

# Friday, August 17, 2012: Friend of the Court Bureau Advisory Committee Meeting

1:00 PM – Michigan Hall of Justice

## 1) Administrative matters

- Because the minutes from the previous meeting (May 18, 2012) were not available, they will be reviewed at the November meeting, along with the minutes from this meeting.

## 2) Public Comment

- Mr. Robert Kerr (Dads and Moms PAC) spoke to the committee about the discrepancies between the recent Michigan Supreme Court *Likine* ruling, and the Administration on Children and Families Turner letter (AT-12-01) published last month.
  - Mr. Kerr requested that the committee recommend to the FOCB that an educational piece or Pundit article be written to help the local offices figure out how to abide by the new standard.
- Mr. Kerr also says that he feels that the committee does not open positions on the committee to the public, but instead shifts members from existing positions to crowd out the public.
  - Anyone interested in serving on the committee can apply through email to the FOCB mailbox. There is currently one opening for a human services professional.

## 3) Correspondence

- There was no correspondence to discuss at the meeting.

## 4) Old Business

- There was no old business to discuss at the meeting.

## 5) New Business

### A) FEDERAL 1115 GRANT – GENESEE COUNTY PACT COURT RESULTS

- Jack Battles, the FOC director of Genesee County, spoke of the results and conclusions of the PACT program that the county implemented. The program addressed barriers for a large percentage of people who wanted to pay but couldn't.
  - Genesee selected nearly 600 cases to participate in the PACT court – 300 cases where a parent had lost a job, and 300 cases where new orders had yet to be established.
  - Dedicated staff worked with voluntary participants in each category to improve their ability to pay the amount of support the court ordered.

- Staff created “blitz days” to entice parents to join the new establishment portion of PACT court. On these days, all FOC staff, and some from SCAO, worked with both parents to create a consent order for custody, parenting time, and support, after voluntarily waiving their right to a summons and complaint.
- The program showed huge improvements in percentages and amounts paid in support for job loss cases.
- The program showed higher compliance with the current support obligation for the “blitz” participants, and faster order establishment for the traditional participants.
- Statistics show that getting them involved up front has the effect of reduced enforcement efforts later.
- The committee asked several questions about the program, including plans for on-going or statewide applications.

## **B) CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM 5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

- A group of leaders in Michigan’s created a 5 year plan for the child support program.
- The report is still in draft form, but should be released in the partnership forum on November 1st.
- The draft mission and vision, subject to modification:
  - Vision statement: Engaging parents to improve children’s lives.
  - Mission statement:
    - To achieve the permanent well being and self sufficiency of families we will:
      - Deliver consistent, innovative, and holistic services;
      - Promote healthy relationships between parents and children ; and
      - Ensure parents fulfill their financial obligations to their children
    - To promote excellency and service to families we will:
      - Educate, engage, and empower child support professionals,
      - Communicate clearly externally and internally, and
      - Embrace Michigan’s diversity.

## **C) ENTERING A SPECIFIC DATE FOR THE END OF A CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATION UNDER MCL 552.605(B)93)**

- The FOCB has been getting calls from people whose children end high school in May, but don’t graduate in a ceremony until June, and the people do not know if their support obligations go through May or June.
- MCL 552.605(b)(3) states that a support order shall include provisions saying that support ends on the last day of a specified month. The current form doesn’t call for a specific date, which was the intent of FOCA on presenting the bill to the legislature.
- FOCB will propose that the FOC 10 (Uniform Child Support Order) change to specify a specific date when support will end. The date will be based on the best knowledge of the date the order is established. If it later appears that this date won’t be the correct date (for example, if a child is held back or skips a grade), then the parties can petition the court to modify the order before that exact date is reached.

- The FOCB makes this recommendation with FOCA support. It isn't drafted yet, and the form won't be changed for six to nine months.

#### **D) REVOCATION OF PATERNITY ACT**

- The committee received a copy of the new SCAO policy announcing changes to the Revocation of Paternity Act (which was signed into law with immediate effect). The Act allows for biological fathers to intervene in a marriage, divorce, or other action to declare himself the legal father based on certain requirements that are established in the law. The Act allows the mother, legal father, or alleged father to file to establish action to establish paternity.
- The memo is drafted in a way that identifies what the law is, but doesn't provide specific procedures to any court on how to do it. The FOCB is working on creating a policy that gives direction as to how to implement the act.
- The committee suggested placing this policy on the SCAO website with other numbered administrative memoranda. The committee acknowledged that it is an aberration by being informational only and not administrative.

#### **E) FOC GRIEVANCE AUDIT PROCEDURES REVIEW**

- The FOCB's bi-annual grievance audit is complete. The FOCB goes through the audits submitted from the FOCs, takes statistical samples, and looks at them in close detail.
- There were no major findings in the audits. All were responded to in the proper amount of time and were professional in tone.

#### **F) FEES FOR USING THE WORK NUMBER FOR EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION**

- Many private sector employers use TALX or "The Work Number" to provide employment verification and handle human resources issues for their business.
- When the FOC contacts employers for verification, the employer refers the FOC to The Work Number. The Work Number assesses fees to provide the information, even though the statute does not allow fees to be charged to the FOC for employment verification.
- The FOCB is drafting a memo to instruct FOCs how to work with The Work Number. The MiSDU employer outreach committee meets on October 19, and FOCB will discuss this issue with employers.

### **6) CLOSING**

- There were no closing comments by the committee members.
- Mr. Kerr requested that a Pundit article be written on PACT, because it is a good program that people should be pointed to. He was told that the final report should be a public document on OCSE's website.
- The next meeting is Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 at the Hall of Justice.