



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

**Family Court  
(Incumbent)**

**Full Name:** Alicia Allsbrook Richardson

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

When I applied to law school over thirty years ago my goal was to devote my legal career to public service and eventually become a Judge. Since taking the Family Court Bench in January, 2024, I have found this position to be much more rewarding and much more challenging than I ever imagined. I have learned so much, not just from other Judges and attorneys, but from the litigants as well. The great responsibility of this position is not lost on me. I want to continue to learn every day and to serve the families of this State to the best of my ability.

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?

Judges and attorneys should not only follow the letter of the law and Judicial Cannons, but also the spirit of the law, to avoid the appearance of impropriety. *Ex parte* communications should be avoided unless there is a clear exception to the rule. Such communications are allowed for scheduling purposes or administrative functions, including requests for emergency or expedited hearings. Other exceptions typically involve emergency situations that could affect the safety and welfare of the parties or children and where immediate action is necessary to avoid likely irreparable harm. *Ex parte* communications should be documented, and rulings should be reduced to writing. Opposing parties should be notified as soon as it is safe to do so and be given an opportunity to be heard. Any Order issued based on *ex parte* communications should be temporary until the opposing party has an opportunity to respond and request a full hearing. Orders based on *ex parte* communications should not give a party a tactical and/or procedural advantage.

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 would grant the motion and recuse myself unless the motion was clearly for an improper purpose. I believe that appearances of impropriety should be avoided. Litigants and attorneys should have faith in the judicial system and confidence that all decisions are rendered based on the law and evidence presented with all parties having an opportunity to be heard and respond. There should not even be the slightest doubt that a decision was rendered on an improper basis such as a prior relationship or some sort of bias.

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

I would recuse myself unless all parties waived any potential conflict after full disclosure in an uncontested matter. I would recuse myself in any contested matter.

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

I would follow the Judicial Canons. I would only accept gifts or social hospitality when there is a pre-existing close friendship, and the hospitality or gifts are ordinary social hospitality and have no connections to my judicial position.

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 follow the Judicial Canons. I would encourage the person to self-report and/or contact Lawyers Helping Lawyers. If this does not resolve the issue, I would report the matter as required.

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

Prior to my election as Family Court Judge, I participated in fundraising activities for my children in school and sporting events. I have also participated in fundraising for a community organization and church activities. I have not specifically requested donations for political candidates, but I have physically assisted in fundraising activities. I have not engaged in any fundraising activities since being elected Family Court Judge.

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?

If attorneys are involved, I have one of the attorneys draft the order and require the drafting attorney to provide a proposed order and an opportunity to request modifications or object to opposing counsel and/or the opposing party, if self-represented. In some matters, the Clerk of Court's office or judicial administrative assistants assist in drafting the order. If an immediate order is needed or if both parties are self-represented, then I will draft the order myself.

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

My administrative assistant and I keep a notebook of all court rosters with notes regarding cases heard, which attorney is to prepare the order, and when orders have been signed. We flag any rosters with outstanding orders and follow-up with the attorneys if the orders have not been received. If a lengthy order is anticipated that will take a significant amount of time to prepare, then I may issue an interim order to address the more urgent concerns of the parties.

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?

I follow the statutory guidelines in appointing guardians and make sure it is an appropriate matter for appointment. I do my best to appoint qualified, fair guardians who have the available time to devote to the issues in the case. I have learned that procedures for appointment vary from county to county and often there is not an accurate list of those qualified and willing to serve. I set clear guidelines in the order and attempt to minimize costs to the parties. I give the attorneys and parties an opportunity to be heard on issues related to the appointment, fees, and satisfaction with the investigation of the guardian.

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

Judges should follow the statutory law and constitution as written and follow the precedent established by case law. It is the role of the Legislative branch to change laws based on public policy, and the Judiciary should not upset the checks and balances that are the cornerstone of our government

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 am willing to participate and speak at any continuing education or training courses. I would also like to speak to students and participate in law-related education or career days. I have allowed law students, new attorneys, paralegal students, and other individuals requiring court observation hours to observe court proceedings.

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?

Balancing family life and work life is a challenge that I have dealt with throughout my legal career. My husband and I have three children, all of whom were involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities. At times, we also assisted with the medical needs of our own parents. My children are now young adults, and my schedule is not as busy as it was when they were younger. My family is very supportive of me.

As a Judge, I recognize that the unscheduled need for time-off affects many others. The Family Court Bench is very supportive of one another. Judges and Court Administration work together to help cover the terms of Judges that have unexpected family emergencies or illnesses. I believe my personal experience of balancing family and career makes me more understanding of similar pressures facing attorneys, court staff, and litigants.

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 must always appear calm, respectful, fair, and honest, both off and on the bench. A judge should treat all attorneys, litigants, and courthouse personnel with dignity and respect. A Judge should remember that behavior and actions outside of the courtroom reflect on the reputation of the judiciary.

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?

A Judge should maintain a calm demeanor. A Judge should recognize that Family Court proceedings are often emotional, should expect this, and use strategies to calm the parties and not further inflame the situation. A Judge should set an example of self-control, dignity, and professionalism. Anger is not appropriate in dealing with attorneys or pro se litigants even if the attorney or litigant is displaying anger.

However, a Judge should be firm in maintaining the dignity, decorum, and respect of the Court. Allowing disrespect and a lack of decorum in the courtroom diminishes the public's confidence in the proceedings and in the judiciary as a whole. Maintaining order and decorum is necessary to protect the safety of those involved.

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: \_\_\_\_\_