

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR SEMINOLE COUNTY,
FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.:
26-28-S

IN RE: JUDGES – SEMINOLE DIVISION AND CASE ASSIGNMENTS FOR CIRCUIT COURT

WHEREAS, Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(4) authorizes the Chief Judge to assign judges to the courts and divisions and determine the length of each assignment;

WHEREAS, in order to properly assign circuit judges in Seminole County, all circuit court cases should be clearly defined and identified; and

WHEREAS, the resident Circuit Judges of Seminole County have determined that it is in the best interest of the litigants, attorneys, and judges that so far as possible that cases remain with the judges originally assigned for better understanding, efficiency, and savings of time for all involved;

IT IS ORDERED:

I. CRIMINAL DIVISION (CF)

A. Organization:

1. The circuit Criminal Division will be comprised of Divisions A, E, J, and M. All original cases presently assigned to one of those divisions in the clerk's system will remain assigned to that division unless the Administrative Judge of the Criminal Division shall order otherwise in a particular case.
2. The Administrative Judge of the Criminal Division will be responsible for criminal division operations, including, but not limited to, maintaining approximately equal caseload distribution among the various criminal divisions, reassigning cases in which a criminal division judge has recused or been disqualified, and acting as liaison with other components of the criminal justice system.
3. The Criminal Division judges will be assigned secondarily to cases assigned to other judges in the division for the purpose of backing up other judges by taking pleas, ruling on motions, scheduling matters, conducting trials, and sentencing defendants in cases over which the backup judge tried. All judges in the Criminal Division may act in the absence of the judge who is assigned to a case.

B. Assignment of Original Informations/Indictments:

Original charging documents (except for capital and Jimmy Ryce cases) will be randomly assigned so that the four (4) criminal divisions are each assigned to 25% of the cases. Information filed directly (before the defendant is taken into custody) will initially be assigned to Division N. These cases will be reassigned by the Clerk in accordance with this paragraph when the defendant is taken

into custody. However, if there is an active pending case with the same defendant, reassignment will be in accordance with paragraph I below.

C. Assignment of Multiple Defendant Cases:

Informations naming multiple defendants will be assigned to the first judge assigned to the case. The Clerk will not reassign cases in accordance with paragraph I below in cases naming multiple defendants.

D. Assignment of Murder Cases and Jimmy Ryce Cases:

1. The Clerk is responsible, upon the defendant's arrest, for the assignment of a judge to any murder case, excluding Murder by the Unlawful Distribution of a Controlled Substance under section 782.04(1)(a)3., Florida Statutes. The following murder cases will be assigned on a rotating basis among the four criminal divisions, beginning with Division J, followed by Divisions M, A, and E. Cases naming multiple defendants will be assigned to the first judge assigned to the case. The Clerk will not reassign cases in accordance with paragraph I below in cases naming multiple defendants.

- a. First Degree Premeditated Murder, § 782.04(1)(a)1., Fla. Stat.
- b. First Degree Felony Murder, § 782.04(1)(a)2., Fla. Stat.
- c. Second Degree Murder, § 782.04(2), Fla. Stat.
- d. Second Degree Felony Murder, § 782.04(3), Fla. Stat.
- e. Third Degree Felony Murder, § 782.04(4), Fla. Stat.

2. The same rotation will continue when a division is assumed by a successor judge. Murder cases, excluding Murder by the Unlawful Distribution of a Controlled Substance under section 782.04(1)(a)3. Florida Statutes and Jimmy Ryce cases will be assigned on a rotating basis among the four criminal divisions in alphabetical order, beginning with the next division in rotation. A judge who imposes the death penalty will remain assigned to the case for all purposes, including all post-trial and postconviction proceedings, whether or not the judgment and sentence are upheld on appeal, regardless of the division of the court to which that judge may be assigned subsequent to the imposition of the death penalty sentence. The Chief Judge will assign these cases if the judge who imposed the death penalty is no longer in office.

E. Assignment of Postconviction Relief Cases (3.850) and Motions for Correction, Reduction, and Modification of Sentence (3.800):

Cases will be assigned to the judge who is assigned to the division designated on the file.

F. Consolidation of Misdemeanor Cases with a Felony Charge Arising Out of the Same Circumstances:

The Clerk will consolidate misdemeanor cases arising out of the same facts as a felony case into the felony case. All papers in the misdemeanor case will be filed in the felony case, and the case will be set for arraignment on the next open felony arraignment docket before the assigned judge. The felony information will contain the felony case number and show the former misdemeanor case number.

G. Assignment of Violations of Probation and Miscellaneous Cases:

Violations of probation or community control, adult consequences alternatives, habeas corpus actions contesting the legality of a prisoner's detention, and any other action filed in a criminal case will be assigned to the division designated on the file. If the file does not contain a current division designation, such as old cases, the case will be assigned according to the following schedule, using the last two numbers in the case:

1. Division A: cases ending in 00-24
2. Division E: cases ending in 25-49
3. Division J: cases ending in 50-74
4. Division M: cases ending in 75-99

H. Assignment of Writs of Mandamus, Certiorari, and Prohibition Arising Out of Criminal Charges in the County Court:

The Clerk will deliver Petitions for Writ of Mandamus, Certiorari, and Prohibition filed in the circuit court and arising out of criminal charges in county court to the Circuit Criminal Division Administrative Judge for action and assignment within the Criminal Division of the circuit court.

I. Assignment of Cases Involving the Same Defendant:

Cases involving the same defendant in two or more divisions in circuit court will be reassigned to the division with the lowest case number sua sponte by the Clerk.

II. JUVENILE DIVISION (CJ)

- A. The Juvenile Division will be comprised of Divisions B and P. All cases presently assigned to those divisions in the clerk's system will remain assigned to that division unless the judge assigned to that division orders otherwise in a particular case.
- B. All new dependency filings will be assigned equally by the Clerk to Divisions B and P at the time of filing, regardless of the case number.
- C. All new delinquency filings against a juvenile who is not on probation or conditional release will be assigned to a division based upon the mailing address of the juvenile. A juvenile whose residence or mailing address is Sanford, Midway, Lake Forest, Heathrow, Lake Mary, Lake Monroe, or Longwood will be assigned to Division B. All other juveniles will be assigned to Division P. Any new charge against a juvenile who is on probation or conditional release will be assigned to the division previously assigned to that case or cases.
- D. New delinquency filings involving codefendants who would be assigned to different divisions because of their mailing addresses or their probationary status will be assigned to the judge assigned to the codefendant with the lowest case number until all the codefendant cases are resolved. Any violation of probation in companion cases will also be assigned to that judge for resolution.

III. PROBATE, GUARDIANSHIP, AND MENTAL HEALTH (CP)

- A. The probate, guardianship, and mental health cases will be assigned to Divisions B and P.
- B. All new probate, guardianship, and mental health filings will be assigned as follows:

1. Division B: cases ending in an even number
2. Division P: cases ending in an odd number

C. Consolidation and/or Transfer of Probate and Guardianship Cases:

1. All probate cases involving the same individual in any pending guardianship matter will be reassigned to the division with the corresponding guardianship case sua sponte by the Clerk, unless the guardianship case has been closed.
2. The Clerk, upon the filing of any new probate case, will assign the probate case to the division of any pending guardianship case involving the same decedent/ward. If there is no pending guardianship case, then it will be assigned according to paragraph III.B. above.
3. If a guardianship matter was previously filed involving the decedent in any court of any state, and a probate action is thereafter opened in Seminole County, the attorney in the probate action will be required to file a Notice of Related Cases in both the probate action and the guardianship case indicating the guardianship case number(s), the guardianship case name, the jurisdiction where the guardianship case was filed, and the status of the guardianship.
4. The transfer provision does not apply to guardianship cases opened for a minor child of a decedent for the purpose of receiving the estate proceeds not otherwise governed by a trust. However, attorneys opening a guardianship case for a minor child of the decedent must file a Notice of Related Cases in the guardianship case and the probate case, indicating the guardianship case number(s), the guardianship case name, the jurisdiction where the guardianship case was filed, and the status of the guardianship.

IV. CIVIL DIVISION (CA)

- A. The circuit Civil Division will be comprised of Divisions G and W. The Civil Division includes forfeiture cases but excludes Jimmy Ryce cases.
- B. Any new civil case will, in a random but alternating manner, be assigned to Divisions G or W so that each division will be assigned an equal and proportionate share of each case type.
- C. Any general civil case that is not presently assigned in the clerk's system to Divisions G or W will be reassigned when reactivated on a rotating basis among the divisions beginning with the next division in rotation.

V. FAMILY DIVISION (DR)

- A. The Family Division will be comprised of Divisions K and L. The Family Division excludes actions for injunctions for protection against repeat, sexual, or dating violence filed pursuant to section 784.046, Florida Statutes.
- B. Any new family case will, in a random but alternating manner, be assigned to Divisions K or L so that each division will be assigned an equal and proportionate share of each case type. However, actions for injunctions for protection against domestic violence filed pursuant to section 741.30, Florida Statutes, shall be assigned pursuant to the existing Family Division - Model Family Court Administrative Order.

- C. Any family case that is not presently assigned in the clerk's system to Divisions K or L will be reassigned when reactivated on a rotating basis among the divisions beginning with the next division in rotation.

VI. Actions for Injunction for Protection Against Domestic Violence (section 741.30), Actions for Injunction for Protection Against Repeat Violence, Sexual Violence, or Dating Violence (section 784.046), and Actions for Injunction for Protection Against Stalking (section 784.048)

- A. Upon the filing of a Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Domestic Violence, which qualifies as a Unified Family Court injunction as defined in the existing Family Division - Model Family Court Administrative Order, the Clerk shall first determine if any of the children named in the petition are the subject of an open juvenile dependency case in Seminole County. If they are, the Clerk will assign the case and forward the petition to the division assigned to the open juvenile dependency case for action by that judge. If there is no open dependency case, the Clerk will then determine whether there is an open or closed family law case involving the parties. If there is, the Clerk will assign the case and forward the petition to the division assigned to the open or closed family law case according to the existing Family Division - Model Family Court Administrative Order. If there is no open or closed family law case, the Clerk will assign the case and forward the petition to the judge in the family law judicial rotation schedule furnished to the Clerk for review of the petition.
- B. All other Petitions for Injunction Against Domestic Violence filed pursuant to section 741.30, and all Petitions for Injunction for Protection Against Repeat Violence, Sexual Violence, and Dating Violence filed pursuant to section 784.046, including Petitions for Injunction Against Stalking filed pursuant to section 784.048, shall be forwarded to the Seminole County judge designated in a rotation furnished to the Clerk from the Seminole County judges to handle injunctions for that particular week.
- C. Any Petition for Injunction for Protection Against Sexual Violence in which it is alleged that sexual violence is perpetrated by a child shall be assigned to a presiding juvenile division circuit judge.

VII. Retention of Cases:

The interests of justice may require that a judge retain assignment over one or more cases that would customarily be transferred to another judge at the time of the annual rotation of judicial assignments. Any circuit judge may elect to retain the assignment of individual cases and will accomplish this by entering an order directing the Clerk not to reassign the case.

VIII. Habeas Corpus:

A. Civil:

Habeas corpus actions in pending cases will be assigned to the division in that case. A new habeas corpus action that does not allege unlawful detention in a jail, correctional facility, juvenile detention facility, or medical facility will be assigned to each division, like other general civil cases.

B. Probate, Guardianship, and Mental Health:

Habeas corpus actions related to a probate, guardianship, or mental health case will be assigned as follows:

1. Division B: cases ending in an even number
2. Division P: cases ending in an odd number

C. Juvenile:

Habeas corpus actions related to a juvenile case will be assigned to the judge assigned to the case if the detention alleged to be illegal involves a delinquency case pending in the juvenile division. Other habeas corpus actions involving a juvenile who is detained in the Juvenile Detention Center, the county jail, or other state detention or commitment facility will be assigned as follows:

1. Division B: cases ending in an even number
2. Division P: cases ending in an odd number

IX. Assignment of Circuit Court Judges to Divisions:

The circuit judges assigned to the divisions of the court from July 1, 2026, until June 30, 2028, are as follows:

Division A: Melanie Case - Criminal
Division B: William Orth - Juvenile/Probate/Guardianship/Mental Health
Division E: Melissa Souto - Criminal
Division G: Donna Goerner - Civil (*effective 1 year, until June 30, 2027*)
Division J: Susan Stacy - Criminal (*effective 1 year, until June 30, 2027*)
Division K: Christopher Sprysenski - Family
Division L: Mark Herr - Family
Division M: Michael Rudisill - Criminal
Division P: John Galluzzo - Juvenile/Probate/Guardianship/Mental Health
Division W: Jessica Recksiedler - Civil (*effective 1 year, until June 30, 2027*)

DONE AND ORDERED this 7th day of July 2026.



MELANIE CHASE
CHIEF JUDGE

DISTRIBUTION:

All Circuit and County Judges (Seminole County)
Court Administration (Seminole County)
Clerk of Court (Seminole County)
State Attorney (Seminole County)
Public Defender (Seminole County)
Sheriff of Seminole County
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