

**DISTRICT COURT CONTINUANCE POLICY
(Effective November 1, 1998)**

Pursuant to the inherent authority invested in the Chief District Court Judge as to management of the court dockets within the District Court Division for the 30th Judicial District, the authority delegated to the Chief District Court Judge by the North Carolina General Statutes, Section 7A-146, and pursuant to the directives and requirements of the Caseflow Management Plan as reported by the Supreme Court of North Carolina to the General Assembly on 1 May, 1996, pursuant to Chapter 333 of the 1995 Session Laws.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that all parties and attorneys with cases pending in the District Criminal, Traffic, Civil, Domestic and Juvenile Courts, shall comply with the provision of the District Court Continuance Policies of the attached and incorporated "District Court Continuance Policy for District Court, 30th District," on and after the effective date of November 1, 1998.

The Rules contained in the attached District Court Continuance Policy shall supersede all previous Rules of the District with which there is conflict on and after the effective date. Otherwise, the present and existing Rules shall continue in full force and effect.

The continuance rules, policies, and time standards set out in this Continuance Policy and Order are adopted pursuant to the Caseflow Management Plan adopted by the Supreme Court of North Carolina submitted to North Carolina General Assembly on 1 May 1996 pursuant to Chapter 333 of the 1995 Session Laws.

The continuance rules, policies, and time standards set out in this Continuance Policy and Order are adopted as an addition to the Local Rules of the 30th District, District Court Division.

This the 15th day of October, 1998.

John J. Snow, Jr.
Chief District Court Judge
District 30

2. Jackson County Sylva Office
Jackson County Justice Center
401 Grindstaff Cove Road
Sylva, NC 28779
Phone: 828/586-7586

3. Macon County Franklin Office
Macon County Courthouse
Franklin, NC 28734
Phone: 828/349-2032

4. Swain County Bryson City Office
Swain County Courthouse
Bryson City, NC 28713
Phone: 828/488-8723

5. Cherokee,
Clay
Graham County Murphy Office
Cherokee County Courthouse
Murphy, NC 28906
Phone: 818/837-7818 FAX: 828/837-8512

The District Attorney will consider the factors as set out in **Section 1.6 Evaluation of Motions for Continuance** in deciding whether or not to agree to any motions for continuance.

If the District Attorney agrees with the continuance, the District Attorney, at the session for which the case in question was scheduled, will provide for documentation on form (AOC-CR-203), information showing the reason(s) for the continuance, who the case was continued for, of if continued by consent. The District Attorney is responsible for informing the victim(s), all states witnesses, and/or law enforcement officer(s) of the continuance.

If the District Attorney does not agree to the continuance, the moving party must reduce to writing the grounds for the motion to continue on the Continuance Form (AOC-CR-203), and the moving party will then turn this form over to the District Attorney who should note any objections and refer the motion to any available District Court Judge for a ruling. Upon ruling by a District Court Judge, the District Attorney will then turn the Continuance Form (AOC-CR-203) over to the Clerk for filing in the appropriate file.

If, prior to the session, a continuance is sought in the above excepted cases, motion for continuance should be made in writing to the presiding trial judge of that court with proper notice to the District Attorney.

1.2 Court Conflicts

The various levels of court should work together to try to move cases as expeditiously as possible. Age of case, subject matter, and priority of setting should be given as much primacy as the level of court when resolving conflicts.

Attorneys shall notify the court and opposing counsel of any other court conflict(s) as they become known and shall keep the court advised of the resolution of that conflict. All judges shall communicate with other judges to resolve such conflicts. In resolving court conflicts juvenile cases shall take precedence over all other matters..

1.3 Documentation Of Continuance

All orders for continuance shall be documented on AOC Form (AOC-CR-203), and placed in the file. The form shall include the name of the moving party, any objections to the continuance, and the basis for the continuance.

1.4 Notification Of Opposing Counsel/Unrepresented Parties/Witnesses

All applications for continuance shall be made as soon as a conflict is identified, and all impacted – opposing counsel, unrepresented parties, subpoenaed witnesses, or court staff charge with subpoenaing witnesses – shall be notified as soon as possible by the moving party.

1.5 Objections To Motion For Continuance

All parties should have an opportunity to be heard on a motion to continue.

1.6 Evaluation Of Motions For Continuance

Factors to be considered by the appropriate court official when deciding whether to grant or deny a motion for continuance should include:

- the opportunity to exercise the right to effective assistance of counsel;
- the age of the case and seriousness of the charge;
- the incarceration status of the defendant;
- the effect on children and spouses if the issue is continued and not resolved;
- the status of the trial calendar for the session;
- the number, moving party, and grounds for previous continuances;
- the due diligence of counsel in promptly making a motion for continuance as soon as practicable and notifying opposing counsel and witnesses;
- the period of delay caused by the continuance requested;
- the presence of witnesses for the present session, or for a future session;
- whether the basis of the motion is the existence of a legitimate conflict with another court setting;
- the availability of counsel;

- consideration of the financial consequences to the public, the parties, the attorneys, or witnesses if the case is continued; and
- any other factor that promotes the fair administration of justice.

1.7 Case Rescheduling

Upon granting a motion for continuance, the judge should reschedule the case, taking into consideration the availability of counsel, defendant, and witnesses.

1.8 Time Standards

All criminal and motor vehicle cases should be disposed within 120 days from the first appearance in District Court.

[Commentary: Meeting this deadline may not be possible in instances in which a defendant fails to appear and is “called and failed.” In these matters, it is the responsibility of the district attorney to determine when it is appropriate to dismiss these matters.]

2. MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE – GENERAL CIVIL AND MAGISTRATE APPEAL CASES

Civil cases should be disposed at the earliest opportunity, including the first trial setting. However, when compelling reasons for continuance are presented which would affect the fundamental fairness of the trial process, a continuance may be granted for good cause. Request for continuances that will delay the resolution of the case beyond the established time standards shall only be granted for extraordinary cause.

2.1 Appropriate Court Official

All applications for continuance shall be made to the District Court Judge presiding over the session of court for which the case is calendared, or his or her designee. If the trial judge is not known at the time the request is made, the application should be addressed to the Chief District Court Judge, or his or her designee.

2.2 Court Conflicts

The various levels of court should work together to try to move cases as expeditiously as possible. Age of case, subject matter, and priority of setting should be given as much primacy as the level of court when resolving conflicts.

Attorneys shall notify the court and opposing counsel of any other court conflict(s) as they become known and shall keep the court advised of the resolution of that conflict. All judges shall

communicate with other judges to resolve such conflicts. In resolving court conflicts juvenile cases will take precedence over all matters.

[Commentary: All attorneys are reminded of the requirements of Rule 2(e) of the General Rules of Practice regarding their appearance, or the appearance of a partner, associate, or another attorney familiar with the case, if there is another court that requires his or her presence in court simultaneously.]

2.3 Documentation Of Continuance

All requests for continuance shall be by written motion, in the form of a letter, or on Form 30A of the Local Civil Rules. However, oral motions may be allowed when the reason for the continuance did not become known until immediately preceding the start of court.

[Commentary: This proviso for an oral motion is only for emergency situations, such as severe family illness or death of a party, one of the attorneys, or critical witnesses; and the absence of that person will make it impossible for the trial or hearing to continue.]

2.4 Notification Of Opposing Counsel/Unrepresented Parties/Witnesses

All parties must be notified of a motion to continue. A copy of the motion to continue must be distributed to all counsel of record and/or unrequited parties prior to ruling on the motion. In addition to the service requirements set out in the statute, distribution of the motion must be made by the quickest means feasible, including facsimile transmission, electronic mail, or hand delivery.

[Commentary: The burden is on the moving party to advise the court and opposing counsel of any motion for continuance. The goal of this provision is to avoid any continuance surprises and to provide notice as expeditiously as possible to the court and to the opposing party and/or their counsel.]

2.5 Objections To Motion For Continuance

All parties should have an opportunity to be heard on a motion to continue.

When a motion to continue is made more than seven (7) working days prior to trial, opposing counsel and/or unrepresented parties shall have a period of four (4) working days, following completion of distribution, to communicate objections to the motion for continuance to the moving party and the presiding District Court Judge or his/her designee. Objections not raised in writing within this time period are deemed waived.

When a motion to continue is made within seven (7) working days of the trial term (other than an oral motion as provided in Rule 2.3 above), the moving party shall include in the written motion a statement that the opposing counsel or party has been contacted and a short statement on opposing party's position on the motion (including whether the opposing party or counsel

consents or objects, and whether or not he or she desires to be heard on the motion). If the moving party is unable to contact the opposing counsel or unrepresented parties, the motion shall state what efforts were made and why contact was not possible.

2.6 Evaluation Of Motions For Continuance

Motions for continuances will be heard at the calendar call at the beginning of that particular session unless a continuance has been granted by the Presiding Judge. If a party objects to a continuance request and it is important that the motion for continuance be heard before the beginning of the session, the Presiding Judge will try to hear the motion at any time before the court date if it can be arranged at a time convenient to the Presiding Judge.

- the effect on children and spouses if the issue is continued and not resolved;
- the impact of a continuance on the safety of the parties or any other persons;
- the age of the case;
- that status of the trial calendar for the session;
- the order in which the case appears on the trial calendar, including whether the case is peremptorily scheduled;
- the number of previous continuances;
- the extent to which counsel had input into the scheduling of the trial date;
- the due diligence of counsel in promptly filing a motion for continuance as soon as practicable;
- whether the reason for continuance is a short-lived event which would resolve prior to the scheduled trial date;
- whether the basis for the motion is the existence of a legitimate conflict with another court setting;
- the period of delay caused by the continuance requested;
- the position of opposing counsel or unrepresented parties for a future session;
- whether the parties themselves consent to the continuance;
- present or future inconvenience or unavailability of witnesses/parties;
- consideration of the financial consequences to the public, the parties, the attorneys, or witnesses if the case is continued;\
- compliance with any law relating to the scheduling and trial of civil cases (such as summary ejection appeals); and
- any other factor that promotes the fair administration of justice.

2.7 Case Rescheduling

If good cause arises to request a continuance after the ten (10) day cut off time passes, the party requesting a continuance should notify the other parties in writing, with certification of service, if enough time remains for delivery. If not enough time, notice should be made by phone, even as late as the day before the beginning of the term.

2.8 Time Standards

All general civil and magistrate appeal cases should be disposed within 24 months of filing, with 90% of all cases disposed within 12 months of filing.

[Commentary: These are the standards adopted by the Supreme Court of North Carolina in the case flow management plan provided 1 May 1996 to the General Assembly, pursuant to Chapter 333 of the 1995 Session laws.]

3. MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE – DOMESTIC CASES

Domestic cases should be disposed at the earliest opportunity, including the first trial setting. However, when compelling reasons for continuance are presented which would affect the fundamental fairness of the trial process, a continuance may be granted for good cause. Requests for continuances that will delay the resolution of the contested issues beyond the established time standards shall only be granted for extraordinary cause.

[Commentary: Domestic cases can involve disputes that directly impact children (especially their living arrangements and support) and that prevent the parties and their family members from moving on with their lives. Therefore, they should be resolved expeditiously.]

3.1 Appropriate Court Official

All applications for continuance shall be made to the District Court Judge presiding over the session of court for which the case is calendared, or his/her designee. If the trial judge is not known at the time the request is made, the application should be addressed to the Chief District Court Judge or his or her designee.

3.2 Court Conflicts

The various levels of court should work together to try to move cases as expeditiously as possible. Age of case, subject matter, and priority of setting should be given as much primacy as the level of court when resolving conflicts.

Attorneys shall notify the court and opposing counsel of any other court conflict(s) as they become known and shall keep the court advised of the resolution of that conflict. All judges shall communicate with other judges to resolve such conflicts. In resolving court conflicts juvenile cases shall take precedence over all other matters.

[Commentary: All attorneys are reminded of the requirements of Rule 2(e) of the General Rules of Practice regarding their appearance, or the appearance of a partner, associate, or another attorney familiar with the case, if there is another court that requires his or her presence in court simultaneously.]

3.3 Documentation Of Continuance

All requests for continuance shall be by written motion, in the form of a letter or on Form 30A of the Local Civil Rules. However, oral motions may be allowed when the reason for the continuance did not become known until immediately preceding the start of court.

[Commentary: This proviso for an oral motion is only for emergency situations, such as severe family illness or death of a party, one of the attorneys, or critical witnesses, and the absence of that person will make it impossible for a trial or hearing to proceed.]

3.4 Notification Of Opposing Counsel/Unrepresented Parties/Witnesses

All parties must be notified of a motion to continue. A copy of the motion to continue must be distributed to all counsel of record and/or unrepresented parties prior to ruling on the motion. In addition to the service requirements set out in the statute, distribution of the motion must be made by the quickest means feasible including facsimile, electronic mail, or hand delivery.

[Commentary: The burden is on the moving party to advise the court and opposing counsel of any motion for a continuance. The goal of this provision is to avoid any continuance surprises and to provide notice as expeditiously as possible to the court and to the opposing party and/or their counsel.]

3.5 Objections To Motions For Continuance

All parties should have an opportunity to be heard on a motion to continue.

When a motion to continue is made more than seven (7) working days prior to trial, opposing counsel and/or unrepresented parties shall have a period of four (4) working days, following completion of distribution, to communicate objections to the motion for continuance to the moving party and the presiding District Court Judge or his/her designee. Objections not raised in writing are deemed waived.

When a motion to continue is made within seven (7) working days of the trial term (other than an oral motion as provided in Rule 3.3, above), the moving party shall include in the written motion a statement that the opposing counsel or party has been contacted and a short statement on the opposing party's position on the motion (including whether the opposing party or counsel consents or objects, and whether or not he or she desires to be heard on the motion). If the moving party is unable to contact the opposing counsel or unrepresented parties, the motion shall state what efforts were made and why contact was not possible.

3.6 Evaluation Of Motions For Continuance

Factors to be considered by the appropriate court official when deciding whether to grant or deny a motion for continuance should include:

- the effect on children and spouses if the issue is continued and not resolved;

- whether there is in effect a temporary order dealing with the issue that is the subject of the continuance request;
- the impact of a continuance on the safety of the parties or any other persons;
- whether the issue has been identified statutorily as an issue which should be addressed expeditiously, i.e., child support, post-separation support;
- the age of the case or motion;
- the status of the trial calendar for the session;
- the number of previous continuances OR the number, moving party, and grounds for previous continuances;
- the extent to which counsel had input into the scheduling of the trial date;
- the due diligence of counsel in promptly making a motion for continuance as soon as practicable;
- whether the reason for the continuance is a short-lived event which would resolve prior to the scheduled trial date;
- whether the basis for the motion is the existence of a legitimate conflict with another court setting;
- the period of delay caused by the continuance requested;
- the position of opposing counsel or unrepresented parties;
- whether the parties themselves consent to the continuance;
- present or future inconvenience or unavailability of witnesses/parties;
- consideration of the financial consequences to the public, the parties, the attorneys, or witnesses if the case is continued; and
- any other factor that promotes the fair administration of justice.

3.7 Case Rescheduling

Prior to granting a motion for continuance, the appropriate judicial official should reschedule the trial or pre-trial of the contested issues to a specific date after receiving input from all parties

3.8 Time Standards

All domestic cases should be disposed of within 18 months of filing, with 90% disposed within six (6) months. Issues of child support should be resolved and temporary or permanent order entered within 60 days of service. Post-Disposition issues, such as contempt and motions to modify existing orders, should be resolved within 60 days of the filing of such actions.

[Commentary: These are the standards adopted by the Supreme Court of North Carolina in the case flow management plan provided 1 May 1996 to the General Assembly, pursuant to Chapter 333 of the 1995 Session Laws.]

4. MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE – JUVENILE CASES

For an abused or neglected child, the courts are his or her source of protection and the source of services. For a delinquent child or youth, the courts provide the opportunity for rehabilitation.

The goal of a case management plan for juvenile court is to put the courts in the best position to ensure the safety of children, and to give them the best possible chance of living in stable, permanent families. Therefore, continuances should be allowed only when it serves the child's best interest. Participants must come to court prepared to meet each statutory obligation that is required for resolution of these matters.

Accordingly, juvenile cases, including motions for review in neglect and abuse matters, should be disposed at the earliest opportunity, including the first setting for hearing. Requests for continuances that are made after the first setting for hearing on the merits of the case shall only be granted for extraordinary cause.

4.1 Appropriate Court Official

All applications for continuances shall be made to the District Court Judge presiding over the session of court for which the case is calendared. If the trial judge is not known at the time the request is made, the application should be addressed to the Chief District Court Judge, or his or her designee.

4.2 Court Conflicts

The various levels of court should work together to try to move cases as expeditiously as possible. Age of case, subject matter, and priority of setting should be given as much primacy as the level of court when resolving conflicts.

Attorneys shall notify the court and opposing counsel of any other court conflict(s) as they become known and shall keep the court advised of the resolution of that conflict. All judge shall communicate with other judges to resolve such conflicts.

In resolving court conflicts juvenile cases shall take precedence over all other matters.

4.3 Documentation Of Continuance

All orders for continuance shall be documented in writing, and shall include the name of the moving party, any objections to the continuance, and the basis for the continuance.

4.4 Notification Of Opposing Counsel/Unrepresented Parties/Witnesses

All applications for continuance shall be made as soon as a conflict is identified, and all impacted – opposing counsel, unrepresented parties, subpoenaed witnesses, or court staff charged with subpoenaing witnesses – shall be notified as soon as possible by the moving party.

4.5 Objections To Motion For Continuance

All parties should have an opportunity to be heard on a motion to continue.

4.6 Evaluation Of Motions For Continuance

Factors to be considered by the appropriate court official when deciding whether to grant or deny a motion for continuance should include:

- the best interest of the child;
- the opportunity to exercise the right to effective assistance of counsel;
- the age of the case and the seriousness of the charge;
- the incarceration status of the juvenile;
- the effect on children and spouses if the issue is continued and not resolved;
- the impact of a continuance on the safety of the parties or any other persons;
- the status of the trial calendar for the session;
- the number, moving party, and grounds for previous continuances;
- the due diligence of counsel in promptly making motion for continuance as soon as practicable and notifying opposing counsel and witnesses;
- the period of delay caused by the continuance requested;
- the presence of witnesses, including the juvenile;
- the availability of witnesses for the present session, or for a future session;
- whether the basis of the motion is the existence of a legitimate conflict with another court setting;
- the availability of counsel;
- consideration of the financial consequences to the public, the parties, the attorneys, or witnesses if the case is continued; and
- any other factor that promotes the fair administration of justice.

4.7 Case Rescheduling

Upon granting a motion for continuance, the judge shall reschedule the case for a specified date, taking into consideration the availability of counsel, parties, and witnesses.

4.8 Time Standards

All undisciplined cases should be disposed within 30 days of service of the petition. All delinquency cases involving misdemeanor offenses should be disposed within 90 days of service of the petition and those involving felony offenses within 120 days of service of the petition.

All adjudication of neglect and abuse cases should be within 60 days of service of the petition. All termination of parental rights (Tars) should be disposed within 120 days after service of the petition.

[Commentary: These are the standards recommended by juvenile experts who served on the Juvenile Task Force on Case Flow Management, part of the Court Improvement Project].