

Article 18.

District Court Practice and Procedure Generally.

**§ 7A-190. District courts always open.**

The district courts shall be deemed always open for the disposition of matters properly cognizable by them. But all trials on the merits shall be conducted at trial sessions regularly scheduled as provided in this Chapter. (1965, c. 310, s. 1.)

**§ 7A-191. Trials; hearings and orders in chambers.**

All trials on the merits and all hearings on infractions conducted pursuant to Article 66 of Chapter 15A shall be conducted in open court and so far as convenient in a regular courtroom. All other proceedings, hearings, and acts may be done or conducted by a judge in chambers in the absence of the clerk or other court officials and at any place within the district; but no hearing may be held, nor order entered, in any cause outside the district in which it is pending without the consent of all parties affected thereby. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1985, c. 764, s. 11; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17.)

**§ 7A-191.1. Recording of proceeding in which defendant pleads guilty or no contest to felony in district court.**

The trial judge shall require that a true, complete, and accurate record be made of the proceeding in which a defendant pleads guilty or no contest to a Class H or I felony pursuant to G.S. 7A-272. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 725, s. 4.)

**§ 7A-192. By whom power of district court to enter interlocutory orders exercised.**

Any district judge may hear motions and enter interlocutory orders in causes regularly calendared for trial or for the disposition of motions, at any session to which the district judge has been assigned to preside. The chief district judge and any district judge designated by written order or rule of the chief district judge, may in chambers hear motions and enter interlocutory orders in all causes pending in the district courts of the district, including causes transferred from the superior court to the district court under the provisions of this Chapter. The designation is effective from the time filed in the office of the clerk of superior court of each county of the district until revoked or amended by written order of the chief district judge. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1969, c. 1190, s. 16.)

**§ 7A-193. Civil procedure generally.**

Except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, the civil procedure provided in Chapters 1 and 1A of the General Statutes applies in the district court division of the General Court of Justice. Where there is reference in Chapters 1 and 1A of the General Statutes to the superior court, it shall be deemed to refer also to the district court in respect of causes in the district court division. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1969, c. 1190, s. 17.)

**§ 7A-194. Repealed by Session Laws 1977, c. 711, s. 33.**

**§ 7A-195. Repealed by Session Laws 1969, c. 911, s. 5.**

**§ 7A-196. Jury trials.**

(a) In civil cases in the district court there shall be a right to trial by a jury of 12 in conformity with Rules 38 and 39 of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

(b) In criminal cases there shall be no jury trials in the district court. Upon appeal to superior court trial shall be de novo, with jury trial as provided by law.

(c) In adjudicatory hearings for infractions, there shall be no right to trial by jury in the district court. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1967, c. 954, s. 3; 1985, c. 764, s. 12; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17.)

#### **§ 7A-197. Petit jurors.**

Unless otherwise provided in this Chapter, the provisions of Chapter 9 of the General Statutes with respect to petit jurors for the trial of civil actions in the superior court are applicable to the trial of civil actions in the district court. (1965, c. 310, s. 1.)

#### **§ 7A-198. Reporting of civil trials.**

(a) Court-reporting personnel shall be utilized, if available, for the reporting of civil trials in the district court. If court reporters are not available in any county, electronic or other mechanical devices shall be provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts upon request of the chief district judge.

(b) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall from time to time investigate the state of the art and techniques of recording testimony, and shall provide such electronic or mechanical devices as are found to be most efficient for this purpose.

(c) If an electronic or other mechanical device is utilized, it shall be the duty of the clerk of the superior court or some other person designated by him to operate the device while a trial is in progress, and the clerk shall thereafter preserve the record thus produced, which may be transcribed, as required, by any person designated by the Administrative Office of the Courts. If stenotype, shorthand, or stenomask equipment is used, the original tapes, notes, discs, or other records are the property of the State, and the clerk shall keep them in his custody.

(d) Reporting of any trial may be waived by consent of the parties.

(e) Reporting will not be provided in ex parte or emergency hearings before a judge pursuant to Chapter 50B or 50C of the General Statutes, trials before magistrates, or in hearings to adjudicate and dispose of infractions in the district court.

(f) Appointment of a reporter or reporters for district court proceedings in each district court district shall be made by the chief district judge for that district. The compensation and allowances of reporters in each district shall be fixed by the chief district judge, within limits determined by the Administrative Officer of the Courts, and paid by the State.

(g) A party to a civil trial in district court may request a private agreement from the opposing party or parties to share equally in the cost of a court reporter to be selected from a list provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts. If the opposing party does not consent to share this cost, the requesting party may nevertheless pay to have a court reporter present to record the trial and, in the event that the opposing party appeals the case, that party shall reimburse the party providing the court reporter in full for the costs incurred for the court reporter's services and transcripts.

In the event that the recording device in a civil trial conducted without a court reporter fails for any reason to provide a reasonably accurate record of the trial for purposes of appeal, then the trial judge shall grant a motion for a new trial made by a losing party whose request pursuant to this section to share the cost of a court reporter was not consented to by the opposing party. (1965, c.

310, s. 1; 1969, c. 1190, s. 18; 1985, c. 764, s. 13; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17; 1987, c. 384, s. 2; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 19; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 22.11; 2015-173, s. 5.)

**§ 7A-199. Special venue rule when district court sits without jury in seat of court lying in more than one county; where judgments recorded.**

(a) In any nonjury civil action or juvenile matter properly pending in the district court division, regularly assigned for a hearing or trial before a district judge at a seat of the district court in a municipality the corporate limits of which extend into two or more contiguous counties, venue is properly laid for such trial or hearing if by statute or common law it is properly laid in any of the contiguous counties.

(b) In any jury civil action regularly assigned for a hearing or trial before a district judge at a seat of the district court in a municipality the corporate limits of which extend into two or more contiguous counties, venue is properly laid for such jury trial if by statute or common law it is properly laid in any of the contiguous counties; provided, however, any such action shall be instituted in the county of proper venue, and the jurors summoned shall be from the county where such action was instituted. Notwithstanding the fact that the place of trial within such municipality is in a different county from the county where such action was commenced, the sheriff of the county where such action was commenced is authorized to summon the jurors to appear at such place of trial. Such jurors shall be subject to the same challenge as other jurors, except challenges for nonresidence in the county of trial.

(c) A district court judge sitting at a seat of court described in this section may, in criminal cases, conduct preliminary hearings and try misdemeanors arising within the corporate limits of the municipality plus the territory embraced within a distance of one mile in all directions therefrom.

If the corporate limits of the municipality extend into two or more counties, each of which is in a separate district court district, a district court judge assigned to sit at the seat of court has the same authority over criminal cases arising in the municipality and the territory embraced within a distance of one mile in all directions that he would have if the corporate limits of the municipality were solely located in a single district court district. Judges assigned to sit in such a municipality shall be assigned by the chief district court judge serving the district in which a majority of the voters of the municipality reside, but offenses arising in a portion of the municipality in which a minority of the voters reside shall not be disposed of in the municipality unless the chief district court judge for that district consents in writing to the disposition of criminal cases in the municipality. However, for charges brought by municipal law enforcement officers only, if the corporate limits of the municipality extend into four or more counties, each of which is in a separate district court district, offenses arising in a portion of the municipality in which a minority of the voters reside shall be disposed of in the portion of the municipality in which a majority of the voters reside without obtaining the consent of the chief district court judge for the district in which the offense occurred.

(d) The judgment or order rendered in any civil action or juvenile matter heard or tried under the authority of this section shall be recorded in the county where the action was commenced. The judgment or finding of probable cause or other determination in any criminal action heard or tried under the authority of this section shall be recorded in the county where the offense was committed. (1967, c. 691, s. 19; 1989, c. 795, s. 23(c2); 2009-398, s. 1.)

**§ 7A-200. District and set of districts defined; chief district court judges and their authority.**

(a) In this section:

- (1) "District" means any district court district established by G.S. 7A-133 which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties;
- (2) "Set of districts" means any set of two or more district court districts established under G.S. 7A-133, none of which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties, but both or all of which include territory from the same county or counties and together comprise all of the territory of that county or those counties; "set of districts" also means a set of three district court districts in one county, one consisting of the entire county and the other two consisting of parts of that county; and
- (3) "Chief district court judge" means in the case of a set of districts, the chief district court judge for those districts, designated by the chief justice from among the district court judges for the districts in the set of districts.

(b) Whenever by law a duty is imposed upon the chief district court judge, it means for a set of districts the chief district court judge designated under subsection (a)(3) of this section. (1995, c. 507, s. 21.1(a); 2007-484, s. 25(c).)

**§ 7A-201. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-202. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-203. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-204. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-205. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-206. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-207. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-208. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 7A-209. Reserved for future codification purposes.**