

## TUSCOLA FRIEND OF THE COURT OPT OUT PROCESS

Beginning July 1, 2020, the Family Court Division no longer requires a hearing to “opt out” of the Friend of the Court Services so long as certain conditions are met:

1. To opt out of Friend of the Court services, a party must file **all** of the following with the Tuscola County Clerk’s Office:

- A) Motion to opt out of the Friend of the Court services and a proof of service
- B) Friend of the Court Opt Out Eligibility Certificate (eligibility certificate)
- C) Advice of Rights form, signed by **both** parties [Form FOC 10]
- D) Stipulated Order Exempting Case from Friend of the Court Services signed by **both** parties which indicates the following [See form FOC 102]:

- 1. There is no domestic violence or unequal bargaining position between the parties
- 2. Opting out is in the best interests of any child in the case
- 3. The Advice of Rights form is filed in the case with both parties signatures
- 4. Neither party receives public assistance
- 5. No money is due the governmental entity because of past public assistance in the case
- 6. No arrearage or custody or parenting-time order violation has occurred in the last 12 months in this case
- 7. Neither party has reopened a friend of the court case in the last 12 months
- 8. The parties understand they are giving up the following services:
  - a. Accounting Services
  - b. Support Enforcement Services
  - c. Medical Support Enforcement Services
  - d. Support Review and Modification Services
  - e. Custody and Parenting-Time Investigation Services
  - f. Mediation Services Friend
  - g. Custody and Parenting-Time Enforcement Services

2. An eligibility certificate can be obtained by contacting the Friend of the Court by email at [foc@tuscolacounty.org](mailto:foc@tuscolacounty.org) or by calling 989-672-3206. Once the Friend of the Court receives a request for an eligibility certificate, it will review the case to determine if the statutory requirements have been met. It will then prepare an eligibility certificate and provide a copy to the requesting party. Please note, the certificate is only valid for **30 days**.

3. Once the motion to opt out, eligibility certificate, Advice of Rights, and Stipulated Order Exempting Case From Friend of the Court Services are filed with the Tuscola County Clerk, the Court will review the pleadings:

- If the case meets the requirements, and **both** parties have signed the Advice of Rights and the stipulated order exempting the case, the court will enter the order exempting the case and no hearing will be necessary.
- If the case has not met the requirements, or **both** parents do not sign the Advice of Rights and/or the stipulated order exempting the case, a hearing will be scheduled.

STATE OF MICHIGAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY	ADVISE OF RIGHTS REGARDING USE OF FRIEND OF THE COURT SERVICES (PAGE 1)	CASE NO.
Friend of the court address		Telephone no.

## 1. Right to Refuse Friend of the Court Services

- a. You have the right to refuse friend of the court services for custody, parenting time, and support. To decline friend of the court services, you must file with the court a motion requesting that friend of the court services not be required. You must attach a signed copy of this advice of rights to the motion. The court will grant the motion provided both parties agree and have signed this advice of rights and it determines that all the following are true.
- 1) Under MCL 552.505a, neither of you receives or has received public assistance or requests friend of the court services.
  - 2) There is no evidence of domestic violence or of an uneven bargaining position between you.
  - 3) The court finds that declining to receive friend of the court services is not against the best interests of a child.
- b. If you already have a friend of the court case, you can file a motion to discontinue friend of the court services provided both parties agree and have signed this advice of rights and the court finds that all the following are true.
- 1) Neither of you receives public assistance or requests friend of the court services.
  - 2) There is no evidence of domestic violence or an uneven bargaining position between you.
  - 3) The court finds that declining to receive friend of the court services is not against the best interests of a child.
  - 4) No money is due the governmental entity because of past public assistance.
  - 5) No arrearage or violation of a custody or parenting-time order has occurred in the last 12 months.
  - 6) Neither of you has reopened a friend of the court case in the last 12 months.

## 2. Friend of the Court Services (you will not receive these services if you choose not to use the friend of the court)

### a. Accounting Services

Friends of the court must collect support and disburse it within 48 hours. Friend of the court accounting services include:

- 1) friend of the court accounting for payments received and sent, 2) adjustments of support for parenting time or other credits, and 3) annual statements of accounts, if requested.

### b. Support Enforcement Services

The friend of the court must begin to enforce support when one month of support is overdue. For friend of the court cases, child-support enforcement services include:

- paying support out of tax refunds.
- asking the court to order the nonpaying party to come to court to explain the failure to pay.
- having unpaid support paid out of property the payer owns.
- reporting support arrearage to a consumer reporting agency or requesting that the payer's license(s) be suspended.
- collecting support by an income withholding order.

If you choose not to receive friend of the court services, any existing income withholding source will be notified that the friend of the court is no longer responsible for income withholding. **The parties will be solely responsible for stopping or changing income withholding as the law allows.** The friend of the court will stop any unfinished collection actions.

### c. Medical Support Enforcement Services

The friend of the court is required to recommend how the parents divide health-care expenses and to take action to collect the amounts that a parent fails or refuses to pay. When a parent is required to insure the children, the friend of the court is authorized to instruct an employer to enroll the children in an insurance plan when the parent fails or refuses to do so.

### d. Support Review and Modification Services

Once every three years, persons with friend of the court cases may request the friend of the court to review the support amount. After completing the review, the friend of the court must file a motion to raise or lower support, or inform the parties that it recommends no change. It must also review support when changed circumstances lead it to believe that support should be modified.

### e. Custody and Parenting-Time Investigation Services

For disputes about custody or parenting time in friend of the court cases, the friend of the court sometimes must investigate and provide reports to the parties and the court.

### f. Mediation Services

Friend of the court offices must provide mediation services to help parties with friend of the court cases settle custody and parenting-time disputes.

### g. Custody and Parenting-Time Enforcement Services

For friend of the court cases, the friend of the court must enforce custody and parenting time when a party complains that it is violated. Child-custody and parenting-time enforcement services include:

(See page 2)

<b>STATE OF MICHIGAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY</b>	<b>ADVICE OF RIGHTS REGARDING USE OF FRIEND OF THE COURT SERVICES (PAGE 2)</b>	<b>CASE NO.</b>
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Friend of the court address

Telephone no.

**2. Friend of the Court Services (you will not receive these services if you choose not to use the friend of the court)**  
(continued from page 1)

**g. Custody and Parenting-Time Enforcement Services** (continued from page 1)

- asking the court to order the noncooperating party to come to court to explain the failure to obey the parenting-time order.
- suspending the licenses of individuals who deny parenting time.
- awarding makeup parenting time.
- joint meetings to resolve complaints.

**3. Michigan State Disbursement Unit and IV-D Services**

**a. Michigan State Disbursement Unit (MiSDU)**

If you choose not to receive friend of the court services, you may continue to make and receive child support payments through MiSDU. MiSDU will keep track of the amount paid and sent out. However, MiSDU cannot provide you with all the accounting functions the friend of the court provides. All payments made through MiSDU must be distributed according to the amounts due as required by federal law. When a payer has more than one case, federal law determines how a payment is divided among the cases. **Even if you choose not to receive friend of the court services, payments through MiSDU must be divided among all a payer's cases and distributed in the same manner as payments on friend of the court cases. You cannot discontinue friend of the court services if you want to use MiSDU unless you first provide to MiSDU all the information that MiSDU needs to set up an account.**

**b. Your Rights Under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act**

Title IV-D of the Social Security Act provides federal government resources to collect child support and it allows certain funding to be used for parenting-time and custody services. In Michigan, critical Title IV-D services are delivered by the friend of the court. **If you choose not to receive friend of the court services, you cannot receive most Title IV-D services.**

**4. Public Assistance**

Receipt of public assistance means receipt of any of the following benefits: cash assistance, medical assistance, food assistance, foster care, and/or child care.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT REGARDING SERVICES**

**Check below only if you do not want to receive friend of the court services. Then date, print name, and sign.**

I have read this advice of rights and I understand the friend of the court services I am entitled to receive.

I acknowledge that by signing below I **am choosing not to receive** any friend of the court services. I understand that before this choice can take effect, a motion requesting this choice and the other party's agreement must be filed with the court for approval. I also understand that the court may deny this choice if certain conditions are not met as stated in this advice of rights.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (type or print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (type or print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**If you did not check the above box, you are choosing to receive friend of the court services. For the most effective friend of the court services, you can request Title IV-D services by dating and signing below.**

I request Title IV-D services through the friend of the court office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

<b>STATE OF MICHIGAN 54<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FAMILY DIVISION TUSCOLA COUNTY</b>	<b>STIPULATED ORDER EXEMPTING CASE FROM FRIEND OF THE COURT SERVICES</b>	<b>CASE NUMBER</b>
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440 N State Street, Caro MI 48723

Circuit Court Clerk Phone: 989-672-3780

Plaintiff's name, address, email, and phone no.	Defendant's name, address, email, and phone no.
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**THE COURT FINDS:**

1. There is no evidence of domestic violence or of an unequal bargaining position between the parties in the case.
2. Granting the parties the relief they have requested would not be against the best interests of any child in the case.
3. The parties have filed executed copies of a form advising them of services they will not receive if their motion is granted.
4. Neither party receives public assistance.
5. No money is due the governmental entity because of past public assistance in the case.
6. No arrearage or custody or parenting-time order violation has occurred in the last 12 months.
7. Neither party has reopened a friend of the court case in the last 12 months.
8.  The parties do not want Title IV-D services and have requested that any existing Title IV-D case be closed. **(Note: This box should be checked unless exceptional circumstances exist that entitle the Title IV-D case to remain open.)**

**IT IS ORDERED:**

1. Subject to the provisions of item 6 below, this case is not a friend of the court case.
2.  This case is not a Title IV-D case. (Note: This box should be checked if item 8 has been checked.)
3. The friend of the court shall not be involved in the enforcement, investigation, or accounting functions for custody, parenting time, or support in this case.
4. The parties are responsible for all enforcement and accounting functions for custody, parenting time, or support in this case.
5. Except as indicated below, there is no income withholding in this case, support will be paid directly by the payer to the payee, and the friend of the court shall terminate any existing income withholding. Should this case become a friend of the court case, the payer must keep the friend of

the court advised of the name and address of the payer's source of income and any health-care coverage that is available to the payer as a benefit of employment or that the payer maintains, including the name of the insurance company, health-care organization, or health maintenance organization; the policy, certificate, or contract number; and the names and birth dates of the persons for whose benefit the payer maintains the coverage.

a. Child support shall be paid through the Michigan State Disbursement Unit (MiSDU) by income withholding to the extent allowed by statutes and court rules; however, the friend of the court is not responsible for income withholding. The friend of the court shall notify the employer that it is no longer involved in the case and that any further information concerning income withholding will be provided by the parties.

b. Child support shall be paid through MiSDU by the payer.

6. If child support payments are to be made through MiSDU by income withholding or otherwise, the friend of the court shall not close the friend of the court case until MiSDU notifies the friend of the court that it has been provided with the information necessary to process the child-support payments. There will be no accounting for support that is not paid through MiSDU.

7. The friend of the court shall open a friend of the court case if a party applies for or receives public assistance, a child is placed in foster care, or either party submits to the friend of the court a written request to reopen the friend of the court case. If this case becomes a friend of the court case for any reason, the following provisions shall apply.

a. The parties must cooperate fully with the friend of the court in establishing the case as a friend of the court case.

b. The parties must provide copies of all orders in their case to the friend of the court.

c. The parties must supply any documents that a party to a friend of the court case is required to supply if they have not already done so.

d. The friend of the court is not responsible for determining any support arrearage that is not indicated by payment made through MiSDU.

e. Support is payable through MiSDU effective the date the case becomes a friend of the court case.

f. The friend of the court may prepare and submit, ex parte, a uniform support order that contains all the statutory requirements of a Michigan support order as long as the order does not contradict the existing support order.

g. At the request of the friend of the court, the parties shall complete a Verified Statement and Application for Title IV-D Services.

Plaintiff Signature	Date	Defendant Signature	Date
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Honorable Nancy L Thane P38918 Probate/Family Division Judge	Date
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STATE OF MICHIGAN 54 <sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT TUSCOLA COUNTY	FRIEND OF THE COURT OPT OUT ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATE	DOCKET NUMBER
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440 N. STATE STREET, CARO MI 48723-1555 TEL: 989-673-4848 FAX: 989-673-4898 EMAIL: [FOC@TUSCOLACOUNTY.ORG](mailto:FOC@TUSCOLACOUNTY.ORG)


Parties to a domestic relations case are not required to have a friend of the court case opened or maintained as long as certain statutory requirements are met. Friend of the Court (FOC) has reviewed its records and to the best of its knowledge it has determined the following:

- ( ) The statutory requirements of MCL 552.505a have been met. Therefore, FOC believes the parties are eligible to opt out of FOC services.
- ( ) The statutory requirements of MCL 552.505a have **NOT** been met. Therefore, FOC does **NOT** believe the parties are eligible to opt out of FOC services because:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Friend of the Court Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**THIS CERTIFICATE WILL REMAIN VALID FOR 30 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF SIGNATURE. IT MUST BE FILED WITH A STIPULATED ORDER EXEMPTING CASE FROM FOC SERVICES.**