

DEPLOYMENT AND CHILD CUSTODY

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I. Servicemembers Civil Relief Act – Section 522

- A. What is it?
- B. Who is covered?
 - a. *Active Duty and NG/RC for > 30 days active, Public Health Service and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.*
- C. How does one apply for it?
 - a. *LETTER OR OTHER COMMUNICATION DETAILING CURRENT MILITARY DUTY THAT MATERIALLY AFFECTS SERVICEMEMBER'S ABILITY TO APPEAR*
 - b. *MUST GIVE DATE WHEN SERVICEMEMBER AVAILABLE TO APPEAR*
 - c. *COMMUNICATION FROM SERVICEMEMBER'S COMMANDING OFFICE THAT SERVICEMEMBER PREVENTED FROM APPEARING AND THAT LEAVE NOT AUTHORIZED AT TIME OF COMMUNICATION*
- D. How strict is the SCRA rules?
 - a. Must be strictly followed in order to procure the stay
- E. Does it apply to temporary hearings? YES
- F. Should you include more information?
 - a. *YES, THE APPLICATION SHOULD BE JUICED UP IF POSSIBLE WITH RELEVANT MATERIAL. SERVICEMEMBER SHOULD ALSO EXPLAIN (THOUGH NOT REQUIRED) WHY PRESENCE NEEDED FOR DEFENSE.*
- G. Does asking for the stay make for a general appearance? No.
- H. How long does the stay last?
 - a. *FIRST STAY IS 90 DAYS AS MATTER OF RIGHT. ALL OTHERS ARE DISCRETIONARY.*
- I. Great, if done properly, the 90 day automatic stay is granted. If I need more stays, I can get them with no questions asked, right?
 - a. *NOT NECESSARILY. CAN'T KEEP A CASE IN PERPETUITY ESPECIALLY WITH CHILDREN INVOLVED. ALSO, CASES SAY THAT SCRA IS A SHIELD, NOT A SWORD AND IT WILL NOT SHIELD IMPROPER ACTIONS.*

II. Section 521 and the Default Judgment Situation

When the servicemember has not made an appearance, 50 U.S.C. App. § 521 governs. The court must first determine whether an absent or defaulting party is in military service. Before entry of a judgment or order for the moving party (usually the plaintiff), the movant must file an affidavit stating “whether or not the defendant is in military service and showing necessary facts in support of the affidavit.” Criminal penalties are provided for filing a knowingly false affidavit.

When the court is considering the entry of a default judgment or order, one tool that is specifically recognized by the SCRA is the posting of a bond. If the court cannot determine whether the defendant is in military service, then the court may require the moving party to post a bond as a condition of entering a default judgment. Should the nonmoving party later be found to be a SERVICEMEMBER, the bond may be used to indemnify the defendant against any loss or damage that he or she might incur due to the default judgment (if it should later be set aside).

When the filed affidavit states that the party against whom the default order or judgment is to be taken is a member of the armed forces, no default may be taken until the court has appointed an attorney for the absent SERVICEMEMBER:

If in an action covered by this section it appears that the defendant is in military service, the court may not enter a judgment until after the court appoints an attorney to represent the defendant. If an attorney appointed under this section to represent a servicemember cannot locate the servicemember, actions by the attorney in the case shall not waive any defense of the servicemember or otherwise bind the servicemember.

If the court fails to appoint an attorney then the judgment or decree is -voidable. The statute is silent as to what tasks are to be undertaken by the appointed attorney, but the probable duties are to protect the interests of the absent member, much as a guardian *ad litem* protects the interests of a minor or incompetent party. This would include contacting the SERVICEMEMBER to advise that a default is about to be entered and to ask whether the SERVICEMEMBER wants to request a stay of proceedings. Counsel for the SERVICEMEMBER always should renew the request for a stay of proceedings, given the difficulty of preparing and presenting a case without the client’s participation.

The statute also leaves one in the dark about the limitations of the appointed attorney. The attorney’s actions may not waive any defense of the SERVICEMEMBER or bind the SERVICEMEMBER. How can counsel operate effectively before the court with these restrictions? Can counsel, for example, stipulate to the income of his or her client or of the other party? Can counsel agree to guideline child support and thus waive a request for a variance? Without elaboration in this area, the Act could mean that counsel must contest everything, object whenever possible, and refuse to make even reasonable stipulations or concessions for fear of violating the SCRA. Such conduct, of course, is at odds with the ethical requirements that counsel act in a professional and civil manner, avoiding undue delay and expense.

If a default decree is entered against a SERVICEMEMBER, whether the judge complies

with the terms of the SCRA or not, the Act provides protections. The purpose of this is to protect those in the military from having default judgments entered against them without their knowledge and without a chance to defend themselves. The SCRA allows the SERVICEMEMBER who has not received notice of the proceeding to move to reopen a default judgment. To do so the SERVICEMEMBER must apply to the trial court that rendered the original judgment or order. In addition, the default judgment must have been entered when the SERVICEMEMBER was on active duty in the military service or within 60 days thereafter, and the SERVICEMEMBER must apply for reopening the judgment while on active duty or within 90 days thereafter. Reopening or vacating the judgment does not impair right or title acquired by a bona fide purchaser for value under the default judgment.

In order to prevail in his or her motion to reopen the default decree, the SERVICEMEMBER must prove that, at the time the judgment was rendered, the SERVICEMEMBER was prejudiced in his or her ability to defend the case due to military service. In addition, the SERVICEMEMBER must show that there is a meritorious or legal defense to the initial claim. Default judgments will not be set aside when a litigant's position lacks merit. Such a requirement avoids a waste of judicial effort and resources in opening default judgments in cases in which SERVICEMEMBERS have no defense to assert.

III. Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act.

Part 1. General Provisions.

§ 50A-101. Short title.

This Article may be cited as the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-102. Definitions.

In this Article:

- (1) "Abandoned" means left without provision for reasonable and necessary care or supervision.
- (2) "Child" means an individual who has not attained 18 years of age.
- (3) "Child-custody determination" means a judgment, decree, or other order of a court providing for the legal custody, physical custody, or visitation with respect to a child. The term includes a permanent, temporary, initial, and modification order. The term does not include an order relating to child support or other monetary obligation of an individual.
- (4) "Child-custody proceeding" means a proceeding in which legal custody, physical custody, or visitation with respect to a child is an issue. The term includes a proceeding for divorce, separation, neglect, abuse, dependency, guardianship, paternity, termination of parental rights, and protection from domestic violence in which the issue may appear. The term does not include a proceeding involving juvenile delinquency, contractual emancipation, or enforcement under Part 3 of this Article.
- (5) "Commencement" means the filing of the first pleading in a proceeding.
- (6) "Court" means an entity authorized under the law of a state to establish, enforce, or modify a child-custody determination.

- (7) "Home state" means the state in which a child lived with a parent or a person acting as a parent for at least six consecutive months immediately before the commencement of a child-custody proceeding. In the case of a child less than six months of age, the term means the state in which the child lived from birth with any of the persons mentioned. A period of temporary absence of any of the mentioned persons is part of the period.
- (8) "Initial determination" means the first child-custody determination concerning a particular child.
- (9) "Issuing court" means the court that makes a child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought under this Article.
- (10) "Issuing state" means the state in which a child-custody determination is made.
- (11) "Modification" means a child-custody determination that changes, replaces, supersedes, or is otherwise made after a previous determination concerning the same child, whether or not it is made by the court that made the previous determination.
- (12) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, limited liability company, association, joint venture, government; governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality; public corporation; or any other legal or commercial entity.
- (13) "Person acting as a parent" means a person, other than a parent, who:
 - a. Has physical custody of the child or has had physical custody for a period of six consecutive months, including any temporary absence, within one year immediately before the commencement of a child-custody proceeding; and
 - b. Has been awarded legal custody by a court or claims a right to legal custody under the law of this State.
- (14) "Physical custody" means the physical care and supervision of a child.
- (15) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.
- (16) "Tribe" means an Indian tribe or band, or Alaskan Native village, which is recognized by federal law or formally acknowledged by a state.
- (17) "Warrant" means an order issued by a court authorizing law enforcement officers to take physical custody of a child. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-103. Proceedings governed by other law.

This Article does not govern an adoption proceeding or a proceeding pertaining to the authorization of emergency medical care for a child. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-104. Application to Indian tribes.

(a) A child-custody proceeding that pertains to an Indian child, as defined in the Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1901 et seq., is not subject to this Article to the extent that it is governed by the Indian Child Welfare Act.

(b) A court of this State shall treat a tribe as if it were a state of the United States for the purpose of applying Parts 1 and 2.

(c) A child-custody determination made by a tribe under factual circumstances in substantial conformity with the jurisdictional standards of this Article must be recognized and enforced under Part 3. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-105. International application of Article.

(a) A court of this State shall treat a foreign country as if it were a state of the United States for the purpose of applying Parts 1 and 2.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c), a child-custody determination made in a foreign country under factual circumstances in substantial conformity with the jurisdictional standards of this Article must be recognized and enforced under Part 3.

(c) A court of this State need not apply this Article if the child-custody law of a foreign country violates fundamental principles of human rights. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-106. Effect of child-custody determination.

A child-custody determination made by a court of this State that had jurisdiction under this Article binds all persons who have been served in accordance with the laws of this State or notified in accordance with G.S. 50A-108 or who have submitted to the jurisdiction of the court and who have been given an opportunity to be heard. As to those persons, the determination is conclusive as to all decided issues of law and fact except to the extent the determination is modified. (1979, c. 110, s.1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-107. Priority.

If a question of existence or exercise of jurisdiction under this Article is raised in a child-custody proceeding, the question, upon request of a party, must be given priority on the calendar and handled expeditiously. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-108. Notice to persons outside State.

(a) Notice required for the exercise of jurisdiction when a person is outside this State may be given in a manner prescribed by the law of this State for service of process or by the law of the state in which the service is made. Notice must be given in a manner reasonably calculated to give actual notice but may be by publication if other means are not effective.

(b) Proof of service may be made in the manner prescribed by the law of this State or by the law of the state in which the service is made.

(c) Notice is not required for the exercise of jurisdiction with respect to a person who submits to the jurisdiction of the court. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-109. Appearance and limited immunity.

(a) A party to a child-custody proceeding, including a modification proceeding, or a petitioner or respondent in a proceeding to enforce or register a child-custody determination, is not subject to personal jurisdiction in this State for another proceeding or purpose solely by reason of having participated, or of having been physically present for the purpose of participating, in the proceeding.

(b) A person who is subject to personal jurisdiction in this State on a basis other than physical presence is not immune from service of process in this State. A party present in this State who is subject to the jurisdiction of another state is not immune from service of process allowable under the laws of that state.

(c) The immunity granted by subsection (a) does not extend to civil litigation based on acts unrelated to the participation in a proceeding under this Article committed by an individual while present in this State. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-110. Communication between courts.

(a) A court of this State may communicate with a court in another state concerning a proceeding arising under this Article.

(b) The court may allow the parties to participate in the communication. If the parties are not able to participate in the communication, they must be given the opportunity to present facts and legal arguments before a decision on jurisdiction is made.

(c) Communication between courts on schedules, calendars, court records, and similar matters may occur without informing the parties. A record need not be made of the communication.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c), a record must be made of a communication under this section. The parties must be informed promptly of the communication and granted access to the record.

(e) For the purposes of this section, "record" means information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored in an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-111. Taking testimony in another state.

(a) In addition to other procedures available to a party, a party to a child-custody proceeding may offer testimony of witnesses who are located in another state, including testimony of the parties and the child, by deposition or other means allowable in this State for testimony taken in another state. The court on its own motion may order that the testimony of a person be taken in another state and may prescribe the manner in which and the terms upon which the testimony is taken.

(b) A court of this State may permit an individual residing in another state to be deposed or to testify by telephone, audiovisual means, or other electronic means before a designated court or at another location in that state. A court of this State shall cooperate with courts of other states in designating an appropriate location for the deposition or testimony.

(c) Documentary evidence transmitted from another state to a court of this State by technological means that do not produce an original writing may not be excluded from evidence on an objection based on the means of transmission. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-112. Cooperation between courts; preservation of records.

(a) A court of this State may request the appropriate court of another state to:

- (1) Hold an evidentiary hearing;
- (2) Order a person to produce or give evidence pursuant to procedures of that state;
- (3) Order that an evaluation be made with respect to the custody of a child involved in a pending proceeding;
- (4) Forward to the court of this State a certified copy of the transcript of the record of the hearing, the evidence otherwise presented, and any evaluation prepared in compliance with the request; and

- (5) Order a party to a child-custody proceeding or any person having physical custody of the child to appear in the proceeding with or without the child.
- (b) Upon request of a court of another state, a court of this State may hold a hearing or enter an order described in subsection (a).
- (c) Travel and other necessary and reasonable expenses incurred under subsections (a) and (b) may be assessed against the parties according to the law of this State.
- (d) A court of this State shall preserve the pleadings, orders, decrees, records of hearings, evaluations, and other pertinent records with respect to a child-custody proceeding until the child attains 18 years of age. Upon appropriate request by a court or law enforcement official of another state, the court shall forward a certified copy of those records. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

Part 2. Jurisdiction.

§ 50A-201. Initial child-custody jurisdiction.

- (a) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204, a court of this State has jurisdiction to make an initial child-custody determination only if:
 - (1) This State is the home state of the child on the date of the commencement of the proceeding, or was the home state of the child within six months before the commencement of the proceeding, and the child is absent from this State but a parent or person acting as a parent continues to live in this State;
 - (2) A court of another state does not have jurisdiction under subdivision (1), or a court of the home state of the child has declined to exercise jurisdiction on the ground that this State is the more appropriate forum under G.S. 50A-207 or G.S. 50A-208, and:
 - a. The child and the child's parents, or the child and at least one parent or a person acting as a parent, have a significant connection with this State other than mere physical presence; and
 - b. Substantial evidence is available in this State concerning the child's care, protection, training, and personal relationships;
 - (3) All courts having jurisdiction under subdivision (1) or (2) have declined to exercise jurisdiction on the ground that a court of this State is the more appropriate forum to determine the custody of the child under G.S. 50A-207 or G.S. 50A-208; or
 - (4) No court of any other state would have jurisdiction under the criteria specified in subdivision (1), (2), or (3).
- (b) Subsection (a) is the exclusive jurisdictional basis for making a child-custody determination by a court of this State.
- (c) Physical presence of, or personal jurisdiction over, a party or a child is not necessary or sufficient to make a child-custody determination. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-202. Exclusive, continuing jurisdiction.

- (a) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204, a court of this State which has made a child-custody determination consistent with G.S. 50A-201 or G.S. 50A-203 has exclusive, continuing jurisdiction over the determination until:

- (1) A court of this State determines that neither the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent do not have a significant connection with this State and that substantial evidence is no longer available in this State concerning the child's care, protection, training, and personal relationships; or
- (2) A court of this State or a court of another state determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent do not presently reside in this State.

(b) A court of this State which has made a child-custody determination and does not have exclusive, continuing jurisdiction under this section may modify that determination only if it has jurisdiction to make an initial determination under G.S. 50A-201. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-203. Jurisdiction to modify determination.

Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204, a court of this State may not modify a child-custody determination made by a court of another state unless a court of this State has jurisdiction to make an initial determination under G.S. 50A-201(a)(1) or G.S. 50A-201(a)(2) and:

- (1) The court of the other state determines it no longer has exclusive, continuing jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-202 or that a court of this State would be a more convenient forum under G.S. 50A-207; or
- (2) A court of this State or a court of the other state determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent do not presently reside in the other state. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-204. Temporary emergency jurisdiction.

(a) A court of this State has temporary emergency jurisdiction if the child is present in this State and the child has been abandoned or it is necessary in an emergency to protect the child because the child, or a sibling or parent of the child, is subjected to or threatened with mistreatment or abuse.

(b) If there is no previous child-custody determination that is entitled to be enforced under this Article and a child-custody proceeding has not been commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203, a child-custody determination made under this section remains in effect until an order is obtained from a court of a state having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203. If a child-custody proceeding has not been or is not commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203, a child-custody determination made under this section becomes a final determination if it so provides, and this State becomes the home state of the child.

(c) If there is a previous child-custody determination that is entitled to be enforced under this Article, or a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in a court of a state having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203, any order issued by a court of this State under this section must specify in the order a period that the court considers adequate to allow the person seeking an order to obtain an order from the state having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203. The order issued in this State remains in effect until an order is obtained from the other state within the period specified or the period expires.

(d) A court of this State which has been asked to make a child-custody determination under this section, upon being informed that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in, or a child-custody determination has been made by, a court of a state having jurisdiction under

G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203 shall immediately communicate with the other court. A court of this State which is exercising jurisdiction pursuant to G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203, upon being informed that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in, or a child-custody determination has been made by, a court of another state under a statute similar to this section shall immediately communicate with the court of that state to resolve the emergency, protect the safety of the parties and the child, and determine a period for the duration of the temporary order. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-205. Notice; opportunity to be heard; joinder.

(a) Before a child-custody determination is made under this Article, notice and an opportunity to be heard in accordance with the standards of G.S. 50A-108 must be given to all persons entitled to notice under the law of this State as in child-custody proceedings between residents of this State, any parent whose parental rights have not been previously terminated, and any person having physical custody of the child.

(b) This Article does not govern the enforceability of a child-custody determination made without notice or an opportunity to be heard.

(c) The obligation to join a party and the right to intervene as a party in a child-custody proceeding under this Article are governed by the law of this State as in child-custody proceedings between residents of this State. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-206. Simultaneous proceedings.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204, a court of this State may not exercise its jurisdiction under this Part if, at the time of the commencement of the proceeding, a proceeding concerning the custody of the child has been commenced in a court of another state having jurisdiction substantially in conformity with this Article, unless the proceeding has been terminated or is stayed by the court of the other state because a court of this State is a more convenient forum under G.S. 50A-207.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204, a court of this State, before hearing a child-custody proceeding, shall examine the court documents and other information supplied by the parties pursuant to G.S. 50A-209. If the court determines that a child-custody proceeding has been commenced in a court in another state having jurisdiction substantially in accordance with this Article, the court of this State shall stay its proceeding and communicate with the court of the other state. If the court of the state having jurisdiction substantially in accordance with this Article does not determine that the court of this State is a more appropriate forum, the court of this State shall dismiss the proceeding.

(c) In a proceeding to modify a child-custody determination, a court of this State shall determine whether a proceeding to enforce the determination has been commenced in another state. If a proceeding to enforce a child-custody determination has been commenced in another state, the court may:

- (1) Stay the proceeding for modification pending the entry of an order of a court of the other state enforcing, staying, denying, or dismissing the proceeding for enforcement;
- (2) Enjoin the parties from continuing with the proceeding for enforcement; or
- (3) Proceed with the modification under conditions it considers appropriate. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-207. Inconvenient forum.

(a) A court of this State which has jurisdiction under this Article to make a child-custody determination may decline to exercise its jurisdiction at any time if it determines that it is an inconvenient forum under the circumstances, and that a court of another state is a more appropriate forum. The issue of inconvenient forum may be raised upon motion of a party, the court's own motion, or request of another court.

(b) Before determining whether it is an inconvenient forum, a court of this State shall consider whether it is appropriate for a court of another state to exercise jurisdiction. For this purpose, the court shall allow the parties to submit information and shall consider all relevant factors, including:

- (1) Whether domestic violence has occurred and is likely to continue in the future and which state could best protect the parties and the child;
- (2) The length of time the child has resided outside this State;
- (3) The distance between the court in this State and the court in the state that would assume jurisdiction;
- (4) The relative financial circumstances of the parties;
- (5) Any agreement of the parties as to which state should assume jurisdiction;
- (6) The nature and location of the evidence required to resolve the pending litigation, including testimony of the child;
- (7) The ability of the court of each state to decide the issue expeditiously and the procedures necessary to present the evidence; and
- (8) The familiarity of the court of each state with the facts and issues in the pending litigation.

(c) If a court of this State determines that it is an inconvenient forum and that a court of another state is a more appropriate forum, it shall stay the proceedings upon condition that a child-custody proceeding be promptly commenced in another designated state and may impose any other condition the court considers just and proper.

(d) A court of this State may decline to exercise its jurisdiction under this Article if a child-custody determination is incidental to an action for divorce or another proceeding while still retaining jurisdiction over the divorce or other proceeding. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-208. Jurisdiction declined by reason of conduct.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-204 or by other law of this State, if a court of this State has jurisdiction under this Article because a person seeking to invoke its jurisdiction has engaged in unjustifiable conduct, the court shall decline to exercise its jurisdiction unless:

- (1) The parents and all persons acting as parents have acquiesced in the exercise of jurisdiction;
- (2) A court of the state otherwise having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203 determines that this State is a more appropriate forum under G.S. 50A-207; or
- (3) No court of any other state would have jurisdiction under the criteria specified in G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203.

(b) If a court of this State declines to exercise its jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (a), it may fashion an appropriate remedy to ensure the safety of the child and prevent a repetition of

the unjustifiable conduct, including staying the proceeding until a child-custody proceeding is commenced in a court having jurisdiction under G.S. 50A-201 through G.S. 50A-203.

(c) If a court dismisses a petition or stays a proceeding because it declines to exercise its jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (a), it shall assess against the party seeking to invoke its jurisdiction necessary and reasonable expenses including costs, communication expenses, attorneys' fees, investigative fees, expenses for witnesses, travel expenses, and child care during the course of the proceedings, unless the party from whom fees are sought establishes that the assessment would be clearly inappropriate. The court may not assess fees, costs, or expenses against this State unless authorized by law other than this Article. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-209. Information to be submitted to court.

(a) In a child-custody proceeding, each party, in its first pleading or in an attached affidavit, shall give information, if reasonably ascertainable, under oath as to the child's present address or whereabouts, the places where the child has lived during the last five years, and the names and present addresses of the persons with whom the child has lived during that period. The pleading or affidavit must state whether the party:

- (1) Has participated, as a party or witness or in any other capacity, in any other proceeding concerning the custody of or visitation with the child and, if so, the pleading or affidavit shall identify the court, the case number, and the date of the child-custody determination, if any;
- (2) Knows of any proceeding that could affect the current proceeding, including proceedings for enforcement and proceedings relating to domestic violence, protective orders, termination of parental rights, and adoptions and, if so, the pleading or affidavit shall identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding; and
- (3) Knows the names and addresses of any person not a party to the proceeding who has physical custody of the child or claims rights of legal custody or physical custody of, or visitation with, the child and, if so, the names and addresses of those persons.

(b) If the information required by subdivisions (a) is not furnished, the court, upon motion of a party or its own motion, may stay the proceeding until the information is furnished.

(c) If the declaration as to any of the items described in subdivisions (a)(1) through (3) is in the affirmative, the declarant shall give additional information under oath as required by the court. The court may examine the parties under oath as to details of the information furnished and other matters pertinent to the court's jurisdiction and the disposition of the case.

(d) Each party has a continuing duty to inform the court of any proceeding in this or any other state that could affect the current proceeding.

(e) If a party alleges in an affidavit or a pleading under oath that the health, safety, or liberty of a party or child would be jeopardized by disclosure of identifying information, the information must be sealed and may not be disclosed to the other party or the public unless the court orders the disclosure to be made after a hearing in which the court takes into consideration the health, safety, or liberty of the party or child and determines that the disclosure is in the interest of justice. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-210. Appearance of parties and child.

(a) In a child-custody proceeding in this State, the court may order a party to the proceeding who is in this State to appear before the court in person with or without the child. The court may order any person who is in this State and who has physical custody or control of the child to appear in person with the child.

(b) If a party to a child-custody proceeding whose presence is desired by the court is outside this State, the court may order that a notice given pursuant to G.S. 50A-108 include a statement directing the party to appear in person with or without the child and informing the party that failure to appear may result in a decision adverse to the party.

(c) The court may enter any orders necessary to ensure the safety of the child and of any person ordered to appear under this section.

(d) If a party to a child-custody proceeding who is outside this State is directed to appear under subsection (b) or desires to appear personally before the court with or without the child, the court may require another party to pay reasonable and necessary travel and other expenses of the party so appearing and of the child. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

Part 3. Enforcement.

§ 50A-301. Definitions.

In this Part:

- (1) "Petitioner" means a person who seeks enforcement of an order for return of a child under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or enforcement of a child-custody determination.
- (2) "Respondent" means a person against whom a proceeding has been commenced for enforcement of an order for return of a child under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or enforcement of a child-custody determination. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-302. Enforcement under Hague Convention.

Under this Part, a court of this State may enforce an order for the return of the child made under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction as if it were a child-custody determination. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-303. Duty to enforce.

(a) A court of this State shall recognize and enforce a child-custody determination of a court of another state if the latter court exercised jurisdiction in substantial conformity with this Article or the determination was made under factual circumstances meeting the jurisdictional standards of this Article, and the determination has not been modified in accordance with this Article.

(b) A court of this State may utilize any remedy available under other law of this State to enforce a child-custody determination made by a court of another state. The remedies provided in this Part are cumulative and do not affect the availability of other remedies to enforce a child-custody determination. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-304. Temporary visitation.

(a) A court of this State which does not have jurisdiction to modify a child-custody determination may issue a temporary order enforcing:

- (1) A visitation schedule made by a court of another state; or
- (2) The visitation provisions of a child-custody determination of another state that does not provide for a specific visitation schedule.

(b) If a court of this State makes an order under subdivisions (a)(2) of this section, it shall specify in the order a period that it considers adequate to allow the petitioner to obtain an order from a court having jurisdiction under the criteria specified in Part 2. The order remains in effect until an order is obtained from the other court or the period expires. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-305. Registration of child-custody determination.

(a) A child-custody determination issued by a court of another state may be registered in this State, with or without a simultaneous request for enforcement, by sending to the appropriate court in this State:

- (1) A letter or other document requesting registration;
- (2) Two copies, including one certified copy, of the determination sought to be registered, and a statement under penalty of perjury that to the best of the knowledge and belief of the person seeking registration the order has not been modified; and
- (3) Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-209, the name and address of the person seeking registration and any parent or person acting as a parent who has been awarded custody or visitation in the child-custody determination sought to be registered.

(b) On receipt of the documents required by subsection (a), the registering court shall:

- (1) Cause the determination to be filed as a foreign judgment, together with one copy of any accompanying documents and information, regardless of their form; and
- (2) Direct the petitioner to serve notice upon the persons named pursuant to subdivision (a)(3) of this section, including notice of their opportunity to contest the registration in accordance with this section.

(c) The notice required by subdivision (b)(2) must state that:

- (1) A registered determination is enforceable as of the date of the registration in the same manner as a determination issued by a court of this State;
- (2) A hearing to contest the validity of the registered determination must be requested within 20 days after service of notice; and
- (3) Failure to contest the registration will result in confirmation of the child-custody determination and preclude further contest of that determination with respect to any matter that could have been asserted.

(d) A person seeking to contest the validity of a registered order must request a hearing within 20 days after service of the notice. At that hearing, the court shall confirm the registered order unless the person contesting registration establishes that:

- (1) The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under Part 2;
- (2) The child-custody determination sought to be registered has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2; or
- (3) The person contesting registration was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of G.S. 50A-108 in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which registration is sought.

(e) If a timely request for a hearing to contest the validity of the registration is not made, the registration is confirmed as a matter of law, and the person requesting registration and all persons served must be notified of the confirmation.

(f) Confirmation of a registered order, whether by operation of law or after notice and hearing, precludes further contest of the order with respect to any matter that could have been asserted at the time of registration. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1997-81, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3; 2007-484, s. 8.)

§ 50A-306. Enforcement of registered determination.

(a) A court of this State may grant any relief normally available under the law of this State to enforce a registered child-custody determination made by a court of another state.

(b) A court of this State shall recognize and enforce, but may not modify, except in accordance with Part 2, a registered child-custody determination of a court of another state. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-307. Simultaneous proceedings.

If a proceeding for enforcement under this Part is commenced in a court of this State and the court determines that a proceeding to modify the determination is pending in a court of another state having jurisdiction to modify the determination under Part 2, the enforcing court shall immediately communicate with the modifying court. The proceeding for enforcement continues unless the enforcing court, after consultation with the modifying court, stays or dismisses the proceeding. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-308. Expedited enforcement of child-custody determination.

(a) A petition under this Part must be verified. Certified copies of all orders sought to be enforced and of any order confirming registration must be attached to the petition. A copy of a certified copy of an order may be attached instead of the original.

(b) A petition for enforcement of a child-custody determination must state:

- (1) Whether the court that issued the determination identified the jurisdictional basis it relied upon in exercising jurisdiction and, if so, what the basis was;
- (2) Whether the determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court whose decision must be enforced under this Article and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding;
- (3) Whether any proceeding has been commenced that could affect the current proceeding, including proceedings relating to domestic violence, protective orders, termination of parental rights, and adoptions and, if so, identify the court, the case number, and the nature of the proceeding;
- (4) The present physical address of a child and the respondent, if known;
- (5) Whether relief in addition to the immediate physical custody of the child and attorneys' fees is sought, including a request for assistance from law enforcement officials and, if so, the relief sought; and
- (6) If the child-custody determination has been registered and confirmed under G.S. 50A-305, the date and place of registration.

(c) Upon the filing of a petition, the court shall issue an order directing the respondent to appear in person with or without the child at a hearing and may enter any order necessary to

ensure the safety of the parties and the child. The hearing must be held on the next judicial day after service of the order unless that date is impossible. In that event, the court shall hold the hearing on the first judicial day possible. The court may extend the date of hearing at the request of the petitioner.

(d) An order issued under subsection (c) must state the time and place of the hearing and advise the respondent that at the hearing the court will order that the petitioner may take immediate physical custody of the child and the payment of fees, costs, and expenses under G.S. 50A-312, and may schedule a hearing to determine whether further relief is appropriate, unless the respondent appears and establishes that:

- (1) The child-custody determination has not been registered and confirmed under G.S. 50A-305 and that:
 - a. The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under Part 2;
 - b. The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2;
 - c. The respondent was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of G.S. 50A-108 in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which enforcement is sought;
or
- (2) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought was registered and confirmed under G.S. 50A-304, but has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-309. Service of petition and order.

Except as otherwise provided in G.S. 50A-311, the petition and order must be served, by any method authorized by the law of this State, upon respondent and any person who has physical custody of the child. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-310. Hearing and order.

(a) Unless the court issues a temporary emergency order pursuant to G.S. 50A-204 upon a finding that a petitioner is entitled to immediate physical custody of the child, the court shall order that the petitioner may take immediate physical custody of the child unless the respondent establishes that:

- (1) The child-custody determination has not been registered and confirmed under G.S. 50A-305 and that:
 - a. The issuing court did not have jurisdiction under Part 2;
 - b. The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2; or
 - c. The respondent was entitled to notice, but notice was not given in accordance with the standards of G.S. 50A-108 in the proceedings before the court that issued the order for which enforcement is sought;
or

(2) The child-custody determination for which enforcement is sought was registered and confirmed under G.S. 50A-305 but has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court of a state having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2.

(b) The court shall award the fees, costs, and expenses authorized under G.S. 50A-312 and may grant additional relief, including a request for the assistance of law enforcement officials, and set a further hearing to determine whether additional relief is appropriate.

(c) If a party called to testify refuses to answer on the ground that the testimony may be self-incriminating, the court may draw an adverse inference from the refusal.

(d) A privilege against disclosure of communications between spouses and a defense of immunity based on the relationship of husband and wife or parent and child may not be invoked in a proceeding under this Part. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-311. Warrant to take physical custody of child.

(a) Upon the filing of a petition seeking enforcement of a child-custody determination, the petitioner may file a verified application for the issuance of a warrant to take physical custody of the child if the child is immediately likely to suffer serious physical harm or be removed from this State.

(b) If the court, upon the testimony of the petitioner or other witness, finds that the child is imminently likely to suffer serious physical harm or be removed from this State, it may issue a warrant to take physical custody of the child. The petition must be heard on the next judicial day after the warrant is executed unless that date is impossible. In that event, the court shall hold the hearing on the first judicial day possible. The application for the warrant must include the statements required by G.S. 50A-308(b).

(c) A warrant to take physical custody of a child must:

(1) Recite the facts upon which a conclusion of imminent serious physical harm or removal from the jurisdiction is based;

(2) Direct law enforcement officers to take physical custody of the child immediately; and

(3) Provide for the placement of the child pending final relief.

(d) The respondent must be served with the petition, warrant, and order immediately after the child is taken into physical custody.

(e) A warrant to take physical custody of a child is enforceable throughout this State. If the court finds on the basis of the testimony of the petitioner or other witness that a less intrusive remedy is not effective, it may authorize law enforcement officers to enter private property to take physical custody of the child. If required by exigent circumstances of the case, the court may authorize law enforcement officers to make a forcible entry at any hour.

(f) The court may impose conditions upon placement of a child to ensure the appearance of the child and the child's custodian. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-312. Costs, fees, and expenses.

(a) The court shall award the prevailing party, including a state, necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by or on behalf of the party, including costs, communication expenses, attorneys' fees, investigative fees, expenses for witnesses, travel expenses, and child care during the course of the proceedings, unless the party from whom fees or expenses are sought establishes that the award would be clearly inappropriate.

(b) The court may not assess fees, costs, or expenses against a state unless authorized by law other than this Article. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-313. Recognition and enforcement.

A court of this State shall accord full faith and credit to an order issued by another state and consistent with this Article which enforces a child-custody determination by a court of another state unless the order has been vacated, stayed, or modified by a court having jurisdiction to do so under Part 2. (1979, c.110, s.1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-314. Appeals.

An appeal may be taken from a final order in a proceeding under this Part in accordance with expedited appellate procedures in other civil cases. Unless the court enters a temporary emergency order under G.S. 50A-204, the enforcing court may not stay an order enforcing a child-custody determination pending appeal. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-315. Role of prosecutor or public official.

(a) In a case arising under this Article or involving the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the prosecutor or other appropriate public official may take any lawful action, including resort to a proceeding under this Part or any other available civil proceeding to locate a child, obtain the return of a child, or enforce a child-custody determination if there is:

- (1) An existing child-custody determination;
- (2) A request to do so from a court in a pending child-custody proceeding;
- (3) A reasonable belief that a criminal statute has been violated; or
- (4) A reasonable belief that the child has been wrongfully removed or retained in violation of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

(b) A prosecutor or appropriate public official acting under this section acts on behalf of the court and may not represent any party. (1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-316. Role of law enforcement.

At the request of a prosecutor or other appropriate public official acting under G.S. 50A-315, a law enforcement officer may take any lawful action reasonably necessary to locate a child or a party and assist a prosecutor or appropriate public official with responsibilities under G.S. 50A-315. (1979, c. 110, s. 1; 1999-223, s. 3.)

§ 50A-317. Costs and expenses.

If the respondent is not the prevailing party, the court may assess against the respondent all direct expenses and costs incurred by the prosecutor or other appropriate public official and law enforcement officers under G.S. 50A-315 or G.S. 50A-316. (1999-223, s. 3.)