

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY  
FRIEND OF THE COURT

2022 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.

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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.

## **2022 IN REVIEW**

### **FUNDING**

In 2022, 93% 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 2022, we received \$745,658 from the federal portion of this contract and \$79,093 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 2022, the county received \$119,837 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 | \$ 745,658  |
| State portion-reimbursement contract   | \$ 79,093   |
| Federal incentive payments             | \$ 119,837  |
| Statutory fees                         | \$ 38,517   |
| Judgment fees and interest             | \$ 17,790   |
| Court costs                            | \$ 9,715    |
| Other revenue                          | \$ 5,624    |
| Total revenue                          | \$1,016,234 |

## **COLLECTIONS**

Total collections for 2022 were down from previous years, 2020 saw an increase of nearly \$1 million in child support collected due to increased unemployment funds. Pandemic Unemployment payments didn't end until April 17, 2021, which inflated 2021 collections as well.

### **2022**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Child Support Collected   | \$9,696,266       |
| Spousal Support Collected | <u>\$ 159,751</u> |
| Total Collections         | \$9,856,017       |

### **2021**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Child Support Collected   | \$10,340,675      |
| Spousal Support Collected | <u>\$ 146,339</u> |
| Total Collections         | \$10,487,014      |

### **2020**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Child Support Collected   | \$10,934,119      |
| Spousal Support Collected | <u>\$ 173,597</u> |
| Total Collections         | \$11,107,716      |

### **2019**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Child Support Collected   | \$10,108,991      |
| Spousal Support collected | <u>\$ 181,418</u> |
| Total Collections         | \$10,290,409      |

## **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 employs five caseworkers who are all trained mediators.

The results have been impressive. In 2022, only a handful of contested cases required a full evidentiary hearing before the Referee. Everyone benefits from the current procedures. 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 – 2022

|                                                         |     |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| <b>1. MEDIATIONS &amp;<br/>FACILITATIVE CONFERENCES</b> |     | <b>326</b>     |
| <i>Resolved</i>                                         | 231 |                |
| <br><b>2. INVESTIGATIONS WITH<br/>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>   |     | <br><b>738</b> |
| <i>Custody</i>                                          | 73  |                |
| <i>Parenting time</i>                                   | 101 |                |
| <i>Support</i>                                          | 556 |                |
| <i>Other</i>                                            | 8   |                |
| <br><b>3. REFEREE HEARINGS</b>                          |     | <br><b>430</b> |
| <i>Custody</i>                                          | 54  |                |
| <i>Parenting time</i>                                   | 43  |                |
| <i>Support</i>                                          | 47  |                |
| <i>Other</i>                                            | 286 |                |
| <br><b>4. ORDERS ESTABLISHED</b>                        |     | <br><b>440</b> |
| <i>Paternity</i>                                        | 43  |                |
| <i>Child support</i>                                    | 159 |                |
| <i>Parenting time or custody</i>                        | 238 |                |