Legislative Changes to Adult Protective Services Affecting Magistrates

Meredith Smith, Associate Professor, UNC School of Government



Session Overview

1. Provide background on adult protective services (APS) proceedings to help understand and give context to recent legislative changes to APS law

2. Identify three key changes to APS law impacting magistrates

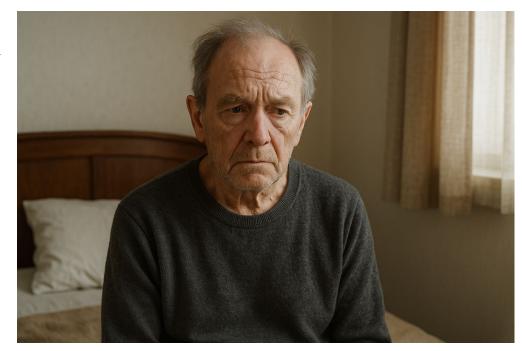
Background on APS Proceedings

The Case of Mr. Johnson

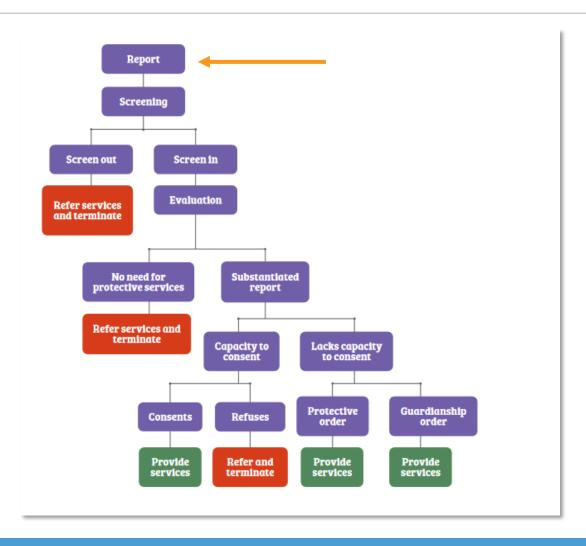
Mr. Johnson is a 68-year-old man with dementia who lives with his adult son, Frank. He has mobility issues and requires assistance getting in and out of bed. Frank helps him with meals, medication, and medical appointments. Mr. Johnson does not drive and relies on Frank for transportation.

Frank regularly yells at him, belittles him, and locks him in his bedroom for long stretches of the day "so he won't wander." Frank has recently failed to provide him with meals and medications. Mr. Johnson appears to have bed sores that are untreated and bruises that are consistent with falls.

Frank was arrested for a DUI and remains in jail. Mr. Johnson has no other family or friends.



Adult Protective Services: NC Mandatory Reporting Law



Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult is in need of protective services shall **report** such information to the director.

G.S. 108A-102(a).



Adult Protective Services: Purpose

Provide (temporary) protection for disabled adults in North Carolina who are the subject of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

G.S. 108A-100.

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G.S. 108A-100.

Who is a disabled adult?

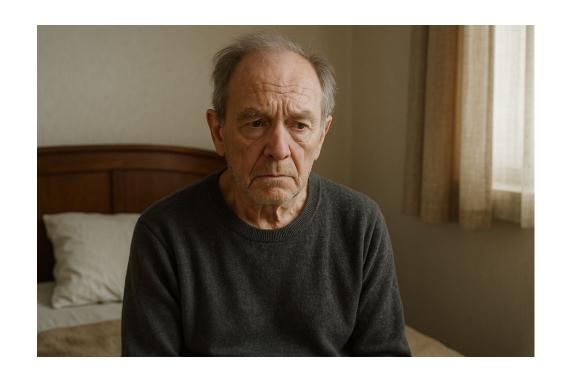
Any person who is

- 1. 18 years of age or over or a lawfully emancipated minor
- 2. Present in N.C. and
- 3. Who is **physically or mentally incapacitated** due to
 - an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy or autism;
 - organic brain damage caused by advanced age or other physical degeneration in connection therewith; or
 - c. conditions incurred at any age which are the result of accident, organic brain damage, mental or physical illness, or continued consumption or absorption of substances.



The Case of Mr. Johnson: Disabled Adult

- Over 18
- Present in North Carolina
- Diagnosed with dementia which impairs his memory, judgment, and ability to make decisions and meet his basic needs
- Physical limitations which make him unable to get out of bed or move around without assistance



Adult Protective Services: Purpose

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G.S. 108A-100.

Abuse

The willful infliction of physical pain, injury or mental anguish, unreasonable confinement, or the willful deprivation by a caretaker* of services necessary to maintain mental and physical health.

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

*Caretaker: An individual who has responsibility for care of the disabled adult

- as a result of family relationship or
- voluntarily or by contract.

Neglect

A disabled adult who is

- Self-Neglect: living alone and not able to provide for themselves the services necessary to maintain their mental or physical health
- 2. Caretaker Neglect: not receiving services from their caretaker.

G.S. 108A-101(m).

Exploitation

The illegal or improper use of a disabled adult or their resources for another's profit or advantage.

- Only prong not limited to self or caretaker.
- Includes but not limited to financial exploitation.

The Case of Mr. Johnson:

Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation

Abuse

- Willful infliction of mental anguish by a caretaker – berated him and yelled at him
- Unreasonable confinement in his room by caretaker – locked him in his room

Neglect

 Not receiving necessary services from caretaker – not providing meals and medication



Adult Protective Services: Purpose

Provide (temporary) protection for disabled adults in North Carolina who are the subject of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

G.S. 108A-100.

Protective Services: How Needs are Met

Services provided by

- the State or
- other government or
- private organizations or
- individuals

which are necessary to protect the disabled adult from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

They shall consist of

- 1. evaluation of the need for service and
- 2. mobilization of essential services on behalf of the disabled adult.



G.S. 108A-101(n).

Essential Services: What the Adult Lacks/Needs

Social, medical, psychiatric, psychological or legal services necessary to safeguard the disabled adult's rights and resources and to maintain the physical or mental well-being of the individual.

G.S. 108A-101(i).

Protective Services (How)

- APS report; evaluation; substantiation
- Consent or court authorization for services (APS or guardianship proceeding)
 - Case management; coordination
 - -Referral; advocacy

Essential Services (What)

- Medical care; medication access
 - Food and nutrition
 - Shelter and safety
 - Personal care
 - Utility restoration

Disabled Adult "In Need of" Protective Services

The person:

- (personal limitation) due to his physical or mental incapacity, is unable to perform or obtain for themselves essential services and
- (external limitation) is without able, responsible, and willing persons to perform or obtain for his essential services.

G.S. 108A-101(e).

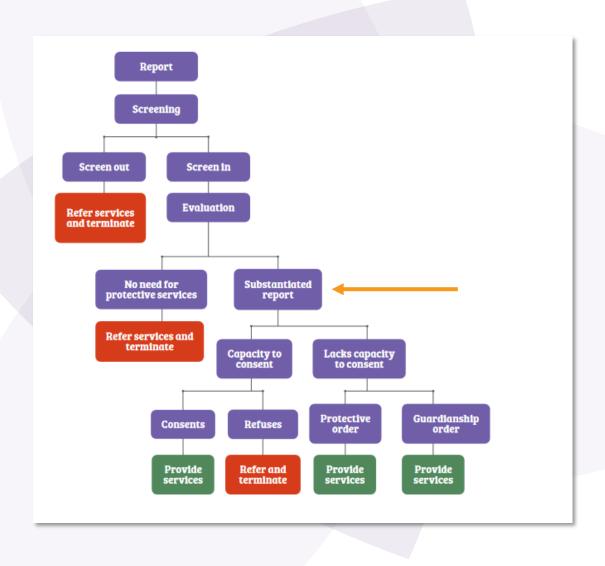
The Case of Mr. Johnson:

In Need of Protective Services

- Unable to provide basic care for himself food, medication, transportation
- Relies on Frank to provide for him as his caretaker, but Frank has failed to do so
- Untreated bed sores and bruises
- Unable to safely get out of bed or move around independently, which places him at risk of falls and worsening sores
- Alone and has no other friends or family and there is no evidence of any other person such as a guardian or an agent under a power of attorney who has legal authority to act on Mr. Johnson's behalf



Adult Protective Services: Process Overview

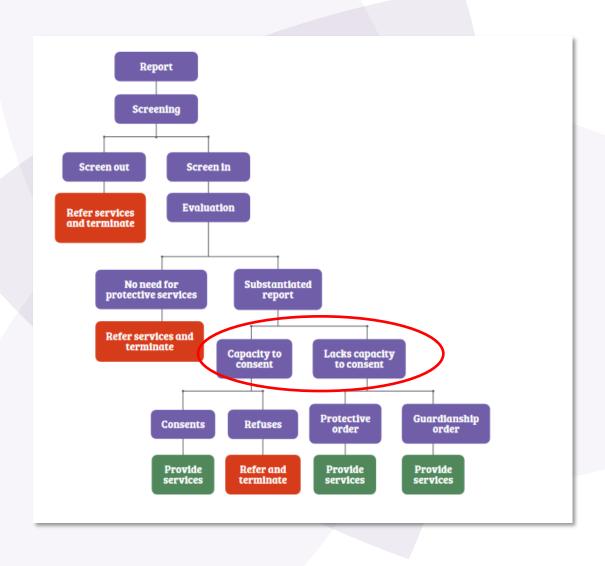


Substantiation of the Report

Following an evaluation, a determination must be made whether the report is **substantiated**, meaning all three conditions are met:

- 1. Disabled adult
- 2. Abused, neglected, or exploited
- 3. In need of protective services

Adult Protective Services: Process Overview



Substantiation of the Report: Role of Consent

Adult with capacity

- DSS must seek consent
- If consent received, DSS mobilizes essential services
- If consent **not** received, DSS may not provide services

Adult lacks capacity

- DSS petitions the court for order authorizing provision of services
 - APS order
 - Guardianship order

"Lacks Capacity to Consent to Services"

The person lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to **make or communicate responsible decisions** concerning his **person**.

This includes, but is not limited to, provisions for health or mental health care, food, clothing, or shelter, because of physical or mental incapacity.

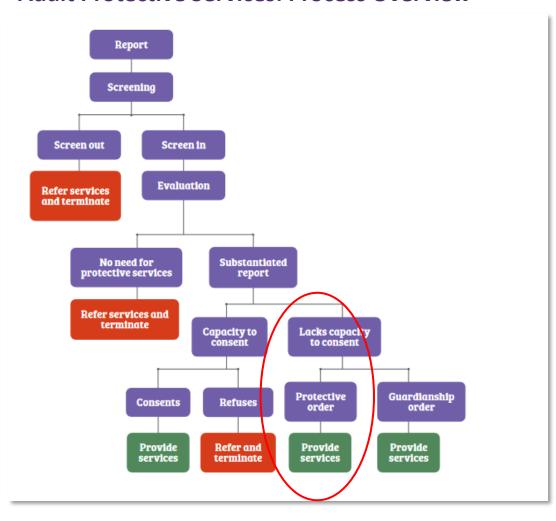
G.S. 108A-101(l).

The Case of Mr. Johnson: Lacks Capacity to Consent

- Severity of the dementia?
- Dementia coupled with other facts in the case demonstrating a lack of functional capacity
 - Does not remember to take food or medicine
 - Unable to manage his own medications or recognize the need for medical care
 - Unable to maintain safe housing



Adult Protective Services: Process Overview



APS Protective Order: G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6

Ex Parte
Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Up to 14 days)

G.S. 108A-106(d)

Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Up to 14 days) G.S. 108A-106 Order
Authorizing
Protective
Services

(Up to 60 days; extended 60 days)
G.S. 108A-105

APS Protective Order: G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6

Ex Parte
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G.S. 108A-106(d)

Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Up to 14 days)

Order
Authorizing
Protective
Services

(Hearing within 14 days from filing petition)

G.S. 108A-105

Grounds: Order Authorizing Protective Services, G.S. 108A-105

- 1. Disabled adult
- 2. Subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- 3. Disabled adult in need of protective services
- 4. Disabled adult lacks the capacity to consent to services

APS Protective Order: G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6

Ex Parte
Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Up to 14 days)

G.S. 108A-106(d)

Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Hearing ASAP – at least 24 hours notice required) G.S. 108A-106 Order
Authorizing
Protective
Services

(Up to 60 days; extended 60 days)
G.S. 108A-105

Grounds: Order Authorizing Emergency Services, G.S. 108A-106

- Disabled adult
- 2. Subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- 3. Disabled adult in need of protective services
- 4. Disabled adult lacks the capacity to consent to services
- 5. An emergency* exists
- 6. No other person authorized by law or order to give consent for the respondent is available and willing to arrange for emergency services

*Substantial danger of death or irreparable harm if protective services are not provided immediately together with other elements in G.S. 108A-101(g).



APS Protective Order: G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6

Ex Parte
Order
Authorizing
Emergency

(Hearing ASAP; no notice required)
G.S. 108A-106(d)

Services

Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

(Up to 14 days)

Order Authorizing **Protective** Services

(Up to 60 days; extended 60 days)
G.S. 108A-105

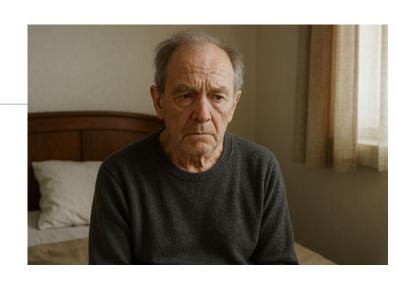
Grounds: Ex Parte Order Authorizing Emergency Services, G.S. 108A-106(d)

- Disabled adult
- 2. Subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- 3. Disabled adult in need of protective services
- 4. Disabled adult lacks the capacity to consent to services
- 5. An emergency exists
- 6. No other person authorized by law or order to give consent for the respondent is available and willing to arrange for emergency services
- 7. There is a likelihood the respondent may suffer irreparable injury or death if the emergency services order is delayed
- 8. Reasonable attempts have been made to locate interested parties and secure emergency services from them or their consent to services for the respondent



The Case of Mr. Johnson

- 1. Disabled adult
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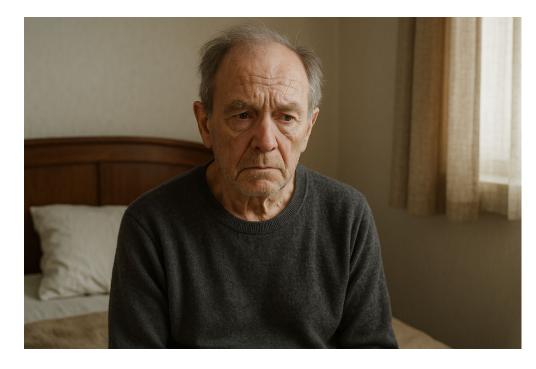


The Case of Mr. Johnson:

Emergency + Irreparable Harm or Death if the Order is Delayed

No access to food, medication, or transportation.

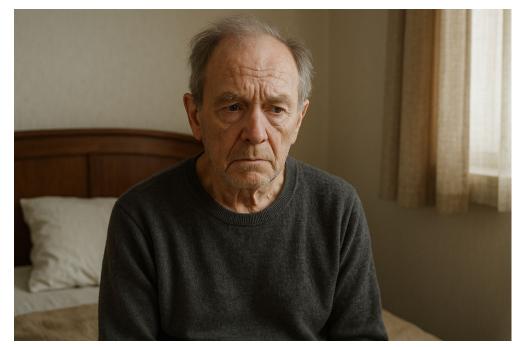
Home alone; no other means of support; caretaker who he is dependent on is in jail.



The Case of Mr. Johnson:

No Other Authorized Person + Reasonable Attempts to Locate Interested Parties and Secure Services

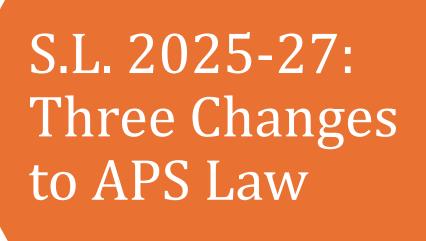
- Reliant on a caretaker
- Caretaker is in jail
- No other family or friends
- No agent under a power of attorney, guardian, or other authorized fiduciary to act on his behalf



Petition Authorizing Protective/Emergency/Ex Parte Services AOC-CV-770

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	File No.		
County	In The General (District Cou		
IN THE MATTER OF Name And Address Of Respondent	PETITION FOR ORDER ALL PROTECTIVE SERVICES EMERGENCY SERVICES EX PARTE EMERGENCY AND APPOINTMENT OF GUAL G.S. 1A	S S Y SERVICES	
Name And Address Of Petitioner	Name And Address Of Attorney For Petitioner		
Telephone Number Of Petitioner	Telephone Number Of Petitioner's Attorney	State Bar No.	
Spoken Language Court Interpreter Needed For Any Party, Victim, Or Witness? (If Yes, identify person(s) and language(s). Interpreters provided for all court proceedings at no cost.) No Yes: (explain)			

Legislative Changes Affecting Magistrates



#1: DSS may file an emergency APS petition after hours that seeks ex parte relief

#2: "Authorized Magistrates" may hear ex parte petitions for emergency services and enter ex parte orders

#3: District court judges and Authorized Magistrates to may authorize ex parte emergency services orders telephonically

Effective November 1, 2025

G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6: Types of APS Orders

Ex Parte
Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

G.S. 108A-106(d)

Order
Authorizing
Emergency
Services

G.S. 108A-106

Order
Authorizing
Protective
Services

G.S. 108A-105



#1: DSS may file an emergency APS petition after hours that seeks ex parte relief

#2: "Authorized Magistrates" may hear ex parte petitions for emergency services and enter ex parte orders

#3: District court judges and Authorized Magistrates to may authorize ex parte emergency services orders telephonically

Effective November 1, 2025

#1: New G.S. 108A-106.1 – Filing When Clerk's Office is Closed

- (a) When the office of the clerk is closed, a magistrate shall accept for filing a petition for an order authorizing the provision of emergency services to a disabled adult and shall note the date of the filing.
- (b) The authority of the magistrate under this section is limited to **emergency situations in which a petition is filed under G.S. 108A-106 seeking an order ex parte** for the provision of emergency services to a disabled adult. Any magistrate who accepts a petition for filing under this section shall deliver the petition to the clerk's office for processing as soon as that office is open for business.



Two Key Limitations on Magistrate's Authority

The magistrate's authority to accept APS filings is limited to

1. When the clerk's office is closed

2. Petitions seeking ex parte relief (which will be combined with at least a petition for emergency services)

G.S. 108A-106.1



Petition for APS Orders Authorizing Services

- 1. Petition for order authorizing protective services
- 2. Petition for order authorizing emergency services



- 3. Petition for ex parte emergency services + emergency services
- 4. Petition for emergency services + protective services
- 5. Petition for ex parte emergency services + emergency services + protective services
- → All sought via **AOC-CV-770 Petition**



AOC-CV-770

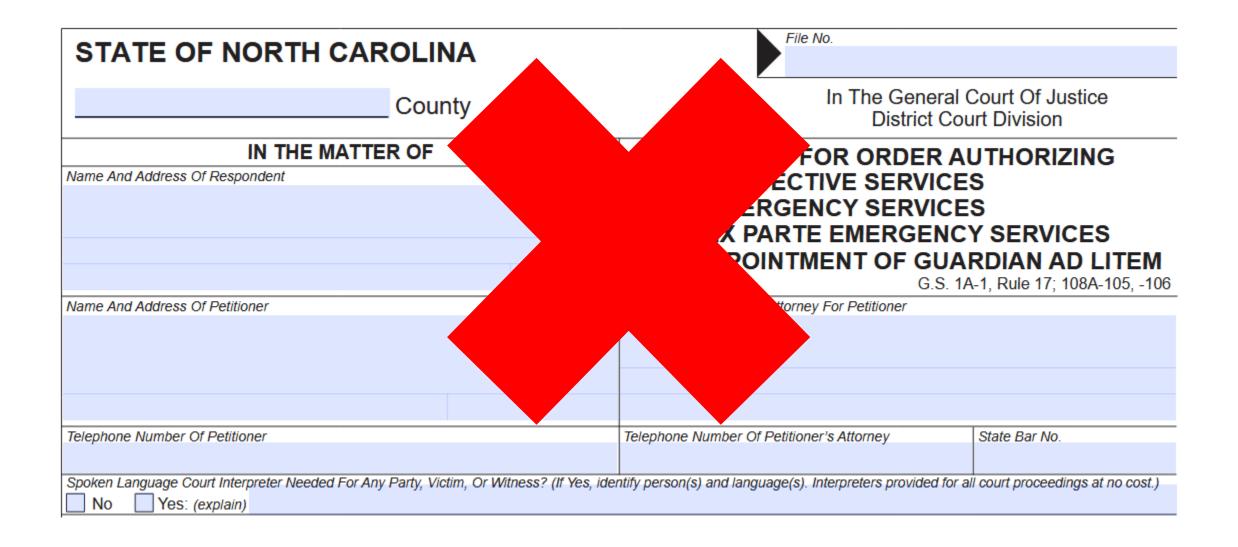
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	File No.		
County	In The General (District Cou		
IN THE MATTER OF Name And Address Of Respondent	PETITION FOR ORDER AND APPOINTMENT OF GUA	S S Y SERVICES	
Name And Address Of Petitioner	Name And Address Of Attorney For Petitioner		
Telephone Number Of Petitioner Spoken Language Court Interpreter Needed For Any Party, Victim, Or Witness? (If Yes, idea No Yes: (explain)	Telephone Number Of Petitioner's Attorney ntify person(s) and language(s). Interpreters provided for a	State Bar No. Il court proceedings at no cost.)	

The petitioner is the representative of the director of the county department of social services authorized to file this petition pursuant to G.S. 108A-14(a)(14) and G.S. Chapter 108A, Article 6, having sufficient knowledge to believe that the respondent is in need of protective services, alleges that:

Petition: AOC-CV-770

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	File No.		
County	In The General (District Cou		
IN THE MATTER OF	PETITION FOR ORDER AL	JTHORIZING	
Name And Address Of Respondent	⋈ PROTECTIVE SERVICE	S	
	X EMERGENCY SERVICE		
	X EX PARTE EMERGENC		
	AND APPOINTMENT OF GUA		
		A-1, Rule 17; 108A-105, -106	
Name And Address Of Petitioner	Name And Address Of Attorney For Petitioner		
Telephone Number Of Petitioner	Telephone Number Of Petitioner's Attorney	State Bar No.	
Spoken Language Court Interpreter Needed For Any Party, Victim, Or Witness? (If Yes, identify person(s) and language(s). Interpreters provided for all court proceedings at no cost.) No Yes: (explain)			

Petition: AOC-CV-770



Magistrate Receives the Filing: Next Steps

Upon receipt, the magistrate must note the date of the filing on the petition by placing their file stamp on it.

G.S. 108A-106.1(a).

FILED

DATE: September 16, 2025

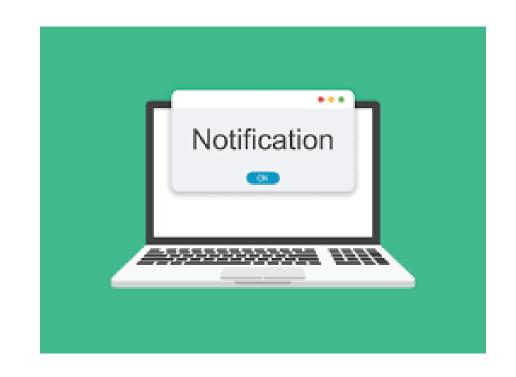
TIME: 1:28 PM MAGISTRATE BY: Magistrate Test



Magistrate Receives the Filing: Next Steps

Any magistrate who accepts a petition for filing must deliver the petition to the clerk's office for processing as soon as the office is open for business.

G.S. 108A-106.1(b).





#1: DSS may file an emergency APS petition after hours that seeks ex parte relief

#2: "Authorized Magistrates" may hear ex parte petitions for emergency services and enter ex parte orders

#3: District court judges and Authorized Magistrates to may authorize ex parte emergency services orders telephonically

Effective November 1, 2025

Prior to November 1, 2025

G.S. 108A, Article 6:

"Court" authorized to preside over APS proceedings and enter APS orders authorizing services limited to a **district court judge.**



#2: New G.S. 108A-106.2 – Ex Parte Emergency Orders by Authorized Magistrates

(a) The chief district court judge <u>may</u> authorize one or more magistrates to hear <u>ex parte motions</u> for the provision of emergency services to disabled adults and <u>issue a show-cause</u> notice in the order as required by G.S. 108A-106(d).

→ Method of authorization?



#2: New G.S. 108A-106.2 – Ex Parte Emergency Orders by Authorized Magistrates

- (a) The chief district court judge may authorize one or more magistrates to hear ex parte motions for the provision of emergency services to disabled adults and issue a show-cause notice in the order as required by G.S. 108A-106(d). A magistrate may proceed with hearing a motion ex parte and issuing a show-cause notice under this subsection only if, prior to the hearing, the magistrate determines that at the time the party is seeking emergency services ex parte the district court is not in session and a district court judge is not and will not be available to hear the motion.
- → Does the chief's authorization define when a judge is "not available to hear the motion"?



"Authorized Magistrate" to Enter Ex Parte Orders

- 1. Chief district court judge authorized the magistrate to hear the petition and enter the ex parte order,
- 2. District court is not in session, and
- 3. A district court judge is not and will not be available to hear the motion.

G.S. 108A-106.2(a).

Standard of Proof

Emergency APS order (including ex parte orders)

- "Reasonable cause to believe...."

Regular APS order

- "Clear, cogent, and convincing evidence..."



Grounds: Ex Parte Order Authorizing Emergency Services, G.S. 108A-106(d)

- 1. Disabled adult
- 2. Subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- 3. Disabled adult in need of protective services
- 4. Disabled adult lacks the capacity to consent to services
- 5. An emergency exists
- 6. No other person authorized by law or order to give consent for the respondent is available and willing to arrange for emergency services
- 7. There is a likelihood the respondent may suffer irreparable injury or death if the emergency services order is delayed
- 8. Reasonable attempts have been made to locate interested parties and secure emergency services from them or their consent to services for the respondent



If the grounds for ex parte relief are met....

Then the judge or Authorized Magistrate:

- 1. enters an order authorizing emergency services* and
- 2. identifies in the order who is authorized to provide or give consent to emergency services.

* The court shall order only such emergency services (services necessary to maintain vital functions) as are necessary to remove the conditions creating the emergency; this may include taking physical custody of the disabled adult.

G.S. 108A-106(b).

Additional Steps: Whether Grant or Deny Ex Parte Relief

1. Consider whether to appoint an attorney

If the disabled adult, in the determination of the judicial official, lacks the capacity to waive the right to counsel, then **a guardian ad litem must be appointed pursuant to Rule 17** of the N.C. Rules of Civil Procedure and rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services. G.S. 108A-105(b).

2. Schedule the hearing on the emergency services petition promptly

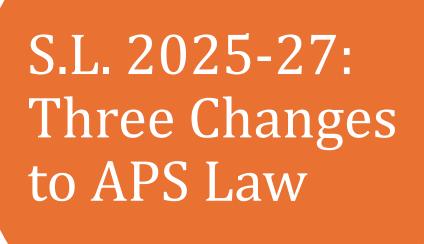
If the ex parte order is entered when the clerk's office is closed, then the magistrate may determine the hearing date and include that date on the notice of hearing. The emergency services hearing should be scheduled as soon as possible, but in any event, it must be scheduled for a date that is no more than 14 days from the entry of the ex parte emergency services order. See G.S. 108A-106(d).

The Case of Mr. Johnson:

Ex Parte Order for Emergency Services

- → Authorization to provide or consent to emergency services reasonably necessary to remove the conditions creating the emergency
- → Who is authorized to provide or give consent to provide: DSS (petitioner)
- → Emergency services:
 - → Authority to enter the premises
 - → Authority to take physical custody of Mr. Johnson
 - → Immediate medical evaluation and treatment
 - → Nutritional support
 - → Safe placement





#1: DSS may file an emergency APS petition after hours that seeks ex parte relief

#2: "Authorized Magistrates" may hear ex parte petitions for emergency services and enter ex parte orders

#3: District court judges and Authorized Magistrates to may authorize ex parte emergency services orders telephonically

Effective November 1, 2025

New G.S. 108A-106.2(c) - Telephonic authorizations

All authorizations for ex parte orders for emergency services may be made by telephone when other means of communication are impractical.



New G.S. 108A-106.2(c) - Telephonic authorizations

A copy of the petition for an order authorizing the provision of emergency services shall be provided to the **district court judge or the authorized magistrate** by any appropriate method, including hand delivery, facsimile, or electronic means.



New G.S. 108A-106.2(c) - Telephonic authorizations

Any order entered pursuant to telephonic communication must bear:

- the name and the title of the DSS director,
- the name and the title of the district court judge or Authorized Magistrate issuing the ex parte order,
- the hour and date of the telephonic authorization, and
- the signature and the title of the clerk or magistrate receiving the authorization and entering the order and who accepted the petition for filing.

G.S. 108A-106.2(c).



SOG Blog: On the Civil Side



Categories Home About Contributors Subscribe to the Blog Legislative Changes to Ex Parte Proceedings for the Provision of Emergency Services to Disabled Adults **=** This entry was contributed by Meredith Smith on September 30, 2025 at 12:20 pm and is filed under Adult Protective (in)Services. On November 1, 2025, legislative changes to North Carolina adult protective services (APS) law take effect pursuant to Session Law 2025-27, Part V. There are three primary changes reflected in two new statutes, G.S. 108A-106.1 and -106.2. (00)1. Magistrates are authorized to accept for filing petitions for the provision of emergency services to disabled adults when the clerk's office is closed and the petitioner requests the court enter an ex parte emergency services order. S. 108A-106.1. 2. Certain "Authorized Magistrates" (defined below) may hear petitions for the provision of emergency services to disabled adults and enter ex parte emergency services orders. G.S. 108A-106.2(a), (b). 3. District court judges and Authorized Magistrates may authorize ex parte emergency services



Questions?

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