

**COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
JUDICIAL CONDUCT COMMISSION**

IN RE THE MATTER OF:

**LAUREN ADAMS OGDEN, FAMILY COURT JUDGE
30TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

AGREED ORDER OF SUSPENSION

Lauren Adams Ogden is a Family Court Judge for Kentucky's 30th Judicial Circuit consisting of Jefferson County. Judge Ogden has waived formal proceedings and agrees to the entry of this Order.

The Commission received numerous complaints pertaining to Judge Ogden's conduct, comprehensively reviewed all video and written records, and finds Judge Ogden violated the Code of Judicial Conduct by: (1) failing to perform judicial duties competently; (2) failing to comply with the law; (3) failing to uphold and promote the independence and impartiality of the judiciary; (4) failing to apply the law fairly and impartially; (5) failing to perform judicial duties without bias or prejudice; (6) failing to accord every person the right to be heard according to law; and (7) failing to uphold order and decorum.

Judge Ogden failed to perform her judicial duties competently and failed to comply with the law in several cases she adjudicated. In *Anthony De Almeida v. Destiny Paige Smith*, 24-CI-501354, she *sua sponte* changed sole custody, did not provide Mr. De Almeida with proper notice or due process, did not permit his attorney to cross-examine witnesses, and did not make findings or conclusions as required by law regarding the best interests of the child, prior to ordering that the mother take immediate custody of the child in the courtroom.

In *Michael Warren Snyder v. Paige Marie Snyder*, 24-D-503477-001, she rendered a Domestic Violence Order (DVO) without making sufficient findings of fact, placed no

documentary evidence in the record, and denied Mr. Snyder due process by not permitting him to introduce any evidence and denying him a meaningful opportunity to be heard, stating “the standard is very low. I just have to decide who to believe” and prejudging the case by encouraging Mr. Snyder to accept an EPO. See also, *Snyder v. Snyder*, 2025 WL 2176842 (unpublished)(vacating the EPO).

In *Bianca Young v. Yvonne Young*, 20-CI-502072, Judge Ogden “blatantly violated a parent’s due process rights - - without any consideration of or reference to the relevant law. In so doing, [Judge Ogden] facilitated the bodacious action of a non-custodian to remove a child from its mother[’s sole custody] in another state with no notice to the mother.” *Young v. Hon. Lauren Adams Ogden*, No. 2025-CA-1245-OA (Ky. App. Oct. 13, 2025) (Order Granting Emergency Relief). We attach the Court of Appeals order granting emergency relief which sets forth the various ways in which the Court of Appeals concluded Judge Ogden violated Bianca’s due process rights, the facts of which were also presented to the Commission.

Similarly, in *April Vannatta v. Michael Vannatta*, 22-CI-502857, Judge Ogden ordered Michael’s unsupervised parenting time with his three children be suspended, without making sufficient findings of endangerment. The Court of Appeals reversed that order on February 28, 2025. Despite the Court of Appeals’ mandate to reinstate Michael’s parenting time Judge Ogden refused to do so in five separate hearings, expressing her view that the Judges of the Court of Appeals “[do]n’t really recognize . . . they don’t do what I do every day and we have to worry about the kids more than anything.” Judge Ogden did not restore the previous visitation schedule until six (6) months after the Court of Appeals rendered its mandate.

In *Jamiracle Watts v. Chris Sharp*, 24-CI-500202, Judge Ogden had not read the case pleadings and other filings, was not familiar with applicable caselaw or statutes, and did not know the motion's scope; instead, she considered matters from a separate DVO proceeding without taking testimony, and disregarded inadequate service on the respondent, Chris Sharp, and his rights as a military servicemember despite Chris' filing of a *pro se* special appearance outlining his status. She incorrectly represented to Chris that the hearing was "just to talk about your kids," using a sarcastic tone, waving her hands, and refusing to let him cross-examine Jamiracle. Additionally, Judge Ogden informed the parties that she did not have a flash drive of evidence despite it being provided to her office three weeks prior to the hearing.

In *Shayla Geene West v. Chase Romine* 24-D-504410-001, Judge Ogden did not consider all of Chase's evidence nor allow him to respond to all allegations, and made findings based upon hearsay statements attributed to a child who did not appear as a witness. See also, 2025-CA-0291-ME (Order vacating and remanding April 3, 2026).

This conduct violates Rules 1.1 and 2.5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Judge Ogden has repeatedly engaged in conduct that fails to meet Kentucky judges' duty to uphold and promote the judiciary's impartiality and fairness. For example, in both *De Almeida v. Smith* and *Snyder v. Snyder*, Judge Ogden made several facial expressions including, but not limited to, rolling her eyes and smirking while hearing testimony. Judge Ogden also repeatedly made certain comments such as "wow" in response to testimony. During a hearing in *De Almeida*, Judge Ogden laughed at Anthony and his counsel while they were speaking, and whispered questions to opposing counsel who was present in the

courtroom while Anthony and his counsel were on Zoom. They could not hear her questions or opposing counsel's answer.

Similarly, in *Young v. Young*, Judge Ogden repeatedly responded to Yvonne's statements with "wow," "you were the de facto caregiver," and "thank God for grandparents," She asked Yvonne's opinion of Bianca's mental health, and made several facial expressions – such as dropping her jaw in amazement at Yvonne's representations. Additionally, throughout the hearing, which was held without proper notice to Yvonne, Judge Ogden commented that the situation is "heartbreaking" and that it "had to be really traumatizing" for the child.

In a hearing for *Shayla Geene West*, Judge Ogden made facial expressions and commented that the child was "pretty young to be dealing with this" and that the defendant's behavior was "definitely not appropriate." She also provided Ms. West with the phone number for Legal Aid to pursue a custody case. These expressions and behaviors highlight Judge Ogden's lack of impartiality throughout the proceeding.

In *Aaron Maupin v. Amy Garrard*, 24-CI-501371, Judge Ogden should have recused from the case based on her bias and partiality demonstrated by her comments in a DVO proceeding involving the same parties and their minor child, 24-D-501362, wherein she commented about only requiring drug testing for Aaron in both cases, despite no evidence.

Finally, in a hearing for *Jamiracle Watts*, Judge Ogden told the defendant he was "hostile," does not "seem stable," was "just rogue", and commented that she was "shocked" that he is in the military service and said she would order a full psychiatric evaluation without any basis in the record. When one of the parties expressed her frustration that the flash drive was not available for review, Judge Ogden responded telling the individual to "not

complain to [her]" and that she didn't "want the whining." These actions and behaviors violate the judge's duty to maintain impartiality and fairness, calling into question Judge Ogden's impartiality when adjudicating the matters before her. For these reasons, Judge Ogden's behavior and actions violated Rules 1.2, 2.2, and 2.3(A) of the Judicial Code of Conduct.

Judge Ogden also engaged in behavior that inhibited individuals' right to be heard. In *Anthony De Almeida*, Plaintiff's counsel received an email from Judge Ogden's staff stating that an upcoming hearing was cancelled; however, the Defendants were never informed of the change in schedule and appeared in-person for the cancelled hearing. Despite the miscommunication with the parties, Judge Ogden nevertheless proceeded with the hearing and called Plaintiff's counsel to inform him she was proceeding after all. Plaintiff's counsel expressed his confusion that the hearing was moving forward but Judge Ogden dismissed these concerns stating that her staff attorney "does not make the decisions."

Throughout the hearing Plaintiff's counsel repeatedly stated that he could not hear the proceedings or the testimony, but Judge Ogden nevertheless continued to receive testimony from the Defendants. At the end of the hearing, Judge Ogden asked Plaintiff's counsel if he had any questions or concerns. As Plaintiff's counsel answered, Judge Ogden spoke over him and asked the Defendant questions about the case (ex: "Does the [Plaintiff] have any criminal history?"). This behavior continued during a subsequent hearing where Judge Ogden refused to hear any testimony from the Plaintiff or his witnesses.

Judge Ogden engaged in similar behavior in a hearing for *Jamiracle Watts*, wherein the plaintiff was physically present in the courtroom and the defendant joined via Zoom. During the hearing, the defendant interrupted the plaintiff's testimony and said "objection"

numerous times. After 2-3 interruptions, Judge Ogden muted the defendant on Zoom and informed him that he did not have a valid objection “just because [he] disagree[d]” with what was being said. When the defendant unmuted himself to speak again, Judge Ogden scoffed, placed the defendant back on mute, and said “we are going to have you sit in the corner and be quiet.”

In *Michael Warren Snyder*, Judge Ogden would not permit Michael to present evidence he was prepared to offer. Her failure to do so constitutes a violation of due process and Rule 2.2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

In *Aaron Maupin* 24-CI-501371, Judge Ogden did not hold a hearing on Aaron’s motion to recuse and denied it without explanation, requiring the Supreme Court to order her recusal.

Similarly, in *Cortez Darnell Gist v. Elyssa Michelle Pedro*, 26-D-500350-001, a hearing was held with one party physically present in the court room and another party on Zoom. Throughout the hearing the parties spoke over each other, and Judge Ogden repeatedly placed the party on Zoom on mute. These actions and behaviors demonstrate how Judge Ogden repeatedly limited testimony and muted named parties throughout numerous hearings. Accordingly, Judge Ogden’s behavior hindered and otherwise limited individuals’ right to be heard in violation of Rule 2.8(A) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Finally, Judge Ogden has failed to maintain order and decorum in her courtroom. For example, in *Michael Snyder*, *Jamiracle Watts*, and *Cortez Darnell Gist*, the parties repeatedly spoke over each other, and Judge Ogden struggled to maintain order and control over the proceedings. In *April Vannatta*, Judge Ogden permitted April’s attorney to loudly speak over Michael when he attempted to pose a question, appeared exasperated and confused, and

stated “I’m done” and abruptly ended the hearing, stating “This is crazy”. At another hearing in *April Vannatta*, on Michael’s motions to restore his visitation rights as ordered by the Court of Appeals, and to recuse, Judge Ogden failed to exercise control over the hearing, became angry when he attempted to point out the appellate ruling, and said “I’m going to excuse you.”

Besides failing to maintain control over the individuals in her courtroom, Judge Ogden failed to establish an environment that upholds the proper decorum required of a courtroom. For example, in *Shayla Geene West*, Judge Ogden conducted a hearing with her judicial robe unzipped revealing a shirt covered with a design of two champagne glasses. In *Jamiracle Watts*, Judge Ogden ate food and texted during the proceedings. These actions and behaviors exhibit a failure by Judge Ogden to maintain the proper order and decorum in violation of Rule 2.8(A) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

Collectively, these actions by Judge Ogden demonstrate bias and lack of impartiality and highlight her failure to uphold proper judicial decorum. For these reasons, Judge Ogden has engaged in misuse of judicial authority and has undermined public confidence in the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the judiciary.

In determining the appropriate sanction, the Commission has considered that Judge Ogden has acknowledged the concerns raised in these proceedings and has accepted responsibility for the administration of her courtroom and docket. She has implemented changes intended to ensure that all parties, including those appearing without counsel, have a full opportunity to be heard, that the record reflects the basis for the Court’s decisions, and that rulings of the Court of Appeals are implemented promptly and completely.

The Commission concludes Judge Ogden's conduct violated SCR 4.020(1)(b) by engaging in misconduct in office. The Commission further concludes that Judge Ogden violated the following rules of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

Rule 1.1 which requires judges to comply with the law.

Rule 1.2 which requires judges to uphold and promote the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety. The test for appearance of impropriety is whether the conduct would create in reasonable minds a perception that the judge engaged in conduct that reflects adversely on the judge's honesty, impartiality, temperament, or fitness to serve as a judge. Canon 1, comment 5.

Rule 2.2 which requires judges to uphold and apply the law and perform all duties of the judicial office fairly and impartially.

Rule 2.3(A) which prohibits judges from performing their judicial duties with bias or prejudice.

Rule 2.5 which requires judges to perform their duties competently.

Rule 2.6(A) which requires judges to accord every person who has legal interest in a proceeding, or that person's lawyer, the right to be heard according to law.

Rule 2.8(A) which requires judges to uphold order and decorum in proceedings before the court.

Therefore, in light of Judge Ogden's conduct, she is hereby suspended from her duties without pay for a period of thirty (30) consecutive days beginning at midnight November 8, 2026, and ending at 11:59 p.m. on December 8, 2026. Judge Ogden shall refrain from performing the duties of her office, shall not access or utilize court resources, and shall not appear at the Jefferson County Judicial Center. Additionally, Judge Ogden shall complete an educational course relating to proper conduct of hearings and due process within 6 months of the date of this Order, at her own expense, with JCC's prior approval. She may complete this course during the time of her suspension.

Judge Mitch Perry recused from any consideration of this matter.