

**3A JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
FAMILY COURT  
JUVENILE ABUSE/NEGLECT/DEPENDENCY RULES  
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Rule 1:	Scope.....	2
Rule 2:	Purpose.....	2
Rule 3:	Construction and Enforcement.....	2
Rule 4:	Appointment of Counsel.....	2
Rule 5:	Responsibilities of Attorneys.....	4
Rule 6:	Child Planning Conference.....	5
Rule 7:	Hearing Timelines.....	7
Rule 8:	Service of Summons and Petition.....	7
Rule 9:	Calendar.....	8
Rule 10:	Discovery.....	8
Rule 11:	Pre-Hearing Conferences.....	8
Rule 12:	Stipulated Adjudications.....	9
Rule 13:	Early Submission of Court Reports.....	9
Rule 14:	Review of Cases.....	10
Rule 15:	Permanency Planning Hearing.....	11
Rule 16:	Termination of Parental Rights Pre-Hearing Conferences.....	11
Rule 17:	Writs.....	11
Rule 18:	Permanency Mediation.....	11
Rule 19:	Continuances.....	12
Rule 20:	Efficient Use of Court Time.....	12
Rule 21:	Judicial Assignment.....	12
Rule 22:	Preparation and Entry of Court Orders.....	13
Rule 23:	Amendments.....	13

### **Rule 1: Scope**

These rules apply to all cases in which a petition is filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected or dependent or a petition or motion is filed for termination of parental rights.

### **Rule 2: Purpose**

These local rules establish procedures for Juvenile Court, which are designed to fulfill the purposes of Family Court and the North Carolina Juvenile Code.

To that end, these rules serve the following purposes:

- (1) To efficiently utilize time to ensure the best interest of the children and the reunification of the family;
- (2) To help the Court oversee case planning;
- (3) To help eliminate unnecessary delays in Court proceedings in order to reach permanence in a timely manner;
- (4) To help the parties present issues and evidence to the Court in an efficient and simple manner; and
- (5) To otherwise ensure compliance with Chapter 7B of the North Carolina General Statutes.

### **Rule 3: Construction and Enforcement**

These rules shall be construed to accomplish the purposes set forth in Rule 2. These rules shall not be construed in any manner which is in conflict with the Constitution of the United States nor the Constitution of the State of North Carolina nor any of federal or state statutes and laws nor any rules promulgated by the North Carolina Supreme Court. Matters not covered by these rules shall be governed by existing laws and rules. No rule shall be construed, applied or enforced in a manner that will endanger or harm a child or prejudice the rights of a party. Sanctions may be addressed in specific provisions of these Rules as applicable.

### **Rule 4: Appointment of Counsel**

**4.1 General:** The Clerk shall maintain a current list of attorneys eligible to be appointed 1) to represent parents of children alleged to be abused, neglected or dependent; 2) to represent parents in a termination of parental rights proceedings; 3) to act as the Guardian ad Litem for parents pursuant to Rule 17 of the Rules for Civil Procedure; and 4) to act as the Guardian ad Litem for minor children when the Guardian ad Litem program has a conflict. To be included on any list an attorney must have a local working telephone number at which he or she can be contacted, complete any initial or follow up training specified by the Chief District Court Judge, and maintain a mailbox in the Clerk's Office of the Pitt County Courthouse.

**4.2 Abuse/Neglect/Dependency:** When a petition is filed alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency, the Clerk shall assign separate provisional counsel to represent each parent named in the petition. The summons shall include the attorney's name and

telephone number and shall direct the parent to contact the attorney. The summons shall also inform the parent:

- (1) That the parent may retain counsel;
- (2) That the court, at the first hearing, if the parent appears, will determine whether the parent qualifies for appointed counsel and, if the parent does, whether the parent waives the right to such counsel;
- (3) That the court will dismiss the appointed counsel if the parent does not qualify for appointed counsel or the parent waives the right to counsel; and
- (4) Of the date and time of the Child Planning Conference and non-secure hearing, if applicable, and the Adjudication hearing.

After the first hearing in a case, the provisional attorney assigned to represent a parent who has not been served and/or who does not appear at the hearing shall be relieved as a matter of course as attorney of record, unless extraordinary circumstances exist as determined by the Court, and will not be responsible for further appearances until the Clerk notifies the attorney that the parent has been served and the attorney is reappointed.

If the parent has been served and the provisional attorney appointed to represent a parent has been unable to establish contact with the parent, the appointed attorney shall be permitted to withdraw from the case at the call of the adjudication hearing.

If an attorney appointed to represent a parent has been unable to maintain contact with the parent subsequent to the adjudication hearing, the appointed attorney shall be permitted to withdraw from the case at the first review hearing, absent a compelling reason. Further, an attorney appointed to represent a parent may be permitted to withdraw at any time upon filing of a motion with good cause.

Any order to withdraw as counsel shall include the last known address of the parent for the purpose of service of future pleadings in the case.

Should a parent be located by the Department of Social Services (hereinafter referred to as DSS) after the filing of the petition, the DSS shall provide the name and last known address of the parent to the Clerk and the DSS shall send notice of the next court date to the last known address of the parent. A provisional attorney shall be appointed by the Court for that parent. If the parent does not appear in court or contact his or her attorney, the Court may relieve counsel for the parent either at the next hearing of the matter or upon a motion to withdraw filed by counsel.

**4.3 Termination of Parental Rights:** In any case in which a petition for termination of parental rights is filed by DSS, the Clerk shall provisionally appoint the same attorney to represent the parent in the termination proceeding (if the parent whose rights are sought to be terminated has been represented by an appointed attorney in a prior abuse, neglect, or dependency proceeding). The petitioner shall provide the attorney a copy of the summons and petition or the motion and notice of hearing. If the parent fails to apply or to qualify for court-appointed counsel by the date of the hearing on the petition, or

waives court-appointed counsel, the appointment of court-appointed counsel shall not be approved by the Court and that attorney shall have no further responsibility in the case. In the event the termination of parental rights proceeding is filed as a Motion in the Cause, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 7B-1102 and served as by law provided in N.C.G.S. 7B-1106.1, the current appointed counsel, including the guardian ad litem, shall continue representation, unless that attorney has properly moved the court to withdraw.

In any case where the petitioner is not the DSS, the following rules shall apply:

- (1) The Clerk shall select an attorney from the appropriate list for appointment by the Court at the first hearing upon the parent's qualification for court-appointed counsel unless the parent waives his/her right to counsel
- (2) If the parent fails to apply or to qualify for court-appointed counsel by the date of the hearing on the petition, or waives court-appointed counsel, the appointment of court-appointed counsel shall not be approved by the Court.
- (3) As soon as is practicable, the Clerk shall forward a copy of the appointment order, the summons and the petition to the appointed attorney and the attorney for the petitioner.
- (4) If an answer or response filed by a parent denies any material allegations of the petition, the Court shall appoint a Guardian ad Litem for the juvenile from the list of eligible attorneys maintained by the Clerk.
- (5) As soon as is practicable, the Clerk shall forward a copy of the Guardian ad Litem appointment order, the summons and the petition to the appointed Guardian ad Litem attorney.
- (6) As soon as is practicable, the Clerk shall forward a copy of the guardian ad Litem appointment order to the parent(s) attorney(s) and to the attorney for the petitioner.

**4.4 GAL Attorney for Juveniles:** Appointment of a Guardian Ad Litem attorney shall occur upon the filing of a petition and in accordance with N.C.G.S. 7B-601.

**4.5 Rule 17 GAL Attorney:** The Judge shall appoint a Rule 17 Guardian at the first non-secure hearing or at any hearing thereafter if the Judge determines that the respondent parent is in need of such a Guardian. The Rule 17 Guardian shall remain in the case until released by the Judge.

## **Rule 5: Responsibilities of Attorneys**

**5.1 Priority:** An attorney who represents a party in a case scheduled for hearing shall appear at the time set for opening of that session unless excused by the Court. An attorney who has a conflict in another Court shall comply with the relevant rules relating to priority, and it shall be the responsibility of the attorney to keep the Courtroom Clerk informed of his or her location at all times. In order to resolve conflicts, any attorney or represented party should call upon the judge presiding or to be presiding in juvenile court to communicate with the presiding judge of other courts which counsel represents to be in conflict with the juvenile setting. Contested issues in juvenile court shall have priority among the other courts as set forth in Rule 3.1 of the North Carolina Supreme Court General Rules of Practice.

**5.2 Continuation of Representation:** After a parent's attorney enters an appearance or accepts an appointment in a case, he or she shall represent his or her client through all stages of the proceedings as long as the child continues within the jurisdiction of the Court. Leave of Court to withdraw from a case shall only be granted for good cause or as allowed in Rule 4.2 herein.

## **Rule 6: Child Planning Conference**

**6.1 Schedule and Notice:** When a petition is filed, a Child Planning Conference (herein after referred to as Conference) shall be scheduled. DSS shall notice the respondent parent by attaching a Notice of Child Planning Conference to the petition and summons and furnish a copy of the Petition and Notice of Child Planning Conference to the Family Court Office. The DSS social worker shall give a copy of the Notice of Child Planning Conference to the respondent parent when possible. The Family Court Office will be responsible for notifying all parties, by telephone, fax or email of the date and time for the Conference. Unless notified otherwise, the Conference will be held on a specified Thursday morning within seven (7) days of the filing of the petition at 8:00 AM in the Jury Room on the Second Floor of the Pitt County Courthouse. The Conference shall be conducted by a Family Court Facilitator.

**6.2 Purpose and Facilitation:** At the Conference, a Family Court Facilitator shall:

- (1) Introduce himself or herself and the parties and advise the parties that the Conference is confidential, and that a non-secure custody hearing may be held before a district court judge if custody was taken;
- (2) Explain that the Conference is non-prejudicial to the parties in terms of adjudication and that no documents generated at the Conference will be presented to the Court other than a Consent Order;
- (3) Explain the purposes of the Conference;
- (4) Inquire as to service of the summons and petition on the parent, guardian or custodian of the child(ren);
- (5) Attempt to ascertain the identity and whereabouts of any parent, guardian, or custodian of the child who is not present, whether that person has been served, and what steps need to be taken to identify, locate or serve any such person;
- (6) Facilitate discussion by the parties about services that might be helpful to the families based on the issues alleged in the petition.

**6.3 Attendance and Discussion:** The following persons shall attend the Conference:

- (1) DSS social worker;
- (2) Representative from the GAL office;
- (3) Respondent parent or guardian;
- (4) Respondent's attorney; and
- (5) DSS attorney.

The following persons may attend the Conference and will be noticed on a case by case basis:

- (1) DSS Supervisor

- (2) Juvenile, if over the age of twelve (12) years;
- (3) Mental health therapist if already involved with the family;
- (4) School workers if the juvenile is enrolled in school;
- (5) Foster parents or relative placements; or
- (6) Other family members.

DSS shall transport respondent parents if requested and as needed. If all persons do not attend the Conference after receiving Notice, the Conference will proceed without such persons.

After giving all parties an opportunity to present information and to ask questions of other parties, a Family Court Facilitator shall facilitate discussion regarding:

- (1) Paternity/child support;
- (2) Placement options for the child;
- (3) Relative sources;
- (4) Service needs of the child and parent(s);
- (5) Parental and sibling visitation with the child; and
- (6) Continued non-secure custody, if applicable.

**6.4 Agreement:** If there is an agreement by all parties on any issue regarding custody, placement, visitation or services, the Family Court Facilitator shall:

- (1) Summarize in writing, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, the basis for the agreement,
- (2) Give all parties an opportunity to review the Memorandum of Understanding and to decide whether to sign it; and
- (3) If all parties voluntarily sign the Memorandum of Understanding, a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding shall be given to all parties prior to leaving the Conference.

The parties shall provide the Family Court Facilitator a list of all records requested to be available at hearing, including, but not limited to, physician records, therapist records, medical records, school records, CPS history, criminal record checks, and a subpoena or order shall be prepared by the Family Court Facilitator and issued by the Court for said records to be delivered within fourteen (14) days to the Family Court Office or a representative of the agency to whom the subpoena was issued shall appear in Court at the designated date and time to produce the documents. If delivered prior to the Court date, the Family Court Office shall notify all parties that the documents have been received, and upon an agreement by the parties, the Family Court Facilitator shall have an Order to Share prepared and signed by the Judge. DSS shall be responsible for copying the records for all parties as soon as practicable.

**6.5 Continued Non-Secure Custody:** If all parties agree to continued non-secure custody, an order shall be presented to the district court judge presiding. If the parties cannot agree to continued non-secure custody the parties will be informed of the date and time of the next non-secure hearing.

**6.6 Second Conference:** Judges may, upon their own motion or upon the request of a party, order a second Child Planning Conference to review the service plan, to identify additional services that may be provided to the family or to discuss any other issue that may facilitate the best interest of the child.

## **Rule 7: Hearing Timelines**

**7.1 Non-secure Custody:** If a child is placed in non-secure custody, a hearing to determine the need for continued non-secure custody shall be held within seven (7) days, unless an earlier hearing is required by N.C.G.S. 7B-506. Subsequent review of non-secure custody shall be held as required by N.C.G.S. 7B-506.

**7.2 Adjudication:** The adjudication hearing shall be scheduled for the earliest possible date and in no event more than sixty (60) days after the filing of the petition.

**7.3 Disposition:** Whenever possible, the disposition shall take place immediately following adjudication and in no event more than thirty (30) days from the adjudication.

## **Rule 8: Service of Summons and Petition**

**8.1 Duty to Locate:** From the date the petition is filed until the adjudication hearing, the petitioner shall have a continuing duty to identify and locate any parent who has not been served with a copy of the summons and petition and to have the summons and petition served on any such parent.

**8.2 Dates on Summons:** The dates and times for the Non-Secure Custody Hearing, if applicable, the Child Planning Conference and the Adjudication Conference shall be reflected on the Summons. On the line on the JUVENILE SUMMONS AND NOTICE OF HEARING for "Notice of Pre-Hearing Conferences" shall reflect the date and time of the Child Planning Conference. The line labeled "Notice of Hearing on Need for Non-Secure Custody" shall reflect the date and time of the Non-Secure Custody Hearing. The line labeled "Summons and Notice of Hearing on the Petition" shall reflect the date of the Adjudication.

## **Rule 9: Calendar**

**9.1 Distribution:** The juvenile calendar shall be maintained and distributed by Family Court. On the Friday that is thirteen (13) days prior to a scheduled court session, Family Court will distribute the calendar to the County Attorney responsible for abuse/neglect/dependency cases, court appointed counsel for each parent, the Guardian ad Litem Attorney Advocate, any Conflict Guardian ad Litem-Attorney Advocate, the Guardian ad Litem District Administrator and staff and the Juvenile Clerk. In the event that the Friday is a holiday the calendar shall be distributed on the first succeeding business day. All attorneys, social workers, and Guardians ad Litem for the juvenile and/or a parent are responsible for contacting the Juvenile Clerk immediately if there are corrections that need to be made to the calendar. If an attorney's name appears on the calendar and that attorney has been released from responsibility in the case, he or she must appear in court for the hearing unless the attorney timely notifies Family Court.

With the exception of Non-secure Custody hearings, “emergency” situations, motions to publish for an unknown parent, or corrections to the calendar, no cases will be added or removed after the calendar is created. Cases continued from the previous session will be added as cases on an “add-on calendar.” Requests for continuances must take place in open court before the presiding judge as set forth herein.

**9.2 Calling of the Cases:** Calling of the cases, unless otherwise directed by the Judge, will be in the order as reflected on the calendar. The Court shall to the extent possible, establish a schedule in order to allow attorneys, parties and witnesses to address business elsewhere while waiting for their cases to be reached. Attorneys who are excused until a certain time shall return at that time and shall keep the courtroom clerk informed of their location until that time.

## **Rule 10. Discovery**

Attorneys are encouraged to provide all other attorneys with discoverable materials at any time upon request, and without court involvement.

## **Rule 11: Pre-Hearing Conferences**

**11.1 Pre-Adjudication Conference:** At 2:00 PM on the Thursday that is seven (7) days prior to the adjudication or such other day as set by the Court if that Thursday is a holiday, there shall be a pre-adjudication conference among the attorneys. All counsel of record and unrepresented parties shall attend the conference. The parties, if represented, may be present at the conference.

The purposes of the conference shall be to explore the possibility of settlement, to narrow the issues as much as possible, to stipulate those facts that are not in dispute, to estimate the time the matter will take for hearing. Further, any attorney considering a pre-trial motion shall put all other counsel on notice of same at the pre-hearing conference.

Unless a consent is entered, the attorneys shall enter into a pre-hearing conference order for a juvenile court judge’s signature. Each party shall attach to the order a written list of prospective witnesses and exhibits. Copies of all available listed exhibits intended for use at trial shall be provided. Any listed exhibit not available for distribution at the pre-hearing conference shall be distributed as soon as available. Parties are encouraged to share any exhibits intended to be used for hearing on adjudication at the earliest practicable time.

The pre-adjudication conference orders shall be tendered as soon as possible to the district court judge presiding in juvenile court that week and distributed by Family Court.

**11.2 Pre-Disposition Conference:** If disposition occurs on a date after the adjudication, there shall be no additional pre-hearing conference unless ordered by the Court or agreed upon by the parties. In the event there is a pre-hearing conference for disposition, it shall follow the rules of pre-hearing conferences for adjudications.



## **Rule 12: Stipulated Adjudications**

If the parties agree to stipulate to certain findings and/or conclusions and/or provisions of the Court's decree, the Court shall determine, before accepting the stipulations in open Court, that the parties understand the content and consequences of the stipulation, that they voluntarily consent to the stipulation and that they have the opportunity to seek legal counsel. The Court's findings shall be set forth on the record. In lieu of stipulations, in order to protect the parent's constitutional rights or for any other reason, a parent may choose not to resist the entry into evidence of the petition, court summary, medical reports or other documents forming the basis of an adjudication. A statement that a party does not resist the findings/stipulations shall be a sufficient finding of fact.

## **Rule 13: Early Submission of Court Reports**

**13.1 Submission of Adjudication/Disposition and Termination of Parental Rights Reports:** Adjudication/Disposition and Termination of Parental Rights court reports for review by the presiding judge shall be delivered to all parties and to the Family Court Office on or before the Tuesday of the week preceding the scheduled court hearing. Late reports must also be delivered to all parties and to the Family Court Office. The Family Court Office shall notify the presiding judge of which reports are tardy. These reports shall not be submitted to the presiding judge prior to the Adjudication hearing or the Termination of Parental Rights hearing without consent of all parties prior to the hearing. Information obtained after the submission of a report may be updated by an addendum on a case by case basis as circumstances require or as agreed upon by the parties.

**13.2 Submission of Review Reports:** Court reports for all review hearings shall be submitted to all parties and to the Family Court Office on or before the Tuesday of the week preceding the scheduled court hearing. Late reports must also be delivered to all parties and to the Family Court Office. The Family Court Office shall notify the presiding judge of which reports are tardy. These reports shall not be submitted to the presiding judge prior to the review hearing without consent of all parties prior to the hearing. Information obtained after the submission of a report may be updated by an addendum on a case by case basis as circumstances require or as agreed upon by the parties.

**13.3 Types of Reports to be Submitted:** The court reports submitted shall include, but are not limited to, court summary reports from DSS, the Guardian ad Litem Program or Conflict Guardian ad Litem Attorney-Advocate, the parent attorney, and mental health, psychological, substance abuse and any other evaluations or records previously ordered by the Court.

**13.4 Unrepresented Parties:** If a parent is unrepresented by counsel, then a copy shall be mailed by the party submitting the report to the parent's last known address if the parent is believed to still reside at that residence. If the parent's last known address is not currently valid, no report shall be mailed.

**13.5 Review of Reports:** All individuals receiving a copy of the court reports based on the Early Submission deadlines shall read the reports prior to the day of the hearing to ensure the most efficient use of court time. An attorney for a parent shall also make efforts to review the report with the parent prior to the day of the hearing. It is the intent of these rules that early submission of reports to the Court shall be sought whenever possible.

## **Rule 14: Review of Cases**

**14.1 Scheduling of Reviews:** The Court shall conduct a review of each case, as provided by statute. The Court may set a review hearing for any case at any time, on its own motion, or upon motion of any party. A notice of the hearing shall be prepared by DSS and signed, issued and served by the Clerk at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date set for the review hearing to such persons as may be involved in the case and any other person or agency specified by Court Order.

**14.2 Scheduling of Motions:** If a motion is filed by a party requesting relief, the moving party shall serve the motion and a notice of hearing at least five (5) days prior to the hearing date. When service is by facsimile, the sending attorney shall confirm receipt of same by the receiving attorney. Any party filing a motion for relief with less than five (5) days notice to the parties shall show good cause for said failure. A copy of the motion and notice of hearing shall be delivered to the juvenile clerk.

**14.3 Periodic Reviews:** If DSS is not relieved of court-ordered responsibility, the case shall be re-docketed for further review pursuant to statute.

## **Rule 15: Permanency Planning Hearings**

**15.1 Calendaring:** The court shall conduct a permanency planning hearing of each case, as provided by statute. The court may set a permanency planning hearing for any case at any time, on its own motion or upon motion by any party. Notice of the permanency planning hearing may be given in open court at the end of the prior hearing.

**15.2 Notice:** A notice of the hearing shall be prepared by DSS and signed, issued and served by the Clerk at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date set for the permanency planning hearing to such persons as may be involved in the case and any other person or agency specified by Court Order.

## **Rule 16: Termination of Parental Rights Pre-Hearing Conference**

**16.1 Scheduling:** At 2:00 PM on the Thursday that is seven (7) days prior to the adjudication or such other day as set by the Court if that Thursday is a holiday, there shall be a pre-hearing conference among the attorneys. All counsel of record and unrepresented parties shall attend the conference. The parties, if represented, may be present at the conference.

**16.2 Purpose:** The purposes of the pre-hearing conference shall be to determine the issues raised by the petition and any filed answer, to address any issues regarding

appointment of counsel, and to enter into a pre-hearing order. Further, any attorney considering a pre-trial motion shall put all other counsel on notice of same at the pre-hearing conference.

**16.3 Order:** The attorneys shall enter into a pre-hearing conference order for a juvenile court's signature. Each party shall attach to the order a written list of prospective witnesses and exhibits. Copies of all available listed exhibits intended for use at trial shall be provided. Any listed exhibit not available for distribution at the pre-hearing conference shall be distributed as soon as available. Parties are encouraged to share any exhibits intended to be used for hearing at the earliest practicable time.

The orders shall be tendered as soon as possible to the district court judge presiding in juvenile court that week. The juvenile clerk shall ensure copies of the signed order are placed in each attorney's box in the juvenile clerk's office.

### **Rule 17: Writs**

Any party wishing to have an inmate brought to the Court should contact the Inmate Coordinator with the Sheriff's Office located in the District Attorney's office.

### **Rule 18: Permanency Mediation**

N.C.G.S. §7B-202 shall govern permanency mediation in all A/N/D and TPR proceedings and are incorporated herein by reference.

### **Rule 19: Continuances**

**19.1 Good Cause:** No extension of time or continuance beyond the time specified by statute, order, or these Rules shall be granted, except for good cause. The consent of the parties alone is not good cause for an extension or continuance. Absence of reports which are dispositional in nature may be good cause to continue the disposition, but not good cause to continue the adjudication. In considering granting a continuance, the Court should consider the availability of the parties and all witnesses, whether such continuance would promote the purposes of these rules, protect the rights of the parties and the best interest of the juvenile, and promote the ends of justice.

**19.2 Orders:** All orders for extension or continuance shall appear on the record, state supporting reasons, and set the next hearing date.

### **Rule 20: Efficient Use of Court Time**

**20.1 Court Session:** All attorneys and/or parties are expected to be in Court as scheduled on the calendar.

**20.2 Consent Orders and Stipulations:** The use of consent orders and stipulations is encouraged. Proposed consent orders, stipulations, and/or court reports shall be circulated among the parties in advance of the scheduled hearing. Parties are encouraged to contact each other to ascertain the possibility of a consent order or stipulation. Attorneys should urge their clients to maintain contact with the attorney before the scheduled hearing date(s) so that proposed consent orders, stipulations,

and/or court reports may be reviewed prior to the scheduled court hearing and issues narrowed whenever possible.

## **Rule 21: Judicial Assignment**

**21.1 Judicial Assignment upon Adjudication:** Once a juvenile petition involving allegations of abuse, neglect, and/or dependency has been filed, the case shall be assigned to the judge presiding over the Adjudication/Disposition hearing. All subsequent hearings in the case shall be scheduled before the same judge, including Termination of Parental Rights hearings and future Adjudications regarding the same juvenile(s), unless extraordinary circumstances require otherwise. A new judge can be assigned upon the request of any party for the adjudication of the TPR.

**21.2 New Petitions Involving Same Parent(s):** With the exception of Non-secure Custody hearings, if a new petition for custody of other juvenile(s) of the same parent(s) is filed, all hearings involving the sibling juvenile(s) shall be heard by the judge assigned to the previous case if that judge is currently assigned to Abuse/Neglect/Dependency Court, including future Adjudications and Termination of Parental Rights hearings regarding the same juvenile(s), unless extraordinary circumstances require otherwise.

**21.3 Scheduling Changes:** Once a judge is assigned to a case, reasonable efforts shall be made to schedule all hearings before the assigned judge during his or her scheduled Abuse/Neglect/ Dependency Court rotation.

## **Rule 22: Preparation and Entry of Orders**

**22.1 Preparation of Orders:** In cases involving DSS, the DSS Attorney's Office shall prepare all orders, unless otherwise provided herein or instructed by the presiding judge. On a motion for review, the attorney or party filing the motion shall be responsible for the filing of the order unless otherwise directed by the Judge. If further hearings are calendared in the case, then the order shall designate the date, time, place and purpose of the next hearing, which shall serve as notice of hearing to all parties served with a copy of the order.

**22.2 Time Standards for Entry of Order:** All orders should be filed within **thirty (30)** days following the hearing. A draft of each order must be circulated among the attorneys (and any unrepresented parties who appeared at the hearing) involved in the proceeding within seven (7) days prior to the submission of the final order to the Court for signature. If the order was not circulated in compliance with this Rule, this must be brought to the Court's attention when the final order is submitted for signature.

**22.3 Orders:** Orders must be reduced to writing, signed, and entered within thirty (30) days of the completion of the hearing. If the order is not entered within thirty (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 ten (10) days of the subsequent hearing required by this subsection.

**22.4 Order Submission:** All orders must be delivered to the Family Court Office in advance of the due date to allow the judge time to return the order for changes before signature. For all orders timely submitted in accordance with this rule, the Family Court Office will ensure that the orders are signed and filed.

**Rule 23: Amendments and Modifications**

These Rules are subject to amendment or modification as experience dictates and requires.