

Unified Family Courts of North Carolina



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Family Courts Risk Elimination

Budget reductions in state government threaten to eliminate the core services provided by North Carolina Family Courts. *What would be the impact of losing Family Courts in North Carolina?* Here is what some judges had to say.

“The loss of Family Court would set our court system back immeasurably and without a doubt harm our families in crisis.” — **Elizabeth Keever, Chief District Court Judge, 12th Judicial District**

“Eliminating Family Court will undermine our ability to provide families with real access to justice.” - **Michael A. Sabiston, Chief District Court Judge, Judicial District 19B**

“Over the last several years a great deal of progress has been made in the disposition of Family Court cases. I would hate to see the state return to a system that obviously did not work then and would not work now.” —**Robert M. Brady, Chief District Court Judge, 25th Judicial District**

“Family Court is the innovative path to the future of a responsive court system. We do not need to go backwards in time.” - **Brenda G. Branch, Chief District Court Judge, Judicial District 6A**

“My thirty-four years of experience have proven to me that Family Courts work and are a core part of our modern court system. I personally hope that it is retained.” - **David B. Brantley, Chief District Court Judge, 8th Judicial District**

Accountable & Cost Effective Justice for North Carolina Families

Since its inception in 1999, North Carolina Family Courts have helped families resolve difficult legal issues of divorce, child custody, child support and property distribution in a timely, more affordable and often non-adversarial manner utilizing alternative dispute resolution methods. Accountable, cost effective and fair case management practices are the hallmark of North Carolina Family Courts!

Accountable! Families in crisis are at their most vulnerable as they seek timely resolution of their legal claims. Domestic disputes in non-Family Court districts take up to **three** times longer to resolve.

- ▶ The pending median age in Family Court districts is 90 days. That number jumps to 272 days in non-Family Court districts.
- ▶ The percentage of cases pending over one year in Family Court districts is 19.8%. That number increases exponentially in non-Family Court districts to 43.6%.
- ▶ Since their inception, the median age of cases in Family Court districts has **DROPPED 25%**. Over the same period, the age of cases in non-Family Court Districts has **INCREASED by 40%**.
- ▶ Families receive personalized attention and the stability of specially trained judges and court personnel under the intrinsic and proven One Judge/One Family approach.

Cost Effective and Smart! North Carolina Family Courts prevent needless delays and save money. What is the cost of delay to families and to state expenditures?

- \$ Delays in establishing child support, spousal support and distributing marital assets leads to increased demands on public assistance, loss of homes, loss of vehicles and loss of businesses.
- \$ Delays result in the postponement of permanent placement for children who are in the custody of the Department of Social Services. Such delays often equate to higher expenditures in foster care costs.
- \$ Delays increase the length of time children who have been adjudicated delinquent remain in detention facilities rather than of being monitored, educated and treated in the community.
- \$ Delay harms our children by taking an enormous psychological toll during the extended periods of dysfunction in their lives.
- \$ **Justice Delayed is Justice Denied. Delay creates unintended winners and losers by giving the party with custody of the children and/or assets de facto control.**

Fair and Accessible Court Services! 40% - 60% of cases in Family Court districts have at least one party without legal counsel. Many working parents simply cannot afford traditional legal representation. In turn, a higher level of assistance is often required to serve this population. From providing informational packets to staffing court-based self-help centers, Family Court personnel are on the front-line in assisting parents navigate a complex legal system.