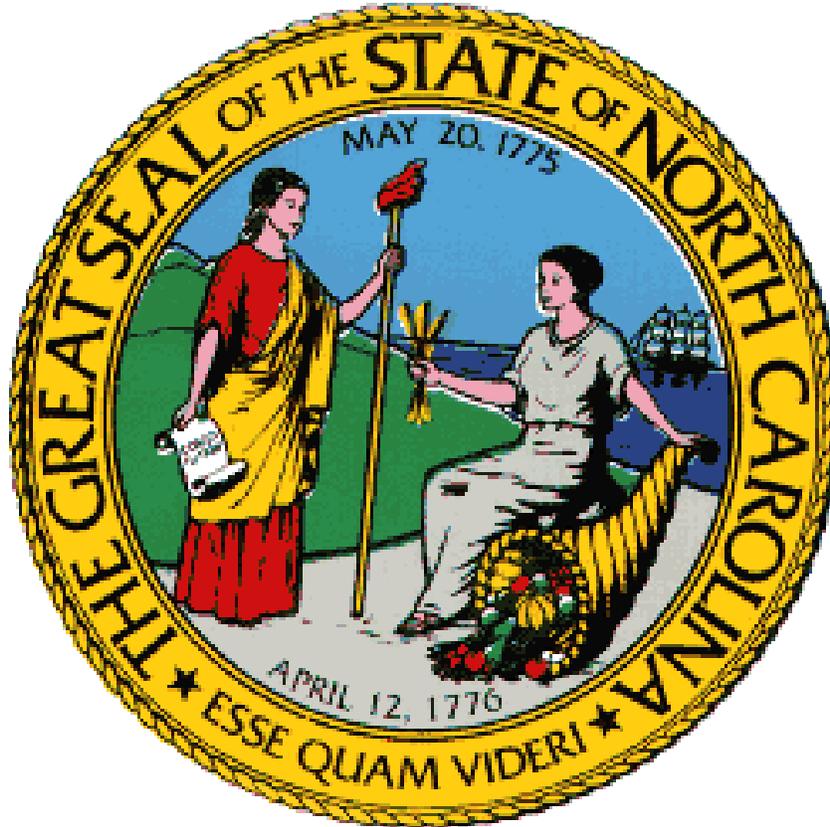


**Civil Superior Court Rules**  
**Wilson, Nash, and Edgecombe Counties**



**NORTH CAROLINA COURT**  
**Division I - District 7**

**Written and Published by:**

Quentin T. Sumner, Nash County Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

Milton T. Fitch, Wilson County Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

Robyn Hicks-Guinn, Trial Court Administrator

***In collaboration with:***

Civil Superior Court Rules Committee, North Carolina District 7

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**I. PURPOSE**

- A. The purpose of these Rules is to provide for the just and prompt disposition of civil matters in Superior Court District 7.

**II. EFFECTIVE DATE**

- A. These Rules will be effective on January 1, 2016.

**III. COURTROOM DECORUM FOR ATTORNEYS AND *PRO SE* LITIGANTS**

- A. When an attorney is notified to appear for a pretrial conference, motion hearing, trial or any other court appearance, the attorney must, consistent with ethical requirements, appear or have a partner, associate, or another attorney familiar with the case appear on his/her behalf. An attorney's absence is not grounds for a continuance unless the attorney has followed Rule 3.1 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts ("General Rules of Practice") including being excused in advance by the judge before whom the case is scheduled and having given prior notice to his opponent. In considering any request for a continuance, the court should be guided by Rule 3.1 of the General Rules of Practice; and for more specifics regarding continuances, see Section IX below.
- B. Attorneys and pro se litigants shall be punctual for all court appearances. In the event that an attorney or pro se litigant anticipates he/she may be late to court, he/she shall inform the court as soon as practical.
- C. Counsel for each party and the presiding judge shall remain in the courtroom throughout the course of a trial, including jury selection, opening statements and closing arguments.

**IV. MOTIONS**

- A. **MOTION HEARING:** Motions may be calendared for any date that a Civil Superior Court trial session is scheduled to begin. Motions will be calendared upon request or by Order of the Court. Motions will be calendared for and heard at 10:00 a.m. on the first day of the scheduled session subject to the presiding judge's discretion to hear any motion later in the session.
- B. **CALENDARING MOTIONS:** To request the calendaring of a motion:

- i. For any pending motion, serve on the other parties, and file with the Clerk of Court in the county where the case is filed, a notice of hearing. For any motion not then pending, serve on the other parties, and file with the Clerk of Court in the county where the case is filed, a notice of hearing and the motion, and submit to the Clerk the appropriate fee. All notices of hearing must be received no later than the Friday that is ten (10) days prior to the court session for which the petitioner requests the motion to be heard; however, any different or additional time requirements for service and filing of motions imposed by the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure (“Rules of Civil Procedure”) must also be complied with regarding the hearing of a motion. If a party requests the calendaring of a motion or motions pursuant to this Rule, and there are then pending any other motion(s) by any other party to the action which cannot then be noticed for hearing in time to comply with the ten (10) day requirement of this Rule, such motions may be heard in the discretion of the presiding judge if they are noticed for hearing in compliance with the Rules of Civil Procedure, including Rule 6(d) on modification of time requirements. Requests for the hearing of a minor settlement shall be made as provided in Section VII A.
- ii. Email, as an attachment, a copy of the Notice of Hearing to the Trial Court Coordinator (“TCC”) for the appropriate county. The Notice of Hearing should include the estimated length of time for the hearing. A sufficient Notice of Hearing Form (NH-1) and is located at web address: <http://www.nccourts.org/Courts/CRS/Policies/LocalRules/Default.asp> under “Nash County.” The Notice of Hearing form for Wilson and Edgecombe Counties is located at the same web address.

- C. PUBLISHED CALENDAR:** Motion (and Trial) Calendars will be published on the web at [www.nccourts.org](http://www.nccourts.org). Motion (and Trial) calendars will not be mailed, except as may otherwise be provided by our local rules. If procedure has been followed and the statutory notice has been given, the Motion will appear on the Final Motion Calendar on the Monday immediately preceding the Motion Session.
- D. FOREIGN CASES:** Motions for cases filed in a foreign district (or a different county pursuant to Rule 7(b)(4) of the Rules of Civil Procedure) will be calendared once the parties provide written consent for the motion to be heard in District 7 and with approval from the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge.

- E. DISTRICT COURT MOTIONS:** To calendar a motion in a District Court case, contact the appropriate Clerk of Court Office and ask for the Civil District Court Clerk to schedule the motion.
  - i. Wilson: (252) 291-7502
  - ii. Nash: (252) 220-3001
  - iii. Edgecombe: (252) 824-3200

**V. SCHEDULING CONFERENCE**

- A. SET FOR TRIAL:** Trial calendars shall include cases set for trial by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or the TCC during the Scheduling Conference.
- B. SCHEDULING CONFERENCE:** Pending civil cases in which an appearance has been made by a defendant, or which has been pending at least ninety (90) days with no defendant having appeared, shall be placed on a scheduling calendar. Scheduling calendars shall be posted on the [www.nccourts.org](http://www.nccourts.org) website. Attorneys are expected to subscribe to this website and review it regularly. Pro se litigants will receive notification regarding scheduling of the pending cases by mail.
- C.** For the purpose of case-flow management, the Scheduling Conference will be held bi-annually, in May and November. During this Scheduling Conference, attorneys and pro se parties are provided the opportunity to discuss any pending cases on the scheduling calendar. Attorneys and pro se parties have the option of appearing at this Scheduling Conference or submitting a Civil Case Status Report to the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or the TCC prior to the Scheduling Conference, and such input will be considered by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge in designating the trial date. If a Civil Case Status Report is not received for a case and there is no appearance at the scheduling conference, the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge will designate the trial date without input from the attorneys/parties.
- D. PUBLICATION OF INITIAL CALENDARS:** The Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or the TCC will set cases from the scheduling calendar onto an initial trial calendar within one week of the Scheduling Conference. The initial trial calendar will be posted on the [www.nccourts.org](http://www.nccourts.org) website.
- E. PUBLICATION OF FINAL TRIAL CALENDARS:** The Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or the TCC will post all final calendars five business days prior to the court session.

## **VI. MEDIATION**

- A.** All pending Civil Superior Court cases shall be mediated pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. §7A-38.1 and the Rules Implementing Statewide Mediated Settlement Conferences adopted by the North Carolina Supreme Court (“Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences”), except cases exempted from mediation by the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences or when the requirement is dispensed with by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge in the district where the case is pending.
- B.** An Order for Mediation will be sent to all attorneys of record in a case ninety (90) days after the complaint is filed. The tentative trial date assigned on the Mediation Order will become the final trial date, for the purpose of mediation, unless a new trial date is agreed upon by the attorneys, unrepresented parties, and the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or his designee. The deadline for completion of the mediated settlement conference will be the date that is two (2) weeks from the trial date.
- C.** The parties shall designate a mediator and notify the TCC within twenty-one (21) days of the entry of an Order of Mediation. When parties fail to designate a mediator and/or notify the TCC of the same within the time required, the Court will appoint a mediator. All mediators in Superior Court District 7, whether designated by the parties or appointed by the Court without party designation, shall meet the standards for certification adopted by the Supreme Court pursuant to N.C.G.S. §7A-38.2.
- D.** All communications with the court concerning mediated settlement conferences shall be made to the TCC in writing.
- E.** All mediators appointed by the Court without party designation will be appointed from the list provided by the Dispute Resolution Commission.
- F.** Costs shall be borne by the parties and paid in equal shares unless otherwise ordered or agreed. Multiple parties shall be considered one party when represented by the same counsel. Parties unable to pay costs shall be permitted to participate without costs pursuant to the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences.
- G.** Such persons or entities, and their attorneys, required to attend the Mediated Settlement Conference by the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences shall physically attend the Mediated Settlement Conference unless excused by an Order of the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or with the consent of all parties and the mediator. Persons who fail to attend shall be subject to any appropriate monetary sanction imposed by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, following notice and hearing, pursuant to N.C.G.S. §7A-38.1(g) and Rule 5 of the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences, including, but not limited to, attorney’s fees, mediator fees, and expenses incurred in attending the conference.

## **VII. MINOR SETTLEMENT**

- A.** All minor settlement and structured settlement matters shall be addressed in the pending civil action; and if no civil action is pending, such matters shall be filed with the Clerk of Court as a civil action pursuant to Rule 3 of the Rules of Civil Procedure. To set for hearing, a notice of hearing should be delivered to the TCC no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday prior to the first day of the court session requested.
- B.** Matters will be given priority and will be set for hearing at the next available Criminal or Civil court session consistent with the notice of hearing.
- C.** The minor and his/her Guardian ad Litem (who must be an attorney licensed to practice in North Carolina) must be present, unless excused in advance by the Court.

## **VIII. WILL CAVEAT**

- A.** Will Caveat cases will be placed on the next available calendar for the purpose of aligning parties, determining a trial setting, and hearing all other motions under Rule 16 of the Rules of Civil Procedure.
- B.** Will caveat cases are entitled to a priority trial calendar setting by statute.

## **IX. CONTINUANCES (Also see Section III A)**

- A.** Continuance requests prior to a session of court shall be directed to the TCC. Continuance requests made at or after the beginning of a session of court shall be directed to the Presiding Judge.
- B.** A request for continuance must be made in writing to the TCC, using the Motion and Order for Continuance Form (AOC-CV-221). Form located at: <http://www.nccourts.org/Forms/Documents/214.pdf> .
- C.** The TCC will submit all requests to the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and then advise counsel of the Judge's decision.
- D.** After publication of the initial trial calendar, continuances will be granted only for reason of compelling necessity, will not be granted solely because of the unavailability of an expert witness or witness who is not subject to a subpoena unless the expert or lay witness (a) is determined to be of great importance to the party's case, (b) was determined by the party's attorney to be needed to give testimony in person at trial, and (c) whose unavailability could not have been

reasonably foreseen by the party or attorney---use of depositions is encouraged. The Court shall consider the following in conjunction with Rule 3.1 of the General Rules of Practice when deciding to grant or deny a request for continuance:

- i. The age of the case;
- ii. The status of the trial calendar for the week;
- iii. The order the case appears on the trial calendar, including whether the case is peremptorily scheduled;
- iv. Number of previous continuances;
- v. The due diligence of counsel in promptly filing a request for continuance as soon as practicable;
- vi. The length of the continuance requested, if applicable;
- vii. The position of opposing counsel;
- viii. Whether the parties consent;
- ix. Present or future inconvenience or unavailability of witnesses or parties, and ;
- x. Any other reason that promotes the ends of justice

**E.** Reasons that are considered invalid for a request for continuance are:

- i. First time scheduling of the case for trial
- ii. Whether counsel of record has received payment

**F.** Cases that are continued will be set for a new trial date by the presiding judge at the time of the continuance if the continuance is granted in open court; otherwise, the new trial date will be set by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge (or TCC).

**G.** Ex parte requests for continuance will not be considered by the Court.

**X. EXCEPTIONAL CIVIL AND COMPLEX BUSINESS CASES—RULE 2.1  
GENERAL RULES OF PRACTICE**

- A. Requests to designate a case as exceptional or as a complex business case shall be made in accordance with Rule 2.1 of the General Rules of Practice.
- B. When all parties are in agreement, a request for 2.1 designation may be presented to the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge as a consent motion.
- C. When all parties are not in agreement, the request shall be made in the form of a motion and scheduled for hearing.
- D. In both instances, the motion should include information on the factors set out in Rule 2.1(d) of the General Rules of Practice.

**XI. PEREMPTORY SETTINGS**

A request for a peremptory setting shall be made in writing to the TCC. A Request for Peremptory Setting Form (CCF-2) may be used for such requests and is at <http://www.nccourts.org/Courts/CRS/Policies/LocalRules/Documents/71.pdf>.

**XII. CASES WITH ORDER DUE**

- A. When a case is reported settled, the attorney responsible for submitting the closing documents shall submit them on or before the next scheduled session of Civil Superior Court unless some other rule applies or the court extends the time for good cause. If the closing documents are not timely filed and no extension has been obtained, the case shall appear on each subsequent trial calendar until the closing documents are filed, or until the date of the next Scheduling Conference at which time the TCC shall place the case on a motion calendar for the attorney to show cause for the failure to comply with this rule. Cases settled at mediated settlement conferences shall have the closing documents filed within the time provided by Rule 4.C.(2) of the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences, with notice of the settlement being given to the TCC within the time provided by Rule 4.C.(4) of the Rules for Mediated Settlement Conferences. Extensions of time to file the closing documents may be granted by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, or designee, for good cause.

**XIII. OUT OF STATE/COUNTRY SUBPOENAS/LIMITED PRACTICE OF OUT-OF-STATE ATTORNEYS**

- A. The procedure for the issuance of subpoenas to compel attendance to testify and/or produce for actions pending outside North Carolina is established pursuant to Rule 28(d)(1) of the Rules of Civil Procedure (for actions pending in foreign countries)

and N.C.G.S. §1F-1, et. seq. (for actions pending in other states), in conjunction with Rule 45 of the Rules of Civil Procedure; and those procedures shall be followed.

**B.** The party seeking the subpoena shall deliver to the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court the following items:

- i. A completed North Carolina Subpoena Form (ACO-G-100), leaving blank the file number, date and signature lines for the Clerk and Senior Resident Superior Court Judge to complete. Form located at:  
<http://www.nccourts.org/Forms/Documents/556.pdf>;
- ii. If documents subject to the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, as amended (“HIPAA”), or subject to §42 CFR, Part 2 (relating to facilities providing drug abuse or alcohol abuse treatment), or which constitute confidential physician-patient communications which are protected from disclosure pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. §8-53 and/or N.C.G.S. §8-53.3, and/or constitute confidential information which is protected from disclosure pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. §122C-52 through N.C.G.S. §122C-56, are being subpoenaed, and the subpoena submitted does not include a valid authorization by the patient, or the personal representative of the patient, whose health information is being subpoenaed, which authorizes the release of such records, the person seeking the subpoena must also submit an Order for execution and entry by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge that complies with the requisites of all such applicable statutes and regulations for release of such information without the patient’s consent. Additionally, a comparable Order is required if the subpoena seeks the production of juvenile records or any other document that requires authorization by a Court Order;<sup>1</sup>
- iii. A check in the amount specified by N.C.G.S. §1F-3(b) and §7A-305(a)(2) must be tendered to the Clerk of Superior Court;
- iv. If requesting the Wilson, Nash, or Edgecombe Counties Sheriff’s Office to serve the subpoena, a check made payable to the Sheriff in the amount

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<sup>1</sup> This Section XIII. B. ii. applies as well to subpoenas issued in actions pending in North Carolina Courts.

specified by N.C.G.S. §7A-311(a)(1)a must be included for each subpoena issued. If other type service is requested, indicate the method; and

- v. If the subpoena is being applied for by an attorney who is not licensed in North Carolina, the attorney must be admitted to practice in North Carolina Pro Hac Vice as provided by N.C.G.S. §84-4.1 and Section C. below.

C. Pro Hac Vice Procedure: If an out-of-state attorney intends to make an appearance in North Carolina in connection with this case and is not licensed in North Carolina, a Motion and Order to Admit Counsel Pro Hac Vice must be filed pursuant to N.C.G.S. §84-4.1. The motion required under this section must fully comply with N.C.G.S. §84-4.1, including that it shall be signed by the attorney and shall contain or be accompanied by:

- (1) The attorney's full name, post-office address, bar membership number, and status as a practicing attorney in another state.
- (2) A statement, signed by the client, setting forth the client's address and declaring that the client has retained the attorney to represent the client in the proceeding.
- (3) A statement that unless permitted to withdraw sooner by order of the court, the attorney will continue to represent the client in the proceeding until its final determination, and that with reference to all matters incident to the proceeding, the attorney agrees to be subject to the orders and amenable to the disciplinary action and the civil jurisdiction of the General Court of Justice and the North Carolina State Bar in all respects as if the attorney were a regularly admitted and licensed member of the Bar of North Carolina in good standing.
- (4) A statement that the state in which the attorney is regularly admitted to practice grants like privileges to members of the Bar of North Carolina in good standing.
- (5) A statement to the effect that the attorney has associated and is personally appearing in the proceeding, with an attorney who is a resident of this State, has agreed to be responsible for filing a registration statement with the North Carolina State Bar, and is duly and legally admitted to practice in the General Court of Justice of North Carolina, upon whom service may be had in all matters connected with the legal proceedings, or any disciplinary matter, with the same effect as if personally made on the foreign attorney within this State.
- (6) A statement accurately disclosing a record of all that attorney's disciplinary history. Discipline shall include (i) public discipline by any court or lawyer regulatory organization, and (ii) revocation of any pro hac vice admission.

(7) Additionally:

- i. A check in the amount specified by N.C.G.S. §84-4.1(7) must be tendered to the Clerk of Superior Court.
- ii. All out of state payments fees must be paid using a certified check.
- iii. Include a large, self-addressed, postage-paid envelope for return of all filings.

#### **XIV. ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSITIONS**

- A.** The following categories of cases are deemed not pending for trial and are subject to removal from the list of pending cases by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, or the TCC if so designated, without prejudice in categories (1) through (8):
  1. The case is in bankruptcy;
  2. defendants are making payments;
  3. defendant was never served, the time for service has expired and there has thereafter been no action in the file for at least ninety (90) days;
  4. the case was removed to Federal Court;
  5. the case was removed to North Carolina Court of Appeals or North Carolina Supreme Court;
  6. removal for any other specified cause;
  7. no response to the Complaint has been filed, the time for filing a response has expired; and there has thereafter been no action in the file for at least ninety (90) days; or
  8. The action has become subject to binding arbitration.
- B.** The attorneys of record in each case that becomes subject to removal from the list of pending cases shall receive notice from the TCC that the case is subject to removal no less than five (5) business days prior to the date the “Order of Removal from the List of Pending Cases” is signed by the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge.

## **XV. REINSTATEMENT TO THE ACTIVE DOCKET**

Cases in category (1) through (8) of Section XIV may be returned to active status upon request by any party to the case.

## **XVI. MEDICAL MALPRACTICE CASES**

In the event there is no Consent Order pursuant to Rule 26 of the Rules of Civil Procedure, the following rules shall apply:

- A.** The TCC will regularly review all medical malpractice cases in each county to determine if a discovery conference or a final conference should be scheduled. A discovery conference shall be scheduled with the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge or his designee within sixty days after the close of the pleadings, the filing of a responsive pleading or the filing of a motion requiring a determination by the Court. A final conference shall be scheduled with the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge at the close of the discovery period.
- B.** Senior Superior Court Judge or Presiding Judge shall:
  - i. Rule on all motions;
  - ii. Establish an appropriate schedule for designating expert witnesses;
  - iii. Establish, by order, an appropriate discovery schedule for the completion of discovery within one hundred fifty (150) days after the order is entered. Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent any party from utilizing any procedures afforded under Rules 26 through 37 of the Rules of Civil Procedure; and
  - iv. Review and approve consent orders presented by counsel
- C.** Counsel for parties may submit written orders for the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge in lieu of the discovery conference. These orders must be signed by each counsel or party and must address each of the statutory mandates set out in G.S. 90-21.11 and Rule 26(f) of the Rules of Civil Procedure. Counsel shall advise the TCC of their intention to comply by consent.
- D.** When a party fails to identify an expert witness as ordered, the court shall, upon motion by the moving party, impose an appropriate sanction, which may include

dismissal of the action, entry of default against the defendant, or exclusion of the testimony of the expert witness at trial.

- E. At the close of the discovery period, the TCC shall schedule a final conference for the purpose of calendaring the case for trial. The parties may agree on a trial date subject to the approval of the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge. The Court shall consider the complexity of the case, the convenience of witnesses, the schedules of counsel, and such other matters as the court may deem proper in calendaring the case for trial.
- F. All requests for a peremptory setting must be made in writing and sent to the TCC.

## **XVII. SECURED LEAVE**

- A. Each attorney is entitled to designate three weeks during each calendar year as secure leave during which time no matter requiring that attorney's appearance shall be calendared for hearing in any court in this District and the attorney shall not otherwise be required to appear before any tribunal of this District. The weeks designated may be consecutive.
- B. A secure leave period shall be designated ninety (90) days or more in advance. Attorneys shall not be entitled to designate a period subsequent to a trial or other matter having already been set by a Court.
- C. Designation shall be made by the attorney by filing a letter in the offices of the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge in each county in which the attorney has pending matters and with the Chief District Court Judge if the attorney has pending matters in that division and depending upon "division" pendency of the case(s) referenced in the letter (or, in either case, with the TCC as allowed by Rule 26 E.(2) of the General Rules of Practice). Any pending civil case should be referenced.
- D. This policy is not exclusive. For extraordinary circumstances, the Court may designate other or additional weeks of vacation when an attorney is faced with a particular or unusual situation or for other reasons as has been the custom in this District.

## **XVIII.**

### **COURT CONTACT INFORMATION**

- A. **Wilson**

- a. Milton F. Fitch, Jr., Senior Resident Judge .....(252) 399-0008
- b. Felecia Lucas, Trial Court Coordinator.....(252) 399-0008  
[Felecia.W.Lucas@nccourts.org](mailto:Felecia.W.Lucas@nccourts.org)
- c. Andrew Whitley, Clerk of Court.....(252) 291-7502

**B. Nash**

- a. Quentin Sumner, Senior Resident Judge .....(252) 220-3016
- b. Rachel Joyner, Clerk of Court .....(252) 220-3001
- c. Bernice Perry, Trial Court Coordinator .....(252) 220-3016  
[bernice.d.perry@nccourts.org](mailto:bernice.d.perry@nccourts.org)

**C. Edgecombe**

- a. Milton F. Fitch, Jr., Senior Resident Judge .....(252) 399-0008
- b. Janice Allsbrook, Judicial Assistant .....(252) 824-3280  
[Janice.C.Allsbrook@nccourts.org](mailto:Janice.C.Allsbrook@nccourts.org)
- c. Carol Allen White, Clerk of Court.....(252)824-3200
- d. Felecia W. Lucas, Trial Court Coordinator.....(252)-399-0008  
[Felecia.W.Lucas@nccourts.org](mailto:Felecia.W.Lucas@nccourts.org)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

COUNTY OF NASH

SUPERIOR COURT DISTRICT 7A

ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 40 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 2 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior Courts, the attached Rules are hereby adopted for Superior Court District 7A.

This the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

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NASH SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

COUNTY OF EDGECOMBE

SUPERIOR COURT DISTRICT 7B-C

ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 40 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 2 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior Courts, the attached Rules are hereby adopted for Superior Court District 7A.

This the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

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EDGECOMBE SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

COUNTY OF WILSON

SUPERIOR COURT DISTRICT 7B-C

ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 40 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 2 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior Courts, the attached Rules are hereby adopted for Superior Court District 7A.

This the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

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WILSON SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE