

Article 58.

Procedures Relating to Guilty Pleas in Superior Court.

**§ 15A-1021. Plea conference; improper pressure prohibited; submission of arrangement to judge; restitution and reparation as part of plea arrangement agreement, etc.**

(a) In superior court, the prosecution and the defense may discuss the possibility that, upon the defendant's entry of a plea of guilty or no contest to one or more offenses, the prosecutor will not charge, will dismiss, or will move for the dismissal of other charges, or will recommend or not oppose a particular sentence. If the defendant is represented by counsel in the discussions the defendant need not be present. The trial judge may participate in the discussions.

(b) No person representing the State or any of its political subdivisions may bring improper pressure upon a defendant to induce a plea of guilty or no contest.

(c) If the parties have reached a proposed plea arrangement in which the prosecutor has agreed to recommend a particular sentence, they may, with the permission of the trial judge, advise the judge of the terms of the arrangement and the reasons therefor in advance of the time for tender of the plea. The proposed plea arrangement may include a provision for the defendant to make restitution or reparation to an aggrieved party or parties for the damage or loss caused by the offense or offenses committed by the defendant. The judge may indicate to the parties whether he will concur in the proposed disposition. The judge may withdraw his concurrence if he learns of information not consistent with the representations made to him.

(d) When restitution or reparation by the defendant is a part of the plea arrangement agreement, if the judge concurs in the proposed disposition he may order that restitution or reparation be made as a condition of special probation pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 15A-1351, or probation pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 15A-1343(d). If an active sentence is imposed the court may recommend that the defendant make restitution or reparation out of any earnings gained by the defendant if he is granted work release privileges under the provisions of G.S. 148-33.1, or that restitution or reparation be imposed as a condition of parole in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 148-57.1. The order or recommendation providing for restitution or reparation shall be in accordance with the applicable provisions of G.S. 15A-1343(d) and Article 81C of this Chapter.

If the offense is one in which there is evidence of physical, mental or sexual abuse of a minor, the court should encourage the minor and the minor's parents or custodians to participate in rehabilitative treatment and the plea agreement may include a provision that the defendant will be ordered to pay for such treatment.

When restitution or reparation is recommended as part of a plea arrangement that results in an active sentence, the sentencing court shall enter as a part of the commitment that restitution or reparation is recommended as part of the plea arrangement. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall prepare and distribute forms which provide for ample space to make restitution or reparation recommendations incident to commitments. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 117; c. 166, s. 27; 1977, c. 614, ss. 3, 4; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1147, s. 1; 1979, c. 760, s. 3; 1985, c. 474, s. 2; 1987, c. 598, s. 3; 1997-80, s. 2; 1998-212, s. 19.4(e).)

**§ 15A-1022. Advising defendant of consequences of guilty plea; informed choice; factual basis for plea; admission of guilt not required.**

(a) Except in the case of corporations or in misdemeanor cases in which there is a waiver of appearance under G.S. 15A-1011(a)(3), a superior court judge may not accept a plea of guilty or no contest from the defendant without first addressing him personally and:

- (1) Informing him that he has a right to remain silent and that any statement he makes may be used against him;
- (2) Determining that he understands the nature of the charge;
- (3) Informing him that he has a right to plead not guilty;
- (4) Informing him that by his plea he waives his right to trial by jury and his right to be confronted by the witnesses against him;
- (5) Determining that the defendant, if represented by counsel, is satisfied with his representation;
- (6) Informing him of the maximum possible sentence on the charge for the class of offense for which the defendant is being sentenced, including that possible from consecutive sentences, and of the mandatory minimum sentence, if any, on the charge; and
- (7) Informing him that if he is not a citizen of the United States of America, a plea of guilty or no contest may result in deportation, the exclusion from admission to this country, or the denial of naturalization under federal law.

(b) By inquiring of the prosecutor and defense counsel and the defendant personally, the judge must determine whether there were any prior plea discussions, whether the parties have entered into any arrangement with respect to the plea and the terms thereof, and whether any improper pressure was exerted in violation of G.S. 15A-1021(b). The judge may not accept a plea of guilty or no contest from a defendant without first determining that the plea is a product of informed choice.

(c) The judge may not accept a plea of guilty or no contest without first determining that there is a factual basis for the plea. This determination may be based upon information including but not limited to:

- (1) A statement of the facts by the prosecutor.
- (2) A written statement of the defendant.
- (3) An examination of the presentence report.
- (4) Sworn testimony, which may include reliable hearsay.
- (5) A statement of facts by the defense counsel.

(d) The judge may accept the defendant's plea of no contest even though the defendant does not admit that he is in fact guilty if the judge is nevertheless satisfied that there is a factual basis for the plea. The judge must advise the defendant that if he pleads no contest he will be treated as guilty whether or not he admits guilt. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 27; 1989, c. 280; 1993, c. 538, s. 10; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(b).)

**§ 15A-1022.1. Procedure in accepting admissions of the existence of aggravating factors in felonies.**

(a) Before accepting a plea of guilty or no contest to a felony, the court shall determine whether the State intends to seek a sentence in the aggravated range. If the State does intend to seek an aggravated sentence, the court shall determine which factors the State seeks to establish. The court shall determine whether the State seeks a finding that a prior record level point should be found under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7). The court shall also determine whether the State has provided the notice to the defendant required by G.S. 15A-1340.16(a6) or whether the defendant has waived his or her right to such notice.

(b) In all cases in which a defendant admits to the existence of an aggravating factor or to a finding that a prior record level point should be found under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7), the court

shall comply with the provisions of G.S. 15A-1022(a). In addition, the court shall address the defendant personally and advise the defendant that:

- (1) He or she is entitled to have a jury determine the existence of any aggravating factors or points under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7); and
- (2) He or she has the right to prove the existence of any mitigating factors at a sentencing hearing before the sentencing judge.

(c) Before accepting an admission to the existence of an aggravating factor or a prior record level point under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7), the court shall determine that there is a factual basis for the admission, and that the admission is the result of an informed choice by the defendant. The court may base its determination on the factors specified in G.S. 15A-1022(c), as well as any other appropriate information.

(d) A defendant may admit to the existence of an aggravating factor or to the existence of a prior record level point under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7) before or after the trial of the underlying felony.

(e) The procedures specified in this Article for the handling of pleas of guilty are applicable to the handling of admissions to aggravating factors and prior record points under G.S. 15A-1340.14(b)(7), unless the context clearly indicates that they are inappropriate. (2005-145, s. 4.)

**§ 15A-1023. Action by judge in plea arrangements relating to sentence; no approval required when arrangement does not relate to sentence.**

(a) If the parties have agreed upon a plea arrangement pursuant to G.S. 15A-1021 in which the prosecutor has agreed to recommend a particular sentence, they must disclose the substance of their agreement to the judge at the time the defendant is called upon to plead.

(b) Before accepting a plea pursuant to a plea arrangement in which the prosecutor has agreed to recommend a particular sentence, the judge must advise the parties whether he approves the arrangement and will dispose of the case accordingly. If the judge rejects the arrangement, he must so inform the parties, refuse to accept the defendant's plea of guilty or no contest, and advise the defendant personally that neither the State nor the defendant is bound by the rejected arrangement. The judge must advise the parties of the reasons he rejected the arrangement and afford them an opportunity to modify the arrangement accordingly. Upon rejection of the plea arrangement by the judge the defendant is entitled to a continuance until the next session of court. A decision by the judge disapproving a plea arrangement is not subject to appeal. If a judge rejects a plea arrangement disclosed, in open court, pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, then the judge shall order that the rejection be noted on the plea transcript and shall order that the plea transcript with the notation of the rejection be made a part of the record.

(c) If the parties have entered a plea arrangement relating to the disposition of charges in which the prosecutor has not agreed to make any recommendations concerning sentence, the substance of the arrangement must be disclosed to the judge at the time the defendant is called upon to plead. The judge must accept the plea if he determines that the plea is the product of the informed choice of the defendant and that there is a factual basis for the plea. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 27; 1977, c. 186; 2009-179, s. 1.)

**§ 15A-1024. Withdrawal of guilty plea when sentence not in accord with plea arrangement.**

If at the time of sentencing, the judge for any reason determines to impose a sentence other than provided for in a plea arrangement between the parties, the judge must inform the defendant of that

fact and inform the defendant that he may withdraw his plea. Upon withdrawal, the defendant is entitled to a continuance until the next session of court. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1.)

**§ 15A-1025. Plea discussion and arrangement inadmissible.**

The fact that the defendant or his counsel and the prosecutor engaged in plea discussions or made a plea arrangement may not be received in evidence against or in favor of the defendant in any criminal or civil action or administrative proceedings. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 27.)

**§ 15A-1026. Record of proceedings.**

A verbatim record of the proceedings at which the defendant enters a plea of guilty or no contest and of any preliminary consideration of a plea arrangement by the judge pursuant to G.S. 15A-1021(c) must be made and preserved. This record must include the judge's advice to the defendant, and his inquiries of the defendant, defense counsel, and the prosecutor, and any responses. If the plea arrangement has been reduced to writing, it must be made a part of the record; otherwise the judge must require that the terms of the arrangement be stated for the record and that the assent of the defendant, his counsel, and the prosecutor be recorded. If the judge rejects the plea arrangement under G.S. 15A-1023(b), then the rejection of the plea arrangement must also be made part of the record pursuant to G.S. 15A-1023(b). (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 27; 1975, 2nd Sess., c. 983, s. 144; 2009-179, s. 2.)

**§ 15A-1027. Limitation on collateral attack on conviction.**

Noncompliance with the procedures of this Article may not be a basis for review of a conviction after the appeal period for the conviction has expired. (1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 21; 1989, c. 290, s. 4.)

**§ 15A-1028. Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 15A-1029. Reserved for future codification purposes.**