



CHAPTER 15A
ARTICLE 20 - ARREST

N.C.G.S. § 15A-401.

Arrest by law-enforcement officer.

SOURCE General Statutes of North Carolina, as published by the General Assembly	LAST AMENDMENT IN THIS TEXT No amendment history on record	RETRIEVED 21 September 2026, 04:50 UTC	SOURCE FINGERPRINT 1525d57ce6621326cf87f1c2 - 6638a434ec5ae08afba39842 - 8813984630fa28c4
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§ 15A-401(a) Arrest by Officer Pursuant to a Warrant. -

- (1) Warrant in Possession of Officer. - An officer having a warrant for arrest in his possession may arrest the person named or described therein at any time and at any place within the officer's territorial jurisdiction.
- (2) Warrant Not in Possession of Officer. - An officer who has knowledge that a warrant for arrest has been issued and has not been executed, but who does not have the warrant in his possession, may arrest the person named therein at any time. The officer must inform the person arrested that the warrant has been issued and serve the warrant upon him as soon as possible. This subdivision applies even though the arrest process has been returned to the clerk under G.S. 15A-301.

§ 15A-401(b) Arrest by Officer Without a Warrant. -

- (1) Offense in Presence of Officer. - An officer may arrest without a warrant any person who the officer has probable cause to believe has committed a criminal offense, or has violated a pretrial release order entered under G.S. 15A-534 or G.S. 15A-534.1(a)(2), in the officer's presence.
- (2) Offense Out of Presence of Officer. - An officer may arrest without a warrant any person who the officer has probable cause to believe has committed or violated any of the following:

a.A felony.

b.A misdemeanor, when the person meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Will not be apprehended unless immediately arrested.
 2. May cause physical injury to himself or others, or damage to property unless immediately arrested.
 - c. A misdemeanor under G.S. 14-72.1, 14-134.3, 20-138.1, or 20-138.2.
 - d. A misdemeanor under G.S. 14-33(a), 14-33(c)(1), 14-33(c)(2), or 14-34 when the offense was committed by a person with whom the alleged victim has a personal relationship as defined in G.S. 50B-1.
 - e. A misdemeanor under G.S. 50B-4.1(a).
 - f. A pretrial release order entered under G.S. 15A-534 or G.S. 15A-534.1(a)(2).
 - g. A misdemeanor under G.S. 14-32.5.
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 1991, c. 150.
- (4) A law enforcement officer may detain an individual arrested for violation of an order limiting freedom of movement or access issued pursuant to G.S. 130A-475 or G.S. 130A-145 in the area designated by the State Health Director or local health director pursuant to such order. The person may be detained in such area until the initial appearance before a judicial official pursuant to G.S. 15A-511 and G.S. 15A-534.5.

§ 15A-401(c)**How Arrest Made. -**

- (1) An arrest is complete when:
- a. The person submits to the control of the arresting officer who has indicated his intention to arrest, or
 - b. The arresting officer, with intent to make an arrest, takes a person into custody by the use of physical force.
- (2) Upon making an arrest, a law-enforcement officer must:
- a. Identify himself as a law-enforcement officer unless his identity is otherwise apparent,
 - b. Inform the arrested person that he is under arrest, and
 - c. As promptly as is reasonable under the circumstances, inform the arrested person of the cause of the arrest, unless the cause appears to be evident.

§ 15A-401(d)**Use of Force in Arrest. -**

(1) Subject to the provisions of subdivision (2), a law-enforcement officer is justified in using force upon another person when and to the extent that he reasonably believes it necessary:

a.To prevent the escape from custody or to effect an arrest of a person who he reasonably believes has committed a criminal offense, unless he knows that the arrest is unauthorized; or

b.To defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

(2) A law-enforcement officer is justified in using deadly physical force upon another person for a purpose specified in subdivision (1) of this subsection only when it is or appears to be reasonably necessary thereby:

a.To defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of deadly physical force;

b.To effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of a person who he reasonably believes is attempting to escape by means of a deadly weapon, or who by his conduct or any other means indicates that he presents an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to others unless apprehended without delay; or

c.To prevent the escape of a person from custody imposed upon him as a result of conviction for a felony.

Nothing in this subdivision constitutes justification for willful, malicious or criminally negligent conduct by any person which injures or endangers any person or property, nor shall it be construed to excuse or justify the use of unreasonable or excessive force.

§ 15A-401(d1)

Duty to Intervene and Report Excessive Use of Force. - A law enforcement officer, while in the line of duty, who observes another law enforcement officer use force against another person that the observing officer reasonably believes exceeds the amount of force authorized by subsection (d) of this section and who possesses a reasonable opportunity to intervene, shall, if it is safe to do so, attempt to intervene to prevent the use of excessive force. Additionally, the observing officer shall, within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 72 hours thereafter, report what the officer reasonably believes to be an unauthorized use of force to a superior law enforcement officer within the agency of the observing officer, even if the observing officer did not

have a reasonable opportunity to intervene. If the head of the law enforcement agency of the observing officer was involved or present during what the observing officer reasonably believes to be unauthorized use of force, the observing officer shall make the report to the highest ranking law enforcement officer of that officer's agency who was not involved in or present during the use of force.

§ 15A-401(e)**Entry on Private Premises or Vehicle; Use of Force. -**

- (1) A law-enforcement officer may enter private premises or a vehicle to effect an arrest when:
 - a. The officer has in his possession a warrant or order or a copy of the warrant or order for the arrest of a person, provided that an officer may utilize a copy of a warrant or order only if the original warrant or order is in the possession of a member of a law enforcement agency located in the county where the officer is employed and the officer verifies with the agency that the warrant is current and valid; or the officer is authorized to arrest a person without a warrant or order having been issued,
 - b. The officer has reasonable cause to believe the person to be arrested is present, and
 - c. The officer has given, or made reasonable effort to give, notice of his authority and purpose to an occupant thereof, unless there is reasonable cause to believe that the giving of such notice would present a clear danger to human life.
- (2) The law-enforcement officer may use force to enter the premises or vehicle if he reasonably believes that admittance is being denied or unreasonably delayed, or if he is authorized under subsection (e)(1)c to enter without giving notice of his authority and purpose.

§ 15A-401(f)**Use of Deadly Weapon or Deadly Force to Resist Arrest. -**

- (1) A person is not justified in using a deadly weapon or deadly force to resist an arrest by a law-enforcement officer using reasonable force, when the person knows or has reason to know that the officer is a law-enforcement officer and that the officer is effecting or attempting to effect an arrest.
- (2) The fact that the arrest was not authorized under this section is no defense to an otherwise valid criminal charge arising out of the use of such deadly weapon or deadly force.

(3) Nothing contained in this subsection (f) shall be construed to excuse or justify the unreasonable or excessive force by an officer in effecting an arrest. Nothing contained in this subsection (f) shall be construed to bar or limit any civil action arising out of an arrest not authorized by this Article.

§ 15A-401(g) Care of minor children. - When a law enforcement officer arrests an adult who is supervising minor children who are present at the time of the arrest, the minor children must be placed with a responsible adult approved by a parent or guardian of the minor children. If it is not possible to place the minor children with a responsible adult approved by a parent or guardian within a reasonable period of time, the law enforcement officer shall contact the county department of social services. (1868-9, c. 178, subch. 1, ss. 3, 5; Code, ss. 1126, 1128; Rev., ss. 3178, 3180; C.S., ss. 4544, 4546; 1955, c. 58; 1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1979, c. 561, s. 3; c. 725, s. 4; 1983, c. 762, s. 1; 1985, c. 548; 1991, c. 150, s. 1; 1995, c. 506, s. 10; 1997-456, s. 3; 1999-23, s. 7; 1999-399, s. 1; 2002-179, s. 14; 2004-186, s. 13.1; 2009-544, s. 2; 2011-245, s. 1; 2021-137, s. 1(a); 2021-138, s. 16(a); 2025-70, s. 17(c).)

END OF SECTION TEXT

APPARATUS FOLLOWS — DERIVED, NOT ENACTED

APPARATUS II
12 AUTHORITIES

Authorities referenced

Every G.S. cross-reference appearing in the text of this section, in order of first appearance. Nothing is characterized; the operative language is quoted from the section itself.

REFERENCE	APPEARS IN	OPERATIVE LANGUAGE IN THIS SECTION
G.S. 15A-301	(a)(2)	"been returned to the clerk under"
G.S. 15A-534	(b)(1)	"a pretrial release order entered under"
G.S. 15A-534.1(a)(2)	(b)(1)	"order entered under G.S. 15A-534 or"
G.S. 14-72.1	(b)	"c. A misdemeanor under"
G.S. 14-33(a)	(b)	"d. A misdemeanor under"
G.S. 50B-1	(b)	"a personal relationship as defined in"
G.S. 50B-4.1(a)	(b)	"e. A misdemeanor under"
G.S. 14-32.5	(b)	"g. A misdemeanor under"
G.S. 130A-475	(b)(4)	"movement or access issued pursuant to"
G.S. 130A-145	(b)(4)	"issued pursuant to G.S. 130A-475 or"

G.S. 15A-511	(b)(4)	"before a judicial official pursuant to"
G.S. 15A-534.5	(b)(4)	"official pursuant to G.S. 15A-511 and"

APPARATUS III

Citation

FULL SECTION

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-401 (2026).

PINPOINT

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-401(a) (2026).

Pinpoint keys are set in the left margin of the text rather than line numbers: subsection designators are stable across editions and paper sizes, line numbers are not.

COLOPHON

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