

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE NO: OCAD2024-04
(Vacates OCAD2023-13, OCAD2023-07 & OCAD2006-07)**

**IN RE: CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURT DIVISION ASSIGNMENTS
FOR OKALOOSA, COUNTY, FLORIDA**

WHEREAS, the following will set forth the delivery and caseloads assigned to each Division.
Therefore, it is,

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED:

1. EFFECTIVE DATE: The administrative policies and procedures herein, shall be effective January 1, 2025.
2. DELIVERY OF ARREST REPORTS TO CLERK: All arrest reports shall be delivered to the Clerk of the Court for Okaloosa County, Florida, no later than **three (3) working days** following the arrest.
3. DELIVERY OF BONDS TO CLERK: All bonds shall be delivered to the Clerk of the Court, for Okaloosa County, Florida, no later than **three (3) working days** after being accepted by law enforcement.
4. ARRAIGNMENT AND TRIAL DATES FOR COUNTY COURT:
 - a. Any Misdemeanor Arraignment shall be set for the next following Arraignment Day which is at least **fifteen (15) calendar days** after each misdemeanor arrest;
 - b. All Misdemeanor Bonds shall be made returnable for the next following Arraignment Day which is at least **fifteen (15) calendar days** from the date of arrest; and
 - c. Each Violation of Probation, in County Court, shall be set for the next following Arraignment Day which is at least **fifteen (15) calendar days** after each violation of county probation arrest.

All Misdemeanor Arraignments shall be scheduled as set forth below:

NORTH OKALOOSA COUNTY MISDEMEANOR ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Misdemeanor Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse, located in Crestview, Florida, at 9:30 a.m. (CT). All Arraignment Days are scheduled on designated Tuesdays as set forth in the annual Court Schedule for Okaloosa County.

SOUTH OKALOOSA COUNTY MISDEMEANOR ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Misdemeanor Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension, located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, at 1:30 p.m. (CT). All Arraignment Days are scheduled on every Tuesdays as set forth in the annual Court Schedule for Okaloosa County. All Traffic related issues, including but not limited to mandatory civil traffic infractions, shall be conducted at 9:00 a.m. (CT).

Any Misdemeanor Arraignment Day which falls on a legal holiday that is observed by the Court, shall be held as directed by the presiding Judge. All Misdemeanor Trial Dates and

County Court Evidentiary Hearings regarding Violations of Probation shall be set by the presiding Judge at Arraignment.

5. CASE DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLATION OF PROBATION/COMMUNITY CONTROL & CO-DEFENDANT CASES FOR COUNTY COURT: All Violations of Probation and/or Community Control cases involving a new substantive offense shall be transferred to the Division to which the newest substantive case is assigned, as set forth and provided in herein. Any Violations of Probation and/or Community Control shall follow the newest substantive case assignment as set forth herein. The Clerk of the Court shall transfer any case with any new substantive offense to the Division in which the newest substantive case is assigned. Upon receipt of a Memorandum from the Office of the State Attorney to the Clerk of the Court advising the Clerk of any new substantive case, that case shall be transferred to the Division in which the oldest open substantive case is assigned, without the necessity of an Order from the Court.

In all cases involving co-defendants, those cases shall be assigned to the Division to which the oldest open substantive case is assigned.

In any criminal cases involving multiple charges against the same defendant, those cases shall be disposed of in the Division in which the oldest open substantive case is originally assigned unless, upon agreement and stipulation of counsel, the cases are transferred in the interest of judicial economy. Criminal cases assigned to a Division at either the Okaloosa County Courthouse, located in Crestview, Florida, or Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension, located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, as defined herein, shall be disposed of in the Division to which the oldest open substantive case is assigned, upon agreement and stipulation by the Office of the State Attorney and the defendant prior to any transfer.

6. ARRAIGNMENT AND TRIAL DATES FOR CIRCUIT COURT:

- a. Any Felony Arraignment shall be set for the next following Arraignment Day which is at least **thirty (30) calendar days** after each Felony arrest, to include cases where information has not been filed;
- b. Any Felony case where information has not been filed by the first scheduled Arraignment Day, the Clerk of the Court shall manually remove that case from the trial cycle and set it for the next following Arraignment Day at least **sixty (60) calendar days** after the date of Felony arrest;
- c. All Felony bonds shall be made returnable for the next following Arraignment Day which is at least **thirty (30) calendar days** from the date of arrest; and
- d. Each Violation of Probation and each Violation of Community Control, in Circuit Court, shall be set for arraignment in the assigned division for the next following Miscellaneous date or Violation of Probation Date which is at least **ten (10) calendar days** from the date of arrest.

All Felony Arraignments shall be scheduled as set forth below:

NORTH OKALOOSA COUNTY FELONY ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Felony Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse, located in Crestview, Florida, at 1:30 p.m. (CT). All Arraignments Days shall be scheduled on the first Thursday after the first Monday of each Month and the fourth Thursday after the first Monday of each Month.

SOUTH OKALOOSA COUNTY FELONY ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Felony Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension, located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, at 1:30 p.m. (CT). All cases with surnames beginning with the letter 'A' through 'K' shall be assigned to Division 001 and all cases with surnames beginning with the letter 'L' through 'Z' shall be assigned to Division 002. All Arraignment Days shall be scheduled on the second Thursday after the first Monday of each Month and the third Thursday after the first Monday of each Month.

All Felony Trial dates shall be set for trial in the Division in which the case is assigned to, for the next trial cycle which is at least **sixty (60) calendar days** after the date of Felony arrest, to include cases where information has not been filed. Any Felony case where information has not been filed by the first scheduled Arraignment Day, the Clerk of the Court shall manually remove that case from the trial cycle and set it for the next following Arraignment Day at least **sixty (60) calendar days** after the date of Felony arrest. For cases in which information has been filed by the second scheduled Arraignment Day, then the Division to which that case is assigned shall direct the Clerk of the Court to set the case for trial. Any Felony case in which information has not been filed by the second scheduled Arraignment Day, at least **sixty (60) calendar days** after the date of Felony arrest, the Division to which that case is assigned, shall handle all future scheduling, including but not limited to setting that case for trial.

For purposes of this Administrative Directive the first day of the trial cycle is referred to as 'Docket Day'. Any Felony Arraignment Day which falls on a legal holiday that is observed by the Court shall be held as directed by the presiding Judge. All Circuit Court Evidentiary Hearings for Violations of Probation and Violation of Community Control, in Circuit Court, shall be set by the presiding Judge at the scheduled Arraignment Day.

7. PRETRIAL DETENTION HEARINGS: All Pretrial Detention Hearings shall be conducted for Okaloosa County, Florida, every Thursday at 12:30 p.m. (CT), pursuant to 907.041(5)(g), Florida Statutes. Shall a Court Holiday fall on any day in which Pretrial Detention Hearings are scheduled, those hearings shall be conducted for Okaloosa County, Florida, on the day immediately preceding the Court Holiday.

NORTH OKALOOSA COUNTY

All Pretrial Detention Hearings shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse, located in Crestview, Florida, every Thursday commencing at 12:30 p.m. (CT). All Pretrial Detention Hearings shall be presided over by the assigned Judge for Division 006 for all cases with surnames beginning with the letter 'A' through 'Z'.

SOUTH OKALOOSA COUNTY

All Pretrial Detention Hearings shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension, located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, every Thursday commencing at 12:30 p.m. (CT). All Pretrial Detention Hearings shall be presided over by the assigned Judge for the Division in which the case currently is or shall be assigned to. All cases with surnames beginning with the letter 'A' through 'K' shall be assigned to Division 001 and all cases with surnames beginning with the letter 'L' through 'Z' shall be assigned to Division 002.

8. CASE DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLATION OF PROBATION/COMMUNITY CONTROL & CO-DEFENDANT CASES FOR CIRCUIT COURT: All violation of probation and/or community control cases involving a new substantive offense shall be transferred to the Division to which the newest substantive case is assigned, as set forth and provided in herein. Any violations of probation and/community control shall follow the newest substantive case assignment as set forth herein. The Clerk of the Court for Okaloosa County, Florida, shall transfer any case with any new substantive offense to the Division in which the newest substantive case is assigned. Upon receipt of a memorandum from the Office of the State Attorney to the Clerk of the Court advising the Clerk of any new substantive case, that case shall be transferred to the Division in which the oldest open substantive case is assigned, without the necessity of an Order from the Court.

In all cases involving co-defendants, those cases shall be assigned to the Division to which the oldest open substantive case is assigned.

In any criminal cases involving multiple charges against the same defendant, those cases shall be disposed of in the Division in which the oldest open substantive case is originally assigned unless, upon agreement and stipulation of counsel, the cases are transferred in the interest of judicial economy. Criminal cases assigned to a Division at either the Okaloosa County Courthouse, located in Crestview, Florida, or Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension, located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, as defined in herein, shall be disposed of in the Division to which the oldest open substantive case is assigned, upon agreement and stipulation by the Office of the State Attorney and the defendant prior to any transfer.

9. ARRAIGNMENT AND ADJUDICATORY DATES FOR JUVENILE COURT:

- a. All Juvenile Arraignments shall be set for the next following Arraignment Day, in the assigned division, which occurs **twenty-eight (28) calendar days** after each juvenile arrest; and
- b. Each Violation of Probation in Juvenile Court shall be set for arraignment in the assigned division the next following Juvenile Court Date which is no less than **three (3) working days** from the date of arrest, unless otherwise directed by the presiding Judge.

All Juvenile Arraignments shall be scheduled as set forth below:

NORTH OKALOOSA JUVENILE ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Juvenile Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse located in Crestview, Florida, at 9:00 a.m. (CT) and all Arraignment Days are scheduled the first Thursday after the first Monday of each Month and the third Thursday after the first Monday of each Month.

SOUTH OKALOOSA JUVENILE ARRAIGNMENT DAYS: All Juvenile Arraignment days shall be conducted at the Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex Extension located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, at 9:00 a.m. (CT) and all Arraignment Days are scheduled for the first Wednesday after the first Monday of each Month and the third Wednesday after the first Monday of each Month.

Any Juvenile Arraignment Day which falls on a legal holiday that is observed by the Court shall be held as directed by the presiding Judge. All Adjudicatory hearings, set in Juvenile Court shall be set by the presiding Judge at that Arraignment. All Adjudicatory Hearings for Violations of Probation, set in Juvenile Court, shall be set by the presiding Judge at that Arraignment.

10. CIRCUIT COURT DIVISION ASSIGNMENTS: All Circuit Court Division for Okaloosa County, Florida, assignments shall be scheduled as set forth below:

SOUTH OKALOOSA COUNTY DIVISIONS – OKALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX EXTENSION

Judge Clark (Division 001)
Circuit Civil (50%)
Felony & Felony Arraignments
(Cases A-K)
Appeals (50%)

Judge Ketchel (Division 003)
Family Law (50%)
Dependency (100%)

Judge Stone (Division 002)
Circuit Civil (50%)
Appeals (50%)
Felony & Felony Arraignments
(Cases L-Z)

Judge Brown (Division 004)
Family Law (50%)
Juvenile Delinquency (100%)
Injunctions for Protection Against Violence
Division (100%)
Probate Division & Guardianship
(100% North & South)

NORTH OKALOOSA COUNTY DIVISIONS – OKALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Judge Gontarek (Division 005)
Family Law (100%)
Juvenile Delinquency (100%)
Dependency (100%)
Injunctions for Protection Against
Violence
Division (100%)

Judge Oberliesen (Division 006)
Circuit Civil (100%)
Felony & Felony Arraignments (100%)
Appeals (100%)
Risk Protection Orders
(100% North & South)

Forfeitures (100%)

11. COUNTY COURT DIVISION ASSIGNMENTS: All County Court Division assignments shall be scheduled as set forth below:

Judge Ward (Division A)
Civil (100% North)
Misdemeanor/Criminal & Traffic Division
(100% North)
Small Claims (100% North & South)

Judge Mason (Division B)
Civil (Cases L-Z)
Misdemeanor/Criminal & Traffic Division
(Cases L-Z)

Judge Schlechter (Division C)
Civil (Cases A-K)
Misdemeanor/Criminal Traffic Division
(Cases A-K)
Mental Health Division (Baker & Marchman Act)
(100% North & South)

12. GENERAL MAGISTRATE: All of the following matters in Okaloosa County, Florida, shall be handled by the General Magistrate:
 - a. Baker Act and Marchman Act Hearings;
 - b. Pro Se Family Law;
 - c. Family Law Post Judgment;
 - d. Dependency Drug Court;
 - e. Dependency Truancy Court;
 - f. Recusals from Child Support Hearing Officer; and
 - g. Any other matters specifically referred.

13. CHILD SUPPORT HEARING OFFICER: All cases, related to Title IV-D (Department of Revenue) child support issues, in Okaloosa, County, Florida, shall be heard by the Child Support Hearing Officer.

14. SPECIALTY & OTHER COURTS ASSIGNED TO JUDGES: All specialty and other Court duties are assigned to individual Judges in Okaloosa County, Florida. All specialty and other Court duties are distributed to stakeholders via a memorandum, and these policies and procedure shall be effective as of the date of this Administrative Directive.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

DRUG COURT

MENTAL HEALTH COURT

MENTAL HEALTH PRETRIAL SERVICES COURT

FIRST APPEARANCES: All First Appearances shall be conducted by one of the three County Court Judges for Okaloosa County, Florida, Monday through Friday, at 8:30 a.m. (CT). Shall a replacement be required the Judge seeking such replacement is responsible for securing that replacement.

DUTY JUDGE: Duty Judge assignments and responsibilities are set forth and provided in Administrative Directive OCAD 2024-01. *See* OCAD 2024-01.

SHELTER & DETENTIONS: Any Judge assigned to handle Family Law Cases, shall handle all Shelters & Detentions on a rotation schedule commencing at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Shall a replacement be required the Judge seeking such replacement is responsible for securing that replacement.

DONE AND ORDERED at Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, Florida this 3rd day of September 2024.

 /S/ WILLIAM F. STONE
WILLIAM F. STONE
 ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

Administrative Directive No. OCAD2024-04

Copies furnished to:

Honorable John L. Miller, Chief Judge
All Circuit and County Judges, Okaloosa County
Kasey Watson, Trial Court Administrator
Eric Bensinger, General Counsel
Ursula Hall, Court Operations Manager, Okaloosa County
Okaloosa Clerk of Circuit Court
Okaloosa Bar Association
Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association
Walton Bar Association
Honorable J.D. Peacock II, Clerk of Circuit Court