**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR CITRUS, HERNANDO, LAKE, MARION, AND SUMTER COUNTIES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. A-2026-36**

**IN RE: INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE BEST PRACTICES ASPIRATIONAL COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the Fifth Judicial Circuit is committed to promoting access to justice, enhancing public safety, improving outcomes for victims of interpersonal violence, and facilitating meaningful coordination among courts, justice partners, and community service providers; and

**WHEREAS,** the Florida Supreme Court Families and Children in Courts Steering Committee developed the Best Practices Guide and Case Management Techniques for Civil Interpersonal Violence Cases and sought participating circuits to evaluate and implement identified best practices; and

**WHEREAS,** the Fifth Judicial Circuit volunteered to participate in the statewide best-practices initiative and to undertake a review of the Circuit's existing procedures and services relating to civil interpersonal violence matters; and

**WHEREAS,** representatives of the Fifth Judicial Circuit met with members of the statewide domestic violence advisory group subcommittee to conduct a self-assessment and to identify opportunities for improvement; and

**WHEREAS,** the principal objectives identified during the self-assessment include: 1) Connecting victims and families with available resources; 2) Enhancing coordination among courts and community resource providers; and 3) Maximizing court and community resources for self-represented litigants and other individuals seeking assistance; and

**WHEREAS,** the Fifth Judicial Circuit has identified stakeholders throughout Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter Counties, including representatives of the Clerks of Court,

law enforcement agencies, the State Attorney's Office, domestic violence shelters, advocacy organizations, and other community partners. A thorough local review of resources, conducted with stakeholder input, determined that extensive interpersonal violence resources are already in existence within the Circuit and that greater public awareness, accessibility, coordination, and dissemination of information will assist victims, litigants, courts, and community partners; and

**WHEREAS,** the resources identified by the stakeholders have been compiled into a comprehensive inventory of services available within the Fifth Judicial Circuit and its constituent counties; and

**WHEREAS,** establishing a centralized repository of interpersonal violence information and encouraging stakeholders to collaborate in cross-referring individuals and coordinating services where possible will advance the aspirational goals identified in the statewide best-practices initiative; and

**WHEREAS,** a dedicated Domestic Violence and Interpersonal Violence Resources webpage, developed and placed on the Fifth Judicial Circuit's website to facilitate public access to available services, contact information, and educational resources throughout the Circuit, would promote the efficient administration of justice; and

**WHEREAS,** pursuant to Article V, Section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution; section 43.26, Florida Statutes; and 2.215, Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration, the Chief Judge of each judicial circuit is charged with the authority and power to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice;

**THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED**:

**1.** The Fifth Judicial Circuit hereby adopts this Interpersonal Violence Best Practices Aspirational Coordinated Community Response Plan designed to encourage collaboration and communication among courts, justice-system partners, governmental entities, advocacy organizations, service providers, and community stakeholders.

**2.** The Circuit shall maintain and periodically review a public resource repository, including information made available through the Circuit's website, identifying available interpersonal violence resources, services, contact information, and referral opportunities throughout the Circuit.

**3.** All stakeholders are encouraged to cooperate with one another in identifying, sharing, and promoting available resources and services for victims of interpersonal violence and their families whenever legally authorized and operationally feasible.

**4.** Stakeholders are encouraged to provide referrals to other organizations, agencies, and providers when doing so may increase access to services for individuals seeking assistance, subject to any restrictions imposed by law, funding requirements, or organizational policy.

**5.** The Trial Court Administrator, or designee, shall facilitate periodic review of the information maintained within the resource repository and may coordinate the addition of newly available resources and the removal or correction of outdated information.

**6.** The Circuit encourages continued education concerning best practices in matters involving interpersonal violence and promotes awareness of available training opportunities, professional resources, and developments in the delivery of services to affected individuals and families.

**7.** This Administrative Order is aspirational in nature and is intended to promote communication, awareness, and collaboration among stakeholders. Nothing contained herein shall create substantive or procedural rights, duties, causes of action, or enforceable obligations upon any individual, organization, governmental entity, or court participant.

**8.** This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately upon signing and shall remain in effect until further order of the Court.

**DONE AND ORDERED** in chambers in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, this 5th day of November 2026.

Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.
Chief Judge, Fifth Judicial Circuit

Thomas R. Eineman
Family Law Administrative Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit