

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. H-2015-21**

**WHEREAS, UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (“UFC”)** in the Fifth Judicial Circuit was created in 2001 and formalized for the Circuit by Administrative Order No. A2002-03. Since that time, UFC principles have been in effect in each of the counties of the Circuit. This Administrative Order is intended to further enhance and support UFC in Hernando County, to establish procedural protocol and uniformity in certain types of cases, and to not limit existing practices already in effect which otherwise comply with UFC and its principles, including usage of the General Magistrate where appropriate and when also in conformity with UFC principles. In accordance with the directive and procedures set forth in Circuit wide Administrative Order A2015-10, **IT IS THEREFORE,**

**ORDERED** and **ADJUDGED** as follows:

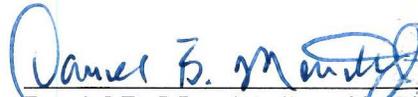
1. Commencing July 1, 2015, in conjunction with their respective regularly assigned dockets, all Circuit Judges in Hernando County are hereby designated as Judges of the Unified Family Court (UFC) division in and for Hernando County with responsibility for handling UFC related cases involving the same parties and/or children as from time to time may be determined proper when such related cases are not otherwise proper for primary assignment as set forth below. The Clerk of the Court shall establish and maintain a division specifically dedicated to related cases identified as UFC cases in conjunction with the establishment herein of a regular recurring UFC hearing “docket”, as hereinafter specified.
2. The Honorable **CURTIS J. NEAL** is hereby assigned the primary responsibility for the UFC as UFC hearing “docket” Judge and shall establish a regular and recurring hearing docket day and time for same, either weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, half-day, full day, or time certain hearings as the further local evolution of the UFC may require and as he in his discretion determines proper.
3. Commencing July 1, 2015, **every newly filed** 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; adoption that emanates from a TPR under Chapter 39; and action under Chapter 984, Florida Statutes, shall be assigned to the UFC division in accordance with Circuit wide Administrative Order A-2015-10.

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4. Commencing July 1, 2015, **every newly filed injunction against domestic violence that involves the same parties or child(ren) as a domestic relations case** (whether open or closed) shall be assigned to the UFC division and both cases shall be transferred to the UFC docket Judge after the injunction return hearing has been concluded for further hearing(s) in due course. Likewise, if a Domestic Relations case is filed and there is an existing injunction that involves the same parties or child(ren), both cases shall be assigned to the UFC division and both cases shall be transferred to the UFC docket Judge for further hearing(s) in due course.
5. Commencing July 1, 2015, **every newly filed dependency petition that involves the same parties or child(ren) as a domestic relations case** (whether open or closed) shall be assigned to the UFC division and both cases shall be transferred to the UFC docket Judge. Likewise, if a Domestic Relations case is filed and there is an existing dependency petition filed that involves the same parties or child(ren), both cases shall be assigned to the UFC division and both cases shall be transferred to the UFC docket Judge. Emergency shelter hearings shall continue to be held before the assigned dependency judge and, when otherwise required by this Order to be assigned to the UFC docket Judge, shall then go back to the UFC docket Judge for further hearing(s) in due course.
6. All other terms, conditions, procedures and requirements, not inconsistent with this Order, as set forth in Circuit wide Administrative Order A-2015-10 shall remain in full force and effect.
7. Any and all disputes and ambiguities in the terms of this Order or in the assignment of related cases to the Judges of the UFC division or UFC hearing docket shall be resolved by the Administrative Judge in and for Hernando County. The UFC division, processes, and anticipated regular and recurring hearing docket of the UFC shall be monitored by the Administrative Judge with the assistance and input of the Clerk of Court and Circuit Judges assigned to the UFC division and hearing docket. Accordingly, this Administrative Order, as well as the annual Administrative Order related to the assigned dockets of the respective Circuit Judges, shall be subject to amendment and modification in the discretion of the Administrative Judge for Hernando County as the UFC in actual practice and local effect may require, as the best interests of the affected parties and children may require, and as the efficient administration of all the divisions and dockets of the Judicial Branch of Hernando County may require.

8. Except as specifically provided herein, the terms and principles ordered and approved in Circuit wide Administrative Orders A2002-03 and A2015-10 continue in full force and effect in this Circuit.

**DONE and ORDERED** at Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, this 8<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2015, nunc pro tunc to July 1, 2015.



**Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.**, Circuit Judge and  
Administrative Judge in and for Hernando  
County, Florida