



Hon. Janice K. Cunningham
Circuit Court
Chief Judge

Hon. Kelly E. Morton
Circuit Court

STATE OF MICHIGAN
EATON COUNTY TRIAL COURTS
56TH CIRCUIT COURT • 56A DISTRICT COURT
EATON COUNTY PROBATE COURT
1045 Independence Blvd. • Charlotte, MI 48813
517-543-7500
www.eatoncounty.org

Hon. Amanda G. Pollard
Probate Court
Hon. Adrienne K. Van Langevelde
District Court
Hon. Reid S. Felsing
District Court

STATE OF MICHIGAN

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF EATON

FAMILY COURT PLAN FOR THE 56th CIRCUIT COURT AND THE EATON COUNTY PROBATE COURT

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2025-05J

Probate Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2025-06J

Rescinds Circuit Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2013-02J

Rescinds Probate Court Joint Local Administrative Order 2013-02J

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 designed to enhance the subject matter expertise of the circuit and probate court judges in Eaton County, while distributing a workload that is equitable and efficiently satisfies the “one family-one judge” concept.

- 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 shall be reviewed immediately upon a new judicial appointment or election in either the circuit or probate court or change in chief judge, with the intent on reviewing subject matter expertise, caseload distribution, and clarifying language within the current plan.

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. Addendum A lists the probate judge and circuit judges serving in the family division pursuant to the FCP for the 56th Circuit Court and Eaton County Probate Court. Any judicial changes to the probate or circuit courts will be made by an amendment to addendum A.
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 Eaton County Family Court supports additional training opportunities afforded through judicial associations and other relevant organizations providing educational opportunities specific to this FCP.
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 exists. Each family court judge will be assigned 1/3 of all domestic relations cases filed with the circuit court. Family division proceedings under the juvenile and adoption code will be assigned solely to the probate court judge who has specialized training related to these matters. Family division miscellaneous proceedings case types will also be assigned solely to the probate court judge except for PH, PP and VP case types which will be assigned 50% to each of the two circuit court judges to sufficiently and evenly distribute caseloads.

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. **Definitions.**

For purposes of this FCP, the term “family” means: individuals 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 a matter currently in process, awaiting a final judgment or decision from the court.

3. **One Family-One Judge.** Cases shall be assigned pursuant to II(A) and to the extent practicable, will be assigned to the same family court judge when a matter involving the same family is pending, recently closed or inactive with the court.

Domestic relations and miscellaneous proceedings case types identified in II (A)(3) will be assigned by blind draw, however the circuit court clerk’s shall review new filings and if a family court judge has an open case or within the last five years a previously closed case involving a member of that family or party to a case, the new case shall be assigned to that judge.

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, UD, 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.

Case types for the family division of the circuit court shall be assigned as outlined in local administrative order C56 2025-04J and P23 2025-05J, Assignment of Matters in the Family Division of the Circuit Court.

6. **Concurrent Cases.** If a new family court case is filed while another family court case is pending and either action includes a pending case based on the case type assignments for the family division judges, all active cases shall be reassigned to the proper family division judge. When reassignment of a pending matter is required based on the FCP, the clerk of the court shall reassign the matter and note the reassignment within the register of action for the case.

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.** When a judge's service in the family court ends, pending cases will be resolved by that judge or assigned to that judge's successor.
3. **Dispute.** Any dispute on proper reassignment shall be resolved by the chief judge.

D. STAFFING AND FACILITIES

1. **Administrative Structure.** A family division organizational chart is included as Appendix A. The chief judge of the circuit court has supervisory authority over the administration of the family division of the circuit court. The chief judge of the circuit court has the authority and flexibility to determine the duration of a judge's service in the family division and to delegate supervision based on the goal of the FCP, to enhance the expertise developed by the circuit and probate judges while maintaining a workload that is equitable and efficient.

The family division of the circuit court shall be comprised of the circuit and probate court judges. The friend of the court shall assist and provide services to and for the family division, working to establish, modify and enforce orders on domestic relations matters. The friend of the court and personnel of this office are under the jurisdiction and control of the chief judge of the circuit court.

The juvenile referee shall be under the jurisdiction and control of the probate court judge. The juvenile division of the circuit court, including the personnel of this division are under the jurisdiction and control of the probate court judge. The probate judge has developed a knowledge specific to the juvenile system that is unique to the family division of the circuit court. As such, the probate judge shall be the primary judicial oversight for the juvenile division.

The Eaton County youth facility is operated under the oversight of the Eaton County circuit court through a resolution approved by the Eaton County Board of Commissioners. The youth facility is under the direction of the family court and is operated under the direction of the facility director. In accordance with the probate judge's experience with the juvenile system, the youth facility director shall be under the oversight of the probate judge and court administrator. The youth facility personnel are under the direction of the facility director.

2. **Remote Proceedings.** Each judge and referee will have the discretion of using remote proceedings in compliance with MCR 2.408.

3. **Facilities.** The circuit court, friend of the court office and the circuit court clerk's office are located on the second floor of the Eaton County courthouse, with the probate court being located on the first floor. Youth services, including the juvenile referee hearing room and probation services are housed within a separate building on the Eaton County governmental complex. In addition, the Eaton County youth facility is also located at the youth services building encompassing secure and non-secure programming.

The sheriff department is adjacent to the courthouse and provides onsite security for the courthouse, along with security at the youth services building.

The courthouse offers meeting places on both the first and second floors of the courthouse for attorney/client meetings, with similar rooms located at that juvenile services building. Financial deficits and space limitations prevent having all family court matters in one area. Court offices have worked well in communicating and creating processes that seek to eliminate unreasonable inconveniences for those involved with the family court.

E. **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

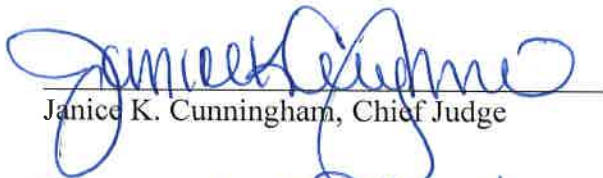
1. **Clerks of the Court.** The Eaton County Clerk is designated as the Clerk of the Court for the Family Division. The Eaton County probate clerk shall maintain every record created by or filed with the probate court. Delinquency, neglect/abuse, and adoption cases are filed with the juvenile services department. The juvenile services department maintains all records created and filed for these case types. Coordination with the circuit court clerks and the probate court is made when cases are scheduled before a circuit or probate court judge.
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.** All filings for the family court, other than delinquency, neglect/abuse and adoption filings, are filed with the circuit court clerk's office located on the second floor of the Eaton County Courthouse located at 1045 Independence Blvd., Charlotte, MI 48813. Delinquency, neglect/abuse and adoption filings, are filed with juvenile services located at 822 Courthouse Drive, Charlotte, MI 48813. Stored records and access to records are located at the clerk's office in which a filing was made.

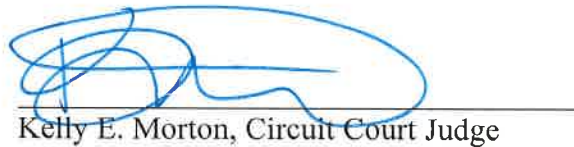
Case scheduling information is completed with the assigned circuit or probate court judges' office. Cases filed with the juvenile services department are scheduled with the clerks located within that office.

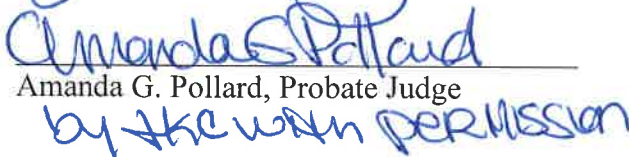
4. **Access Point.** Information for the public is provided on the county website under the Court section for the circuit and probate courts. www.eatoncounty.org. The Eaton County courthouse has public terminals within the main courthouse for individuals to access public case searches.

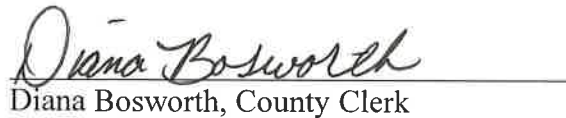
5. **Internal Transfer.** The circuit court and probate court utilize JIS case management systems and rely on physical court files within the courtrooms and for filings made within clerk offices. The circuit court utilizes Laserfiche for storing electronic copies of filed documents. Judges and court staff have access to view electronic copies as desired. A physical legal file is created for cases filed with the juvenile court. BizStream's juvenile supervision data system, YouthCenter, is utilized for internal case records that can be accessed by court staff related to delinquency cases.
6. **Technological Access.** All judges and court staff shall have appropriate electronic case management access for family division cases in which they serve.
7. **Public Access.** This FCP is posted on the court's website and is otherwise publicly available upon request.

Date: June 11, 2025


Janice K. Cunningham, Chief Judge


Kelly E. Morton, Circuit Court Judge


Amanda G. Pollard, Probate Judge
by HKC with permission


Diana Bosworth, County Clerk

ADDENDUM A

The following is a list of the probate judge serving in the family division of the Circuit Court pursuant to the Eaton County Family Court Plan.

1. Hon. Amanda G. Pollard

Term commenced on January 1, 2025 – term expires January 1, 2031

The following is a list of the circuit judges serving in the family division of the Circuit Court pursuant to the Eaton County Family Court Plan.

1. Hon. Janice K. Cunningham (Chief Judge)

Term commenced on January 1, 2025 – Term expires on January 1, 2031

2. Hon. Kelly E. Morton (Chief Judge Pro Tempore)

Term commences on July 2, 2024 – Term expires on January 1, 2027

Eaton County Family Division Organizational Chart

