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

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.: S-2026-39

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ASSIGNING DUTY JUDGE ROTATION AND JUDICIAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR SUMTER COUNTY CIRCUIT JUDGES, COUNTY JUDGES, GENERAL MAGISTRATE AND HEARING OFFICER FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2027

WHEREAS, the undersigned having considered the need for judicial assignments for the calendar year 2027; and

WHEREAS, the undersigned having considered that the Legislature has mandated a judge shall be available as nearly as possible at all times to hold and conduct hearings to handle emergency cases; and

WHEREAS, a judge, commonly referred to as the "duty judge", shall be available at all times to handle applications for search warrants, pen registers, petitions for *ex parte* injunctive relief to prevent domestic and repeat violence, and other emergency matters; and

WHEREAS, in this context, the term "emergency" encompasses the foregoing *ex parte* applications and other matters of extreme urgency (*i.e.*, matters of life and death or instances of irreparable harm) that have not been assigned to a division; and

WHEREAS, it would be unfair and inequitable to have one judge permanently assigned to handle such matters, and that it would be in the best interest of fairness to rotate this duty among the various judges of the County.

THEREFORE, it is hereby

ORDERED as follows:

1. Attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference is the rotation for the Sumter County duty judge assignments for 2027. This duty shall be in addition to Tri-County weekend and holiday duty judge assignments by the Chief Judge of the circuit.

2. The assigned duty judge shall be available to handle all matters needing emergency judicial attention, Monday through Friday, for the month that they are assigned. The duty judge shall be on call 24 hours a day on weekdays during their month. The monthly duty judge assignment begins at 8:00 a.m. on the first day of any duty month, except for weekends and holidays.

3. Nothing in this order shall preclude judges from accepting responsibility for

another judge's duties by agreement, in writing, with copies to all of the following: Sumter County judges, Clerk of Court, Sheriff's Office, Public Defender's Office, State Attorney's Office, Departments of Juvenile Justice and Children and Family Services, and the State Court Administrative Assistant assigned to Sumter County.

4. It is not the intention of this Court that any duty judge shall be required to handle matters that are assigned to another judge. This order is only to ensure judicial coverage in Sumter County as mandated by the Legislature, the Rules of Judicial Administration and the orders of the Chief Judge of this circuit.

5. Any County Court judge who serves as the duty judge under this Order is hereby assigned to act as a judge of the Circuit Court of the Fifth Judicial Circuit should an emergency requiring the actions of a circuit judge arise during their term as duty judge. This is not to be construed as a permanent assignment of the County Court judge to the Circuit Court bench and shall be effective only during the time that the County Court judge shall serve as the duty judge hereunder.

6. The Clerk of the Court of Sumter County has been provided with a signature stamp of each of the judges in Sumter County so that the Clerk may affix the stamped signature on orders and documents requiring the signature of the duty judge, after personally speaking to the judge, explaining the situation, reading the document over the telephone, and receiving a verbal authorization from the judge to affix the signature stamp thereon. Such stamped signature shall have the same force and effect as a manual signature, and the Clerk of the Court shall be responsible for the safekeeping of said signature stamps, pursuant to the provisions of section 116.34, Florida Statutes.

7. Unless an emergency occurs, there shall always be at least one judge available in Sumter County to handle the business of the county as it may arise during each duty month. Should a conflict arise, which would leave the county without judicial coverage during any particular week, or a portion thereof, it shall be the responsibility of the assigned duty judge for that month to coordinate with other judges to ensure coverage is maintained in the manner set forth in this order.

8. The duty judge for each month shall also be responsible for juror excusal review, qualifying jurors during any jury trial session, and signing search warrants and arrest warrants.

9. Effective January 1, 2027, the assignments of judicial duties among the Circuit Court Judges, County Judges, General Magistrate and Child Support Hearing Officer of Sumter County shall be as follows:

A. The **Honorable Charles L. W. Helm**, Administrative Judge and Circuit Judge of Sumter County, is hereby assigned the following cases: all Felony cases; all Juvenile Delinquency; Jimmy Ryce cases.

B. The **Honorable Erin Daly**, Circuit Judge of Sumter County, is hereby assigned the following cases: all Circuit Civil cases; all Guardianship cases; Mental Health, including Risk Protection Orders; Drug Court.

C. The **Honorable Mary P. Hatcher**, Circuit Judge of Sumter County, is hereby assigned the following cases: all Domestic Relations cases; Juvenile Dependency; Unified Family Court cases; Probate.

D. The **Honorable Paul L. Militello**, County Judge of Sumter County, is hereby assigned the following cases: all County Criminal cases; all Criminal Traffic cases.

E. The **Honorable Shelby D. Senn**, County Judge of Sumter County, is hereby assigned the following cases: all County Civil cases; all Small Claims cases; all Civil Traffic Infractions, including those involving serious bodily injury or fatality; First Appearances.

F. The **General Magistrate** assigned to Sumter County is hereby assigned to hear such matters including but not limited to: Juvenile Dependency arraignments; judicial reviews and permanency judicial reviews; name changes; adoptions; dissolutions of marriage; paternity and post dissolution/paternity proceedings; simplified dissolutions of marriage filed pro se; Unified Family Court proceedings as assigned by Judge Hatcher.

G. The **Child Support Hearing Officer** assigned to Sumter County is hereby assigned to hear such matters including but not limited to: Department of Revenue Child Support cases and other duties as assigned.

10. This Order shall take effect on January 1, 2027, and shall remain in effect until vacated, amended or supplemented.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers at Bushnell, Sumter County, Florida, this 5 day of November 2026.

CHARLES L.W. HELM
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

SUMTER COUNTY DUTY JUDGE SCHEDULE FOR 2027	
MONTH:	JUDGE:
JANUARY	JUDGE DALY
FEBRUARY	JUDGE HELM
MARCH	JUDGE MILITELLO
APRIL	JUDGE SENN
MAY	JUDGE HATCHER
JUNE	JUDGE DALY
JULY	JUDGE HELM
AUGUST	JUDGE MILITELLO
SEPTEMBER	JUDGE SENN
OCTOBER	JUDGE HATCHER
NOVEMBER	JUDGE DALY
DECEMBER	JUDGE HELM

** FROM 8:00 A.M. FIRST WORKING DAY OF THE MONTH TO 5:00 P.M. ON THE LAST WORKING DAY OF THE MONTH (For Weekends and Holidays, refer to Weekend and Holiday Tri-County Duty Roster)