

**SUPREME COURT OF GUAM**

**ADMINISTRATIVE RULE NO. 24-001**

**REGARDING AMENDED TRIAL COURT CASE ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES<sup>1</sup>**

Pursuant to this court’s authority to “make and promulgate rules governing the administration of the judiciary and the practice and procedure in the courts of the judicial branch of Guam,” 48 U.S.C. 1424-1(a)(6), the mandate of Title 7 GCA § 4101(e) that this court “enact rules governing the efficient dispatch of the Superior Court’s business, including . . . (3) assignment, management, distribution, processing, scheduling and disposition of cases in the Superior Court,” and upon consultation with the trial court judges relative to suggested adjustments to the manner in which cases are assigned to the judges of the Superior Court of Guam to better maximize equity and efficiency in managing the trial court’s business, the Trial Court Case Assignment Procedures as set forth in its entirety in Exhibit A hereto and incorporated herein by this reference are hereby **ADOPTED**, and shall replace the case assignment procedures articulated in Administrative Rule No. 16-002.

The Trial Court Case Assignment Procedures will be effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2029.

**SO ORDERED** this 6th day of March, 2024.

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/s/  
**ROBERT J. TORRES**  
Chief Justice

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/s/  
**F. PHILIP CARBULLIDO**  
Associate Justice

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/s/  
**KATHERINE A. MARAMAN**  
Associate Justice

<sup>1</sup> This court issued the original version of Administrative Rule No. 24-001 on February 2, 2024. This amended rule corrects clerical errors that were overlooked in the original version and supersedes that version in its entirety.

**EXHIBIT “A”**  
**AMENDED TRIAL COURT CASE ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES**  
[Administrative Rule 24-001; Effective January 1, 2025]

**I. Introduction**

The Administrative Rule and Case Assignment Procedures were updated in May 2023 on an interim basis when an eighth judge took the Superior Court bench. If fewer than eight Superior Court judges occupy the bench for an extended period, the Superior Court Clerk of Court shall confer with the Presiding Judge and the Administrator of the Courts about interim measures until a full contingent occupies the bench. Any proposed interim measure is subject to the approval of the Chief Justice. These procedures also contemplate the assignment of cases to two magistrates, a Family Court Referee, and an Administrative Hearings Officer.

All cases addressed herein shall be assigned in accordance with the Administrative Rule and case assignment procedures.

**II. Court Designations**

There shall be eight court designations for the assignment of cases to the Superior Court judges. The designations will include four criminal courts, three non-criminal courts, and one court with a docket comprised of both criminal and non-criminal cases, which will be referred to as a general jurisdiction court. Courts 1, 2, and 3 are designated as non-criminal courts, Courts 4, 5, 6, and 7 are designated as criminal courts, and Court 8 as a general jurisdiction court. Courts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 shall have a therapeutic court or treatment program component.<sup>1</sup>

One judge shall occupy each designation for four years. Selection of the courts shall be based on seniority and shall occur at a meeting with the full contingent of eight judges held no

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<sup>1</sup> The therapeutic courts include: Juvenile Drug Court, Adult Drug Court, Veterans Treatment Court, and the Driving While Impaired Treatment Court. The Guam Adult Reentry Court is a treatment program. *See* 7 GCA § 2101.

later than 18 months<sup>2</sup> before the expiration of the rotation to allow the next judge to adequately prepare for the newly assigned docket. The assignments shall be fair and equitable and should provide each of the eight judges with the opportunity to occupy each court established in these procedures. A judge may not select the same court when rotating; however, once the selections based on seniority are made, the judges shall have the discretion to exchange their assigned courts with one another on or before a date set by the Chief Justice. A judge shall not occupy the same court longer than eight years.<sup>3</sup> If a judge vacates the bench, the judges may request with the Presiding Judge to be reassigned to the vacant court with priority given to the most senior judge making such request.

All active cases<sup>4</sup> except for the cases where a defendant or minor are in a therapeutic court, treatment program, or the Family Violence Deferred program shall remain with the judge responsible for the case unless that judge is subsequently disqualified from the matter. If the judge is subsequently disqualified, the matter will be randomly assigned in accordance with these rules.

### **III. Assignment of Cases**

Except as provided in sections III(D), (E), and (F) below, all cases shall be assigned to the eight courts as follows.

#### **A. Non-Criminal Cases**

##### **1. Juvenile Delinquency (JD) Cases**

All Juvenile Delinquency cases shall be assigned to Courts 3 and 8, except in instances

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<sup>2</sup>The next rotation will be January 1, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> The current rule was first adopted pursuant to Administrative Rule No. 20-001 and updated under Administrative Rule No. 23-002. This Rule contemplates a significant change to the types of cases which make up each of the eight courts. As a result, none of the courts will carry a case load that looks the same as the prior case assignment procedures and the one which is currently in place. Therefore, the prohibition on continuing in the same court shall reset effective January 1, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> An active case includes a case that has not been closed by the court.

where there is an active related case. In such instances, the JD case will be assigned to the Court handling the related active case unless the judicial officers agree to a transfer. If a juvenile is eligible for Juvenile Drug Court (“JDC”), the case shall be assigned to Court 3. The assignment of a Juvenile Delinquency case to the Juvenile Drug Court shall count toward Court 3’s one-half (½) share of Juvenile Delinquency cases.

## **2. Juvenile Proceeding (JP) Cases**

All Juvenile Proceeding cases, including truancy, beyond control, legal guardianship, status offenses, and Person in Need of Services (“PINS”), shall be assigned to the Family Court Referee.

Consistent with the One-Judge-One-Family concept, if a juvenile has an active prior or active related case, any new case involving that juvenile shall be assigned to the same judge or referee, except that the case may be reassigned upon agreement with the judges and Family Court Referee.

## **3. Domestic (DM) Cases**

All domestic cases, except for uncontested divorces shall be assigned equally between Courts 1, 2, and 3.

## **4. *Ex Parte* Applications**

a. All civil *ex parte* Applications for Temporary Orders of Protection (“TPO”) and Orders to Show Cause, and all Protective Order cases (“PO”) as defined under the Local Rules of Court, Miscellaneous Rule 2.1, shall be assigned equally to Courts 1, 2, and 3.

b. Consistent with the concept of One-Judge-One-Family, any domestic case (DM) involving a party or parties who are also involved in a PO case or cases shall be assigned or reassigned to the judge assigned to the PO case. The assignment or reassignment of a DM

or PO case shall count toward that court's share of DM and PO cases.

## **5. Other Non-Criminal Cases**

Adoption cases shall be assigned to Court 8. All other non-criminal cases not assigned above shall be assigned equally to Courts 1, 2, and 3.

## **B. Criminal Cases**

Criminal cases shall be assigned to Courts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, as outlined below.

### **1. Felony Cases**

- a. Cases that include any of the following felony charges shall be equally assigned, one-fifth (1/5) each, to Courts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8:
  - (i) Aggravated Murder – 9 GCA § 16.30
  - (ii) Murder – 9 GCA § 16.40
  - (i) Attempted Murder, Solicitation, and Conspiracy to commit murder – 9 GCA §§ 13.60 and 16.40
  - (ii) Manslaughter – 9 GCA § 16.50
  - (iii) Kidnapping – 9 GCA § 22.20
  - (iv) First Degree Robbery – 9 GCA § 40.10
  - (v) First Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct – 9 GCA § 25.15
  - (vi) Second Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct – 9 GCA § 25.20
  - (vii) Prostitution – 9 GCA § 28.10
  - (viii) Compelling Prostitution – 9 GCA § 28.30
  - (ix) Use of Child in Obscene Acts – 9 GCA § 28.52
  - (x) Photographs of Minor's Sexual Acts – 9 GCA § 28.80
  - (xi) Electronic Enticement of Child in Sexual Acts – 9 GCA § 25A105

(xii) Child Pornography – 9 GCA § 25A203

(xiii) Home Invasion – 9 GCA § 37.210

b. All felony and misdemeanor cases involving any level of a family violence charge shall be assigned equally to Courts 5 and 7. Any felony or misdemeanor assigned to Courts 5 and 7 shall count toward that court's one-fifth (1/5) share of felonies and one-fourth (1/4) share of misdemeanors.

c. All felonies not assigned under subsection (a) and (b) shall be assigned one-fifth (1/5) each to Courts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

## **2. Misdemeanor Cases**

All misdemeanor cases not assigned under subsection (b) shall be assigned one-fourth (1/4) each to Courts 4, 5, 6, and 7.

## **3. Veterans Treatment Court**

All felony and misdemeanor cases in which a defendant is eligible for the Veterans Treatment Court ("VTC") shall be reassigned to Court 7 when: (1) the defendant is legally and clinically eligible, as set forth in the VTC Participant Handbook; (2) the defendant executes a participation agreement; and (3) the case is accepted by the VTC judge. Any felony or misdemeanor assigned to the VTC shall count toward that court's share of the felonies and misdemeanors.

## **4. Mental Health Cases**

All felony and misdemeanor cases in which a defendant is eligible for the Mental Health Court ("MHC") shall be reassigned to Court 8 when: (1) the defendant is legally and clinically eligible as set forth in the Guam Mental Health Court Rules as promulgated by the Supreme Court; (2) the defendant executes a participation agreement; and (3) the case is accepted

by the MHC judge. Any felony case assigned to the MHC shall count toward Court 8's share of felonies.

### **5. Adult Drug Court**

All felony cases in which a defendant is eligible for the Adult Drug Court I and III ("ADC" I and III) treatment track shall be reassigned to Court 4 when: (1) the defendant is legally and clinically eligible, as set forth in the ADC Participant Handbook; (2) the defendant executes a participation agreement; and (3) the case is accepted by the ADC judge. Any felony assigned to the ADC I and III shall count toward that court's share of the felonies.

All felony cases in which a defendant is eligible for the Adult Drug Court II ("ADC" II) treatment track shall be reassigned to Court 5 when: (1) the defendant is legally and clinically eligible, as set forth in the ADC Participant Handbook; (2) the defendant executes a participation agreement; and (3) the case is accepted by the ADC II judge. Any felony assigned to the ADC II shall count toward that court's share of the felonies.

### **6. Driving While Impaired Treatment Court**

All felony and misdemeanor cases in which a defendant is eligible for the Driving While Impaired Treatment Court ("DWITC") shall be reassigned to Court 6 when: (1) the defendant is legally and clinically eligible, as set forth in the DWITC Participant Handbook; (2) the defendant executes a participation agreement; and (3) the case is accepted by the DWITC judge. Any felony or misdemeanor assigned to the DWITC shall count toward that court's share of the felonies and misdemeanors.

### **7. Guam Adult Reentry Court Program**

All participants eligible for the Guam Adult Reentry Court Program shall be assigned to Court 2.

### **C. Complex Litigation**

Where a party moves to consolidate complex cases which have been assigned to different judges, the Presiding Judge will address the motion and shall thereafter make the assignment of cases upon ruling on the motion. If the Presiding Judge is disqualified from any of the cases to be consolidated, the next senior judge will address and rule on the motion and shall thereafter make the assignment of the cases to be consolidated. To have a fair and equitable case distribution, the Presiding Judge may adjust total case assignments when complex litigation requires the assigned judge to devote a greater proportion of his or her time to the complex case or cases.

### **D. Assignment of Cases to Magistrates**

The Magistrates will preside over all first appearances and arraignment proceedings in criminal cases and juvenile preliminary hearings when the Family Court Referee is not available to hear them. All civil collection cases, special proceedings cases involving a change of name petition, uncontested divorces where there is a notarized consent on file, unlawful detainer, and restitution cases shall be assigned to the Magistrates. All traffic and small claims cases shall be assigned to the Magistrates. Magistrates shall be responsible for the issuance of search warrants and the hearing of returns of the Grand Jury. The Magistrates may serve as settlement judges and may also be assigned cases and preside over matters as provided under 7 GCA § 4401(c).

### **E. Special Proceedings, Probate, Land Registration, and Foreign Orders**

Special Proceedings matters shall be assigned as follows: Except for guardianship matters, habeas corpus, and extradition matters, one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of these matters will be assigned to Courts 1 and 2. Court 3 will be assigned all guardianship matters. If Court 3 is disqualified, guardianship matters will be assigned equally to Courts 1 and 2. Habeas Corpus and extradition matters shall be assigned in one-fifth ( $\frac{1}{5}$ ) to Courts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Probate matters shall be assigned to Courts



1 and 2. Land registration and foreign order matters shall be assigned to Court 3.

**F. Assignment of Cases to Family Court Referee**

The Family Court Referee shall be assigned cases under section III(A)(2) above. The Family Court Referee will also hear all juvenile preliminary hearing matters, all child support issues in domestic cases where the Office of the Attorney General has not entered an appearance, and may serve as a settlement judge. Additionally, the Family Court Referee shall hear traffic and small claims cases when the Magistrates, judge *pro tempore* or referee is not available to hear them.

**G. Assignment of Cases to Administrative Hearings Officer**

The Administrative Hearings Officer will hear all child support cases filed by the Office of the Attorney General and child support issues in domestic cases where the Office of the Attorney General entered its appearance.

**IV. Miscellaneous Matters**

**A. Disqualification of a Judicial Officer**

1. Upon the disqualification of a judge or Family Court Referee in a non-criminal case, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the remaining judges available to preside over such non-criminal cases. If all judges or Family Court Referee presiding over such non-criminal cases are disqualified, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the judges presiding over criminal cases. Upon the disqualification of a judge from a criminal case, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the remaining judges available to preside over such criminal cases. If all judges presiding over such criminal cases are disqualified, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the judges presiding over non-criminal cases. The Presiding Judge shall have authority to make direct assignments in cases of necessity.

2. Magistrates

a. Upon the disqualification of a magistrate in cases assigned to the magistrate pursuant to section III(D), the case shall be reassigned to the second magistrate. If both magistrates are disqualified, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the judges presiding over the applicable non-criminal cases or to the Family Court Referee, as provided in section III.

b. Upon the disqualification of a magistrate presiding over a first appearance, or an arraignment in criminal cases, the matter shall be reassigned to the second magistrate. Should both magistrates be disqualified from presiding over these proceedings, the matter shall be heard by the assigned judge or the *ex parte* judge, if the assigned judge is unavailable.

3. Upon the disqualification of the Family Court Referee from presiding over child support issues in domestic cases where the Office of the Attorney General has not entered an appearance, the child support issues shall be heard by the assigned judge.

4. Upon the disqualification of the Administrative Hearings Officer in cases assigned pursuant to section III(F), the case shall be reassigned to the Family Court Referee. If the Family Court Referee is disqualified, the case shall be randomly reassigned to the magistrates.

5. When a judge shall deny his or her disqualification under 7 GCA § 6107, the question of the judge's disqualification shall be randomly assigned to one of the remaining Superior Court judges (referred to as the "recusal judge") who has not been previously disqualified from the underlying matter. 7 GCA § 6105, **Grounds of Disqualification** and 7 GCA § 6106, **Duty to Disclose Disqualification** shall apply to a recusal judge.

## **B. Case Assignment Review**

The Clerk of Court shall review the actual case assignment numbers on or about July 1 of each year, and with the approval of the Presiding Judge, shall make appropriate adjustments to the assignment of cases during the final quarter of each calendar year to ensure equal and balanced case assignments to the extent reasonably possible. However, therapeutic court or treatment program case assignments must always be made under this rule.

## **C. *Ex Parte* Schedule**

All judges will rotate every two weeks as the *ex parte* judge with a schedule to be established by the Presiding Judge.

## **V. Random Case Assignment**

The Administrator of the Courts shall take reasonable steps as may be necessary to cause to be computerized the random assignment of cases as described herein.