

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR HARDEE, HIGHLANDS, AND POLK COUNTIES, FLORIDA
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 5-38.1

**IN RE: ESTABLISHMENT OF A FAMILY COURT ADVISORY COUNCIL
AND AN ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY COURT PROFESSIONALS**

WHEREAS, the Florida Supreme Court in In re: Report of the Family Court Steering Committee, 794 So.2d 518 (Fla. 2001), directed the establishment of family law advisory groups in each circuit or each county to further the goals of tailoring the unified family court to the needs of each community, exploring and taking advantage of resources within the community, and establishing open communication among court staff, judges, attorneys, social service providers, and other community leaders; and,

WHEREAS, the Tenth Judicial Circuit conducted a family court summit in April, 2001, attended by over 250 people representing a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations from throughout the circuit, many of whom expressed an interest in forming an association of family court professionals; and

WHEREAS, the Family Law Advisory Group/Association of Family Court Professionals Subcommittee of the Tenth Judicial Circuit's Unified Family Court Implementation Committee has studied advisory group structures in other circuits where they exist and has recommended that the Tenth Judicial Circuit have a bifurcated structure made up of (1) a smaller Family Court Advisory Council of representatives appointed by the Chief Judge from the judiciary, court staff, clerks of courts offices, and government agencies as well as community leaders to advise the court, and (2) a voluntary Association of Family Court Professionals made up of individuals within and outside the court system to facilitate open communication on a broader scale between the family court and the community; and,

WHEREAS, the Subcommittee has recommended that the Family Court Advisory Council be representative of the entire circuit, at least initially, rather than composed of separate groups for each of the three counties in the circuit; now, therefore, it is

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED as follows:

A. A Family Court Advisory Council is established, to be appointed by the Chief Judge, and to consist of the following:

1. Administrative judges (or their designees) of the courts in Hardee County and Highlands County regularly assigned domestic relations and/or juvenile dockets;
2. Administrative judges (or their designees) of the juvenile and family divisions in Polk County;
3. Coordinating Judge for Unified Family Court Implementation (if not one of the administrative judges);
4. Court Administrator (or designee);
5. Family Court Coordinator or Family Court Case Coordinator;
6. At least one representative each of the Hardee County Clerk of Court, the Highlands County Clerk of Court and the Polk County Clerk of Court;
7. Representative of the Family Mediation Program;
8. Representative of the Domestic Violence Program;
9. Representative of the Magistrates Office;
10. One representative each of the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Revenue (to be selected by the respective district directors);
11. One representative each from the offices of the State Attorney and the Public Defender (to be selected by the respective constitutional officer);
12. One representative each from the Family Law Bar and the Dependency Court Bar (may be the same person who is a member of both associations);
13. Representative of a substance abuse treatment program;
14. Representative of a mental health treatment program;
15. One representative each of the three public school systems in the circuit;
16. Representative of Community Based Care;
17. Representative of Community Alliance;
18. One representative each from the County Probation and Department of Corrections probation offices;
19. Representative of law enforcement;
20. Representative of the Guardian Ad Litem Office;

21. Representative of the Association of Family Court Professionals.

The Chief Judge may designate one or more individuals to represent more than one of the represented organizations.

2. Upon convening, the Family Court Advisory Council shall initiate and facilitate the formation of an Association of Family Court Professionals with membership limited to employees of the court, the respective clerks of courts, government agencies (including law enforcement), and social service providers, and attorneys and other professionals whose employment or self employment brings them into contact with the family court system (broadly defined to include delinquency, dependency, domestic relations, and domestic violence cases) as counsel, treatment or assessment/evaluation providers, or expert witnesses.

The Association will operate as an independent organization.

Administrative Order No. 5-38.0, entered January 15, 2002, is hereby VACATED.

DONE AND ORDERED this 15th day of December 2004.

RONALDA. HERRING

Chief Judge