

**STATUTES ON LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COURT FACILITIES,  
ASSISTANCE ON COURT OPERATIONS**  
*December 2016*

**I. STATUTES ALLOCATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNDING**

**§ 7A-300. Expenses paid from State funds.**

(a) The operating expenses of the Judicial Department shall be paid from State funds, out of appropriations for this purpose made by the General Assembly, or from funds provided by local governments pursuant to G.S. 7A-300.1, 153A-212.1, or 160A-289.1. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall prepare budget estimates to cover these expenses, including therein the following items and such other items as are deemed necessary for the proper functioning of the Judicial Department:

- (1) Salaries, departmental expense, printing and other costs of the appellate division;
- (2) Salaries and expenses of superior court judges, district attorneys, assistant district attorneys, public defenders, and assistant public defenders, and fees and expenses of counsel assigned to represent indigents under the provisions of Subchapter IX of this Chapter;
- (3) Salaries, travel expenses, departmental expense, printing and other costs of the Administrative Office of the Courts;
- (4) Salaries and travel expenses of district judges, magistrates, and family court counselors;
- (5) Salaries and travel expenses of clerks of superior court, their assistants, deputies, and other employees, and the expenses of their offices, including supplies and materials, postage, telephone and telegraph, bonds and insurance, equipment, and other necessary items;
- (6) Fees and travel expenses of jurors, and of witnesses required to be paid by the State;
- (7) Compensation and allowances of court reporters;
- (8) Briefs for counsel and transcripts and other records for adequate appellate review when an appeal is taken by an indigent person;
- (9) Transcripts of preliminary hearings in indigency cases and, in cases in which the defendant pays for a transcript of the preliminary hearing, a copy for the district attorney;
- (10) Transcript of the evidence and trial court charge furnished the district attorney when a criminal action is appealed to the appellate division;
- (11) All other expenses arising out of the operations of the Judicial Department which by law are made the responsibility of the State; and
- (12) Operating expenses of the Judicial Council and the Judicial Standards Commission.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1971, c. 377, s. 32. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1967, c. 108, s. 9; c. 1049, s. 5; 1969, c. 1013, s. 2; 1971, c. 377, ss. 18, 21; 1973, c. 47, s. 2; c. 503, ss. 10, 11; 2000-67, s. 15.4(c); 2010-31, s. 29.7(a).)

**§ 7A-302. Counties and municipalities responsible for physical facilities.**

In each county in which a district court has been established, courtrooms, office space for juvenile court counselors and support staff as assigned by the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety, and related judicial facilities (including furniture), as defined in this Subchapter, shall be provided by the county, except that courtrooms and related judicial facilities may, with the approval of

the administrative Officer of the Courts, after consultation with county and municipal authorities, be provided by a municipality in the county. To assist a county or municipality in meeting the expense of providing courtrooms and related judicial facilities, a part of the costs of court, known as the "facilities fee," collected for the State by the clerk of superior court, shall be remitted to the county or municipality providing the facilities. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1998-202, s. 15; 2000-137, s. 4(a); 2007-323, s. 14.16; 2008-107, s. 29.8(f); 2011-145, s. 19.1(l).)

**§ 7A-343.2. Court Information Technology Fund.**

(a) Fund. – The Court Information Technology Fund is established within the Judicial Department as a special revenue fund. Interest and other investment income earned by the Fund accrues to it. The Fund consists of the following revenues:

- (1) All monies collected by the Director pursuant to G.S. 7A-109(d) and G.S. 7A-49.5.
- (2) State judicial facilities fees credited to the Fund under G.S. 7A-304 through G.S. 7A-307.

(b) Use. – Money in the Fund derived from State judicial facilities fees must be used to upgrade, maintain, and operate the judicial and county courthouse telecommunications and data connectivity. All other monies in the Fund must be used to supplement funds otherwise available to the Judicial Department for court information technology and office automation needs.

(c) Report. – The Director must report annually by August 1 of each year to the Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety and the Chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Justice and Public Safety. The report must include the following:

- (1) Amounts credited in the preceding fiscal year to the Fund.
- (2) Amounts expended in the preceding fiscal year from the Fund and the purposes of the expenditures.
- (3) Proposed expenditures of the monies in the Fund. (1999-237, s. 17.15(b); 2000-67, s. 15.1; 2006-187, s. 2(d); 2008-107, s. 29.8(e); 2009-570, s. 2.; 2012-142, s. 16.5(a); 2014-100, s. 18B.1(b)); 2015-241, s.18A.23(a).

**II. STATUTES AUTHORIZING LOCAL SUPPORT FOR OPERATING EXPENSES**

**§ 153A-212.1. Resources to protect the public.**

Subject to the requirements of G.S. 7A-41, 7A-44.1, 7A-64, 7A-102, 7A-133, and 7A-498.7, a county may appropriate funds under contract with the State for the provision of services for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving threats to public safety. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts or the Office of Indigent Defense Services to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (1999-237, s. 17.17(b); 2000-67, s. 15.4(e); 2001-424, s. 22.11(e).)

**§ 160A-289.1. Resources to protect the public.**

Subject to the requirements of G.S. 7A-41, 7A-44.1, 7A-64, 7A-102, 7A-133, and 7A-498.7, a city may appropriate funds under contract with the State for the provision of services for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving threats to public safety. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be

construed to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts or the Office of Indigent Defense Services to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (1999-237, s. 17.17(c); 2000-67, s. 15.4(f); 2001-424, s. 22.11(f).)

**§ 7A-44.1. Secretarial and clerical help.**

(a) Each senior resident superior court judge may appoint a judicial secretary to serve at his pleasure and under his direction the secretarial and clerical needs of the superior court judges of the district or set of districts as defined by G.S. 7A-41.1(a) for which he is the senior resident superior court judge. The appointment may be full-or part-time and the compensation and allowances of such secretary shall be fixed by the senior regular resident superior court judge, within limits determined by the Administrative Office of the Courts, and paid by the State.

(b) Each senior resident superior court judge may apply to the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts to enter into contracts with local governments for the provision by the State of services of judicial secretaries pursuant to G.S. 153A-212.1 or G.S. 160A-289.1.

(c) The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts may provide assistance requested pursuant to subsection (b) of this section only upon a showing by the senior resident superior court judge, supported by facts, that the overwhelming public interest warrants the use of additional resources for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving a threat to public safety.

(d) The terms of any contract entered into with local governments pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall be fixed by the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts in each case. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section or to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide the administrative costs of establishing or maintaining the positions or services provided for under this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (1975, c. 956, s. 3; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 3; 2000-67, s. 15.4(a).)

**§ 7A-64. Temporary assistance for district attorneys.**

(a) A district attorney may apply to the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts to:

- (1) Temporarily assign an assistant district attorney from another district, after consultation with the district attorney thereof, to assist in the prosecution of cases in the requesting district;
- (2) Authorize the temporary appointment, by the requesting district attorney, of a qualified attorney to assist the requesting district attorney; or
- (3) Enter into contracts with local governments for the provision of services by the State pursuant to G.S. 153A-212.1 or G.S. 160A-289.1.

(a1) Repealed by Session Laws 2012-7, s. 9, effective June 7, 2012.

(b) The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts may provide this assistance only upon a showing by the requesting district attorney or the Chair of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, as appropriate, supported by facts, that:

- (1) Criminal cases have accumulated on the dockets of the superior or district courts of the district beyond the capacity of the district attorney and the district attorney's full-time assistants to keep the dockets reasonably current;
- (2) The overwhelming public interest warrants the use of additional resources for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving a threat to public safety; or
- (3) There is an allegation of or evidence of prosecutorial misconduct in the case that is the subject of the hearing under G.S. 15A-1469.

(c) The length of service and compensation of any temporary appointee or the terms of any contract entered into with local governments shall be fixed by Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts in each case. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section or to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide the administrative costs of establishing or maintaining the positions or services provided for under this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (1967, c. 1049, s. 1; 1973, c. 47, s. 2; 1999-237, s. 17.17(a); 2000-67, s. 15.4(g); 2010-171, s. 2; 2012-7, s. 9.)

**§ 7A-102. Assistant and deputy clerks; appointment; number; salaries; duties.**

(a) The numbers and salaries of assistant clerks, deputy clerks, and other employees in the office of each clerk of superior court shall be determined by the Administrative Officer of the Courts after consultation with the clerk concerned. However, no office of clerk of superior court shall have fewer than five total staff positions in addition to the elected clerk of superior court. All personnel in the clerk's office are employees of the State. The clerk appoints the assistants, deputies, and other employees in the clerk's office to serve at his or her pleasure. Assistant and deputy clerks shall take the oath of office prescribed for clerks of superior court, conformed to the office of assistant or deputy clerk, as the case may be. Except as provided by subsection (c2) of this section, the job classifications and related salaries of each employee within the office of each superior court clerk shall be subject to the approval of the Administrative Officer of the Courts after consultation with each clerk concerned and shall be subject to the availability of funds appropriated for that purpose by the General Assembly.

(b) An assistant clerk is authorized to perform all the duties and functions of the office of clerk of superior court, and any act of an assistant clerk is entitled to the same faith and credit as that of the clerk. A deputy clerk is authorized to certify the existence and correctness of any record in the clerk's office, to take the proofs and examinations of the witnesses touching the execution of a will as required by G.S. 31-17, and to perform any other ministerial act which the clerk may be authorized and empowered to do, in his own name and without reciting the name of his principal. The clerk is responsible for the acts of his assistants and deputies. With the consent of the clerk of superior court of each county and the consent of the presiding judge in any proceeding, an assistant or deputy clerk is authorized to perform all the duties and functions of the office of the clerk of superior court in another county in any proceeding in the district or superior court that has been transferred to that county from the county in which the assistant or deputy clerk is employed.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), the Administrative Officer of the Courts shall establish an incremental salary plan for assistant clerks and for deputy clerks based on a series of salary steps corresponding to the steps contained in the Salary Plan for State Employees adopted by the Office of State Human Resources, subject to a minimum and a maximum annual salary as set forth below. On and after July 1, 1985, each assistant clerk and each deputy clerk shall be eligible for an annual step increase in his salary plan based on satisfactory job performance as determined by each clerk. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if an assistant or deputy clerk's years of service in the office of superior court clerk would warrant an annual salary greater than the salary first established under this section, that assistant or deputy clerk shall be eligible on and after July 1, 1984, for an annual step increase in his salary plan. Furthermore, on and after July 1, 1985, that assistant or deputy clerk shall be eligible for an increase of two steps in his salary plan, and shall remain eligible for a two-step increase each year as recommended by each clerk until that assistant or deputy clerk's annual salary corresponds to his number of years of service. Any person covered by this subsection who would not receive a step increase in fiscal year 1995-96 because that person is at the top of the salary range as it existed for fiscal year 1994-95 shall receive a salary increase to the maximum annual salary provided by subsection (c1) of this section.

(c1) A full-time assistant clerk or a full-time deputy clerk, and up to one full-time deputy clerk serving as head bookkeeper per county, shall be paid an annual salary subject to the following minimum and maximum rates:

Assistant Clerks and Head Bookkeeper	Annual Salary
Minimum	\$33,098
Maximum	58,963
Deputy Clerks	Annual Salary
Minimum	\$28,646
Maximum	46,092

(c2) The clerk of superior court may appoint assistant clerks, deputy clerks, and a head bookkeeper and set their salaries above the minimum rate established for the positions by subsection (c1) of this section if, in the clerk's discretion, (i) the needs of the clerk's office would be best served by an appointment above the minimum rate, (ii) the appointee's skills and experience support the higher rate, and (iii) the Administrative Office of the Courts certifies that there are sufficient funds available.

(d) Full-time assistant clerks, licensed to practice law in North Carolina, who are employed in the office of superior court clerk on and after July 1, 1984, and full-time assistant clerks possessing a masters degree in business administration, public administration, accounting, or other similar discipline from an accredited college or university who are employed in the office of superior court clerk on and after July 1, 1997, are authorized an annual salary of not less than three-fourths of the maximum annual salary established for assistant clerks; the clerk of superior court, with the approval of the Administrative Office of the Courts, may establish a higher annual salary but that salary shall not be higher than the maximum annual salary established for assistant clerks. Full-time assistant clerks, holding a law degree from an accredited law school, who are employed in the office of superior court clerk on and after July 1, 1984, are authorized an annual salary of not less than two-thirds of the maximum annual salary established for assistant clerks; the clerk of superior court, with the approval of the Administrative Office of the Courts, may establish a higher annual salary, but the entry-level salary may not be more than three-fourths of the maximum annual salary established for assistant clerks, and in no event may be higher than the maximum annual salary established for assistant clerks. Except as provided by subsection (c2) of this section, the entry-level annual salary for all other assistant and deputy clerks employed on and after July 1, 1984, shall be at the minimum rates as herein established.

(e) A clerk of superior court may apply to the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts to enter into contracts with local governments for the provision by the State of services of assistant clerks, deputy clerks, and other employees in the office of each clerk of superior court pursuant to G.S. 153A-212.1 or G.S. 160A-289.1.

(f) The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts may provide assistance requested pursuant to subsection (e) of this section only upon a showing by the senior resident superior court judge, supported by facts, that the overwhelming public interest warrants the use of additional resources for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving a threat to public safety.

(g) The terms of any contract entered into with local governments pursuant to subsection (e) of this section shall be fixed by the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts in each case. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section or to obligate the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide the administrative costs of establishing or maintaining the positions or services provided for under this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the Administrative

Office of the Courts to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (1777, c. 115, s. 86; P.R.; R.C., c. 19, s. 15; Code, s. 75; 1899, c. 235, ss. 2, 3; Rev., ss. 898-900; 1921, c. 32, ss. 1-3; C.S., ss. 934(a)-934(c), 935-937; 1951, c. 159, ss. 1, 2; 1959, c. 1297; 1963, c. 1187; 1965, c. 264; c. 310, s. 1; 1971, c. 363, s. 2; 1973, c. 678; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1034, ss. 88, 89; 1985, c. 479, s. 212; c. 757, s. 190; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 1014, s. 35; 1987, c. 738, s. 21(a); 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1086, s. 15; 1989, c. 445; c. 752, s. 32; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, ss. 42, 119; 1993, c. 321, ss. 58, 59; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 769, ss. 7.11, 7.12; 1995, c. 507, s. 7.6(a), (b); 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 28.5; 1997-443, ss. 33.12, 33.10(b); 1998-153, s. 8(b); 1999-237, s. 28.5; 2000-67, ss. 15.4(b), 26.5; 2001-424, s. 32.6; 2003-284, s. 30.14B; 2004-124, s. 31.6(b); 2005-276, s. 29.6; 2006-66, s. 22.6; 2007-323, s. 28.6; 2008-107, s. 26.6; 2011-145, s. 15.8; 2012-142, s. 25.1A(f); 2013-382, s. 9.1(c); 2014-100, s. 35.3(e); 2016-94, s. 36.5.(a))

**§ 7A-300.1. Local supplementation of salaries for certain officers and employees.**

(a) In order to attract and retain the best qualified officers and employees for positions in the Judicial Branch of government, the Administrative Office of the Courts may contract with the governing body of a city or county for the provision of local funds to supplement the salaries of Judicial Department employees, other than elected officials and magistrates, who serve the superior court district, district court district, or prosecutorial district containing that unit of local government. Any employee who receives salary supplementation under this section shall be notified before receiving it that the supplementation is subject to the availability of local funds, may be discontinued at any time, and is not "compensation" for purposes of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System or the Consolidated Judicial Retirement System.

(b) This section applies only to (i) cities with a population of 300,000 or more according to the most recent estimate of the Office of State Budget and Management and (ii) counties with a population of 300,000 or over according to the most recent estimate of the Office of State Budget and Management. (2010-31, s. 29.7(b).)

**§ 7A-498.7. Public Defender Offices.**

(a) The following counties of the State are organized into the defender districts listed below, and in each of those defender districts an office of public defender is established:

Defender District	Counties
1	Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Pasquotank, Perquimans
3A	Pitt
3B	Carteret
5	New Hanover
10	Wake
12	Cumberland
14	Durham
15B	Orange, Chatham
16A	Scotland, Hoke
16B	Robeson
18	Guilford
21	Forsyth
26	Mecklenburg
27A	Gaston
28	Buncombe

After notice to, and consultation with, the affected district bar, senior resident superior court judge, and chief district court judge, the Commission on Indigent Defense Services may recommend to the General Assembly that a district or regional public defender office be established. A legislative act is required in order to establish a new office or to abolish an existing office.

(b) For each new term, and to fill any vacancy, public defenders shall be appointed from a list of not less than two and not more than three names nominated by written ballot of the attorneys resident in the defender district who are licensed to practice law in North Carolina. The balloting shall be conducted pursuant to rules adopted by the Commission on Indigent Defense Services. The appointment shall be made by the senior resident superior court judge of the superior court district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1 that includes the county or counties of the defender district for which the public defender is being appointed.

(c) A public defender shall be an attorney licensed to practice law in North Carolina and shall devote full time to the duties of the office. In lieu of merit and other increment raises paid to regular State employees, a public defender shall receive as longevity pay an amount equal to four and eight-tenths percent (4.8%) of the annual salary set forth in the Current Operations Appropriations Act payable monthly after five years of service, nine and six-tenths percent (9.6%) after 10 years of service, fourteen and four-tenths percent (14.4%) after 15 years of service, nineteen and two-tenths percent (19.2%) after 20 years of service, and twenty-four percent (24%) after 25 years of service. "Service" means service as a public defender, appellate defender, assistant public or appellate defender, district attorney, assistant district attorney, justice or judge of the General Court of Justice, or clerk of superior court.

(c1) When traveling on official business, each public defender and assistant public defender is entitled to reimbursement for his or her subsistence expenses to the same extent as State employees generally. When traveling on official business outside his or her county of residence, each public defender and assistant public defender is entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses to the same extent as State employees generally. For purposes of this subsection, the term "official business" does not include regular, daily commuting between a person's home and the public defender's office. Travel distances, for purposes of reimbursement for mileage, shall be determined according to the travel policy of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(d) Subject to standards adopted by the Commission, the day-to-day operation and administration of public defender offices shall be the responsibility of the public defender in charge of the office. The public defender shall keep appropriate records and make periodic reports, as requested, to the Director of the Office of Indigent Defense Services on matters related to the operation of the office.

(e) The Office of Indigent Defense Services shall procure office equipment and supplies for the public defender, and provide secretarial and library support from State funds appropriated to the public defender's office for this purpose.

(f) Each public defender is entitled to assistant public defenders, investigators, and other staff, full-time or part-time, as may be authorized by the Commission. Assistants, investigators, and other staff are appointed by the public defender and serve at the pleasure of the public defender. Average and minimum compensation of assistants shall be as provided in the biennial Current Operations Appropriations Act. The actual salaries of assistants shall be set by the public defender in charge of the office, subject to approval by the Commission. The Commission shall fix the compensation of investigators. Assistants and investigators shall perform such duties as may be assigned by the public defender.

(f1) In cases in which a public defender determines that a conflict of interest exists in the office, whenever practical, rather than obtaining private assigned counsel to resolve the conflict, the public

defender may request the appointment of an assistant public defender from another office of public defender in the region to resolve the conflict.

(g) In lieu of merit and other increment raises paid to regular State employees, an assistant public defender shall receive as longevity pay an amount equal to four and eight-tenths percent (4.8%) of the annual salary set forth in the Current Operations Appropriations Act payable monthly after five years of service, nine and six-tenths percent (9.6%) after 10 years of service, fourteen and four-tenths percent (14.4%) after 15 years of service, nineteen and two-tenths percent (19.2%) after 20 years of service, and twenty-four percent (24%) after 25 years of service. "Service" means service as a public defender, appellate defender, assistant public or appellate defender, district attorney, assistant district attorney, justice or judge of the General Court of Justice, or clerk of superior court.

(h) The term of office of public defender appointed under this section is four years. A public defender or assistant public defender may be suspended or removed from office, and reinstated, for the same causes and under the same procedures as are applicable to removal of a district attorney.

(i) A public defender may apply to the Director of the Office of Indigent Defense Services to enter into contracts with local governments for the provision by the State of services of temporary assistant public defenders pursuant to G.S. 153A-212.1 or G.S. 160A-289.1.

(j) The Director of the Office of Indigent Defense Services may provide assistance requested pursuant to subsection (i) of this section only upon a showing by the requesting public defender, supported by facts, that the overwhelming public interest warrants the use of additional resources for the speedy disposition of cases involving drug offenses, domestic violence, or other offenses involving a threat to public safety.

(k) The terms of any contract entered into with local governments pursuant to subsection (i) of this section shall be fixed by the Director of the Office of Indigent Defense Services in each case. Nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this section or to obligate the Office of Indigent Defense Services to provide the administrative costs of establishing or maintaining the positions or services provided for under this section. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to obligate the Office of Indigent Defense Services to maintain positions or services initially provided for under this section. (2000-144, s. 1; 2001-424, ss. 22.11(a), 22.11(d); 2002-126, s. 14.11(a); 2003-284, ss. 30.19A(c), (d); 2004-124, ss. 14.4(a), (b); 2005-276, s. 14.14(a); 2005-345, s. 50A; 2007-323, ss. 14.4(d), 28.18A(g); 2009-451, s. 15.17B(c); 2010-96, s. 27; 2011-145, s. 15.16(b); 2013-360, s.18A.5.(a).)