

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRD JUDICIAL  
CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2024-001**

**APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL MAGISTRATE**

**WHEREAS**, many matters to include probate, guardianship, mental health, trusts, substance abuse and adult protective services are brought before the Probate, Guardianship and Trust Division of this court; and

**WHEREAS**, Unified Family Court proceedings include, but are not limited to cases involving support, alimony, custody, time-sharing, juvenile dependency, attorneys' fees, and substance abuse; and

**WHEREAS**, matters involving residential foreclosure of real property are brought before the Civil Division of this court; and

**WHEREAS**, the cases set forth above comprise a substantial portion of this Circuit Court's workload, both as to the number of cases and the amount of judicial time connected with disposition of same; and

**WHEREAS**, the interests of the public and of the litigants require flexible and speedy resolution of such matters; and

**WHEREAS**, Florida Statutes section 29.004 (2009) provides, for the purpose of implementing section 14, Article V, of the Florida Constitution, the appointment of "general magistrates, special magistrates and hearing officers"; and

**WHEREAS**, Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 1.490; Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 1.491; Florida Rules of Probate Procedure, Rule 5.095 and Rule 5.697; and Florida Rules of Family Procedure Rule 12.490 and Rule 12.491 authorize the Chief Circuit Judge to appoint General Magistrates to preside over a myriad of pre-judgment, post-judgment, non-child support matters and child support establishment, enforcement and modification matters;

By the power vested in me under Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(2), it is therefore **ORDERED**:

**A. APPOINTMENT OF MAGISTRATE**

1. Christina Nieto Seifert is hereby appointed as General Magistrate to assist the Judges in their above-described workload. The General Magistrate is appointed and authorized to function within all types of proceedings

enumerated above as may be referred by the Chief Judge or any Circuit Judge and to assist the Circuit Judges. The General Magistrate shall serve without bond.

2. Christina Nieto Seifert shall discharge her duties and obligations at the direction of the Chief Judge of the Circuit, the Administrative Judge of the Unified Family Court and the Circuit Court Judges for whom she serves.
3. Upon filing of any matter in family court which may be referred to the General Magistrate, litigants and/or attorneys may submit Florida Supreme Court approved forms 12.920(a) and 12.920(b), for consideration by the regularly assigned Judge.
4. Christina Nieto Seifert shall be invested with all powers and authority under Florida law and the appropriate Florida Family Rules of Procedure, Florida Civil Rules of Procedure and Florida Probate and Guardianship Rules of Procedure.
5. Any objection to a referral shall be made in writing and filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of the Order of Referral. If an objection is filed, the matter will remain to be heard by the presiding Judge.

#### **B. EMERGENT MATTERS**

1. Due to the time limitations procedurally inherent in the General Magistrate system, emergent matters, styled as such, shall be referred to the Circuit Judges directly by the Clerk of the Circuit Court for review, not to the General Magistrate.
2. If the Circuit Judge determines that the matter is non-emergent, then it may be referred to the General Magistrate for disposition.

#### **C. RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**

1. Consistent with the Florida Civil Rules of Procedure, Florida Family Rules of Procedure and the Florida Probate and Guardianship Rules of Procedure, all proceedings before the General Magistrate shall be electronically recorded with equipment provided by this Circuit's Office of Court Administration.
2. Copies of the recordings or transcripts of the proceedings may be obtained in accordance with Administrative Order 2009-004.

#### **D. ORDER OF REFERRAL TO GENERAL MAGISTRATE**

1. To the extent that a motion or petition is referred to the General Magistrate

for disposition, then all matters connected therewith such as discovery, continuances, etc. are to be heard solely by the General Magistrate.

2. The following matters are not appropriate for and should not be referred to the General Magistrate:
  - a. Exceptions to Report per Rule 12.490;
  - b. Bifurcation of attorney's fees hearing after Judge has ruled on underlying action or motion;
  - c. Bifurcation of initial action for dissolution of marriage after Judge grants dissolution of marriage and refers everything else;
  - d. Motion for Rehearing of Order on action or motion heard and issued by Judge;
  - e. Motion for Clarification of Order on an action or motion heard and issued by the Judge;
  - f. Emergencies of any type;
  - g. Contempt proceedings arising from a contempt order which was heard and issued by the Judge;
  - h. First Appearance Hearings on Commitment Order arrests;
  - i. Adoptions; and
  - j. Domestic Violence Injunctions.

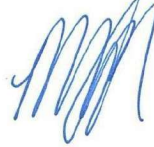
#### **E. REPORTS**

1. The General Magistrate will proceed with the hearings and the preparation and filing of reports in the manner set out in Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.490 and 1.491; Florida Rule of Probate Procedure 5.095 and Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.490. The General Magistrate shall retain authority to correct any errors or omissions or both in the original report by filing a corrected or amended general magistrate report. The General Magistrate will notify the parties or the attorneys within fifteen (15) days of receipt of exceptions filed. Such reservation of authority by the General Magistrate does not restrict the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court to proceed on the previously filed exceptions, nor does the reservation of authority by the General Magistrate prevent a party from filing exceptions to the corrected or amended report.
2. The General Magistrate shall file any report dealing with modification within ten (10) days from the date of the hearing. Any finding of contempt should be done within three (3) days of the date of the hearing so an appropriate order may be entered by the Circuit Judge. If a recommendation of incarceration is made, the matter shall be brought *instante* to the appropriate Circuit Judge.

**NOW THEREFORE IT IS ORDERED:**

1. Christina Nieto Seifert is hereby appointed as General Magistrate for the Third Judicial Circuit of Florida;
2. This order shall be effective as of March 7, 2024.

**DONE AND ORDERED** in Chambers at Lake City, Columbia County, Florida, this 21st day of February, 2024.



Digitally signed by  
Melissa Gates Olin,  
Circuit Judge  
Date: 2024.02.21  
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Melissa Gates Olin, 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