



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

**Family Court**  
**(New Candidate)**

Full Name: Deanne Marie Gray

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1. Why do you want to serve as a Family Court Judge?  
I have spent a significant portion of my legal career advocating for the families and children in South Carolina. Although I prosecuted juvenile offenders in Charleston County, it was with the clear purpose of rehabilitation and providing the juveniles with services to become productive members of our community. As a SCDSS attorney, I advocate, not only for the safety and protection of our state's children, but also work to reunify children with their parents, when possible, to strengthen the families of South Carolina.
2. Do you plan to serve your full term if 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. I am currently 47 years old and have resided in South Carolina for over five years. I was admitted to practice in South Carolina in 2000 and have been actively practicing law for approximately 14 years.
5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated? I would abide by the Judicial Cannons regarding *ex parte* communications. I believe a judge needs to guard against the appearance of impropriety. In family court where many of the litigants are self-represented, a judge needs to be vigilant about not engaging in *ex parte* communications.
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 note the possible conflict to the parties and indicate that I do not feel that the appeared conflict would prejudice my impartiality. After hearing from all parties, I would weigh not only the arguments but also if any party would be prejudiced and the effect any type of recusal would have to judicial efficiency.

7. How would you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative? I would first weigh the financial or social involvement to determine if the involvement was significant and direct or merely minor and tangential. If the involvement was significant, I would hear arguments from all parties and recuse myself from hearing the matter.
8. What standards would you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? I would not accept any gift or social invitation that, if accepted, would appear to attempting to influence the Court's decision. When in doubt about accepting items, I believe it is important to seek the guidance of the South Carolina State Ethics Commission, Court Administration, or other appropriate entities.
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 recommend to any attorney or judge who is having concerns or problems to contact the Lawyers helping Lawyers Program. I believe addressing concerns about infirmity, substance abuse and even stress should be done when the concern is small before it has the chance to grow into a larger, life and career crippling issue. As for misconduct, I would report it to the South Carolina Office of Disciplinary Counsel for further investigation.
10. 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. To my knowledge, I do not belong to any organization or association that prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin.
11. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe. I have supported my children's fund-raising activities through their schools. I have also engaged in fund-raising activities for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life events.
12. Do you have any business activities that you would envision remaining involved with if elected to the bench? No.

13. Since family court judges do not have law clerks, how would you handle the drafting of orders? If the parties are represented in an action, I would request they draft the order reflecting and pursuant to the Court's ruling. I understand that for numerous reasons there may be specific orders that I need to personally draft. In my experience, it is best to draft orders when the case is still fresh in your mind and does increase judicial efficiency when the orders are completed in a timely manner.
14. If elected, what method would you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? My office would put in place specific tracking devices to monitor old issues that still need to be resolved and also items that we are aware are coming in the future. Uniform procedures need to be in place that everyone in my office uses. In addition, I believe it is important to constantly assess the effectiveness of my policies and procedures and make adjustments as necessary.
15. If elected, what specific actions or steps would you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case? I believe it is important for all individuals, including the Court, to treat any volunteer, lay person or attorney that serves as a guardian ad litem with respect as they hold an important role in most Family Court cases. However, the Court still needs to assure the minor child's best interests are protected therefore, requiring a guardian ad litem to be competent, unbiased and fully informed about the proper performance of the guardian ad litem duties. This can be accomplished by carefully reviewing any guardian ad litem reports submitted to the Court and upon questioning of the guardian ad litem by the parties or the Court. A guardian ad litem should only be relieved upon a finding that the guardian ad litem cannot carry out his or her duties or has been proven to be biased in the specific case.
16. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? Judges should take an active role in pushing a certain agenda or their own personal opinions and beliefs. However, in our ever-changing world, there will be times when the Court is called upon to interpret the law and apply it to a new set of facts or circumstances that may not have been contemplated when the law was enacted. In these instances, I believe the Court should make a reasoned sound detailed decision concentrating how the law is being applied to make it apparent to all individuals that the ruling is based on the interpretation of the law and not the Court's own personal opinions and beliefs.
17. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities would you plan to

undertake to further this improvement of the legal system? It is important as a family court judge to have a good working relationship with the Solicitor's Office and the Department of Social Services. Meeting these individuals to develop a clear understanding of the Court's expectations and goals can assist their dockets in moving in an efficient manner. Despite having arduous schedules, I believe judges should be open to speaking at Continuing Legal Education seminars, community events and various Bench/Bar committees that strive to improve the legal experience for every citizen of South Carolina.

18. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge would strain personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How would you plan to address this? I do believe any job has inherent stress and poses a risk to strain personal relationships. I am the wife of a Marine veteran who served our country for seventeen (17) years through many deployments while I remained home working and caring for our two young children. I am now the managing attorney and only county attorney in Dorchester County representing the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS). Both these roles have placed an immense amount of pressure on me. I am open and honest with my spouse and family about the pressure, without disclosing confidential information, and have hobbies and activities that I enjoy doing to relax. I have discussed this opportunity with my husband and children and they support my decision.
19. Would you give any special considerations to a pro se litigant in family court? Although pro se litigants are held to the same rules of civil procedure and evidence, I believe the Court does need to show pro se litigants some flexibility. The Court must always keep a calm demeanor but may also need to provide a more detailed explanation of the Court's rulings.
20. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? No.
21. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved? A *de minimis* financial interest should not give an appearance of impropriety. However, I would disclose the information to the parties and entertain arguments regarding my recusal from the case.
22. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period? Yes.
23. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply? A judge's demeanor should always be beyond reproach. First and foremost, a judge must be fair and impartial.

However, it is also important for a judge to be polite, dignified, and respectful of all individuals, whether she is on the bench or out in the community.

24. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public who would appear before you, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? I do not feel it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, attorneys or pro se litigants who would appear before me. Anger is a corrosive emotion that would result in an appearance that I had personal issues with those individuals.

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 \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

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