

229.21 Judicial hospitalization referee — appeals to district court.

1. The chief judge of each judicial district may appoint at least one judicial hospitalization referee for each county within the district. The judicial hospitalization referee shall be an attorney, licensed to practice law in this state, who shall be chosen with consideration to any training, experience, interest, or combination of those factors, which are pertinent to the duties of the office. The referee shall hold office at the pleasure of the chief judge of the judicial district and receive compensation at a rate fixed by the supreme court. If the referee expects to be absent for any significant length of time, the referee shall inform the chief judge who may appoint a temporary substitute judicial hospitalization referee having the qualifications set forth in [this subsection](#).

2. When an application for involuntary hospitalization under [section 229.6](#) or for involuntary commitment or treatment of persons with a substance use disorder under [section 125.75](#) is filed with the clerk of the district court in any county for which a judicial hospitalization referee has been appointed, and no district judge, district associate judge, or magistrate who is admitted to the practice of law in this state is accessible, the clerk shall immediately notify the referee in the manner required by [section 229.7](#) or [section 125.77](#). The referee shall discharge all of the duties imposed upon the court by [sections 229.7 through 229.19](#), [this section](#), and [section 229.22](#) or [sections 125.75 through 125.94](#) in the proceeding so initiated. Subject to the provisions of [subsection 4](#), orders issued by a referee, in discharge of duties imposed under [this section](#), shall have the same force and effect as if ordered by a district judge. However, any commitment to a facility regulated and operated under [chapter 135C](#) shall be in accordance with [section 135C.23](#).

3. a. Any respondent with respect to whom the magistrate or judicial hospitalization referee has found the contention that the respondent is seriously mentally impaired or a person with a substance use disorder sustained by clear and convincing evidence presented at a hearing held under [section 229.12](#) or [section 125.82](#), may appeal from the magistrate's or referee's finding to a judge of the district court by giving the clerk notice in writing, within ten days after the magistrate's or referee's finding is made, that an appeal is taken. The appeal may be signed by the respondent or by the respondent's next friend, guardian, or attorney.

b. An order of a magistrate or judicial hospitalization referee with a finding that the respondent is seriously mentally impaired or a person with a substance use disorder shall include the following notice, located conspicuously on the face of the order:

NOTE: The respondent may appeal from this order to a judge of the district court by giving written notice of the appeal to the clerk of the district court within ten days after the date of this order. The appeal may be signed by the respondent or by the respondent's next friend, guardian, or attorney. For a more complete description of the respondent's appeal rights, consult [section 229.21](#) of the Code of Iowa or an attorney.

c. When appealed, the matter shall stand for trial de novo. Upon appeal, the court shall schedule a hospitalization or commitment hearing before a district judge at the earliest practicable time.

d. Any respondent with respect to whom the magistrate or judicial hospitalization referee has held a placement hearing and has entered a placement order may appeal the order to a judge of the district court. The request for appeal must be given to the clerk in writing within ten days of the entry of the magistrate's or referee's order. The request for appeal shall be signed by the respondent, or the respondent's next friend, guardian, or attorney.

4. If the appellant is in custody under the jurisdiction of the district court at the time of service of the notice of appeal, the appellant shall be discharged from custody unless an order that the appellant be taken into immediate custody has previously been issued under [section 229.11](#) or [section 125.81](#), in which case the appellant shall be detained as provided in that section until the hospitalization or commitment hearing before the district judge. If the appellant is in the custody of a hospital or facility at the time of service of the notice of appeal, the appellant shall be discharged from custody pending disposition of the appeal

unless the chief medical officer, not later than the end of the next secular day on which the office of the clerk is open and which follows service of the notice of appeal, files with the clerk a certification that in the chief medical officer's opinion the appellant is seriously mentally ill or a person with a substance use disorder. In that case, the appellant shall remain in custody of the hospital or facility until the hospitalization or commitment hearing before the district court.

5. The hospitalization or commitment hearing before the district judge shall be held, and the judge's finding shall be made and an appropriate order entered, as prescribed by [sections 229.12 and 229.13](#) or [sections 125.82 and 125.83](#). If the judge orders the appellant hospitalized or committed for a complete psychiatric or substance use disorder evaluation, jurisdiction of the matter shall revert to the judicial hospitalization referee.

[C97, §2267, 2268; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §3560, 3561; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, §229.17, 229.18; C77, 79, 81, §229.21; [82 Acts, ch 1212, §27](#)]

[85 Acts, ch 195, §25](#); [87 Acts, ch 190, §2](#); [90 Acts, ch 1085, §20](#); [91 Acts, ch 108, §6](#); [92 Acts, ch 1165, §6](#); [98 Acts, ch 1181, §23](#); [99 Acts, ch 144, §3, 4](#); [2001 Acts, ch 155, §38](#); [2011 Acts, ch 121, §54 – 56, 62](#); [2013 Acts, ch 130, §49](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1026, §47](#); [2021 Acts, ch 80, §122](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §525](#)

Referred to in [§97B.1A, 125.90](#)