

Supreme Court of Florida

No. AOSC10-50

IN RE: STEERING COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES
AND CHILDREN IN THE COURT

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

The goal of the family court initiative is to establish a fully integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases involving children and families. The Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court has been the guiding force in encouraging and facilitating the family court initiative. This initiative has produced numerous improvements in the judicial branch and provides support and assistance as the Florida State Courts System endeavors to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of family court operations.

Court committees are a vital component in the governance of the judicial branch. Committees established by the Supreme Court assist in the development of policies and operating procedures that enhance the administration of justice. In recent years, as a result of the global recession and the subsequent decline in state financial resources, the Florida State Courts System has sustained significant reductions in operating funds and staff positions. Even given the demanding fiscal

times we are in, work of the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court must proceed.

The Steering Committee must, however, be cognizant of the limitations on the resources available to support its efforts as it develops a work plan that will accomplish, to the best of the Steering Committee's abilities, the important tasks assigned in this administrative order. The chair should use discretion in the establishment of subcommittees that require operating funds and staff support. With regard to meetings, the Steering Committee should strive to utilize the most economical means appropriate to the type of work being accomplished.

Accordingly, the term of the Steering Committee is extended until June 30, 2012. During its term the Steering Committee shall perform the following tasks:

1. Examine the results of the family court survey conducted by the Office of the State Courts Administrator and report to the Court on the manner in which Unified Family Court (UFC) principles are being implemented by the circuit courts. The report should examine any remaining impediments to the judicial administration of related family cases, identify promising UFC practices, and identify strategies that will assist circuits in their ongoing UFC implementation efforts. The report should also reexamine the UFC principles outlined in In re:

Report of the Family Court Steering Committee, 794 So. 2d 518 (Fla. 2001), and identify any appropriate changes or improvements.

2. Subject to available resources, the Steering Committee shall provide for an education program for family court judges and staff that addresses promising UFC practices and strategies for UFC implementation.
3. Examine rule 2.545(d), Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, which requires the petitioner in a family case to file with the court a notice of related cases, and propose amendments that ensure all of the necessary parties and attorneys receive proper notification and that also prevent problems with regard to notice, case coordination, scope of representation, and efficiency that were identified during the 2006-2008 term of the Steering Committee (Impediment 3).
4. Propose appropriate amendments to the Florida Statutes and/or Florida Rules of Court Procedure to resolve the inconsistencies between Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 63, Florida Statutes, with regard to Termination of Parental Rights proceedings.
5. Provide for a liaison to the multi-disciplinary dependency court improvement panel that must be established by the Office of the State Courts Administrator to guide the Florida State Courts System's

efforts in meeting its federal Dependency Court Improvement Grant obligations.

6. Collaborate with other court committees, as appropriate, to identify and define the data elements necessary for effective family court case management.

The Steering Committee is authorized to propose statutory and rule amendments as specified in its charges. Should the Steering Committee recommend amendments to the rules of court procedure and/or forms, it shall file such recommendations in petition form with the Clerk of the Florida Supreme Court. Mr. William W. Booth shall serve as the liaison between the Steering Committee and The Florida Bar Juvenile Court Rules Committee. The Honorable Lisa Davidson shall serve as the liaison between the Steering Committee and The Florida Bar Rules of Judicial Administration Committee.

Should the Steering Committee make recommendations that require additional funding or resources to implement, the Steering Committee is directed to establish the necessary liaison relationship with the District Court of Appeal Budget Commission or the Trial Court Budget Commission, as appropriate. At a minimum, the Steering Committee shall provide the chair of the respective budget commission with copies of committee reports and recommendations that reference

the need for additional court funding or resources, prior to the finalization of those reports.

Should the Steering Committee make recommendations that impact on court technology, the Steering Committee is directed to establish the necessary liaison relationship with the Florida Courts Technology Commission. At a minimum, the Steering Committee shall provide the Chair of the Florida Courts Technology Commission with copies of committee reports and recommendations that reference court technology, prior to the finalization of those reports.

Should the Steering Committee make recommendations about the education and training needs of judges and court staff, the committee is directed to establish the necessary liaison relationship with the Florida Court Education Council. At a minimum, the Steering Committee shall provide the Chair of the Florida Court Education Council with copies of committee reports and recommendations that reference court education, prior to the finalization of those reports.

The Judicial Branch Governance Study Group was established in the fall of 2009 and directed by the Supreme Court to undertake an in-depth study of the current governance system of the judicial branch of Florida. There is a possibility the results of that initiative may necessitate a re-evaluation of this administrative order, at a future date.

The following individuals are appointed to serve on the Steering Committee
on Families and Children in the Court for a term to expire on June 30, 2012:

The Honorable Barbara J. Pariente, Chair
Justice, Supreme Court of Florida

Mr. Alan Abramowitz
Director, Office of Family Safety
Department of Children and Families

The Honorable Scott Bernstein
Circuit Judge, Eleventh Judicial Circuit

Mr. William W. Booth
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County

The Honorable Nikki Ann Clark
Appellate Judge, First District Court of Appeal

The Honorable Jeri Beth Cohen
Circuit Judge, Eleventh Judicial Circuit

The Honorable Katherine G. Essrig
Circuit Judge, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Mr. Tom Genung
Trial Court Administrator, Nineteenth Judicial Circuit

The Honorable Lee E. Haworth
Chief Judge, Twelfth Judicial Circuit

The Honorable John Helinger
Circuit Judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit

Mr. Jon Johnson
Magistrate, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Ms. Susan Keith
Hearing Officer, Fifth Judicial Circuit

Ms. Diane M. Kirigin
Magistrate, Fifteenth Judicial

The Honorable Kathleen Kroll
Circuit Judge, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

The Honorable Robert J. Morris, Jr.
Appellate Judge, Second District Court of Appeal

Myrna Neims, Ph.D.
President, Florida Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

The Honorable Sandra Sue Robbins
Circuit Judge, Fifth Judicial Circuit

The Honorable David C. Wiggins
Circuit Judge, Fourth Judicial Circuit

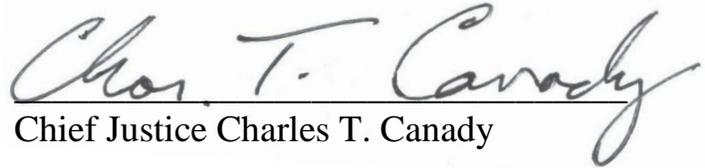
The Honorable Raul A. Zambrano
Circuit Judge, Seventh Judicial Circuit

Ms. Nina Zollo
Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

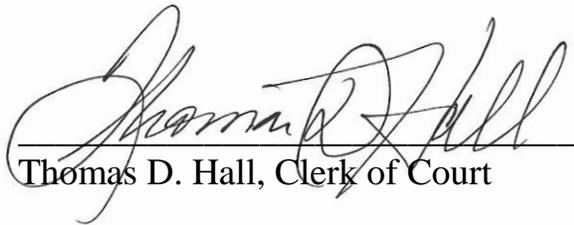
The Steering Committee should submit its reports to the Chief Justice
through the State Courts Administrator.

Staff support will be provided by the Office of the State Courts
Administrator.

DONE AND ORDERED at Tallahassee, Florida, on September 10, 2010.


Chief Justice Charles T. Canady

ATTEST:


Thomas D. Hall, Clerk of Court

