

Rescinds LAO:
C14 2024-05J
P61 2024-02J

This administrative order is issued in accordance with Michigan Court Rule 8.112(B) which allows a trial court to issue an administrative order governing internal court management.

IT IS ORDERED:

1. This local administrative order, issued in accordance with Michigan Court Rules 8.110 and 8.111, sets forth the method to be used for assigning civil, criminal, family division and probate cases within the Muskegon County 14th Circuit Court and Muskegon County 61st Probate Court.

The Chief Judge of the Circuit/Probate Court may make adjustments to equalize judicial workloads by reassigning cases, pursuant to MCR 8.111. Further, in order to expedite the processing of certain case types, to take advantage of the expertise of a particular judge or to facilitate the application of the one family/one judge concept, the Chief Circuit/Probate Judge may assign or reassign cases among judges to ensure the effective and expeditious handling of such cases. Cases in which a judge has disqualified themselves, will be reassigned randomly among the remaining judges responsible for that type of case.

CIVIL/CRIMINAL DIVISION-

1. All new case assignments, except as otherwise stated, will be random, by lot in accordance with MCR 8.111. The Circuit Court shall use a selection deck, or its electronic equivalent, weighted to reflect the amount of time each Judge is devoted their assigned division.
2. The Circuit Court Administrators shall continue to review and report all caseload numbers and make any recommended case distribution changes to the Chief Circuit/Probate Court Judge when appropriate.
3. In the Civil/Criminal Division, cases shall be assigned in the following percentages:
 - A. **Circuit Court Judge Kenneth S. Hoopes-** Shall be assigned 20% of all FH and FJ criminal cases, 80% of civil cases, and 100% of all Business Court Cases.
 - B. **Circuit Court Judge Annette R. Smedley-** Shall be assigned 60% of all FH and FJ criminal cases and 50% of all FC criminal cases.

- C. **Circuit Court Judge Matthew R. Kacel**- Shall be assigned 20% of all FH and FJ criminal cases, 50% of all FC criminal cases, 20% of civil cases, 100% of cases assigned to Swift & Sure Sanctions Probationary Program, and 100% of cases assigned to the Recovery Court Program.
- D. **Circuit Court Judge Kathy L. Hoogstra**- Shall be assigned 100% of all appeals cases.
- E. All cases will be assigned pursuant to the above distribution, with the exception of Mental Health Court cases and Veterans' Court cases.

FAMILY DIVISION-

1. The main goal of case assignment within the Family Division is to achieve the legislative intent of one family/one Judge.
2. All new case assignments, except as otherwise stated in this Order or in the Family Court Plan, within the Family Division, will be random, by lot in accordance with MCR 8.111. The Circuit Court Clerk shall use a selection deck, or its electronic equivalent, weighted to reflect the amount of time each Judge is devoted to the Family Division.
3. In accordance with the Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES) Federal 1115 Demonstration grant, new domestic cases, excluding DM, DO, and DC cases, as determined by the Friend of the Court to have an indication of domestic violence between the parties, shall be assigned to a specific judge, as outlined in subsection (D) of this section.
4. The Circuit Court Administrator shall continue to review and report all caseload numbers and make any recommended case distribution changes to the Chief Circuit/Probate Court Judge when appropriate.
5. Four Judges will serve in the Family Division of the Circuit Court when practicable and where sufficient caseloads and judicial resources exist.
6. The Chief Circuit/Probate Court Judge shall assign four Circuit and/or Probate Judges to the Family Division. A Probate Judge serving in the Family Division shall have the same power and authority as Circuit Judges in Family Division matters.
 - A. **Probate Judge Gregory C. Pittman**- Shall serve in the Family Division, and shall be assigned 33% of all Family Division cases, with the exception of DO cases, and 25% of all PP and PJ Personal Protection Orders, and shall be assigned 100% of the Infectious Disease (ID) cases.
 - B. **Probate Judge Brenda E. Sprader**- Shall serve in the Family Division, and shall be assigned 33% of all Family Division cases, with the exception of DO cases, and 25% of all PP and PJ Personal Protection Orders.

C. **Circuit Judge Jenny L. McNeill**- Shall serve in the Family Division, and shall be assigned 33% of all Family Division cases, with the exception of DO cases, and 25% of all PP and PJ Personal Protection Orders. Additionally, Judge McNeill shall be assigned all cases pursuant to subsection (3) of this section under the SAVES grant.

D. **Circuit Judge Kathy L. Hoogstra**- Shall serve in the Family Division and shall be assigned 100% of all DO cases and 100% of all PH and VP Personal Protection Orders.

7. The Circuit Court Administrator shall periodically review, report and ensure that the Family Division Dockets remain consistent with the principle of equal distribution for all Family Court Judges assigned to the Family Division.

PROBATE COURT-

1. All new case assignments, except as otherwise stated in this Order or in the Family Court Plan, within the Probate Court, will be random, by lot in accordance with MCR 8.111.
2. The Probate Court Administrator/Register shall use a selection deck, or its electronic equivalent, weighted to reflect the amount of time each Judge is devoted to the Probate Court.
3. The Probate Court Administrator/Register shall continue to review and report all caseload numbers and make any recommended case distribution changes to the Chief Circuit/Probate Court Judge when appropriate.
4. The Chief Circuit/Probate Court Judge shall assign individual Judges to serve in the Probate Court when practicable and where sufficient caseloads and judicial resources exist.
 - A. **Circuit Judge Kathy L. Hoogstra**- Shall be assigned 100% of Probate Court cases.
 - B. **Judge Gregory C. Pittman, Judge Kathy L. Hoogstra, and Judge Brenda E. Sprader**- Shall each be assigned 33% of the MI cases.
 - C. **Judge Gregory C. Pittman, Judge Jenny L. McNeill, and Judge Brenda E. Sprader**- All ancillary minor guardianship and minor conservatorship cases (GM, LG, and CY) will be assigned to the Family Division Judge if there is a pending Family Division case involving a family member in the minor guardianship or minor conservatorship case, pursuant to the Family Court Plan.

5. The Probate Court Administrator/Register shall periodically review, report and ensure that the Probate Court Dockets remain consistent with the principle of equal distribution for all Judges assigned to the Probate Court.

REASSIGNMENTS-

1. The above assignments will require the following cases to be transferred:
 - A. All of Judge Hoogstra's pending Family Division cases will be transferred to Judge Pittman, Judge McNeill, and Judge Sprader to achieve a 33% split among those Family Division Judges.
 - B. All of Judge Hoopes' open Probate Court cases will be transferred to Judge Hoogstra.

Date: 10-7-25



Hon. Kenneth S. Hoopes
Chief 14th Circuit/Probate Court Judge