

Washington County Bar Association

Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Joyce A. Hatfield-Wise

1. Name: Joyce Ann Hatfield-Wise

Joyce A. Hatfield-Wise  
Joyce A. Hatfield

2. Position Sought: Judge, Washington County Court of Common Pleas

3. Addresses:

a. Office for past 10 years

100 West Beau Street  
Suite 502  
Washington, PA 15301  
(January 1998-September 2016)

290 Sanitarium Road  
Washington, PA 15301  
(September 2016-present)

b. Home

290 Sanitarium Road  
Washington, PA 15301 (Amwell Township)  
(June 2007-present)

263 Moscow Road  
Amity, PA 15311 (Amwell Township)  
(December 1991-June 2007)

4. DOB: 1-8-65

Washington, PA  
Washington Hospital

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5. Education:

- 1997, Juris Doctor *cum laude*  
Duquesne University School of Law  
(1993-1997) 4-year Evening Program
- 1992, Post-Graduate Certificate- Family Therapy  
University of Pittsburgh-Graduate School of Social Work  
(1991-1992) 2-year program
- 1988, Master's in Psychological Services  
University of Pennsylvania (PENN)-Graduate School of Education  
(1987-1988)
- 1987, Bachelor's *magna cum laude*  
Dual Majors: Communications and Psychology  
University of Pittsburgh, College of Arts and Sciences  
(1983-1987)

6. Employment/Affiliation Record:

- Joyce A. Hatfield-Wise, Esquire  
(Sept 2016-present)  
290 Sanitarium Road  
Washington, PA 15301  
Attorney, Private Practice of Law
- Washington County Children and Youth Services  
(Jan 1998-Sept 2016)  
100 West Beau Street, Suite 502  
Courthouse Square  
Washington, PA 15301  
Agency Solicitor

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- Washington County Courts  
(Nov 1995-Jan 1998)  
Washington County Courthouse  
1 South Main Street  
Courtroom #3  
Washington, PA 15301  
Court Crier, Judge O'Dell Seneca
- Try-Again Homes, Inc.  
(June 1988-Nov 1995)  
365 Jefferson Avenue  
Washington, PA 15301  
Youth and Family Counselor (dependent children), Program Coordinator  
(delinquent children), Director of Youth and Family Counseling Program,  
Director of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Assistant Director of Social  
Services
- PA Children and Youth Solicitors Association  
(2004-present) – One of the original incorporators  
Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, President  
Member
- ChildFirst PA  
(2011-present)  
Co-founded and certified PA in March 2012  
Wrote and received CAPTA grants totaling \$440,000.00  
Faculty
- Washington County Bar Association- WCBA  
Executive Board Member  
(approx. 2001-2003) 3-year unpaid, elected term  
(2014-2016) 3-year unpaid, elected term
- Washington County Bar Foundation- WCBF  
Trustee  
(2016-2018) 3-year unpaid, elected term

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7. Honors and Awards:

- January 2014- Applied for and Received Partial Scholarship from Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) and Federal District Court of Western Pennsylvania to attend the annual National Trial Advocacy College at the University of Virginia School of Law
- 2013, Washington County Bar Association -Certificate of Meritorious Service
- 2013, League of Women Voters of Washington County-Community Education Award
- 2011, Rotary Club of Washington County- John L. Northrop Vocational Service Award
- 2011, Pennsylvania Bar Association, named "Government Lawyer of the Year
- University Scholar, University of Pittsburgh

8. Bar Associations and legal or judicial-related committees

Washington County Bar Association (WCBA)

Member, 1997-present

Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA)

Member, 1997-2016

PBA Children's Rights Committee

Chair, (years unknown)

Government Lawyers Committee

Appellate Law Section (including CLE faculty)

PA Children's Roundtable

Faculty (Permanency Circuit)

Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI)

Faculty and CLE Planning Committees

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PA Children and Youth Solicitors Association

Child Welfare Law- annual CLE

Faculty and CLE Planning Committee

ChildFirst PA, [www.childfirstpa.com](http://www.childfirstpa.com)

Faculty

Coordinator

Co-founder

9. Bar and Court Admissions:

a. Admitted to Federal Courts – Dec. 1997

Admitted to State Courts- January 8, 1998

Admitted to WCBA (approx. Dec. 1997)

Been Member ever since, no lapses

Love the WCBA

PBA (1997-2016)

Dropped membership when WCBA voted to drop Unit-County Membership

b. Admitted to practice before

PA State Courts- January 1998

Federal District Courts- December 1997

U.S. Supreme Court- approx. 2004

No lapses in admission

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10. Memberships:

- a. WCBA, continuous and active member since December 1997  
Co-Chair, Chair, Law Day Committee  
(approx. 2000 to present)  
PBA, 1997-2016
- b. To this candidate's knowledge, no organization to which I have belonged or belong engages in any illegal, discriminatory practice.

11. Public Office, Political Activities and Affiliations:

- a. None
- b. I once passed a Nomination petition for Commissioner Diane Irey at her request while I was a County employee. (approx. 2000)

12. Legal Career:

- a. Law Practice and Experience post Law School
  - (i) Clerked for Judge Debbie O'Dell Seneca,  
Washington County Court of Common Pleas  
(Nov 1995-Jan 1998)  
  
After completing an unpaid summer internship in 1995, was solicited, interviewed, and hired to fill a vacancy within the office in the late fall.  
Official position was Court Crier.
  - (ii) Have practiced as Sole Practitioner exclusively since Sept 2016  
290 Sanitarium Road, Washington, PA 15301  
  
\*have had number of private cases and court appointments in delinquency and Guardians ad Litem in termination proceedings

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(iii) Washington County

- a. Children and Youth, (January 1998-Sept 2016)  
100 West Beau Street, Suite 502, Courthouse Square, Washington,  
PA 15301

Agency Solicitor

Served as the first, full-time Solicitor. Was responsible for all Motions practice, Dependency Hearings before Juvenile Masters and Juvenile Judge, all Appellate Practice (largely before Superior Court), Department of Public Welfare Bureau of Hearings and Appeals Child Abuse Expunction Appeals, Adoption Subsidy Appeals, Foster Family Disapproval Appeals, Legal Consultations, Legal Trainings, Attendance at Supervisory, Management, and Staff Meetings, and other duties as assigned.

- b. Court of Common Pleas, (Nov. 1995-January 1998)  
1 South Main Street, Courtroom #3, Washington, PA 15301

Court Crier/Law Clerk

As Court Crier/Law Clerk was responsible for, *inter alia*, assisting in the management of a busy court, retrieved official court files, changed and placed daily schedule/public marque, drafted Opinions, supervised and assisted with juries, assisted in Court function during voir dire, swore/affirmed witnesses before testifying before the Court, docketed Orders signed by the Judge, filed official court papers before Court Offices (largely Prothonotary and Clerk of Courts), read advance sheets and wrote Memorandums of Law to inform Court of new cases/laws, filed Court copy of Juvenile Orders, Liaison between various individuals and the Court.

(iv) Arbitrator

Sought and received permission to serve as an unpaid Arbitrator to acquire the experience (believed to be less than 10 matters)

No cases stand out to me. I was more a student of the process and of the legal players- my older, more experienced colleagues.

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12. b. Describe:

(i) My law practice has primarily involved the well-being and welfare of children and families from birth to adoption, and sadly many stops between. As outlined below, my practice has shifted at times.

Through a project with the Washington County Bar Association and the Court, all adoptions were done by outside practitioners. I completed every termination of parental rights cases. However, my practice needed to see light at the end of the tunnel. I increased from completing no adoptions to completing all the adoptions through Washington County CYS. We earned a State Award in 1999 for the many adoptions completed in that timeframe.

In about 2014, we welcomed our second, full-time Solicitor. I then shared all the responsibilities and office space with this individual. I was and remain most grateful.

(ii) I have practiced primarily in child welfare and have had the privilege of helping to create caselaw in the area. My private cases have included termination of parental rights (voluntary and involuntary), adoption, tax assessment/sheriff's sales, conveyance of real property and deed transfers, divorce, delinquency, and expungement.

c. Describe:

1. Percentage of my practice in various courts

Federal courts	1%
State courts	59%
Other courts	40%
Admin. Agencies	0%

2. Percentage of my practice in types of cases

Civil	99%
Criminal	1%



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12. d. State the number:

1. a. 100% Non-Jury

There are no provisions for jury trials in child dependency, termination of parental rights, adoptions, or child abuse expunction appeal hearings.

e. I have never tried a case before a jury as there are no provisions for jury trials in child dependency, termination of parental rights, adoptions, or child abuse expunction appeal hearings. However, I have been involved as a court function in jury selection, voir dire, trial deliberations, and verdict.

f. Summarize:

1. My court appearances between January 1998 and November 2015 were nearly daily.

2. Due to an emergency illness, I did not return to work after November 23, 2015. I retired in September 2016.

13. Litigation:

Ten most significant matters:

1. In re: Adoption of J.E.F. – PA Supreme Court
2. In re: Adoption of S.P. – PA Supreme Court
3. In re: In the Interest of B.L.L. – PA Superior Court
4. In the Interest of A.L.D., Jr.– PA Superior Court
5. In re: T.D.- PA Superior Court
6. Adoption of K.M.- Washington County Court of Common Pleas, (approx. 2008)
7. Incapacitation of Christopher B.- Washington County Court of Common Pleas
8. In re: Termination of Parental Rights involving S.- Washington County Court of Common Pleas (approx. 2000)
9. Involuntary Termination and Adoption of E.G. - Washington County Court of Common Pleas (approx. 2008)
10. Guardianship of J.D.- PA Superior Court and its Mediation Program

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13. Litigation: (cont.)

1. In re: Adoption of J.E.F. – PA Supreme Court

This case was first litigated before then-President Judge Thomas D. Gladden of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. Agency won at the trial level. Appeal was taken to Superior Court. Superior Court reversed. Allocator then granted to Agency to appeal to PA Supreme Court. PA Supreme Court affirmed and remanded. Agency won on remand. The case is reported at 29-31 WAP 2005. Decided July 18, 2006. Appellee's counsel was Andrew Glasgow.

Case held that relatives do not cease to exist at termination of parental rights and that court can excuse requirement of agency consent to adoption.

2. In re: Adoption of S.P. – PA Supreme Court

This case involved the parental rights of an incarcerated parent. Decided initially by Judge Mark E. Mascara of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. Agency won. Appeal taken by father. Superior Court reversed. Allocator then granted to Agency to appeal to PA Supreme Court. The case is reported. Decided May 17, 2012. Appellate counsel included local counsel Erin Dickerson, Esquire and MariAnn Hathaway, Esquire. Agency won.

Case addressed the issue of the impact of incarceration on the termination of parental rights. Trial testimony included that of then-Assistant District Attorney Michael J. Lucas, now judge.

3. In re: In the Interest of B.L.L. – PA Superior Court

This case was first litigated before then-President Judge Thomas D. Gladden of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. This case involves the compulsory testimony of a child in a termination of parental rights case. Agency won at trial level. Mother took appeal to Superior Court. PA Superior Court affirmed. Case has been cited regularly since as it provides a general overview of all judicial proceedings involving children. Decided December 4, 2001. Appellate counsel included local counsel Karen Hassinger, Esquire.

4. In the Interest of A.L.D., Jr. – PA Superior Court

This case was first litigated before then-President Judge Thomas D. Gladden of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. This case involved the termination of parental rights of both parents. Trial court postponed its decision in the case as to

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Mother. The Agency took an appeal and Mother filed cross appeal. Superior Court vacated in part, affirmed in part, and remanded with instructions. Agency won on remand. Decided April 10, 2002. Appellate counsel included local counsel Karen Hassinger, Esquire.

5. In re: T.D.- PA Superior Court

This case involved whether the Agency is required to have an adoptive resource when the court determines to terminate parental rights. Agency won at trial level before Judge Katherine B. Emery of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. Agency won at trial level. Appeal taken to Superior Court. Affirmed. Decided April 25, 2008. Appellate counsel included local counsel Erin Dickerson, Esquire and Tamora Reese, Esquire.

Case affirms adoptive resource not required in Agency termination of parental rights case.

6. Adoption of K.M.- Washington County Court of Common Pleas, (approx. 2008)

This was a private voluntary termination of parental rights by both parents pro se and a subsequent interstate adoption. Case decided by Judge Katherine B. Emery of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. I was intimately involved in this case as Washington Hospital required that newborn child be released to the immediate custody of this counsel. Child is now a preschooler and family remains so appreciative.

7. Incapacitation of Christopher B.- Washington County Court of Common Pleas

This case originated in Washington County and was decided by now-President Judge Katherine B. Emery of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. I initially was involved in the naming of a Guardian of the Person and Of the Estate of this individual. Over the years, I have been contacted privately to change the Guardianship with consent of the parties. Local counsel has included Peter Marcoline, Esquire.

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8. In re: Termination of Parental Rights involving S. - Washington County Court of Common Pleas (approx. 2000)

This case was heard by then-President Judge Thomas D. Gladden. It is the only case I can recall where the judge called a sidebar and indicated he had heard enough. The father was testifying to bones in his closet. Involved three siblings. Each child was adopted separately and enjoy ongoing sibling contact as result of the ongoing and deliberate contact between the adoptive families. I have been privileged to watch the children grow and succeed.

9. Involuntary Termination and Adoption of E.G. - Washington County Court of Common Pleas (approx. 2008)

This case was heard by now-President Judge Katherine B. Emery of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. It was a private case that involved the pro se involuntary termination of incarcerated father's rights and subsequent relative adoption. The father had been convicted of the mother's murder and the murder of her friend.

10. Guardianship of J.D. - PA Superior Court and its Mediation Program

This case involved the alleged Incapacitation of the Person and of the Estate of Jessica D. This case was heard by now-President Judge Katherine B. Emery of the Washington County Court of Common Pleas. Trial court found less restrictive alternatives and denied Petition. Child's Guardian ad Litem appealed. Case went to Mediation which was in its infancy but it did not lend itself to mediation. Superior Court affirmed. Local counsel included Frank Kocevar, Esquire.

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14. Legal activities:

While my practice of the law should have been plenty, I have always engaged in additional legal activities, driven by my own pursuit of excellence and service.

- Incorporated PA Children and Youth Solicitors Association in 2004 (one of the original incorporators), Held every office in this organization, remain active member. Secured and continue to secure status of Association as approved Continuing Legal Education provider through the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
- Co-founded and began ChildFirst PA, a Forensic Interview and Court Preparation Training Program. Certified PA as ChildFirst state in March 2012. Wrote and secured on-going OCYF grants totaling \$440,000.00. [www.childfirstpa.com](http://www.childfirstpa.com)

- Law Day- I just love this opportunity!

Public Relations/Public Education Outreach program of the WCBA. Received on behalf of WCBA an award by the American Bar Association based on our Law Day programming.

To the candidate's knowledge, I have not engaged in any lobbying activities.

15. Potential Conflicts of Interest:

a. To the candidate's knowledge, there are no family members or other persons, parties, categories of litigation, or financial arrangements that are likely to present any potential conflicts of interest.

b. As a jurist, I would carefully consider all petitions to recuse and would voluntarily refuse to hear any matters in which I would believe my ability to act fairly would be in any way compromised due to any real or perceived conflict of interest.

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16. Pro Bono Work:

My legal work has always included service to the “disadvantaged.” Noting its importance, I have performed my governmental work at a markedly reduced market rate. I have continued this same reduced-rate practice in my private work. In addition, I have performed multiple duties without regard to compensation as a service to my community, my profession, and my world.

These include:

- Church Elder, 3-year term
- Vacation Bible School (2005-present)
- Women’s Retreats (2005-present)
- Girl Scout Leader/ Began Troop 50556 in 2008 (remains continuous)
- Law Day programming
- ChildFirst PA
- PA Children and Youth Solicitors Association
- WCBA
- WCBF
- Volunteer, weekly Allegheny Health Network Canonsburg Hospital Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit

17. Motions Practice:

I have presented and practiced Motions Court before 4 of the current 5 elected Judges of Washington County.

As a practitioner, I understand how long, arduous, and frustrating Motions Court practice can be. I also understand its importance and the time it requires for the Court to consider each, often very different, request for relief.

As a jurist, I will remain open to all thoughts and ideas from practitioners with a keen eye toward what works best to satisfy the needs of the profession, and more importantly, the persons we represent. My early inclination is that a scorecard as to which judge does what may not be as helpful, but I will remain open to finding the best solution possible.

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18. Relationship with the Bar:

I am actively and intimately involved with the WCBA. I genuinely enjoy the work I do inside and out of the Bar. Should I be blessed with a judgeship, I would not expect my relationship with the WCBA to be adversely affected. I am committed to continuing to serve my profession, my community, and my world no matter what the job title.

19. General Questions:

a. Being a judge differs from being a lawyer in a myriad of ways but perhaps most notably in that, lawyers try cases; judges decide cases. Lawyers are advocates for their client; judges are bound by the law not by any one person's self-interests.

b. I feel comfortable walking away from the private practice of law as I have enjoyed a relatively long tenure and much success in the law, and I choose to use my skills and talents in the role of judge while maintaining a servant's heart.

c. The most significant challenge facing the local court continues to be the volume of work and the too few judicial hands the local court has to manage all the cases before it. I believe that challenge can be addressed by increasing the number of judges if our population and volume justify it. I am aware there are steps underway to increase our court size from six judges to seven judges. I also believe that I can substantially and individually assist the court by working hard as a judge to hear and decide matters fairly, fully, and timely. Judging cases with a servant's heart will enable me to always remember that as judges, we work for the people.

d. Yes, I anticipate being onsite at the Courthouse during normal business hours and beyond. Being visibly at work is important. Hearing and deciding cases requires a lot of judicial time. Judges, like every other employee, should be at work.