

## Educational Requirements for Juvenile Court Judges

We asked the national Court Improvement Program listserve if any states have statutes or other requirements detailing the level of training or education that a judge must have prior to taking a juvenile court docket, as well as any requirements for continuing education.

We heard from six states, none of which have statutes requiring a specific level of training or education in juvenile law for judges. However, North Carolina and Washington both have statutes that detail specialized training for juvenile court judges, though North Carolina does not require judges to attend this training and Washington only requires it for judges in courts that are receiving JCIP state funds.

### **North Carolina**

North Carolina has a statute that the State should “encourage specialization in juvenile cases by district court judges” and should encourage those judges to “secure appropriate training” in juvenile law. The training is currently facilitated by UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government which offers a Juvenile Certification. The certification requires judges to take 4 courses: (1) Abuse, Neglect, Dependency, Termination of Parental Rights, (2) Basic Substance Abuse for Judges, (3) Child Development for Judges, and (4) Juvenile Delinquency.

*Statute 7A-147(c): The policy of the State is to encourage specialization in juvenile cases by district court judges who are qualified by training and temperament to be effective in relating to youth and in the use of appropriate community resources to meet their needs. The Administrative Office of the Courts is therefore authorized to encourage judges who hear juvenile cases to secure appropriate training whether or not they were elected to a specialized judgeship as provided herein. Such training shall be provided within the funds available to the Administrative Office of the Courts for such training, and judges attending such training shall be reimbursed for travel and subsistence expenses at the same rate as is applicable to other State employees.*

*The Administrative Office of the Courts shall develop a plan whereby a district court judge may be better qualified to hear juvenile cases by reason of training, experience, and demonstrated ability. Any district court judge who completes the training under this plan shall receive a certificate to this effect from the Administrative Office of the Courts. In districts where there is a district court judge who has completed this training as herein provided, the chief district judge shall give due consideration in the assignment of such cases where practical and feasible.*

### **Washington**

Washington does not have statutes or requirements for training of juvenile court judges generally. However, for judicial officers in courts that are receiving Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program state funds, they must have a minimum of 30 hours of specialized training in topics related to family and juvenile matters within 6 months of serving in family and juvenile court. The Revised Code of Washington details what those topics must include.

RCW 2.56.230: *The topics for training must include:*

- (i) Parentage;*
- (ii) Adoption;*
- (iii) Domestic relations;*
- (iv) Dependency and termination of parental rights;*
- (v) Child development;*
- (vi) The impact of child abuse and neglect;*
- (vii) Domestic violence;*
- (viii) Substance abuse;*
- (ix) Mental health;*
- (x) Juvenile status offenses;*
- (xi) Juvenile offenders;*
- (xii) Self-representation issues;*
- (xiii) Cultural competency;*
- (xiv) Roles of family and juvenile court judges and commissioners*

### **Colorado**

Colorado does not have any statewide requirements prior to taking the bench. All judicial officers are required to complete 45 general and 7 ethics credits every three years. The Judicial Educator's office recommends the juvenile bench basics videos which most judicial officers view within the first 30 days on the bench, but this is not required.

### **Mississippi**

Mississippi has County Youth Court Judges and Referees appointed by the Chancellor in counties without a County Court. County Court Judges are required to attend an annual training. Referees are required to receive judicial training according to the Mississippi Code, though the Code does not require specific juvenile law topics.

*MS Code 43-21-111(2): Any referee appointed pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall be required to receive judicial training approved by the Mississippi Judicial College and shall be required to receive regular annual continuing education in the field of juvenile justice. The amount of judicial training and annual continuing education which shall be satisfactory to fulfill the requirements of this section shall conform with the amount prescribed by the Rules and Regulations for Mandatory Continuing Judicial Education promulgated by the Supreme Court. The Administrative Office of Courts shall maintain a roll of referees appointed under this section, shall enforce the provisions of this subsection and shall maintain records on all such referees regarding such training. Should a referee miss two (2) consecutive training sessions sponsored or approved by the Mississippi Judicial College as required by this subsection or fail to attend one (1) such training session within six (6) months of their initial appointment as a referee, the referee shall be disqualified to serve and be immediately removed as a referee and another member of the bar shall be appointed as provided in this section.*

## **Texas**

Texas does not have a statute governing juvenile judge training, but it does have a Board of Legal Specialization that includes Juvenile Law. Board certification requires 20 hours of CLE each year in the area of specialty.

## **Wisconsin**

Under Wisconsin Supreme Court rules, there is no requirement for judges to attend educational programs specific to juvenile law. They are required to attend each of the following at least once every 6 years: Judicial college, Criminal Law Sentencing Institute, and Prison Tour. The state's CIP provides a Child Welfare Law Orientation, a training for new juvenile judges specific to Wisconsin's children's code.