

EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA
Brevard and Seminole Counties
ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215 requires the Chief Judge to develop an administrative plan for the efficient and effective administration of the Courts and judicial resources within the Circuit; and

WHEREAS, the administrative plan provides for the general operational policies of the Court including the assignment of judges to divisions, the prompt disposition of cases, control of the dockets, mandatory periodic review of the status of the inmates of the county jail, and regulation of the use of court facilities, including courtrooms and hearing rooms, and other administrative matters detailed in the plan; it is therefore

ORDERED:

The administrative plan for the operation of the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit is as follows:

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUIT

The Eighteenth Judicial Circuit is composed of two (2) counties: Brevard and Seminole. There are forty-three (43) judges in the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit, twenty-six (26) Circuit Judges and seventeen (17) County Court Judges.

II. EQUITABLE DELIVERY OF CIRCUIT COURT SERVICES

The Eighteenth Judicial Circuit is comprised of two (2) diverse and distinctively unique counties with unique needs and political environments. The Court is committed to the equitable delivery of court services and programs to all citizens in each county of the Circuit.

III. DIVISIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The Circuit Court is divided into Criminal, Family, Civil, Dependency, Delinquency, and Probate / Guardianship divisions. The County Court is divided into Criminal and Civil divisions. The Circuit and County Court Assignments are as described in the Administrative Order regarding Division Assignments.

IV. ROTATION OF JUDGE ASSIGNMENTS

Judges are generalists and their assignments are rotated. The assignments are for two years. The length of the assignment and the division of may vary depending upon special circumstances of the Court and the specific needs of a judge.

V. NEW JUDGES

Judges who are new to the Circuit and County Court bench are assigned a division by the Chief Judge, provided a mentor Judge, and receive support from his or her colleagues.

VI. APPEALS - COUNTY TO CIRCUIT

An appellate panel shall convene multiple times per year to hear appeals from County Court to Circuit Court. Each appellate case shall be assigned to an appellate panel consisting of three Circuit Judges. The panels will be assigned in the General Assignment of Judges Administrative Order and will include the assignment of a Presiding Judge for each panel. A staff attorney is assigned to assist in the appellate process.

VII. JUDGES' MEETINGS

Judges' meetings shall be held monthly and include all Circuit and County Court Judges. Judges' meetings shall be held in each county at least once per month unless canceled by the Chief Judge.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGES

Administrative Judges are responsible for the organization and delivery of court services on behalf of the Chief Judge. In this capacity, the Administrative Judges are responsible for the oversight and case management of their divisions. Administrative Judges shall meet with the Chief Judge, when practicable. There shall be various Administrative Judges appointed from time to time in a separate Administrative Order.

IX. COUNTY COURT JUDGES ACTING AS TEMPORARY CIRCUIT JUDGES

County Court Judges are temporarily appointed as Acting Circuit Judges and asked to cover Circuit cases throughout the Circuit.

X. SENIOR JUDGES

Senior Judges are a resource for the Court assigned by the Chief Judge to cover assignments as needed. A Senior Judge Coordinator shall be designated and shall secure coverage as needed.

XI. GENERAL MAGISTRATES/JUDICIAL HEARING OFFICERS

General Magistrates and Judicial Hearing Officers support the Family, Civil, and Mental Health Divisions. General Magistrates and Judicial Hearing Officers are managed by the Chief Judge, with judicial oversight by the Administrative Judge.

XII. STAFF ATTORNEYS

Staff Attorneys support the workload of the Circuit Judges and County Court Judges. The Chief Judge manages Staff Attorneys, with judicial oversight by the Administrative Judges. Staff Attorneys are assigned to all divisions.

XIII. FIRST APPEARANCE

First appearance during normal business hours will be held in each respective county based on a rotation calendar. All Circuit and County Court Judges in the Circuit shall take weekend/holiday duty for first appearance equally and will be assigned by rotation in their respective counties.

XIV. DUTY JUDGE ASSIGNMENT

In addition to first appearance coverage on weekends and holidays, a Duty Judge shall be assigned during times when the Court is not open to hear other special or emergency cases, including, but not limited to: injunctions, shelter hearings, detention hearings, arrest warrants, and search warrants. There will also be a Duty Judge during the week as well for warrants, mental health, and injunctions as ordered by the Chief Judge. The Trial Court Administrator shall designate a Duty Judge Coordinator to ensure access to judicial resources during these times.

XV. SPECIALTY COURTS

The Court is committed to the support of the Specialty Courts. The Eighteenth Judicial Circuit has the following Specialty Courts: Felony Adult Drug Court, Juvenile Adult Drug Court, Misdemeanor Mental Health Court, and Veterans Treatment Court.

XVI. UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

The Eighteenth Judicial Circuit has implemented a Unified Family Court executed by Administrative Order. Family cases are screened for related cases. Related cases are then assigned following a policy of “one family one judge.” A major component of the Unified Family Court is case management. Through a cooperative effort between the Clerks’ Offices in the Circuit, Court Technology, Family Court, and various stakeholder agencies, data is collected and analyzed to enable staff to identify related cases in real time and communicate that information to the appropriate judges and judicial officers. The judicial viewer has been upgraded to include a Unified Family Court report, and several “form orders” for use in Unified Family Court cases. This function shall be used to enable a circuit-wide Unified Family Court.

XVII. CASE MANAGEMENT

It is the responsibility of every judge to ensure that cases assigned to them are resolved timely and that effective case management principles are utilized. The Chief Judge and Trial Court Administrator are committed to providing the technology, case management, and other necessary resources to assist in accomplishing this requirement. Each month, Judges are responsible for submitting to the Chief Judge, whether he or she asks or not, their case list of any ruling pending sixty (60) days or more.

XVIII. PERIODIC REVIEW OF STATUS OF INMATES IN CUSTODY

The Chief Judge or the Chief Judge’s designee will regularly examine the status of every inmate in the county jails in the Circuit. All interested County Stakeholders will meet to facilitate communication and cooperation and shall hold quarterly Public Safety Coordinating Council meetings. The meetings provide a forum for the discussion of issues of mutual concern and common interests.

XIX. TRIAL COURT ADMINISTRATOR

The Trial Court Administrator collaborates closely with the Chief Judge to oversee all administrative responsibilities of the Circuit. It is the Trial Court Administrator’s role to facilitate administrative functions within the Circuit and to develop and conduct policies that enhance court system performance. The Trial Court Administrator reviews pertinent case management reports and statistics to ensure timely disposition of cases. The Trial Court Administrator also serves as liaison with city and state agencies, as well as the media and the public.

XX. COURT FACILITIES

The Chief Judge, together with the Trial Court Administrator, ensures space for safe and efficient Court operations. This includes the regulation and use of courtrooms, hearing rooms, and other court offices. It is the policy of the Circuit to ensure that courthouse facilities are utilized in adherence with the Canons of Judicial Conduct, to include a general prohibition on political and commercial activity.

XXI. SECURITY

The public, attorneys, litigants, staff, jurors, and judges shall be safe and secure in all courthouses. In coordination with each County Commission, Sheriff’s Department, and other appropriate stakeholders, the Court shall establish procedures and practices for court security throughout the Circuit and promulgate them through Administrative Orders.

XXII. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

In furtherance of the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit’s Administrative Plan, all Administrative Orders are herein incorporated into this Plan. Administrative Orders, and any amendments thereto, can be found on the Circuit’s website (excluding those considered confidential under Florida law).

ORDERED this 25th day of April, 2025.

CHARLES CRAWFORD
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CHIEF JUDGE