

Fourth Judicial District Bench Policy

D.18 Buddy Judges and Intra-division Assignments

1. **Buddy Judges.**

- a. ***Designation of Buddy Judges.*** Every judicial officer will designate one or more buddy judges to handle his or her assigned cases in the event of his or her *temporary* unavailability.
 - i. Judges on the same Criminal or Civil block team are buddy judges for each other.
 - ii. Judges who are located on the same floor may also be designated as additional buddy judges.
 - iii. Any judge willing to act as a buddy judge.
- b. ***Specialty Courts.*** The members of each of the specialty courts are designated Buddy Judges for each other.
 - i. Designated Specialty Court buddy judges must be presently assigned to Specialty Court.
 - ii. *Ongoing Responsibility for Criminal Matters.* To the extent that a Specialty Court judge has ongoing responsibility for criminal matters that arose before the judge's Specialty Court assignment, that judge will be responsible for maintaining buddy judges in such other divisions of the Court in accordance with that division's policies.
- c. ***Maintenance of Buddy Judge Designations.*** Buddy judge designations shall be maintained by each judicial officer and by District Court Administration. Such designations shall be available on the District Court website for attorneys, litigants, probation officers, and judicial staff who need action on a case during an assigned judge's temporary absence.
- d. ***Arranging Buddy Judge Coverage.*** If a judicial officer is temporarily unavailable to handle action on a case, that judicial officer - or his or her staff - may arrange for coverage by a buddy judge. Attorneys, litigants and probation officers may request assistance from a buddy judge. Attorneys, litigants and probation officers may contact the assigned judicial officers' staff for assistance in contacting the buddy judge.
- e. ***Authority of the Buddy Judge.*** The buddy judge officer has full authority to take whatever action on the case the buddy judge deems appropriate. However, the buddy judge stands in the stead of the assigned judicial officer only for that hearing or hearings. The case is not *permanently* reassigned to the buddy judge.

2. **Dispositional Judge is Permanently Unavailable.** If the dispositional judge is no longer on the bench, or if the Chief Judge or his designee agrees to the dispositional judge's request to reassign the case, the case will be referred to the appropriate team leader who will then make the assignment.

- 3. Completing Cases after Division Transfer.** When a judge completes a division assignment, pending cases will remain in the division and will be reassigned in accordance with the policies / practices of the division.
- a. Requests to take a case(s) until disposed or resolved to a new division assignment will be decided by the current and new assignments' Presiding Judges and the involved judge on the basis that an exception would benefit the Court.
 - b. In the event that the Presiding Judges and the involved judge cannot agree, the Chief Judge will make the determination.

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