ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
FRIEND OF THE COURT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MARY HERENDEEN
FRIEND OF THE COURT

MISSION STATEMENT

The St. Joseph County Friend of the Court is committed to providing the highest quality customer service for the establishment, collection, and enforcement of child support orders, as well as professional, unbiased mediation and investigative services for the resolution of custody, parenting time and support issues.

The Friend of the Court is a branch of Circuit Court whose primary mission is the enforcement of the Court's orders regarding custody, parenting time, and support. The St. Joseph County Friend of the Court is a recognized child support enforcement agency entitled to federal funding under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

The Friend of the Court must comply with both federal and state laws regarding child support. The office is subject to compliance audits from both the state and federal levels.

2024 IN REVIEW

FUNDING

In 2024, 94% of our funding came from two sources. The office has a Cooperative Reimbursement Contract with the State that passes through federal funding and reimburses the county for 66% of eligible child support enforcement expenses. In 2024, we received $863,733.20 from the federal portion of this contract and $85,380.24 from the State supplement.

In addition, the office is entitled to incentive payments from the federal government based on performance in five categories:

1) Paternity establishment
2) Support order establishment
3) Current support collections
4) Support arrearage collection
5) Medical support collection

In 2024, the county received $151,727 based on the Friend of the Court's performance in the five categories above.

The Friend of the Court is also required by Michigan law to provide various custody and parenting time services. These are funded in whole by user fees and judgment fees.

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Federal portion-reimbursement contract	$ 863,733
State portion-reimbursement contract	$ 85,380
Federal incentive payments	$ 151,727
Statutory fees	$ 38,255
Judgment fees and interest	$ 15,985
Court costs	$ 9,678
Other revenue	$ 5,276
Total revenue	$1,170,034

COLLECTIONS

Total collections for 2024 are up from 2023. We continue to lag slightly behind pre-pandemic collections in 2019. That lag can be attributed to many support orders being reduced during the pandemic that have not returned to pre-pandemic charge levels.

2024

Child Support Collected	$9,808,544
Spousal Support Collected	$ 167,540
Total Collections	$9,976,084

2023

Child Support Collected	$9,602,243
Spousal Support Collected	$ 146,181
Total Collections	$9,748,424

NON-ADVERSERIAL PROCEDURES

In 2007, the Friend of the Court adopted new procedures designed to help parties through custody, parenting time, and support proceedings with less litigation. Instead of going directly through a contested hearing in front of the court, usually with attorneys, the case is now referred to Friend of the Court staff for a Facilitative Conference. The office employees five caseworkers who are all trained mediators.

The results continue to be impressive saving judicial time that can be used elsewhere. Contested cases required a pretrial and a full evidentiary hearing before the Referee. Everyone benefits from the current procedures and the court saves judicial time that can be used elsewhere. The parties benefit from quicker and cheaper settlement of their issues. Also, we've found that parties who settle are less likely to return to court with future litigation.

ACTIVITY REPORT – 2024

1. MEDIATIONS & FACILITATIVE CONFERENCES		279
Resolved	186	
2. INVESTIGATIONS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS		532
Custody	65	
Parenting time	92	
Support	365	
Other	10	
3. REFEREE HEARINGS		363
Custody	43	
Parenting time	54	
Support	39	
Other	227	
4. **ORDERS ESTABLISHED**		334
Paternity	25	
Child support	127	
Parenting time or custody	182	