



Friend of the Court

Mission Statement

In keeping with the best interest of children, the Jackson County Friend of the Court will provide quality services in a fair and respectful manner.

Programs

[Judgment Order Entry Fees](#)

[FOC Duties](#)

Judgement Order Entry Fees

Activities

Enforcement of court orders regarding custody, parenting time, and support of minor children. Conducts hearings, investigations, and makes reports and recommendations to the Court on those matters. The FOC offers mediation as an alternative dispute resolution process, for custody and parenting time issues.

Strategic Plan Impact/Accomplishments

See FOC Duties budget page.

Budget Adjustments

There are no significant budget adjustments to this program.

FOC Duties

Activities

Enforcement of court orders regarding custody, parenting time, and support of minor children. Conducts hearings and investigations, and makes reports and recommendations to the Court on those matters. The FOC offers mediation as an alternative dispute resolution process, for custody and parenting time issues.

Strategic Plan Impact

✓ **Safe Community**

Investigating and making custody, parenting time, and support recommendations helps ensure the proper care and custody of children. Facilitative Information Gathering Conferences (FIGS), formerly known as Conciliations, allows parents to mediate their disputes and to reach their own custody, parenting time, and support agreements, which reduces the likelihood of parental kidnapping, non-payment of support, and parental alienation. Domestic Violence Screening and Safety Planning for families with domestic violence contributes to a safe community by providing safe options for parents at risk or struggling with domestic violence. The FOC has also partnered with Aware Inc. and Safe Havens to provide supervised parenting time and exchanges for families with domestic violence. Reporting suspected abuse and neglect and conducting criminal history checks on FOC employees and vendors contributes to a safe community.

Through its participation in the Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (MPRI), the FOC reviews parolee support obligations to ensure that support is set at a reasonable amount, and focuses more on job seeking initiatives as opposed to demanding unrealistic payment plans. This reduces parolee anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, and the chance of a parolee returning to a life of crime. The Warrant Unit arrests individuals who have outstanding warrants.

Safeguarding confidential FOC files keeps the community safe from improper disclosure of confidential information.

✓ **Economic Development**

The duties performed by the Enforcement/Casework, Bench Warrant, and Interstate Units advances economic development. By enforcing and collecting child and spousal support,



Jackson's children and families are afforded financial support to help them meet their basic needs. Support is often spent in the community, which ensures continued growth and vibrancy within the local, regional, state, and global marketplace.

Additionally, the Friend of the Court is partnering with Michigan Works and Temporary Employment Agencies to connect unemployed or underemployed parents with educational and job opportunities.

The Friend of the Court has also partnered with MDRC and the Families Forward Demonstration to provide educational and employment assistance to underemployed payers of support.


The timely entry and modification of support orders into the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System by the Accounting Department is critical to the receipting and distribution of support payments. The FOC Support Services Unit, in addition to the Michigan Disbursement Unit, accepts payments locally to ensure that no money is turned away. By reviewing support obligations, the FOC helps ensure that support is set at manageable levels. Customers are more likely to pay their support, if they feel their income has been fairly evaluated.

Regular support payments decrease public assistance involvement, which places an unnecessary burden on taxpayers and negatively impacts the economy.

✓ **Healthy Community**

The FOC program has a direct impact on the healthy community strategic priority. By investigating and making recommended orders for custody and parenting time, this contributes to a healthy community by providing appropriate and safe parenting time and custody arrangements. In some cases, supervised parenting time may be appropriate, therapeutic services may be necessary, or non-traditional approaches for parenting may be required.

The ADR and Investigation Department works with parents to evaluate the best interests of children to create a healthy environment for that child to develop. The Enforcement Unit contributes to a healthy community by enforcing court ordered child support to ensure that the basic needs of children and families are met. In addition, the



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Enforcement Unit enforces court ordered health insurance provisions and delinquent medical bills, which all directly relate to a healthy community. Reporting suspected child abuse and neglect also contributes to a healthy community by providing intervening services for the children at risk of abuse or neglect.

Accomplishments

- ✓ Enforcement / Arrears Management: Collaborated with Matterhorn, Inc. to provide text and email notifications for hearings as well as text / email communication between caseworkers and clients.
- ✓ Collaboration: Partnered with Aware Inc and Safe Havens to provide supervised parenting time and exchanges.
- ✓ Collaboration: Partnered with MDRC and the Families Forward Demonstration to provide educational and employment services for under or unemployed payers of support.
- ✓ Changes: New Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) instituted from the Office of Child Support related to locate, medical support, timely enforcement, and timely modifications.

Budget Adjustments

There are no significant budget adjustments to this program.





Strategic Outcomes						
Indicator	2017		2019 Actual	2020 Target	2021 Target	2022 Target
Current Support Percentage Collected				81	81	81
Percent of cases receiving arrears collections				70	70	70
Total amount of support collected				\$22.1 million	\$22.1 million	\$22.1 million

Other Key Indicators



<u>Indicator</u>		<u>2018 Actual</u>	<u>2019 Actual</u>	<u>2020 Target</u>	<u>2021 Target</u>	<u>2022 Target</u>
Total number of Cases	13,633	13,492	13,324	13,000	13,000	13,000
Telephone calls handled	29,538	25,655	27,113	25,000	25,000	25,000
Conciliations/investigations completed	397	428	381	400	400	400
Support reviews completed	775	943	921	800	800	800
Wednesday show cause hearings held	3,328	4,736	4,213	4,500	4,500	4,500
% Cases with locate action within 30 days	n/a	97.2%	82.2%	75%	75%	75%
% Support Reviews within 180 days	n/a	98.0%	99.3%	75%	75%	75%
Average wait time per phone call (min)	2 min 1 sec	1 min	1 min	2 min	2 min	2 min
% Cases with timely enforcement action	n/a	94.6%	95.1%	75%	75%	75%
Grievances Acknowledged / Total	1 / 13	1 / 8	1/11	2 / 10	2 / 10	2 / 10