STATE OF MICHIGAN

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTIES OF

OGEMAW AND ROSCOMMON

FAMILY COURT PLAN FOR THE 34th CIRCUIT COURT, ROSCOMMON COUNTY PROBATE COURT, AND OGEMAW COUNTY PROBATE COURT

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order C34 2026-02J

Probate Court Joint Local Administrative Order P72 2026-01J/P65 2026-03J

Rescinds Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order C34 2025-02J

Rescinds Probate Court Local Administrative Order P72 2025-02J

Rescinds Probate Court Local Administrative Order P65 2025-2J

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 goal(s) of this FCP are described below:

One Family-One Judge: This is a foundational principle in Michigan Family Courts, aiming to have a single judge handle all legal matters involving the same family. This promotes consistency, a deeper understanding of family dynamics, and potentially more efficient case management.

Consistency and Predictability for Families: Families navigating the legal system benefit from consistent application of the law and predictable court procedures. This reduces anxiety and promotes a sense of fairness, which is particularly important in our close-knit rural communities where reputations and personal connections can be significant. This goal also directly leads to a sense of equal access to justice for the families served by the division.

Understanding Community Context: Judges and court staff are encouraged to develop an understanding of the specific social and economic challenges faced by families in this region.

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality: In a smaller community, maintaining the privacy of families involved in court proceedings is particularly important.

Collaboration with Local Agencies: We rely heavily on inter-agency cooperation. We prioritize strong working relationships with local Friend of the Court offices, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Community Mental Health (CMH), and law enforcement agencies.

C. Operation. This FCP 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. This plan will also be reviewed if there is a change in identity of the judges serving.

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. JUDICAL RESOURCES / SERVICE

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. There is one family division judge in Roscommon County (Hon. Mark D. Jernigan) and one family division judge in Ogemaw County (Hon. Scott M. Williams). Judge Jernigan began serving in the family division in 2018 and is anticipated to serve until approximately 2030. Judge Williams began serving in the family division in 2020, with his current term ending in 2030.

2. Judicial Expertise. Each judge listed has attended New Judge Orientation as well as has 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.

3. Judicial Service. All judges are serving full time in the family division, under MCL 600.1011(3), where sufficient caseload and judicial resources exists.

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 are assigned randomly, as provided for under MCR 8.111 or as otherwise provided in accordance with 8.112(B), except for those cases identified to be those of a family member within the jurisdiction of the family court.

2. One Family-One Judge. A single judge handles all Circuit Court Family Division legal matters involving the same family within each county. This promotes consistency, a deeper understanding of family dynamics, and potentially more efficient case management. It may not be practical to utilize the "one family-one judge" theory if a family court judge is on vacation or unavailable, and a judge on our blanket assignment must handle after-hours verbal ERPO requests by law enforcement, criminal violations of personal protection orders, or other family court matters that require immediate attention.

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

4. 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, NC, NB, PH, PJ, PP, PW, TL, UE, UF, UI, UM, UN, VF, and VP. While FH (only felony, non-payment of child support) and TL are primary case types of a family division, in Ogemaw and Roscommon Counties, they are not being utilized in case assignments

5. Concurrent Cases. We have one family division judge in each county in the circuit. The family court judges are assigned all family division cases within each county, which supports the "one family-one judge" requirement of concurrent cases.

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 SCAO assignment.

2. Transfer. All cases will be assigned to the successor family court judge effective upon retirement date of the current family court judge.

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.

2. Here is how the listed positions and their respective duties contribute to the Michigan Family Court plan:

ROSCOMMON

a. **FOC Referee (Friend of the Court Referee)**

By handling a significant volume of initial and modification requests for custody, parenting time, and support, FOC Referees ensure the timely and efficient processing of cases. Their investigations and recommendations, centered on the child's best interests, directly support the goal of protecting children and ensuring fair and consistent application of support guidelines. This also frees up judicial time for more complex legal matters.

b. **Juvenile Director/Attorney Referee**

This role is crucial for the efficient and effective operation of the Juvenile Division. By supervising staff and developing programs, in addition to hearing a significant number of delinquency and abuse/neglect cases, they ensure that interventions for delinquent and neglected youth are timely and appropriate, advancing the court's goal of promoting the success and well-being of youth. The Juvenile Director/Attorney Referee is also responsible for administration of the Child Care Fund (CCF). Their referee duties ensure a prompt response to critical juvenile matters, upholding due process and focusing on rehabilitation and child protection.

c. **Family Court Administrator**

The Administrator is vital for the overall efficiency and organizational integrity of the Family Court. By managing personnel, resources, and operations, they ensure that the court functions smoothly, allowing for timely case resolution and the delivery of quality services to families. Their focus on process improvement directly contributes to the court's goals of efficiency and effectiveness.

d. **Family Court Deputy Clerk**

Deputy Clerks are the backbone of court operations. Their meticulous record-keeping, scheduling, and processing of documents ensure the accuracy and integrity of court proceedings. This foundational work is essential for the fair and timely resolution of family cases, providing a clear and accessible record of all actions and decisions.

e. **Juvenile Financial Clerk**

By accurately processing juvenile financial information and managing case files, the Juvenile Financial Clerk supports the operation of the Juvenile Division. This ensures that financial aspects of juvenile cases, such as restitution and implementation of the CCF, are correctly managed, which is part of the court's overall commitment to accountability and supporting the welfare of children.

f. **Lead Juvenile Probation Officers & Juvenile Probation Officers**

These officers are central to the court's efforts in juvenile justice. By supervising and guiding youth, implementing treatment plans, and enforcing court orders, they actively work towards the rehabilitation of delinquent youth and the protection of children in neglect and abuse cases. Their direct work with families, schools, and community agencies promotes successful outcomes for youth and contributes to community safety, aligning with the court's vision for promoting the success of individuals and youth.

g. **The Friend of the Court (FOC)**

The FOC (Director) acts as the administrative backbone and operational leader of the Friend of the Court office, directly supporting the judiciary in its mission to serve families and children within the Michigan family court system. Through effective management, specialized services, and diligent enforcement, the FOC Director helps to ensure that court orders are fair, enforced, and ultimately advance the best interests of the children involved in domestic relations cases.

h. **FOC Enforcement Officer/Interstate Worker**

These officers are critical for ensuring compliance with court orders, particularly financial support for children. Their work ensures that parents meet their obligations, providing essential resources for children's care and upholding the court's authority. The interstate aspect ensures that children do not lose support simply because a parent moves out of state, thereby protecting the best interests of children across jurisdictional lines.

i. **FOC Clerk/Medical Enforcement**

This role provides essential administrative support for the FOC's operations. By assisting the public with understanding complex medical enforcement issues and managing the flow of cases, they contribute to the accessibility and efficiency of court services, helping families navigate the system and ensure their children receive ordered medical care.

j. **FOC Financial Officer**

The Financial Officer ensures the accurate and timely collection and distribution of child and spousal support payments. Their meticulous financial management is crucial for providing financial stability to recipient families, which directly benefits children. This also upholds the integrity and accountability of the support system, a key component of the Family Court's plan.

k. **FOC Caseworker**

FOC Caseworkers are at the forefront of direct service delivery within the Friend of the Court. Their comprehensive investigations and enforcement efforts are fundamental to ensuring that court orders reflect the child's best interests and are actively followed. By mediating disputes and managing cases, they help stabilize family situations and provide ongoing support for children's well-being.

OGEMAW

a. Juvenile Director / Juvenile Referee / Domestic Relations Referee

In serving as a judicial officer, the juvenile and domestic relations referee ensures the timely and efficient processing of cases within the family division by hearing a wide variety of matters, often serving as the first stop for families as they bring complex matters before the court. They provide detailed synopses of the records of these matters and provide reasoned recommendations to the family court judge, which allows accountability and consistency to the families. Also

serving as the juvenile director allows the professional in this role to truly embody the one family, one court goal of Michigan's trial courts and interact with families wholly in pursuit of the goals of the family plan.

b. Family Court Administrator / Friend of The Court

The Administrator/Friend of the Court is vital for the overall efficiency and organizational integrity of the family court. By managing personnel, resources, and operations in both offices, they ensure that the court functions smoothly, allowing for timely case resolution and the delivery of equal access to justice for families. Their focus on process improvement directly contributes to the court's goals of efficiency and effectiveness. By acting in both roles, they are able to take advantage of that cross management to truly ensure court staff and families are best served by the family division.

c. Family Court Scheduling Clerk

The Family Court Scheduling Clerk is primarily responsible for ensuring domestic relations matter proceed through the court on an efficient and effective schedule. They serve as a main point of contact for multiple stakeholders, and their meticulous record-keeping, scheduling, and processing of documents ensure the accuracy and integrity of court proceedings. This foundational work is essential for the fair and timely resolution of family cases, providing a clear and accessible record of all actions and decisions.

d. Juvenile Officer / Intensive Probation Officer

These officers are central to the court's efforts in juvenile justice. By supervising and guiding youth, implementing treatment plans, and enforcing court orders, they actively work towards the rehabilitation of delinquent youth and the protection of children in neglect and abuse cases. Their direct work with families, schools, and community agencies promotes successful outcomes for youth and contributes to community safety, aligning with the court's vision for promoting the success of individuals and youth.

e. School Support Services

The School Support Services worker provides services directly to youth under the jurisdiction of the court. They serve to ensure the educational needs of a family are met by monitoring school progress, liaising with local school systems, and providing feedback to the probation department. By having this position in place, the family

division is better able to ensure families are supported in all areas.

f. Juvenile Register

The Juvenile Register serves as the main point of contact for child protective and juvenile delinquency matters that are before the court. They must deal with families who are often experiencing difficult events and provide consistency and dependability in order to ensure that the family receives access to the court and understands the proceedings they are a part of. They ensure that rigid time guidelines are met by making sure cases move through the court efficiently and safely. They regularly interact with community partners and have a strong understanding of the interrelationships that exist on these matters.

g. Friend of the Court Caseworker/Enforcement Officer

The Friend of the Court Caseworker / Enforcement Officer is vital to the success of the family division. Working as case managers, they guide families through the often difficult and emotionally driven subjects of custody and parenting time, ensuring that families understand their orders as well as their options should they want changes made. Enforcing the custody, parenting time, and child support orders of the court in one-on-one relationships with families, they must be diligent in adhering to the standards of consistency and predictability, understanding community context, privacy, and community involvement.

h. Friend of the Court Financial Officer / Scheduling Coordinator

The Financial Officer ensures the accurate and timely collection and distribution of child and spousal support payments. Their meticulous financial management is crucial for providing financial stability to recipient families, which directly benefits children. This also upholds the integrity and accountability of the support system, a key component of the Family Court's plan. This role also serves as the Scheduling Coordinator for the family division's domestic relations referee, ensuring that families are not waiting to have their voices heard.

i. Friend of the Court Clerk / Receptionist.

This Friend of the Court Clerk / Receptionist is the familiar face of the Friend of the Court office. Manning the customer service window, they provide direct access to justice for families by answering myriad questions and carefully providing guidance through the complex

policies and procedures that come with having a case at Friend of the Court. By assisting the public with understanding complex medical enforcement issues and managing the flow of cases, they contribute to the accessibility and efficiency of court services, helping families navigate the system and ensure their children receive ordered medical care.

In summary, each of these positions plays a specialized and interconnected role in the Michigan Family Court system. From the administrative oversight of the Family Court Administrator to the direct child advocacy of the Juvenile Probation Officers and the intricate financial management of the FOC Financial Officer, their combined efforts create a robust framework designed to efficiently and fairly resolve family disputes, enforce crucial orders, and ultimately, prioritize and advance the best interests and well-being of Michigan's children.

3. Remote Proceedings. The 34th Circuit Court complies with the Court Rule regarding remote proceedings by allowing written requests for Zoom appearances to be filed and a judicial determination to be made on said Zoom requests pursuant to the requirements in MCR 2.408.

4. Facilities. The 34th Circuit Court Offers the following facilities, which further the goals of this Family Court Plan:

- **Single Building Access.** Currently in both Ogemaw and Roscommon Counties access to the family division is housed all in the same building, with the courtrooms, clerks' offices, juvenile offices, and friends of the court in one location. This allows families the ability to handle all family court matters in one visit, without having to jump from building to building.
- **Private Meeting Rooms:** Access to private rooms for attorney/client meetings, guardian ad litem consultations, and confidential discussions is crucial, and will be made available upon request. These spaces allow for candid conversations without fear of being overheard, fostering trust and facilitating the negotiation of sensitive family issues. These rooms may be utilized for mediation and are designed to be non-confrontational and comfortable, encouraging open dialogue and resolution of disputes outside of the courtroom.

Recognizing the importance of safety and security for families, 34th Circuit Court utilizes the following security measures in its facilities:

- **Unified Security Protocols:** The Family Division operates under the same overarching security protocols as the rest of the court building. This includes security screening at all public entrances (metal

detectors, X-ray machines), controlled access points, and the presence of court officers or building security.

- **Security Committee**: A security committee, including Judges and Court Administrators as well as other security stakeholders, meets quarterly to discuss security of the county building, which includes our court facilities.

E. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

1. Clerks of the Court. The Roscommon County Clerk is designated as the Clerk of the Court for the Family Division. The Roscommon County Probate Clerk shall maintain every record created by or filed with the probate court. The same applies in Ogemaw, with the Ogemaw County Clerk serving as Clerk of the Court for the Family Division.

2. Plan Development. The County Clerks in both Ogemaw and Roscommon County have 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.

ROSCOMMON COUNTY

Filings for the following family court types are accepted by the Office of Central Filing: DC, DM, DO, DP, DS, DZ, EE, EJ, EP, ER, EV, EZ, PH, PJ, PP, UE, UF, UI, UM, and UN.

Filings for the following family court file types are accepted by the Roscommon County Probate/Family Court Office: AB, AC, AD, AF, AG, AM, AN, AO, AU, AY, DJ, DL, EM, ID, JA, JG, NA, NC, NB, PW, VF and VP.

Traffic and ordinance violations are filed with 82nd District Court under a separate local administrative order.

Records access aligns with the division of file types as outline directly above, with either the Office of Central Filing or Roscommon County Probate/Family Court being responsible for access. Storage of all case types is located at the Office of Central Filing.

Family court filings are accepted in person, by mail, or electronically by e-mail to the court that accepts the filings. A court user should contact the Office of Central Filing or Roscommon County Probate/Family Court (depending on case type, as outlined above) prior to electronic filing to ensure that the filing is allowable via electronic means and is sent to the correct e-mail address.

In general, the family court judge's scheduling clerk handles case scheduling for the family division with the exception of juvenile cases (handled by the juvenile register). The family court scheduling clerk and juvenile register may both be contacted at the Roscommon County Probate/Family Court Office.

OGEMAW COUNTY

Filings for the following family court file types are accepted by the Ogemaw County Clerk's Office: DC, DM, DO, DP, DS, DZ, EE, EJ, EP, ER, EV, EZ, FH (only felony, non-payment of child support), PH, PJ, PP, UE, UF, UI, UM, and UN.

Filings for the following family court file types are accepted by Ogemaw County Probate Court: AB, AC, AD, AF, AG, AM, AN, AO, AU, AY, DJ, DL, ID, JA, JG, NA, NC, NB, PW, VF and VP.

Traffic and ordinance violations are filed with 82nd District Court under a separate local administrative order.

Records access and records storage aligns with the division of file types as outline directly above, with either the Ogemaw County Clerk's Office or Ogemaw County Probate Court being responsible for access and storage.

In general, family court filings are only accepted in person or by mail. A court user may contact the Ogemaw County Clerk's Office or Ogemaw County Probate Court (depending on case type, as outlined above) to request an alternative filing method, which may be allowed upon review.

In general, the family court judge's scheduling clerk handles case scheduling for the family division. The family court scheduling clerk may be contacted at Ogemaw County Probate Court.

4. Access Point

ROSCOMMON COUNTY

The central access point for the family division will be dependent on case type, as indicated in section E3, above, with either the Office of Central Filing or Roscommon County Probate/Family Court acting as the central access point. Certain case types may be accessed online through the public case search function on MiCOURT: https://micourt.courts.michigan.gov/case-search/

OGEMAW COUNTY

The central access point for the family division will be dependent on case type, as indicated in section E3, above, with either the Ogemaw County Clerk's Office or Ogemaw County Probate Court acting as the central access point. Certain case types may be accessed online through the public case search function on MiCOURT: https://micourt.courts.michigan.gov/case-search/

5. Technological Access

34th Circuit Court does not utilize document imaging to store its case files and remains at this time a 100% paper county. Case files are available to family court judges and referees as indicated in section E3 regarding records access.

34th Circuit Court utilizes Judicial Information Systems (JIS) web-based Trial Court System (WebTCS) and the probate courts in both Ogemaw and Roscommon utilize JIS Probate Court System (PCS) for case management. Access to WebTCS and/or PCS is made available to family court judges and referees upon request.

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

8/1/26
Date

Hon. Robert W. Bennett, Chief Circuit Judge

8/12/2026
Date

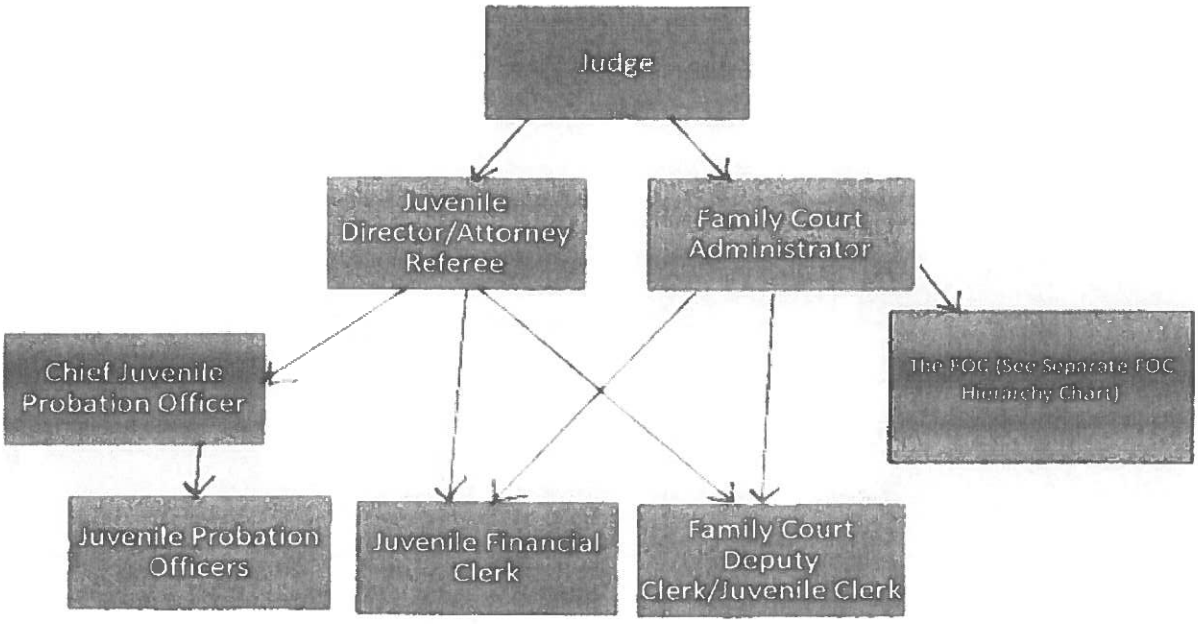
Hon. Scott M. Williams, Ogemaw Probate Judge

8-11-26
Date

Hon. Mark D. Jernigan, Roscommon Probate Judge

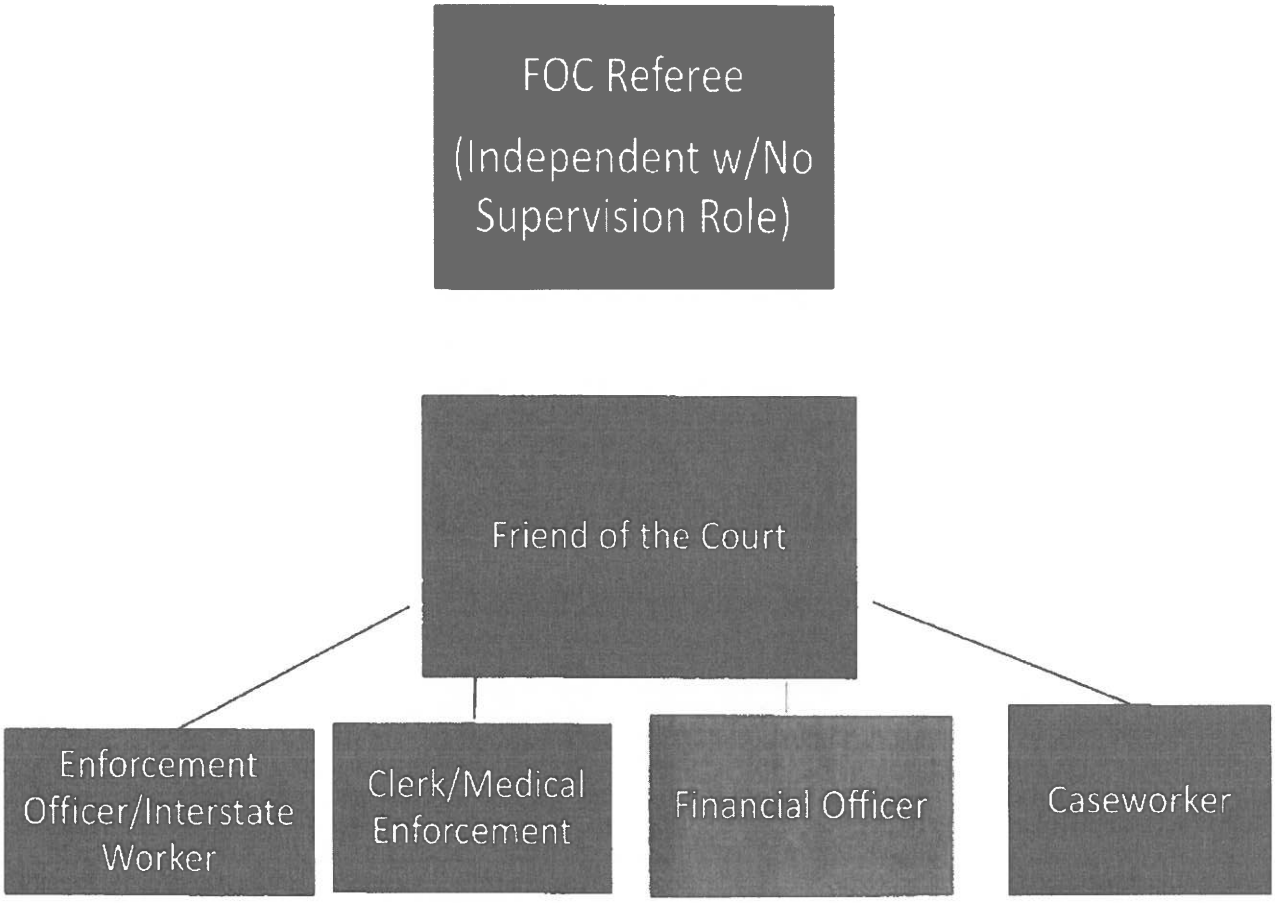
ADDENDUM A

34th Circuit Court, Roscommon County, Family Division Hierarchy Chart



ADDENDUM A

34th Circuit Court, Roscommon County, FOC Hierarchy Chart



ADDENDUM A
34TH CIRCUIT COURT – FAMILY DIVISION – OGEMAW COUNTY
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

