



CRIMINAL DIVISION CASE ASSIGNMENTS

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER C03 2026-01

RESCINDS: C03 2025-19

Court Address
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 711, Detroit, MI 48226

Court Telephone No.
(313) 224-5261

The Administrative Order rescinds and replaces Administrative Order 2025-19.

IT IS ORDERED:

1. This local administrative order, issued in accordance with Michigan Court Rules 8.110 and 8.111, sets forth the method to be used for assigning criminal cases within the Third Circuit Court.
2. The same judge must adjudicate all open or pending cases of a defendant. An open case is one in which the judge has not signed and filed an order closing probation. A pending case is one in which a sentence has not been imposed. Cases will be packaged according to the following guidelines:
 - a. When a criminal case is filed and there is an open or pending case involving the same defendant, the new case will be assigned to the judge who has the open or pending case.
 - b. When a defendant has both an open case and pending case, assignment is based on the most recent open case.
3. The same judge must adjudicate all pending cases when there are multiple defendants. Cases will be packaged according to the following guidelines:
 - a. When a new case (same prosecutor's number) has multiple defendants and is bound over on the same or different dates, all defendants shall be assigned to the judge with the oldest pending case (i.e. the lowest case number).
 - b. If none of the defendants have a pending case, all defendants shall be assigned to the judge with the most recent open probation case (i.e. placed on probation last).
 - c. It is the responsibility of the Prosecutor's Office to immediately move for consolidation upon knowing of cases that arise out of the same transaction or occurrence that have been assigned to different judges. The judge with the lowest case number (oldest case) shall adjudicate all of the cases in accordance with section 3(a) and (b). This judge will determine whether to consolidate the cases or whether to conduct the trials at different times.
4. A reissued warrant on a previously dismissed case will be manually assigned to the judge who dismissed the earlier case.

5. The Third Circuit Court utilizes a two-tier assignment system for criminal cases. The Arraignment on the Information (AOI) Dockets, the first tier, includes:
 - a. All non-capital cases other than those with an included felony firearm (MCL 750.227b) will be randomly assigned to an AOI docket.
 - b. Felony Non-Support Docket (MCL 750.161 and 750.165); also referred to as "FNS": A Third Circuit Court Judge who is cross-assigned to serve as a 36th District Court Judge will conduct or waive the preliminary examination in Felony Non-Support cases under MCL 750.161 and 750.165 and may bind the case over to the Third Circuit Court. After bind-over, the same judge, acting in their Circuit Court capacity, will handle the case from the Arraignment on the Information through final disposition and all post-disposition matters. The judge will either accept a plea or set the next action date; if a guilty plea is accepted, sentencing will be scheduled, and if no plea is entered, the judge will set the next appropriate court action. If no plea agreement is reached within forty-two (42) days of the bind-over date, or if a jury trial is requested, the case will be assigned to the Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division who shall handle the trial and any sentencing. If probation is included as part of any sentence, the case will be returned to the AOI judge who has been assigned FNS cases in order to oversee probation.
 - c. Non-capital domestic violence related charges will be identified as such by the Prosecutor's Office at the time of the warrant request and will be assigned to a designated AOI Docket. The same judge will either accept a plea or set the next action date; if a guilty plea is entered and accepted, a sentencing date will be scheduled, and if no guilty plea is entered, the judge will set the next appropriate court action. If the parties cannot reach a plea agreement within twenty-eight days of the bind-over date, or if a jury trial is requested, the case will be blind-drawn to a Trial Docket.
 - d. All non-capital cases not specifically enumerated in the previous paragraphs will be randomly assigned to an AOI Docket. The same judge shall accept the plea or set a next action date. If a guilty plea is entered and accepted, a sentencing date shall be set. If a guilty plea is not entered, the judge shall schedule the next court action. If a plea agreement cannot be reached within twenty-eight (**28**) days of the bind-over date or there is a demand for a jury trial, the case shall be blind-drawn to a Trial Docket.
 - e. AOI judges shall retain and conduct trials in first tier cases as described in paragraphs 6a - 6e. This includes resolution of all evidentiary issues (motions and hearings). The exception to this is domestic violence cases which include a capital charge.
 - f. The blind draw to a trial docket must be accomplished within the time standards enunciated for the specific case types listed in paragraph 6 unless the Presiding Judge has granted an extension of time. In a multi-defendant case if any defendant fails to meet the criteria listed above, the entire case shall be blind drawn to a trial docket.
6. The second tier, Trial Dockets, consists of:
 - a. All criminal offenses for which life imprisonment is the maximum sentence and are contained in one of the following crime categories: homicide; assault; criminal sexual conduct; robbery; drugs, or non-capital cases including a count of felony-firearm, will be assigned by lot to a Trial Docket at bind-over.

- b. Domestic violence cases that include a charge for a capital offense, shall be blind drawn to the trial docket. The trial judge shall handle each case through final disposition as well as address all post disposition matters.
- 7. To ensure that cases enumerated in paragraph 6 are equally distributed to all Trial Dockets, no docket shall receive a second case within a designated category until all Trial Dockets have received one case within that designated category. The Trial Docket Judge shall conduct the AOI for these charges and the case remains with that judge or his/her successor until final disposition.
- 8. All welfare fraud (MCL 400.60) cases will be blind drawn to the trial docket.
- 9. Fugitive extradition (MCL 780.12) cases will be assigned to designated docket.
- 10. Designated judges from the AOI or Trial Dockets will supervise cases from the Adult Drug Treatment Court (ADTC), Mental Health Court (MHC), and Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). The assigned judge for a defendant participating in the ADTC, MHC, or VTC will take the plea and reassign the case to the respective Supervising ADTC, MHC, or VTC Judge for sentence and supervision. Case Packaging Rules as indicated in this LAO apply to the Supervising ADTC, MHC, and VTC Judge(s).
- 11. Criminal Appeal cases (AR) from the District Court on the following District Court case types: felony-criminal (FY); felony-drunk driving (FD); and felony-traffic (FT) shall be assigned by lot to a Trial Docket unless there is a pending case or open probation matter (see paragraph 2). After the disposition of the appeal and a subsequent bind-over of the criminal case to the Third Circuit Court, the case shall be manually assigned to the judge who disposed of the appeal.
- 12. Criminal Appeal cases (AR) which include the following case types from the District Court: ordinance misdemeanor-drunk driving (OD); ordinance civil infraction-traffic (O 1); ordinance- parking (OK); ordinance misdemeanor-criminal (OM); ordinance civil infraction-non-traffic (ON); ordinance misdemeanor-traffic (OT); statute misdemeanor-drunk driving (SD); statute civil infraction-traffic (SI); statute-parking (SK); statute misdemeanor-criminal (SM); state civil infraction- non-traffic (SN); statute misdemeanor-traffic (ST), shall be assigned by lot to a Trial Docket.
- 13. Pre-charged habeas corpus (AH) matters and supervisory control powers of the court (AS) matters will be assigned, upon notification to the Clerk of the Court, to the judge signing or initiating the action within one (1) business day.
- 14. A judge shall manually reassign a case to the proper judge within fourteen (14) days of the first scheduled hearing on that judge's docket when a case was assigned in error. A judge shall not reassign a case that exceeds the fourteen (14) days.
- 15. If a judge is disqualified or for other good cause cannot undertake an assigned case, the Presiding Judge shall assign it to another judge by written order stating the reason for the reassignment. To the extent feasible, all case reassignments shall be done by lot. When a judge is disqualified from hearing a case, it shall be exchanged for a comparable (or less serious) case from the docket of the judge receiving the reassigned case. The criteria for determining a comparable case shall include: case type and maximum sentence, the number of defendants, case age, and the potential number of witnesses. The parties may proceed to the Presiding Judge if the assigned judge denies recusal or the new judge refuses their assignment.

16. Due to the high volume of cases and the unique processing needs required by speedy trial and other Constitutional safeguards, and pursuant to MCR 8.111(C)(1), if an assigned judge is unavailable to conduct a trial scheduled in a case, the case shall be reassigned to the first judge to communicate his or her availability to conduct the scheduled trial in response to a bench-wide email requesting coverage. The Deputy Court Administrator (DCA) or the DCA's designee, after communicating with the assigned judge, shall make every effort to send the bench-wide email requesting coverage at the earliest date upon which the assigned judge becomes aware of his or her unavailability to conduct the trial. The bench-wide email shall include the case name and number, the date scheduled for trial, and the expected length of the trial, the attorneys on the case, and the age of the case. The first judge who communicates his or her availability to take the case will be assigned the case, by entry of an order, for the purpose of conducting the trial, only.
17. The Presiding Judge shall consider a motion for an adjournment of the trial, if on the day of trial, the assigned judge has approved the adjournment.
18. After the entry of the sentence, the Chief Judge or his/her designee may enter orders remitting prisoner funds for fines, costs and assessments ("288 orders"). Motions to Vacate the Order to Remit shall be heard by the Chief Judge or his/her designee.
19. All cases emanating from a grand jury indictment shall be randomly assigned to a judge on the grand jury indictment panel. The Chief Judge or his/her designee shall assign no fewer than three judges by docket directive to hear cases resulting from a grand jury indictment.

Dated: 2/6/2026



Hon. Edward Ewell, Jr.

Chief Judge Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan

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To: Hardester, Frank; [Hon. Edward Ewell, Jr.](#); [Ewell, Edward](#)
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C03 2026-01 Criminal Division Case Assignments – Approved
Rescinds 2025-19

This is to advise that we have reviewed the above referenced administrative order and find that it conforms to the requirements of MCR 8.112(B). This order is being accepted and filed until advised by your court of any change.

Donald Coleman
Region 1 Administrator
Michigan State Court Administrative Office
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