

SUBCHAPTER VI. PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS.

Article 29.

First Appearance Before District Court Judge.

§ 15A-601. First appearance before a district court judge; consolidation of first appearance before magistrate and before district court judge; first appearance before clerk of superior court.

(a) Any defendant charged in a magistrate's order under G.S. 15A-511 or criminal process under Article 17 of this Chapter, Criminal Process, with a crime in the original jurisdiction of the superior court must be brought before a district court judge in the district court district as defined in G.S. 7A-133 in which the crime is charged to have been committed. This first appearance before a district court judge is not a critical stage of the proceedings against the defendant.

Any defendant charged in a magistrate's order under G.S. 15A-511 or criminal process under Article 17 of this Chapter, Criminal Process, with a misdemeanor offense and held in custody must be brought before a district court judge in the district court district as defined in G.S. 7A-133 in which the crime is charged to have been committed. This first appearance before a district court judge is not a critical stage of the proceedings against the defendant.

(a1), (a2) Repealed by Session Laws 2021-47, s. 10(g), effective June 18, 2021, and applicable to proceedings occurring on or after that date.

(b) When a district court judge conducts an initial appearance as provided in G.S. 15A-511, the judge may consolidate those proceedings and the proceedings under this Article.

(c) Unless the courthouse is closed for transactions for a period longer than 72 hours or the defendant is released pursuant to Article 26 of this Chapter, Bail, first appearance before a district court judge must be held within 72 hours after the defendant is taken into custody or at the first regular session of the district court in the county, whichever occurs first. If the courthouse is closed for transactions for a period longer than 72 hours, the first appearance before a district court judge must be held within 96 hours after the defendant is taken into custody or at the first regular session of the district court in the county, whichever occurs first. If the defendant is not taken into custody, or is released pursuant to Article 26 of this Chapter, Bail, prior to a first appearance, the first appearance must be held at the next session of district court held in the county. This subsection does not apply to a defendant whose first appearance before a district court judge has been set in a criminal summons pursuant to G.S. 15A-303(d).

(d) Upon motion of the defendant, the first appearance before a district court judge may be continued to a time certain. The defendant may not waive the holding of the first appearance before a district court judge but he need not appear personally if he is represented by counsel at the proceeding.

(e) The clerk of the superior court in the county in which the defendant is taken into custody may conduct a first appearance as provided in this Article if a district court judge is not available in the county within 72 hours after the defendant is taken into custody, or 96 hours after the defendant is taken into custody if the courthouse is closed for transactions for a period longer than 72 hours. A magistrate may conduct the first appearance if the clerk is not available. For the limited purpose of conducting a first appearance and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the clerk or magistrate shall proceed under this Article as a district court judge would and shall have the same authority that a district court judge would have at a first appearance. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, 2nd Sess., c. 983, ss. 139, 140; 1979, c. 651; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 58; 1993, c. 30, s. 2; 2021-47, s. 10(g); 2021-138, s. 14(a); 2021-182, s. 2.5(a); 2022-6, s. 8.4; 2022-47, s. 15(a).)