

## WHAT IS JOINT LEGAL CUSTODY?

The Court may order two types of child custody. One is physical custody, where a child resides primarily with one or both parties, typically under a specific schedule. The other is legal custody, which authorizes a parent to make important decisions regarding a child's welfare such as medical treatment, enrollment in school, religious instruction, etc. Parents are sometimes awarded joint legal custody in their judgment or order.



Joint legal custody is appropriate where the parents are able to cooperate and generally agree on the important decisions affecting the welfare of the child. When parents are unable to agree on an important decision, a motion is often filed with the Court and a special hearing, called a *Lombardo* hearing [based on *Lombardo v Lombardo*, 202 Mich App 151 (1993)], is scheduled for the Court to make the decision. If motions are frequently filed because the parents are unable to mutually agree on important decisions, then it may be appropriate for the Court to review whether joint legal custody should be changed so that only one parent has decision making authority.

Although the Court sometimes refers the issue of legal custody to the Friend of the Court for an evaluation on whether a sole or joint arrangement is appropriate, the Friend of the Court is not involved in enforcing legal custody decisions (e.g. which school or daycare provider) when the parents are unable to agree. Additionally, legal custody disputes and/or alleged violations of legal custody provision are not subject to the parenting time enforcement process through the Friend of the Court; for those situations, a motion must be filed directly with the Court.

### VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2

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### SPRING 2016

#### Helpful reminders:

Join us and others at the Kent County Resource Fair May 5 at the Paul I Phillips Center.

The court works through written orders. Keep a copy of your own court order handy.

A payer of support is generally automatically submitted for tax offset if he or she owes more than \$150.

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE FOC

Client Service Representatives are available by phone and through the lobby from 8am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday to answer most of your questions. If you need to make a payment at FOC, the payment window is open Monday through Friday, 8am – 4:30pm. If you have an active bench warrant, you may come in to see an Arraignment Case Manager to resolve the warrant during regular lobby hours. Other child support staff at Friend of the Court will be available for walk-ins (those without an appointment) on Tuesdays from 8 am – 11:30 am and Thursdays from 1 pm – 4 pm.

We do our best to provide quick response to your questions. Due to the volume of calls, emails and letters we receive, response times will vary. Emails and voice mails will be responded to within 2 – 3 business days. Letters or requests sent via regular mail or submitted at our lobby window will generally be responded to within 5 business days of receipt. Multiple requests do not speed the response time. Please be aware of holidays and weekends when our office will be closed, as these are not counted in the response time.



## KENT COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT



*Our mission:  
To assist the Family  
Division of the Circuit  
Court in facilitating the  
resolution of domestic  
relations matters so  
that children's best  
interests are  
protected.*



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Or visit Kent County's  
[website](#) for employment  
opportunities with  
Kent County and the FOC.

### SUMMER PARENTING TIME

It may still feel like winter, but it is not too early to start planning for summer parenting time. Planning now will help you avoid stress when important vacation time approaches. Start by checking your court order to see what it says about summer time. Next, touch base with the other parent: do the two of you agree about how your children should spend their time during the summer? If you don't agree, there may be several options to help you clarify summer parenting time. By clicking on the underlined word in the descriptions below, you will be connected to more information about the processes.

Mediation: If you have a specific order that will not work this year, or do not have an order for summer parenting time, you can write to the Friend of the Court and ask for [mediation](#).

Co-Parent Session: If you have an order for specific summer parenting time that doesn't go as far as specific dates and times, you can contact the Friend of the Court and ask for a [co-parent session](#).

Court: If mediation or a co-parent session will not work for you, you can petition the court through your attorney or on [your own](#).



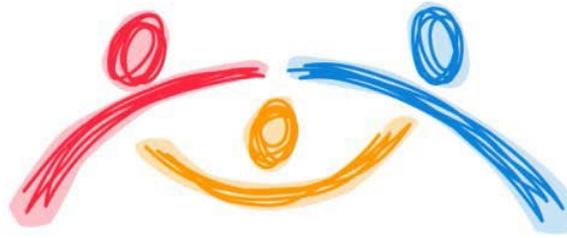
### Arrears Forgiveness

The State of Michigan has a program that could substantially reduce or eliminate certain state-owed child support debt.

The State of Michigan conducted research that suggested that a vast majority of arrears in the state are owed by people who earn the least amount of money. Eliminating some of this uncollectible debt may allow payers of support to become more self-sufficient while at the same time allowing the local Friend of the Court office to focus its efforts on collectible support.

Please [check your balance](#) or contact the [Friend of the Court](#) to see if you have

support arrears that would be eligible for this program. If you do, then you may complete a five-page form called a DHS-681. You may find this form online at <https://www.accesskent.com/Courts/FOC/pdfs/Discharge-State-Owed-Debt.pdf>. Return the form to the Friend of the Court. An agent at the Friend of the Court will review the form to determine your eligibility. You may be eligible for a full discharge of state-owed debt. If not eligible for a full discharge, then you may also qualify for a dollar-for-dollar match on a lump-sum payment.



## Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family

FREE Six Week Class Series. This class can help you, your children & your family!

Learn to improve parenting relationships of single and co-parenting adults.

- Are you divorced with children?
- Do you have children, but never married?
- Are you helping to raise someone else's children?
- Are you in a relationship with someone who has children that are not yours?

Lessons in the six-week series include:

- Positive co-parenting relationships
- Stress and conflict management strategies
- Ongoing involvement of both parents
- Money management/support for children
- Healthy decisions about couple relationships

Class Dates: Mondays from 6:00-8:00PM

May 9, 16, 23 & June 6, 13, 20, 2016

Location: 775 Ball Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

REGISTER by calling: Holly Tiret, (616)632-7893 or [tiret@anr.msu.edu](mailto:tiret@anr.msu.edu)

MSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension employment opportunities are open to eligible/qualified persons without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status. Persons with disabilities have the right to request and receive reasonable accommodations. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting Holly Tiret at 616-632-7893 by April 25, 2016.