

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PASCO AND PINELLAS COUNTIES, FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2024-022 PI-CIR

RE: UNIFIED FAMILY COURT – PINELLAS COUNTY

Unified Family Court in Pinellas County was created in 2001 by Administrative Order No. PI-CIR-2001-29 and consists of sections 1, 2, 5, and 6. To continue maintaining efficient court operations, it has become necessary to update the Administrative Order assigning cases in Unified Family Court.

Therefore, in accordance with Article V, section 2, Florida Constitution, Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215, and section 43.26, Florida Statutes, it is

ORDERED:

1. Unified Family Court (UFC) in Pinellas County shall continue to be comprised of sections 1, 2, 5, and 6.

2. **New assignments:** Except as otherwise directed herein, every juvenile delinquency case arising from a law enforcement complaint against a minor child, juvenile dependency case, termination of parental rights case (TPR) under Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, action under Chapter 751, Florida Statutes, and action under Chapter 984, Florida Statutes, shall be assigned to a UFC section using an equal, at random, blind assignment system. An adoption that emanates from a TPR case under Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, shall be assigned to the UFC section where the juvenile dependency case is pending. An adoption that emanates from a TPR case under Chapter 63, Florida Statutes, shall be assigned to the UFC section where the TPR case is pending. All truancy cases will be assigned to Section U. All existing cases shall remain in the section in which they are currently assigned.

3. **Previous assignments:** If a mother has any open dependency cases or has been a mother in any previously-assigned dependency cases, the Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court (the Clerk) shall assign any new dependency cases according to the mother's previously assigned section first. If the mother does not have any open dependency cases or has not been a mother in any previously-assigned dependency cases, then if a minor child has been previously assigned to a section, the Clerk shall assign any new juvenile delinquency, dependency, TPR case, case under Chapter 751, Florida Statutes, or case under Chapter 984, Florida Statutes, according to the minor child's previously assigned section.

4. **Co-Defendants:** The Clerk shall assign all co-defendants in a juvenile delinquency case to a UFC section as described in paragraphs 2 and 3. If a minor child has been a defendant in any previously-assigned delinquency case, the Clerk shall assign any new delinquency case according to the minor child's previously-assigned section. If one codefendant does not have any prior delinquency cases, their delinquency case shall be assigned to the section of the other codefendant with prior delinquency history. However, should the Court determine that it is necessary to reassign one or more co-defendants to ensure that all the co-defendants' cases are

tried in one section, then the case shall be reassigned by the Court.

5. If at any point, for judicial efficiency, it becomes necessary to transfer a case from one section to a different section, then the Court on its own motion or on the motion of the state attorney, public defender, regional counsel, court-appointed counsel, private counsel for the child, or counsel for the guardian ad litem, may request the Clerk's Office to assign all pending cases relating to the child to a single section. Notwithstanding Local Rule 3(B), the motion shall be filed in and heard by the judge of the section in which the older pending case(s) are assigned.

6. The Clerk shall continue to assign termination of parental rights cases under Chapter 63, Florida Statutes, and adoption cases under Chapter 63, Florida Statutes (excluding those adoption cases arising from a TPR under Chapter 39, Florida Statutes) on an equal, at random, blind assignment basis among Sections 1, 2, 5, and 6.

7. The Clerk and the Pinellas County Business Technology Services Department shall take the steps necessary to ensure that cases are assigned and reports generated in accordance with this Administrative Order.

Effective September 2, 2024, Administrative Order 2018-008 PI-CIR is hereby rescinded.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers at Clearwater, Pinellas County, Florida this ____ day of July, 2024.

ORIGINAL SIGNED ON JULY 19, 2024
BY SHAWN CRANE, CHIEF JUDGE

cc: All Pinellas Judges
The Honorable Bruce Bartlett, State Attorney
The Honorable Sara Mollo, Public Defender
The Honorable Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Pinellas County
Ita M. Neymotin, Regional Counsel
Ngozi Acholonu, Assistant Regional Counsel
Jennifer Parker, Trial Courts Administrator
Michele Emmerman, Deputy Trial Courts Administrator
Mariela Ollsen, Director, Guardian ad Litem Program
Gina Jeffrey, Family Court Manager, Unified Family Court
Bar Associations, Pasco and Pinellas Counties
Law Library, Pinellas County