# STATE OF MICHIGAN
# 12TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
# HOUGHTON, BARAGA AND KEWEENAW COUNTIES
# FAMILY COURT PLAN

Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2026-03J
Baraga County Probate Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2026-02J
Houghton County Probate Court Local Administrative Order 2026-02J
Keweenaw County Probate Court Local Administrative Order 2026-01J

Rescinds Circuit Court Local Administrative Order 2023-03J
Rescinds Houghton Probate Court Local Administrative Order 2023-01J
Rescinds Baraga Probate Court Local Administrative Order 2023-02J
Rescinds Keweenaw Probate Local Administrative Order 2023-01J

## FAMILY DIVISION ESTABLISHMENT

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. AUTHORITY.

1. Pursuant to MCL 600.1011, as amended by 2002 PA 682, each judicial circuit is required to establish a family court plan. Supreme Court Administrative Order 2003-2 requires the family court plan to be submitted for approval to the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) for filing in accordance with the statute and guidelines provided by the SCAO. The Chief Circuit Judge, the Circuit Court Judge and the Probate Court Judges of the 12th Judicial Circuit, comprising the counties of Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw shall enter into an agreement establishing how the Family Division of the 12th Judicial Circuit will be operated and how the services will be coordinated. The Chief Judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit Courts has the authority to determine the duration of a judge's service pursuant to the Family Court Plan. This circuit has a multi-judge Family Division and the Chief Judge has selected presiding judges to serve in the Family Division. The Circuit Court Judge and the Probate judges of all three counties shall be assigned to the Family Division in their respective counties.

B. GOALS.

1. The primary goal of the Family Court Plan is to follow the statutory requirement of "one family-one judge". Attainment of that goal will allow each judge to access information from the relevant files, leading to efficient court operation and predictability for families.

C. OPERATION.

1. This Family Court Plan supersedes prior plans that have been approved for operation of the Family Division. A judge's service in the Family Division will require the continued development of judicial expertise in family law. All judges presently have expertise, both as a result of education, judicial experience, and from prior private and/or public practice. The Judges shall continue to develop their expertise by participating in training and receiving aids as offered by and through the State of Michigan, the Michigan Judicial Institute, or other providers. The Judges will also periodically consult and communicate with one another on family law issues. The Chief Circuit Court Judge, the Circuit Court Judge and the Probate Judges from each county shall periodically review existing family division plans as necessary but minimally every two (2) years. Periodic reviews will ensure that the Family Court Plan meets the Family Court Plan requirements and guidelines published by the SCAO and that the Family Court Plan reflects the actual practice of the Family Courts in the 12th Judicial Circuit. The Chief Circuit Court Judge shall ensure that such reviews are conducted.

## II. ADMINISTRATION

A. JUDICIAL RESOURCES

1. *Family Division Judges.* All judges assigned to the Family Division have expressed an interest in overseeing family law cases through the end of their term. The Circuit Court Judge, the Probate Judge for the County of Baraga, the Probate Judge for the County of Houghton, and the Probate Judge for the County of Keweenaw shall serve in the Family Division as hereinafter specified.

   After consultation, the Probate Judge for the County of Baraga is appointed as the Presiding Judge of the Family Division in the County of Baraga; the Probate Judge for the County of Houghton and Circuit Court Judge are appointed as the Presiding Judges of the Family Division in the County of Houghton; and, the Probate Judge for the County of Keweenaw and Circuit Court Judge are appointed as the Presiding Judges of the Family Division in the County of Keweenaw (*see Addendum 1).*

   The Chief Judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court has the authority and flexibility to determine the duration of a Judge's service in the Family Division. The Judges serving in the Family Division are identified above and in the attached Addendum 1 and they shall continue to serve until the end of their terms, unless otherwise determined by the Chief Judge *(see Addendum 1).*

2. *Judicial Expertise*. Each judge listed in Addendum 1 may attend New Judge Orientation as well as continued training consistent with the Michigan Continuing Judicial Education (MCJE) rules, and is encouraged to attend training that informs the position and current skillset. Training opportunities are provided by the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJI), under MCL 600.1019.

3. *Judicial Service*. It is not practicable for judges serving in the Family Division to serve full time. The Circuit Judge has judicial responsibilities in civil and criminal cases for the circuit in addition to family cases. The Probate Judges have judicial responsibilities for probate court cases in the county in which they serve. The Probate Judges will be assigned 100% of cases under the juvenile code and adoption code, along with 100% of cases under Family Division-Miscellaneous Proceedings.

B. ASSIGNMENT OF CASES.

1. Cases involving members of the same family (aka "one family-one judge") is defined as "when 2 or more matters within the same jurisdiction of the family division of circuit court involving members of the same family are pending in the same judicial circuit, those matters, whenever practicable, shall be assigned to the judge to whom the first case was assigned" [MCL 600.1023]. The term "whenever practicable" is not defined in statute but generally means to the greatest extent possible to further the goals of the Family Court Plan described in section I(A)(1).

2. The filing official in each county shall be responsible for aligning cases with the "one family-one judge" requirement. After hours matters, such as removals of children, shall be heard by the Family Court Judge.

3. Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) requests shall be assigned in accordance with LAO 2026-02. Any ERPO after hours requests from law enforcement shall be handled by the assigned on call Judge at that time as specified in Circuit Court Administrative Order 2024-02.

4. *Case Assignment*. Cases are assigned randomly, as provided for under MCR 8.111 or as otherwise provided in accordance with MCR 8.112(8); except for cases identified to be those of a family member within the jurisdiction of the Family Court.

5. *Definitions*.

    i. For purposes of the Family Court Plan, the term "family" means people related by blood, marriage or adoption.

    ii. For purposes of the Family Court Plan, the term "family member" means those personally related by law or biology to one parent or the same parents.

iii. For purposes of the Family Court Plan, the term "pending" for assignment of prior matters means cases currently active and including cases closed or designated as inactive within the prior 2 years.

6. *Prior Matters.* When cases or motions are filed, the filing official shall review the case inventory and court records to see if the family, as defined herein, has a prior pending matter, as defined herein.

7. *Case Types.* The primary case types of the family division are: DC, DM, DO, DP, DS, DZ, UD, UE, UF, UI, UM, UN, FH, JA, TL, DJ, DL, JG, NA, PJ, AB, AC, AD, AF, AG, AM, AN, AO, AU, AY, EE, EJ, EM, EP, ER, EV, EZ, ID, NB, NC, PH, PP, PW, VF, VP.

8. *Concurrent Cases.*

   i. In Baraga County, all family court cases are assigned to the probate judge. In cases of disqualification the assigned judge will be assigned to other case(s) involving the same family in accord with the one family/one judge requirement.

   ii. In Houghton County, new family court cases will be assigned to the same judge (or successor) that is assigned to an existing case, in accord with the one family/one judge requirement.

   iii. In Keweenaw County, cases will be assigned as provided in the Local Administrative Order Re: Assignment of Cases in the Family Division.

C. REASSIGNMENT OF CASES.

1. *Disqualifications.* Disqualifications will first be handled as described under MCR 8.111(C)(1). Cases must be reassigned first with the court's family division, then within the remaining bench, and finally by the SCAO's assignment.

2. *Transfer.* When a judge's service in the Family Division ends, that judge's family division caseload will be reassigned to another family division judge.

3. *Dispute.* Any dispute on proper reassignment shall be resolved by the chief judge.

D. STAFFING AND FACILITIES.

1. *Administrative Structure.* The referees, juvenile officers, and Friend of the Court provide statutorily required support services to the court so that the court is operating efficiently with each judge serving in their area of expertise and in furtherance of the Family Division goals.

2. *Remote Proceedings*. Video conferencing and telephonic conferencing will be allowed in accordance with MCR 2.408 and MCR 2.402.

3. *Facilities*. The 12th Judicial Circuit is comprised of three old courthouses. Periodic reviews will be undertaken to consider improvements to facilities in furtherance of the goals of the Family Court Plan in addition to increased security measures. Two of the three courthouses are within close proximity to its Sheriff's Department, which also enhances security.

E. RECORDS MANAGEMENT.

1. *Family Court Administrator*. The Family Court Administrator in Houghton County is designated as the filing official for specific classes of cases within the Family Division in Houghton County as specified in LAO 2026-02.

2. *Circuit Court Clerk.* The Circuit Court Clerk in Houghton County is designates as the filing official for specific classes of cases within the Family Division and Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) as specified in LAO 2026-02.

3. *Clerks of the Court.* In Baraga and Keweenaw Counties, the County Clerk and Probate Register are designated as the filing officials for the Family Division.

4. *Plan Development.* The County Clerk has been afforded the opportunity to participate in the development of plans for management of court records. Any letter of concurrence or disagreement with the Family Court Plan authored by the County Clerk regarding management of court records shall be submitted to the SCAO with the submission of the Family Court Plan for approval.

5. *Filings*. All Family Division matters are filed with the Family Court Administrator in Houghton County and with the County Clerk in Baraga and Keweenaw Counties. Juvenile records and other court documents previously within the jurisdiction and control of the respective Juvenile Courts continue to be filed in the Juvenile Court Offices in Houghton, Baraga and Keweenaw Counties.

6. *Access Point.*

    i. In Houghton County, the office of the Family Court Administrator shall serve as the access point, to provide the public and the bar with information regarding the Family Division.

    ii. In Baraga and Keweenaw Counties, the County Clerk's office shall serve as the access point. The staff of the Juvenile Courts and Probate Judges shall assist the Clerk's office, if necessary.

7. *Internal Transfer.* All Family Division filings will be assigned in accordance with the Local Administrative Order (LAO) for Assignment of Cases in the Family

Division and Section B of this Family Court Plan. All Judges serving within the Family Division shall have access to files and documents of other family division cases including access to MiFile and electronic records as technologically possible.

8. *Technological Access*. All Family Division Courts within the 12th Circuit are Judicial Information System (JIS) Courts, thus ensuring a level of technological access to all family division cases for all family division judges.

9. *Public Access.* This Family Court Plan shall be posted on the respective County websites and shall be publicly available upon request.

Date: 3/9/25

Hon. Fraser T. Strome P43804
Houghton County Probate Court Judge
Chief Judge, 12th Judicial Circuit

Date: 3-10-2026

Hon. Timothy S. Brennan P41461
Baraga County Probate Court Judge

Date: 3/9/2026

Hon. Brittany A. Bulleit P72475
Houghton County Circuit Court Judge

Date: 3-4-26

Hon. Keith W. DeForge P76935
Keweenaw County Probate Court Judge

# ADDENDUM 1

## JUDGES SERVING IN THE FAMILY DIVISION OF THE 12TH CIRCUIT COURT

### PRESIDING CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

Hon. Brittany A. Bulleit, 12th Circuit Court

- Began serving in Family Division 06/26/2023
- Term expires 1/1/2027 at noon

### PRESIDING FAMILY DIVISION JUDGES

Hon. Timothy S. Brennan, Baraga County Probate Court

- Began serving 01/01/1998
- Term ends 1/1/2031 at noon

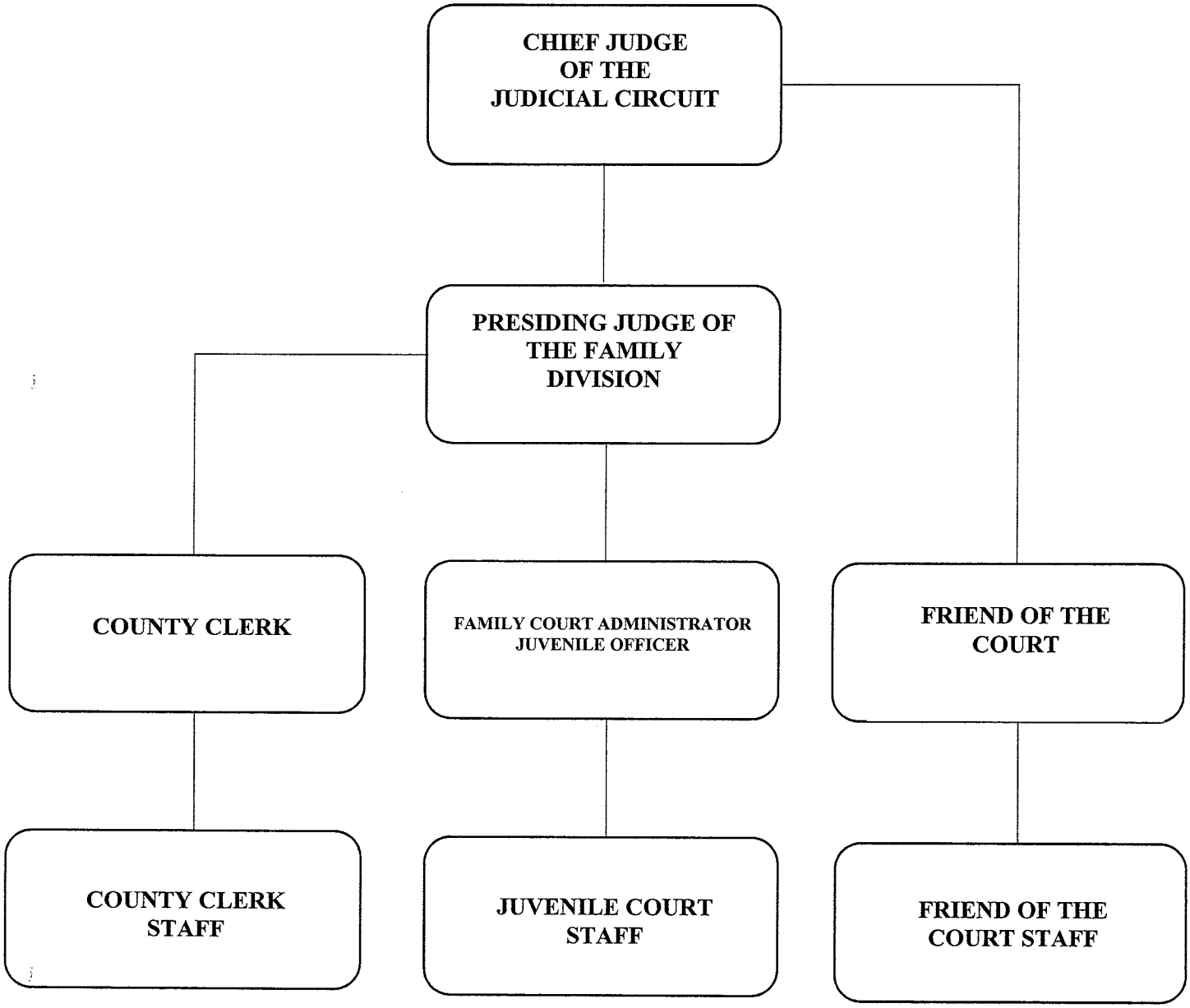
Hon. Fraser T. Strome, Houghton County Probate Court

- Began serving 03/20/2009
- Term ends 1/1/2031 at noon

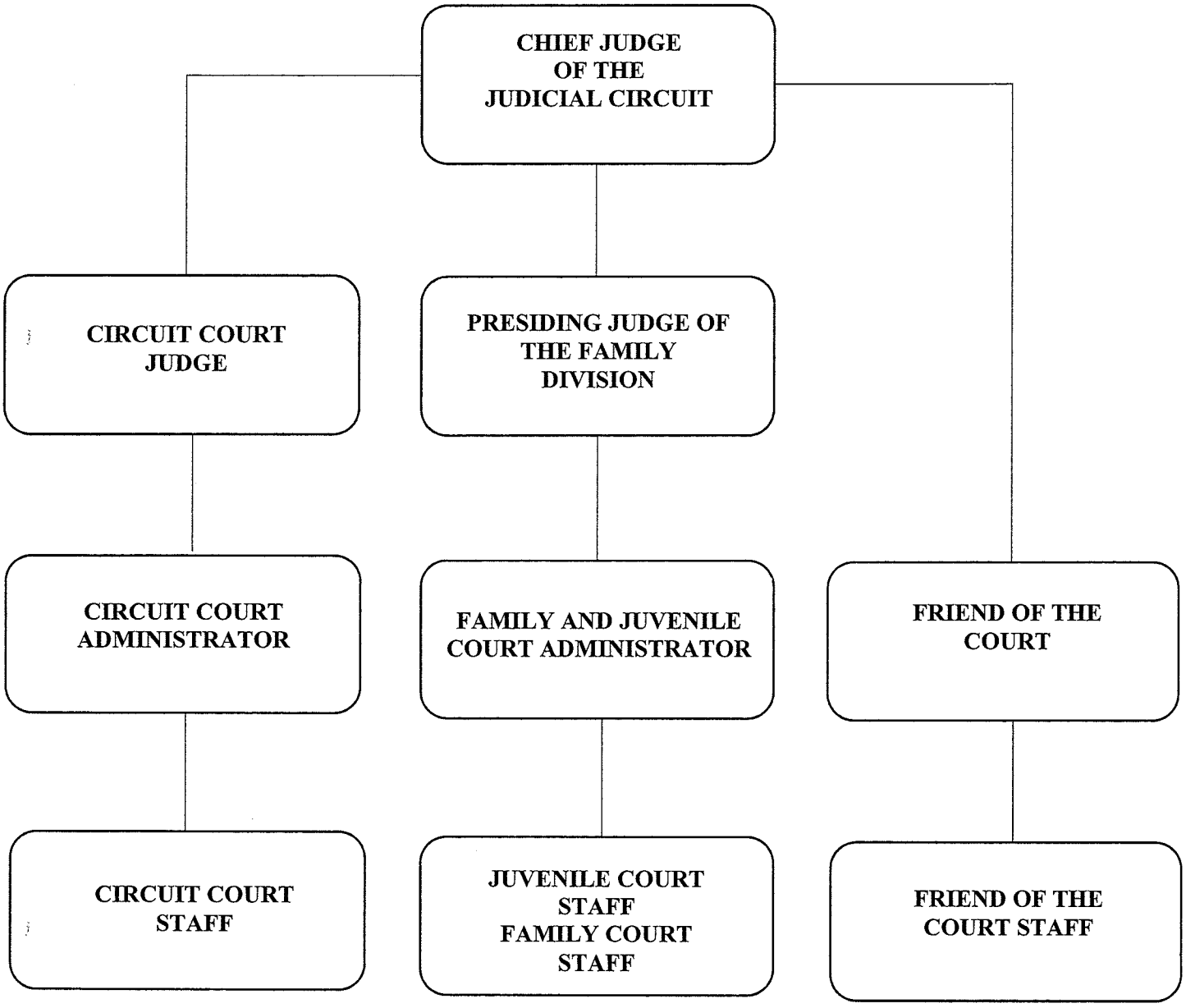
Hon. Keith W. DeForge, Keweenaw County Probate Court

- Began serving 01/01/2018
- Term ends 1/1/2031 at noon

# 12TH CIRCUIT FAMILY COURT
# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
# BARAGA COUNTY



# 12TH CIRCUIT FAMILY COURT
# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
# HOUGHTON COUNTY



# 12TH CIRCUIT FAMILY COURT
# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
# KEWEENAW COUNTY

