

**FRIEND OF THE COURT  
ANNUAL GRIEVANCE  
REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

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**CALENDAR YEAR 2019**

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**Michigan Supreme Court  
State Court Administrative Office**

**April 2020**

## SUMMARY

The State Court Administrative Office, Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB), was created by the Friend of the Court Act, 1982 PA 294, MCL 552.501, *et seq.*, (the Act). Among other duties, the Act requires the FOCB to collect data on the operations of friend of the court (FOC) offices, including data on all grievances filed with FOCs or the circuit court chief judges and the FOCs' or courts' responses to those grievances. MCL 552.519(3)(d) requires the FOCB to prepare an annual report that provides a summary of the types of grievances each office receives and indicates whether the grievances are resolved or outstanding. This report is the 36th annual grievance report submitted to the Michigan Legislature.

During 2019, 338 grievances were filed with 40 FOC offices,<sup>1</sup> 16 more grievances than in 2018. The grievances raised 551 discrete issues. Of those issues, 56.3 percent (310) were complaints about some aspect of FOC office operations, while 43.7 percent (241) were issues related to an FOC employee's performance.

In the "office operations" category, 39.0 percent (121) raised a child support issue, 18.4 percent (57) focused on parenting time, 10.3 percent (32) involved custody, and 0.6 percent (2) alleged gender bias. The remaining 31.6 percent (98) were classified as "other" because the issues they raised were unique or nearly so, and did not fit into the categories listed above.

In this annual report, grievance responses are grouped into four categories: (1) grievances acknowledged to have merit in full; (2) grievances acknowledged to have merit in part; (3) grievances denied; and (4) grievances deemed nongrievable.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, 12 grievances were acknowledged to have merit in full, 30 were acknowledged to have merit in part, 255 were denied, 49 were nongrievable, and 4 were pending as of December 31, 2019. In response to grievances, FOCs changed their office procedures in 9 instances and took personnel actions in 32 instances.<sup>3</sup>

The chart provides detailed grievance data information. Also attached is a separate summary of grievance processing by FOC Citizen Advisory Committees in the two counties that had committees during 2019.

## LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[SCAO Grievance Forms](#)

[Statute Describing Grievance Process](#)

Attachments: Data Charts, CAC Supplement

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the 73 FOC offices did not have a grievance filed in 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The Act allows individuals to file a grievance related to an FOC employee or office operations. MCL 552.526. Some complaints are based on other factors, and therefore are not considered "grievable". Examples include complaints about the substance of a court ruling, complaints about the substance of an FOC recommendation to a court, and issues that must be addressed by some agency other than the FOC (e.g., complaints about judges and referees who are subject to the Judicial Tenure Commission, complaints about prosecutors who do not charge a person with criminal nonsupport, and complaints about private attorneys who are subject to the Attorney Grievance Commission). The FOCs accept these grievances and respond to them, but the response may simply inform the grievant that the issue is not grievable under the Act.

<sup>3</sup> Not all grievances acknowledged in full or in part required a change in office procedures or personnel action. Some grievances merely required corrective action on the case. Even when a grievance is denied, change in practices can result.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE DATA CHARTS

Total Filed	Number of grievances filed in each office during the reporting year of January 1 through December 31.
Response Over 30 Days	Number of grievances not responded to within the statutorily required time period of 30 days. MCL 552.526.
Duplicate Grievance (DG)	Same party filed a grievance on the same issue.
Same Grievance Filed With the Citizen Advisory Committee (CA)	The same grievance filed with the FOC and a citizen advisory committee.
Same Party/ New Grievance (SP)	Same party filed a prior grievance dealing with items not addressed in current grievance.

### **Grievance Issue Categories:**

Employee (Empl)	Number of grievances filed that concerned an employee.
Office Operations	This broad category (for which the charts do not show a cumulative number) includes grievances regarding support, parenting time, custody, gender, or “other.” The charts provide numbers for each of those “office operations” components.
Support (S)	Number of grievances in which support-related concerns were at issue.
Parenting Time (PT)	Number of grievances in which parenting time concerns were at issue.
Custody (C)	Number of grievances in which custody concerns were at issue.
Gender-Based (GB)	Number of grievances in which gender concerns were at issue.
Other (O)	Number of grievances in which other concerns not related to support, parenting time, custody, or gender were at issue.

### **Possible Grievance Responses:**

Acknowledged in Full (AF)	Merit in grievance.
Acknowledged in Part (AP)	Merit in part of grievance.

Denied (D)	No merit in grievance.
Nongrievable (NG)	Issue does not come under the grievance procedure.
Pending Response (PR)	Number of grievances not resolved at the time the grievance report was submitted to the State Court Administrative Office.

**Grievance Results:**

Change in Policy/Operations (CO)	Grievance resulted in change in office operations.
Personnel Action (PA)	Grievance resulted in personnel or employee action.
No Action (NA)	No change in policy or personnel action.

Notes A single grievance may involve both office operations and an employee. Therefore, the total number of grievances filed may be less than the sum of employee-related grievances plus office operations grievances.

A grievance may involve multiple concerns that require an FOC response. One response may address multiple concerns. Therefore, the total number of grievance concerns reported here (e.g., support, parenting time, custody, gender, or “other”) may exceed the total number of grievances filed. Also, one FOC response may address multiple concerns.

**2019 ANNUAL GRIEVANCE REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

County	2019 total filed	Response over 30 days	Multiple Grievances			Types of Grievance Issues						Grievance Response Category					Grievance Result		
			DG	CA	SP	GB/O EMPL	S	PT	C	GB	O	A/F	A/P	D	NG	PR	CO	PA	NA
ALCONA/ARENAC/IOSCO/OSCODA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ALGER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ALLEGAN	4	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	3
ALPENA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ANTRIM/GRAND TRAVERSE/LEELANAU	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
BARAGA/HOUGHTON/KEWEENAW	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
BARRY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BAY	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
BENZIE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BERRIEN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BRANCH	6	0	0	0	2	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	6
CALHOUN	8	0	0	0	0	6	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
CASS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHARLEVOIX	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHEBOYGAN	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
CHIPPEWA	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
CLARE	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
CLINTON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRAWFORD/KALKASKA/OTSEGO	3	1	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
DELTA	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
DICKINSON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EATON	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
EMMET	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
GENESEE	10	0	0	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	3	0	1	9	0	0	0	1	9
GLADWIN	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	2
GOGEBIC	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

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			DG	CA	SP	GB/O EMPL	S	PT	C	GB	O	A/F	A/P	D	NG	PR	CO	PA	NA
GRATIOT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HILLSDALE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HURON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
INGHAM	7	0	0	0	0	5	3	0	1	0	6	0	1	5	0	0	0	1	5
IONIA	7	0	1	0	3	5	0	5	1	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
IRON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ISABELLA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JACKSON	11	4	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	5	1	2	4	4	0	0	3	8
KALAMAZOO	9	0	0	0	0	9	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
KENT	4	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	4
LAKE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAPEER	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
LENAWEE	14	0	0	0	9	13	5	0	0	0	2	0	1	10	6	0	0	0	14
LIVINGSTON	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	3
LUCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MACKINAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MACOMB	53	3	0	0	12	38	25	20	14	0	21	1	4	46	0	1	0	6	45
MANISTEE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MARQUETTE	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2
MASON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MECOSTA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENOMINEE	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
MIDLAND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISSAUKEE/ WEXFORD	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
MONROE	7	1	0	0	1	8	3	2	1	0	5	2	1	4	2	0	0	3	4
MONTCALM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MONTMORENCY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MUSKEGON	9	0	1	0	1	6	6	1	1	1	1	0	2	7	1	0	2	0	7
NEWAYGO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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OAKLAND	74	1	4	0	1	54	36	13	3	1	2	1	2	64	8	0	2	0	73
OCEANA	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
OGEMAW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ONTONAGON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OSCEOLA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
OTTAWA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PRESQUE ISLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ROSCOMMON	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
SAGINAW	4	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	3
ST. CLAIR	5	0	0	0	2	4	2	0	0	0	4	0	1	4	4	0	0	0	5
ST. JOSEPH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SANILAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCHOOLCRAFT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SHIAWASSEE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TUSCOLA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VANBUREN	5	2	0	0	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	3	1	2
WASHTENAW	7	0	0	0	1	4	2	3	2	0	2	0	0	7	0	1	0	0	7
WAYNE	57	0	0	0	1	30	0	0	0	0	26	5	10	32	9	1	0	13	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>295</b>

**State Court Administrative Office (SCAO)  
Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB)  
2019 Citizen Advisory Committee Report to the Legislature**

This report summarizes the current status of the Friend of the Court Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs). A brief history of the CACs can be found in the [SCAO's 2004 Annual Grievance Report to the Legislature](#).

In January 2020, the SCAO/FOCB contacted all friend of the court (FOC) directors and asked if they had an active CAC in their county. Based on the responses from the directors, the two counties with active CACs (Kent County and Macomb County) were sent the annual CAC reporting forms.

**Kent County CAC**

The Kent County CAC met six times (bimonthly) and submitted minutes after each CAC meeting to the county board of commissioners. Written reports were submitted to the court and county board of commissioners annually.

A subcommittee was formed to review grievances. There were no grievances filed directly with the committee. The CAC received and reviewed every grievance filed with the Kent County FOC. Those 4 grievances raised 3 child support issues, and 1 issue considered "other." The CAC fully agreed with the FOC for all 4 grievances. The Kent County CAC stated that there were no problems that impeded the committee's functions and activities for 2019.

**Macomb County CAC**

The Macomb County CAC met 7 to 12 times in 2019. Minutes were submitted to the county board with the CAC's annual report to the court and county board of commissioners, and additional advice from the CAC was provided as requested.

There were 5 grievances filed directly with the CAC, one of which was a new issue grieved by the same party. There were 3 grievances filed with the CAC which alleged gender bias and 2 grievances raising issues categorized as "other." All 5 grievances were rejected by the CAC because they were not about office operations. The CAC partially agreed with 1 grievance and disagreed entirely with the other 4 grievances. No recommendations were made to change local policy, local operations, laws, or state policy as a result of reviewing the 5 grievances.

The CAC reviewed 19 grievances that were filed with the FOC office, 2 of which were duplicate grievances and another 2 which were new issues grieved by the same party. Those 19 grievances raised 7 gender-based issues and 19 issues categorized as "other." The CAC fully agreed with the FOC regarding 18 of the grievance responses and partially agreed with the FOC on 1 grievance response. The CAC found that in each of the gender-based grievances, the FOC decision was based on the best interests of the child. The Macomb County CAC stated that there were no problems that impeded the committee's functions and activities for 2019.