

CAROL-LISA PHILLIPS
CHIEF JUDGE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF
FLORIDA



BROWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE
201 S.E. 6TH STREET, #20170
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301
954-831-7554

May 5, 2025

Monica Cepero, County Administrator
115 South Andrews Avenue, Room 409
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
mcepero@broward.org

Re: Article V, Revision 7 – Certification of Local Requirements for FY 2025-2026

Dear Ms. Cepero,

The timely administration of justice through efficient case resolution along with addressing the needs of the local community and those appearing before the court are central to the mission of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit of Florida. The Court is most appreciative of the County's support for various programs and initiatives, and our continued collaboration with the County will only help to further the Court's mission.

To ensure continued service to the local community and in compliance with section 29.008(2), Florida Statutes, I respectfully certify and submit the FY2025-2026 Local Requirements for the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, and other justice system stakeholders. Pursuant to section 29.008(2), the County's obligation is to fund "...reasonable and necessary salaries, costs, and expenses of the state courts system, including associated staff and expenses" to meet the Court's Local Requirements. The statute defines "local requirements" as "...those specialized programs, nonjudicial staff, and other expenses associated with specialized court programs, specialized prosecution needs, specialized defense needs, or resources required of a local jurisdiction as a result of special factors or circumstances."

As set forth in the above Florida Statute, these factors include geographic and demographic factors, labor market forces, the number, and location of court facilities as well as the volume, severity, complexity, or mix of court cases. The following programs and services represent the Local Requirements for FY2025-2026:

Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Court

1. Mental Health Court*
2. Broward Community Justice Alternatives*
3. Alternative Sanctions Coordinator*
4. Family Court Services**

State Attorney's Office

1. Domestic Violence Victim Advocate Program*

*Existing Local Requirement program

**New Local Requirement program

The Court's existing Local Requirements are currently funded, in part, by the collection of a \$65 court cost, "imposed by the court when a person pleads guilty or nolo contendere to, or is found guilty of, or adjudicated delinquency for, any felony, misdemeanor, delinquent act, or criminal traffic offense" Because court cost revenues have declined over time, the County has continued to fund these integral programs using transfers from the General Fund. I mention this merely to highlight that court cost revenues are available to supplement, and are not the sole source of, funding for the Court's Local Requirements. *See* § 939.185(1)(a)1., Fla. Stat. Accordingly, to the extent court cost revenue is insufficient to fund these programs, we respectfully request funding from the County's General Fund.

Please find enclosed descriptions of Circuit Court programs and services being certified. Should you require any further information, please feel free to contact me at 954-831-7554 or Joseph D'Amico, Trial Court Administrator at 954-831-7741. We are providing this information based upon the deadline requested by the Office and Budget Management and our anticipated presentation to the County Commissioner on May 13, 2025. Pursuant to section 29.008, Florida Statutes, however, we respectfully reserve the opportunity to supplement these Local Requirements, if needed, up until June 1, 2025.

Thank you again for your continued dedication and commitment to furthering the mission of the courts by providing Broward's residents with equal, fair, and impartial access to justice.

Sincerely,

/s/ Carol-Lisa Phillips

Carol-Lisa Phillips

Chief Judge

Cc: Kimm Campbell, Deputy County Administrator
Norman Foster, Broward County, Director, OMB
Jennifer Steelman, Broward County, Asst. Director, OMB
Elijah Anderson, Broward County, Budget Analyst
Jenna Lyons, Broward County, Budget Analyst
Joseph D'Amico, Trial Court Administrator
Taiwo Akinkunmi, Chief of Personnel



**SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
CERTIFICATION OF LOCAL REQUIRMENTS
FY 2025-2026**

**Carol-Lisa Phillips, Chief Judge
Joseph M. D'Amico, Trial Court Administrator**

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LOCAL REQUIREMENTS BUDGET SUMMARY

Trial Court

Program	Anticipated FY2025-2026 Cost
Mental Health Court	\$458,910
Justice Alternatives Program	\$76,490
Family Court Services	\$1,252,970
Alternative Sanctions Coordinator	\$89,480

State Attorney's Office

Program	Anticipated FY2025-2026 Cost
Domestic Violence Victim Advocate Program	\$209,200

OVERVIEW OF SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

The Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida is a co-equal branch of government serving the residents of Broward County. It is one of twenty judicial circuits in the State and, although not geographically large in comparison with other circuits and counties, it is the second largest circuit in the State, with 90 judges¹ and 12 quasi-judicial officers.²

Circuit Court

The Circuit Court is a Court of General Jurisdiction. It has exclusive jurisdiction in all actions at law in which the matter in controversy exceeds fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in proceedings relating to civil disputes, as well as criminal felony, juvenile delinquency, family, dependency, domestic violence, and probate. Circuit Court also hears appeals from County Court civil traffic infraction proceedings and administrative orders of local government code enforcement boards.

Circuit Criminal

The Circuit Criminal Division is responsible for all felony matters, which include murder, sexual offenses, robbery, burglary, theft, forgery, and fraud.

Circuit Civil

The Circuit Civil Division is responsible for all civil matters exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), including automobile and other negligence, professional malpractice, product liability, condominium lawsuits, eminent domain, real property, mortgage foreclosure, contract, and indebtedness.

Unified Family Court

The Unified Family Court is responsible for all domestic relations matters, including dissolution of marriage, child custody and support, name changes, adoptions, paternity suits, and modification proceedings. It also includes domestic violence, dependency (relating to juveniles who are abandoned, abused or neglected) and juvenile delinquency (juvenile criminal) matters.

Probate

The Circuit Probate Division is responsible for all matters relating to the validity and execution of wills, appointment of guardians, trusts, Baker and Marchman Act matters, and incapacity and guardianship proceedings.

County Court

The County Court is a court of limited jurisdiction, which hears actions at law in which the matter in controversy does not exceed fifty thousand dollars

¹ Presently, there are fifty-eight (58) Circuit Court Judges and thirty-two (32) County Court Judges.

² Nine (9) General Magistrates and three (3) Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officers.

(\$50,000). County Courts have exclusive jurisdiction over traffic, small claims, most landlord and tenant disputes, and misdemeanor criminal cases. County Judges are assigned to each of the court's satellite courthouses in Hollywood, Deerfield Beach, and Plantation.

Court Administration

The Office of the Trial Court Administrator provides services and administrative oversight over various court programs. The office serves as staff to the judges and presently employs a total of 207 personnel³ (both state/county funded).

Court services include:

- Purchasing office supplies, equipment, and furnishings for the Judiciary, Court Administration, court programs, and the courtrooms.
- Personnel services to the County and State funded court employees. Additional responsibilities include recruitment and selection, classification, compensation and benefits, and employee relations.
- Research and statistical analysis required by the Chief Judge, State Courts Administrator, and others, as well as for internal management that encompasses monitoring and periodic evaluations.
- Financial management, including preparation and management of both the State and County budgets
- Development and administration of circuit emergency preparedness plans and continuity of operations plans for emergency court closures
- ADA coordination and accommodation
- Community outreach through educational tours for students and other visiting groups
- Coordination of facilities maintenance, *i.e.*, courtrooms, office space, etc., and
- Providing assistance to attorneys and members of the public.

³ 171 state-funded and 36 county-funded. This figure does not include the 90 judicial assistants who serve as personal staff to each judge.

LOCAL REQUIREMENTS - § 29.008, FLA. STAT.

In 1998, Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment to Article V of Florida's Constitution. The amendment, implemented in 2004 and commonly referred to as Revision 7, transformed the manner in which the state courts receive funding. Specifically, it transferred primary funding responsibility for Florida's courts from local governments to the state. Notwithstanding, counties remain obligated to fund certain aspects of the state courts, including local requirements.

Pursuant to section 29.008(2), Florida Statutes, one of the County's obligation is to fund ". . . reasonable and necessary salaries, costs, and expenses of the state court system, including associated staff and expenses" of the Court's Local Requirements, defined as ". . . those specialized programs, nonjudicial staff, and other expenses associated with specialized court programs, specialized prosecution needs, specialized defense needs, or resources required of a local jurisdiction as a result of special factors or circumstances." Such factors include geographic and demographic factors, labor market forces, the number and location of court facilities, or the volume, severity, complexity, or mix of court cases.

The following programs consist of the Court's Local Requirements for FY 2025-2026.

TRIAL COURT LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Mental Health Court

Section 394.47892(1), Florida Statutes, provides that “[e]ach county may fund a mental health court program under which a defendant in the justice system assessed with a mental illness shall be processed in such a manner as to appropriately address the severity of the identified mental illness through treatment services tailored to the individual needs of the participant.” As you may know, the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit was the **first** court in the nation to create a Mental Health Court for **both** felony and misdemeanor offenses and these programs have continued in large part to the continued financial support from the County.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, it is estimated that more than 1 in 5 of U.S. adults live with a mental illness.⁴ That means, for a population of two million, approximately 400,000 Broward County residents are living with a mental illness. From January 2021 through June 2024, there were a total of 29,290 defendants facing one or more criminal charges and a total of 36,013 defendants facing one or more misdemeanor or county or municipal ordinance charges. Based on the above statistic, that equates to approximately 13,000 individuals charged with one or more criminal offenses who are suffering from a mental illness. It is imperative that the Court have the tools and resources to not only dispose of pending cases efficiently but to also address any underlying mental illness that is likely the reason (or part thereof) for the person’s involvement with the criminal justice system.

Presently, we have four county-funded staff⁵ who provide case management support to the judges presiding over our felony and misdemeanor mental health courts, while also providing support when mental health issues arise in juvenile delinquency proceedings. Continued funding of these positions and related operating expenses is essential to ensure these cases progress efficiently from filing to disposition while also ensuring that those who qualify to participate in mental health court are linked to appropriate services to address underlying mental illness. The positions and related operating expenses total \$376,910.

For FY 2025-2026 we are also requesting funding in the amount of \$75,000 to allow the Court to engage a peer specialist to support mental health court. Peers and mentors are individuals who have lived experience and skills learned in training to assist others achieve and maintain recovery and wellness from substance abuse and/or mental health disorders, and they provide an invaluable

⁴ National Institute of Mental Health, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness> (last accessed May 2, 2025).

⁵ One Mental Health Unit Manager (position 14769) and three Mental Health Program Specialists (positions 15002, 15003, and 18968).

service. If authorized, the Circuit has an immediate plan to implement the use of this funding. For several years, the Circuit has contracted with South Florida Wellness Network (SFWN) for peer support specialist services for our other problem-solving courts. SFWN is willing and able to supply additional peers to support the participants in our mental health courts, and given our existing relationship with SFWN, the implementation of this added service would be swift. Although the Court has engaged a peer support specialist for our felony mental health court through state funding, pending caseloads in both felony and misdemeanor divisions dictate an additional peer is needed.

Additionally, the Court is requesting \$7,000 to purchase County bus passes to distribute as needed to program participants who lack reliable transportation to attend required court hearings. The provision of bus passes to those who lack reliable transportation will reduce delays in case processing time and ensure court participants are able to attend required court hearings. This will increase attendance at court hearings, which will reduce the number of capias issues by judges for nonappearance, thus avoiding the needless crowding of our county's jails.

Justice Alternatives Program

Initially called Citizens' Dispute when it was established in 1976, the Broward Community Justice Alternatives program (BCJA) continued following the implementation of Revision 7. For many years, the BCJA offered mediation services to resolve community or neighborhood cases as well as worthless check and tax diversion cases referred by the State Attorney's Office. The program offered a quick collection and recovery of thousands of dollars annually for local businesses. Because of budget reductions, actual mediation services are no longer provided as part of the BCJA. Rather, and presently, one (1) county-funded full-time employee provides administrative support to the Court's Mediation and Arbitration Unit. The staff member funded through this program serves as the primary receptionist for the entire mediation department, answering phone calls and greeting walk-ins. In recent years, this person has taken on additional responsibilities to ensure the efficient processing of mediations, while decreasing overall program costs. For example, she assists with scheduling contract mediators and confirming that all parties have the requisite information prior to the mediation. This allows the program to timely cancel contract mediators, thus saving money by decreasing the number of no shows for mediation. The table below shows the number of cases referred to the Court's mediation department for the past 3 years, which fully justifies the continued need for this support position.

Year	Number of Mediation Referrals
2022	2,064

2023	1,900
2024	2,062
2025 (projected)	2,226

Family Court Services (new Local Requirement for FY2025-2026)

Prior to the implementation of Revision 7, the Court had a county-funded Family Court Services unit that was comprised of various departments, including court psychology and custody evaluation services. These previously funded programs and services, and many more, are essential components to a model family court, see *In re: Report of the Family Court Steering Committee*, 794 So. 2d 518 (Fla. 2001), and all unfortunately were eliminated based on the transfer of funding responsibility from local governments to the state. We are now seeking to revive this program to ensure our family court operates at the highest level.

There is a common belief that family is the “bedrock of society” essential to the proper functioning and maintenance of local communities. Divorce is a major life stressor, one that creates turmoil within a family unit and ancillary negative consequences affecting the mental and physical health of all involved. Children are especially prone to suffering during the pendency of divorce proceedings and following final judgment of divorce. This suffering continues post-judgment as many cases are reopened with a litany of issues continuing to be litigated. “Children experience many difficulties which may linger into adulthood if left unaddressed, adversely affecting their success in intimate relationships.”⁶ However, “many divorced parents are unaware of the importance of interventions for their children” as they navigate the family court system.⁷ The intent of this proposal is to ensure sufficient staffing to allow the court to offer a variety of in house services to provide education, therapeutic intervention and other intervention services to assist families during this turbulent time in their lives, ultimately reducing the detrimental effects – especially to children - stemming from divorce and paternity matters. Such in house services include, but are not limited to, supervised visitation and monitored exchange, social investigations to aid the judges in resolving disputes regarding parenting plans,⁸ crisis intervention, co-parenting education, individual, family and reunification therapy, and parenting coordination.

Additionally, when in house services are not required or not available, appropriate staff would link families with available service providers in the community. Although the Court currently makes referrals to outside service

⁶ Donahey, Katherine, *Effects of Divorce on Children: The Importance of Intervention*, Intuition: The BYU Undergraduate Journal of Psychology, Vol. 13, Iss. 1, Article 3 (2018).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ See § 61.20, Fla. Stat.

providers for many of the aforementioned services, the current system is not without its drawbacks. For instance, in most cases, outside service providers are cost prohibitive, leading to conditions of economic discrimination where some parties are able to take advantage of services and others are not. Moreover, experience has shown there is a lack of accountability from outside service providers back to the court. In this regard, it is not uncommon for a judge to make a referral to a service provider and subsequently have to follow up for a report or other documentation as to the outcome of the referred service(s) so that the judge can then render a decision. Although it is anticipated our Family Court Services program will include a component of referring cases to outside service providers, the requested staffing to assist the judge in not only making the referrals but ensuring accountability back to the court, will reduce or remove these issues. Currently, the court does not have any staff or resources to assist in this regard.

Our request follows several of the twelve guiding principles from the Family Court Steering Committee, which were approved by the Florida Supreme Court in *In re: Report of the Family Court Steering Committee*, 794 So. 2d 518 (Fla. 2001). Of particular relevance are the following principles:

- Therapeutic justice should be a key part of the family court process. Therapeutic justice is a process that attempts to address the family's interrelated legal and nonlegal problems to produce a result that improves the family's functioning. The process should empower families through skills development, assist them to resolve their own disputes, provide access to appropriate services, and offer a variety of dispute resolution forums where the family can resolve problems without additional emotional trauma.
- Trial courts must coordinate and maximize court resources and establish linkages with community resources.
- Court services should be available to litigants at a reasonable cost and accessible without economic discrimination.

Additionally, the Florida Supreme Court noted, *inter alia*, that the following elements, all of which will be satisfied through the fulfillment of the instant budgetary request, are essential to a model family court:

- Custody evaluation – Providing the court with evaluative information in proceedings involving custody disputes.
- Supervised Visitation – Promoting the utilization of qualified programs for supervised visitation and/or monitored exchange.

- Education Programs for Parents – Utilizing education programs for parents involved in family law proceedings.
- Counseling Services/Treatment Programs – Assuring the availability of crisis intervention and long-term counseling/treatment programs and ensuring that compliance is monitored when such services are court ordered.

A review of several of the factors listed in section 29.008, Florida Statutes to determine local requirements also supports our request.

Geographic factors

Although our Circuit is not large geographically when compared to other circuits, we are the second largest Circuit in the state (second only to Miami-Dade) based on population, the number of judges, court staff, and court filings.

Broward County is home to approximately 2 million residents, and those who avail themselves of the family court system should be able to receive the needed services and resources contemplated herein.

Demographic factors

As mentioned, Broward County is home to nearly 2 million residents. The median household income is \$74,534 and the median family income is less than \$88,689.⁹ As mentioned above, many of the outside service providers offering the services and resources the court desires to move “in house” are cost prohibitive for the majority of families. Although offering these needed services and resources at zero cost will primarily benefit the families during their time of greatest need, the benefits will “trickle down” to Broward County and its various municipalities. Specifically, it is our intent that this program provide individuals (parents and children alike) with the tools and resources to remain contributing and emotionally stable members of our community following the disposition of their family cases.

The number and location of court facilities

There is one main courthouse complex located in downtown Fort Lauderdale, and three satellite courthouse locations, each located in Deerfield Beach, Plantation, and Hollywood. Court Administration has office space at all locations to accommodate the anticipated program and services. Offering these services at all courthouse locations will save time and money not only for litigants but for their employers as well. In addition, offering these services at the satellite

⁹ <https://www.broward.org/Planning/Demographics/Pages/QuickFacts.aspx>.

courthouse locations will help accommodate children’s school schedules, by limiting interference with education and extracurricular activities.

The volume, severity, complexity, or mix of court cases

There are currently eight judges assigned to the family law division and three judges assigned to handle domestic violence cases. There are also four general magistrates and three designated child support enforcement hearing officers who hold a quasi-judicial role to help hear contested family law matters, post judgment matters and Title IV-D child support matters.

The volume of family law cases and their increasing complexity also justifies this request. For calendar year 2024, there were a total of 17,786 **new** family cases filed and 18,168 previously filed family cases **reopened**. See Appx. A, Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report. It is important to note that these cases are not as simple as entering an order dissolving a marriage. Matters relating to equitable distribution of assets and liabilities (both marital and non-marital), alimony (spousal support), child support, timesharing and parental responsibility, and the establishment of parenting plans is a routine occurrence in most cases. These cases also sometimes intersect with a companion domestic violence case.

The pending¹⁰ caseloads for each judge assigned to a family division as of the end of March 2025 is as follows:

Court Division	Pending Case Count
33	826
35	799
36	1,171
37	875
38	762
40	906
41	863
42 (simplified dissolution petitions only)	440
44	701

Based upon the above, we are requesting the following staff positions to implement this program. Besides providing necessary services to individuals and families during their family law case, the requested positions will increase judicial efficiency by allowing judges to rely on staff to monitor compliance with

¹⁰ Pending caseload should not be construed to be the same as newly filed or reopened cases.

court ordered, which in turn will allow the judge to focus on the needs of more complex cases.

A **Family Court Services Manager** who will be responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the Family Court Services Unit, ensuring the delivery of high-quality services to families involved in high-conflict divorce, custody and domestic violence cases. This position will manage a diverse team, coordinating with various court divisions and ensuring compliance with court orders. The Family Court Services Manager will collaborate with community agencies, court staff and judicial officers to optimize services and develop innovative solutions to meet the needs of families. This position will also be responsible for developing and implementing training programs for community providers.

Pay Grade: 116

Salary: \$65,401.26

Total Compensation: \$97,317.25

One (1) **Family Court Services Office Coordinator** who will be responsible for providing advanced administrative support and overseeing daily operational functions across all program areas. The Office Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating office workflows, supporting management with staff and program coordination, and ensuring the efficient processing of court-ordered services. This role will act as a central point of contact for internal staff, judicial officers, service providers, and court users, ensuring high-quality administrative service delivery in support of Family Court Services' mission.

Pay Grade: 115

Salary: \$60,837.95

Total Compensation: \$91,764.62

Two (2) **Judicial Support Investigators** who will be responsible for providing in-depth custody investigations to help facilitate the Court's determination as to the best interests of the children in custody and visitation disputes. Investigation protocols will include office clinical interviews of both parents' domiciles; in-home interviews with parents, children and significant others; additional separate interviews with the children at a neutral site such as their school; collateral contacts with teachers, neighbors, attending mental health professionals, etc.; as well as record checks for local civil, criminal and protective services involvement. Judicial Support Investigators will prepare timely reports that provide accurate details and appropriate options for judges and magistrates.

Pay Grade: 112

Salary (per position): \$48,972.05

Total Compensation (per position): \$77,326.19

Total Compensation for two (2) staff: \$154,652.38

Four (4) **Judicial Navigators** who will be responsible for managing complex casework, focusing on referring families to appropriate service providers based on judicial instructions. They will ensure compliance with court orders, monitor referrals and provide compassionate case management. They will ensure that families access timely and effective services, monitor ongoing compliance and maintain communication with both service providers and litigants, while also providing accurate documentation for the Court. Additionally, the Judicial Navigators will lead networking and outreach efforts, building relationships with community stakeholders and agencies to enhance resource access. Responsibilities will also include processing and renewing provider applications, managing the resource directory and ensuring only qualified services.

Pay Grade 112

Salary (per position): \$48,972.05

Total Compensation (per position): \$77,326.19

Total Compensation for four (4) staff: \$309,304.76

Three (3) **In-house Service Specialists** who will be responsible for delivering short-term, solution-focused services to parents and children, including comprehensive assessments and interventions designed to promote healthy resolutions. Potential services provided will include crisis assistance, co-parenting skill enhancement, alienation/reunification intervention and time-sharing schedule assistance. In-house Service Specialists may also recommend additional services as needed and draft status reports and other documentation to submit to the Court.

Pay Grade 113

Salary (per position): \$52,645.84

Total Compensation (per position): \$81,796.46

Total Compensation for three positions: \$245,389.38

Three (3) **Judicial Administrative Assistants** who will be responsible for administrative and clerical support to the Family Court Services Unit. Essential functions will include answering phone calls, scheduling intake appointments, responding to general inquiries, as well as front-desk operations, such as greeting and directing visitors. They will assist with document intake, data entry, scanning, and filing tasks to support the daily operations of the Unit.

Pay Grade: 106

Salary (per position): \$31,732.59

Total Compensation (per position): \$56,349.22

Total Compensation for three positions: \$169,047.66

Four (4) **Supervised Visitation & Monitored Exchange Observers** who will be responsible for ensuring the physical and emotional safety of children during supervised visits with a non-custodial parent, either in person or virtually. These

positions will play a critical role in observing, intervening when necessary, and documenting family interactions in high-conflict cases involving issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health concerns. The Observers will facilitate intake and orientation sessions, manage visitation schedules, document session details, and maintain accurate case records. These positions will support the mission of Family Court Services by promoting safe and constructive parent-child interactions in accordance with court directives. Services will be provided during designated visitation hours, including weekday evenings and weekends.

Pay Grade: 112

Salary (per position): \$24,486.03

Total Compensation (per position): \$38,663.10

Total Compensation for four positions: \$154,652.40

One (1) **Court Security Specialist** who will be responsible for providing customer service, security, and administrative support for the Supervised Visitation/Monitored Exchange Program. The Court Security Specialist will ensure the safety and security of all individuals on the premises, including children, parents court-ordered for supervised visits, the public and court staff. The Security Specialist will enforce policies and procedures, particularly in cases involving domestic violence, sexual abuse, child abuse and substance abuse. In addition, the position will serve as the liaison with the Broward Sheriff's Office when necessary, helping to coordinate security measures and interventions as required to maintain a safe and controlled environment for visitation. Services will be provided during designated visitation hours, including evenings and weekends.

Pay Grade: 20

Salary: \$18,057.66

Total Compensation: \$30,841.06

Accordingly, we are requesting the following full and part-time positions to assist our family court judges efficiently process pending cases, while ensuring access or linkage to necessary services to assist families "recover" from divorce to ensure they remain functional members of the community.

Alternative Sanctions Coordinator

Alternative Sanctions Coordinator (ASC) positions are considered Local Requirements pursuant to express statutory directive. See § 29.008(3)(b), Fla. Stat.; § 984.09, Fla. Stat.; § 985.037, Fla. Stat. The Circuit has had an alternative sanctions coordinator on staff since 1995. This individual acts as a

“liaison between the judiciary, local department officials, district school board employees, and local law enforcement agencies” by coordinating and maintaining “a spectrum of contempt sanction alternatives.” § 984.09(3), Fla. Stat.; § 985.037(3), Fla. Stat. The goal of the Alternative Sanctions Coordinator is to divert and deter juveniles from entry into the criminal justice system, as well as to help prevent repeat offenses and continued court appearances. This goal is accomplished by providing treatment alternatives for juveniles and their families, by coordinating and providing to the families of these children referrals to appropriate alcohol, drug, mental health, educational and vocational counseling, and support services.

The Coordinator assists the juvenile courts provide children and families with intervention, rehabilitation, and justice in a timely, humane, and effective manner.

For calendar year 2024, the ASC completed case research and docket preparation for over 2,000 cases scheduled on the court’s detention docket. The ASC referred 241 youth charged with a domestic violence offense to mental health and safety planning services. The ASC is also an integral member of a Local Review Team (LRT) designed to resolve specific complex case issues. In this regard, the ASC assisted with coordinating LRT staffing meetings for 11 youth and their families.

Continued funding for this Local Requirement is integral to the workings of the juvenile delinquency divisions.

STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Domestic Violence Victim Advocate Program (existing program)

This Local Requirement has been in existence for over two decades and the County currently funds three (3) staff members employed by the State Attorney's Office who serve as victim advocates in domestic violence cases. Attached please find a letter from Executive Director Neva Rainford-Smith, Esq., requesting the County's continuing funding for this program. The Court continues to certify this program and related employment positions as a needed Local Requirement.

Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report
Summary for the Month of January 2024 thru December 2024
Circuit: Seventeenth County Broward

Section II. Family Court - Part 1.a.

	Simplified Dissolution	Dissolution	Domestic Violence	Dating Violence	Repeat Violence	Sexual Violence	Subtotal
A. Cases Filed	1,619	7,218	3,695	320	773	62	13,687
B. Cases Disposed							
1. Dismissed Before Hearing	25	486	188	12	10	3	724
2. Dism. After Hearing	77	406	1,751	140	227	27	2,628
3. By Default	1	2,219	0	0	0	0	2,220
4. By Judge	1,285	3,750	1,642	161	504	32	7,374
5. Non-Jury	0	42	0	0	0	0	42
6. Jury Trial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. By Other	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
Total Disposed	1,388	6,915	3,581	313	741	62	13,000
C. Cases Reopened							
1. Modification/Supp Petition	8	732	44	5	36	1	826
2. Motion for Civil Cont/Enf	13	1,457	16	0	0	0	1,486
3. Other	55	5,723	801	28	88	7	6,702
Total Reopened	76	7,912	861	33	124	8	9,014

1. SRS data provides a base for judicial workload. It is not valid as a performance measure for the judiciary, state attorneys or public defenders.
2. This data is based on information received from the Clerks of Court and is accurate as of the run date of this document. Please note that SRS totals may change after the run date of this report as a result of amendments submitted by the Clerk.
3. Dismissals cannot be attributed to a single individual or agency. Dismissals include counts dismissed prior to trial and on prosecutor action.

Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report
Summary for the Month of January 2024 thru December 2024
Circuit: Seventeenth County Broward

Section II. Family Court - Part 1.b.

	<u>Child Support</u>		<u>UIFSA</u>		Other Family Court	Adoption Chap. 63	Name Change	Paternity disestab	Sub- total	Total
	IV-D	Non IV-D	IV-D	Non IV-D						
A. Cases Filed	484	10	3	0	1,224	251	701	1,426	4,099	17,786
B. Cases Disposed										
1. Dismissed Before Hearing	148	1	0	0	253	27	38	192	659	1,383
2. Dism. After Hearing	71	0	0	1	178	6	41	171	468	3,096
3. By Default	1	0	0	0	105	12	18	101	237	2,457
4. By Judge	86	3	1	0	490	205	544	763	2,092	9,466
5. Non-Jury	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	8	50
6. Jury Trial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
7. By Other	14	0	0	0	15	3	1	16	49	61
Total Disposed	320	4	1	1	1,042	253	642	1,251	3,514	16,514
C. Cases Reopened										
1. Modification/Supp Petition	146	1	1	0	79	16	8	450	701	1,527
2. Motion for Civil Cont/Enf	941	2	18	0	917	2	2	1,437	3,319	4,805
3. Other	950	8	9	0	943	39	54	3,131	5,134	11,836
Total Reopened	2,037	11	28	0	1,939	57	64	5,018	9,154	18,168

1. SRS data provides a base for judicial workload. It is not valid as a performance measure for the judiciary, state attorneys or public defenders.
2. This data is based on information received from the Clerks of Court and is accurate as of the run date of this document. Please note that SRS totals may change after the run date of this report as a result of amendments submitted by the Clerk.
3. Dismissals cannot be attributed to a single individual or agency. Dismissals include counts dismissed prior to trial and on prosecutor action.



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SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA
BROWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE
201 S.E. SIXTH STREET
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PHONE (954) 831-6955

RE: Broward County Domestic Violence Advocates

Dear Joseph M. D'Amico, Esq.,

I am writing this letter to express the urgent need for the continued funding for the three Broward County Judicial Funded Domestic Violence Advocates. The three Domestic Violence Advocates that are currently employed and supervised by The State Attorney's Office are responsible for informing victims of victim rights, providing case information, supportive counseling, and resource/referral services to victims of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Advocates are present daily in Misdemeanor and Felony Domestic Violence Court. They provide crisis counseling and court accompaniment to all victims that attend court in person.

The State Attorney's Office firmly believes that the Judicial County Funding significantly contributes to the crucial work of providing legal support to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking within our community. In 2024, 4,102 victims of Domestic Violence were served based on the number of arrests in Broward County. The County funded Domestic Violence Advocates provided 38,149 of victim services to Victims and Survivors. The services provided include but are not limited to the following; court accompaniment, information regarding Crime Victim Compensation, safety planning, Restraining Orders, information and referrals, accompaniment to depositions, and language interpretation assistance.

In recent months, Broward County has been faced with an alarming increase of Domestic Violence fatality cases. This further highlights the need for the continued funding of these three vital positions. Domestic Violence Advocates have been collaborating with community partners such as Women in Distress and Nancy J. Cotterman Center to strategically plan and provide access to services and resources for victims of Domestic violence. Additionally, due to the cuts in VOCA funding, the SAO must now fund 4.5 FTEs just to maintain quality of services.

The State Attorney's Office has been a valuable partner in The Court Administration's efforts to address and combat Domestic Violence, dating violence, and stalking. The organization's dedication to promoting justice, supporting survivors, and working collaboratively with law enforcement aligns seamlessly with our mission at the State Attorney's Office. The continuation of the County Judicial funding will further empower The State Attorney's Office to expand its reach and enhance the provision of victim services to those who need it most.

The continued funding of the Domestic Violence Advocates undoubtedly will allow Victims to be assisted to navigate legal complexities that victims often face and ensure that victims receive the necessary legal guidance and resources to rebuild their lives after being victimized. The Domestic Violence Advocates are continuously receiving trauma informed training and Danger Assessment Tools to ensure that best practices are being implemented to serve Domestic Violence victims in the community.

In conclusion, we strongly encourage Broward County Court Administration to consider maintaining the funding of the three Domestic Violence Advocates of The State Attorney's Office. The organization's commitment to justice, combined with the support from the funding, will undoubtedly make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of victims and survivors within our community.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Neva Rainford-Smith, Esq
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