STATE OF MICHIGAN

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTIES OF ALGER, LUCE, MACKINAC, AND SCHOOLCRAFT

11TH CIRCUIT COURT, 5TH PROBATE DISTRICT COURT FOR ALGER AND SCHOOLCRAFT COUNTIES, AND THE 6TH PROBATE DISTRIC COURT FOR LUCE AND MACKINAC COUNTIES

FAMILY COURT PLAN

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

11th Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2026-10J
5th Probate District Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2026-02J
6th Probate District Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2026-02J

Rescinds 11th Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2025-22J
Rescinds 5th Probate District Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2025-05J
Rescinds 6th Probate District Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2025-07J

FAMILY DIVISION ESTABLISHMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Authority. Pursuant to MCL 600.1011, as amended by 2002 PA 682, each judicial circuit is required to establish a family court plan (FCP or "the 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 and the chief probate judge shall enter into an agreement establishing how the family division will be operated in the circuit and how the services will be coordinated. The chief judge of the circuit court has the authority to determine the duration of a judge's service pursuant to the family court plan in furtherance of this goal.

B. Goals. The Family Court plan goal is to utilize the extensive experience and expertise of our existing Family Court Judges to ensure efficient court operations and consistency and predictability for our court users.

C. Operation. This Family Court Plan supersedes prior plans that have been approved for the operation of the family division. This Plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary including when family division judicial assignments change, and at least every 2 years, by the chief circuit and chief probate judges to ensure that the Plan

meets the statutory requirements and complies with the Family Court Plan Requirements and Guidelines provided by the SCAO.

The Judge of the 5th Probate District Court for Alger and Schoolcraft Counties is the Presiding Judge of the Family Court in Alger County.

The Judge of the 11th Circuit Court is the Presiding Judge of the Family Court in Schoolcraft County.

The Judge of the 6th Probate District Court for Mackinac and Luce Counties is the Presiding Judge of the Family Court in Mackinac and Luce Counties.

The Chief Judge of the 11th Circuit Court shall have supervisory authority over human resources/employment issues of the Family Court.

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. JUDICAL RESOURCES / SERVICE

1. Family Division Judges. The 5th Probate District Court Judge, the 6th Probate District Court Judge, and the 11th Circuit Judge assigned to the family division have expressed an interest in overseeing family law cases through the end of their term.

   A list of judges assigned to the family division, including when they started serving in the family division and when their current term expires is included in Appendix B.

2. Judicial Expertise. Each judge listed in the appendix may attend New Judge Orientation as well as continued training consistent with 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. Each Family Court Judge shall pursue judicial education through MCI, MPJA, and other accredited institutions to ensure litigants receive fair, just, and prompt attention to their matters.

3. Judicial Service. All judges in "the Plan" will serve full time in the family division, under MCL 600.1011(3), where sufficient caseload and judicial resources exist. For any partial assignment the Plan must disclose the percentage of new filings by case type assigned to each judge.

4. The Friend of the Court office shall be under the general supervisory authority of the Chief Judge and under the day-by-day direction of the Family Court Presiding Judge.

5. The Friend of the Court and the staff shall assist the Family Court.
6. The Chief Judge may contract with an attorney referee to perform pretrials, conciliation, mediation, clerking, and refereeing in family court cases in the 11th Circuit.

7. Probate Court staff shall be under the supervisory authority of the Probate Judge. Family Court shall be under the day-to-day supervision of the Presiding Judge and under the general supervisory authority of the Chief Judge.

B. ASSIGNMENT OF CASES

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(B).

1. Case Assignment. Cases shall be assigned pursuant to the circuit's case assignment local administrative order.

2. Definitions.

   For purposes of this FCP, the term "family" means: a group of persons united by birth, marriage, or adoption.

   For purposes of this FCP, the term "family member" means: parents, children, siblings, spouses, or other close relatives (such as stepparents, grandparents, etc.).

   For purposes of this FCP, the term "pending" means: a case that has been filed but not yet resolved or concluded.

3. One Family-One Judge. With the limited resources in the Circuit, "one family-one judge" is easily achievable. When this is not practicable, internal reassignment will occur pursuant to this Local Administrative Order. Staff shall inform the assigned judge of other cases that are pending that involve the family members in the assigned case.

4. Prior Matters. When cases or motions are filed, the clerk's office or court administrator as clerk of the court shall review the case inventory and court records to see if the family, as defined herein, has a prior pending matter, as defined herein.

5. Case Types. The primary case types of the family division are AB, AC, AD, AF, AG, AM, AN, AO, AU, AY, DC, DJ, DL, DM, DO, DP, DS, DZ, EE, EJ, EM, EP, ER, EV, EZ, FH (only felony, non-payment of child support), ID, JA, JG, NA, NB, PH, PJ, PP, PW, TL, UE, UF, UI, UM, UN, VF, and VP. The ancillary case types that may be included in the Plan, if concurrent jurisdiction plans or other court configurations require it are CA, CY, DD, GA, GL, GM, JA, LG, MI, NC, and PO.

6. Concurrent Cases. Staff will ensure coordination with concurrent cases.

C. REASSIGNMENT OF CASES

1. Disqualifications. Disqualifications will be handled as outlined in the circuit's case assignment local administrative order. Cases must be reassigned first with the court's family division, then within the remaining bench, and finally by SCAO assignment.

2. Transfer. When a family court judge leaves the bench, any cases assigned to that judge will be transferred to the judge's successor.

3. Dispute. Any dispute on proper reassignment shall be resolved by the chief judge and/or the presiding family division judge, should one be appointed.

D. STAFFING AND FACILITIES

1. Administrative Structure. A family division organizational chart is included as Appendix A. The 11th Circuit Court employs various positions within the Family Division. The positions include a Domestic Relations and Juvenile Attorney Referee, Juvenile Probation Officers, Friend of the Court (FOC) staff, and administration.

    a. The Domestic Relations and Juvenile Attorney Referee conducts hearings and makes recommendations on custody, parenting time, and child support in domestic cases and preliminary hearings, adjudications, dispositions, review hearings, permanency planning hearings, juvenile guardianships, and termination hearings in juvenile cases. The Referee helps manage judicial caseload and ensures continuity in domestic and juvenile cases.
    b. In addition to the Attorney Referee, preliminary hearings, adjudications, dispositions, review hearings, permanency planning hearings, juvenile guardianships and termination hearings in juvenile cases can also be coordinated and heard by the Juvenile Officer if they are authorized by local administrative order to act as a juvenile referee.
    c. Juvenile Probation Officers supervise youth involved in the juvenile

justice system, coordinate services among community partners, monitor compliance with court orders, and provide reports to inform judicial review and disposition.

d. Friend of the Court personnel monitor compliance with support, custody, and parenting time orders and ensure effective communication with judicial officers and court personnel.

Together, these positions work collaboratively to promote the goals of the FCP.

2. Remote Proceedings.

- Persons wishing to appear remotely shall seek the approval of the Presiding Judge within a reasonable amount of time prior to the scheduled court hearing.
- Use of videoconferencing technology in civil cases within the Family Court is otherwise controlled by MCR 2.408.

3. Facilities.

- An attorney/client meeting room is located on the third floor of the courthouse in the southeast corner of the courtroom for parties to confer privately at the Mackinac County Courthouse. The attorney conference room in Luce and Schoolcraft County Courthouse is on the main floor. The Alger County Courthouse has an attorney/client meeting room available on the second floor.
- The judiciary has the inherent right to control court spaces.
- Because of limited space, exceptional flexibility, communication, and cooperation will be necessary. Jury trials in any court must have priority, requiring a balancing of needs. The 11th Circuit Court Administrator will resolve any conflicts.

E. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

1. Clerks of the Court. The County Clerk is designated as the Clerk of the Court in Schoolcraft County for the Family Division. In Alger, Luce, and Mackinac Counties the Court Administrator is designated Clerk of the Court. The Probate Register for their respective county (Alger, Luce, Mackinac, or Schoolcraft) shall maintain every record created by or filed with the Probate Court.

2. 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 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.

3. Filing. Probate case codes will be filed by the Probate Register. These files will

be stored and maintained by the Probate Register. Circuit Court Family Court case codes will be held, filed, and stored with the County Clerk and maintained and stored by the County Clerk.

4. Access Point. The Probate Register will be the access point for each court for all family court matters.

5. Internal Transfer. Weekly, the Probate and County Clerk or Court Administrator as Clerk of the Court staff will review the next week's docket to prepare and remit files to the Family Court Judge for review and preparation of scheduled hearings.

6. Technological Access. The court utilizes TCS case management system and will be implementing MiFILE this year.

7. Public Access. This FCP is posted on the court's website and is otherwise publicly available upon request.

Dated: 8/7/26

Hon. Beth A. Gibson
Chief Judge
11th Circuit Court

Dated: 8-10-2026

Hon. Brian D. Rahilly
Circuit Judge
11th Circuit Court

Dated: 7-28-26

Hon. Charles C. Nebel
Probate Judge
5th Probate District Court

Dated:

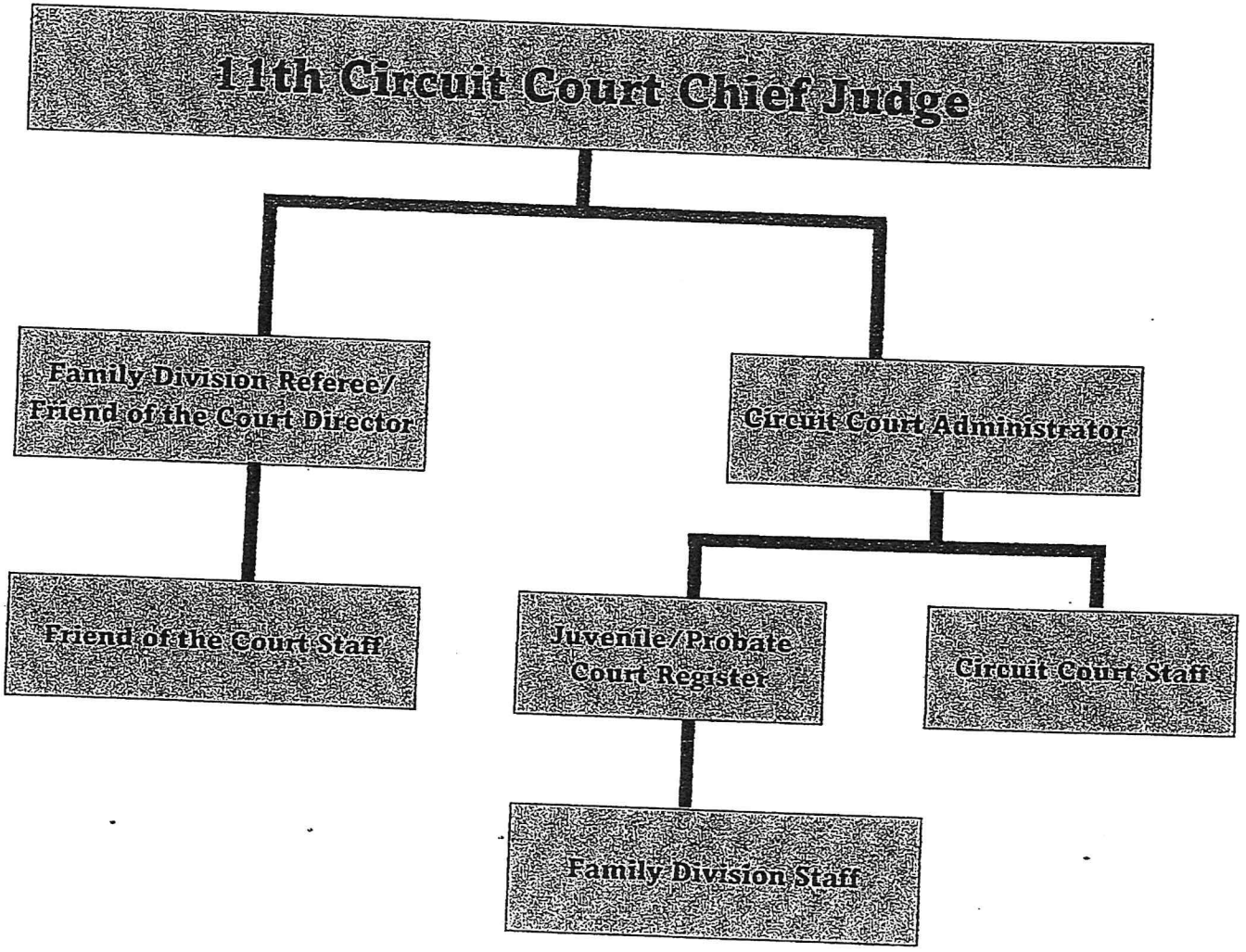
Hon. XXXXXXX
Probate Judge
6th Probate District Court

APPENDIX A

11TH CIRCUIT COURT FAMILY DIVISION ORGANIZATION CHART

Appedix A

11th Circuit Court Family Division



APPENDIX B

11TH CIRCUIT COURT FAMILY DIVISION JUDGES

Alger Presiding Family Division Judge:

Hon. Charles C. Nebel (P39695)
5th Probate District Court
Appointed: March 2009
Bench Start Date: March 17, 2009
Term Expires: December 31, 2030

Luce and Mackinac Presiding Family Division Judge:

Hon. _____ (PXXXXX)
6th Probate District Court
Appointed:
Bench Start Date:
Term Expires:

Schoolcraft Presiding Family Division Judge:

Hon. Brian D. Rahilly (P74065)
11th Circuit Court
Elected: November 2020
Bench Start Date: January 1, 2021
Term Expires: December 31, 2026