

1 Introduced by Council Member Becton & Co-Sponsored by Council Member  
2 Morgan:

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5 **RESOLUTION 2021-723-A**

6 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER  
7 AS FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH; PROVIDING AN  
8 EFFECTIVE DATE.  
9

10 **WHEREAS**, the concept for Family Court Awareness Month began after  
11 Tina Swithin's arduous ten-year custody battle, with the intent to shine  
12 a spotlight on the topic of family courts while honoring the young lives  
13 traumatized or lost during separation or divorce legal procedures; and

14 **WHEREAS**, domestic violence does not necessarily stop when an  
15 abusive relationship ends, there may be post-separation abuse and also  
16 pain and suffering during the custody process within the family court  
17 system. Ms. Swithin's custody battle created years of distress, but  
18 thankfully ended without tragedy. Other families have not been so  
19 fortunate, with at least 806 children murdered by separating or divorcing  
20 parents in the US since 2008; and

21 **WHEREAS**, all parties - Judges, Guardian ad Litem, Custody  
22 Evaluators, Therapists and Attorneys - working in the family court system  
23 should have proper training on domestic violence, childhood trauma and  
24 post separation abuse in order to maximize children's safety; and

25 **WHEREAS**, the mission of Family Court Awareness Month is to educate  
26 judges and other family court professionals on the empirical data and  
27 research that is currently available. Such research is a critical  
28 component to making decisions that are truly in the best interest of  
29 children. This research includes The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)  
30 Study (CDC-Kaiser Permanente), Saunder's Study (US Department of  
31 Justice), The Meier Study: Child Custody Outcomes in Cases Involving

1 Abuse Allegations, and the Santa Clara Law Study (Confronting the  
2 Challenge of High-Conflict Personality in Family Court); and

3 **WHEREAS**, recognizing November as Family Court Awareness Month is a  
4 method to address these heartbreaking events that can destroy families,  
5 in an effort to ensure children's rights to be safe and protected; now  
6 therefore

7 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

8 **Section 1.** The City of Jacksonville hereby recognizes  
9 November as Family Court Awareness Month. Jacksonville City Council  
10 encourages all parties involved in the family court system to take  
11 whatever precautions are necessary to ensure children are safe and  
12 protected during separation or divorce legal procedures.

13 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become  
14 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective  
15 without the Mayor's signature.

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17 Form Approved:

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19           /s/ Paige H. Johnston          

20 Office of General Counsel

21 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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