

2025 Plan of the Third Judicial Circuit Pursuant to Administrative Order No. 14

The Plan of the Third Judicial Circuit of Arkansas is hereby as follows:

I. Case Assignment & Allocation

Division 1 judge will be assigned all criminal cases, all civil cases and be assigned all other cases filed in the civil division, with the exception of mortgage foreclosures and real property cases, however, Division 1 will be assigned condemnation/eminent domain, landlord/tenant unlawful detainer and **other** landlord/tenant matters. Division 1 shall also be assigned all Adult Drug Court cases in Jackson, Lawrence Counties, and all post-conviction criminal cases. Division 1 judge will be assigned name changes filed in Jackson County. Division 1 judge will be assigned all Act 911 cases.

Division 2 judge will be assigned all domestic relations cases, adoption cases not involving the Department of Human Services, all guardianship cases not involving the Department of Human Services, and will be assigned all other cases filed in the probate division. Division 2 will be assigned all mortgage foreclosure cases. Division 2 judge will be assigned Adult Drug Court cases for Sharp County. Division 2 judge will be assigned name changes in Randolph and Sharp Counties

Division 3 judge will be assigned all juvenile cases, child support cases, Orders of Protection cases, Department of Human Services, (including Adult Protection Services cases), Sharp County Family Treatment Court and shall also be assigned all real property cases, excluding those cases assigned as described above. Division 3 judge will be assigned name changes filed in Lawrence County. Division 3 judge will preside over the hearings on involuntary commitment cases (alcoholic commitment, civil commitment, and narcotic commitment) in all four counties.

II. Caseload Estimate

Based on filings from 2024, the caseload estimate per division is as follows:

Division 1	2,165 Cases
Division 2	1,422 Cases
Division 3	895 Cases

The judges of the circuit deem the division of work equitable and appropriate on the basis that many of the civil cases are uncontested and the juvenile cases are labor intensive involving several review hearings, emergency hearings, and preliminary hearings.

The judges of the circuit shall meet at the end of each calendar year to determine whether any adjustment in caseload assignments between or among circuit court divisions or subject matter division are necessary to maintain a proper balance of caseloads and to otherwise conform to the orders and directive of the Supreme Court of Arkansas.

III. State District Court Judges

Currently, there are three State District Court Judges operating within the Third Judicial Circuit. The 11th Judicial District is comprised of Lawrence County, Randolph County, and Sharp County. Mark Johnson is the Division 1 presiding judge and Alexander Bigger is the presiding Division 2 judge. The 15th Judicial District is composed of Jackson County and Woodruff County. (Woodruff County is included in the 1st Judicial Circuit.) Henry Boyce is the presiding judge.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 18 REFERRALS FROM CIRCUIT COURT TO STATE DISTRICT JUDGES

Has the circuit court referred matters pursuant to Administrative Order No. 18 to be heard by a state district judge?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Participating State District Judges of Cases	Assignment and Allocation
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The state district judges participating in referrals from the circuit court include:

Name	District Court Judicial District	Assignment and Allocation of Cases
Judge Mark Johnson Division 1	11 th District	50% Referrals from Lawrence, Randolph, and Sharp Counties
Judge Alex Bigger Division 2	11 th District	50% Referrals from Lawrence, Randolph, and Sharp Counties

Name	District Court Judicial District	Assignment and Allocation of Cases
Judge Henry Boyce Division 1	15 th District	100% Referrals from Jackson County

Matters Subject to Reference

The following matters are referred from circuit court to state district court and have been included in the administrative plan for the circuit court and the administrative plan for the district court:

☐ **Consent Jurisdiction.** Upon the consent of all parties and approval by the circuit judge originally assigned, the following types of cases are referred from circuit court:

- ☐ Civil
- ☐ Domestic Relations
- ☐ Probate

☒ **Protective Orders.**

☐ **Forcible Entry and Detainers / Unlawful Detainer.**

☒ **Other Matters of an Emergency or Uncontested Nature**

Pending in Civil, Domestic Relations or Probate Division. *Please provide detailed information regarding the types of matters that will be referred and where these matters will be heard below.*

Type of Other Matters	Location
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Petition for Involuntary Commitment (72 Hour Hold)

☐ **Other Matters, if Justification for the Reference and Procedures to be Employed are Sufficiently Demonstrated in the Circuit Court Administration Plan Pursuant to Administrative Order No. 14.** *Please provide detailed information regarding the types of matters that will be referred and where these matters will be heard below.*

Type of Other Matters	Location
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☒ **Criminal.** The following duties are referred with respect to an investigation or prosecution of an offense lying within the exclusive jurisdiction of the circuit court:

- ☒ Issue Search Warrant Pursuant to Rule 13.1
- ☒ Issue Arrest Warrant Pursuant to Rule 7.1 or AC.A. §16-81-104
- ☐ Issue Summons Pursuant to Rule 6.1
- ☒ Reasonable Cause Determinations Pursuant to Rule 4.1 (e)
- ☒ Conduct First Appearance Pursuant to Rule 8.1
- ☒ Appoint Counsel Pursuant to Rule 8.2
- ☒ Inform Defendant Pursuant to Rule 8.3
- ☐ Accept Plea of "Not Guilty" or "Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity"
- ☒ Conduct Pretrial Release Inquiry Rules 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3
- ☐ Conduct Preliminary Hearing Pursuant to AC.A. §16-93-307

Digital Audio Recording Equipment
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Is digital audio recording equipment utilized to make a verbatim record of matters referred from the circuit court?

- ☐ Yes
☒ No

Specialty Court Dockets or Programs

Does a district court judge preside over a circuit court specialty court program?

- X Yes
☐ No

The following circuit court specialty courts are conducted:

Type of Specialty Court	Location
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RANDOLPH COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT JUDGE ALEXANDER BIGGER	
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A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

The Randolph County Adult Drug Court program is a 24-month, post-adjudication program open to defendants with pending non-violent convictions.

B. Statutory Authority.

The adult drug court program was established pursuant to A.C.A. §16-98-301 et seq.

C. Certification.

The Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit hereby certify this specialty court program is operated in compliance with Arkansas statutes governing drug court programs, Arkansas sentencing laws and guidelines, and Arkansas statutes and rules regulating the assessment and collection of fines, fees, court costs, and probation assessments.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

Adult Drug Court team members in each court consists of the presiding judge, the prosecuting attorney or designee, the public defender, the ACC probation officer, the ACC substance abuse advisor, the ACC administrative assistant, the County Sheriff or his designee, and the local Chief of Police or his designee.

E. Source of Funding.

The Randolph County Adult Drug Court is funded by the State of Arkansas and by collection-of defendants' assessed fees and court costs.

District Court Administrative Plans
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The following district court administrative plans are appended for submission to the supreme court:

- ☒ 11th District -- Lawrence County, Randolph County and Sharp County
- ☒ 15th District -- Jackson County (and Woodruff County)

IV. Specialty Court Programs

**JACKSON COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT
JUDGE ROB RATTON**

A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

The Jackson County Adult Drug Court program is a 24-month, post-adjudication program open to defendants with pending non-violent convictions.

B. Statutory Authority.

The adult drug court program was established pursuant to A.C.A. §16-98-301 et seq.

C. Certification.

The Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit hereby certify this specialty court program is operated in compliance with Arkansas statutes governing drug court programs, Arkansas sentencing laws and guidelines, and Arkansas statutes and rules regulating the assessment and collection of fines, fees, court costs, and probation assessments.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

Adult Drug Court team members in each court consists of the presiding judge, the prosecuting attorney or designee, the public defender, the ACC probation officer, the ACC substance abuse advisor, the ACC administrative assistant, the County Sheriff or his designee, and the local Chief of Police or his designee.

E. Source of Funding.

The Jackson County Adult Drug Court is funded entirely by the State of Arkansas.

**LAWRENCE COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT
JUDGE ROB RATTON**

A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

The Lawrence County Adult Drug court program is a 24-month, post-adjudication program open to defendants with pending non-violent convictions.

B. Statutory Authority.

The adult drug court program was established pursuant to A.C.A. §16-98-301 et seq.

C. Certification.

The Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit hereby certify this specialty court program is operated in compliance with Arkansas statutes governing drug court programs, Arkansas sentencing laws and guidelines, and Arkansas statutes and rules regulating the assessment and collection of fines, fees, court costs, and probation assessments.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

Adult Drug Court team members in each court consists of the presiding judge, the prosecuting attorney or designee, the public defender, the ACC probation officer, the ACC substance abuse advisor, the ACC administrative assistant, the County Sheriff or his designee, and the local Chief of Police or his designee.

E. Source of Funding.

The Lawrence County Adult Drug Court is funded by the State of Arkansas and by collection of defendants' assessed fees and court costs.

**RANDOLPH COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT
JUDGE ALEXANDER BIGGER**

A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

The Randolph County Adult Drug court program is a 24-month, post-adjudication program open to defendants with pending non-violent convictions.

B. Statutory Authority.

The adult drug court program was established pursuant to A.C.A. §16-98-301 et seq.

C. Certification.

The Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit hereby certify this specialty court program is operated in compliance with Arkansas statutes governing drug court programs, Arkansas sentencing laws and guidelines, and Arkansas statutes and rules regulating the assessment and collection of fines, fees, court costs, and probation assessments.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

Adult Drug Court team members in each court consists of the presiding judge, the prosecuting attorney or designee, the public defender, the ACC probation officer, the ACC substance abuse advisor, the ACC administrative assistant, the County Sheriff or his designee, and the local Chief of Police or his designee.

E. Source of Funding.

The Randolph County Adult Drug Court is funded by the State of Arkansas and by collection-of defendants' assessed fees and court costs.

**SHARP COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT
JUDGE MICHELLE HUFF**

A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

Sharp County Adult Drug Court is a voluntary, eighteen-month, pre-adjudication and post-adjudication, multi-phase intervention program designed to address the needs of criminal defendants with substance use disorders. Adult Drug Court is available only to defendants meeting program eligibility requirements. The defendant must be an adult resident of Sharp County; must not have a pending charge for a violent felony or a prior conviction for a violent felony; must not have a prior conviction that would require registration as a sex offender; must be identified as high-risk/high-need, as determined by a validated risk-need assessment; and must have a moderate-to-severe substance use disorder.

B. Statutory Authority.

The adult drug court program was established pursuant to A.C.A. §16-98-301 et seq.

C. Certification of Compliance.

Sharp County Adult Drug Court operates in compliance with all applicable sentencing laws including fines, fees, court costs and probation assessments. Team members have attended training programs offered by the Administrative Office of the Courts. Sharp County Adult Drug Court was implemented and operates in accordance with best-practice standards.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

The Sharp County Adult Drug Court team includes the circuit judge, deputy prosecuting attorney, deputy public defender, court coordinator, treatment provider, probation officer, and law enforcement representative. All drug court team members meet weekly for staffing and court review hearings.

E. Source of Funding.

The Sharp County Adult Drug Court receives funding and support from Sharp County, the Public Defender Commission, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Department of Community Corrections, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and federal and state grant opportunities as they arise and become available. There are sufficient resources for the programs operation, as required by A.C.A. §16-98-305. The Sharp County Adult Drug Court is funded by collection of defendants assessed fees and court costs.

SHARP COUNTY FAMILY TREATMENT COURT JUDGE ADAM WEEKS

A. Description of Program and How it Operates.

Sharp County Family Centered Treatment Court is a voluntary, multi-phase intervention program designed to reduce the incidence of family separation due to substance use disorders and mental health disorders. The Court uses multidisciplinary, collaborative approach to serve families and ensure that parents are fully supported in their parenting role and children receive the necessary services and support to return to or remain with his or her parent, guardian or custodian during the treatment and recovery process.

B. Statutory Authority.

The Sharp County Family Treatment Court was established pursuant to A.C.A. §9-27-801 et seq.

C. Certification.

The Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit hereby certify this specialty court program is operated in compliance with Arkansas statutes governing drug court programs, Arkansas sentencing laws and guidelines, and Arkansas statutes and rules regulating the assessment and collection of fines, fees, court costs, and probation assessments.

D. Description of Program's Use of Resources.

The Sharp County Family Treatment Court uses a team approach to decision making. The team includes the Judge, representative of the Department of Child and Family Services division of DHS, a program coordinator, a peer support specialist, parent counsel, attorney ad litem and mental health providers from Hope Behavioral. The team meets bi-weekly for staffing and court hearings.

E. Source of Funding.

Funding is provided by a SAMSA grant from the United States Department of Justice.

Therefore, the Circuit Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit respectfully submits this plan for judicial caseload allocation for the consideration and approval of the Supreme Court of the State of Arkansas.



Honorable Rob Ratton
Third Circuit, Division 1

Honorable Michelle Huff
Third Circuit, Division 2

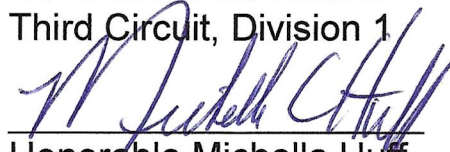
Honorable Adam Weeks
Third Circuit, Division 3

E. Source of Funding.

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