

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| STATE OF MICHIGAN 36th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT Van Buren COUNTY | FRIEND OF THE COURT ANNUAL STATUTORY REVIEW | YEAR 2015 |
|--|--|--------------|

Court address 212 Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079 **Court telephone no.** (269) 657-8229

The following review is made of the performance records of the friend of the court for this county during the past year as required by statute.

1. Were the following purposes of the act met?

- a. Did the friend of the court investigate relevant facts and make written reports and recommendations to the parties and court regarding child custody, parenting time, and support? Yes. Please explain how well.
 No. Please explain why not.

Support investigations are conducted by Friend of the Court staff. Custody and parenting time investigations are conducted by independent contractors.

- b. How were domestic relations mediation services provided to the parties? Please explain. If services were not provided, please explain.

Informal mediation is provided by trained Friend of the Court staff. Formal mediation is provided by independent contractors that are qualified to provide formal mediation services. The cost of formal mediation is paid by the Friend of the Court.

- c. What has been the established friend of the court procedure for initiating enforcement of support orders? Please explain. The preferred method for enforcing a support obligation is via an income withholding notice. When a source of income cannot be identified for the purposes of income withholding, the case is scheduled for a contempt hearing. If the payer fails to appear at the contempt hearing, a bench warrant is issued for failure to appear. Deputies assigned to the Friend of the Court Office review warrant lists and attempt to contact payers with outstanding bench warrants. Efforts are made by the deputy to collect money from the payer, or arrest the payer. In addition, the Friend of the Court will obtain a lien against real or personal property if assets are identified and ownership can be confirmed. Liens against estates, worker's compensation payments, and civil law suits are used as well. Cases that meet the criteria for income tax refund intercept are submitted to the appropriate taxing authority.

- d. Has the friend of the court examined the records and conducted necessary investigations to determine whether child support should be increased or decreased? Please explain.

Yes. Notices for automatic statutory reviews and notices of the right to request a review are generated via MICSSES. In addition, staff may identify other situations that result in the staff initiating a review, i.e., incarceration, receipt of public assistance or disability income, change of custody, active military duty, out-of-home placement of a child. Staff provide information to customers about available options for modifying support obligations.

- e. Has the friend of the court responded to complaints regarding custody and parenting time orders and initiated appropriate enforcement proceedings? Please explain.

Yes. The Friend of the Court has complied with statutory requirements.

(PLEASE SEE OTHER SIDE)

f. Has the friend of the court published informational pamphlets with all information required by statute?

Yes. The Friend of the Court last updated its handbook in May 2014.

g. How has the friend of the court distributed the informational pamphlets? Please explain.

Paper copies of the Friend of the Court handbook are available in the Friend of the Court Office. Copies of the handbook are provided to attorneys upon request. The handbook is also available on the Friend of the Court web site and the Friend of the Court's public Share Point web site. In addition to the handbook, the Friend of the Court has a web site that provides information and forms to those involved in a domestic relations case. Lastly, when a new case is opened in the Friend of the Court Office, an introductory letter is mailed to the parents informing them of the availability of the handbook in either paper or electronic format.

h. Has the friend of the court investigated and responded to each grievance? Please explain.

Yes. See grievance reports filed separately with the State Court Administrative Office.

2. Were the duties of the friend of the court carried out in a manner that reflects the needs of the community? Please explain.

Yes. The Friend of the Court has conducted public outreach by participating in a family fair. The Friend of the Court Office is offering a class for fathers that are involved in domestic relations actions. This class has been opened up for other agencies and courts to refer fathers who may benefit from the class. A staff person has been assisting customers with signing up for accounts to access MiCHILDSUPPORT which provides online access to accounts. A suggestion box has been placed in the lobby of the Office. Customers are now able to pay support with a credit card in the Office.

3. Was there any misconduct, neglect of statutory duty, or failure to carry out written orders of the court relative to a statutory duty? Please explain.

No.

4. How was the public notice of the annual review given?

Newspaper name: The Courier-Leader Dates published: May 29, 2015 and June 5, 2015

Other methods of public notice:

Notice of the annual review was also posted on the Friend of the Court web site.

If notice was not given, please explain.

5. A written summary of public and citizen advisory committee comments received is attached.

None received.

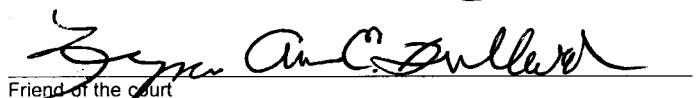
6. Additional comments: Additional pages may be attached as necessary.

8/5/15
Date

 P41930
Chief Judge Bar no.

I have reviewed this report. My response is attached.

08/04/2015
Date


Friend of the court