



EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

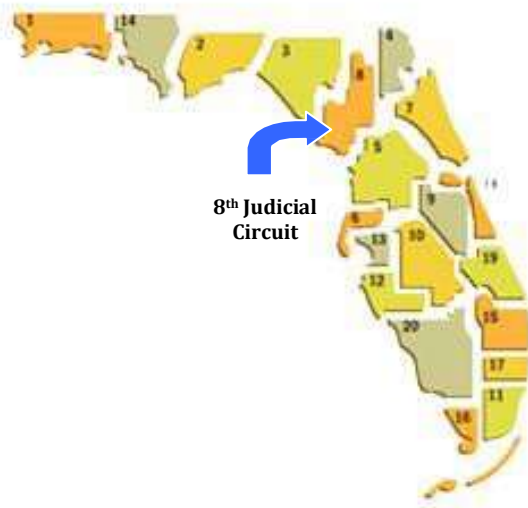
www.circuit8.org

The Florida Constitution provides that a circuit court shall be established in each of the 20 judicial circuits in Florida. The number of designated judges in each judicial circuit is determined by factors such as population and caseload of the particular area.

The Eighth Judicial Circuit is comprised of six counties: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Levy, Gilchrist, and Union. There are 23 judges in the Eighth Judicial Circuit. Thirteen of those are Circuit Judges and ten are County Court Judges.

There are five Alachua County Court Judges and one County Court Judge in each of the five regional counties of Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union.

The Eighth Judicial Circuit currently has 86 employees (excluding judges) in positions such as staff attorney, judicial assistant, court interpreter, and judicial hearing officer, and in fields such as technology, court reporting, and case management.



Mission of Florida Judicial Branch

To protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Vision of Florida Judicial Branch

Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsive, and accountable.

Mission of Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Administration

To provide professional and effective management services and programs to the Judges of the Eighth Judicial Circuit.

Chief Judge

The Chief Judge is responsible to the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court for the administration and supervision of the courts, judges, and officers of the courts within the judicial circuit. The Chief Judge is also responsible for developing and implementing an administrative plan for the efficient operation of the courts. The plan provides for the prompt disposition of cases, assignment of judges and staff, control of dockets, regulation and use of courtrooms, and review of the statistics of inmates in local jails. Selected by a majority of the active judges in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, the Chief Judge serves for a term of two years.

The Honorable James P. Nilon was unanimously elected Chief Judge in 2018. Chief Judge Nilon also presides over the Dependency and Unified Family Court assignments and currently serves on the Criminal Court Steering Committee.

Administrative Judges

Administrative Judges are responsible for the oversight of case management within their division and report directly to the Chief Judge. The Administrative Judges for 2019 are:

- Hon. Monica J. Brasington *Circuit Civil*
- Hon. Robert K. Groeb *Family Court*
- Hon. Mark W. Moseley *Circuit Criminal*
- Hon. Thomas M. Jaworski *Alachua County Court*
- Hon. Joseph M. Williams *Regional County Courts*

Circuit Judges

Circuit court judges are elected by the voters of the 8th Circuit in non-partisan elections and serve six-year terms. In order to qualify for the office of circuit judge, a person must be an elector in one of the six counties within the 8th Circuit and admitted to the practice of law in the state for the preceding five years. If a vacancy occurs prior to the end of a circuit judge's term, the Governor appoints a circuit judge to fill the vacancy. The Circuit Judges are:

- Hon. Monica J. Brasington
- Hon. Susanne Wilson Bullard
- Hon. James M. Colaw
- Hon. William E. Davis
- Hon. Denise R. Ferrero
- Hon. Stanley H. Griffis III
- Hon. Robert K. Groeb
- Hon. Donna M. Keim
- Hon. David P. Kreider
- Hon. Mark W. Moseley
- Hon. James P. Nilon
- Hon. Phillip A. Pena
- Hon. Gloria R. Walker

County Judges

The Florida Constitution establishes a county court in each of Florida's 67 counties. The number of judges in each county court varies dependent upon the population and caseload of that county. In order to qualify for the office of county judge, a person must be an elector of the county and, in general, a member of The Florida Bar for five years. County judges are elected by the voters and serve six-year terms. Alachua County has five County Court Judges:

- Hon. Walter M. Green
- Hon. Thomas M. Jaworski
- Hon. Susan Miller-Jones
- Hon. Meshon T. Rawls
- Hon. Kristine Van Vorst

Senior Judges

A senior judge is a retired judge who is eligible to serve on assignment to temporary judicial duty. The Chief Judge may assign senior judges to temporary service in any court of the Circuit, with the authority to hear, conduct, try, determine, and dispose of the case.

Judicial Hearing Officers and General Magistrates

Judicial Hearing Officers and General Magistrates are authorized to hear and make recommendations on the following matters as permitted by statute and rule: family law, mortgage foreclosures, mental health, medical treatment, guardianship accountings and plans, and valuations in executions on judgments of money. The Chief Judge determines the assignments of the General Magistrates and Judicial Hearing Officers.

Trial Court Administrator

The Trial Court Administrator is the Chief Executive Officer of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. The Administrator directs and manages trial court operations, programs, and services in the six counties of the 8th Circuit. Specifically, the Trial Court Administrator is responsible for staff supervision, strategic planning, policy implementation, operations coordination, budget development, and financial reporting. The Trial Court Administrator also serves as the principal liaison with the Office of the State Courts Administrator and reports directly to the Chief Judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit.

Alachua County Criminal Justice Center

The Alachua County Criminal Justice Center has been in operation since September of 2003 and houses the Circuit and County Criminal Divisions. Criminal trials are held each week in Alachua County. Jurors are summonsed to appear for service on the first day of a trial week. If selected as a juror, jury service continues for the duration of the trial.



Circuit Criminal Division

The Circuit Criminal Division is assigned the following case types: felonies, post-conviction relief, Jimmy Ryce Cases, extraordinary and unusual case compensation, and juror show cause hearings.

County Criminal Division

The County Criminal Division is assigned the following case types: misdemeanors, criminal traffic, and municipal ordinance violations.

Specialty Courts

The Eighth Judicial Circuit operates several specialty courts. Specialty Courts address particular case types and are designed to reduce recidivism and provide alternatives to normal sentencing and/or incarceration. In general, active monitoring and intensive therapy and treatment are key elements of the program. The Specialty Courts in the Circuit are:

- Felony Adult Drug Court
- Felony Forensic Court
- Mental Health Court
- Veterans Treatment Court

Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center

The Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center was built in 1978, and currently houses proceedings related to the Circuit Civil and Probate Division, County Civil Division, and Family Court.



Circuit Civil and Probate Division

Judges assigned to the Circuit Civil and Probate Division preside over private disputes with damages in excess of \$15,000, actions related to estates, determinations of title and boundaries of real property, extraordinary writs, guardianship and mental health cases. In addition, the Division has two General Magistrates that review foreclosure and mental health cases.

Family Court Division

In general, the Family Court Division is assigned cases related to juvenile dependency, juvenile delinquency, paternity, truancy, adoptions, name changes, domestic violence, and dissolution of marriage. The Division operates under the Unified Family Court concept, in which all related legal matters affecting a family are brought to the attention of the UFC judge. This structure benefits families by keeping court proceedings at a minimum and thereby reducing the potential for conflicting orders from the Court. The Division also has General Magistrates and Judicial Hearing Officers to review child support and juvenile dependency cases.

Within the Family Court Division, the Judicial Hearing Officer Program reviews, manages and processes volume-driven cases, such as the establishment of paternity, the modification of child support, and the compliance/enforcement of child support and final judgments of divorce.

County Civil Division

The County Civil Division is responsible for the following case types: civil traffic cases, landlord-tenant cases, small claims with damages up to \$5,000, and civil disputes with damages up to \$15,000. The Division also has a Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer who presides over traffic infraction proceedings, including county and municipal parking ordinance violations.

Appellate Division

The Alachua County Appellate division reviews, through a party's appeal, orders of the county courts in the Eighth Judicial Circuit. Four appellate panels, each consisting of three Circuit Judges, are appointed by the Chief Judge. Each panel meets quarterly to review orders. The Chief Judge presides as Administrative Judge over the Appellate Division.

Court Administration

Administrative Services Office

The Administrative Services Office serves the six counties of the Eighth Judicial Circuit and is responsible for state and county human resources, finance and accounting, budget management, purchasing, state payroll and benefits, county payroll and benefits, asset management, courier services, and registry of court-appointed attorneys.

The Circuit receives legislative appropriations through the State Court System to fund Circuit operations, administration, and personnel. In addition, federal funds in the form of state grants from the Department of Revenue and the Department of Children and Families are dedicated to the

Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officer Program and the Juvenile Dependency Mediation Program, respectively. The court also receives a portion of its funding from Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, and Union Counties to provide for state mandated positions, facilities, security, communications and technology.

Alternative Dispute Resolution/Mediation

Alternative Dispute Resolution Office facilitates the use of mediation and other alternate means to resolve court cases for litigants in all six counties. Mediation is an informal and non-adversarial process in which parties involved in a disputed matter meet with a neutral third party, the mediator, in an attempt to resolve their differences. The Eighth Judicial Circuit also has a volunteer mediation program for certain types of cases. The Office is divided into three sections: Family, Dependency, and County Civil/Small Claims.

In In 2018 the 8th Circuit Mediators conducted:

43 County Mediations (above small claims)
63 Dependency Mediations
739 Family Mediations
491 Small Claims Mediations

1,336 Total mediations

Alternative Sanctions Coordinator

The Alternative Sanctions Coordinator serves the six counties of the Eighth Judicial Circuit assisting, creating, and implementing community based alternative sanctions for juvenile offenders.

Court Reporting

The Court Reporting Office is responsible for the Court's official record through the use of Real-time Court Reporters and Digital Court Reporters. Real-time Court Reporters provide transcripts of the court events that they cover and provide real-time access to the judiciary and attorneys via computer screen and same-day rough-draft transcripts during felony trials. Digital Court Reporters log each event, play back recorded events, and ensure the quality of the recording by staying in contact with event participants. The Office also provides Americans with Disabilities (ADA) assistance for the hearing-impaired.

Court Technology

The Court Technology Office is responsible for all the technology needs in the Eighth Judicial Circuit. The Office determines specifications for the all equipment, configures it, deploys it, and supports it, via the telephone support line, remote network access, and in-house-calls throughout the Circuit.

OpenCourt, an open source based digital court reporting system, was developed in-house by the Circuit's Court Technology Officer. The system is now being used in 500 courtrooms in 43 counties (13 of the 20 Judicial Circuits) in Florida.

ICMS3, the latest version of the Circuit's Integrated Case Management System, provides case lookup, search, and case reporting for the six counties from a single web interface. This system was developed in the Eighth Circuit and is now used by 31 other counties (9 other circuits).

Court Interpreting

Court Interpreting provides services to non-English speaking persons or deaf persons for court events in all six counties of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. The Office has one full-time certified Spanish interpreter and maintains a roster of certified and qualified contract interpreters who are employed on an as-needed basis.

Family/Pro Se Coordinator

The Pro Se Coordinator gives procedural information for certain cases that include contested, non-contested, and simplified divorce matters, cases to establish paternity, certain custody cases, child support, visitation, step-parent adoptions, and name changes. The Coordinator does not provide legal advice or legal representation. Self-help packets and Pro Se procedural workshops are available through the Clerk's office and the Family Court Division, respectively.

Self Help Center

The Alachua County Self-Help Center Staff is available to answer procedural questions and to help *pro-se* litigants with Supreme Court approved forms. Most *pro se* litigants utilizing the Self Help Center seek assistance with family law issues, but the SHC also handles questions on simple probate, guardianship, mental health, Baker and Marchman Acts, and other civil (including landlord/tenant). The SHC host "Ask A Lawyer" clinics every 3-4 months. Local Bar members have been instrumental in assisting the Court in this area.

Jury Management

Court Administration works closely with the Alachua County Clerk of Court to ensure jurors are available for jury selection and trials. The Office monitors jury selections, jury excusals, and the progress of trials throughout the Eighth Judicial Circuit.

Staff Attorneys

Staff attorneys are assigned to the Appellate, Civil, Criminal, Family, and Probate Divisions. In general, staff attorneys assist circuit and county judges with case management, legal research, daily casework (reviewing petitions and drafting orders) and providing technical expertise in specific areas of law.