



Frequently Asked Questions

(And Answers from
State Court Administrative Office
Friend of the Court Bureau)

FAQ 2010-01

December 2010

Electronic Notification of Address Changes

This FAQ answers common questions and clarifies policy related to SCAO Administrative Memorandum 2004-15, Friend of the Court Guidelines for Determining, Changing, or Suppressing Addresses of Parties and Nonparties.

If court or friend of the court staff have any questions or would like additional information or clarification, please contact Timothy Cole at Colet@courts.mi.gov or 517-373-9663.

#1 Q: Can a friend of the court (FOC) office consider mail returned as undeliverable based on an electronic notification from a United States Postal Service (USPS) source that the address is no longer valid for the addressee?

A: Yes. The USPS determines and returns mail as undeliverable to a person at a specific address based on its electronic databases. Because the information returned on undeliverable mail comes from the same source, the FOC may rely on electronic information from a USPS source in the same manner as information returned on undeliverable notices or papers.

#2 Q: Can an FOC office administratively change a party's address on its records to a new address for that person based on an electronic notification from the USPS source?

A: Yes. After an office has determined that mail is undeliverable to a party at an address, the office may treat electronic notification of a new address from a USPS database in the same manner as other written verification from the USPS.¹

Whenever an office updates an alternative address for service required under MCR 3.203(F) provided by a source other than that party, SCAO recommends notifying the party of the change to permit the party an opportunity to provide another alternative address to receive service of notices associated with that party's cases.

¹ See [FOCB FAQ 2009-01](#). This includes changing a party's single address for serving all notices and papers (usually designated as the "legal address" in MiCSES).

#3 Q: Can an FOC office update its records using an address that the party provided in writing via electronic means (e.g., MiCase, electronic documents, secured websites, etc.)?

A: Yes. Court orders require parties to provide specific information to the FOC office in writing. An office may treat information disclosed electronically by a party the same as if that individual provided it to the office in a physical document.

Before relying on the information, FOC offices should have some assurance that the party disclosed or wrote it, and receive it through means that the office accepts communication. Some methods to authenticate information originated from an individual include: recognized digital signatures or IDs, electronically imaged documents, imaged signatures, delivery from the individual's verified e-mail address,² or information reported to the office through an individual's password-restricted account in a database or secured website.

Offices should maintain an appropriate record that properly documents the electronic communication.

² A verified address is an address the FOC staff person has reason to believe is the party's e-mail address.