and shall hire and supervise such other staff as may be authorized by the Interstate Commission.

(c) **Qualified Immunity, Defense, and Indemnification.** – The Commission's executive director and employees shall be immune from suit and liability, either personally or in their official capacity, for any claim for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or other civil liability caused or arising out of or relating to any actual or alleged act, error, or omission that occurred, or that such person had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of Commission employment, duties, or responsibilities; provided, that any such person shall not be protected from suit or liability for any damage, loss, injury, or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of any such person.

The liability of any commissioner, or the employee or agent of a commissioner, acting within the scope of such person's employment or duties for acts, errors, or omissions occurring within such person's state may not exceed the limits of liability set forth under the Constitution and laws of that state for state officials, employees, and agents. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to protect any such person from suit or liability for any damage, loss, injury, or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of any such person.

The Interstate Commission shall defend the executive director or the employees or representatives of the Interstate Commission and, subject to the approval of the Attorney General of the state represented by any commissioner of a compacting state, shall defend such commissioner or the commissioner's representatives or employees in any civil action seeking to impose liability arising out of any actual or alleged act, error, or omission that occurred within the scope of Interstate Commission employment, duties, or responsibilities, or that the defendant had a

reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of Interstate Commission employment, duties, or responsibilities, provided that the actual or alleged act, error, or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such person.

The Interstate Commission shall indemnify and hold the commissioner of a compacting state, or the commissioner's representatives or employees, or the Interstate Commission's representatives or employees, harmless in the amount of any settlement or judgment obtained against such persons arising out of any actual or alleged act, error, or omission that occurred within the scope of Interstate Commission employment, duties, or responsibilities, or that such persons had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of Interstate Commission employment, duties, or responsibilities, provided that the actual or alleged act, error, or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such persons.

Article VI.

Rulemaking Functions of the Interstate Commission.

(a) The Interstate Commission shall promulgate and publish rules in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the purposes of the Compact.

(b) Rulemaking shall occur pursuant to the criteria set forth in this Article and the bylaws and rules adopted pursuant thereto. Such rulemaking shall substantially conform to the principles of the "Model State Administrative Procedures Act," 1981 Act, Uniform Laws Annotated, Vol. 16, p. 1 (2000), or such other administrative procedures acts, as the Interstate Commission deems appropriate consistent with due process requirements under the United States Constitution as now or hereafter interpreted by the United States Supreme Court. All rules and amendments shall become binding as of the date specified, as published with the final version of the rule as approved by the Commission.

(c) When promulgating a rule, the Interstate Commission shall, at a minimum:

- (1) Publish the proposed rule's entire text stating the reason for that proposed rule;
- (2) Allow and invite any and all persons to submit written data, facts, opinions, and arguments, which information shall be added to the record and be made publicly available;
- (3) Provide an opportunity for an informal hearing if petitioned by 10 or more persons;
- (4) Promulgate a final rule and its effective date, if appropriate, based on input from state or local officials, or interested parties; and
- (5) Allow, not later than 60 days after a rule is promulgated, any interested person to file a petition in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia or in the Federal District Court where the Interstate Commission's principal office is located for judicial review of such rule.

(d) If the court finds that the Interstate Commission's action is not supported by substantial evidence in the rulemaking record, the court shall hold the rule unlawful and set it aside. For purposes of this subsection, evidence is substantial if it would be considered substantial evidence under the Model State Administrative Procedures Act.

(e) If a majority of the legislatures of the compacting states rejects a rule, those states may, by enactment of a statute or resolution in the same manner used to adopt the Compact, cause that rule to have no further force and effect in any compacting state.

(f) The existing rules governing the operation of the Interstate Compact on Juveniles superseded by this act shall be null and void when all states, as defined in the Compact, have adopted The Interstate Compact for Juveniles.

(g) Upon determination by the Interstate Commission that a state of emergency exists, it may promulgate an emergency rule which shall become effective immediately upon adoption, provided that the usual rulemaking procedures provided hereunder shall be retroactively applied to said rule as soon as reasonably possible but no later than 90 days after the effective date of the emergency rule.

Article VII.

Oversight, Enforcement, and Dispute Resolution by the Interstate Commission.

(a) Oversight. – The Interstate Commission shall oversee the administration and operations of the interstate movement of juveniles subject to this Compact in the compacting states and shall monitor such activities being administered in noncompacting states which may significantly affect compacting states.

The courts and executive agencies in each compacting state shall enforce this Compact and shall take all actions necessary and appropriate to effectuate the Compact's purposes and intent. The provisions of this Compact and the rules promulgated hereunder shall be received by all the judges, public officers, commissions, and departments of the state government as evidence of the authorized statute and administrative rules, and all courts shall take judicial notice of the Compact and the rules. In any judicial or administrative proceeding in a compacting state pertaining to the subject matter of this Compact which may affect the powers, responsibilities, or actions of the Interstate Commission, it shall be entitled to receive all service of process in any such proceeding and shall have standing to intervene in the proceeding for all purposes.

(b) Dispute Resolution. – The compacting states shall report to the Interstate Commission on all issues and activities necessary for the administration of the Compact as well as issues and activities pertaining to compliance with the provisions of the Compact and its bylaws and rules.

The Interstate Commission shall attempt, upon the request of a compacting state, to resolve any disputes or other issues which are subject to the Compact and which may arise among compacting states and between compacting and noncompacting states. The Commission shall promulgate a rule providing for both mediation and binding dispute resolution for disputes among the compacting states.

The Interstate Commission, in the reasonable exercise of its discretion, shall enforce the provisions and rules of this Compact using any or all means set forth in Article XI of this Compact.

Article VIII.

Finance.

(a) The Interstate Commission shall pay or provide for the payment of the reasonable expenses of its establishment, organization, and ongoing activities.

(b) The Interstate Commission shall levy on and collect an annual assessment from each compacting state to cover the cost of the internal operations and activities of the Interstate Commission and its staff which must be in a total amount sufficient to cover the Interstate Commission's annual budget as approved each year. The aggregate annual assessment amount shall be allocated based upon a formula to be determined by the Interstate Commission, taking into consideration the population of each compacting state and the volume of interstate movement of juveniles in each compacting state and shall promulgate a rule binding upon all compacting states which governs said assessment.

(c) The Interstate Commission shall not incur any obligations of any kind prior to securing the funds adequate to meet the same; nor shall the Interstate Commission pledge the credit of any of the compacting states, except by and with the authority of the compacting state.

(d) The Interstate Commission shall keep accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements. The receipts and disbursements of the Interstate Commission shall be subject to the audit and accounting procedures established under its bylaws. However, all receipts and disbursements of funds handled by the Interstate Commission shall be audited yearly by a certified or licensed public accountant, and the report of the audit shall be included in and become part of the annual report of the Interstate Commission.

Article IX.

The State Council.

Each member state shall create a State Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision. While each state may determine the membership of its own state council, its membership must include at least one representative from the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government, victims groups, and the compact administrator, deputy compact administrator, or designee. Each compacting state retains the right to determine the qualifications of the compact administrator or deputy compact administrator. Each state council will advise and may exercise oversight and advocacy concerning that state's participation in Interstate Commission activities and other duties as may be determined by that state, including, but not limited to, development of policy concerning operations and procedures of the Compact within that state.

Article X.

Compacting States, Effective Date, and Amendment.

(a) Any state, the District of Columbia or its designee, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas Islands, as defined in Article II of this Compact, is eligible to become a compacting state.

(b) The Compact shall become effective and binding upon legislative enactment of the Compact into law by no less than 35 of the states. The initial effective date shall be the later of July 1, 2004, or upon enactment into law by the 35th jurisdiction. Thereafter, it shall become effective and binding as to any other compacting state upon enactment of the Compact into law by that state. The governors of nonmember states or their designees shall be invited to participate in the activities of the Interstate Commission on a nonvoting basis prior to adoption of the Compact by all states and territories of the United States.

(c) The Interstate Commission may propose amendments to the Compact for enactment by the compacting states. No amendment shall become effective and binding upon the Interstate Commission and the compacting states unless and until it is enacted into law by unanimous consent of the compacting states.

Article XI.

Withdrawal, Default, Termination, and Judicial Enforcement.

(a) **Withdrawal.** – Once effective, the Compact shall continue in force and remain binding upon each and every compacting state; provided that a compacting state may withdraw from the Compact by specifically repealing the statute which enacted the Compact into law.

The effective date of withdrawal is the effective date of the repeal.

The withdrawing state shall immediately notify the chairperson of the Interstate Commission in writing upon the introduction of legislation repealing this Compact in the withdrawing state. The Interstate Commission shall notify the other compacting states of the withdrawing state's intent to withdraw within 60 days of its receipt thereof.

The withdrawing state is responsible for all assessments, obligations, and liabilities incurred through the effective date of withdrawal, including any obligations, the performance of which extend beyond the effective date of withdrawal.

Reinstatement following withdrawal of any compacting state shall occur upon the withdrawing state reenacting the Compact or upon such later date as determined by the Interstate Commission.

(b) Technical Assistance, Fines, Suspension, Termination, and Default. – If the Interstate Commission determines that any compacting state has at any time defaulted in the performance of any of its obligations or responsibilities under this Compact, or the bylaws or duly promulgated rules, the Interstate Commission may impose any or all of the following penalties:

- (1) Remedial training and technical assistance as directed by the Interstate Commission;
- (2) Alternative Dispute Resolution;
- (3) Fines, fees, and costs in such amounts as are deemed to be reasonable as fixed by the Interstate Commission; and
- (4) Suspension or termination of membership in the Compact, which shall be imposed only after all other reasonable means of securing compliance under the bylaws and rules have been exhausted, and the Interstate Commission has therefore determined that the offending state is in default. Immediate notice of suspension shall be given by the Interstate Commission to the Governor, the Chief Justice, or the Chief Judicial Officer of the state, the majority and minority leaders of the defaulting state's legislature, and the state council.

The grounds for default include, but are not limited to, failure of a compacting state to perform such obligations or responsibilities imposed upon it by this Compact, the bylaws, or duly promulgated rules, and any other grounds designated in Commission bylaws and rules. The Interstate Commission shall immediately notify the defaulting state in writing of the penalty imposed by the Interstate Commission and of the default pending a cure of the default. The Commission shall stipulate the conditions and the time period within which the defaulting state must cure its default. If the defaulting state fails to cure the default within the time period specified by the Commission, the defaulting state shall be terminated from the Compact upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the compacting states, and all rights, privileges, and benefits conferred by this Compact shall be terminated from the effective date of termination.

Within 60 days of the effective date of termination of a defaulting state, the Commission shall notify the Governor, the Chief Justice or Chief Judicial Officer, the majority and minority leaders of the defaulting state's legislature, and the state council of the termination.

The defaulting state is responsible for all assessments, obligations, and liabilities incurred through the effective date of termination, including any obligations, the performance of which extends beyond the effective date of termination.

The Interstate Commission shall not bear any costs relating to the defaulting state unless otherwise mutually agreed upon in writing between the Interstate Commission and the defaulting state.

Reinstatement following termination of any compacting state requires both a reenactment of the Compact by the defaulting state and the approval of the Interstate Commission pursuant to the rules.

(c) Judicial Enforcement. – The Interstate Commission may, by majority vote of the members, initiate legal action in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia or, at the discretion of the Interstate Commission, in the federal district where the Interstate Commission has its offices to enforce compliance with the provisions of the Compact and its duly promulgated rules and bylaws, against any compacting state in default. In the event judicial enforcement is

necessary, the prevailing party shall be awarded all costs of such litigation, including reasonable attorneys' fees.

(d) **Dissolution of Compact.** – The Compact dissolves effective upon the date of the withdrawal or default of the compacting state, which reduces membership in the Compact to one compacting state.

Upon the dissolution of this Compact, the Compact becomes null and void and shall be of no further force or effect, and the business and affairs of the Interstate Commission shall be concluded, and any surplus funds shall be distributed in accordance with the bylaws.

Article XII.

Severability and Construction.

(a) The provisions of this Compact shall be severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence, or provision is deemed unenforceable, the remaining provisions of the Compact shall be enforceable.

(b) The provisions of this Compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purposes.

Article XIII.

Binding Effect of Compact and Other Laws.

(a) **Other Laws.** – Nothing herein prevents the enforcement of any other law of a compacting state that is not inconsistent with this Compact.

All compacting states' laws, other than state Constitutions and other interstate compacts, conflicting with this Compact are superseded to the extent of the conflict.

(b) **Binding Effect of the Compact.** – All lawful actions of the Interstate Commission, including all rules and bylaws promulgated by the Interstate Commission, are binding upon the compacting states.

All agreements between the Interstate Commission and the compacting states are binding in accordance with their terms.

Upon the request of a party to a conflict over meaning or interpretation of Interstate Commission actions, and upon a majority vote of the compacting states, the Interstate Commission may issue advisory opinions regarding such meaning or interpretation.

In the event any provision of this Compact exceeds the constitutional limits imposed on the legislature of any compacting state, the obligations, duties, powers, or jurisdiction sought to be conferred by such provision upon the Interstate Commission shall be ineffective, and such obligations, duties, powers, or jurisdiction shall remain in the compacting state and shall be exercised by the agency thereof to which such obligations, duties, powers, or jurisdiction are delegated by law in effect at the time this Compact becomes effective." (2005-194, s. 1; 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 7B-4002. Implementation of the Compact.

(a) The North Carolina State Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision is hereby established. The Secretary of Public Safety, or the Secretary's designee, shall serve as the Compact Administrator for the State of North Carolina and as North Carolina's Commissioner to the Interstate Commission. The Secretary of Public Safety, or the Secretary's designee, is a member of the State Council and serves as chairperson of the State Council. In addition to the chairperson, the State Council shall consist of 10 members as follows:

- (1) One member representing the executive branch, to be appointed by the Governor;
- (2) One member from a victim's assistance group, to be appointed by the Governor;

- (3) One at-large member, to be appointed by the Governor;
- (4) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;
- (5) One member of the House of Representatives, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (6) A district court judge, to be appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; and
- (7) Four members representing the juvenile court counselors, to be appointed by the Secretary of Public Safety.

(b) The State Council shall meet at least twice a year and may also hold special meetings at the call of the chairperson. All terms are for three years.

(c) The State Council may advise the Compact Administrator on participation in the Interstate Commission activities and administration of the Compact.

(d) The members of the State Council shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for necessary travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the policies of the Office of State Budget and Management.

(e) The State Council shall act in an advisory capacity to the Secretary of Public Safety concerning this State's participation in Interstate Commission activities and other duties as may be determined by each member state, including recommendations for policy concerning the operations and procedures of the Compact within this State.

(f) The Governor shall by executive order provide for any other matters necessary for implementation of the Compact at the time that it becomes effective, and, except as otherwise provided for in this section, the State Council may promulgate rules or regulations necessary to implement and administer the Compact. (2005-194, s. 1; 2012-194, s. 3.)