



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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### **State Foster Care Funding Program Earns High Marks on Federal Review**

LANSING, MI, September 26, 2019 – Michigan’s Title IV-E foster care program recently received favorable feedback from federal regulators at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Federal officials reviewed a random sample of 80 foster care cases statewide from April 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018, and recently notified the state that Michigan’s program is in substantial compliance with federal eligibility requirements. The Michigan Title IV-E program is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). MDHHS partners collaboratively with the Michigan Court Improvement Program, which operates under the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), to prepare state courts and county agencies to ensure a successful federal review every three years.

“I am thrilled to hear about the favorable review and proud of our SCAO Child Welfare Services team for their engagement and leadership in this effort,” said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth T. Clement, one of the Court’s liaisons on child welfare issues. “Protecting vulnerable children is what the program is all about, and this review highlights the effectiveness of our work in Michigan and reflects the hard work of the DHHS leadership.”

Ensuring that judicial determinations are timely and child-specific, that all court staff are trained, and that licensing and background checks are done thoroughly and efficiently are just some of the criteria on which the review is based. Because of Michigan’s high rating, a secondary review is not required, and the next primary review will be held in three years.

“Having a court system that is accessible to those most in need is one of the reasons we do what we do,” said Justice Megan K. Cavanagh, who also serves as an MSC child welfare liaison. “From the judges to the case workers, everyone who is a part of this program works day-in and day-out to ensure that every child is safe and given every opportunity possible. I applaud their efforts and look forward to building on this success.”

Title IV-E is a federal funding program that helps states pay for the costs of children who are removed from their home due to child abuse or neglect. Title IV-E eligibility is based on meeting certain criteria when a child is initially removed from his or her home and placed under the care of MDHHS. Essential to meeting the criteria for eligibility are the court orders with required judicial findings that must be detailed and child-specific.

Judicial determinations were explicitly cited by the federal government as a program strength and promising practice in the [Final Report](#) released on September 6:

“For years, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Court Improvement Program (CIP) have collaborated to strengthen the efficiency of court processes through training and supporting judges, attorneys, and other court staff, particularly in terms of the federally-required judicial determinations. The judicial determinations examined during the onsite review were timely, and included rulings that facilitated timely permanency plans. Judicial determination were also child-specific and those pertaining to the child's removal clearly outlined the circumstances under which the child was removed from the home. For all cases reviewed, contrary to the welfare findings were located in the first order sanctioning removal, as were case-specific reasonable efforts to prevent removal findings. We encourage MDHHS to continue its collaborative efforts with the CIP in order to maintain the quality of its judicial determinations and court orders.”

The SCAO Child Welfare Services division provides training on Title IV-E requirements, shares information with local courts and MDHHS, and collaborates with the Michigan tribal courts by including them in trainings and providing assistance as they apply for their own individual Title IV-E federal contracts. Click [here](#) to find out more.

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