

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER C-2002 -05

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING MODEL FAMILY LAW COURT**

**WHEREAS**, the Supreme Court of Florida, in Case No. SC00-1410 (May 3, 2001), held that each judicial circuit should develop a local rule implementing a unified family division consistent with the recommendations set forth in the Model Family Court for Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, the Supreme Court set forth in said opinion certain guidelines and requirements to be addressed in a local rule implementing a unified family division; and

**WHEREAS**, the judges of the Fifth Judicial Circuit agree that the continuing goal of the family courts should be the creation of a fully integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases involving children and families; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit pursuant to Rule 2.050(b)(5), Florida Rules of Judicial Administration has issued an administrative order establishing the Model Family Law Court to implement the recommendations of The Supreme Court of Florida as to a unified family court division in the Fifth Judicial Circuit, which requires the Administrative Judge of each county within the Fifth Judicial Circuit to establish, by administrative order, procedures for the Family Court Division within their respective counties based upon the unique needs of the county and available resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit pursuant to Rule 2.050(b)(5), Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, has designated and assigned an administrative judge in Citrus County to assist with the supervision of the court, IT IS THEREFORE

**RESOLVED** that the Administrative Orders of Citrus County shall be amended to include this Order implementing the Florida Supreme Court recommendations as to a unified family court division in the Fifth Judicial Circuit, Citrus County:

1. The Judges of the Fifth Judicial Circuit, Citrus County, recognize that their primary role is to enforce and uphold the rule of law. Paramount within this role are the needs and best interests of the children who are affected by the Family Court system. Family court cases frequently involve multiple and interrelated issues within the judicial system which necessitate a comprehensive, fair, and coordinated approach to all the cases affecting the same family.

2. In achieving the goal of a unified family court, there is established the Family Court Division of Citrus County. The Family Court Division shall be comprised of the family court circuit judge, the circuit judge who presides over juvenile delinquency cases, and the circuit judge who presides over domestic violence injunctions and repeat violence injunctions. The judges of the Family Court Division will be aided by the Twelve Guiding Principles set forth by the Florida Supreme Court in *In Re: Report of the Family Court Steering Committee*, 26 Fla.L. Weekly 19 (Fla. May 3, 2001) and by the legislative policies set forth in section 61.001, *Fla. Stat.* (2000).

3. In order to achieve a unified and coordinated approach, the Family Court Division within Citrus County shall include the following types of cases:

- a) Dissolution of Marriage;
- b) Division and distribution of property arising out of a dissolution of marriage;
- c) Annulment;
- d) Support unconnected with dissolution of marriage;

- e) Paternity;
- f) Child support;
- g) URESA/UIFSA;
- h) Custodial care of and access to children;
- i) Adoption;
- j) Name change;
- k) Declaratory judgment actions related to premarital, marital, or postmarital agreements;
- l) Civil domestic and repeat violence injunctions;
- m) Juvenile Dependency;
- n) Termination of parental rights;
- o) Juvenile Delinquency;
- p) Emancipation of a minor;
- q) CINS/FINS;
- r) Truancy;
- s) Modification and enforcement of orders entered in these cases.

Upon consideration of the various components comprising the unified family court, the Chief Judge has determined that criminal misdemeanor domestic violence cases shall not be included in the family division.

4. To the extent possible and consistent with the resources available, the Clerk of Courts shall cross-reference cases identified in sub-paragraphs "a" thru "s", above, involving the same family unit, parents and/or child(ren). Any judge hearing family law cases is encouraged to inquire

of the litigants of any other family law cases involving the same family unit. The goal of cross-referencing and advising all the circuit judges who preside over any of the above-referenced cases of related litigation is to facilitate the delivery of appropriate social services, maximize judicial resources, avoid conflicting court orders and prevent multiple court appearances by the parties on the same issues.

5. To the extent possible, the Family Court Division of Citrus County shall incorporate programs implementing the twelve elements identified by The Florida Supreme Court as essential or fundamental elements. These elements are:

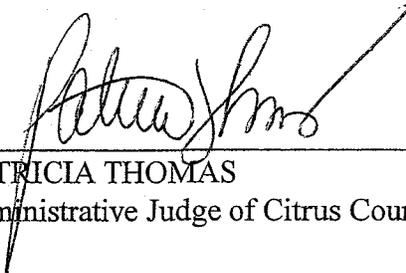
- a) Case Management;
- b) Self-Help Programs;
- c) Domestic Violence Programs;
- d) Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs;
- e) Utilization of Guardians Ad Litem;
- f) Utilization of Masters and Hearing Officers;
- g) Custody Evaluations;
- h) Utilization of qualified Supervised Visitation Programs;
- i) Counseling Services/Treatment Programs;
- j) Providing Security; and
- k) Utilization of technology.

All the circuit judges presiding over these cases shall cooperate and advise one another when it is determined that certain family cases are interrelated.

6. A Family Law Advisory Group is hereby created to assist in the development,

implementation, and monitoring of the Family Court Division. The Family Law Advisory Group will be comprised of court staff, judges, representative(s) of the Clerk of the Court, members of the bar, social service providers, local community leaders and any other interested persons or organizations to support and advise the family court. The Family Law Advisory Group shall continue to meet regularly and shall submit an annual report to the Chief Judge and to the Administrative Judge of the Family Court Division of the Fifth Judicial Circuit. The first report should be submitted on or before December 1, 2002 and shall be submitted annually on the same date thereafter.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers at Inverness, Citrus County, Florida, this 24  
day of January, 2002.

  
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PATRICIA THOMAS  
Administrative Judge of Citrus County