

FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT: A YEAR IN REVIEW

A note from the Honorable Stephanie J. Williams



On September 1, 2024, I officially began my term as Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court of Davidson County. I and the incredible staff of the Fourth Circuit care deeply about the families of Nashville, and we wanted the Fourth Circuit Court to reflect that care. My first year as Judge was marked by learning, growth, and, most importantly, improvements to the functions of this court for the betterment of the attorneys and families it serves. Thank you to the domestic bar, the State Trial Court Administrator's Office, my colleagues and staff, and all who helped bring this vision to life.

At the heart of the Fourth Circuit is its mission statement: To serve families with compassion, competence, and respect; to provide transparent, professional, and accessible court services; invest in the growth and development of our families; and be a model for the advancement and improvement of the legal system.



From my "Journey to Judge" to my "Journey as Judge," I am overwhelmed with emotions of gratitude, awe, and inspiration for all that the Fourth Circuit has accomplished to fulfill this mission statement over the last year. Before jumping into my next year as Judge, I want to take time to reflect on the visions that were brought to life during my first 365 days in this role. The following pages are filled with highlights from this year, from CLEs and bi-weekly newsletters to streamlined court processes. I am so proud of the work that has been done and am eager to see what comes next.

—Judge Stephanie J. Williams

FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT: A YEAR IN REVIEW



SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

New Judge, New Court

Judge Stephanie J. Williams was sworn in as the 5th Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court of Davidson County. Regular newsletter communications began, appearance waivers for ID Divorces are implemented, two adoption days are regularly held every month, ID Divorces heard 3 days per week, pretrial conferences are held before contested trials, and Staggered Friday Motion Docket effectuated with Zoom appearance for certain hearings.

OCTOBER 2024



New Staff, New Look

Court Improvements & Communications Coordinator and Staff Attorney positions created and filled. Logo and design elements for the court are created.



NOVEMBER 2024

Website Launched!

The Fourth Circuit website is launched, complete with resources, contact information and online scheduling for ID Divorces and Default Divorces and Adoptions.

DECEMBER 2024



First Fourth Circuit CLE

Judge Williams hosts the Fourth Circuit's first CLE, the first of many events to come that educate and bring awareness to important matters in family law both to the bar and the community.



JANUARY 2025

Chamber Rules & Socials & *Pro Se* Docket, Oh My!

Judge Williams releases comprehensive Chamber Rules, the first of its kind in the state. Additionally, Fourth Circuit social media pages go live and a regular *Pro Se* Docket begins for self represented litigants of ID Divorces.

FEBRUARY 2025



Status Conference Dockets

Judge Williams begins conducting a monthly Status Conference Docket to ascertain the status of dormant or lingering cases.



MARCH 2025

Accessibility Matters

In an effort to continuously improve accessibility to the Fourth Circuit for all people, Spanish translation sheets are created and informational videos for attorneys and litigants on practicing in Fourth Circuit go live.

APRIL 2025



Special Master Case Management Dockets

In addition to the pending case Status Conference Dockets, Case Management Dockets with Special Master Menke are implemented to begin case management measures from the inception of cases.



MAY 2025

Law Day With the Fourth Circuit Court

Law Day with the 4th Circuit offered new and soon-to-be attorneys the opportunity to learn more about practicing in the Fourth Circuit.

JUNE 2025

Family Matters Community Enrichment Fund

Judge Williams and the Fourth Circuit Staff officially form the Family Matters Community Enrichment fund with the support and management of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. See more information on the next page.

JULY 2025

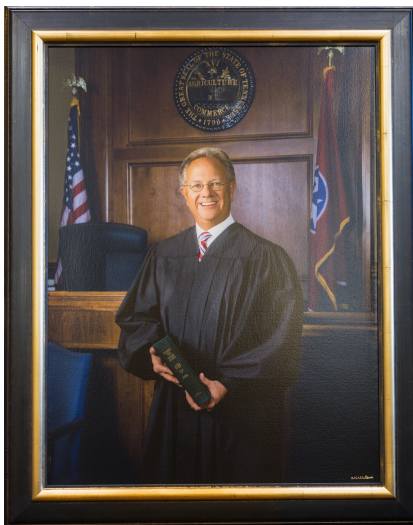
Case Load Reduced!

As of July 31, 2025, the Court has reduced its caseload from 2,776 pending case to just 1,259. This is a direct result of the monthly Status and Case Management Dockets and the effort put in by the entire Fourth Circuit staff.

AUGUST 2025

Judge Smith Portrait Unveiling

In honor of his 13 years as presiding Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court, Judge Williams, Judge Phillip Robinson, the 20th Judicial District State Trial Court Judges and the Fourth Circuit Staff had the honor of hosting Judge Philip E. Smith's portrait unveiling, a meaningful way to end Judge Williams' first year.



Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to view photos from the unveiling ceremony:



ANNOUNCING THE...



The Fourth Circuit Court is honored to announce the newly created Family Matters Community Enrichment Fund ("FMCEF"), through the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. The FMCEF provides long-term funding that supports the Fourth Circuit Court in providing legal professionals, organizations, businesses, and individuals involved in family law with access to education programs, collaborative initiatives, and civic engagement opportunities. These initiatives are aimed at raising awareness about the family law system and improving both the experience and the short- and long-term outcomes for litigants, parents, and children involved in family law matters.

Through the FMCEF, the Fourth Circuit Court will continue hosting CLE and community-based events at a minimal cost to participants. Opportunities and events, such as the **Chamber Rules CLE** the Court held in December of 2024, the **Law Day** event held in May of 2025, and our upcoming symposium, **Children in the Crossfire**, provide space for collaboration and growth to all stake holders in the family law community, ultimately broadening mindsets, raising awareness, and encouraging deep and meaningful change. We are unable to host these events on our own which is why the FMCEF was created. It is important to note that the initial investment required to establish the fund came from the direct contributions of Judge Williams, her family, and the staff of the Fourth Circuit Court because we believe in the work we are doing and the impact it will have on our legal community, families, and children for many generations to come.

In addition to private donations, registration fees for Fourth Circuit Court sponsored events also operate as a tax-deductible contribution to the FMCEF.

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to learn more:



Thank you to the Community Foundation for supporting the fund.





SAVE THE DATE!

Upcoming Events with the Fourth Circuit Court

Children in the Crossfire

Friday, October 3, 2025

Registration is officially open for the highly anticipated educational symposium hosted in tandem with Trevecca Nazarene University: **Children in the Crossfire**. This event is the first of its kind to join legal and mental health professionals in an important conversation about the detrimental impact of high conflict divorces on the ones who have the smallest voice: the children.

See more information on the flyer at the end of this newsletter. To register for the event, you can click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code:

Register now! There is an early bird special of \$125 for those who register on or before September 15, 2025. See flyer on next page for more details.



Adoption 101 with the Fourth Circuit

Tuesday & Wednesday, November 18 & 19, 2025



This two-day event will educate attorneys on the fundamental process and best practices for handling adoptions in Davidson County and across Tennessee. CLE approval pending.

Home for the Holidays

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Directly following Adoption 101, Judge Williams is proud to announce a day celebrating adoptions and the hard work of attorneys who take court appointed cases in Nashville. Families and attorneys are invited to join us as we honor this joyful process —some adoptions may even be finalized during the event, just in time for the holiday season!



December 2025

Stay tuned for more details on a two-hour CLE focused on high-functioning depression and its impact on legal professionals. In the high-demand, high-emotion field of family law, it is very common for attorneys to experience mental health challenges. This session will offer tools for recognizing and addressing these issues for yourself and your colleagues. Remember, you never know what someone else is going through.

CALENDAR

S M T W Th F S

	1			4		
				18	19	

SEPTEMBER

9/1: Office Closed for Labor Day

9/4: Special Master's Case Management Docket at 9 a.m. Via Zoom, No Pro Se Docket

9/18: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

9/19: No Motion Docket, Office Open

S M T W Th F S

				2	3	
				23		

OCTOBER

10/2: Special Master's Case Management Docket at 9 a.m. Via Zoom, No Pro Se Docket

10/3: Children in the Crossfire, No Motion Docket

10/23: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

For a complete view of our regularly scheduled dockets and available court dates, please see the calendar page on our website by clicking here: [Website Calendar](#) or by scanning the QR code:



SHARE!



@JudgeStephanieJWilliams

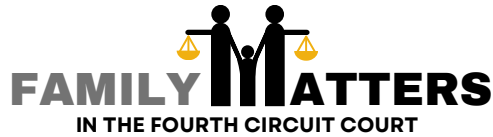


Judge Stephanie J. Williams

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who may be interested. To be added to the mailing list, please email RebekahLHaralson@jnsnashville.gov.

Additionally, you may view this and all previous newsletters on our website by clicking this link: [Updates and Announcements](#) or by scanning the QR code:





JUDGE STEPHANIE J. WILLIAMS AND TREVECCA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY PRESENT

CHILDREN IN THE CROSSFIRE



*A collaborative symposium of legal and mental health professionals
examining the detrimental impact of high conflict divorce and
custody cases on children*

4.7 CLE Hours and 6 CEU Credits



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2025

8:30 A.M. TO 3:30 P.M.

**TREVECCA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY
BOONE CONVOCATION CENTER**

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code to register and learn more:



Sponsored by:

