

Questions and Answers about Family Court



What is Family Court?

Lincoln, Pulaski and Rockcastle Circuit Family Court is the result of Kentucky's Court Improvement Project. Unlike other courts, a family court is based on the idea that all judicial proceedings involving children and families should be collected and resolved in a single court. By having one judge preside over all the legal problems facing a family, the unique family circumstances can be better understood.

While Family Court is a court of law, it is also a linkage to services in the community. Circuit Judge Debra Lambert understands that distressed families with children need much more than legal resolution of their problems. They need the assistance and support that can make families whole again and help prevent serious problems such as drug abuse, domestic violence and child abuse. By making referrals to outside agencies, and by ordering specific treatment to meet individual needs, Judge Lambert is helping families in our community.

What kinds of cases does Family Court hear?

Judge Lambert presides over divorce, child support, custody disputes, visitation, adoption, child abuse and neglect cases, domestic violence and juvenile cases such as children who are runaways, truant or beyond control, among others.

Why is Family Court better for children?

When parents are in the middle of bitter disputes, children suffer. If the process is drawn out, if the case is heard over and over again before different commissioners and judges, if decisions are arbitrary, inconsistent and

Each person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Nothing is more important than listening to people with a caring heart and a firm determination to deal fairly with everyone. -- Judge Lambert

contradictory, children are pulled in different directions and the suffering is compounded. In Family Court, Judge Lambert provides the consistency, perspective, expertise and compassion to make the hard decisions about what is best for the child in a timely and fair manner. Because cases are not drawn out for extended periods of time, children can start to adapt to their new situation and the process of healing can begin just as quickly as possible.

Judge Lambert also understands that the best way to help the child is to help the parent. Some parents need help with anger management, substance abuse, and parenting skills in order to have more consistent and frequent contact with the child. When making custody decisions, Judge Lambert orders parents to access these services and conducts frequent reviews to make sure they are receiving and responding to treatment so that increased contact with the child can occur. She is also quite capable of deciding when contact

with a parent is not in the best interest of the child, and will rule accordingly.

What has Judge Lambert accomplished thus far?

Each family court is as unique as the community it serves, and each Judge brings different strengths and priorities to the implementation of a family court as well. Judge Lambert's accomplishments include:

DIVORCE EDUCATION:

Judge Lambert has instituted a very successful child-based divorce education program which helps parents get refocused on the needs of their children.

CHILD ABUSE:

Judge Lambert understands that children must be safe. She serves on the State Board of Directors of Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky and has been trained to properly interview children who may have been abused. Debra has a special touch with children and works hard to make them feel at ease when they talk to her.

TRUANCY COURT:

Judge Lambert knows that truancy is the first sign of a child losing his or her way. She volunteers her time in middle schools helping parents and kids get back on track.

JUVENILE DRUG COURT:

Judge Lambert saw the need for a rehabilitation program for children

using drugs. "Drugs can destroy children and families," Judge Lambert says. "I am committed to doing all I can to help." She and her staff applied for and received a grant of federal monies to pay for an intensive judge-led rehab program. Dalton Miller has been hired as the coordinator of the program.

EFFICIENT HANDLING OF CASES:

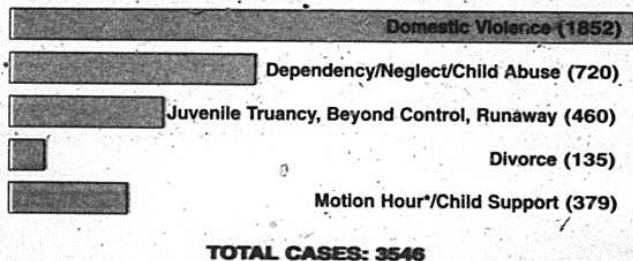
Judge Lambert knows that a family shouldn't have to wait for months or years for a decision. Most cases take less than a week.

Can concerned citizens help in this project?

Yes. Around the nation, courts have increased significantly the use of trained volunteers to improve services, minimize costs and maximize community involvement. The area of helping children and families draws considerable attention from sensitive persons. Carefully selected and properly trained volunteers provide the court with an opportunity to improve the quality of its determinations, as well as filling gaps in the delivery of its services. Stated simply, the more a community becomes involved in its problems, the more likely it is to correct them.

Your vote on Tuesday, November 7, 2000 can also contribute to this effort. Judge Lambert brings strong family values, her own positive parenting skills and a background of experiences that make her the best choice for Family Court Judge.

What kinds of hearings are heard by Judge Lambert in Family Court?



28th Judicial Circuit Family Court
Caseload October 1, 1999 through August 31, 2000

* Motion Hour includes child support, custody, and other domestic issues.