

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2021- 007

**IN RE: ASSIGNMENT OF CRIMINAL CASES IN CIRCUIT COURT, COLUMBIA
COUNTY**

NOW THEREFORE, by the authority vested in me as the Chief Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit and pursuant to the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration it is hereby

ORDERED as follows:

1. Each defendant will be assigned to one criminal division and all circuit felony cases of said defendant will be addressed in said division.
2. Whenever a defendant is arrested or otherwise noticed to appear for arraignment and has no other felony cases pending within Columbia County, including pending probation cases existing at the time of case initiation, the case will be assigned based upon the alphabet; wherein Circuit Division A will handle all criminal defendants with last names beginning with A through K and Circuit Division B will handle all criminal defendants with last names beginning with L through Z.
3. If the defendant has other pending cases, including an open probation case or active probationary sentence, the defendant's new case will be assigned to whichever division is assigned the open case.
4. If there are co-defendants the same process will apply. All circuit felony cases involving co-defendant will be assigned to the same division. If one co-defendant has an open or pending case at the time the new case is initiated by arrest, notice to appear, or warrant request to the State Attorney's Office, the new cases will be assigned to that division. If co-defendants have an open or pending case in separate divisions, the lowest clerk number of the pending cases will control to which division the cases are assigned.
5. If co-defendants are arrested and none have pending cases, the highest charge (as defined first by degree level and then by scoresheet level) at the time of arrest will control division assignment. Where co-defendants are charged with the same offense(s) such that a higher charge does not exist, the co-defendant with the lower jail booking number will control Division assignment.

6. In a situation where co-defendants exist, but no clerk number is assigned and none of the co-defendants have pending cases, the co-defendant with highest charge (as defined first by degree level and then by scoresheet level) at the time the complaint is filed with the State Attorney's Office shall control division assignment. Where co-defendants are charged with the exact same offense(s) such that no higher charge exists, the division assignment will be controlled by the lowest agency report number accompanying the warrant request.
7. If at any time a case has an existing felony division assignment, is dismissed for any reason, and is later resumed, the case shall be reinstated to the original felony division.
8. All post-conviction and post-judgment matters shall maintain their designated division assignment. Any case remanded for further proceedings according to appellate mandate will be assigned to the original division where the case was initially handled absent a contrary legal requirement.
9. Nothing contained in this order prevents the presiding judge in each division to confer with one another and determine an assignment to a specific division based on caseload, judicial economy, availability, and any other factor relevant for consideration.

DONE AND ORDERED in Columbia County, Lake City, Florida, this 7th day of September, 2021.



Digitally signed by Mark E.
Feagle
Date: 2021.09.07 09:28:01
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MARK E. FEAGLE, Chief Judge

cc: All Third Circuit Judges and Judicial Assistants
Trial Court Administrator
Office of State Attorney
Office of Public Defender
Office of Regional Conflict Counsel
Third Circuit Bar
Sheriffs of the Judicial Circuit
Clerks of Court, Third Circuit