

Friend of the Court Citizen Advisory Committees



Michigan law authorizes each county to establish a citizen advisory committee (CAC) for its friend of the court.

Who can serve on a CAC?

The CAC is comprised of the following members, each of whom must be a resident of the county:

1. A noncustodial parent,
2. A custodial parent,
3. An attorney who engages primarily in family law practice,
4. The county sheriff or the sheriff's designee,
5. The prosecuting attorney or the prosecuting attorney's designee,
6. The director of the county Department of Human Services office or the director's designee,
7. A mental health professional who provides family counseling, and
8. Two members of the general public who are not serving on the committee in one of the categories listed above.

How are members appointed to the CAC?

The county board of commissioners or, where proper, the county executive with advice and consent of the county board, appoints CAC members.

A person who wants to serve on a CAC should ask a county commissioner, the county executive, or the county administrator for information on how to apply.

What authority does the CAC have?

A CAC is **advisory only**. The responsibilities of the committee are to:

- (a) Meet not less than six times annually, keep minutes of each meeting, and submit a copy of the minutes to the county board.
- (b) Review and investigate grievances filed with the committee concerning friend of the court operations.
- (c) Advise the court and the county board on:
 - The friend of the court office;
 - The friend of the court's duties and performance; and
 - Community needs relating to friend of the court office services.
- (d) At the end of the calendar year, submit an annual report of CAC activities to the county board, the county circuit court, the State Court Administrative Office, the governor's office, and the standing Senate and House committees and appropriations subcommittees that are responsible for legislation concerning the judicial branch.

Are CAC meetings open to the public?

Members of the public may attend CAC meetings and must be given an opportunity to comment on any issue under consideration. If a vote is to be taken by the CAC, the public must be allowed to comment before the vote is taken. A CAC meeting is **not** open to the public while the CAC is reviewing, investigating, or holding a hearing on a grievance.

How do I find out if there is a CAC in my county and where and when it meets?

The county board of commissioners, the county executive, or the county administrator can tell you whether your county has a CAC and how to obtain information about CAC meeting locations and times.

How do I file a complaint to the CAC about a friend of the court office?

Michigan law allows a party with a complaint about friend of the court office operations to file a written grievance with the CAC in his or her county. You may use a form available at your local friend of the court office or online at:

<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/courtforms/domesticrelations/drindex.htm>.

At its discretion, the committee will review, investigate, or hold a hearing on the grievance.

The CAC may appoint subcommittees to review grievances. If a CAC reviews or investigates a grievance, it must respond to the grievance within a reasonable period of time.

Are there any other ways that the CAC reviews grievances?

Most grievances must be filed initially with the local friend of the court office. From those, a CAC is required to randomly select and review some citizen grievances and the responses to those grievances by the friend of the court office. The CAC also must report its findings to the court and the county board either immediately or in the CAC annual report.

The CAC is also required to review or investigate each grievance that claims a decision by a friend of the court employee was made based on gender rather than the best interests of the child.

What does the CAC do after it reviews a grievance?

The CAC advises the county board and the circuit court on the performance of the friend of the court. The conclusions of the CAC are also provided to the court and county board. The committee has no authority to make changes in friend of the court procedures, referee recommendations, or court orders.

*This brochure is produced by the
Michigan Supreme Court
State Court Administrative Office
Friend of the Court Bureau
<http://courts.michigan.gov/>*

PSA 28

Updated 5/28/08