

17th Circuit Court - FOC

82 Ionia Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (616) 632-6888 Fax: (616) 632-6871

Mission

To serve the Court and the families of Kent County to ensure children are supported, both financially and emotionally.

Overview

The Friend of the Court (FOC) was created by statute (MCL 552.501) to serve as the enforcement and investigative arm of the Circuit Court Family Division. FOC employees are court employees. With over 39,000 cases, the FOC is tasked with the following duties:

- Enforcement of child support orders
- Enforcement of custody and parenting time orders
- Review the amount of child support consistent with the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual
- Investigate custody and parenting time issues and make written reports outlining recommendations to the Court
- Provide mediation services for custody, parenting time and child support issues

The FOC is required by law to open a case whenever a domestic relations case is filed that involves a minor child (this includes divorce cases, paternity cases, family support cases and certain interstate cases), unless the parties appropriately “opt out” by court order as provided by statute.

It is the FOC’s vision to improve the lives of children and strengthen families.

Significant Accomplishments

- The Responsible Parent Program (RPP), which launched in 2016, has grown from an initial start of one case manager to two and an assistant, all full-time. The purpose of the program is to assist payers who are having difficulty complying with their child support order. Through this program, payers may obtain a job, have their support order “right-sized,” learn how to establish or modify parenting time orders, and have their driver license reinstated if it was suspended for non-support. RPP has partnered with other agencies and employers, and holds special outreaches in the community including two on-site visits each month at Michigan Works. We are currently in the planning stages for a walk-in center located at the Friend of the Court office, which will allow payers to visit without an appointment to obtain information about potential employers and various processes important to their case.
- Regular monthly outreaches were expanded and are now held at Michigan Works, Urban Family Ministries, Strong Fathers, Hispanic Center, and the Guiding Light Mission. Periodic visits are also made to the Kent County Correctional Facility, Bellamy Creek Prison, and the Salvation Army. The primary purpose of these outreaches is to engage parents who are having difficulty paying their child support.

Strategic Goals

- Maximize grant funding and revenue opportunities (Stable Revenues).
- Assist the Court in entering timely and appropriate child support orders (Efficient Use of Resources).
- Provide stability for children through custody and parenting time investigations referred by the Court and through alternative dispute resolution (Safe Community).
- Active engagement with the community (Citizen Participation).
- Assist the Court by readily identifying and commencing action on those cases in need of child support enforcement, and utilize innovative solutions to address non-compliance (Proactive and Innovative Government).
- Deliver exceptional customer service by answering inquiries promptly and accurately (High Quality of Life).



82 Ionia

Significant Accomplishments Cont'd

- An important part of our outreach is the establishment of the Early Engagement Program (EEP), which launched in June 2017 and is staffed by a full-time employee. The primary purpose is to initiate contact with payers who have a new child support order, especially those who may have an order that was entered by default (i.e., the person failed to participate in the court case that was filed by the Prosecuting Attorney's Office). This is a significant change from former practice, where the first engagement with noncompliant payers was often at a show cause hearing or resolution of a bench warrant. Payers appreciate being given a clear explanation of what is in their order, are introduced to Friend of the Court services, and are referred to their case manager if they want to schedule an appointment. Most are left with a positive impression of the office and are grateful that someone reached out to them.
- The Friend of the Court is also, through our deputy program, able to reach payers with child support warrants. In partnership with the Kent County Sheriff Department, two detectives were assigned to our office in 2016 to work exclusively on engaging payers who have child support warrants. They try to work with each payer to resolve the warrant without having to arrest. In 2017, they succeeded in resolving 96% of the warrants without arrest. Most payers are relieved when they discover that the deputies are much more interested in helping them than in locking them up.
- The Friend of the Court is partnering with the Kent County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to develop a voluntary, streamlined process to determine paternity and enter consent orders regarding custody, parenting time and child support. Many of the referrals to this program will result from home visits with expectant mothers by groups connected to the Kent County Health Department. It is anticipated that this program can be launched sometime between March and April of 2018.
- A series of creative animated videos that provide information and explain Friend of the Court processes was created through a partnership with Grand Valley State University's Animation Outreach, North Park Montessori students and staff, and the Grand Rapids Community Media Center. The videos may be viewed on the Friend of the Court website (www.accesskent.com) and in our lobby, along with other pertinent information.

DEPARTMENT: 17TH CIRCUIT COURT FOC

Department Mission Statement:

To serve the Court and the families of Kent County to ensure children are supported, both financially and emotionally.

Service Area: Administration and Finance

Service Area Mission Statement:

To maximize grant funding and revenue opportunities to ensure the Friend of the Court can fulfill its statutory duties.

Goal

- The Friend of the Court will have stable and predictable revenues to cover operations.

Objectives

- Maintain contract with Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for IV-D funding.
- Maximize eligibility for funding from federal incentive revenues as required by the federal Office of Child Support.
- Maximize medical incentive funding from the State by ensuring medical support is provided as ordered

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of IV-D CRP grant funding	100.00%	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%
% minimum collection on current charges	NA	NA	80.00%/ 77.00%	80.00%
% minimum collection on arrears cases	NA	NA	80.00%/ 81.00%	80.00%
% of cases with medical provided as ordered	NA	NA	85.00%/ 83.00%	85.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
Title IV-D CRP grant funding	NA	NA	\$5,000,769/ \$5,291,372	\$5,817,454

Federal incentive	NA	NA	\$1,054,842/ \$1,075,948	\$1,042,460
Medical incentive	NA	NA	\$150,000/ \$186,981	\$170,000

Service Area: Support Review, Order Processing

Service Area Mission Statement:

To ensure reliable and consistent child support payments.

Goal

- Calculate child support obligations according to the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual, and process them timely once entered into an order so that payment is not delayed.

Objectives

- 90% of all support reviews will be completed within 90 days after information is received.
- 100% of all support reviews will be completed within 120 days after information is received.
- 100% of all child support orders will be entered in the state computer (MiCSES) within 3 business days.

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of all support reviews completed within 90 days after information is received	NA	90.00%/ 91.00%	90.00%/ 80.00%	90.00%
% of all support reviews completed within 120 days after information is received	NA	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%
% of all child support orders entered into the state computer (MiCSES) within 3 business days	NA	100.00%/ 97.00%	100.00%/ 99.00%	100.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
# of support reviews completed	NA	3,161/ 3,148	3,100/ 2,904	3,000
# of child support orders entered into the state computer (MiCSES)	NA	15,600/ 13,522	15,000/ 15,797	15,500

Service Area: Alternative Dispute Resolution

Service Area Mission Statement:

To ensure children's best interests are protected through timely custody and parenting time investigations and recommendations to the Court, and through effective mediation or enforcement when parents have custody and parenting time disputes.

Goal

- The Friend of the Court will promote safe and stable environments for children.

Objectives

- 90% of all court referrals for custody and parenting time investigations/recommendations will be completed within 90 days.
- 90% of all parenting time complaints will be resolved without a contempt hearing.
- 85% of mediations and conciliations will be scheduled within 60 days.

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of all court referrals for custody and parenting time investigations/recommendations completed within 90 days	74.00%	90.00%/77.00%	90.00%/85.00%	90.00%
% of all parenting time complaints resolved without a contempt hearing	86.00%	90.00%/88.00%	90.00%/87.00%	90.00%
% of mediations and conciliations scheduled within 60 days	NA	60.00%/94.00%	85.00%/95.00%	90.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
# of court evaluations completed	NA	750/736	750/710	725
# of parenting time complaints received	2,287	2,290/2,493	2,350/2,453	2,400
# of mediations and conciliations scheduled	NA	NA	400/394	400

Service Area: Administration, Enforcement Unit, Responsible Parent Program (RPP)

Service Area Mission Statement:

To be responsive to community concerns about Friend of the Court personnel and operations, and to educate and engage those who have a Friend of the Court case through effective community outreach.

Goal

- The Friend of the Court will encourage citizen awareness, participation, and compliance with court orders through community outreach.

Objectives

- 100% of grievances will be answered within 30 days.
- 100% monthly outreach to at least three community groups, agencies and facilities that reach payers who are homeless, incarcerated, or in need of special services.

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of grievances answered within 30 days	NA	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%
% of monthly outreach meetings to at least three community groups, agencies and facilities that reach payers who are homeless, incarcerated or need special services	NA	NA	100.00%/ 100.00%	100.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
# of grievances answered within 30 days	NA	20/ 20	18/ 18	18
# of community outreach meetings	NA	NA	36/ 84	85

Service Area: Child Support Enforcement Unit and Responsible Parent Program

Service Area Mission Statement:

To ensure compliance with the Court's child support orders and to assist those facing barriers leading to non-compliance.

Goal

- Systematically identify and follow-up on cases in need of enforcement, and seek innovative solutions to address non-compliance with child support orders.

Objectives

- 80% of current support charges will be collected
- 75% of payers sent to jail at show cause hearings will make the required payment and be released within two weeks
- 75% of the ordered amount will be collected on conditional license suspension orders
- 65% of those referred to the Responsible Parent Program will have their initial appointment scheduled within 14 days.
- 85% of the bench warrants handled by FOC deputies will be resolved without arrest
- 75% of payers will appear at the bond-out hearing.

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of the current support charge collected	NA	80.00%/ 77.00%	80.00%/ 77.00%	80.00%
% of payers who are released within 2 weeks, by making the required payment, after being jailed at a show cause hearing	NA	70.00%/ 75.00%	75.00%/ 82.00%	80.00%
% of the ordered amount collected on conditional license suspension orders	NA	75.00%/ 89.00%	75.00%/ 89.00%	85.00%
% of those referred to the Responsible Parent Program scheduled for an appointment with a FOC worker within 14 days	NA	NA	65.00%/ 81.00%	90.00%
% of the bench warrants handled by FOC deputies that were resolved without arrest	NA	NA	85.00%/ 96.00%	85.00%
% of payers who appeared at the bond-out hearing	NA	NA	75.00%/ 69.00%	70.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
Amount of total current support distributed	NA	73,600,000/ 76,339,969	76,800,000/ 77,258,641	78,000,000
# of payers who made the required payment and were released within two weeks after being jailed at a show cause hearing	NA	80/ 82	82/ 61	75
Total amount of payments made pursuant to conditional license suspension orders	NA	12,500,000/ 20,175,210	20,000,000/ 21,044,698	21,000,000
# of payers who were scheduled for an appointment with a FOC worker within 14 days after being referred to the Responsible Parent Program	NA	NA	175/ 215	225
# of bench warrants resolved without arrest by FOC deputies	NA	NA	400/ 619	600
# of payers who appeared at the bond-out hearing	NA	NA	800/ 591	625

Service Area: Client Information Services Department

Service Area Mission Statement:

To deliver exceptional customer service by answering inquiries promptly and professionally.

Goal

- The Friend of the Court will contribute towards a high quality of life for county residents through excellent customer service.

Objectives

- 80% of incoming calls to CISD will be answered within 5 minutes
- 85% of incoming calls to CISD will be resolved without transfer

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of incoming calls to CISD answered within 5 minutes	NA	80.00%/ 77.00%	80.00%/ 69.00%	75.00%
% of incoming calls to CISD will be resolved without transfer	NA	85.00%/ 93.00%	85.00%/ 90.00%	90.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
# of incoming calls to CISD annually	NA	112,000/ 112,436	115,000/ 86,616	100,000
# of incoming calls to CISD will be resolved without transfer	NA	100,000/ 104,550	100,000/ 80,085	90,000