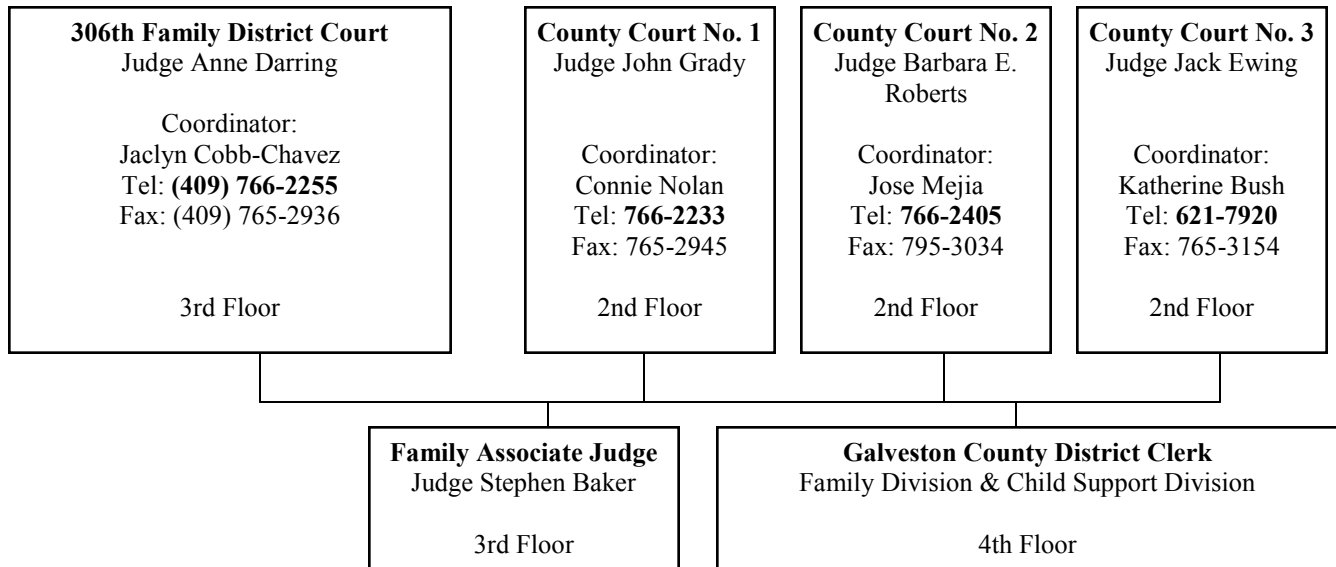


GALVESTON COUNTY FAMILY COURTS

Jurisdiction. Four courts have jurisdiction to hear family law cases in Galveston County: 50% of family cases are assigned to the 306th Family District Court (Judge Darring) and the other 50% are divided equally between the three County Courts at Law (No. 1—Judge Grady, No. 2—Judge Roberts, No. 3—Judge Ewing).



Associate Judge: All four family courts share one full-time Family Associate Judge, Stephen Baker, who has his own courtroom on the 3rd floor. Judge Baker hears virtually all hearings on temporary orders, protective orders, enforcements, discovery motions and most ancillary matters for all courts including discovery motions and temporary orders. Judge Baker hears cases Monday through Thursday and he has dockets each day at 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Typically, up to five hearings are assigned to each docket and all will be heard that morning or afternoon (often with strict time limits). Attorneys request hearings through the Court Coordinators and communicate with Judge Baker through the court to which the case is assigned. Judge Baker does not have a court reporter so attorneys must arrange for their own reporter (especially in enforcement actions). Judge Baker's rulings are usually written by him on 3-part carbonless forms although he will sign proposed orders drafted by counsel.

File Everything With the District Clerk: It is somewhat confusing, but all pleadings filed in family cases in the County Courts at Law are filed with the District Clerk, along with pleadings from the 306th Family District Court. The Family and Child Support Divisions of the District Clerk are on the fourth floor of the Galveston County Justice Center. Unlike Harris County, there are not clerks in the individual courts. However, all documents are scanned electronically and the judges access the court file on the computer, so paper files are typically not used in family courts.

Mailing Address: 600 59th Street, Room 4001, Galveston, Texas 77551

League City Annex: Pleadings can be filed with the District Clerk (including new cases), and child support print-outs and certified copies picked up at the District Clerks Office in the North County Annex just off I.H. 45 in League City at 174 Calder Road, League City 77573. Telephone: (281) 316-8727.

Electronic Filing: E-filing is available thru the Galveston County District Clerk website.

Local Rules for Family Cases: The local rules for Galveston County District and County Courts can be found under the "Galveston Co. Courts" tab on our website. www.divorcereality.com

Discovery in Family Cases. The new local rules require mandatory disclosure of financial information before a hearing or trial even without discovery requests, just as in Harris County. Certificates of Written Discovery are specifically not to be filed with the clerk (attorneys should stop wasting time on them since they are not required!)

GALVESTON COUNTY FAMILY COURTS

(Continued)

Status Conferences and Scheduling Orders. In all four courts, status conferences are set about 120 days after the filing of a new suit. In the 306th, attorneys do not attend the status conference but can instead fax the court a report about the case using a form the court prepared. In the three county courts, counsel must either submit an agreed scheduling order based on a trial date obtained over the phone from the Court Coordinator or appear in person at the court to work out a scheduling order.

Trial Settings. The 306th Family District Court gives definite trial settings and usually assigns two or three cases to each setting. Thus, a docket control order might set a case as No. 2 on April 5 and as the No. 1 on June 14. Trial settings in the County Courts are complicated by the fact that they also hear misdemeanor criminal, juvenile and civil cases. Typically, quite a few cases of different types are set for trial in a given week and a family case might well not go to trial on the assigned date because another case is required to go first. Short bench trials are set on nonjury weeks and are more likely to start when they are scheduled.

The three county courts set several cases for a two week docket and then at the pre-trial conference determine which cases will be heard on specific days.

Pretrial Conferences. Each court has different procedures, so please check the docket control order or the court's web site. Currently, no court requires counsel to exchange witness lists, exhibit lists and exhibits at the pre-trial conference in bench trials except the 306th does for cases that are to last more than two days.

Appeals from the Associate Judge. All of the four family courts require parties to mediate prior to a hearing on a de novo hearing appealing a ruling of the Associate Judge. Associate Judge Baker (but not the presiding judge) will sign a typed order based on his ruling even if a request for a de novo hearing has been filed.

Entries. Entry hearings before the Associate Judge or the presiding judge are set at definite date and time. The Associate Judge hears entries of orders on his rulings. Orders can be e-filed if everyone has signed the order. However, if someone will not sign an order or if there is a disagreement on the form of the order, the attorneys need to appear at the entry. Entry hearing before the presiding judges are on their dockets and the files should be in the court. For entries before the associate judge, an attorney who needs to contest the form of an order must call the clerk to have the file pulled for the Associate Judge because the entry will not be on his or her printed docket.

CPS Cases. The Galveston County District Attorney represents the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (formerly CPS). These cases are handled in the Family Division of the D.A.'s office (phone: 409-766-2364). All TDFPS cases are heard in the 306th Family District Court. Judge Roy Quintanilla hears CPS/Family cases on Tuesdays and Thursdays.