

**IN THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER S-2026-028
(Supersedes Administrative Order S-2025-017)**

JUVENILE DEPENDENCY DIVISION

In light of the abolition of Juvenile Dependency Division “C” and for the proper and efficient administration of justice, it is necessary to revise certain assignment provisions in the Juvenile Dependency Division. *See* Administrative Order S-2026-022 (*Abolition of Juvenile Dependency Division “C”*). By the power vested in the chief judge under article V, section 2(d), Florida Constitution; Florida Statutes section 43.26; and Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(2), it is ORDERED:

1. Divisions

Juvenile dependency matters will be administered by the following six judicial divisions:

Division Letter	Type of Juvenile Division
“B”	Standard
“D”	Standard
“I”	Independent Living Transition Services ⁱ
“J”	Family Dependency Treatment Court
“S”	Standard
“V”	Dependency Specialty

2. Assignment of Cases

A. New Cases

Upon the filing of a shelter petition, the Clerk of the Circuit Court (clerk) will designate a case number and assign the petition using a random equitable assignment system to one of the standard juvenile dependency divisions. The clerk will assign all subsequently filed petitions, except petitions involving a minor seeking special immigrant status, to the division to which the shelter petition was assigned. If an initial shelter petition was not filed, the clerk will assign all other new petitions (dependency, child abuse injunctions, and termination of parental rights), except petitions involving a minor seeking special immigrant status, using a random equitable assignment system to one of the standard juvenile dependency divisions.

3. Shelter Hearings

A. Juvenile Dependency Judge

For purposes of this provision, the term “juvenile dependency judge” means any judge assigned to the Juvenile Dependency Division or a judge or senior judge who has previously presided over dependency proceedings.

B. Rotation Schedule

Regardless of the division assignment, all shelter petitions processed by the clerk on non-holiday weekdays will be considered at a shelter hearing conducted by a juvenile dependency judge. The juvenile dependency judges presiding in Divisions “B,” “D,” “J,” “S,” and “V” will preside over shelter hearings on a weekly rotating basis. The administrative judge of the Juvenile Dependency Division will maintain the schedule of judges presiding over weekly shelter dockets. All shelter petitions processed by the clerk on holidays and weekends will be considered by the duty judge (See www.fljud13.org for duty judge assignments).

C. Arraignment Date

The clerk will assign an arraignment date at the shelter hearing. All parties present at the shelter hearing will be informed of the arraignment date assigned to their case.

D. Court-Appointed Counsel

The court will advise any parent of the right to have counsel present and will appoint counsel to indigent parents unless intelligently waived. Court-appointed attorneys will be assigned to cover shelter hearings on a weekly basis. The Administrative Office of the Courts, in coordination with the administrative judge of the Juvenile Dependency Division, will maintain a list of court-appointed attorneys eligible for appointment and the weekly schedule of assignments.

4. Juvenile Dependency Petitions Involving a Minor Seeking Special Immigrant Status

Any petition requesting that the court make the necessary findings to permit a minor to apply for Special Immigrant Status will be assigned to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V.” If a judge assigned to any of the other juvenile dependency divisions determines that a pending petition is requesting such relief, the judge will confer with the administrative judge of the Juvenile Dependency Division so that the petition can be scheduled and disposed of in Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V.”

5. Petitions for Child Abuse Injunctions

If the juvenile dependency judge issues a temporary injunction, the return hearing will be scheduled by the clerk in Family Law Division “G,” “H,” “K,” or “M” based on a random equitable basis. If a motion to modify or dissolve a final injunction is filed, the motion will be heard in the division in which the return hearing was conducted.

6. Reactivation of Protective Services

If a motion is filed to reactivate protective services supervision on a closed case or if a new shelter, dependency, or termination of parental rights petition is filed concerning a new child born into a family with an already existing case, the motion or petition will be assigned to the division in which the corresponding case was last pending or is currently pending. If the Florida Department of Children and Families Division of Children’s Legal Services (CLS) or Guardian Ad Litem Office (GAL) files such a motion or petition, the CLS or GAL will include the appropriate division designation on the first page of the motion or petition. If the clerk discovers any inaccuracy in the division designation on the motion or petition, the clerk will rectify such inaccuracy so that the motion or petition is filed in the appropriate division. If any other person files such a motion or petition, the clerk will consult with the administrative judge for determination of the appropriate division assignment.

7. Transfer of Cases Involving Same Father

A. Standard Divisions

If it is discovered that a father is a party to multiple juvenile dependency cases pending in different standard juvenile dependency divisions, the cases should be transferred by the clerk to the standard juvenile dependency division with the lowest case number and heard in that division as companion cases. Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding judge in the standard division with the lowest case number, the transferred companion cases should not be consolidated.

B. Non-Standard Divisions

If a father is a party to multiple juvenile dependency cases, any one of which is pending in a non-standard juvenile dependency division, the cases pending in the non-standard division should be transferred by the clerk to the standard juvenile dependency division with the lowest case number only if the presiding judges in both the standard division and non-standard division consent to the transfer.

8. Consultation Regarding Crossover Cases

If a judge presiding in the Juvenile Dependency Division becomes aware of a delinquency case involving a juvenile who is subject to a pending juvenile

dependency case or termination of parental rights case, the judge may consult with the judge presiding in the Juvenile Delinquency Division to determine whether it would be appropriate to transfer either the delinquency case or the juvenile dependency / termination of parent rights case to the other judge's division. A case should be transferred by the clerk to the other subject matter division only if both the presiding judges in the Juvenile Dependency Division and the Juvenile Delinquency Division consent to the transfer.

9. Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division "V"

The presiding judge in Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division "V" is responsible for providing equitable backup relief to the standard juvenile dependency divisions. Backup responsibilities include, but are not limited to: handling all juvenile dependency related petitions under Florida Statutes chapter 984 (CINS/FINS); presiding over adjudicatory, disposition and post-disposition hearings in juvenile dependency cases; presiding over adjudicatory and post-disposition hearings in termination of parental rights cases; covering any juvenile dependency division's docket matters when the regularly assigned judge is unavailable and handling any other matters that might appear on a juvenile dependency division's calendar. Prior to transferring any matter from a standard juvenile dependency division to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division "V" in accordance with this provision, the affected presiding judges must consult with each other. A case may be transferred to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division "V" only by an Order of Transfer issued by the presiding judge of Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division "V."

10. Family Dependency Treatment Court Division "J"

Family Dependency Treatment Court is a problem-solving court for cases of child abuse or neglect in which parental substance use is a primary contributing factor. Judges, court specialists, attorneys, child welfare professionals, treatment professionals, and other community partners collaborate and coordinate services with the goal of ensuring children have safe, nurturing, and permanent homes, and each family member receives the needed services and necessary supports to achieve stable recovery within mandatory timeframes.

At shelter hearings or arraignments, in accordance with established eligibility criteria, court specialists will identify and notify the presiding judge of any case in which Family Dependency Treatment Court Division "J" may be appropriate. Upon identification of a case in which transfer to Family Dependency Treatment Court Division "J" is appropriate, the presiding judge in Juvenile Dependency Division "B," "D," "S," or "V" may, at any time after the disposition hearing, transfer the

case to Family Dependency Treatment Court Division “J.”

11. Reassignment of Case upon Judge’s Disqualification

If a judge in a standard juvenile dependency division enters an order of disqualification, the clerk will reassign the case randomly and equitably to one of the other two standard divisions in the Juvenile Dependency Division. If all three judges in the standard juvenile dependency divisions enter orders of disqualification, the clerk will reassign the case to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V.”

If the presiding judge in Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V” enters an order of disqualification, the clerk will reassign the case to the standard juvenile dependency division from which the case was originally transferred to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V,” or if the case was originally assigned to Juvenile Dependency Specialty Division “V,” the clerk will reassign the case randomly and equitably to one of the standard juvenile dependency divisions.

If all of the judges in Juvenile Dependency Division “B,” “D,” “S,” and “V” enter orders of disqualification, the clerk will transfer the case to a deputy clerk assigned to the Family Law Division for random and equitable reassignment to one of the divisions in the Family Law Division.

If the presiding judge in Family Dependency Treatment Court Division “J” enters an order of disqualification, the clerk will reassign the case to the standard juvenile dependency division from which the case was originally transferred to Family Dependency Treatment Court Division “J.”

If the presiding judge in Independent Living Transition Services Division “I” enters an order of disqualification, the clerk will reassign the case to the standard juvenile dependency division from which the case was originally transferred to Independent Living Transition Services Division “I.”

12. Motions, Petitions and Other Documents

A. Scheduling

i. Attorneys

Attorneys may obtain available hearing times and schedule hearings on a judge’s calendar by accessing JAWS at: <https://jaws.fljud13.org/System/login.aspx> or by telephoning the judge’s judicial assistant.

ii. Self-Represented Litigants

After any self-represented litigant files a motion with the clerk, a

representative of the Dependency Case Management Unit will contact the self-represented litigant for scheduling of the matter on the assigned judge's calendar or other necessary action. Self-represented litigants may obtain a form motion at: http://www.fljud13.org/Portals/0/Forms/pdfs/fiu/dependency_pkt.pdf.

B. Form

Every motion, petition or other document must have the name of the court, uniform case number, and division letter for the child or children, and must be styled in accordance with Florida Rule of Juvenile Procedure 8.220.

C. Notices of Hearing

Every notice of hearing must state the length of time reserved on the judge's calendar for the hearing and specify which matters are to be heard. Notices of hearing specifying that the hearing is on "all pending motions" will not be accepted for filing. There will be no cross-noticing on hearing time unless the opposing counsel or party contacts the judge's judicial assistant and determines if the docket will accommodate hearing additional matters at the same time.

13. Orders and Judgments

A. Consultation with Opposing Counsel or Party

Unless the presiding judge directs otherwise, prior to submitting a proposed order for the court's consideration after a hearing, the attorney or self-represented litigant submitting the proposed order must consult with opposing counsel or the opposing self-represented litigant within five days after the court's decision and make a genuine effort to agree on the language of the proposed order.

B. Objections

If, after consultation with opposing counsel or the opposing self-represented litigant, the parties cannot agree on the language in the proposed order or judgment to be submitted to the court, then the attorney or self-represented litigant submitting the proposed order or judgment must document in a cover letter that the opposing party or counsel has registered an objection and specifically state what the objection is. At the time the cover letter and proposed order or judgment are submitted to the court, copies must simultaneously be sent to all parties or their attorneys. If an objection is registered, the court will determine if a hearing is necessary to resolve the dispute.

C. Timely Submission

All proposed orders or judgments will be submitted to the court by the attorney or self-represented litigant directed to prepare the order within ten days of

the court's decision. If the designated attorney or self-represented litigant fails to timely submit a proposed order or judgment, the attorney for the opposing party or the opposing self-represented litigant may submit a proposed order or judgment within five days of the initial ten-day period.

D. Submission of Proposed Orders and Judgments

i. Unopposed Proposed Orders and Judgments

a. Submission through the Portal

Proposed orders and judgments should be submitted through the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal (Portal) only when all parties have agreed to the form and content of the order or judgment or when no objection has been raised within five business days. The Portal should not be used to submit proposed orders or judgments if anyone entitled to receive a copy cannot be served by e-mail.

b. Format

All proposed orders and judgments submitted through the Portal must be in in Portable Document Format (PDF) or PDF/A (Portable Document Format for Archiving) unless specifically directed otherwise by the court so that the court may make specific findings of fact or conclusions of law. PDF or PDF/A proposed orders and judgments should be created directly from the computer, using "save as" PDF or PDF/A or printing to PDF or PDF/A, not by printing the proposed order or judgment on paper and then scanning it. Exhibits or attachments to the proposed order or judgment, however, may be scanned from paper documents.

c. Paper Copies

If any party is represented by an attorney who has been excused from e-mail service by the court under Rule 2.516, the movant's attorney must submit to the presiding judge sufficient paper copies of the proposed order along with stamped, addressed envelopes. If any party is self-represented and is directed by the presiding judge to submit a proposed order to the court without a direction regarding the specific method for submission, the self-represented party may either submit the proposed order through the Portal or may submit sufficient paper copies of the proposed order along with stamped, addressed envelopes to the presiding judge.

ii. Opposed Proposed Orders and Judgments

When a proposed order or judgment has not been agreed to, the proposed order or judgment must be served on all other parties and submitted to the judicial assistant by United States Mail, courier delivery service, or hand delivery. Sufficient conformed copies of the proposed order or judgment along with stamped, addressed envelopes must also be submitted to the judicial assistant. The proposed order or

judgment must include a cover letter indicating the specific objection(s) of all other parties and a copy of the other party's proposed order or judgment, if available. If a copy of the other party's proposed order or judgment is not available at the time the proposed order or judgment is submitted to the court, the other party must submit a copy of their proposed order or judgment along with a cover letter within five business days after the other party submitted the original opposed proposed order or final judgment to the court.

E. Title

All proposed orders and judgments submitted to the judges must contain, in the title of the order, the exact nature of the court's ruling and must fairly apprise the reader of the action being ordered. Phrasing such as "order granting. . ." or "order denying. . ." is preferred over "order on. . ."

F. Form

No proposed order or judgment will be submitted to a judge unless the order contains in the body of the order a reference to the date(s) of the hearing during which the subject matter of the order or judgment was argued before the court and the names of the parties and counsel present. Every proposed order and judgment must also contain the name of the court, uniform case number, and division letter for the child or children, and be styled in accordance with Florida Rule of Juvenile Procedure 8.220. Any submission of a proposed order or judgment by an attorney will be considered a representation that the attorney has read it and that it is submitted in good faith in accordance with the findings and decision of the court.

14. Cancellation of Hearings

No hearing may be canceled without the consent of all parties, approval of the court, and notice to the clerk.

15. Continuances

In accordance with Florida Rule of Juvenile Procedure 8.255(h), the court may grant a continuance for good cause shown, as permitted by law. *See* § 39.0136, Fla. Stat. Counsel seeking a continuance will file an appropriate motion and notice of hearing and will be present for hearing on the motion. All motions for continuance will explain what effect the motion will have on the progress of the case. *See* Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.545(e). No hearing or other proceeding will be continued upon stipulation of counsel alone. All motions for continuance of a hearing will be filed and heard prior to the scheduled hearing date. Failure to complete discovery will not constitute cause for a continuance unless such failure is brought to the attention of the court at least five working days in advance of any

scheduled hearing date and the failure is not the result of lack of diligence in pursuing such discovery. Except for good cause shown, no continuance will be granted because a witness has not been served with a subpoena, unless the moving party has attempted service at least five working days before the return date.

16. Emergency Matters

All juvenile dependency division judges will be available to handle emergency matters arising in their respective divisions unless arrangements have been made with another judge to substitute during any absence. The administrative judge of the Juvenile Dependency Division will handle emergency matters if the assigned or substitute judge is not available.

17. Professional Conduct and Courtroom Decorum

Counsel must adhere to The Florida Bar's Guidelines for Professional Conduct,ⁱⁱ The Florida Bar's Professionalism Expectations,ⁱⁱⁱ and the Hillsborough County Bar Association's Standards of Professional Courtesy.^{iv} Each judge may announce and enforce additional requirements, or may excuse compliance with any provision(s) of the Guidelines, Expectations, or Standards as that judge deems appropriate.

18. Attorneys' Obligation to Notify Court of Other Proceedings

Counsel are obligated to notify the court, as soon as it becomes known to counsel, of the existence of any other court proceeding in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit or any other jurisdiction that may be relevant to the subject matter before the court affecting the custody, visitation, or support of a child.

19. Previous Administrative Order Superseded

This administrative order supersedes Administrative Order S-2025-017 (*Juvenile Dependency Division*).

20. Effective Date

This administrative order is effective August 24, 2026.

ENTERED on May 5th, 2026.



Christopher C. Sabella, Chief Judge

Original: Victor D. Crist, Clerk of the Circuit Court
Copy: All Juvenile Dependency and Delinquency Judges
Robert Synder, Trial Court Administrator
All Dependency General Magistrates
Kim Williams, Children’s Network of Hillsborough County
Alicia Tarrant, Managing Attorney, Statewide Guardian ad Litem
Office
Ashley Cannon, Managing Attorney, Children’s Legal
Services
Scott Swartz, Managing Attorney, Office of Regional Counsel
DCF Child Protective Investigative Office
Hillsborough County Bar Association

ⁱProcedures for Independent Living Transition Services Court are found in Administrative Order S-2008-159 (*Independent Living Transition Services Court*).

ⁱⁱ<https://www.floridabar.org/prof/regulating-professionalism/presources002/>

ⁱⁱⁱ<https://www.floridabar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/professionalism-expectations.pdf>

^{iv}<https://www.hillsbar.com/page/Professionalism>