Family Court Time Standards

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: SEPTEMBER 1999
AMENDED BY THE FAMILY LAW ADVISORY COMMISSION: 2025
REVISED PER OGC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Domestic Cases

- Unless otherwise specified, "days" are calendar days.
  - Except as noted with a statutory reference, the time frames represent maximum time limits that are "goals."
- All orders should be filed within 30 days following the conclusion of a hearing, unless a statute provides otherwise. A judge may allow additional time to file an order in complex cases.

For (Permanent) Alimony and Equitable Distribution (ED) Matters:

**Completion of mediation session(s) — not when report is filed*

EVENT:	TIME FROM FILING OF INITIAL PLEADING OR MOTION[1]:
A. Inventory Affidavit (1) Inventory Affidavit Served by Claiming Party (ED only) (2) Opposing Party Inventory Affidavit Served (ED only)	 (1) Within 90 days after service of ED claim[1] (2) Within 30 days after service of first ED inventory affidavit[2]
B. Scheduling and Discovery Conference	120 days[3]
C. Completion of ADR*	210 days
D. Final Pretrial Conference	240 days
E. Start of Trial	270 days
F. Order Entered: (1) in 90% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 270 days (2) Within 365 days

Post-Separation Support:

EVENT:	TIME FROM FILING OF INITIAL PLEADING OR MOTION:
Order Entered: (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 90 days (2) Within 150 days

1. Unless specified otherwise.
2. [G.S. 50-21(a)]
3. [G.S. 50-21(a)]
4. [G.S. 50-21(d)]

1. Domestic Cases Continued

Child Support:
G.S. 50-32 requires that all child support cases, except where paternity is at issue, be completed within 60 days of the date of filing. This period may be extended for 30 days under limited circumstances.

Child Custody:

EVENT:	TIME FROM FILING OF INITIAL PLEADING OR MOTION:
A. Temporary Orders Entered, if requested by one or both parties and do not involve paternity determinations: (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 90 days (2) Within 150 days
B. Mediation Orientation Session Scheduled in 100% of cases	Within 45 days
C. Mediation Session(s) Completed: (1) in 90% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 90 days (2) Within 150 days
D. **Permanent** Orders Entered: (1) in 90% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 180 days (2) Within 360 days

2. Juvenile Delinquency/ Undisciplined Cases

- Unless otherwise specified, "days" are calendar days and are counted from the date the petition is served on the juvenile until the date the hearing is completed.
- These time frames represent maximum time limits that are "goals," unless the timeframe is specified by statute. All orders should be entered within 30 days following the conclusion of a hearing unless a statute requires a shorter timeframe. A judge may allow additional time to file an order in complex cases.
- Timelines are based on current statute and may not apply for older offense dates.



2. Juvenile Delinquency/Undisciplined cases continued

EVENT:	TIME STANDARDS:
A. Adjudicatory Hearing Completed for Misdemeanor Charges: (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 60 days (2) Within 90 days
B. Adjudicatory Hearing Completed (Class H-I Felony): (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 90 days (2) Within 120 days
C. Adjudicatory Hearing Completed (Class A-G Felony): (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 150 days (2) Within 180 days
D. Dispositional Hearing Completed: (1) in 90% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 30 days of adjudication (2) Within 60 days of adjudication
E. Initial Custody Hearing after order issued pursuant to delegated authority	At the next regularly scheduled session of district court in the county where custody order was issued, or in the district if no session available in the county prior to time period required.[4]
F. Secure Custody Hearing in 100% of cases	Within 5 days of first secure custody order (required).[5]
G. Secure Custody Hearing after Remand or Removal from Superior Court	Within 10 days after issuance by Superior Court Judge, then follow H.[6]
H. Subsequent Secure Custody Hearings	Within 30 days unless a party requests or court orders an earlier hearing. Within 10 days of request for earlier hearing.[7]
I. Nonsecure Custody Hearing in 100% of cases*	Within 7 days of first nonsecure custody order (required).[8]
J. Subsequent Nonsecure Custody Hearings	Within 7 days of initial nonsecure custody hearing. Then, within 30 days of previous nonsecure custody hearing.[9]
K. First Appearance Hearing (Felony Cases, Juvenile not in Custody): (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 10 days of petition filing.[10] (2) Within 21 days of petition filing (req. good cause for more than 10 days)
L. Probable Cause Hearing Completed (Class A Felony, Age 13/14/15) in 100% of cases, unless continued for good cause; mandatory transfer	Within 90 days of first appearance.[11]

4. [G.S. 7A-1906(a)]
5. [G.S. 7B-1906(a)]
6. [G.S. 7B-1906(b2)]
7. [G.S. 7B-1906(b), (b1), and (b3)]
8. [G.S. 7B-1906(a)]
9. [G.S. 7B-1906(b)]
10. [G.S. 7B-1808(a)]

2. Juvenile Delinquency/Undisciplined Cases Continued

EVENT:	TIME STANDARDS:
M. Probable Cause Hearing Completed (Class F-G Felony, Age 16/17) in 100% of cases, unless continued for good cause; mandatory transfer unless prosecutor declines	Within 90 days of first appearance[12]
N. Probable Cause Hearing Completed (all others) in 100% of cases, unless continued for good cause	Within 15 days of first appearance.[13]
O. Transfer (Discretionary) Completed (Any non-Class A Felony, Age 13/14/15): (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 90 days of first appearance (2) Within 120 days of first appearance
P. Transfer (Discretionary) Completed (Class H-I Felony, Age 16/17): (1) in 75% of cases (2) in 100% of cases	 (1) Within 180 days of first appearance (2) Within 210 days of first appearance
Q. Indictment Return Appearance (Class A Felony, Age 13/14/15, Class F-G Felony Age 16/17) Hearing mandatory in 100% of cases where date of offense on or after 12/1/24; mandatory transfer.	Within 5 days of the return of the true bill.[14]

3. Juvenile Abuse/Neglect/ Dependency Cases

- Unless otherwise noted, "days" are calendar days.
- Not all of the stages listed below will occur in every case (e.g., the child may not be taken into nonsecure custody, or the petition may be dismissed).
- These time frames are intended to be consistent with the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act provisions and North Carolina statutory provisions. It is the purpose of this Committee to comply with the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act provisions and North Carolina statutory provisions.
- Continuances shall be granted only in extraordinary circumstances or as otherwise permitted by statute. Pursuant to G.S. 7B-803, the court may grant a continuance for good cause to receive additional evidence.
- All orders should be filed within 30 days following the conclusion of a hearing unless a statute requires otherwise. A judge may allow additional time in complex cases.

[11] [G.S. 7B-2202(b1)]
[12] [G.S. 7B-2202(b1)]
[13] [G.S. 7B-2202(a)]
[14] [G.S. 7B-2202.5]

3. Juvenile Abuse/Neglect/ Dependency Cases continued

- Orders for subsequent hearings should generally be entered before the next scheduled hearing. It is recommended that orders that address nonsecure custody or change custody be entered as soon as practicable.
- The following orders are required to be entered within 30 days following the completion of the hearing, pursuant to statute.
  - o Adjudication Order [G.S. 7B-807(b)]
  - o Post-Adjudication Venue [G.S. 7B-900.1(f)]
  - o Initial Dispositional order [G.S. 7B-905(a)]
  - o Review and Permanency Planning Orders [G.S. 7B-906.1(h)]
  - o Post-TPR Review Order [G.S. 7B-908(e1)]
  - o Modification Order [G.S. 7B-1000(e)]
  - o TPR Adjudication [G.S. 7B-1109(e)]
  - o TPR Best Interests [G.S. 7B-1110(a)]
  - o Reinstatement of Parental Rights [G.S. 7B-1114(l)]

EVENT:	TIME STANDARDS:
A. Initial Nonsecure Custody Order Entered	Varies, but usually on the same day as petition filed. Petition must be filed before a nonsecure custody order may be entered.
B. First Nonsecure Custody Hearing (1) First Nonsecure Custody Hearing After Initial Order Entered by a Judge (2) First Nonsecure Custody Hearing After Initial Order Entered by a Magistrate	 (1) Within 7 days of when the juvenile is placed in nonsecure custody (may be continued up to 10 business days with consent)[15] (2) On the day of the next regularly scheduled session of court (within 7 days)[16]
C. Second and Subsequent Nonsecure Hearings (1) Second Nonsecure Custody Hearing (2) Subsequent Nonsecure Custody Hearings	 (1) No more than 7 business days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays) after first hearing[17] (2) Subsequent hearings at intervals of no more than 30 days[18] -hearings may be waived with consent[19]
D. Pre-Adjudication Hearing	At or before adjudication hearing[20]
E. Adjudication Hearing Completed	No later than 60 days from the filing of the petition[21]

15. [G.S. 7B-506(a)]
16. [G.S. 7B-506(a)]
17. [G.S.7B-506(e)]
18. [G.S. 7B-506(e)]
19. [G.S. 7B-506(f)]
20. [G.S. 7B-800.1]
21. [G.S. 7B-801; G.S. 7B-803]



3. Juvenile Abuse/Neglect/ Dependency Cases continued

EVENT:	TIME STANDARDS:
F. Initial Disposition Hearing Completed	Immediately following the adjudicatory hearing and shall be concluded within 30 days of the adjudicatory hearing[22]
G. First Review Hearing Completed (when custody is not removed)	Within 90 days from date of initial disposition hearing[23]
H. First Permanency Planning Hearing Completed (when custody has been removed)	Within 90 days from date of initial disposition hearing[24]
I. Subsequent Review & Permanency Planning Hearings (PPH)	At least every six months (~180 days) from the date of the previous review or PPH hearing[25]
J. Review Track Permanency Achieved	Within 12 months from the date of filing of the petition[26]
K. Permanency Planning Track (custody removed) - Permanency Achieved (1) in 100% of cases	(1) 365 days (12 months)
L. Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Petition/Motion Filed	Within 60 days of entry of an order finding a TPR is necessary to perfect the primary permanent plan, unless the court makes written findings as to why the petition cannot be filed within 60 days, in which case the court shall specify the timeframe[27] Note: DSS may also be required to file a TPR petition in other circumstances.[28]
M. TPR Hearing	No later than 90 days from filing[29]

4. Orders for all Family Court Cases

- All orders should be filed within 30 days following the conclusion of a hearing, unless a shorter timeframe is required by statute.
- A judge may allow additional time to file an order in complex cases.



22. [G.S. 7B-901(a)]
23. [G.S. 7B-906.1]
24. [G.S. 7B-906.1]
25. [G.S. 7B-906.1]
26. [G.S. 7B-906.1(d2)]
27. [G.S. 7B-906.1(m)]
28. [G.S. 7B-906.1(f)]
29. [G.S. 7B-1109(a)]