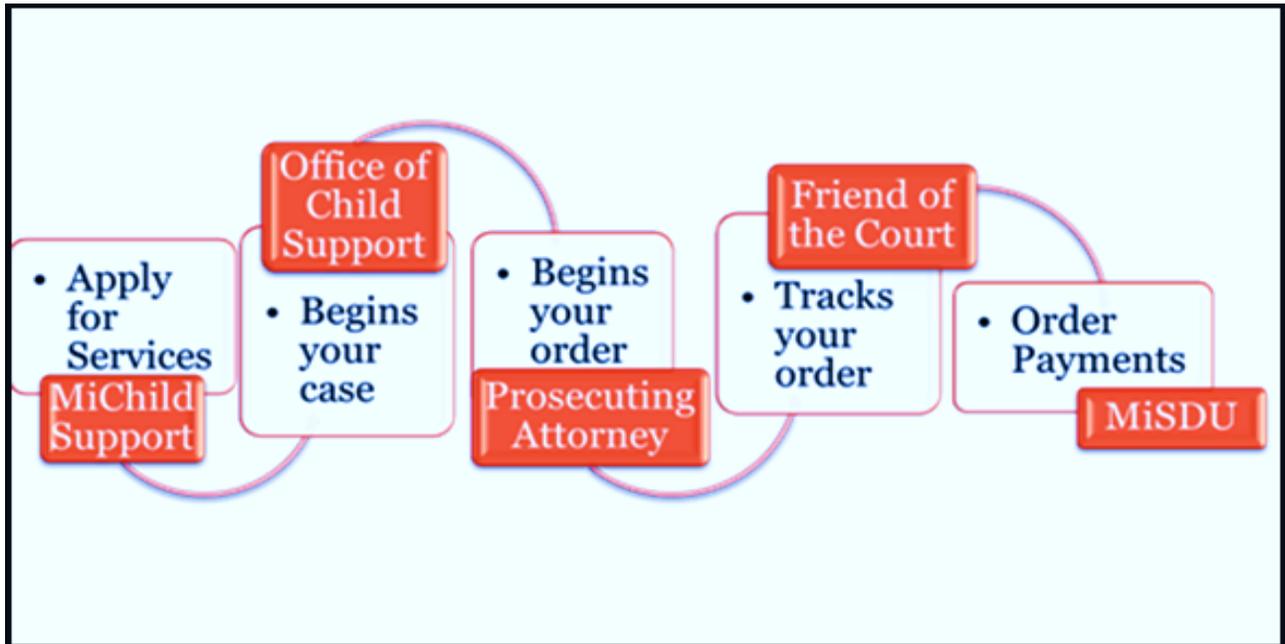


THE MICHIGAN CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM: OFFICES AND SERVICES



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MICHIGAN CHILD SUPPORT PROCESS



Introduction

To collect child support, the circuit court must enter a child support order. In most cases, the circuit court in the county where the child(ren) reside can enter the order. The court must also approve any changes to this order.

The child support process does not begin nor end with the order. Michigan uses different agencies to collect child support. The process begins with an application for child support services. The Office of Child Support (OCS) will collect information about the family and send it to the prosecuting attorney (PA) to prepare the order. Once the circuit court enters the order, local friend of the court (FOC) offices enforce the order and the Michigan State Disbursement Unit (MiSDU) processes payments.

This process is different in divorce cases or when either party has an attorney. In a divorce, parties fill out a paper application for child support services, and turn it in to the local FOC. Once the circuit court enters the final Judgment of Divorce, the local FOC office will enforce the court order and the MiSDU will process payments on the case.

If you or your children have ever received public assistance, a child support case may have already been opened for you. Please contact the OCS for more information.

LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE

Parties may consult with an attorney at any time during the child support case. Parties are not entitled to have a court-appointed attorney when the FOC enforces a child support order.

The State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) is designed to assist members of the public who want to hire an attorney and can afford to pay for legal services. If you are looking to hire an attorney, you can find information on the LRIS at

<http://michbar.org/programs/lawyerreferral.cfm>.

If you have a legal problem and cannot afford to hire an attorney, contact your local legal aid office. You can find information about legal aid services in your area, along with other self-representation resources at <http://www.michiganlegalaid.org>.

The Michigan Legal Help website helps people with basic legal cases who do not have a lawyer. The website consists of articles about family law issues and toolkits that help people prepare to represent themselves in court. Some family law forms are also available on the website, and the website will help you complete the forms by asking simple information. The Michigan Legal Help website is at <http://michiganlegalhelp.org/>.

MiCHILD SUPPORT

To begin the child support process, apply for child support services through the MiChild Support portal at <https://micase.state.mi.us>.

After the court enters an order in your case, MiChildSupport helps you:

- Find your FOC office's contact information.
- Review your payment summary.
- Obtain case information.
- View FOC-sent forms.
- View the next court date for your case.

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT (OCS)

After receiving an application for Child Support services, the OCS will start the child support case. If you decide to start a child support case, **contact the OCS at (866) 540-0008**. In addition to starting the case, the OCS provides:

- Services to locate absent parents.
- Referrals to the prosecuting attorney for paternity establishment.
- Help with cases involving parties outside of Michigan.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY (PA)

The local Prosecuting Attorney's (PA's) office establishes paternity and child support orders. The PA will coordinate genetic (DNA) testing to establish paternity if necessary. The PA will ask the court to establish a paternity and child support order and send a copy of the request to the other parent. The other parent will have 21 days to answer the court case. If the party does not answer, the PA will request the court to enter a child support order.

The PA's office may start a case prosecuting a party for felony nonsupport if the case has substantial unpaid support. In some counties or in some cases, the Attorney General's office may prosecute the felony nonsupport case.

FRIEND OF THE COURT (FOC)

Unless the parties opt-out of FOC services, local FOC offices provide a variety of services to parties and the court including:

- Changing child support when circumstances change.
- Child support enforcement.
- Mediation services.

Local FOC offices have no authority to:

- Investigate abuse and neglect claims.
- Provide legal advice.
- Change an order without court direction.
- Investigate criminal activity.

The local FOC office may use the following methods to enforce child support:

- Withholding support from the payer's income.
- Intercept state and federal tax refunds.
- Initiate show cause proceedings.
- Report arrearages to credit reporting agencies.
- Deny passport or license privileges.
- Place liens on property.

MICHIGAN STATE DISBURSEMENT UNIT (MiSDU)

The MiSDU processes child support payments. The MiSDU sends out all child support payments it receives within 24 hours of payment. For questions on child support payment processing, please contact MiSDU at **(800) 817-0632**.

FRIEND OF THE COURT BUREAU (FOCB)

The State Court Administrative Office, FOCB is a part of the Michigan Supreme Court. The FOCB was created to develop policies and procedures for local FOC offices.

The FOCB also:

- Establishes child support policies and guidelines.
- Publishes information pamphlets for the public.
- Publishes *The Pundit*, the FOCB's quarterly newsletter.
- Analyzes data regarding FOC operations.

The FOCB does not:

- Have access to your case.
- Control local FOC offices.
- Provide legal advice.

For general child support questions that do not require access to your case file, contact the FOCB at **(517) 373-5975**.

Friend of the Court Bureau/ State Court Administrative Office
Michigan Supreme Court
<http://www.courts.michigan.gov/scao>
