

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE 27th CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF LAKE
*****

FAMILY COURT PLAN
FOR THE LAKE COUNTY TRIAL COURT

LAKE COUNTY TRIAL COURT LOCAL
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER: 2025-02 _____

RECISSION: Rescinds Lake County Trial Court - Local Administrative Order 2023-02

FAMILY DIVISION ESTABLISHMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

A. General

Lake County is part of the 27th Judicial Circuit; however, Lake County operates as a separate Trial Court with an elected Probate Judge who has been assigned to the Circuit Court (including the Family Division) and the District Court since the inception of the Trial Court per the Lake County Trial Court Concurrent Jurisdiction Plan. The elected Probate Judge has also served as the Chief Judge of the Lake County Trial Court.

The Newaygo County Circuit Court and the Lake County Trial Court each have their own Family Division, Juvenile Division, and Friend of the Court that operate independently of the other county. Therefore, Lake and Newaygo Counties are submitting individual Family Court Plans to address the goal of "One Family – One Judge" that best serves each county, as outlined below.

B. 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.

C. Goals

The goal of this Family Court Plan is to outline the *One Family – One Judge* requirement which is beneficial to not only the families served, but also the court in general as it allows for:

1. A unified judicial perspective across interconnected cases, such as divorce, custody, juvenile delinquency, abuse or neglect, and criminal matters.

2. Informed decision making, by allowing One Judge to have a comprehensive understanding of the family's circumstances.

3. Increased efficiency by having access to information from all relevant and related case files which provides for a streamline court process and improved decision making to achieve the best outcomes for those before the court.

D. 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 if family division judicial assignments change, and at least every 2 years, by the Trial Court Judge to ensure that the Plan meets the statutory requirements and complies with the Family Court Plan Requirements and Guidelines provided by the SCAO. If changes occur that would impact the accuracy of the FCP modifications will be made and updated with SCAO accordingly at the time the change occurs.

II. ADMINISTRATION

A. JUDICIAL RESOURCES/SERVICE

1. Family Division Judges

The Lake County Trial Court Judge has been assigned to the family division of the circuit court since the inception of the Trial Court and shall oversee family law cases throughout the remainder of their term. The Trial Court Judge has expressed an interest in overseeing family law cases throughout their term. When deviating from this standard an explanation is required as to how the deviation supports the *one family – one* judge requirement and the development of judicial expertise requirements of MCL 600.1011(3) and MCL 600.1023.

The Lake County Trial Court Judge and information pertaining to their terms on the bench, number of years serving in the family division, and expiration of their terms are represented in the Lake Couty Family Court Plan Addendum.

2. **Judicial Expertise**

The Lake County Trial Court Judge may attend the 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 Lake County Trial Court Judge also attends other appropriate trainings as available that pertain to trends in Lake County to better serve the families of Newaygo County. The Lake County Trial Court Judge shall develop sufficient judicial expertise in family Law as specified in MCL 600.1011(3); Administrative Order 2021-7.

3. **Judicial Service**

The Lake County Trial Court system requires one full time judge to reside over all matters. Therefore, the Trial Court Judge will serve part time in the family division, under MCL 600.1011(3), there sufficient caseload and judicial resources exist. Designations to the family division are part-time because it is not practical for, nor do sufficient caseloads exist to serve full-time in the family division. One hundred percent of all cases filed in the Lake County Trial Court are assigned to the Lake County Trial Court 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 Lake County Trial Court - Family Court Plan.

1. **Case Assignment**

Cases are assigned through a separate local administrative order regarding case assignment. (Lake County Trial Court – Local Administrative Order 2024-03J). The case assignment local administrative order assigns judicial resources aligned with judicial expertise and outlines how disqualification cases will be reassigned.

2. **One Family-One Judge**

   The Lake County Trial Court system requires one full time judge to reside over all matters; therefore, the Trial Court Judge handles all case types under the One Family – One Judge concept.

3. **Prior Matters**
   When cases or motions are filed, the Trial Court intake clerks 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, NB, PH, PJ, PP, PW, TL, UE, UF, UI, UM, UN, VF and VP. The Lake County Trial Court Judge, per the concurrent jurisdiction plan, handles all case types, including but not limited to (CA, CY, DD, GA, GL, GM, JA, MI, CA, CY, DD, GA, GL, GM, JA, LG, MI, NC, and PO).

5. **Concurrent Cases**

   The assignment of all cases to the Lake County Trial Court Judge fully addresses the "One Family – One Judge" goal for concurrent cases, such as paternity cases with concurrent NA, DL or DJ cases.

C. REASSIGNMENT OF CASES

1. **Disqualifications**
   Disqualifications will first be handled as described under MCR 8.111(C)(1). Cases must be reassigned per the Judicial and Case Assignment Local Administrative order for Newaygo and Lake Counties and then by assignment through the State Court Administrators Office.

2. **Transfer**

   The judge elected to serve in as the Probate / Trial Court Judge for Lake County shall continue until this plan is revised or until the Lake County Trial Court Concurrent Jurisdiction Plan is revised.

   The reassignment of any caseload of a judge who entirely leaves the bench shall be determined pursuant to the separate current case assignment local administrative order.

3. **Dispute**

   There should be no dispute on proper assignment/reassignment of cases in the Trial Court as it is served by one judge.

D. STAFFING AND FACILITIES

1. **Administrative Structure**
   The Lake County Trial Court Judge / Chief Judge has supervisory authority over the administration of the family divisions for Lake County and is responsible for the general operation of the family division for Lake County.

   The Trial Court Chief Judge and the Trial Court Administrator shall be responsible for the day-to-day administration of staff, operations, policies, procedures and financial responsibilities of the family division.

   The Court Staff that serve the family and juvenile division of the Trial Court are as follows:

   a. **Family and Juvenile Court Referee** – The referee hears family and juvenile division matters as assigned. The referee can preside over multiple hearing involving the same family in custody and parenting time matters, delinquency and abuse/neglect cases. The referee helps maintain efficiency while, reduces delays, and helps ensure consistent application of facts across proceedings.

   b. **Friend of the Court** – The friend of the court staff assists with the establishment of paternity and support, and provides case histories, financial records, and recommendations that support the judge and referee in making informed ruling across family matters. FOC also helps resolve disputes before they require judicial intervention.

   c. **Juvenile Court Supervisor and Officers** – work with parents and children to foster a whole-family approach to address delinquency matters; collaborate with the judge and referee to ensure that updates regarding services or violations are reported in a manner that supports consistent and informed rulings by providing case plans, reports and recommendations.

   d. **Court Intake Clerks** – responsible for case filings in all civil, criminal, family and probate matters. Identify when multiple cases involve the same family, helping ensure adherence to the One Family – One Judge goal by providing the court with information regarding all interconnected cases.

2. **Remote Proceedings**

   Lake County Family Divisions adhere to MCR 2.407 and 2.408 regarding video conferencing and utilize Zoom for remote hearings when appropriate and supportive of parties and families involved in cases.

3. **Facilities**

   Improved facilities and increased services shall be an ongoing consideration for the Lake County Trial Court. As opportunities present themselves, either in planning and/or in funding sources, efforts will be made to propose systematic enhancements to the operations of the family divisions.

   Lake County has rooms that can be used for attorney/client meetings or by the public for more privacy. The court also has a separate remote proceedings room equipped with Polycom and Zoom capabilities to allow for private remote meetings between clients and attorneys.

E. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

1. **Clerks of the Court**
   The Lake County Trial Court has successfully implemented a centralized location of filing all court documents. The Court and the County Clerk have agreed for all recods/case management to be held by the court since the inception of the Trial Court program in 1996. All matters for the Circuit, District and Probate Courts are filed through the Lake County Trial Court Intake Office.

2. **Plan Development**
   The County Clerk has been afforded the opportunity to participate in the development of plans for management of court records.

3. **Filing & Record Management**
   The Lake County Trial Court System has successfully implemented a centralized location for filing court documents. Filing documents, record storage, records access and case scheduling are completed through the Lake County Trial Court intake office.

4. **Access Point**
   The Lake County Trial Court is the main access point for the public and the local bar.

5. **Internal Transfers**

   Lake County is a Trial Court served by one judge. There are no internal transfers that occur as the Trial Court Judge is assigned to all court cases and has access to all court files.

6. **Technological Access**

   Lake County Family Divisions enter all cases into their designated case management systems. Those working within the Family Division have access to this data.

7. **Public Access**

   The Lake County Court plan will be posted on the Court's websites following approval from SCAO and is otherwise publicly available upon request.

Effective Date:
Reviewed and Approved:

Hon. David M. Glancy
Lake County Trial Court Chief Judge

6/16/2025
Date

Addendum

Lake County Family Court Plan

Presiding Judge

Honorable David M. Glancy, Lake County Trial Court Chief Judge
Family Division Start Date: May 8, 2023
Term Expiration Date: January 1, 2031

LAKE COUNTY TRIAL COURT
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

