

STATE OF MICHIGAN



**ST. CLAIR COUNTY COURTS**

**HON. MICHAEL WEST**  
CHIEF JUDGE  
**HON. JOHN TOMLINSON**  
PROBATE JUDGE  
**HON. JENNIFER DEEGAN**  
PROBATE JUDGE  
**HON. CYNTHIA LANE**  
CIRCUIT JUDGE

201 McMORRAN BLVD.  
PORT HURON, MICHIGAN 48060  
Circuit Court (810) 985-2031  
District Court-Port Huron (810) 985-2076  
District Court-Marine City (810) 765-4057  
Adult Probate (810) 985-2066  
Family Division (810) 985-2155

**HON. JOHN MONAGHAN**  
CHIEF JUDGE PRO TEM  
**HON. MICHAEL HULEWICZ**  
DISTRICT JUDGE  
**HON. MONA ARMSTRONG**  
DISTRICT JUDGE  
**HON. DANIEL DAMMAN**  
CIRCUIT JUDGE

Administrative Order: C31-2025-\_\_J  
P74-2025-\_\_J

Rescinds Administrative Order: C31-2024-5J  
P74-2024-3J

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 judge shall establish how the family division will be operated in the circuit and how the services will be coordinated. The chief judge has the authority to determine the duration of a judge’s service pursuant to the family court plan in furtherance of this goal. This court has a multi-judge family division and the chief judge has selected a presiding judge to serve in that capacity. See Appendix A for further detail.
- B. **Goals.** The Circuit and Probate Courts of St. Clair County seek to assign cases in accordance with the judges’ preferred area of practice and expertise while creating an equitable distribution of workload, maximizing scheduling efficiency and ensuring that one family is assigned to one judge pursuant to MCL 600.1023. This goal is furthered by the Case Assignment LAO which provides for direct assignment or re-assignment of any family division case to another judge presiding over an active case with the same family. The mission of the judiciary is to serve the public by protecting individual rights, providing fair and responsive forums for the resolution of family court matters. The Court strives to be fair in its treatment of all citizens, and effective in providing principled, timely, and enforceable judgments. It works to be accessible to all citizens in a convenient, dignified, and affordable manner, and to be accountable for its use of

public resources.

C. **Operation.** This 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 judge and the presiding Family Division judge to ensure that the Plan meets the statutory requirements and complies with the Family Court Plan Requirements and Guidelines provided by the SCAO.

## II. ADMINISTRATION

### A. JUDICIAL 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 are three judges assigned to the Family Division and each has expressed an interest and agreed to continue their current assignment through the end of their term:

- Judge John Tomlinson – term expires January 1, 2031 - began assignment in 2007. Judge Tomlinson will serve as the Presiding Judge of the Family Division. He will be assigned one-third of cases filed with Domestic Relations case type codes or Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes. Judge Tomlinson will be assigned all Name Change (NC) cases. He will be reassigned all Family Division cases where a pending Minor Guardianship case exists. Judge Tomlinson is partially assigned to the Family Division, he will also hear all Probate Matters.
- Judge Daniel Damman – term expires January 1, 2027 - began assignment in 2021. Judge Damman will be assigned one-third of cases filed with Domestic Relations case type codes and Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes. Judge Damman will be assigned all Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) cases. Judge Damman is partially assigned to the Family Division, he will also hear one-third of the Circuit Court criminal docket.
- Judge Jennifer Deegan – term expires January 1, 2027 - began assignment in 2024. Judge Deegan will be assigned all cases under Juvenile Code case type codes or proceedings under Adoption Code case type codes. Judge Deegan will be assigned all newly filed Minor Guardianship cases and will be assigned those Domestic Relations cases when she already has a guardianship over the minor children in the case. She will also be assigned one-third of the Domestic Relations case type codes and Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes.

2. **Judicial Expertise.** Each judge listed above 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. The 31<sup>st</sup> Circuit Court relies upon MJI to support judicial education due to limited county resources. Each judge selects and attends training that aligns with their docket or interests. The rest of the court staff is provided with training opportunities offered by family division associations, MJI and local or state entities. The staff are involved in relevant statewide associations and are active participants in trainings, meetings and workgroups.

3. **Judicial Service.** Judicial resources do not allow for all Family Division judges to serve full time. The Case Assignment LAO governs all case assignments and is to be read in conjunction with the Plan.

## 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. The Case Assignment LAO governs all case assignments and is to be read in conjunction with the Plan.
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: a party sharing a common child, spouse, or parent with another party.
  - For purposes of this FCP, the term “pending” means: pre-judgment or active post-judgment including post-judgment collection of child support within the three months preceding the filing of the new action.

3. **One Family-One Judge.** To the extent practicable, all matters within the jurisdiction of the Family Division will be assigned to the same judge to further the concept of “one family-one judge.” When a matter within the jurisdiction of the Family Division is filed, and a matter involving the same family is pending in the Family Division, the new case will be assigned to the judge assigned to the pending matter. Cases

shall be assigned pursuant to the Case Assignment LAO. The judges may agree on another arrangement as needed for the specifics of the case

4. **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.
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 are CA, CY, DD, GA, GL, GM, JA, LG, MI, NC, and PO.
6. **Concurrent Cases.** Cases that are filed where a new or pending NA, DL, or DJ case type exists shall be transferred to Judge Deegan. Cases not otherwise specified in this order may be transferred to a judge upon agreement of the two judges.

## 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.** Complete caseloads will be transferred to a successor judge if there is a judicial vacancy that is later filled. If the case assignment order is modified, the Chief Judge will determine how to disperse any pending cases if a complete caseload transfer is not appropriate.
3. **Dispute.** Any dispute on proper reassignment shall be resolved by the chief judge.

## D. STAFFING AND FACILITIES

1. **Administrative Structure.** Organizational charts of the family division/probate court and the Friend of the Court are included in Appendix A. The Domestic Relations referees, ADR, Juvenile Referee, juvenile probation officers, Friend of the Court and associated staff 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.
  - The Friend of the Court reports to the Chief Judge.
  - Family Division staff report to the Chief Judge through the Circuit/Probate/Family Court Administrator.
  - Agencies providing assistance for matters in the jurisdiction of the Family Division of the Circuit Court will do so through the Circuit/Probate/Family Court Administrator.

- Staff of the Day Treatment/Night Watch Program and Juvenile Intervention Unit report to the Chief Judge through the Circuit/Probate/Family Court Administrator.
- The Family Counseling Program authorized by MSA 25.33 will be under the direction of the Chief Judge through the Friend of the Court.
- Other functions not specified above will be coordinated by the Chief Judge.

2. **Remote Proceedings.** Remote proceedings may be utilized as permitted by the Michigan Court Rules and the presiding hearing officer.
3. **Facilities.** St. Clair County manages all facilities utilized by the Courts including the Family Division. The Family Division of the Circuit Court will be housed in the County Courthouse where practical. The Court and the County agree that the Court will manage the Daytreatment/Nightwatch Program and Juvenile Intervention Unit. Funding for the facility will be provided by the Child Care Fund with the County matching funds pursuant to current statutes. Courthouse security is a function of the court and is overseen by the Circuit/Probate/Family Court Administrator. The county maintains the facilities and works with the judiciary to consider any requested improvements as needed.

## E. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

1. **Clerks of the Court.** The St. Clair County Clerk is designated as the Clerk of the Court for the Family Division. The St. Clair County probate clerk shall maintain every record created by or filed with the probate court. Juvenile cases shall be filed and maintained by the Juvenile Court staff and overseen by the Circuit/Probate/Family Court Administrator.
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. The location and management of court records for the Family Division was developed in cooperation with the County Clerk.
3. **Filing.** New domestic relations cases within the jurisdiction of the Family Division will be filed with the County Clerk. Clerical staff of the Family Division who are responsible for receiving filings and managing files of cases under the jurisdiction of the Family Division are deputized by the County Clerk for the purpose of maintaining and receiving juvenile filings. Juvenile cases and PPO's involving minors will be filed with the juvenile court. Name Change cases will be filed in the Probate Court. PPO cases shall be filed with Court

Administration with the files maintained by the County Clerk's office. ERPO's shall be filed and maintained by Court Administration.

4. **Access Point.** The central access point for records and court information will be the Clerk of Court Office. Information about Family Division court schedules, record access and records storage including filing procedures can be obtained by contacting this office.
5. **Internal Transfer.** All file transfers will be done by the clerks of the respective courts.
6. **Technological Access.** All 31<sup>st</sup> Circuit Court and Probate Court files are maintained electronically and through paper files and are accessible to court employees of the respective courts. File security is managed with access profiles and is specific to each employee. Public documents are available for inspection at the Clerk's offices. The Register of Actions and court schedules are available on the court's website for all public proceedings.
7. **Public Access.** This plan is posted on the court's website and is otherwise publicly available upon request.

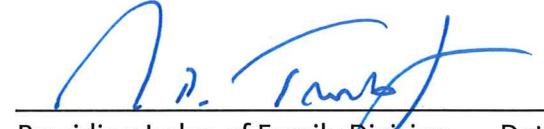
The undersigned affirm that the information contained in this plan represents the full agreement of the Family Division Judges and the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court:



5/11/25

Chief Judge

Date



Presiding Judge of Family Division

Date



6/17/2025

Family Division Judge

Date



6/17/2025

Family Division Judge

Date

**IT IS ORDERED:**

This administrative order is issued in accordance with 2002 Public Act 682 and upon approval from the State Court Administrative Office.

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Date

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Chief Judge

STATE OF MICHIGAN



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CIRCUIT JUDGE

Administrative Order: C31-2024-4 J  
P74-2024-2 J  
D72-2024-2 J

Rescinds Administrative Order: C31-2021-2J  
P74-2021-2J  
D72-2021-2J

**CASE ASSIGNMENT**

**IT IS ORDERED:**

Pursuant to MCR 8.112(B) and MCR 8.111 (B), Circuit Court, Probate Court, and District Court cases will be assigned as follows:

1. Circuit Court Criminal Actions- Each Circuit Judge will be assigned by lot an equal portion of new cases with the following exceptions:
  - a. If there is a pending criminal case involving the same defendant, the County Clerk shall assign any subsequent bind-over to the judge assigned to the initial case.
  - b. Criminal cases filed separately with designated co-defendants shall be assigned to the same judge. If there is no open criminal case involving any of the defendants, then a single judge assignment will be made by lot.
2. Non-Business Court Civil Damage Suits, Other Civil Matters and other cases including appeals, administrative review, and ancillary proceedings will be assigned by lot to Judge West and Judge Lane with the following exception: Subsequent actions arising out of the same transaction or occurrence pursuant to MCR 8.111(D) shall be assigned the judge assigned to the initial case.
3. Business Court cases- assigned by lot to Judge Michael West.

4. Family Division case types will be assigned as specified in the Family Division Plan:
  - a. Judge Jennifer Deegan will be assigned all cases filed with Family Division - Proceedings under Juvenile Code case type codes or Family Proceedings under Adoption Code case type codes. Judge Deegan will be assigned all Minor Guardianship cases and will be assigned those Domestic Relations cases when she already has a guardianship over the minor children in the case.
  - b. Judge Jennifer Deegan will be assigned one-third of cases filed with Family Division - Domestic Relations case type codes or Family Division - Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes.
  - c. Judge Daniel Damman will be assigned one-third of cases filed with Family Division - Domestic Relations case type codes or Family Division - Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes.
  - d. Judge John Tomlinson will be assigned one-third of cases filed with Family Division - Domestic Relations case type codes or Family Division - Miscellaneous Proceedings case type codes.
5. Probate Court cases are assigned as follows:
  - a. Judge Jennifer Deegan will be assigned all Minor Guardianship cases.
  - b. Judge John Tomlinson will be assigned all other Probate cases.
6. District Court Actions are assigned as follows:
  - a. Judge Michael Hulewicz is assigned to handle all pending and new cases filed in the Marine City location of the 72nd District Court.
  - b. Judge John Monaghan and Judge Mona Armstrong are assigned to handle previously assigned cases and new filings in the Port Huron location of the 72nd District Court.
  - c. Misdemeanor cases filed in Port Huron will be randomly assigned to a judge of the same location.
  - d. Same incident civil infraction cases will be assigned to the judge who was assigned to the related misdemeanor case.
  - e. Felony cases filed in Port Huron will be assigned by lot to a judge at the same court location.
  - f. General Civil cases filed in Port Huron will be assigned by lot to a judge at the same court location.

- g. Landlord/tenant cases filed in Port Huron will be assigned by lot to a judge at the same court location.
- h. Small Claims and Civil Infraction cases will be assigned for hearing before the magistrate assigned to each respective location. Appeals de novo from a magistrate will be assigned randomly to a judge in the same location.

The Clerk shall use a selection deck weighted to reflect the portion of new cases to which each judge is assigned within a specific case classification or grouping of case classifications. Where random case assignment exceptions are applied as specified in this order, the Clerk shall calibrate the random assignment system to reflect the additional cases assigned to that judge.

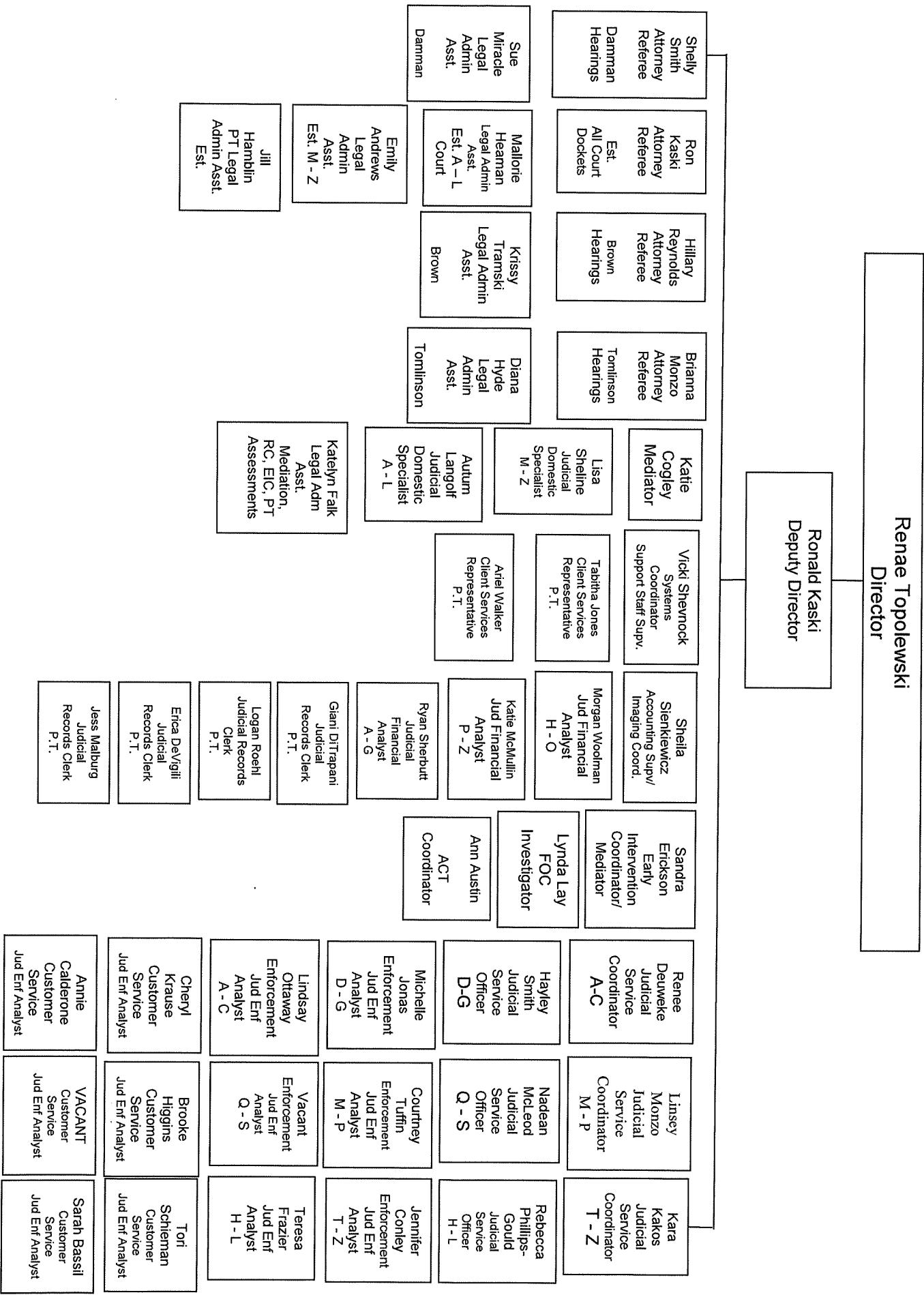
Reassignment of cases as a result of recusal shall be by lot. The Court Administrator shall be responsible for maintaining the records and procedure for reassignments.

4/26/24

Date:

M. A. West

Chief Judge



## 31st Circuit Court Family Division/Probate Court Organizational Chart

