



JUVENILE COURTS
ENOTAH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

GERALD W. BRUCE, Judge

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1 July 2011

To: Juvenile Court Attorneys/CASAs

Re: Juvenile Court information

As we move into July, I thought I'd take an opportunity to address some of the changes you'll encounter in Juvenile Court.

First, I've attached two standing orders: one deals with procedural matters and the other with compensation for appointed counsel. Please review these orders and familiarize yourself with them. I think they are self-explanatory, but I want to make a couple of clarifications.

To give everyone time to communicate with clients, the procedure for attorney re-appointment outlined in the procedural order will not take effect until August 1. This will give you a month to explain to your clients that appointment orders will terminate following a final disposition, and that for reviews and other subsequent hearings new applications will need to be completed. Of course, this does not apply to retained counsel.

Also, I've had a couple of questions about pretrial conferences. Since one of the purposes of the conferences is to ensure that all parties have what they need for the trial of a case, but also to expedite those trials, adjudications will normally be set within 7-21 days of the pretrial conference. A pretrial conference will be held before there can be an adjudicatory hearing in any case, even for those already scheduled. The currently-scheduled hearing will simply be converted to a pretrial conference, so please plan accordingly.

Pretrial conferences are provided for in the order only in deprivation and termination cases. If any of you think they would be of use in delinquency cases, please let me know.

Due to drastic cuts to the salary and budget of the Court by our county commissioners, Truancy Court will no longer be provided. There is a two-fold explanation for this. First, Truancy Court is a non-statutory service provided to the community by the Court when the Court was fully-funded and your county commissioners have not seen fit to fund the Court fully. Second, the Court's travel reimbursement has been cut to \$500.00. This will allow travel for at most a few months — perhaps not beyond the summer. Once the Circuit's travel

reimbursement is gone, so will be the Court's travel. At that point, all hearings of any kind originating in any county in the Circuit will be held in Lumpkin County, pursuant to O.C.G.A. §15-11-29. It would be impossible to conduct the frequent hearings and to continue the intensive oversight involved in Truancy Court cases under such conditions. As it is, it will be difficult enough for people who appear before the Court in statutory proceedings. Many of you will know that the advent of Truancy Court coincided with drastic reductions in truancy in all of our counties. Perhaps the commissioners will see fit to remedy the situation in the very near future.

The continuation of Family Drug Court in White and Lumpkin Counties is dependent in large part upon the outcome of the grant application. For now, services will continue for those already in the Court, and new applicants will be considered.


The Court has an online calendar, and all attorneys and CASAs may have access to it. We are in the process of adding your email addresses to the access list, so it may take a short while before everyone has access. Please keep in mind that this calendar has juveniles' identifying information on it and take steps to protect it from unauthorized access. The online calendar will serve in the place of calendars prepared by DJJ and SAAGs and sent out prior to hearings. It will not, of course, take the place of a notice of hearing or rule nisi.

The Court's email address is enotahjuvenilecourt@gmail.com; please do not use it to communicate anything other than scheduling or procedural information and questions.

I look forward to serving the Juvenile Courts of the Circuit. As I told the SAAGs some time ago, my priest used to say that going from "pew to pulpit" – ordaining a layman from a particular congregation to serve as a clergyman to the same congregation – could create some unique issues as everyone struggled to get used to the change. We face the same kind of issues whenever we get a new judge from among our local bar, and I'm aware that it will be an adjustment for everyone. I simply ask your patience and goodwill, and will promise the same.

With thanks for your service to our Circuit, I am

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald W. Bruce", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gerald W. Bruce

2 attachments