

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. A2015-10

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (“UFC”) in the Fifth Circuit was created in 2001 and formalized for the Circuit by Administrative Order No. A2002-03. Since 2001, 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 the Circuit, and to establish uniformity in certain practices among the counties of the Circuit, and not to limit practices which comply with UFC and its principles. Therefore,

IT IS ORDERED AND ADJUDGED:

1. Commencing not later than July 1, 2015, each county in the Circuit shall establish and maintain one or more dockets specifically dedicated to cases identified as UFC cases. Failure to meet the July 1, 2015, deadline requires express approval by the Chief Judge on good cause shown following specific request for review by the county administrative judge or family law administrative judge.
2. Commencing not later than July 1, 2015, and applying to all cases filed after July 1, 2015, every 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 a UFC division in the manner designated in each county for assignment of cases. Failure to meet the July 1, 2015, deadline requires express approval by the Chief Judge on good cause shown following specific request for review by the county administrative judge or family law administrative judge.
3. Once a case has been assigned to the UFC, while that case is pending, if a juvenile delinquency case is filed with respect to a minor child who is the subject of the UFC case, then the delinquency case will also be assigned or transferred to the UFC to be appropriately coordinated as provided herein. As used throughout this order, the term “pending” means a case which has been initiated but in which no final judgment has been rendered, or, for a juvenile dependency or delinquency case, no disposition order has been rendered.
4. In addition to the foregoing, once a case has been assigned to the UFC, a Notice of Related Cases in that case or in a related case may identify one or more pending cases, or cases filed after the UFC case is filed but while the UFC case is pending, constituting a case or cases related to the UFC case, and request to have the related case or cases coordinated with the UFC case. Likewise the judge in a related case or any judge in any Family Court Division, as defined by Administrative Order No. A2002-03, may identify a case pending before him or her that is related to a case


pending before a judge in UFC because it involves any of the same parties, children, or issues. Any case identified through the processes provided in this paragraph may be assigned or transferred appropriately to be coordinated with the UFC case. A sample Notice of Referral is attached. The notice shall be placed in the court file and a copy provided to the proper UFC judge

5. If the UFC judge agrees with the referral, the UFC judge shall within five business days enter an order of acceptance reassigning the case to the UFC. If the UFC judge is unavailable, then the referral should be reviewed by the county administrative judge or the family law administrative judge. A sample Order of Acceptance is attached. The Order of Acceptance shall be placed in the court file and copy of the order served upon all parties.
6. If the UFC judge does not accept the referral, a Notice of Denial shall be entered. A sample Notice of Denial is attached. The notice shall be placed in the court file and a copy provided to the judge making the referral.
7. If an Order of Acceptance is not issued within five business days, or if a Notice of Denial is entered, upon request of a party or the referring judge, a copy of the Notice of Referral and the Notice of Denial, if any, will be referred to the county administrative judge or the family law administrative judge for determination of whether the case should be reassigned notwithstanding the denial.
8. When a judge in any Family Court Division, as defined by Administrative Order No. A2002-03, identifies a case pending before him or her that the judge believes should be in UFC but is not a case which is required to be assigned or transferred to the UFC under paragraphs 3 or 4, above, and is not related to a case pending in UFC, the judge may nevertheless file a Notice of Referral as provided in paragraph 4, and the case may be transferred and assigned to a UFC division as provided above.
9. In addition to all of the foregoing, the UFC judge, through case management, upon review of the Notice of Related Cases, or otherwise, may become aware of a related case or a Family Court Division case which he or she believes, in the efficient administration of justice, should be assigned to the UFC. The UFC judge may direct the related or Family Court Division case to be transferred to the UFC in order to coordinate the disposition of cases together.
10. From time to time, a case assigned to the UFC in one county in the Circuit may have a related case pending in another county in the Circuit. The efficient administration of justice requires that the judges in the two counties have available to them a protocol which may in their discretion be utilized to determine if both cases should proceed in one county, and in which county the cases should proceed. Therefore, a court in one county in this Circuit may communicate with a court in another county in this Circuit in order to make such determinations using the optional procedure provided in this paragraph. If the procedure is utilized, each court shall allow the

parties to participate in the communication. If the parties elect to participate in the communication, they must be given the opportunity to present facts and legal arguments before a decision concerning venue or transfer of one case or the other, or jurisdiction if applicable, is made. Communications between courts on schedules, calendars, court records, and similar matters may occur without informing the parties. A record need not be made of such communications. However, other communications between courts to resolve issues addressed in this paragraph should be recorded. The parties must be informed promptly of the communication and granted access to the record. The term "record" herein means a form of information, including, but not limited to, an electronic recording or transcription by a court reporter which creates a verbatim memorialization of any communication between two or more individuals or entities.

11. The chief judge with the assistance of the administrative judges in each of the counties and of the family law administrative judge shall, by county administrative order, establish procedures for the establishment of the UFC division or divisions in their respective counties as required herein above and for the assignment and transfer of cases to the UFC.
12. Except as specifically provided herein, the terms and principles ordered and approved in Administrative Order A2002-03 continue in full force and effect in this Circuit.

DONE AND ORDERED this 29 day of April, 2015.



Chief Judge

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

Case No.

NOTICE OF REFERRAL TO THE UNIFIED FAMILY COURT (“UFC”)

TO: Unified Family Court Judge

FROM: _____
Name of Judge Making Referral

The above captioned case is being referred for review for consideration of assignment to UFC. Additional information concerning the case is as follows:

Child(ren)’s Name(s) and DOB(s): Case Type:

Please list all case(s) now pending in UFC:

Case Name and Number:

___ Dependency _____

___ Delinquency _____

___ Other _____

Other information pertinent to referral: _____

REFERRED on the ____ day of _____, 20__.

Circuit Judge

Original to File/Copy to UFC Judge

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

Case No.

**ORDER OF ACCEPTANCE REASSIGNING REFERRED CASE
TO THE UNIFIED FAMILY COURT ("UFC")**

The above captioned case has been referred to the UFC.

The related pending case(s) now in UFC is/are:

Case Name and Number:

___ Dependency _____
___ Delinquency _____
___ Other _____

The referral is hereby accepted. It is hereby ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the Clerk of Court shall reassign the above captioned case to UFC.

DONE AND ORDERED on the _____ day of _____, 20__ in _____
County, Florida.

Circuit Judge

Original to File
Copy to UFC Judge

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

Case No.

NOTICE OF DENIAL

The above captioned case has been referred to the UFC.

The related pending case(s) now in UFC is/are:

Case Name and Number:

___ Dependency _____

___ Delinquency _____

___ Other _____

The referral is not accepted for the following reasons: _____

REFERRAL DENIED on the _____ day of _____, 20__.

Circuit Judge

Original to File
Copy to Referring Judge