



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION**  
**Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings**

**Family Court**  
**(Incumbent)**

Full Name: Anne Guè Jones

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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge? My service as a Family Court Judge has been a rewarding experience for me. My parents instilled in me the importance of giving back to the community, and this work affords me the opportunity to contribute something worthwhile to my community. I believe that Family Court Judges in South Carolina consistently strive to improve the situations of families in South Carolina, and I am encouraged by our collaborative efforts to find new approaches to handling Family Court cases. I want to continue to be a part of these efforts.
2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected? Yes.
3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? No.
4. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice? Yes.
5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated? I have established procedures with my administrative assistant to avoid and discourage all forms of *ex parte* communications. I do not initiate, permit or consider *ex parte* communications except where circumstances require them for scheduling, administrative purposes or emergencies that do not deal with substantive matters or issues on the merits. I consider *ex parte* communications when authorized by Canon 3B (7) of the Code of Judicial Conduct, such as the issuance of a temporary restraining order under limited circumstances and the issuance of temporary orders related to child custody when conditions warrant. I only consider *ex parte* communications when no party will gain an advantage as a result of the communication. Additionally, when I consider an *ex parte*

communication under circumstances envisioned by Canon 3B (7), I require that all other parties be timely notified and given an opportunity to be heard in a Family Court hearing within 24 to 48 hours. If someone approaches me in public and attempts to discuss a Family Court case with me, I inform them that the Code of Judicial Conduct prohibits me from discussing a case with them outside of a hearing in Family Court. I further advise them that if they attempt to discuss a case with me, I am required to disqualify myself from hearing the matter and will immediately issue an order to that effect.

6. If you disclosed something that had the appearance of bias, but you believed it would not actually prejudice your impartiality, what deference would you give a party that requested your recusal? Would you grant such a motion? My routine practice is to disclose, on the record, at the outset of a hearing, any connection I or my family members may have to the parties or witnesses in a case which might cause a party to believe I would be biased or partial to a party. I then require the parties to discuss my disclosure with their attorneys, outside of my presence. After the parties have discussed the matter with their attorneys, I question each party, under oath, if they desire to waive any perceived conflict I may have and move forward with the hearing. If they waive the potential conflict, I place the agreement regarding their waiver of the potential conflict on the record and question each of the parties regarding the agreement. If a party in such a situation requests my recusal, regardless of my ability to be fair and impartial, I give great deference to the request for recusal. I strongly believe all litigants in Family Court should be confident that their case has been heard and ruled upon by a fair and impartial judge. I grant such a motion and use reasonable efforts to transfer the matter to another judge as soon as possible.
7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative? I immediately disclose, on the record, the information regarding the financial or social involvement of my spouse or close relative. Depending on the nature of the financial or social involvement, I may immediately disqualify myself from presiding over any hearings in the matter. Or I ask the parties to consider if, after consultation with their attorneys out of my presence, they wish to waive any potential conflict and move forward with the hearing. If they waive the potential conflict, I place the agreement regarding their waiver of the potential conflict on the record and question each of the parties regarding the agreement. If they do not waive the potential conflict, I disqualify

myself from the matter and make reasonable efforts to transfer the matter to another judge as soon as possible. However, if a party raises the issue of impropriety based upon my disclosure or moves for my disqualification, I recuse myself from hearing the matter. I strongly believe all litigants in Family Court should be confident that their case has been heard and ruled upon by a fair and impartial judge.

8. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? Members of my household and I do not and have not accepted food, meals, beverages, transportation, entertainment or other things of value from attorneys or anyone else other than ordinary social hospitality and gifts from relatives, friends and church members for special occasions in which the gift is commensurate with the occasion and the relationship. As reported in my Statement of Economic Interests, I have annually accepted lodging and complimentary registration from the South Carolina Bar Association and South Carolina Association for Justice at their annual conventions; this lodging and complimentary registration has been offered to all members of the judiciary. Members of my household and I have not accepted any other lodging from attorneys or anyone else.
9. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge? If I become aware of misconduct of a lawyer that violates the Rules of Professional Conduct, I report the lawyer to the Commission on Lawyer Conduct. If I become aware of lawyer misconduct that does not raise a question regarding the lawyer's fitness to practice or violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, I counsel with the lawyer privately about the misconduct. I have also contacted Lawyers Caring About Lawyers of the South Carolina Bar when I have had concerns about potential substance abuse by a lawyer or a lawyer suffering from mental, emotional or physical problems. If I have personal knowledge that a fellow judge has committed a violation of the Judicial Canons which raises a question as to that judge's fitness for office, I would report the fellow judge to the Commission on Judicial Conduct.
10. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe. In the past, I have sold tickets to family and friends when our children have been in organized activities that are raising funds to support the activity, such as a sports team or a church mission trip. I have never taken any such tickets to work to display and have never offered them for sale to

anyone in my office or the courthouse. I do not sell any fundraising items at work.

11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench? I have not maintained any business activities since my election to the bench. I have, since my last screening, inherited an interest in a family limited partnership known as B&T of Orangeburg, LLC. I am one of the two managers of this business. My involvement in this family business is more particularly described in my response to question #6 of the Statement of Economic Interests and question #31 of the Personal Data Questionnaire.
12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders? I generally require one of the lawyers in a case to draft the proposed Order, based upon my verbal or written instructions. The comments to the Judicial Canons allow me to ask lawyers to draft court orders so that I may promptly dispose of the Court's business. I have, in more involved cases which require very detailed findings and rulings on multiple factors and issues and in cases in which litigants are self-represented, drafted my own orders. I prepare my own court orders in routine family court matters such as child support rules to show cause through South Carolina Department of Social Services Child Support Services or the clerk of court's office, orders of protection from domestic abuse and bench warrant orders. In contested matters which I take under advisement, I send detailed, written order preparation instructions to the lawyers in the case with very specific findings and conclusions to be included in the proposed order. When I ask a lawyer to prepare a proposed order, I require that she/he send it to opposing counsel or the self-represented litigant for review before it is sent to me. I also give the lawyer preparing the proposed order a deadline for submitting the order to me.
13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? I have a duty to promptly dispose of the business of the Court and to insist that court officials and lawyers cooperate with me in achieving this disposition. In that regard, I devote specific time each week to review and sign orders and to review administrative issues in my home county or my circuit, if I am the current Chief Administrative Judge. I have established practices which my administrative assistant follows to ensure that I receive, review and sign Orders within thirty days of a hearing and to enable me to comply with other administrative deadlines. When I take matters under advisement, I make every effort to issue a ruling on that matter before the end of the

week in which I took the matter under advisement. My orders are to be signed within thirty days of a hearing being held, and I have developed graduated procedures for my administrative assistant's contact with lawyers who have not timely submitted proposed orders for signing.

14. What specific actions or steps do you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case? My duty to supervise guardian ad litem during the pendency of a case is limited to monitoring only to reduce dilatory practices, avoidable delays and unnecessary costs. However, because of the volume of cases involving guardian ad litem and our required travel to other counties, it is difficult to monitor all these cases, and it would require a party to an action to file a motion to bring such an issue to my attention. I believe my most important role in monitoring guardian ad litem comes at a merits hearing when I must ensure that a guardian ad litem has sufficiently and properly investigated the issues in a case and has not charged excessive fees.
15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? It is my opinion that "judicial activism" should come from the South Carolina Conference of Family Court Judges as a collective body. The South Carolina Conference of Family Court Judges should work in collaboration with the Chief Justice in setting and promoting public policy.
16. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities do you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system? I have volunteered as the judge for the juvenile drug court program in Orangeburg and Calhoun Counties since 2005. In late 2021, I also agreed to serve as the Judge for the Safe Babies Court in Orangeburg County. I have been active in this role since December 2022. My involvement in Safe Babies Court is detailed in my response to question #57 of the Personal Data Questionnaire. I will continue to volunteer my time to these two ancillary court programs which help rehabilitate juveniles and move abused children to permanence more efficiently. I also meet periodically with juvenile solicitors and public defenders and DSS county attorneys in my circuit to review, revise and improve the movement of their cases through the Family Court. I recently organized a meeting between the juvenile solicitor, public defenders, county Department of Juvenile Justice personnel (DJJ) and county Department of Mental Health personnel (DMH) to develop a

collaborative approach to getting juveniles into mental health treatment immediately after a juvenile hearing. We developed new forms to be used between DJJ and DMH to accomplish a quicker referral and intake system. I have also been asked to speak at various schools and community civic organizations about the Family Court system and my job as a Family Court Judge. I will continue to accept invitations to speak to community organizations and schools to further educate the public about the workings of the Family Court system.

17. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge strains personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How do you address this? Serving as a Family Court Judge can put a strain on personal relationships. I have experienced this more over the past several years as several close friends of my family have gone through divorces. In these instances, I have explained to family friends that I cannot discuss their cases or their situations with them, and I will not preside over their personal cases at all. It is impossible to completely isolate myself and my family from these situations. My personal involvement in extra-judicial activities is primarily limited to my church and prior volunteer activities at our children's schools. I do not allow family or social relationships to influence my judicial conduct or judgment. If someone who has a personal relationship with me or one of my family members appears in a Family Court action, I disqualify myself from presiding over their case and take reasonable efforts to get the case transferred to another judge as soon as possible.
18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? I own stocks which I have listed on my Confidential Financial Statement, as well as stock portfolios which are invested and managed by a financial planner. I have income from these investments, but that income in no way affects my impartiality or my appearance of impartiality.
19. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved? I would disclose the interest of the family member on the record at the outset of the hearing. I would require the parties to discuss my disclosure with their attorneys out of my presence. If, after consultation with their attorneys, one of the parties requests my disqualification, I would grant the motion and make reasonable efforts to move the case to another judge as soon as possible. If after consultation with their attorneys, the parties are willing to waive the potential conflict, I would

place the agreement as to waiver on the record and question the parties regarding the agreement. Even in a situation involving a *de minimis* financial interest, I believe the parties should be confident their case is being decided fairly and impartially, and I would recuse myself.

20. Are you a member of any organization or association that, by policy or practice, prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis. No.
21. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period? Yes.
22. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply? A judge should be patient, dignified, courteous and respectful to litigants, witnesses, lawyers, court personnel and others with whom the judge encounters in an official capacity. A judge can maintain order and decorum in the courtroom and promptly dispose of court business while still being patient and courteous. However, there are situations that arise when it becomes appropriate for a judge to express disappointment and frustration over the actions of the parties, lawyers and/or witnesses. A judge has a responsibility to maintain appropriate demeanor in public, outside of work, always.
23. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? There are circumstances in which it is appropriate to convey disappointment to certain parties and lawyers who appear in Family Court. Anger is not typically appropriate unless a party is continually defying a Court Order, or someone is continuously exhibiting contemptuous conduct in the courtroom after warnings to cease such conduct. I have exhibited disappointment and frustration with a party who repeatedly fails to meet his/her child support obligations with no reasonable excuse and with parents who continue to expose their children to abuse and/or neglect. Disappointment is appropriate in dealing with attorneys in certain situations, such as unexcused tardiness, unexcused failure to appear for scheduled hearings, unexcused failure to timely submit proposed orders and unexcused lack of preparation for Court hearings. It is not appropriate to express anger in dealing with a self-represented litigant. Disappointment and frustration can be expressed in a dignified and not an "out of control" manner.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS ARE TRUE AND COMPLETE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

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Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_

(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_