

Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program

The mission of the Office of the Parent Defender's Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program is to defend the rights of parents navigating the abuse, neglect, and dependency system in North Carolina by providing high quality, holistic representation through zealous legal advocacy in and out of court coupled with strengths-based, compassionate, and comprehensive social work services.

January 2026-March 2026 Closed and New Cases

Reporting Dates 1/1/2026-3/31/2026	1 st Quarter Closed Cases	1 st Quarter Closed Cases	1 st Quarter Closed Cases	1 st Quarter Closed Cases	1 st Quarter Closed Cases	1 st Quarter Closed Cases
County	Cleveland	Mecklenburg	Buncombe	New Hanover	Wake	Lincoln
Total Number- 23	1	1	4	3	13	1
Outcome *CC- Custody to Client *CG/C- Custody/Guard, Client Consented *CR- Client Relinquished *AW- Attorney Withdrew *TPR- Termination of Parental Rights *VC- Venue Change	1 (TPR)	1 (AW)	3(CC) 1(CG/C)	1 (CC) 1 (CR) 1 (CG/C)	Report from defenderData counted cases that had "Outcome Dates" from 2024 and 2025.	1 (AW)

Reporting Dates 1/1/2026-3/31/2026	1 st Quarter New Cases	1 st Quarter New Cases	1 st Quarter New Cases	1 st Quarter New Cases	1 st Quarter New Cases	1 st Quarter New Cases
County	Cleveland	Mecklenburg	Buncombe	New Hanover	Wake	Lincoln
Total Number- 39	2	4	18	4	2	9
Allegation Type *A/N- Abuse & Neglect *N- Neglect *N/D- Neglect & Dependency *D- Dependency	2 (N)	2 (N/D) 1 (N) 1(D)	14 (N) 3 (N/D) 1 (A/N/D)	3 (N/D) 1 (AN)	6 (N) 2 (A/N) 1 (D) 11(N/D)	6 (N) 2 (N/D) 1 (A/N)
Participating Attorneys	1 out of 6	2 out of 4	6 out of 6	2 out of 7	4 out of 5	2 out of 4

News and Updates

County Work and Community Connections:

- January 2026
 - Began working with Dr. Alisha Summers on IPRP Evaluation
 - Circle of Security Parenting Meeting and Learning Community
- February 2026
 - Wake County Courtroom Observation
 - Mecklenburg County site visit with IPRP social workers
 - One social worker left the IPR Program
 - Meeting with Dogwood Foundation regarding grant submission process
- March 2026
 - Proposal of new Consent Form Policy to Parent Defender and IDS General Counsel
 - Cleveland/Lincoln County site visit with IPRP social workers
 - Meeting with Jill Cohen (Colorado Office of Respondent Parent's Counsel)
 - Presented at UNC School of Social Work's Law Day 2026 on Child Welfare Social Work Testimony Skills

Message from an IPRP Client

My name is TN, and I wanted to take a moment to tell you about how helpful Ms. Tieshia Bell has been to my life. She is an amazing person, woman, and IPRP social worker. It has been a long journey, and throughout the entire time, she kept me motivated and encouraged me to believe in myself. She really did her job well. I'm not sure who trained her, but they did a great job! There were times when I thought she was nagging me and I'm sure she wanted to give up on me. To be honest, some of those times I wanted her to give up on me, but she didn't. She stuck by me, and I am grateful to her for that. Ms. Bell fought hard for me, and it really made a difference in the process of regaining custody of my son.

IPRP Social Worker Highlight

Lee Rochelle, New Hanover County

Yesterday was one of those days that reminds me why this work matters...

After three years in foster care, a mother was reunified with all five of her children yesterday. Her path to reunification was not easy. Over the past several years she worked tirelessly to achieve sobriety, address every requirement placed in front of her, and rebuild her life so she could be the parent her children needed. The most significant barrier she faced was being on the sex offender registry. A decision she made in her early twenties followed her for more than a decade and created enormous obstacles, especially when it came to housing. As many of you know, registry status can make stable housing nearly impossible to obtain, which in turn makes reunification extremely difficult.

When I first became involved in the case about a year and a half ago, reunification was not being treated as the primary plan. DSS was having conversations with the kids about adoption, even though

reunification was still very much the primary plan. Through persistent advocacy and a shared belief that this mother deserved a fair opportunity to reunite with her children, we continued to push forward.

One of the biggest turning points in the case was helping her navigate the process of petitioning to come off the registry. I had the opportunity to attend her removal hearing. In 2025, after completing every step required of her, she was officially removed from the registry. From there, things began to move quickly. She secured stable housing, and her children immediately began overnight visits. Soon after that the family started trial home placement. And yesterday, the Court returned full custody of all five children to her.

This mother never gave up, even when the system made the process incredibly difficult. She did everything that was asked of her and more. We cried tears of joy together as she walked out of court knowing her children were finally coming home for good. I wanted to share this story because it is a powerful reminder of the impact advocacy, persistence, and support can have in these cases. Sometimes the path to reunification is long and complicated, but when parents are willing to do the work and we continue to advocate for them, life-changing outcomes are possible.

Thank you all for the roles you play in supporting families and making outcomes like this possible.

Lee Rochelle

Interdisciplinary Representation Program

Contract Social Worker

New Hanover County, NC

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