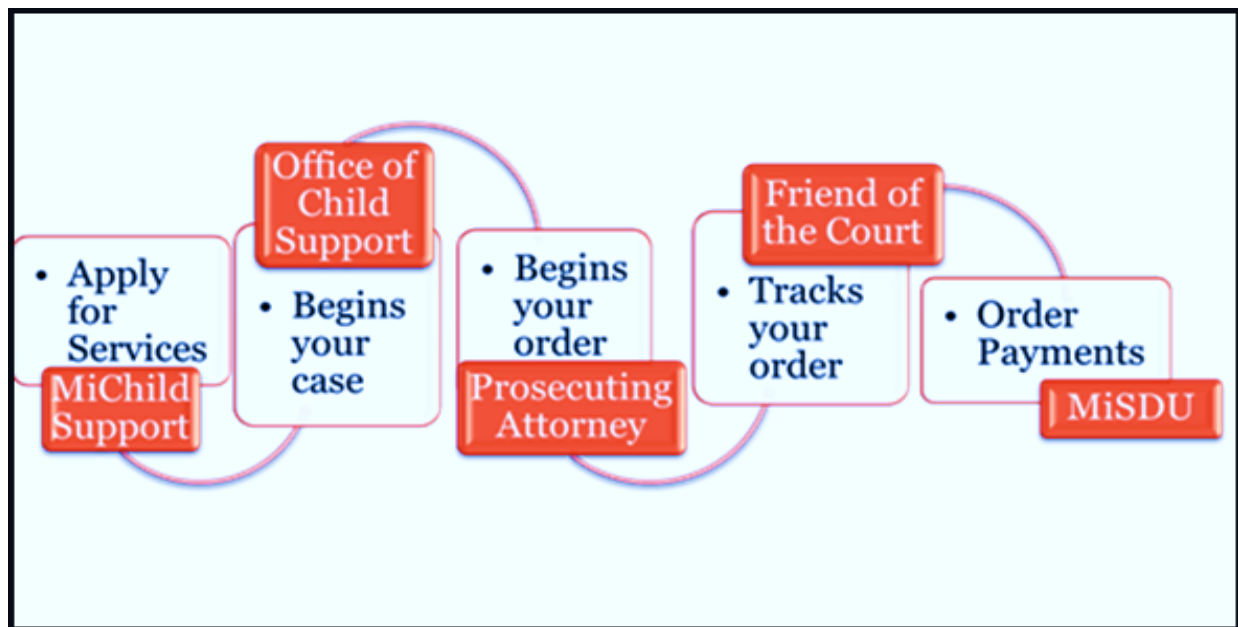


THE MICHIGAN CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM: OFFICES AND SERVICES



State Court Administrative Office
Friend of the Court Bureau
Michigan Supreme Court



Michigan's Child Support Program includes multiple agencies and offices that work together to establish and enforce 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's office (PA) to prepare a court order. The circuit court enters (signs) the court order based on the PA's findings and the parents' circumstances. Once the court order is entered, it can only be changed if the circuit court approves the changes.

Once the circuit court enters the order, the local Friend of the Court (FOC) office enforces the order and the Michigan State Disbursement Unit (MiSDU) processes payments.

This process is different in divorce cases or when either parent has an attorney. In a divorce, parents fill out a paper application for child support services and turn it in to the local FOC. Once the circuit court enters the final Divorce Judgment, the local FOC office will enforce it, 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 and Michigan Legal Help

You may consult with an attorney at any time about your child support case. If you would like to find an attorney, you can use the State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS). For more information on the LRIS, visit <http://lrs.michbar.org/LRS-Info/Lawyer-Referral-Service>.

The Michigan Legal Help website helps people who have a basic legal case but do not have a lawyer. The website has 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 questions. You can also find information on your local legal aid offices through Michigan Legal Help's website. You can find the Michigan Legal Help website at <https://michiganlegalhelp.org>.

MiChildSupport Website

You can apply for child support services by completing a paper application and delivering it to your local FOC or by mailing the application to OCS. You can also apply online through the MiChildSupport website at www.michigan.gov/michildsupport.

After the court enters an order in your case, the MiChildSupport website 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.
- Send secure information to your caseworker (available in some counties).

Office of Child Support (OCS)

After receiving an application for child support services, OCS starts a child support case. In addition to starting the case, OCS provides:

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

Prosecuting Attorney (PA)

The local PA's office establishes paternity and child support orders. If paternity needs to be established, the PA can coordinate genetic (DNA) testing. The PA's office may start a case to prosecute a parent 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 parents request and are approved for opting-out of FOC services, local FOC offices provide a variety of child support services to parents and the court, including:

- Changing child support when circumstances change.
- Child support enforcement.
- Mediation and other types of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

FOC offices have **no authority** to:

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

The 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 after payment. For questions on child support payment processing, please contact the MiSDU at **(877) 543-2660**.

Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB)

The FOCB is part of the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO). The SCAO is the administrative agency of the Michigan Supreme Court. The FOCB:

- Develops policies and procedures for FOC offices.
- Establishes child support policies and guidelines.
- Publishes informational pamphlets for the public.
- Publishes *The Pundit*, the FOCB's quarterly newsletter.
- Analyzes data regarding FOC operations.
- Answers general child support questions that do not require access to a case file.

The FOCB **does not**:

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

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