

FAMILY CODE

TITLE 5. THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND THE SUIT AFFECTING THE
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

SUBTITLE C. JUDICIAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES

CHAPTER 201. ASSOCIATE JUDGE

SUBCHAPTER A. ASSOCIATE JUDGE

Sec. 201.001. APPOINTMENT. (a) A judge of a court having jurisdiction of a suit under this title, Title 1, Chapter 45, or Title 4 may appoint a full-time or part-time associate judge to perform the duties authorized by this chapter if the commissioners court of a county in which the court has jurisdiction authorizes the employment of an associate judge.

(b) If a court has jurisdiction in more than one county, an associate judge appointed by that court may serve only in a county in which the commissioners court has authorized the associate judge's appointment.

(c) If more than one court in a county has jurisdiction of a suit under this title, Title 1, Chapter 45, or Title 4 the commissioners court may authorize the appointment of an associate judge for each court or may authorize one or more associate judges to share service with two or more courts.

(d) If an associate judge serves more than one court, the associate judge's appointment must be made with the unanimous approval of all the judges under whom the associate judge serves.

(e) This section does not apply to an associate judge appointed under Subchapter B or C.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 197 (S.B. 812), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 201.002. QUALIFICATIONS. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), to be eligible for appointment as an associate

judge, a person must meet the requirements and qualifications to serve as a judge of the court or courts for which the associate judge is appointed.

(b) To be eligible for appointment as an associate judge under Subchapter B or C, a person must meet the requirements and qualifications established under those subchapters.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 44 (S.B. [271](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.003. COMPENSATION. (a) An associate judge shall be paid a salary determined by the commissioners court of the county in which the associate judge serves.

(b) If an associate judge serves in more than one county, the associate judge shall be paid a salary as determined by agreement of the commissioners courts of the counties in which the associate judge serves.

(c) The associate judge's salary is paid from the county fund available for payment of officers' salaries.

(d) This section does not apply to an associate judge appointed under Subchapter B or C.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.004. TERMINATION OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) An associate judge who serves a single court serves at the will of the judge of that court.

(b) The employment of an associate judge who serves more than two courts may only be terminated by a majority vote of all the judges of the courts which the associate judge serves.

(c) The employment of an associate judge who serves two courts may be terminated by either of the judges of the courts which the associate judge serves.

(d) This section does not apply to an associate judge appointed under Subchapter B or C.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.005. CASES THAT MAY BE REFERRED. (a) Except as provided by this section, a judge of a court may refer to an associate judge any aspect of a suit or action, including any matter ancillary to the suit or action, over which the court has jurisdiction under:

- (1) this title;
- (2) Title 1;
- (3) Chapter 35, 35A, or 45;
- (4) Title 4;
- (5) Subchapter A, Chapter 7B, Code of Criminal Procedure; or
- (6) Chapter 24A, Property Code.

(b) Unless a party files a written objection to the associate judge hearing a trial on the merits, the judge may refer the trial to the associate judge. A trial on the merits is any final adjudication from which an appeal may be taken to a court of appeals.

(c) A party must file an objection to an associate judge hearing a trial on the merits or presiding at a jury trial not later than the 10th day after the date the party receives notice that the associate judge will hear the trial. If an objection is filed, the referring court shall hear the trial on the merits or preside at a jury trial.

(d) The requirements of Subsections (b) and (c) shall apply whenever a judge has authority to refer the trial of a suit or action described by Subsection (a) to an associate judge, master, or other assistant judge regardless of whether the assistant judge is appointed under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 197 (S.B. 812), Sec. 2, eff.

September 1, 2015.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 861 (H.B. [3474](#)), Sec. 5.001(a), eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 201.006. ORDER OF REFERRAL. (a) In referring a case to an associate judge, the judge of the referring court shall render:

- (1) an individual order of referral; or
- (2) a general order of referral specifying the class and type of cases to be heard by the associate judge.

(b) The order of referral may limit the power or duties of an associate judge.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 201.007. POWERS OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) Except as limited by an order of referral, an associate judge may:

- (1) conduct a hearing;
- (2) hear evidence;
- (3) compel production of relevant evidence;
- (4) rule on the admissibility of evidence;
- (5) issue a summons for:
 - (A) the appearance of witnesses; and
 - (B) the appearance of a parent who has failed to appear before an agency authorized to conduct an investigation of an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child after receiving proper notice;

- (6) examine a witness;
- (7) swear a witness for a hearing;
- (8) make findings of fact on evidence;
- (9) formulate conclusions of law;
- (10) recommend an order to be rendered in a case;
- (11) regulate all proceedings in a hearing before the associate judge;

- (12) order the attachment of a witness or party who fails to obey a subpoena;

- (13) order the detention of a witness or party found guilty of contempt, pending approval by the referring court as

provided by Section 201.013;

(14) without prejudice to the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court under Section 201.015 and subject to Subsection (c), render and sign:

(A) a final order agreed to in writing as to both form and substance by all parties;

(B) a final default order;

(C) a temporary order; or

(D) a final order in a case in which a party files an unrevoked waiver made in accordance with Rule 119, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, that waives notice to the party of the final hearing or waives the party's appearance at the final hearing;

(15) take action as necessary and proper for the efficient performance of the associate judge's duties; and

(16) render and sign a final order if the parties waive the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court under Section 201.015 in writing before the start of a hearing conducted by the associate judge.

(b) An associate judge may, in the interest of justice, refer a case back to the referring court regardless of whether a timely objection to the associate judge hearing the trial on the merits or presiding at a jury trial has been made by any party.

(c) A final order described by Subsection (a)(14) becomes final after the expiration of the period described by Section 201.015(a) if a party does not request a de novo hearing in accordance with that section. An order described by Subsection (a)(14) or (16) that is rendered and signed by an associate judge constitutes an order of the referring court.

(d) An answer filed by or on behalf of a party who previously filed a waiver described in Subsection (a)(14)(D) shall revoke that waiver.

(e) An order signed before May 1, 2017, by an associate judge under Subsection (a)(16) is a final order rendered as of the date the order was signed.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 476, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 550 (H.B. [1179](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 839 (H.B. [930](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. [758](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 279 (H.B. [2927](#)), Sec. 1, eff. May 29, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 912 (S.B. [1329](#)), Sec. 1.03(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 201.008. ATTENDANCE OF BAILIFF. A bailiff may attend a hearing by an associate judge if directed by the referring court. Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 201.009. COURT REPORTER; RECORD. (a) A court reporter may be provided during a hearing held by an associate judge appointed under this chapter. A court reporter is required to be provided when the associate judge presides over a jury trial or a contested final termination hearing.

(b) A party, the associate judge, or the referring court may provide for a reporter during the hearing, if one is not otherwise provided.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (a), in the absence of a court reporter or on agreement of the parties, the record may be preserved by any means approved by the associate judge.

(d) The referring court or associate judge may tax the expense of preserving the record under Subsection (c) as costs.

(e) On a request for a de novo hearing, the referring court may consider testimony or other evidence in the record in addition to witnesses or other matters presented under Section [201.015](#).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 839 (H.B. [930](#)), Sec. 2, eff.

June 15, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 839 (H.B. 930), Sec. 3, eff.
June 15, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. 2501), Sec. 1, eff.
September 1, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 767 (S.B. 865), Sec. 24, eff.
June 19, 2009.

Sec. 201.010. WITNESS. (a) A witness appearing before an associate judge is subject to the penalties for perjury provided by law.

(b) A referring court may fine or imprison a witness who:

(1) failed to appear before an associate judge after being summoned; or

(2) improperly refused to answer questions if the refusal has been certified to the court by the associate judge.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 201.011. REPORT. (a) The associate judge's report may contain the associate judge's findings, conclusions, or recommendations and may be in the form of a proposed order. The associate judge's report must be in writing in the form directed by the referring court.

(b) After a hearing, the associate judge shall provide the parties participating in the hearing notice of the substance of the associate judge's report, including any proposed order.

(c) Notice may be given to the parties:

(1) in open court, by an oral statement or a copy of the associate judge's written report, including any proposed order;

(2) by certified mail, return receipt requested; or

(3) by facsimile transmission.

(d) There is a rebuttable presumption that notice is received on the date stated on:

(1) the signed return receipt, if notice was provided by certified mail; or

(2) the confirmation page produced by the facsimile machine, if notice was provided by facsimile transmission.

(e) After a hearing conducted by an associate judge, the associate judge shall send the associate judge's signed and dated report, including any proposed order, and all other papers relating to the case to the referring court.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 464, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.012. NOTICE OF RIGHT TO DE NOVO HEARING BEFORE REFERRING COURT. (a) Notice of the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court shall be given to all parties.

(b) The notice may be given:

(1) by oral statement in open court;

(2) by posting inside or outside the courtroom of the referring court; or

(3) as otherwise directed by the referring court.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.013. ORDER OF COURT. (a) Pending a de novo hearing before the referring court, a proposed order or judgment of the associate judge is in full force and effect and is enforceable as an order or judgment of the referring court, except for an order providing for the appointment of a receiver.

(b) Except as provided by Section [201.007\(c\)](#), if a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is not timely filed, the proposed order or judgment of the associate judge becomes the order or judgment of the referring court only on the referring court's signing the proposed order or judgment.

(c) An order by an associate judge for the temporary

detention or incarceration of a witness or party shall be presented to the referring court on the day the witness or party is detained or incarcerated. The referring court, without prejudice to the right to a de novo hearing provided by Section [201.015](#), may approve the temporary detention or incarceration or may order the release of the party or witness, with or without bond, pending a de novo hearing. If the referring court is not immediately available, the associate judge may order the release of the party or witness, with or without bond, pending a de novo hearing or may continue the person's detention or incarceration for not more than 72 hours.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 476, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 279 (H.B. [2927](#)), Sec. 2, eff. May 29, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 912 (S.B. [1329](#)), Sec. 1.03(b), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 201.014. JUDICIAL ACTION ON ASSOCIATE JUDGE'S PROPOSED ORDER OR JUDGMENT. (a) Except as otherwise provided in this subchapter, unless a party files a written request for a de novo hearing before the referring court, the referring court may:

(1) adopt, modify, or reject the associate judge's proposed order or judgment;

(2) hear further evidence; or

(3) recommit the matter to the associate judge for further proceedings.

(b) Regardless of whether a party files a written request for a de novo hearing before the referring court, a proposed order or judgment rendered by an associate judge in a suit filed by the Department of Family and Protective Services that meets the requirements of Section [263.401](#)(d) is considered a final order for purposes of Section [263.401](#).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 279 (H.B. [2927](#)), Sec. 3, eff. May 29, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 912 (S.B. [1329](#)), Sec. 1.03(c), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 201.015. DE NOVO HEARING BEFORE REFERRING COURT.

(a) A party may request a de novo hearing before the referring court by filing with the clerk of the referring court a written request not later than the third working day after the date the party receives notice of:

(1) the substance of the associate judge's report as provided by Section [201.011](#); or

(2) the rendering of the temporary order, if the request concerns a temporary order rendered by an associate judge under Section [201.007](#)(a)(14)(C).

(b) A request for a de novo hearing under this section must specify the issues that will be presented to the referring court.

(c) In the de novo hearing before the referring court, the parties may present witnesses on the issues specified in the request for hearing. The referring court may also consider the record from the hearing before the associate judge, including the charge to and verdict returned by a jury.

(d) Notice of a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court shall be given to the opposing attorney under Rule 21a, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

(e) If a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is filed by a party, any other party may file a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court not later than the third working day after the date the initial request was filed.

(f) The referring court, after notice to the parties, shall hold a de novo hearing not later than the 30th day after the date on which the initial request for a de novo hearing was filed with the

clerk of the referring court.

(g) Before the start of a hearing by an associate judge, the parties may waive the right of a de novo hearing before the referring court in writing or on the record.

(h) The denial of relief to a party after a de novo hearing under this section or a party's waiver of the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court does not affect the right of a party to file a motion for new trial, motion for judgment notwithstanding the verdict, or other post-trial motion.

(i) A party may not demand a second jury in a de novo hearing before the referring court if the associate judge's proposed order or judgment resulted from a jury trial.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1043 (H.B. [1995](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 767 (S.B. [865](#)), Sec. 25, eff. June 19, 2009.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 916 (H.B. [1366](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 589 (H.B. [4086](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 16, 2015.

Sec. 201.016. APPELLATE REVIEW. (a) A party's failure to request a de novo hearing before the referring court or a party's waiver of the right to request a de novo hearing before the referring court does not deprive the party of the right to appeal to or request other relief from a court of appeals or the supreme court.

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (c), the date an order or judgment by the referring court is signed is the controlling date for the purposes of appeal to or request for other relief from a court of appeals or the supreme court.

(c) The date an agreed order, a default order, or a final order described by Section 201.007(a)(16) is signed by an associate judge is the controlling date for the purpose of an appeal to, or a request for other relief relating to the order from, a court of appeals or the supreme court.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 476, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. 2501), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 279 (H.B. 2927), Sec. 4, eff. May 29, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 912 (S.B. 1329), Sec. 1.03(d), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 201.017. IMMUNITY. An associate judge appointed under this subchapter has the judicial immunity of a district judge. All existing immunity granted an associate judge by law, express or implied, continues in full force and effect.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 201.018. VISITING ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) If an associate judge appointed under this subchapter is temporarily unable to perform the judge's official duties because of absence or illness, injury, or other disability, a judge of a court having jurisdiction of a suit under this title, Title 1, Chapter 45, or Title 4 may appoint a visiting associate judge to perform the duties of the associate judge during the period of the associate judge's absence or disability if the commissioners court of a county in which the court has jurisdiction authorizes the employment of a visiting associate judge.

(b) To be eligible for appointment under this section, a person must have served as an associate judge for at least two years.

(c) Sections 201.001 through 201.017 apply to a visiting associate judge appointed under this section.

(d) This section does not apply to an associate judge appointed under Subchapter B.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1355, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 30, 1999.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 308, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 197 (S.B. [812](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER B. ASSOCIATE JUDGE FOR TITLE IV-D CASES

Sec. 201.101. AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE. (a) The presiding judge of each administrative judicial region, after conferring with the judges of courts in the region having jurisdiction of Title IV-D cases, shall determine which courts require the appointment of a full-time or part-time associate judge to complete each Title IV-D case within the time specified in this subchapter.

(b) If the presiding judge of an administrative judicial region determines under Subsection (a) that the courts in the region require the appointment of an associate judge, the presiding judge shall appoint an associate judge from a list of the qualified applicants who have submitted an application to the office of court administration. Before making the appointment, the presiding judge must provide the list to the judges of the courts from which cases will be referred to the associate judge. Each judge may recommend to the presiding judge the names of one or more applicants for appointment. An associate judge appointed under this subsection serves for a term of four years from the date the associate judge is appointed and qualifies for office. The appointment of an associate judge for a term does not affect the at-will employment status of the associate judge. The presiding judge may terminate an appointment at any time.

(b-1) Before reappointing an associate judge appointed under Subsection (b), the presiding judge must notify each judge of the courts from which cases will be referred to the associate judge of the presiding judge's intent to reappoint the associate judge to

another term. Each judge may submit to the presiding judge a recommendation on whether the associate judge should be reappointed.

(c) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter may be appointed to serve more than one court. Two or more judges of administrative judicial regions may jointly appoint one or more associate judges to serve the regions.

(d) Except as provided under Subsection (e), if an associate judge is appointed for a court under this subchapter, all Title IV-D cases shall be referred to the associate judge by a general order for each county issued by the judge of the court for which the associate judge is appointed, or, in the absence of that order, by a general order issued by the presiding judge who appointed the associate judge. Referral of Title IV-D cases may not be made for individual cases or case by case.

(e) If a county has entered into a contract with the Title IV-D agency under Section [231.0011](#), enforcement services may be directly provided in cases identified under the contract by county personnel as provided under Section [231.0011](#)(d), including judges and associate judges of the courts of the county.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 742 (S.B. [355](#)), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1182 (S.B. [1139](#)), Sec. 1.01, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 201.102. APPLICATION OF LAW GOVERNING ASSOCIATE JUDGES. Subchapter A applies to an associate judge appointed under this subchapter, except that, to the extent of any conflict between this subchapter and Subchapter A, this subchapter prevails.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 41, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 44 (S.B. 271), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.1021. QUALIFICATIONS. (a) To be eligible for appointment under this subchapter, a person must be a citizen of the United States, have resided in this state for the two years preceding the date of appointment, and be:

(1) eligible for assignment under Section 74.054, Government Code, because the person is named on the list of retired and former judges maintained by the presiding judge of the administrative region under Section 74.055, Government Code; or

(2) licensed to practice law in this state and have been a practicing lawyer in this state, or a judge of a court in this state who is not otherwise eligible under Subdivision (1), for the four years preceding the date of appointment.

(b) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter shall during the term of appointment reside in the administrative judicial region, or a county adjacent to the region, in which the court to which the associate judge is appointed is located. An associate judge appointed to serve in two or more administrative judicial regions may reside anywhere in the regions.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 44 (S.B. 271), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2007.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 760 (S.B. 742), Sec. 1, eff. June 19, 2009.

Sec. 201.103. DESIGNATION OF HOST COUNTY. (a) The presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions by majority vote shall determine the host county of an associate judge appointed under this subchapter.

(b) The host county shall provide an adequate courtroom and quarters, including furniture, necessary utilities, and telephone equipment and service, for the associate judge and other personnel assisting the associate judge.

(c) An associate judge is not required to reside in the host

county.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.104. POWERS OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) On the motion of a party or the associate judge, an associate judge may refer a complex case back to the judge for final disposition after the associate judge has recommended temporary support.

(b) An associate judge may render and sign any order that is not a final order on the merits of the case.

(c) An associate judge may recommend to the referring court any order after a trial on the merits.

(d) Only the referring court may hear and render an order on a motion for postjudgment relief, including a motion for a new trial or to vacate, correct, or reform a judgment.

(e) Notwithstanding Subsection (d) and subject to Section [201.1042\(g\)](#), an associate judge may hear and render an order on any matter necessary to be decided in connection with a Title IV-D service, including:

(1) a suit to modify or clarify an existing child support order;

(2) a motion to enforce a child support order or revoke a respondent's community supervision and suspension of commitment;

(3) a respondent's compliance with the conditions provided in the associate judge's report for suspension of the respondent's commitment;

(4) a motion for postjudgment relief, including a motion for a new trial or to vacate, correct, or reform a judgment, if neither party has requested a de novo hearing before the referring court;

(5) a suit affecting the parent-child relationship; and

(6) a suit for modification under Chapter [156](#).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 42, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1023, Sec. 46, eff. Sept. 1, 2001;

Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 806 (S.B. [1437](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 699 (H.B. [2048](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 201.1041. JUDICIAL ACTION ON ASSOCIATE JUDGE'S PROPOSED ORDER OR JUDGMENT. (a) If a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is not timely filed or the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court is waived, the proposed order or judgment of the associate judge, other than a proposed order or judgment providing for enforcement by contempt or the immediate incarceration of a party, shall become the order or judgment of the referring court by operation of law without ratification by the referring court.

(b) An associate judge's proposed order or judgment providing for enforcement by contempt or the immediate incarceration of a party becomes an order of the referring court only if:

(1) the referring court signs an order adopting the associate judge's proposed order or judgment; and

(2) the order or judgment meets the requirements of Section [157.166](#).

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a proposed order or judgment of the associate judge is in full force and effect and is enforceable as an order or judgment of the referring court pending a de novo hearing before the referring court.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 43, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1023, Sec. 47, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.1042. DE NOVO HEARING BEFORE REFERRING COURT. (a) Except as provided by this section, Section [201.015](#) applies to a

request for a de novo hearing before the referring court.

(b) The party requesting a de novo hearing before the referring court shall file notice with the clerk of the referring court not later than the third working day after the date the associate judge signs the proposed order or judgment.

(c) A respondent who timely files a request for a de novo hearing on an associate judge's proposed order or judgment providing for incarceration shall be brought before the referring court not later than the first working day after the date on which the respondent files the request for a de novo hearing. The referring court shall determine whether the respondent should be released on bond or whether the respondent's appearance in court at a designated time and place can be otherwise assured.

(d) If the respondent under Subsection (c) is released on bond or other security, the referring court shall condition the bond or other security on the respondent's promise to appear in court for a de novo hearing at a designated date, time, and place, and the referring court shall give the respondent notice of the hearing in open court. No other notice to the respondent is required.

(e) If the respondent under Subsection (c) is released without posting bond or security, the court shall set a de novo hearing at a designated date, time, and place and give the respondent notice of the hearing in open court. No other notice to the respondent is required.

(f) If the referring court is not satisfied that the respondent's appearance in court can be assured and the respondent remains incarcerated, a de novo hearing shall be held as soon as practicable, but not later than the fifth day after the date the respondent's request for a de novo hearing before the referring court was filed, unless the respondent or, if represented, the respondent's attorney waives the accelerated hearing.

(g) Until a de novo hearing is held under this section and the referring court has signed an order or judgment or has ruled on a timely filed motion for new trial or a motion to vacate, correct, or reform a judgment, an associate judge may not hold a hearing on the respondent's compliance with conditions in the associate

judge's proposed order or judgment for suspension of commitment or on a motion to revoke the respondent's community supervision and suspension of commitment.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 43, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1023, Sec. 48, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 10, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 916 (H.B. [1366](#)), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2013.

The following section was amended by the 89th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. [1403](#), 89th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting the following section.

Sec. 201.1045. PROCEEDINGS AND JUDICIAL ACTIONS BY REMOTE COMMUNICATION. (a) In this section, "remote communication" includes teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and any similar technology.

(b) Unless a party files a written objection and except as provided by Subsection (d), an associate judge appointed under this subchapter may conduct a proceeding or perform a judicial action authorized under Section [201.104](#) from any location in this state using remote communication.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), an associate judge appointed under this subchapter may require or authorize a party to participate in a proceeding authorized under Section [201.104](#) using a method of remote communication available to the party.

(d) A respondent is entitled to appear in person at a final hearing that may result in a finding of contempt or revocation of the respondent's community supervision under Chapter [157](#). The respondent may waive the right to appear in person at the hearing in writing or on the record. Unless the respondent waives that right, the associate judge must also appear at the hearing in person.

Added by Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 152 (S.B. [870](#)), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 201.105. COMPENSATION OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter is entitled to a salary in the amount equal to 90 percent of the annual salary paid to a district judge with comparable years of service as the associate judge as set by the General Appropriations Act in accordance with Section [659.012](#), Government Code.

(b) The associate judge's salary shall be paid from county funds available for payment of officers' salaries or from funds available from the state and federal government as provided by this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1121 (H.B. [2384](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 861 (H.B. [3474](#)), Sec. 5.002, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 201.106. CHILD SUPPORT COURT MONITOR AND OTHER PERSONNEL. (a) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region or the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions, by majority vote, may appoint other personnel, including a child support court monitor for each associate judge appointed under this subchapter, as needed to implement and administer the provisions of this subchapter.

(b) The salaries of the personnel and court monitors shall be paid from county funds available for payment of officers' salaries or from funds available from the state and federal government as provided by this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1072, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.1065. DUTIES OF CHILD SUPPORT COURT MONITOR. (a) A child support court monitor appointed under this subchapter shall

monitor child support cases in which the obligor is placed on probation for failure to comply with the requirements of a child support order.

(b) In monitoring a child support case, a court monitor shall:

(1) conduct an intake assessment of the needs of an obligor that, if addressed, would enable the obligor to comply with a child support order;

(2) refer an obligor to employment services offered by the employment assistance program under Section 302.0035, Labor Code, if appropriate;

(3) provide mediation services or referrals to services, if appropriate;

(4) schedule periodic contacts with an obligor to assess compliance with the child support order and whether additional support services are required;

(5) monitor the amount and timeliness of child support payments owed and paid by an obligor; and

(6) if appropriate, recommend that the court:

(A) discharge an obligor from or modify the terms of the obligor's community supervision; or

(B) revoke an obligor's community supervision.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1072, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.1066. SUPERVISION OF ASSOCIATE JUDGES. (a) The office of court administration shall assist the presiding judges in:

(1) monitoring the associate judges' compliance with job performance standards and federal and state laws and policies;

(2) addressing the training needs and resource requirements of the associate judges;

(3) conducting annual performance evaluations for the associate judges and other personnel appointed under this subchapter based on written personnel performance standards adopted by the presiding judges and performance information

solicited from the referring courts and other relevant persons; and

(4) receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints about particular associate judges or the associate judge program under this subchapter based on a uniform process adopted by the presiding judges.

(b) The office of court administration shall develop procedures and a written evaluation form to be used by the presiding judges in conducting the annual performance evaluations under Subsection (a)(3).

(c) Each judge of a court that refers cases to an associate judge under this subchapter may submit to the presiding judge or the office of court administration information on the associate judge's performance during the preceding year based on a uniform process adopted by the presiding judges.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 44, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Renumbered from Family Code Sec. 201.1065 by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1420, Sec. 21.001(31), eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 10, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1182 (S.B. [1139](#)), Sec. 1.02, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 201.107. STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS. (a) The office of court administration may contract with the Title IV-D agency for available state and federal funds under Title IV-D and may employ personnel needed to implement and administer this subchapter. An associate judge, a court monitor for each associate judge, and other personnel appointed under this subchapter are state employees for all purposes, including accrual of leave time, insurance benefits, retirement benefits, and travel regulations.

(b) The presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions, state agencies, and counties may contract with the Title IV-D agency for available federal funds under Title IV-D to reimburse costs and salaries associated with associate judges, court monitors, and personnel appointed under this subchapter and may also use available state funds and public or private grants.

(c) The presiding judges and the Title IV-D agency shall act

and are authorized to take any action necessary to maximize the amount of federal funds available under the Title IV-D program.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 45, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1072, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 11, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.110. TIME FOR DISPOSITION OF TITLE IV-D CASES. (a) Title IV-D cases must be completed from the time of successful service to the time of disposition within the following time:

- (1) 75 percent within six months; and
- (2) 90 percent within one year.

(b) Title IV-D cases shall be given priority over other cases.

(c) A clerk or judge may not restrict the number of Title IV-D cases that are filed or heard in the courts.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.111. TIME TO ACT ON ASSOCIATE JUDGE'S PROPOSED ORDER OR JUDGMENT THAT INCLUDES RECOMMENDED FINDING OF CONTEMPT.

(a) Not later than the 10th day after the date an associate judge's proposed order or judgment recommending a finding of contempt is signed, the referring court shall:

- (1) adopt, modify, or reject the proposed order or judgment;
- (2) hear further evidence; or
- (3) recommit the matter for further proceedings.

(b) The time limit in Subsection (a) does not apply if a party has filed a written request for a de novo hearing before the referring court.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 80, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 46, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 13, 14, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 11, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.112. LIMITATION ON LAW PRACTICE BY CERTAIN ASSOCIATE JUDGES. A full-time associate judge appointed under this subchapter may not engage in the private practice of law.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 556, Sec. 47, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 15, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.113. VISITING ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region may assign a visiting associate judge for Title IV-D cases to perform the duties of an associate judge appointed under this subchapter only if:

(1) the associate judge is temporarily unable to perform the associate judge's official duties because of absence resulting from:

- (A) illness;
- (B) injury;
- (C) disability;
- (D) personal emergency;
- (E) military service;
- (F) vacation; or
- (G) attendance at a continuing legal education program;

(2) the associate judge requests assistance due to a heavy workload or a pandemic-related emergency; or

(3) a vacancy occurs in the position of associate judge.

(b) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region may assign a visiting associate judge under Subsection (a) during the period the associate judge is unable to perform the associate judge's duties, during the period assistance is needed to manage the associate judge's workload, or until another associate judge is appointed to fill the vacancy.

(c) A person is not eligible for assignment under this section unless the person has served as a master or associate judge

under this chapter, a district judge, or a statutory county court judge for at least two years before the date of assignment.

(d) A visiting associate judge assigned under this section is subject to each provision of this chapter that applies to an associate judge serving under a regular appointment under this subchapter. A visiting associate judge assigned under this section is entitled to compensation to be determined by a majority vote of the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions through use of funds under this subchapter. A visiting associate judge is not considered to be a state employee for any purpose.

(e) Section [2252.901](#), Government Code, does not apply to the assignment of a visiting associate judge under this section.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1023, Sec. 49, eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 15, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 343 (S.B. [1147](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2005.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 760 (S.B. [742](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 19, 2009.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 861 (H.B. [3474](#)), Sec. 5.003, eff. September 1, 2023.

SUBCHAPTER C. ASSOCIATE JUDGE FOR CHILD PROTECTION CASES

Sec. 201.201. AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE. (a) The presiding judge of each administrative judicial region, after conferring with the judges of courts in the region having family law jurisdiction and a child protection caseload, shall determine which courts require the appointment of a full-time or part-time associate judge to complete cases under Subtitle E within the times specified under that subtitle.

(b) If the presiding judge of an administrative judicial region determines under Subsection (a) that the courts in the region require the appointment of an associate judge, the presiding judge shall appoint an associate judge from a list of the qualified applicants who have submitted an application to the office of court

administration. Before making the appointment, the presiding judge must provide the list to the judges of the courts from which cases will be referred to the associate judge. Each judge may recommend to the presiding judge the names of one or more applicants for appointment. An associate judge appointed under this subsection serves for a term of four years from the date the associate judge is appointed and qualifies for office. The appointment of an associate judge for a term does not affect the at-will employment status of the associate judge. The presiding judge may terminate an appointment at any time.

(b-1) Before reappointing an associate judge appointed under Subsection (b), the presiding judge must notify each judge of the courts from which cases will be referred to the associate judge of the presiding judge's intent to reappoint the associate judge to another term. Each judge may submit to the presiding judge a recommendation on whether the associate judge should be reappointed.

(c) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter may be appointed to serve more than one court. Two or more judges of administrative judicial regions may jointly appoint one or more associate judges to serve the regions.

(d) If an associate judge is appointed for a court, all child protection cases shall be referred to the associate judge by a general order for each county issued by the judge of the court for which the associate judge is appointed or, in the absence of that order, by a general order issued by the presiding judge who appointed the associate judge.

(e) This section does not limit the jurisdiction of a court to issue orders under Subtitle E.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 17, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 377 (S.B. [283](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1182 (S.B. [1139](#)), Sec. 1.03, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 201.202. APPLICATION OF LAW GOVERNING ASSOCIATE JUDGES. Except as provided by this subchapter, Subchapter A applies to an associate judge appointed under this subchapter. Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 44 (S.B. 271), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.2021. QUALIFICATIONS. (a) To be eligible for appointment under this subchapter, a person must be a citizen of the United States, have resided in this state for the two years preceding the date of appointment, and be:

(1) eligible for assignment under Section 74.054, Government Code, because the person is named on the list of retired and former judges maintained by the presiding judge of the administrative region under Section 74.055, Government Code; or

(2) licensed to practice law in this state and have been a practicing lawyer in this state, or a judge of a court in this state who is not otherwise eligible under Subdivision (1), for the four years preceding the date of appointment.

(b) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter shall during the term of appointment reside in the administrative judicial region, or a county adjacent to the region, in which the court to which the associate judge is appointed is located. An associate judge appointed to serve in two or more administrative judicial regions may reside anywhere in the regions.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 44 (S.B. 271), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2007.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 760 (S.B. 742), Sec. 3, eff. June 19, 2009.

Sec. 201.203. DESIGNATION OF HOST COUNTY. (a) Subject to the approval of the commissioners court of the proposed host county, the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions

by majority vote shall determine the host county of an associate judge appointed under this subchapter.

(b) The host county shall provide an adequate courtroom and quarters, including furniture, necessary utilities, and telephone equipment and service, for the associate judge and other personnel assisting the associate judge.

(c) An associate judge is not required to reside in the host county.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 201.204. GENERAL POWERS OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) On the motion of a party or the associate judge, an associate judge may refer a complex case back to the referring court for final disposition after recommending temporary orders for the protection of a child.

(b) An associate judge may render and sign any pretrial order.

(c) An associate judge may recommend to the referring court any order after a trial on the merits.

(d) An associate judge may hear and render an order in a suit for the adoption of a child for whom the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has been named managing conservator.

(e) An associate judge may hear and render an order in a suit referred to the associate judge by a juvenile court under Section [51.04](#), subject to the limitations placed on the associate judge's authority in the order of referral.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 18, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 912 (S.B. [1329](#)), Sec. 1.04, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 660 (S.B. [1887](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 201.2041. JUDICIAL ACTION ON ASSOCIATE JUDGE'S

PROPOSED ORDER OR JUDGMENT. (a) If a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is not timely filed or the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court is waived, the proposed order or judgment of the associate judge becomes the order or judgment of the referring court by operation of law without ratification by the referring court.

(b) Regardless of whether a de novo hearing is requested before the referring court, a proposed order or judgment rendered by an associate judge that meets the requirements of Section [263.401](#)(d) is considered a final order for purposes of Section [263.401](#).

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 19, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.2042. DE NOVO HEARING BEFORE REFERRING COURT. (a) Except as provided by this section, Section [201.015](#) applies to a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court.

(b) The party requesting a de novo hearing before the referring court shall file notice with the referring court and the clerk of the referring court.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 19, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1235 (H.B. [2501](#)), Sec. 13, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 201.205. COMPENSATION OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter is entitled to a salary in the amount equal to 90 percent of the annual salary paid to a district judge with comparable years of service as the associate judge as set by the General Appropriations Act in accordance with Section [659.012](#), Government Code.

(b) The associate judge's salary shall be paid from county funds available for payment of officers' salaries subject to the

approval of the commissioners court or from funds available from the state and federal governments as provided by this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 20, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1121 (H.B. [2384](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 861 (H.B. [3474](#)), Sec. 5.004, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 201.206. PERSONNEL. (a) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region or the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions, by majority vote, may appoint personnel as needed to implement and administer the provisions of this subchapter.

(b) The salaries of the personnel shall be paid from county funds available for payment of officers' salaries subject to the approval of the commissioners court or from funds available from the state and federal governments as provided by this subchapter. Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 21, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 201.2061. SUPERVISION OF ASSOCIATE JUDGES. (a) The office of court administration shall assist the presiding judges in:

(1) monitoring the associate judges' compliance with any applicable job performance standards, uniform practices adopted by the presiding judges, and federal and state laws and policies;

(2) addressing the training needs and resource requirements of the associate judges;

(3) conducting annual performance evaluations for the associate judges and other personnel appointed under this subchapter based on written personnel performance standards adopted by the presiding judges and performance information

solicited from the referring courts and other relevant persons; and

(4) receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints about particular associate judges or the associate judge program under this subchapter based on a uniform process adopted by the presiding judges.

(b) The office of court administration shall develop procedures and a written evaluation form to be used by the presiding judges in conducting the annual performance evaluations under Subsection (a)(3).

(c) Each judge of a court that refers cases to an associate judge under this subchapter may submit to the presiding judge or the office of court administration information on the associate judge's performance during the preceding year based on a uniform process adopted by the presiding judges.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1182 (S.B. [1139](#)), Sec. 1.04, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 201.207. STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS; PERSONNEL. (a) The office of court administration may contract for available state and federal funds from any source and may employ personnel needed to implement and administer this subchapter. An associate judge and other personnel appointed under this subsection are state employees for all purposes, including accrual of leave time, insurance benefits, retirement benefits, and travel regulations.

(b) The presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions, state agencies, and counties may contract for available federal funds from any source to reimburse costs and salaries associated with associate judges and personnel appointed under this section and may also use available state funds and public or private grants.

(c) The presiding judges and the office of court administration in cooperation with other agencies shall take action necessary to maximize the amount of federal money available to fund the use of associate judges under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 201.208. ASSIGNMENT OF JUDGES AND VISITING ASSOCIATE JUDGES. (a) This chapter does not limit the authority of a presiding judge to assign a judge eligible for assignment under Chapter 74, Government Code, to assist in processing cases in a reasonable time.

(b) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region may assign a visiting associate judge to perform the duties of an associate judge appointed under this subchapter only if:

(1) the associate judge is temporarily unable to perform the associate judge's official duties because of absence resulting from:

- (A) illness;
- (B) injury;
- (C) disability;
- (D) personal emergency;
- (E) military service;
- (F) vacation; or
- (G) attendance at a continuing legal education program;

(2) the associate judge requests assistance due to a heavy workload or a pandemic-related emergency; or

(3) a vacancy occurs in the position of associate judge.

(c) The presiding judge of an administrative judicial region may assign a visiting associate judge under Subsection (b) during the period the associate judge is unable to perform the associate judge's duties, during the period assistance is needed to manage the associate judge's workload, or until another associate judge is appointed to fill the vacancy.

(d) A person is not eligible for assignment under this section unless the person has served as a master or associate judge under this chapter, a district judge, or a statutory county court judge for at least two years before the date of assignment.

(e) A visiting associate judge assigned under this section

is subject to each provision of this chapter that applies to an associate judge serving under a regular appointment under this subchapter. A visiting associate judge assigned under this section is entitled to compensation, to be determined by a majority vote of the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions, through use of funds under this subchapter. A visiting associate judge is not considered to be a state employee for any purpose.

(f) Section [2252.901](#), Government Code, does not apply to the assignment of a visiting associate judge under this section.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1302, Sec. 12, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 23, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 343 (S.B. [1147](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2005.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 760 (S.B. [742](#)), Sec. 4, eff. June 19, 2009.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 861 (H.B. [3474](#)), Sec. 5.005, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 201.209. LIMITATION ON LAW PRACTICE BY ASSOCIATE JUDGE. An associate judge appointed under this subchapter may not engage in the private practice of law.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1258, Sec. 24, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

SUBCHAPTER D. ASSOCIATE JUDGE FOR JUVENILE MATTERS

Sec. 201.301. APPLICABILITY. This subchapter applies only to an associate judge appointed under this subchapter and does not apply to a juvenile court master appointed under Subchapter [K](#), Chapter [54](#), Government Code.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. [79](#)), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.302. APPOINTMENT. (a) A judge of a court that is

designated as a juvenile court may appoint a full-time or part-time associate judge to perform the duties authorized by this chapter if the commissioners court of a county in which the court has jurisdiction has authorized creation of an associate judge position.

(b) If a court has jurisdiction in more than one county, an associate judge appointed by that court may serve only in a county in which the commissioners court has authorized the appointment.

(c) If more than one court in a county has been designated as a juvenile court, the commissioners court may authorize the appointment of an associate judge for each court or may authorize one or more associate judges to share service with two or more courts.

(d) If an associate judge serves more than one court, the associate judge's appointment must be made as established by local rule, but in no event by less than a vote of two-thirds of the judges under whom the associate judge serves.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.303. QUALIFICATIONS. To qualify for appointment as an associate judge under this subchapter, a person must:

(1) be a resident of this state and one of the counties the person will serve;

(2) have been licensed to practice law in this state for at least four years;

(3) not have been removed from office by impeachment, by the supreme court, by the governor on address to the legislature, by a tribunal reviewing a recommendation of the State Commission on Judicial Conduct, or by the legislature's abolition of the judge's court; and

(4) not have resigned from office after having received notice that formal proceedings by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct had been instituted as provided in Section 33.022, Government Code, and before final disposition of the proceedings.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.304. COMPENSATION. (a) An associate judge shall be paid a salary determined by the commissioners court of the county in which the associate judge serves.

(b) If an associate judge serves in more than one county, the associate judge shall be paid a salary as determined by agreement of the commissioners courts of the counties in which the associate judge serves.

(c) The associate judge's salary is paid from the county fund available for payment of officers' salaries.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.305. TERMINATION. (a) An associate judge who serves a single court serves at the will of the judge of that court.

(b) The employment of an associate judge who serves more than two courts may only be terminated by a majority vote of all the judges of the courts which the associate judge serves.

(c) The employment of an associate judge who serves two courts may be terminated by either of the judges of the courts which the associate judge serves.

(d) To terminate an associate judge's employment, the appropriate judges must sign a written order of termination. The order must state:

(1) the associate judge's name and state bar identification number;

(2) each court ordering termination; and

(3) the date the associate judge's employment ends.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.306. CASES THAT MAY BE REFERRED. (a) Except as provided by this section, a judge of a juvenile court may refer to an associate judge any aspect of a juvenile matter brought:

(1) under this title or Title 3; or

(2) in connection with Rule 308a, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

(b) Unless a party files a written objection to the associate judge hearing a trial on the merits, the judge may refer the trial to the associate judge. A trial on the merits is any final adjudication from which an appeal may be taken to a court of appeals.

(c) A party must file an objection to an associate judge hearing a trial on the merits or presiding at a jury trial not later than the 10th day after the date the party receives notice that the associate judge will hear the trial. If an objection is filed, the referring court shall hear the trial on the merits or preside at a jury trial.

(d) The requirements of Subsections (b) and (c) apply when a judge has authority to refer the trial of a suit under this title, Title 1, or Title 4 to an associate judge, master, or other assistant judge regardless of whether the assistant judge is appointed under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.307. METHODS OF REFERRAL. (a) A case may be referred to an associate judge by an order of referral in a specific case or by an omnibus order.

(b) The order of referral may limit the power or duties of an associate judge.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.308. POWERS OF ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) Except as limited by an order of referral, an associate judge may:

- (1) conduct a hearing;
- (2) hear evidence;
- (3) compel production of relevant evidence;
- (4) rule on the admissibility of evidence;
- (5) issue a summons for:

(A) the appearance of witnesses; and

(B) the appearance of a parent who has failed to appear before an agency authorized to conduct an investigation of

an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child after receiving proper notice;

- (6) examine a witness;
- (7) swear a witness for a hearing;
- (8) make findings of fact on evidence;
- (9) formulate conclusions of law;
- (10) recommend an order to be rendered in a case;
- (11) regulate proceedings in a hearing;
- (12) order the attachment of a witness or party who fails to obey a subpoena;
- (13) order the detention of a witness or party found guilty of contempt, pending approval by the referring court; and
- (14) take action as necessary and proper for the efficient performance of the associate judge's duties.

(b) An associate judge may, in the interest of justice, refer a case back to the referring court regardless of whether a timely objection to the associate judge hearing the trial on the merits or presiding at a jury trial has been made by any party.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.309. REFEREES. (a) An associate judge appointed under this subchapter may serve as a referee as provided by Sections 51.04(g) and 54.10.

(b) A referee appointed under Section 51.04(g) may be appointed to serve as an associate judge under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.310. ATTENDANCE OF BAILIFF. A bailiff may attend a hearing by an associate judge if directed by the referring court.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.311. WITNESS. (a) A witness appearing before an associate judge is subject to the penalties for perjury provided by law.

(b) A referring court may fine or imprison a witness who:

(1) failed to appear before an associate judge after being summoned; or

(2) improperly refused to answer questions if the refusal has been certified to the court by the associate judge.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.312. COURT REPORTER; RECORD. (a) A court reporter may be provided during a hearing held by an associate judge appointed under this subchapter. A court reporter is required to be provided when the associate judge presides over a jury trial or a contested final termination hearing.

(b) A party, the associate judge, or the referring court may provide for a reporter during the hearing if one is not otherwise provided.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (a), in the absence of a court reporter or on agreement of the parties, the record may be preserved by any means approved by the associate judge.

(d) The referring court or associate judge may assess the expense of preserving the record as costs.

(e) On a request for a de novo hearing, the referring court may consider testimony or other evidence in the record, if the record is taken by a court reporter, in addition to witnesses or other matters presented under Section 201.317.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.313. REPORT. (a) The associate judge's report may contain the associate judge's findings, conclusions, or recommendations and may be in the form of a proposed order. The associate judge's report must be in writing and in the form directed by the referring court.

(b) After a hearing, the associate judge shall provide the parties participating in the hearing notice of the substance of the associate judge's report, including any proposed order.

(c) Notice may be given to the parties:

(1) in open court, by an oral statement or by providing a copy of the associate judge's written report, including any proposed order;

(2) by certified mail, return receipt requested; or

(3) by facsimile.

(d) A rebuttable presumption exists that notice is received on the date stated on:

(1) the signed return receipt, if notice was provided by certified mail; or

(2) the confirmation page produced by the facsimile machine, if notice was provided by facsimile.

(e) After a hearing conducted by an associate judge, the associate judge shall send the associate judge's signed and dated report, including any proposed order, and all other papers relating to the case to the referring court.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.314. NOTICE OF RIGHT TO DE NOVO HEARING; WAIVER.

(a) An associate judge shall give all parties notice of the right to a de novo hearing to the judge of the referring court.

(b) The notice may be given:

(1) by oral statement in open court;

(2) by posting inside or outside the courtroom of the referring court; or

(3) as otherwise directed by the referring court.

(c) Before the start of a hearing by an associate judge, a party may waive the right of a de novo hearing before the referring court in writing or on the record.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.315. ORDER OF COURT. (a) Pending a de novo hearing before the referring court, a proposed order or judgment of the associate judge is in full force and effect and is enforceable as an order or judgment of the referring court, except for an order providing for the appointment of a receiver.

(b) If a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is not timely filed or the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court is waived, the proposed order or judgment of the associate judge becomes the order or judgment of the referring court only on the referring court's signing the proposed order or judgment.

(c) An order by an associate judge for the temporary detention or incarceration of a witness or party shall be presented to the referring court on the day the witness or party is detained or incarcerated. The referring court, without prejudice to the right to a de novo hearing provided by Section 201.317, may approve the temporary detention or incarceration or may order the release of the party or witness, with or without bond, pending a de novo hearing. If the referring court is not immediately available, the associate judge may order the release of the party or witness, with or without bond, pending a de novo hearing or may continue the person's detention or incarceration for not more than 72 hours.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.316. JUDICIAL ACTION ON ASSOCIATE JUDGE'S PROPOSED ORDER OR JUDGMENT. Unless a party files a written request for a de novo hearing before the referring court, the referring court may:

(1) adopt, modify, or reject the associate judge's proposed order or judgment;

(2) hear additional evidence; or

(3) recommit the matter to the associate judge for further proceedings.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.317. DE NOVO HEARING. (a) A party may request a de novo hearing before the referring court by filing with the clerk of the referring court a written request not later than the third working day after the date the party receives notice of the substance of the associate judge's report as provided by Section 201.313.

(b) A request for a de novo hearing under this section must specify the issues that will be presented to the referring court. The de novo hearing is limited to the specified issues.

(c) Notice of a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court shall be given to the opposing attorney in the manner provided by Rule 21a, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

(d) If a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court is filed by a party, any other party may file a request for a de novo hearing before the referring court not later than the third working day after the date the initial request was filed.

(e) The referring court, after notice to the parties, shall hold a de novo hearing not later than the 30th day after the date the initial request for a de novo hearing was filed with the clerk of the referring court.

(f) In the de novo hearing before the referring court, the parties may present witnesses on the issues specified in the request for hearing. The referring court may also consider the record from the hearing before the associate judge, including the charge to and verdict returned by a jury, if the record was taken by a court reporter.

(g) The denial of relief to a party after a de novo hearing under this section or a party's waiver of the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court does not affect the right of a party to file a motion for new trial, a motion for judgment notwithstanding the verdict, or other posttrial motions.

(h) A party may not demand a second jury in a de novo hearing before the referring court if the associate judge's proposed order or judgment resulted from a jury trial.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 916 (H.B. 1366), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 201.318. APPELLATE REVIEW. (a) A party's failure to request a de novo hearing before the referring court or a party's waiver of the right to request a de novo hearing before the

referring court does not deprive the party of the right to appeal to or request other relief from a court of appeals or the supreme court.

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (c), the date an order or judgment by the referring court is signed is the controlling date for the purposes of appeal to or request for other relief from a court of appeals or the supreme court.

(c) The date an agreed order or a default order is signed by an associate judge is the controlling date for the purpose of an appeal to, or a request for other relief relating to the order from, a court of appeals or the supreme court.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.319. JUDICIAL IMMUNITY. An associate judge appointed under this subchapter has the judicial immunity of a district judge.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.

Sec. 201.320. VISITING ASSOCIATE JUDGE. (a) If an associate judge appointed under this subchapter is temporarily unable to perform the judge's official duties because of absence or illness, injury, or other disability, a judge of a court having jurisdiction of a suit under this title or Title 1 or 4 may appoint a visiting associate judge to perform the duties of the associate judge during the period of the associate judge's absence or disability if the commissioners court of a county in which the court has jurisdiction authorizes the employment of a visiting associate judge.

(b) To be eligible for appointment under this section, a person must have served as an associate judge for at least two years.

(c) Sections 201.001 through 201.017 apply to a visiting associate judge appointed under this section.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., 1st C.S., Ch. 3 (H.B. 79), Sec. 6.03, eff. January 1, 2012.