

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

CALENDAR YEAR 2023

**Michigan Supreme Court
State Court Administrative Office**

April 2024

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 39th annual grievance report submitted to the Michigan Legislature.

During 2023, 435 grievances were filed with 41 FOC offices¹ - 93 more grievances than in 2022. The grievances raised 785 discrete issues. Of those issues, 57.7 percent (453) were complaints about some aspect of FOC office operations, while 42.3 percent (332) were issues related to an FOC employee's performance.

In the "office operations" category, 41.5 percent (188) raised a child support issue, 19.4 percent (88) focused on parenting time, 7.1 percent (32) involved custody, and 1.5 percent (7) alleged gender bias. The remaining 30.5 percent (138) 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.² In 2023, 33 grievances were acknowledged to have merit in full, 40 were acknowledged to have merit in part, 315 were denied, 74 were nongrievable, and 1 was pending as of December 31, 2023. In response to grievances, FOCs changed their office procedures in 34 instances and took personnel actions in 41 instances.³

The chart below 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 2023.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[SCAO Grievance Forms](#)

[Statute Describing Grievance Process](#)

Attachments: Data Chart, CAC Supplement and CAC Historic Perspective

¹ Some of the 75 FOC offices did not have a grievance filed in 2023.

² 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.

³ 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 CHART

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 (CAC)	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 chart provides 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.
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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.

2023 ANNUAL GRIEVANCE REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

County	2023 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	3	1	1	0	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
ALGER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ALLEGAN	17	0	2	0	1	16	13	5	1	0	2	2	4	10	1	0	2	3	12	
ALPENA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
ANTRIM/ GRAND TRAVERSE/LEELANAU	7	0	1	0	0	6	2	3	0	2	3	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	7	
BARAGA/HOUGHTON/ KEWEENAW	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
BARRY	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	
BAY	5	0	0	0	2	3	2	4	3	1	0	0	1	4	1	0	0	1	4	
BENZIE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
BERRIEN	11	0	1	0	4	8	1	5	0	0	5	0	1	10	0	0	0	0	11	
BRANCH	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
CALHOUN	7	0	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	3	0	4	2	1	0	0	4	3	
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
CHIPPEWA	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
CLARE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
CLINTON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
CRAWFORD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
DELTA	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	
DICKINSON	10	0	1	0	9	10	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	10	
EATON	5	0	0	0	0	5	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	
EMMET	4	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
GENESEE	16	4	0	0	2	10	7	5	1	0	2	0	1	14	1	0	1	0	15	
GLADWIN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
GOGEBIC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

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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	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
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	6	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	0	1	4	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
IONIA	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	4
IRON	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
ISABELLA	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
JACKSON	5	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	5
KALAMAZOO	6	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	6
KALKASKA	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
KENT	22	0	0	0	0	14	12	3	1	0	9	0	3	14	5	0	1	1	20
LAKE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAPEER	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
LENAWEE	6	0	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6	0
LIVINGSTON	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
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	59	1	1	0	26	66	10	6	2	0	59	1	4	51	3	0	0	4	55
MANISTEE	4	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
MARQUETTE	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	4	1
MASON	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
MECOSTA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENOMINEE	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
MIDLAND	7	0	0	0	4	8	1	3	0	1	4	0	0	6	5	0	0	0	7
MISSAUKEE/ WEXFORD	3	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
MONROE	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	3
MONTCALM	5	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
MONTMORENCY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MUSKEGON	9	1	0	0	0	5	1	1	1	0	4	0	4	7	0	0	0	4	4
NEWAYGO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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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
OAKLAND	86	0	16	0	6	65	38	22	7	0	5	1	5	59	20	1	3	1	82
OCEANA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
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	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
OTSEGO	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
OTTAWA	15	1	6	0	0	18	6	8	1	0	7	2	2	13	8	0	1	3	13
PRESQUE ISLE	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
ROSCOMMON	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
SAGINAW	6	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
ST. CLAIR	7	0	0	0	0	6	4	3	1	0	6	0	1	5	4	0	1	0	6
ST. JOSEPH	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2
SANILAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCHOOLCRAFT	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
SHIAWASSEE	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
TUSCOLA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VAN BUREN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WASHTENAW	7	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	2	5
WAYNE	56	3	2	0	3	16	38	1	2	0	6	10	4	38	5	0	10	5	42
Totals	435	14	40	6	62	332	188	88	32	7	138	33	40	315	74	1	34	41	364

**STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE (SCAO)
FRIEND OF THE COURT BUREAU (FOCB)
2023 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 is summarized on the following attachment.

In January 2024, 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 less than six times. The Kent County CAC held its meetings in January, May, July, and November. It submitted minutes after each 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 CAC. The CAC received and reviewed every grievance filed with the Kent County FOC. Those 21 grievances raised 11 child support issues, 2 parenting time issues, 1 custody issue, and 9 issues considered “other.” The CAC fully agreed with the FOC for 19 grievances. The CAC disagreed solely with how the FOC classified 1 grievance as acknowledged in part. The CAC disagreed with the FOC’s denial of another grievance, but the FOC was subsequently able to provide a solution to address the CAC’s concerns raised by the grievance. The Kent County CAC stated that no problems impeded the committee’s functions and activities for 2023.

Macomb County CAC

The Macomb County CAC met six times in 2023, with meetings scheduled as needed. 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.

The CAC used a computer-generated program to randomly select 20 grievances to review that were filed with the FOC office. Those 20 grievances raised 1 support issue, 1 parenting time issue, and 19 issues considered “other.” The CAC fully agreed with the FOC regarding all 20 grievance responses and no action was taken. The Macomb County CAC states that no problems impeded the committee’s functions and activities for 2023.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – FRIEND OF THE COURT CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

In 1996, PA 366 modified the Friend of the Court Act ([MCL 552.501, et seq.](#)) by establishing a CAC in each county. The CAC legislation ([MCL 552.504a](#)) provided duties for the CAC as follows:

- a) Meet not less than 6 times annually, keep minutes of each meeting, and submit a copy to the county board;
- b) Review and investigate grievances concerning the friend of the court as provided in [MCL 552.526](#);
- c) Advise the court and the county board on the office of the friend of the court's and the friend of the court's duties and performance, and on the community's needs relating to the office's services;
- d) At the end of each calendar year, submit an annual report of its activities to the county board, court, state court administrative office [sic], governor's office, standing senate and house committees, and appropriations subcommittees that are responsible for legislation concerning the judicial branch.

Before 2001, counties were reluctant to implement a CAC due to limited access to friend of the court records. Two amendments expanded access to friend of the court records: in 1998 the [Public Act 551](#) statutory amendment, and then the [MCR 3.218](#) court rule amendment, effective April 1, 2001.

SCAO's Friend of the Court Bureau (SCAO/FOCB) provided assistance to CACs at this time, including developing an informational brochure and consulting with committee members, county executives, legislative representatives, and other interested parties. The SCAO/FOCB also developed annual reporting forms [SCAO 28a](#), [SCAO 28b](#), and [SCAO 28c](#) used by CACs.

In [2004, PA 210](#) modified the Friend of the Court Act ([MCL 552.501](#)) by making establishment of a CAC optional rather than required. PA 210 also set forth that all CACs must honor any guidelines established by the SCAO for friend of the court interaction with CACs.

Many counties have been reluctant to create and maintain CACs due to the added cost of staffing and other support requirements (such as travel, copying, and other office expenses) and low community interest.