

Article 22.

Jurisdiction of the Trial Divisions in Criminal Actions.

§ 7A-270. Generally.

General jurisdiction for the trial of criminal actions is vested in the superior court and the district court divisions of the General Court of Justice. (1965, c. 310, s. 1.)

§ 7A-271. Jurisdiction of superior court.

(a) The superior court has exclusive, original jurisdiction over all criminal actions not assigned to the district court division by this Article, except that the superior court has jurisdiction to try a misdemeanor:

- (1) Which is a lesser included offense of a felony on which an indictment has been returned, or a felony information as to which an indictment has been properly waived; or
- (2) When the charge is initiated by presentment; or
- (3) Which may be properly consolidated for trial with a felony under G.S. 15A-926;
- (4) To which a plea of guilty or nolo contendere is tendered in lieu of a felony charge; or
- (5) When a misdemeanor conviction is appealed to the superior court for trial de novo, to accept a guilty plea to a lesser included or related charge.

(b) Appeals by the State or the defendant from the district court are to the superior court. The jurisdiction of the superior court over misdemeanors appealed from the district court to the superior court for trial de novo is the same as the district court had in the first instance, and when that conviction resulted from a plea arrangement between the defendant and the State pursuant to which misdemeanor charges were dismissed, reduced, or modified, to try those charges in the form and to the extent that they subsisted in the district court immediately prior to entry of the defendant and the State of the plea arrangement.

(c) When a district court is established in a district, any superior court judge presiding over a criminal session of court shall order transferred to the district court any pending misdemeanor which does not fall within the provisions of subsection (a), and which is not pending in the superior court on appeal from a lower court.

(d) The criminal jurisdiction of the superior court includes the jurisdiction to dispose of infractions only in the following circumstances:

- (1) If the infraction is a lesser-included violation of a criminal action properly before the court, the court must submit the infraction for the jury's consideration in factually appropriate cases.
- (2) If the infraction is a lesser-included violation of a criminal action properly before the court, or if it is a related charge, the court may accept admissions of responsibility for the infraction. A proper pleading for the criminal action is sufficient to support a finding of responsibility for the lesser-included infraction.

(e) The superior court has exclusive jurisdiction over all hearings held pursuant to G.S. 15A-1345(e) where the district court had accepted a defendant's plea of guilty or no contest to a felony under the provisions of G.S. 7A-272(c), except that the district court shall have jurisdiction to hear these matters with the consent of the State and the defendant. Once the superior court has concluded a probation revocation hearing, the superior court shall proceed without

remanding or sending the matter back to district court unless covered under subsection (f) of this section.

(f) The superior court has exclusive jurisdiction over all hearings to revoke probation pursuant to G.S. 15A-1345(e) where the district court is supervising a local judicially managed accountability and recovery court probation judgment under G.S. 7A-272(e), except that the district court has jurisdiction to conduct the revocation proceedings when the chief district court judge and the senior resident superior court judge agree that it is in the interest of justice that the proceedings be conducted by the district court. If the district court exercises jurisdiction under this subsection to revoke probation, appeal of an order revoking probation is to the appellate division.

(g) The superior court has jurisdiction to issue a secure custody order pursuant to G.S. 7B-1903 when a juvenile matter that has been transferred to superior court is remanded to district court pursuant to G.S. 7B-2200.5(d). (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1967, c. 691, s. 24; 1969, c. 1190, ss. 23, 24; 1971, c. 377, s. 15; 1977, c. 711, s. 6; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1328, s. 2; 1985, c. 764, s. 15; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17; 2004-128, s. 2; 2009-452, s. 1; 2009-516, s. 7(a), (b); 2010-96, s. 26(a); 2010-97, s. 13; 2021-123, s. 3(a); 2022-6, s. 8.2(a); 2023-97, s. 4(a).)

§ 7A-272. Jurisdiction of district court; concurrent jurisdiction in guilty or no contest pleas for certain felony offenses; appellate and appropriate relief procedures applicable.

(a) Except as provided in this Article, the district court has exclusive, original jurisdiction for the trial of criminal actions, including municipal ordinance violations, below the grade of felony, and the same are hereby declared to be petty misdemeanors.

(b) The district court has jurisdiction to conduct preliminary examinations and to bind the accused over for trial upon waiver of preliminary examination or upon a finding of probable cause, making appropriate orders as to bail or commitment.

(c) When the prosecutor and defendant consent, the district court has jurisdiction to accept a defendant's plea of guilty or no contest to a Class H or I felony if one of the following criteria is met:

- (1) The defendant is charged with a felony in an information filed pursuant to G.S. 15A-644.1, the felony is pending in district court, and the defendant has not been indicted for the offense.
- (2) The defendant has been indicted for a criminal offense but the defendant's case is transferred from superior court to district court pursuant to G.S. 15A-1029.1.

The chief district court judge may schedule and assign sessions of court to accept pleas of guilty or no contest pursuant to this subsection, and the district attorney shall cause agreed-upon pleas to be calendared for these sessions.

(d) Provisions in Chapter 15A of the General Statutes apply to a plea authorized under subsection (c) of this section as if the plea had been entered in superior court, so that a district court judge is authorized to act in these matters in the same manner as a superior court judge would be authorized to act if the plea had been entered in superior court, and appeals that are authorized in these matters are to the appellate division.

(e) With the consent of the chief district court judge and the senior resident superior court judge, the district court has jurisdiction to preside over the supervision of a probation judgment entered in superior court in which the defendant is required to participate in a local judicially managed accountability and recovery court program pursuant to G.S. 15A-1343(b1)(2b) or is participating in a local judicially managed accountability and recovery court program pursuant to a

deferred prosecution agreement under G.S. 15A-1341(a2) or the terms of a conditional discharge under G.S. 15A-1341(a5). The district court may modify or extend the probation judgment, but jurisdiction to revoke probation supervised under this subsection is as provided in G.S. 7A-271(f).

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 2022-6, s. 8.2(b), effective March 17, 2022. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 725, ss. 1, 2; 2009-452, s. 2; 2009-516, s. 8(a), (b); 2010-96, s. 26(b); 2010-97, s. 13; 2014-119, s. 2(b); 2022-6, s. 8.2(b); 2023-97, s. 3(a).)

§ 7A-273. Powers of magistrates in infractions or criminal actions.

In criminal actions or infractions, any magistrate has power:

- (1) In infraction cases in which the maximum penalty that can be imposed is not more than fifty dollars (\$50.00), exclusive of costs, or in Class 3 misdemeanors, other than the types of infractions and misdemeanors specified in subdivision (2) of this section, to accept guilty pleas or admissions of responsibility and enter judgment;
- (2) In misdemeanor or infraction cases involving alcohol offenses under Chapter 18B of the General Statutes, traffic offenses, hunting, fishing, State park and recreation area rule offenses under Chapters 113 and 143B of the General Statutes, State forest rule offenses under Articles 74 and 75 of Chapter 106 of the General Statutes, boating offenses under Chapter 75A of the General Statutes, open burning offenses under Article 78 of Chapter 106 of the General Statutes, and littering offenses under G.S. 14-399(c) and G.S. 14-399(c1), to accept written appearances, waivers of trial or hearing and pleas of guilty or admissions of responsibility, in accordance with the schedule of offenses and fines or penalties promulgated by the Conference of Chief District Judges pursuant to G.S. 7A-148, and in such cases, to enter judgment and collect the fines or penalties and costs;
- (2a) In misdemeanor cases involving the violation of a county ordinance authorized by law regulating the use of dune or beach buggies or other power-driven vehicles specified by the governing body of the county on the foreshore, beach strand, or the barrier dune system, to accept written appearances, waivers of trial or hearing, and pleas of guilty or admissions of responsibility, in accordance with the schedule of offenses and fines or penalties promulgated by the Conference of Chief District Court Judges pursuant to G.S. 7A-148, and in such cases, to enter judgment and collect the fines or penalties and costs;
- (3) To issue arrest warrants valid throughout the State;
- (4) To issue search warrants valid throughout the county;
- (5) To grant bail before trial for any noncapital offense;
- (6) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this section, to hear and enter judgment as the chief district judge shall direct in all worthless check cases brought under G.S. 14-107, when the amount of the check is two thousand dollars (\$2,000) or less. Provided, however, that under this section magistrates may not impose a prison sentence longer than 30 days;
- (7) To conduct an initial appearance as provided in G.S. 15A-511; and
- (8) To accept written appearances, waivers of trial and pleas of guilty in violations of G.S. 14-107 when the amount of the check is two thousand dollars (\$2,000) or less, restitution, including service charges and processing fees allowed by

G.S. 14-107, is made, and the warrant does not charge a fourth or subsequent violation of this statute, and in these cases to enter judgments as the chief district judge directs.

- (9) Repealed by Session Laws 1991 (Regular Session, 1992), c. 900, s. 118(d). (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1969, c. 876, s. 2; c. 1190, s. 25; 1973, c. 6; c. 503, s. 8; c. 1286, s. 7; 1975, c. 626, s. 4; 1977, c. 873, s. 1; 1979, c. 144, s. 3; 1981, c. 555, s. 3; 1983, c. 586, s. 5; 1985, c. 425, s. 4; c. 764, s. 16; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 852, s. 17; 1987, c. 355, ss. 1, 2; 1989, c. 343; c. 763; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1041, s. 1; 1991, c. 520, s. 2; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, s. 118(d); 1993, c. 374, s. 4; c. 538, s. 35; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 14, s. 1; c. 24, s. 14(b); 1999-80, s. 1; 2002-159, s. 1; 2014-115, s. 20; 2015-241, s. 14.30(aa1); 2021-78, s. 2(a).)

§ 7A-274. Power of mayors, law-enforcement officers, etc., to issue warrants and set bail restricted.

The power of mayors, law-enforcement officers, and other persons not officers of the General Court of Justice to issue arrest, search, or peace warrants, or to set bail, is terminated in any district court district upon the establishment of a district court therein. (1965, c. 310, s. 1.)

§ 7A-275. Repealed by Session Laws 1971, c. 377, s. 32.

§ 7A-276. Reserved for future codification purposes.