



Did You Know the Friend of the Court Office Can Use the State-Provided MiFILE Document Management System (DMS)?

Friend of the court offices (FOC) have the option of using the MiFILE DMS provided by the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO). SCAO is developing the requirements of the MiFILE DMS and will be sharing details in early 2020. In the meantime, what can you do now?

Determine Electronic Document Management Needs

MCR 3.203(G) requires courts and FOC offices to determine the manner in which pleadings and other court documents will be made available to parties and the public. Therefore, courts and their respective FOC offices are strongly encouraged to begin collaborative conversations now about their need for an electronic document management system (EDMS) once MiFILE is implemented in their counties. Discussion points include:

- Pros and cons of using an existing EDMS in the court or FOC office
- Pros and cons of using the same or separate EDMS
- The degree of workflow needed in the court and the FOC office
- The ability of the court and the FOC office to fund one or more local EDMS

The MiFILE DMS is the least complicated option with regard to integration; however, workflow processes will be minimal. If a court and FOC office need a more extensive workflow than what the MiFILE DMS will provide, a local EDMS may be the better option. And, although integration with a shared EDMS is less complicated, there may be reasons for the court and the FOC office to maintain separate systems. Courts and FOC offices should assess their long-term needs before making a decision. If neither the court nor the FOC office has an EDMS, we highly recommend starting with the MiFILE DMS. See [MiFILE Brief No. 1: Preparing for an Electronic Document Management System](#) for a high-level comparison of the EDMS options, cost impacts, and considerations. A more detailed comparison of the options will be provided in early 2020.

Determine Ability to Fund a Local EDMS

Federal funding is available to assist FOC offices with the costs of implementing an EDMS. The federal government will pay 66 percent of the eligible costs of implementing an EDMS for child support-related activities in IV-D cases. Child support activities are those associated with establishing, modifying, collecting, and enforcing child support. The FOC must also have a IV-D application from a person on the case. Where the FOC office uses an EDMS for both IV-D and activity that is not child-support related, or in cases that do not have a IV-D application, the funding may be less. Possible challenges to using federal funding include: 1) having to prorate



expenses based on activity between non-IV-D and IV-D and 2) having to include the EDMS in its cost allocation plan, if the system is operated jointly with other court-related activity or other users in the county. The FOC office may be able to pay for the entire system if the non-IV-D activity on the EDMS is minimal and the office otherwise accounts for non-IV-D activity involved for staff.

The cost of an EDMS system is likely to be high enough that the FOC office will need to depreciate the system over its useful life, so cost-recovery will be spread over several years. Courts can use this to their advantage, as fully-depreciated equipment may be used by other departments when the FOC upgrades to newer equipment.

FOC offices should check with their contract manager to determine how best to implement a cost-recovery plan for their office. The county must always obtain the Office of Child Support's (OCS) approval before purchasing any data processing-related equipment or software (excluding printers, monitors, keyboards, and mice).

If you have any questions about the information in this communication, please send them to MiFILECourtHelp@courts.mi.gov.