

**UTAH JUDICIAL COUNCIL
POLICY, PLANNING and TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

DRAFT

Webex video conferencing
December 5, 2025 – 12 p.m.

MEMBERS:

PRESENT

EXCUSED

Judge James Gardner, <i>Chair</i>	✓	
Judge Jon Carpenter	✓	
Judge Angela Fonnesbeck	✓	
Judge Christine Johnson	✓	

GUESTS:

Shane Bahr
Michael Drechsel
Sonia Sweeney

STAFF:

Keisa Williams
Brody Arishita
Cindy Schut

(1) Welcome and approval of minutes:

Judge Carpenter welcomed the committee members. PP&T considered the minutes from the November 3, 2025 meeting. With no changes, Judge Fonnesbeck moved to approve the minutes as presented. Judge Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(2) CJA 4-102. Case and calendar assignments:

Local supplemental rules:

Article 1. District Court Rules:

- 1st district: 10-1-101
- 2nd district: 10-1-201
- 3rd district: 10-1-306
- 4th district: 10-1-406
- 5th district: 10-1-501
- 6th district & juvenile: 10-1-602
- 7th district & juvenile: 10-1-701
- 8th district & juvenile: 10-1-802

Article 2. Juvenile Court Rules:

- 1st juvenile: 10-2-101
- 2nd juvenile: 10-2-201
- 3rd juvenile: 10-2-301
- 4th juvenile: 10-2-401
- 5th juvenile: 10-2-501

Article 3. Business and Chancery Court Rules:

- 10-3-101

The committee conducted a substantive review of each proposed rule, recognizing and expressing appreciation for the time and effort each district invested in drafting the rules. The committee determined that the following overarching principles should be addressed in each rule:

- Judges should articulate on the record the basis for reassignment decisions to improve transparency.
- Each rule should include provisions addressing the following circumstances:
 - disqualification;
 - recusal;
 - case consolidation;
 - notice of change of judge;
 - judicial vacancies (retirement, resignation, etc.) or illness;
 - newly created judge positions;
 - counties with one judge, where applicable; and
 - transfers out of the district (i.e., employee conflicts, all judges conflicted, etc.).
- Assignments and reassignments should be based on specific objective criteria outlined in rule. Judges may not assign or reassign cases to themselves based on broad concepts (i.e., “in the judge’s discretion, reassignment is in the interests of judicial efficiency”). Examples of objective criteria:
 - prior judicial assignments;
 - geographic location and/or travel;
 - best interests of the children;
 - related cases;
 - judicial caseloads;
 - case qualifies for specialized docket or problem-solving court;
 - extraordinary circumstances; or
 - Aggravated murder cases will only be assigned to judges who meet the following criteria:
 - judge has been on the bench for two years;
 - judge has been assigned to a felony calendar for at least two years; and
 - the judge, whether on the bench or as a lawyer, has taken two murder cases to verdict or resolution.
- Rule 4-102 will include a back-stop provision. If a local rule does not address a reassignment procedure, the presiding judge must approve the reassignment.

The Committee had specific feedback for a few districts, but asked Ms. Williams to send the overarching principles above, along with proposed language for consideration to every district. Below are a few examples of proposed language:

- **Counties with one judge.** Where only one judge sits in a county, the case will be reassigned to a judge in another county who does not have a conflict. Assignments to judges outside the county will be made on a rotating basis.
- **Transfers out of district.** If all of the judges in the district have a conflict, the presiding judge will ask the trial court executive to transfer the case to another district.
- **Motions to Disqualify.** If a reviewing judge determines that a case will be reassigned pursuant to Rule 63 of the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure, or Rule 29 of the Utah Rules of Criminal Procedure, the reviewing judge will notify court employees. Court employees will reassign the case in accordance with...
- **Consolidation or similarity.** If a judge assigned to a case determines that, in the interests of judicial efficiency, another case or cases should be heard by himself or herself due to the related nature of the cases, the judge may, after consulting with the other judge(s) assigned to the other case(s), and with the approval of the presiding judge, reassign the other case(s) to himself or herself by written order filed in all of the cases.
- **Notice of a change of judge.** If one or more parties to a case files a Notice of Change of Judge under Rule 63A(a) or Rule 63A(b) of the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure, the presiding judge (or the associate presiding judge if the presiding judge is the judge assigned to the case) will promptly determine whether the notice is proper, and, if so, will direct court employees to reassign the case to another judge in accordance with paragraph (4).
- **Judicial vacancies.** In case of a judicial vacancy, the vacating judge's cases will be reassigned to the judge appointed to fill the vacancy.
- **Newly created judge positions.** When a new judge position is created by statute, the caseload for that new position will be populated by the Clerk of Court taking cases from all other judges' existing caseloads so that the new judge's caseload is comparable to the existing caseloads.
- **Court employee conflicts.** If a judge or the Clerk of Court becomes aware of a case pending in the Eighth District in which an Eighth District employee or a family member of an Eighth District employee is a party, the Clerk of Court will notify the presiding judge, who will then determine, in his or her discretion, whether to reassign the case to a different court location or another judicial district.
- **Juvenile court cases.**
 - **Best practices.** The Juvenile Court has adopted the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) best practice which promotes the "one family, one judge" concept as the judicial model where a single judge handles all legal matters related to a family to ensure consistency. This practice has been adopted by the Board of Juvenile Court Judges.
 - **Criteria.** Juvenile court case assignments and reassignments will be consistent with best practices, and the following criteria will be considered:
 - prior judicial assignments;

- geographic location and travel;
 - best interests of the child(ren);
 - related cases; and
 - judicial caseloads.
- **Specialized dockets or problem-solving courts.** Cases that qualify for specific specialized dockets or problem-solving courts (e.g., drug court, mental health court) will be assigned to the judge presiding over that specialized docket or program.
- **Extraordinary circumstances.** Reassignment of a case from one judge to another may occur only under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the presiding judge or their designee. Requests for reassignment must be submitted in writing, stating the reasons for the request. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include judicial disqualification, conflicts of interest, or significant changes in judicial availability.

Technology report/proposals: None.

Old Business/New Business: None.

Adjourn: With no further items for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m. The next meeting will be held on January 9, 2026, at noon via Webex video conferencing.