
State of Michigan
Washtenaw County
Trial Court

Family Court Plan

Local
Administrative
Order ~~C22~~2015-08J

PBI 2015-08J

PLAN FOR THE OPERATION OF
THE WASHTENAW COUNTY TRIAL COURT
FAMILY DIVISION

The undersigned affirm that the information contained in this plan represents the full agreement of the Chief Judge of the Trial Court who serves as the Chief Judge of the Probate Court and the Circuit Court for the County of Washtenaw. We submit this plan as our agreement. Pursuant to P.A. 682. This plan replaces and rescinds the Family Division Plan attached to LAO 2003-06D.



Hon. David S Swartz
Chief Judge Trial Court

Date:

11/6/15

WASHTENAW COUNTY TRIAL COURT
FAMILY DIVISION IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

This Family Court Plan supersedes any prior Family Division Plans that have been approved for the operation of the Family Division.

1. JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

- A. The Chief Judge of the Trial Court shall act in accord with MCR 8.110(C)
- B. In conformance with MCR 8.110(B)(2), the Chief Judge of the Trial Court shall appoint a Presiding Judge of the Family Division in consultation with the judges of the Family Division.
- C. The Presiding Judge of each division will be responsible for its day-to-day administration. Some or all of these duties may be delegated to the Trial Court Administrator for implementation within the guidelines of the Court's policies and procedures. Those day-to-day responsibilities are budgetary duties; personnel matters; case flow management; policy development and implementation specific to the division; contract management; and labor relations responsibilities including contract negotiations, grievance resolution and contract management.

The Presiding Judge of the Family Division, subject to the final approval of the Chief Judge of the Trial Court, will have authority over all policies, procedures and workflow processes of the Family Division.

- D. The Presiding Judge of the Family Division will work closely with the other division judges, consulting with them on matters of division concern. The Family Division judges will meet regularly to this end.
- E. Circuit and Probate judges selected for service to the Family Division are to be included in substantive decisions pertaining to the administration of the Family Division. Family Division judges may, at their discretion, attend all circuit judges meetings and shall receive notice of all such meetings together with proposed agendas.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of the Washtenaw County Trial Court is attached. The Circuit and Probate Courts in Washtenaw County have a single court administrator to oversee the operations of both courts under the name of the Washtenaw County Trial Court. This individual reports directly to the Chief Judge of the Trial Court. The Trial Court Administrator's Office provides oversight of the budget and personnel.

The Circuit Court is divided into two divisions: the Civil/Criminal Division and the Family Division. Each division has a presiding judge. The Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division oversees the general jurisdiction civil and criminal caseload. The Presiding Judge of the Family Division oversees the domestic relations, delinquency, neglect, Probate Mental Health & Estates, Personal Protection Orders and adoption caseloads.

The Trial Court Administrator is responsible for the operational aspects of the Family Division, Probate Court, and the Civil/Criminal Division of the Circuit Court, including the preparation and defense of the unified budget. He/she is also responsible for the supervision of the Juvenile Division Administrator, the Probate Register, the Friend-of-the-Court, the Central Assignment Office, Court Administration, including the Systems Manager and his/her staff, as well as the Chief Deputy Clerk and all Court Clerking operations. The Trial Court Administrator also has responsibility for facilities and security oversight of the downtown courthouse.

The court has an I.T. staff that provides technical oversight, support and training for all divisions of the Washtenaw County Trial Court.

III. METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINATION OF JUDICIAL SERVICE ON THE FAMILY DIVISION BENCH

Judges will be selected to serve on the Family Division bench by consensus of the Circuit and Probate judges. Final assignment authority lies with the Chief Judge of the Trial Court concerning appointment and duration of appointment of judges to the Family Division.

Based on current caseloads and judicial resources, six judges (3.5 FTEs) will serve on the Trial Court's Family Division bench. The judicial resource distribution for service within the Family Division is outlined in the Trial Court's Case Assignment Local administrative Order which is updated as needed.

The Chief Judge of the Trial Court shall realign judicial resources to keep the Family Division, the Probate Court, and the Civil/Criminal Divisions operating efficiently.

IV. CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT

Case Assignment

Family Division service selection methodology must complement the Family Division mission and purpose, operation principles, one family-one judge concept, MCR 8.111 and identified barriers to these

requirements. Selection for service within the Family Division must also be consistent with the goal of developing judicial expertise in family law.

The Family Division judges will handle cases as indicated on our Case Assignment LAO which is frequently updated. Judicial resource allocation within case types heard by more than one judge will be random, except when random assignment would be in conflict with the Family Division mission and purpose.

V. CENTRAL ACCESS POINT FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE FAMILY DIVISION OF THE WASHTENAW COUNTY TRIAL COURT

The central access point to obtain information regarding the Trial Court and all court related activities is the Trial Court Administrator's office. This office will be responsible for developing, approving, and disseminating information pertaining to the operation of the court.

Effective May 1, 2009, the Washtenaw County Trial Court and the Washtenaw County Clerk, Lawrence Kestenbaum, entered into a formal Partnership Agreement transferring Circuit Court clerking operations (including staff and budgets) to the Trial Court. The County Clerk has been afforded the opportunity to participate in the development of plans for management of court records. Procedures for case filing occurring in the Trial Court will continue largely as is with modifications to be enacted when necessary. E-Filing will be implemented as soon as enabling State legislation is authorized.

**MISSION STATEMENT OF THE WASHTENAW COUNTY
TRIAL COURT**

To provide opportunities for people and organizations to obtain the peaceful resolution of public and private disputes in a fair, efficient and timely manner.

**WASHTENAW COUNTY
TRIAL COURT**

VISION

To create a single trial court united in purpose, with assignment by divisions, coordinated judicially and administratively, to provide fair and efficient justice of the highest quality

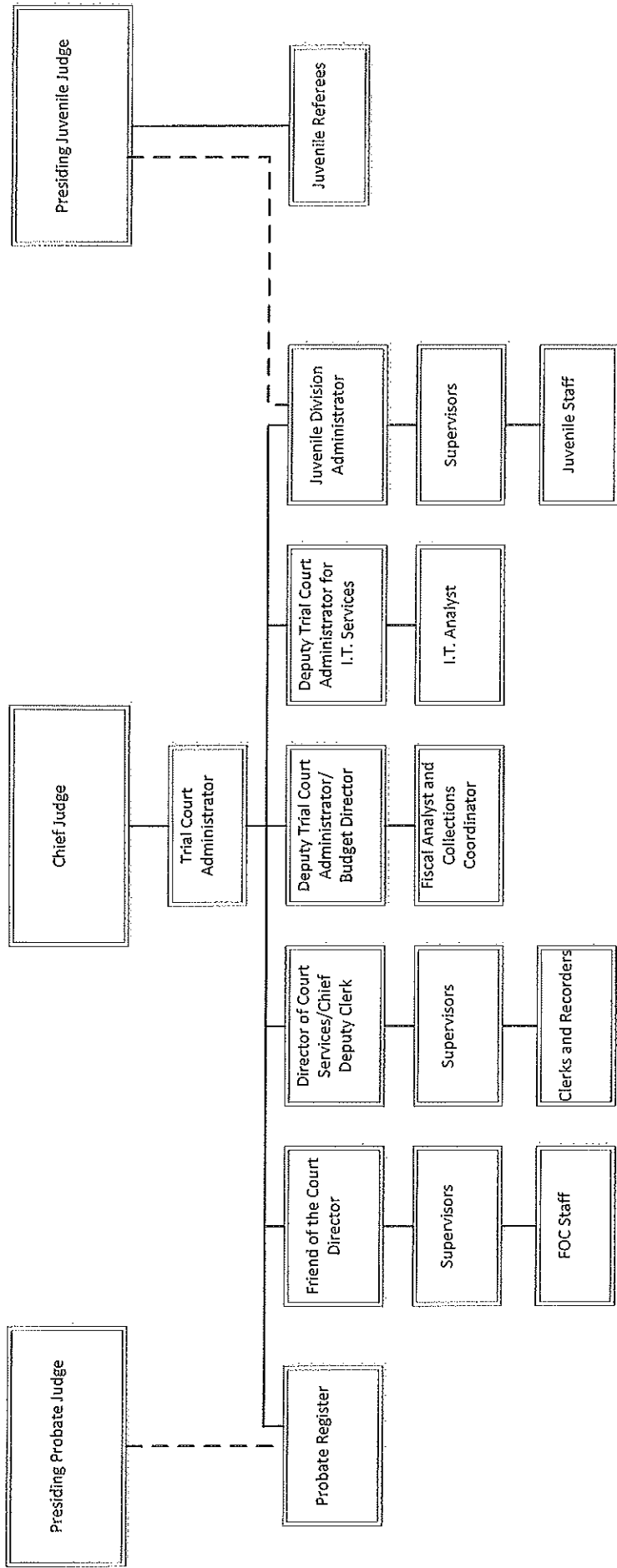
Mission Statement of the Family Division of the Washtenaw County Trial Court

To adhere to the Mission of the Washtenaw County Trial Court. To provide families a variety of dispute resolution opportunities characterized by:

- Fair treatment of all family members
- Timely disposition of all family matters consistent with the circumstances of the individual case
- Enhancement of the quality of the litigation process
- Building public confidence in the court as an institution

Mission of the Juvenile Division

Safe Children
Strong Families
Supportive Communities



Family Division Judges

- 2.0 FTE Hon. Archie C. Brown
- 1.0 FTE Patrick J. Conlin, Jr.
- .75 FTE Hon. Timothy P. Connors
- .10 FTE Carol Kuhnke
- .50 FTE Hon. Darlene O'Brien
- 1.0 FTE Hon. Julia Owdziej

November 2015