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## SHOWING UP TO COURT AT THE WAKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

### **Courthouse Location**

The Wake County Courthouse is at:

316 Fayetteville St.  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
Phone: (919) 792-4000

The front entrance of the courthouse is on Fayetteville Street, south of Martin and north of Davie streets. The rear entrance – also accessible to the public – is on Salisbury Street.

Note: Some cases may be scheduled for the Public Safety Center (“JAIL”) or for Wendell (“0014”). See the end of this document for special instructions about those courtrooms.



### **Where Do I Park?**

Limited meter-fed parking is located on the street. Your best bet is to park at one of the several downtown parking lots. The Moore Street Parking lot is located on Wilmington St. (one block east of the courthouse), just north of Martin Street. They accept cash and major credit cards. Bring \$10 just in case, but you probably won't need to pay that much in parking.

Another parking lot is located on Salisbury Street (near the back entrance to the courthouse) just south of Martin Street.

### **When Should I Get There?**

If your court date is a morning (AM) court date, District Court starts at 9:00 AM. You should arrive by 8:30 so that you make it through the metal detectors and get seated in your courtroom ready for calendar call.

If your court date is an afternoon (PM) court date, District Court starts at 2:00 PM. You should arrive by 1:30 so that you make it through the metal detectors and get seated in your courtroom ready for calendar call.

If your court date is an all day (NC) court date, it means you need to show up at any time that day to handle the matter. I will contact you so that we can coordinate a time for us to show up at the courthouse together.

### **What do I Wear?**

Men: Slacks, button-down shirt, no t-shirts, no logos on shirts. Comfortable “church” clothes or “business casual.” There’s no need to wear a tie or jacket unless I tell you to do so.

Women: Slacks, blouse, or skirt. Comfortable “church” clothes or “business casual”. There is no reason to wear a full suit unless I tell you to do so.

### **Where Do I Go in the Court House?**

You will go through metal detectors. If you’re in 1A (Disposition Court), the courtroom is to the left of the metal detectors as you enter through the front door of the courthouse.

If you’re in District Court (misdemeanors including DWI), you will go to the Second Floor. Take the elevators or the stairs to the right of the elevators on the main floor up to the Second Floor. (Stairs are faster.) Confirm your courtroom – sometimes they change – by looking on the walls of the Second Floor. The clerks post courtroom assignments by Defendant’s last name.

Domestic Violence cases are in 4A on the Fourth Floor.

Misdemeanor Appeals are in Superior Court in room 3D on the Third Floor.

People’s Court (where the alleged victim has sworn out a warrant against you) is in 4C on the Fourth Floor.

Felonies that have not been indicted are in 4D on the Fourth Floor.

Felonies that have been indicted are in Superior Court the Third Floor. Confirm your courtroom – sometimes they change – by looking on the walls of the Third Floor. The clerks post courtroom assignments by Defendant’s last name.

**What if I'm late for Court?**

If you're a little bit late – 15-20 minutes – don't panic. When you get to the courtroom, you'll probably make the second calendar call.

If you're very late – 45 minutes or more – or know you'll be very late or miss the court date, you must let me know so that I can pull your file and give you time to get into court that morning or afternoon.

Generally you need to make your court dates. But I can try to avoid you being Called & Failed. If you have a legitimate emergency – child is sick, car is broken, you're sick, etc. – the court will probably excuse your absence, and we will get a new court date.

If you simply miss a court date because you forgot, you will be Called & Failed and an Order for Arrest will be issued for you. You are liable to be arrested. You may end up forfeiting your bond. You need to call me immediately so that we can rectify the situation.

**What do I do in Court?**

Turn off your cell phone. There are usually two calendar calls, one right at the beginning of the court session at either 9:00 (morning session) or 2:00 (afternoon session).

If you hear your name called, call out my name "Attorney Damon Chetson" in response.

If you don't hear your name called, check to make sure you're in the right courtroom.

During these preliminary court dates, you will generally not need to do anything. You do not need to bring anything to court except for your driver's license/identification, unless I tell you otherwise.

You should not talk to anyone about your case. You should not interact with the alleged victim if you see the alleged victim in court. You should stay in the courtroom until I tell you to leave.

If this is your first appearance on this case, you may be asked by the Court to sign a Waiver of Counsel. This is a document where you waive your right to appointed counsel. Because you have hired me to represent you, the Court will not appoint counsel. Appointed counsel (or Public Defenders) are assigned to poor defendants who cannot afford to pay for an attorney.

**How Long Will I need to Set Aside for My Court Session?**

If you are not going to trial – I will warn you before the happens – generally you will be out of court by 11:00 for morning session or 4:00 for afternoon session. Sometimes the courtroom is really backed up, and you may be there for the entire morning session – 9:00 pm to 1:00 pm – or the entire afternoon session – 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

If you're going to trial, you will be there for the whole session, which sometimes will run a bit long.

If it's a misdemeanor appeal or a felony trial, the trial will take more than one session, and probably more than one day.

### **What is going on in court?**

In District Court, you're watching the processing of cases. People are being informed of their rights, some have worked out plea agreements with the District Attorney and are pleading guilty and being sentenced, others are having their cases dismissed because of the failure of the Assistant District Attorney (ADA) to bring witnesses to court against them.

A majority of cases are being "continued," which is legal jargon for "having a new court date set." Sometimes it's a State's motion, which means the state is asking the Court to give it a new court date. Sometimes it's a Defense motion.

Your case may be continued a number of times, either because the State or because we are not ready to proceed to trial.

### **Where are you, my lawyer, during all of this?**

I am at the courthouse assisting you or one of my other clients. I usually have a number of clients to handle on a given day. That requires me to go from courtroom to courtroom to check on the progress of each of those cases. I am working as quickly as I can to get you in and out of court as efficiently as possible, understanding that you have work, a life, a family to take care of.

Sometimes I will go off into a room to talk to a police officer, another lawyer, or an Assistant District Attorney about your case, or one of my other cases. Sometimes I collect "discovery" (evidence, police reports, test results) from the Assistant District Attorney about your or another one of my cases.

As quickly as I work, sometimes delays can't be avoided. Perhaps the officer, ADA, judge is not available. Perhaps there are 30 cases in front of yours.

I will be in the courtroom shortly after 2:00. Sometimes I have multiple clients in different courtrooms. I will talk to you briefly, and then go get your file - "shuck" - from the front of the courtroom. I will talk to the DA and possibly the police officer or other witnesses about your case.

Occasionally I have a trial elsewhere in the courthouse, elsewhere in another county, or am out of town. On these occasions, I will have another attorney come into the courtroom to "continue" your case. I will let you know personally if I have to do this. And, if so, your case

will not be prejudiced. Ultimately you have hired me to represent you in the matter, which is what I will do.

I do this – continue cases for other attorneys – occasionally when they can't make it to their clients' court dates.

### **Why can't we pick a new court date that is convenient for me?**

Court dates are almost always set according to the officer's next court date. That's because officers may have arrested a dozen people in the last month, and will have a single court date during which they are present as a witness for all of the defendants they arrested recently. The officer's next date is usually a month after his current date.

That said, if you know you're going to be out of town on a business trip or other scheduled event, we can ask the court to set a court date not for the officer's next date, but for his date, say, two months from now. No guarantees, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

### **What happens as the result of my attendance at Court?**

Usually you are given a new court date. You are responsible for showing up at the Court at your next court date. I will send you a reminder, by email or letter, in advance of your court date. But you should mark it on your schedule.

If you something urgent comes up – a sick loved one, a trip to the hospital, a death in the family – I can go into court and request a new court date in advance. New court dates are always at a judge's discretion, so there are no guarantees that one will be granted.

### **Where's the "JAIL" Courtroom?**

Sometimes – usually for a first appearance – you or a loved one will have a court date in the jail. This happens when you were put into custody. Perhaps you bonded out, but now need to return to the JAIL for the court date. You will go to the Public Safety Center (PSC) on Salisbury Street between Martin & Davie streets. The courtroom is behind the big desk in the lobby. Same rules apply as above in terms of how to dress and behave.

### **Where is Wendell ("0014")?**

If you were originally arrested or stopped by a police officer from Wendell, Knightdale, Rolesville, or Wake Forest, your case will probably be handled in Wendell, NC. The courtroom is at the Wendell Police Station at 5 East 4th Street, Wendell, NC 27591. You and I may coordinate a ride out to Wendell, and I will give you special instructions about when to arrive and how Wendell Court works. Wendell is usually very crowded and much slower than downtown court. Part of the reason is because attorneys who are handling downtown matters need to drive out to Wendell, which takes 20 to 25 minutes.