

## Report on Peer Group Analysis

Pursuant to Paragraph 28.35(2)(f), Florida Statutes, approving the proposed budgets submitted by clerks of the court is one of the duties of the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation. As part of that approval process, Sub-paragraph 28.35(2)(f)2. requires the Corporation to “[p]repare a cost comparison of similarly situated clerks of the court, based upon *county population and numbers of filings*, using the standard list of court related functions specified in paragraph (3)(a).” (emphasis added) Based upon this requirement, this analysis utilized the following information:

1. The University of Florida BEBR estimates of population for each county as of April 1, 2022;
2. The total weighted cases reported by each county for the fiscal 2021-2022 fiscal year.

This analysis kept in mind the rule from the currently adopted peer group study that no county should be in a peer group with a county with more than twice its population. Likewise, this rule was applied to total weighted case numbers.

An analysis of case counts, costs, and budgets requires statistical calculations. Many times, the first step in those statistical calculations is the determination of the standard deviation. Generally, after this determination is made, a reviewer looks for those data points which are at least two standard deviations from the mean. With this being the case, it can be argued that peer groups with only one, two, or three members should not be used, as no meaningful standard deviation analysis will occur with data from so few members. Although internally the CCOC budget committee compares all counties, the Legislature apparently envisioned some type of peer group system for budget comparison purposes.

CCOC is required by Sub-paragraph 28.35(2)(f)2. to prepare a cost comparison of similarly situated clerks, and by Sub-paragraph 28.35(2)(f)9. to “identify the budget of any clerk which exceeds the average budget of similarly situated clerks by more than 10 percent.” While it could be argued that no county is similarly situated to Miami-Dade, the caseload per population studies placed Miami-Dade in various places along the number of cases or number of weighted cases per population continuum. Therefore, Miami-Dade is capable of being compared and could be placed in a multi-county peer group. If placed in a multi-county peer group, Miami-Dade will be identified as a county with a budget which exceeds the average budget of the counties in the peer group by more than 10 percent. Likewise, on the small county end of the scale, Lafayette’s small weighted case numbers also deserve some special consideration.

The evaluations of possible peer groups by total population and by weighted case count each yielded eight peer groups with slight variations. In order to provide meaningful peer groups for statistical purposes it is necessary to combine the rules for initially determining peer groups with rules for creating statistically meaningful peer groups. For example, if the peer groups are created using total population, and the rule of no county shall be in a peer group with another

county which is more than twice its population is applied, eight peer groups would be created, but the eighth peer group would consist of only Broward and Miami-Dade. No helpful statistical analysis could be made by simply comparing these two counties to each other. Similarly, if peer groups are created using weighted case count numbers, and the rule of no county shall be in a peer group with another county which has more than twice its case count numbers is applied, nine peer groups would be created, but the first peer group would consist of only Lafayette, Liberty, and Union counties, and the last peer group would only consist of Miami-Dade. Once again, no helpful statistical analysis could be made by simply comparing the smallest three counties to each other and Miami-Dade to itself. Therefore, depending on which numbers are being used, adjustments to at least one end of the scale will be necessary.

Having said the above, it is my recommendation that we continue to use eight (8) peer groups. Further, it appears the similarly situated counties should be based upon either population or case counts in order to be consistent with Sub-paragraph 28.35(2)(f)2. For budgeting purposes, pure case counts without workload weighting are not very helpful. Whether a peer group is based upon population or weighted workloads, questions will always be asked about the other measure; therefore, either method seems appropriate for CCOC purposes. Based upon the current case weighting and a hybrid of the guidelines mentioned above:

- 1) No less than four (4) counties per peer group;
- 2) No county in a population peer group with a county with more than twice its population; and
- 3) No county in a weighted case peer group with a county with more than twice its total weighted cases

the possible peer groups by population and by weighted case count would be:

County	April 1, 2022 Peer Population Estimate		County Total Weighted Cases 2021/22	Peer	
Lafayette	7,808	1	Lafayette	4,538.0	1
Liberty	7,831	1	Liberty	7,148.5	1
Glades	12,273	1	Union	7,861.5	1
Franklin	12,729	1	Gulf**	11,107.0	1
Hamilton	13,395	1	Glades	11,559.5	2
Calhoun	13,740	1	Franklin	12,254.0	2
Jefferson	14,923	1	Gilchrist	12,406.5	2
Union	15,550	1	Jefferson	12,499.0	2
Gulf	15,938	2	Dixie	12,763.5	2
Dixie	16,988	2	Calhoun	13,234.0	2

Madison	18,438	2	Hamilton	15,370.5	2
Gilchrist	18,841	2	Holmes	16,678.5	2
Holmes	19,784	2	Taylor	19,523.0	2
Taylor	21,375	2	Baker	19,595.5	2
Washington	25,461	2	Washington	20,364.0	2
Hardee	25,544	2	Hardee	20,386.0	2
Bradford	27,013	2	Wakulla	23,389.5	3
Baker	27,881	2	Madison	24,042.0	3
DeSoto	34,748	3	Desoto	26,500.5	3
Wakulla	35,169	3	Hendry	28,223.5	3
Okeechobee	39,385	3	Suwannee	30,781.0	3
Hendry	40,633	3	Bradford	30,987.0	3
Gadsden	43,967	3	Jackson	32,334.0	3
Levy	44,288	3	Okeechobee	34,476.0	3
Suwannee	44,688	3	Gadsden	35,454.5	3
Jackson	48,395	3	Levy	39,743.5	3
Columbia	71,525	4	Nassau	53,930.0	4
Putnam	74,249	4	Putnam	59,943.5	4
Walton	79,544	4	Highlands	61,752.5	4
Monroe	83,961	4	Columbia	65,278.0	4
Nassau	95,809	4	Walton	70,373.5	4
Highlands	103,102	4	Flagler	71,591.0	4
Flagler	124,202	4	Sumter	72,197.5	4
Sumter	141,420	4	Indian River	87,914.5	4
Citrus	158,009	5	Citrus	102,654.5	4
Martin	161,655	5	Martin	104,015.0	4
Indian River	165,559	5	Santa Rosa	119,938.5	5
Bay	184,002	5	Monroe	121,354.5	5
Charlotte	196,742	5	Hernando	128,656.5	5
Santa Rosa	196,834	5	Charlotte	140,392.5	5
Hernando	199,207	5	Clay	142,202.0	5
Okaloosa	215,751	5	Okaloosa	154,122.5	5
Clay	225,553	5	Saint Johns	160,469.0	5
Alachua	287,872	5	Alachua	185,378.0	5
St. Johns	296,919	5	Bay	194,563.0	5
Leon	299,130	5	Leon	205,593.0	5
Escambia	329,583	6	Saint Lucie	230,593.5	5
St. Lucie	350,518	6	Collier	230,847.5	5
Collier	390,912	6	Lake	230,984.0	5
Marion	391,983	6	Marion	239,539.5	5
Lake	403,857	6	Manatee	240,170.0	6
Manatee	421,768	6	Escambia	246,362.5	6
Osceola	424,946	6	Osceola	291,815.5	6
Sarasota	452,378	6	Sarasota	304,616.0	6

Seminole	484,054	6	Seminole	313,164.0	6
Volusia	572,815	6	Pasco	333,213.0	6
Pasco	592,669	6	Brevard	388,680.0	6
Brevard	627,544	6	Lee	483,019.5	7
Polk	770,019	7	Volusia	536,057.5	7
Lee	802,178	7	Polk	571,055.0	7
Pinellas	972,852	7	Pinellas	725,922.0	7
Duval	1,033,533	7	Duval	1,012,593.0	8
Orange	1,481,321	7	Palm Beach	1,084,405.5	8
Palm Beach*	1,518,152	8	Orange	1,357,461.0	8
Hillsborough*	1,520,529	8	Hillsborough	1,420,920.0	8
Broward	1,969,099	8	Broward	1,513,921.5	8
Miami-Dade	2,757,592	8	Miami-Dade***	3,160,436.0	8

\*Palm Beach and Hillsborough have been placed into Group 8 to comply with the statutory analysis requirements.

\*\*Gulf was kept in Group 1 although they have slightly more than double Lafayette's total weighted cases. Placing Gulf in Group 1 will allow a somewhat more meaningful statistical analysis of Group 1, if such an analysis is deemed necessary.

\*\*\*Miami-Dade was placed into Group 8 to comply with the statutory analysis requirements.

I believe using either peer group method will satisfy the statutory requirements. Further, in an effort to be thorough, both might be used. Regardless of the choice, the analysis of case counts will continue to use population compared to weighted cases across all counties, not just within peer groups.