



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

**Family Court
(Incumbent)**

Full Name: Angela W. Abstance

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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge?

I am so thankful to have the opportunity to serve as a Family Court judge. I believe I am in a position to help families who are going through the most difficult times of their lives. I enjoy solving problems and protecting the best interest of children. I strive to move cases through my court in an efficient manner so people can move forward with their lives. I have a sense of purpose and enjoy making a difference for people in my community.

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?

Family Courts routinely entertain *ex parte* emergency motions, but I strive to ensure lawyers are following the rules by providing notice to the other party as required. I do not engage in *ex parte* communications concerning the substance of a case, but

my office may engage in scheduling or procedural issues such as scheduling hearings or requesting documentation such as requesting certificates of service, etc.

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?

I generally err on the side of recusal because parties are entitled to have faith in the impartiality of the judicial system, but if such a recusal would result in significant delay or hardship for a party (for example, if no other judge in the circuit could hear the case for several months), I may take action without prejudice and allow the parties to have a de novo hearing before another judge at the earliest possible opportunity.

7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

If there were any appearance of impropriety I would most likely recuse myself. I have not had this issue to date.

8. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?

I don't accept gifts outside the normal familial and long-time friend relationships in a manner commensurate with the relationship. Those relationships would be of a nature that would most likely disqualify me from hearing any cases involving these individuals at all. I would accept normal social hospitality (like someone bringing a meal when a family member is hospitalized, etc.) but would not accept large gifts like trips, expensive gifts, etc.

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?

I would review the rules of Professional Conduct concerning reporting and act accordingly. If a lawyer's misconduct raises a

substantial question as to the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer a report should be made.

10. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe.

No.

11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench?

No.

12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders?

Most often I direct one of the lawyers to prepare the order, which I may then edit if necessary. If the issues are complicated or circumstances dictate, I prepare the order myself.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

My assistant follows up on orders to make sure the lawyers have provided them in a timely manner. Since my office is in Barnwell and many of my orders are provided to me in Aiken, I have created a system in which I check off the orders signed in Aiken on an Excel spreadsheet that is accessible to my assistant in Barnwell so she can stay on top of what orders I have signed in Aiken.

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?

When reviewing the file, I check to be sure the guardian ad litem has filed the affidavit required by statute. I am familiar with most of the guardians in my circuit and their qualifications. We have implemented a standard guardian ad

litem appointment order for our circuit that includes the statutory requirements, among other things. If there are any issues with the guardian, lawyers can bring a motion to be heard on that issue at any time.

15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?

I believe the legislature should make the law and judges should apply it. If lawyers or legislative members have questions on how certain statutes operate "in the real world" or whether any statutes or rules cause any problems or difficulties in court, I respond to the inquiry with information I hope would assist them in addressing the issues.

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?

In our individual circuits, we are always looking for ways to improve the administration of justice by providing status conferences, streamlining instructions, etc. During the Covid pandemic, I developed a one-page notice of virtual hearing form with instructions on how to access the virtual courtroom. I provided this to the other family court judges, and I believe it was widely used across the state as we began to implement virtual hearings. We continue to use it in the Second Judicial Circuit. I was also privileged to serve on the Editorial Board for Jim Thompson's Second Edition of South Carolina Adoption Law and Practice. I am always responsive to requests from any legislators, committees, or lawyers who contact me with questions regarding changes to statutes etc.

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?

This has not been a significant issue for me. I do recognize that my patience may be thin after a particularly long or demanding day, and I try to exercise or have some quiet time before engaging with family and other obligations. I often have an hour-long commute that gives me a chance to wind down before I get home.

18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?
No.
19. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?
No.
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 always strive to be courteous and polite but firm. Judges are held to a high standard and we should treat people with respect at all times, in and out of the courtroom.
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?

Decisions should be made in a calm, deliberate manner. I don't think it is helpful or appropriate to express anger in the courtroom, because it gives people a reason to question the judge's partiality or fairness. If someone's behavior has caused a reaction, it's probably best to take a break and come back after the judge has had time to cool off and calmly assess the situation.

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

Angela W. Adams

Sworn to before me this 22 day of August, 2024.

Sheryl Creech
(Signature)

Sheryl Creech
(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina
My commission expires: 5-31-26