

§ 7B-401.1. Parties.

(a) **Petitioner.** – Only a county director of social services or the director's authorized representative may file a petition alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent. The petitioner shall remain a party until the court terminates its jurisdiction in the case.

(b) **Parents.** – The juvenile's parent shall be a party unless one of the following applies:

- (1) The parent's rights have been terminated.
- (2) The parent has relinquished the juvenile for adoption, or safely surrendered the infant and has not sought the return of the infant prior to the filing of a termination of parental rights, unless the court orders that the parent be made a party.
- (3) The parent has been convicted under G.S. 14-27.21, 14-27.22, 14-27.23, or 14-27.24 for an offense that resulted in the conception of the juvenile.

(c) **Guardian.** – A person who is the child's court-appointed guardian of the person or general guardian when the petition is filed shall be a party. A person appointed as the child's guardian pursuant to G.S. 7B-600 shall automatically become a party but only if the court has found that the guardianship is the permanent plan for the juvenile.

(d) **Custodian.** – A person who is the juvenile's custodian, as defined in G.S. 7B-101(8), when the petition is filed shall be a party. A person to whom custody of the juvenile is awarded in the juvenile proceeding shall automatically become a party but only if the court has found that the custody arrangement is the permanent plan for the juvenile.

(e) **Caretaker.** – A caretaker shall be a party only if (i) the petition includes allegations relating to the caretaker, (ii) the caretaker has assumed the status and obligation of a parent, or (iii) the court orders that the caretaker be made a party.

(e1) **Foster Parent.** – A foster parent as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(9a) providing foster care for the juvenile is not a party to the case and may be allowed to intervene only if the foster parent has authority to file a petition to terminate the parental rights of the juvenile's parents pursuant to G.S. 7B-1103.

(e2) **Grandparent.** – A grandparent is not a party to the case and shall be allowed to intervene if one of the following applies:

- (1) Both parents of the juvenile are deceased.
- (2) One parent of the juvenile is deceased and no other parent is known.
- (3) One parent of the juvenile is deceased and any other parent's rights have been terminated.

(f) **The Juvenile.** – The juvenile shall be a party.

(g) **Removal of a Party.** – If a guardian, custodian, or caretaker is a party, the court may discharge that person from the proceeding, making the person no longer a party, if the court finds that the person does not have legal rights that may be affected by the action and that the person's continuation as a party is not necessary to meet the juvenile's needs.

(h) **Intervention.** – Except as provided in G.S. 7B-1103(b) and subsections (e1) and (e2) of this section, the court shall not allow intervention by a person who is not the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, but may allow intervention by another county department of social services that has an interest in the proceeding. This section shall not prohibit the court from consolidating a juvenile proceeding with a civil action or claim for custody pursuant to G.S. 7B-200.

(i) **Young Adult in Foster Care.** – In proceedings held pursuant to G.S. 7B-910.1, the young adult in foster care and the director of the department of social services are parties. (2013-129, s. 9; 2015-136, s. 2; 2015-181, s. 22; 2015-241, s. 12C.9(h); 2015-264, s. 33(a); 2016-94, s. 12C.1(f); 2023-14, s. 6.2(c); 2024-33, s. 25(a).)