

STANDARDS GOVERNING THE USE OF JUVENILE COURT HEARING OFFICERS

- I. Juvenile court hearing officers may be appointed if juvenile court judges are unable to give adequate time and attention to all juvenile matters coming before the court.**
- II. The juvenile court judge shall retain the primary responsibility for handling and deciding matters relating to delinquent children.**

Hearing officers supplement the essential work of the juvenile court judges; they are not a substitute for juvenile court judges.

Hearing officers should not be used to reduce substantially the time which the juvenile court judges devote to juvenile matters.

- III. The Administrative Judge of the Juvenile Court shall ensure that all qualifications for juvenile court hearing officers are met.**

To become a juvenile court hearing officer, an individual shall be a member, in good standing, of the bar of this Commonwealth; have been licensed to practice law for at least five consecutive years; and have completed six hours of instruction, approved by the Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board, which specifically addresses all of the following topics: the Juvenile Act; the Pennsylvania Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure; the penal laws of Pennsylvania; the Child Protective Services Law; evidence rules and methodology; child and adolescent development; and the collateral consequences of an adjudication of delinquency.

Prior to presiding as a juvenile court hearing officer, an individual shall submit a signed affidavit attesting that they meet all qualifications to the President Judge (or designee) of each judicial district where the individual is seeking to preside as a juvenile court hearing officer.

An active juvenile court hearing officer shall complete six hours of instruction from a course(s) designed by the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, in juvenile delinquency law, policy, or related social science research every two years.

An active juvenile court hearing officer shall submit a new affidavit every two years attesting that the continuing education requirements have been met.

- IV. Juvenile court judges shall provide oversight and guidance to juvenile court hearing officers, and are responsible for the review of all recommendations made by juvenile court hearing officers.**

Prior to the commencement of any proceeding before a juvenile court hearing officer, the parties must be informed that they have the right to have the matter heard by a juvenile court judge. If the juvenile or the Attorney for the Commonwealth objects to having the matter heard before the juvenile court hearing officer, the case must be heard before a judge.

All juvenile court hearing officer decisions are subject to the approval of a juvenile court judge. The hearing officer shall submit a summary of findings and recommendations to the judge for review and judicial action. The judge may accept or reject the hearing officer's recommendation, send the recommendation back for clarification, or schedule a rehearing within seven days.

The Administrative Judge of the Juvenile Court shall ensure that all hearing officers conducting juvenile court proceedings become familiar with and employ best practices as established and/or endorsed by the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission.

- V. Juvenile court hearing officers shall have the authority to preside over only the following matters: detention hearings, detention review hearings, and shelter-care hearings; any proceeding or hearing in which the petition alleges only misdemeanors; and uncontested dispositional review hearings and probation revocation hearings.**
- VI. Juvenile court hearing officers shall not have the authority to conduct hearings on transfer to criminal court, issue warrants, or hear requests for writs of habeas corpus.**

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