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Public Acts of 2009  
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**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
95TH LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2009**

Introduced by Senators Jansen and Hardiman

# **ENROLLED SENATE BILL No. 99**

AN ACT to amend 1982 PA 294, entitled "An act to revise and consolidate the laws relating to the friend of the court; to provide for the appointment or removal of the friend of the court; to create the office of the friend of the court; to establish the rights, powers, and duties of the friend of the court and the office of the friend of the court; to establish a state friend of the court bureau and to provide the powers and duties of the bureau; to prescribe powers and duties of the circuit court and of certain state and local agencies and officers; to establish friend of the court citizen advisory committees; to prescribe certain duties of certain employers and former employers; and to repeal acts and parts of acts," by amending sections 2, 2a, 5, 5a, 9a, 11a, 13, 15, 17, 17b, 19, 27, and 28 (MCL 552.502, 552.502a, 552.505, 552.505a, 552.509a, 552.511a, 552.513, 552.515, 552.517, 552.517b, 552.519, 552.527, and 552.528), sections 2 and 2a as amended by 2004 PA 210, sections 5, 13, and 15 as amended and section 5a as added by 2002 PA 571, section 9a as added by 1999 PA 150, section 11a as added by 2002 PA 569, sections 17, 17b, and 19 as amended by 2004 PA 207, and section 28 as added by 1996 PA 365.

*The People of the State of Michigan enact:*

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

(a) "Alternative dispute resolution" means a process established under section 13 by which the parties are assisted in voluntarily formulating an agreement to resolve a dispute concerning child custody or parenting time that arises from a domestic relations matter.

(b) "Bureau" means the state friend of the court bureau created in section 19.

(c) "Centralizing enforcement" means the process authorized under section 10 of the office of child support act, 1971 PA 174, MCL 400.240.

(d) "Chief judge" means the following:

(i) The circuit judge in a judicial circuit having only 1 circuit judge.

(ii) The chief judge of the circuit court in a judicial circuit having 2 or more circuit judges.

(e) "Citizen advisory committee" means a citizen friend of the court advisory committee established as provided in section 4.

(f) "Consumer reporting agency" means a person that, for monetary fees or dues, or on a cooperative nonprofit basis, regularly engages in whole or in part in the practice of assembling or evaluating consumer credit information or other information on consumers for the purpose of furnishing consumer reports to third parties, and that uses any means or facility of interstate commerce for the purpose of preparing or furnishing consumer reports. As used in this subdivision, "consumer report" means that term as defined in section 603 of the fair credit reporting act, 15 USC 1681a.

(g) “County board” means the county board of commissioners in the county served by the office. If a judicial circuit includes more than 1 county, action required to be taken by the county board means action by the county boards of commissioners for all counties composing that circuit.

(h) “Court” means the circuit court.

(i) “Current employment” means employment within 1 year before a friend of the court request for information.

(j) “Custody or parenting time order violation” means an individual’s act or failure to act that interferes with a parent’s right to interact with his or her child in the time, place, and manner established in the order that governs custody or parenting time between the parent and the child and to which the individual accused of interfering is subject.

(k) “De novo hearing” means a new judicial consideration of a matter previously heard by a referee.

(l) “Department” means the department of human services.

(m) “Domestic relations matter” means a circuit court proceeding as to child custody, parenting time, child support, or spousal support, that arises out of litigation under a statute of this state, including, but not limited to, the following:

(i) 1846 RS 84, MCL 552.1 to 552.45.

(ii) The family support act, 1966 PA 138, MCL 552.451 to 552.459.

(iii) The child custody act of 1970, 1970 PA 91, MCL 722.21 to 722.31.

(iv) 1968 PA 293, MCL 722.1 to 722.6.

(v) The paternity act, 1956 PA 205, MCL 722.711 to 722.730.

(vi) The revised uniform reciprocal enforcement of support act, 1952 PA 8, MCL 780.151 to 780.183.

(vii) The uniform interstate family support act, 1996 PA 310, MCL 552.1101 to 552.1901.

(n) “Friend of the court” means the person serving under section 21(1) or appointed under section 23 as the head of the office of the friend of the court.

(o) “Friend of the court case” means a domestic relations matter that an office establishes as a friend of the court case as required under section 5a. The term “friend of the court case”, when used in a provision of this act, is not effective until on and after December 1, 2002.

(p) “Income” means that term as defined in section 2 of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.602.

Sec. 2a. As used in this act:

(a) “Medical assistance” means medical assistance as established under title XIX of the social security act, 42 USC 1396 to 1396v.

(b) “Office” and “office of the friend of the court” mean an agency created in section 3.

(c) “Payer” means a person ordered by the circuit court to pay support.

(d) “Public assistance” means cash assistance provided under the social welfare act, 1939 PA 280, MCL 400.1 to 400.119b.

(e) “Recipient of support” means the following:

(i) The spouse, if the support order orders spousal support.

(ii) The custodial parent or guardian, if the support order orders support for a minor child or a child who is 18 years of age or older.

(iii) The department of human services, if support has been assigned to that department.

(iv) The county, if the minor is in county-supported foster care.

(f) “State advisory committee” means the committee established by the bureau under section 19.

(g) “State disbursement unit” or “SDU” means the entity established in section 6 of the office of child support act, 1971 PA 174, MCL 400.236.

(h) “Support” means all of the following:

(i) The payment of money for a child or a spouse ordered by the circuit court, whether the order is embodied in an interim, temporary, permanent, or modified order or judgment. Support may include payment of the expenses of medical, dental, and other health care, child care expenses, and educational expenses.

(ii) The payment of money ordered by the circuit court under the paternity act, 1956 PA 205, MCL 722.711 to 722.730, for the necessary expenses connected to the pregnancy of the mother or the birth of the child, or for the repayment of genetic testing expenses.

(iii) A surcharge under section 3a of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.603a.

(i) “Support and parenting time enforcement act” means 1982 PA 295, MCL 552.601 to 552.650.

(j) “Support order” means an order entered by the circuit court for the payment of support in a sum certain, whether in the form of a lump sum or a periodic payment.

(k) “Title IV-D” means part D of title IV of the social security act, 42 USC 651 to 669b.

(l) “Title IV-D agency” means that term as defined in section 2 of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.602.

Sec. 5. (1) Each office of the friend of the court has the following duties:

(a) To inform each party to a domestic relations matter that, unless 1 of the parties is required to participate in the title IV-D child support program, they may choose not to have the office of the friend of the court administer and enforce obligations that may be imposed in the domestic relations matter.

(b) To inform each party to a domestic relations matter that, unless 1 of the parties is required to participate in the title IV-D child support program, they may direct the office of the friend of the court to close the friend of the court case that was opened in their domestic relations matter.

(c) To provide an informational pamphlet, in accordance with the model pamphlet developed by the bureau, to each party to a domestic relations matter. The informational pamphlet shall explain the procedures of the court and the office; the duties of the office; the rights and responsibilities of the parties, including notification that each party to the dispute has the right to meet with the individual investigating the dispute before that individual makes a recommendation regarding the dispute; the availability of and procedures used in alternative dispute resolution; the availability of human services in the community; the availability of joint custody as described in section 6a of the child custody act of 1970, 1970 PA 91, MCL 722.26a; and how to file a grievance regarding the office. The informational pamphlet shall be provided as soon as possible after the filing of a complaint or other initiating pleading. Upon request, a party shall receive an oral explanation of the informational pamphlet from the office.

(d) To make available form motions, responses, and orders to be used by a party, without the assistance of legal counsel, in making or responding to a motion for a payment plan under section 5e of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.605e, or for the modification of a child support, custody, or parenting time order, including a domicile or residence provision. The office shall make available instructions on preparing and filing each of those forms, on service of process, and on scheduling a modification hearing.

(e) To inform the parties of the availability of alternative dispute resolution if there is a dispute as to child custody or parenting time.

(f) To inform the parents of the availability of joint custody as described in section 6a of the child custody act of 1970, 1970 PA 91, MCL 722.26a, if there is a dispute between the parents as to child custody.

(g) To investigate all relevant facts, and to make a written report and recommendation to the parties and to the court, regarding child custody or parenting time, or both, if ordered to do so by the court. If custody has been established by court order, the court shall order an investigation only if the court first finds that proper cause has been shown or that there has been a change of circumstances. The investigation may include reports and evaluations by outside persons or agencies if requested by the parties or the court, and shall include documentation of alleged facts, if practicable. If requested by a party, an investigation shall include a meeting with the party. A written report and recommendation regarding child custody or parenting time, or both, shall be based upon the factors enumerated in the child custody act of 1970, 1970 PA 91, MCL 722.21 to 722.31.

(h) To investigate all relevant facts and to make a written report and recommendation to the parties and their attorneys and to the court regarding child support, if ordered to do so by the court. The written report and recommendation shall be placed in the court file. The investigation may include reports and evaluations by outside persons or agencies if requested by the parties or the court, and shall include documentation of alleged facts, if practicable. The child support formula developed by the bureau under section 19 shall be used as a guideline in recommending child support. The written report shall include the support amount determined by application of the child support formula and all factual assumptions upon which that support amount is based. If the office of the friend of the court determines from the facts of the case that application of the child support formula would be unjust or inappropriate, the written report shall also include all of the following:

(i) An alternative support recommendation.

(ii) All factual assumptions upon which the alternative support recommendation is based, if applicable.

(iii) How the alternative support recommendation deviates from the child support formula.

(iv) The reasons for the alternative support recommendation.

(2) If a party who requests a meeting during an investigation fails to attend the scheduled meeting without good cause, the investigation may be completed without a meeting with that party.

(3) Pursuant to standards prescribed by the state court administrative office under the supervision and direction of the supreme court, the office may charge the parties an amount that does not exceed the expenses of the office for conducting an investigation and making a report and recommendation under subsection (1)(g). If the court orders a

whole or partial waiver or suspension of fees in the case because of indigency or inability to pay, the office shall not charge the amount or, if applicable, shall reduce the amount. An amount shall not be charged under this subsection if the investigation was not requested by either party. If the court determines that a request by a party that led to the investigation was frivolous, the court may order that the amount be charged only against the party, but the amount shall not be charged against the other party. Money collected under this subsection shall be deposited in the county friend of the court fund created under section 2530 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.2530.

Sec. 5a. (1) Except as required by this section, an office of the friend of the court shall open and maintain a friend of the court case for a domestic relations matter. If there is an open friend of the court case for a domestic relations matter, the office of the friend of the court shall administer and enforce the obligations of the parties to the friend of the court case as provided in this act. If there is not an open friend of the court case for a domestic relations matter, the office of the friend of the court shall not administer or enforce an obligation of a party to the domestic relations matter.

(2) The parties to a domestic relations matter are not required to have a friend of the court case opened or maintained for their domestic relations matter. With their initial pleadings, the parties to a domestic relations matter may file a motion for the court to order the office of the friend of the court not to open a friend of the court case for the domestic relations matter. If the parties to a domestic relations matter file a motion under this subsection, the court shall issue that order unless the court determines 1 or more of the following:

(a) A party to the domestic relations matter is eligible for title IV-D services because of the party's current or past receipt of public assistance.

(b) A party to the domestic relations matter applies for title IV-D services.

(c) A party to the domestic relations matter requests that the office of the friend of the court open and maintain a friend of the court case for the domestic relations matter, even though the party may not be eligible for title IV-D services because the domestic relations matter involves, by way of example and not limitation, only spousal support, child custody, parenting time, or child custody and parenting time.

(d) There exists in the domestic relations matter evidence of domestic violence or uneven bargaining positions and evidence that a party to the domestic relations matter has chosen not to apply for title IV-D services against the best interest of either the party or the party's child.

(e) The parties have not filed with the court a document, signed by each party, that includes a list of the friend of the court services and an acknowledgment that the parties are choosing to do without those services.

(3) If a friend of the court case is not opened for a domestic relations matter, the parties to the domestic relations matter have full responsibility for administration and enforcement of the obligations imposed in the domestic relations matter.

(4) The parties to a friend of the court case may file a motion for the court to order the office of the friend of the court to close their friend of the court case. The court shall issue an order that the office of the friend of the court shall close the friend of the court case unless the court determines 1 or more of the following:

(a) A party to the friend of the court case objects.

(b) A party to the friend of the court case is eligible for title IV-D services because the party is receiving public assistance.

(c) A party to the friend of the court case is eligible for title IV-D services because the party received public assistance and an arrearage is owed to the governmental entity that provided the public assistance.

(d) The friend of the court case record shows that, within the previous 12 months, a child support arrearage or custody or parenting time order violation has occurred in the case.

(e) Within the previous 12 months, a party to the friend of the court case has reopened a friend of the court case.

(f) There exists in the friend of the court case evidence of domestic violence or uneven bargaining positions and evidence that a party to the friend of the court case has chosen to close the case against the best interest of either the party or the party's child.

(g) The parties have not filed with the court a document, signed by each party, that includes a list of the friend of the court services and an acknowledgment that the parties are choosing to do without those services.

(5) The closure of a friend of the court case does not release a party from the party's obligations imposed in the underlying domestic relations matter. The parties to a closed friend of the court case assume full responsibility for administration and enforcement of obligations imposed in the underlying domestic relations matter.

(6) If a party to the underlying domestic relations matter wants to ensure that child support payments made after a friend of the court case is closed will be taken into account in any possible future office of the friend of the court enforcement action, the child support payments must be made through the SDU. If the parties choose to continue to have child support payments made through the SDU, the office of the friend of the court shall not close its friend of the court case until each party provides the SDU with the information necessary to process the child support payments required in the underlying domestic relations matter.

(7) If a party to a domestic relations matter for which there is not an open friend of the court case applies for services from the office of the friend of the court or applies for public assistance, the office of the friend of the court shall open or reopen a friend of the court case. If the office of the friend of the court opens or reopens a friend of the court case as required by this subsection, the court shall issue an order in that domestic relations matter that contains the provisions required by this act and by the support and parenting time enforcement act for a friend of the court case. The court may direct the party making the application or the friend of the court to prepare a written order and submit it for approval.

(8) If the parties to a domestic relations matter file a motion under subsection (2) or (4), the friend of the court shall advise the parties in writing as to the services that the office of the friend of the court is not required to provide. The state court administrative office shall develop and make available a form for use by an office of the friend of the court under this subsection and a document for use by parties to a domestic relations matter under subsection (2) or (4).

(9) For purposes of this section, a party receives public assistance if the party receives cash assistance provided under the social welfare act, 1939 PA 280, MCL 400.1 to 400.119b, medical assistance, or food assistance or if foster care is being or was provided to a child who is the subject of the case.

Sec. 9a. The SDU is responsible for the centralized receipt and disbursement of support and fees. An office of the friend of the court may continue to receive support and fees.

Sec. 11a. (1) A complaint seeking enforcement for payment of a health care expense must include information showing that all of the following conditions have been met:

(a) The parent against whom the complaint is directed is obligated to pay the child's uninsured health care expenses, a demand for payment of the uninsured portion was made to that parent within 28 days after the insurers' final payment or denial of coverage, and that parent did not pay the uninsured portion within 28 days after the demand.

(b) If the state court administrative office, under the supervision and direction of the supreme court, establishes a minimum threshold for the enforcement of health care expenses, the health care expense is equal to or greater than the established threshold.

(c) The complaint is submitted to the office on or before any of the following:

(i) One year after the expense was incurred.

(ii) Six months after the insurers' final payment or denial of coverage for the expense, if all measures necessary to submit a claim for the health care expense to all insurers that might be obligated to pay the expense were completed within 2 months after the expense was incurred.

(iii) Six months after a parent defaults in paying for the health care expense as required under a written agreement, signed by both parents, that lists the specific bills covered by the agreement, states the amount to be paid in total, and sets forth the schedule for the payment of that amount, whether by installments or otherwise.

(2) If an office receives a complaint that meets the requirements of subsection (1), the office shall send a copy of the complaint to the parent who is named in the complaint as obligated to pay the child's uninsured health care expenses. The office shall include with the copy of the complaint sent to that parent a notice advising the parent of the provisions of subsection (3).

(3) If, within 21 days after the complaint and notice are sent to a parent under subsection (2), the parent does not file with the office a written objection to the complaint, the amount of the health care expense stated in the complaint becomes a support arrearage and is subject to any enforcement process available to collect a support arrearage. If the parent files a written objection within the 21-day time limit, the office shall set a court hearing, before a judge or referee, to resolve the complaint.

Sec. 13. (1) In a friend of the court case, the office shall provide, either directly or by contract, alternative dispute resolution to assist the parties in settling voluntarily a dispute concerning child custody or parenting time. The alternative dispute resolution shall be provided pursuant to a plan approved by the chief judge and the state court administrative office. The plan shall be consistent with standards established by the state court administrative office under the supervision and direction of the supreme court and shall include minimum qualifications and training requirements for alternative dispute resolution providers and a designation of matters that are subject to alternative dispute resolution by various means. A party shall not be required to meet with a person conducting alternative dispute resolution.

(2) If an agreement is reached by the parties through friend of the court alternative dispute resolution, a consent order incorporating the agreement shall be prepared by an employee of the office or individual approved by the court using a form provided by the state court administrative office, under the supervision and direction of the supreme court, or approved by the chief judge. The consent order shall be provided to, and shall be entered by, the court.

(3) Except as provided in subsection (2), a communication between a friend of the court alternative dispute resolution provider and a party pertaining to the matter subject to resolution is confidential as provided in court rule.

(4) An employee of the office or other person who provides alternative dispute resolution services under a plan approved under subsection (1) shall have all of the following qualifications:

(a) Possess knowledge of the court system of this state and the procedures used in domestic relations matters.

(b) Possess knowledge of other resources in the community to which the parties to a domestic relations matter can be referred for assistance.

(c) Other qualifications as prescribed by the state court administrative office under the supervision and direction of the supreme court.

(5) A domestic relations mediator who performs mediation pursuant to a plan approved under subsection (1) shall have all of the following minimum qualifications:

(a) One or more of the following:

(i) A license or a limited license to engage in the practice of psychology under parts 161 and 182 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16101 to 333.16349 and 333.18201 to 333.18237, or a master's degree in counseling, social work, or marriage and family counseling; and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(ii) Not less than 5 years of experience in family counseling, preferably in a setting related to the areas of responsibility of the friend of the court and preferably to reflect the ethnic population to be served, and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(iii) A graduate degree in a behavioral science and successful completion of a domestic relations mediation training program certified by the bureau with not less than 40 hours of classroom instruction and 250 hours of practical experience working under the direction of a person who has successfully completed a program certified by the bureau.

(iv) Membership in the state bar of Michigan and successful completion of the training program provided by the bureau under section 19(3)(b).

(b) Knowledge of the court system of this state and the procedures used in domestic relations matters.

(c) Knowledge of other resources in the community to which the parties to a domestic relations matter can be referred for assistance.

(d) Knowledge of child development, clinical issues relating to children, the effects of divorce on children, and child custody research.

Sec. 15. An employee of the office who provides alternative dispute resolution in a friend of the court case involving a particular party shall not perform referee functions, investigation and recommendation functions, or enforcement functions as to any domestic relations matter involving that party.

Sec. 17. (1) After a final judgment containing a child support order has been entered in a friend of the court case, the office shall use a procedure provided in section 17b to periodically review the order, as follows:

(a) If a child is being supported in whole or in part by public assistance, not less than once each 36 months unless both of the following apply:

(i) The office receives notice from the department that good cause exists not to proceed with support action.

(ii) Neither party has requested a review.

(b) Upon receipt of a written request from either party. Within 14 days after receipt of the review request, the office shall determine whether the order is due for review. The office is not required to act on more than 1 request received from a party each 36 months.

(c) If a child is receiving medical assistance, not less than once each 36 months unless either of the following applies:

(i) The order requires provision of health care coverage for the child and neither party has requested a review.

(ii) The office receives notice from the department of human services that good cause exists not to proceed with support action and neither party has requested a review.

(d) If requested by the initiating state for a recipient of services in that state under title IV-D, not less than once each 36 months. Within 14 days after receipt of a review request, the office shall determine whether an order is due for review.

(e) At the direction of the court.

(f) At the initiative of the office, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the amount of child support awarded in the judgment should be modified or that dependent health care coverage is available and the support order should be modified to include an order for health care coverage. Reasonable grounds to review an order under this subdivision include any of the following:

(i) Temporary or permanent changes in the physical custody of a child that the court has not ordered.

- (ii) Increased or decreased need of the child.
  - (iii) Probable access by an employed parent to dependent health care coverage.
  - (iv) Changed financial conditions of a recipient of support or a payer, including any of the following:
    - (A) Application for or receipt of public assistance, unemployment compensation, or worker's compensation.
    - (B) Incarceration or release from incarceration after a criminal conviction and sentencing to a term of more than 1 year. Within 14 days after receiving information that a recipient of support or payer is incarcerated or released from incarceration as described in this sub-subparagraph, the office shall initiate a review of the order.
  - (v) That the order was based on incorrect facts.
- (2) A review initiated by the office under subsection (1)(f) does not preclude the recipient of support or payer from requesting a review under subsection (1)(b).
- (3) Within 180 days after determining that a review is required under subsection (1), the office shall obtain a modification of the order if appropriate.
- (4) The office shall use the child support formula developed by the bureau under section 19 in calculating the child support award under section 17b.
- (5) The office shall petition the court if modification is determined to be necessary under section 17b unless either of the following applies:
- (a) The difference between the existing and projected child support award is less than the minimum threshold for modification of a child support amount as established by the formula.
  - (b) The court previously determined that application of the formula was unjust or inappropriate and the office determines that the facts of the case and the reasons for and amount of the prior deviation remain unchanged.
- (6) The notice under section 17b(3) constitutes a petition for modification of the support order and shall be filed with the court.
- (7) If the office determines there should be no change in the order and a party objects to the determination in writing to the office within 21 days after the date of the notice provided for in section 17b(3), the office shall schedule a hearing before the court.
- (8) If a support order lacks provisions for health care coverage, the office shall petition the court for a modification to require that 1 or both parents obtain or maintain health care coverage for the benefit of each child who is subject to the support order if either of the following is true:
- (a) Either parent has health care coverage available, as a benefit of employment, for the benefit of the child at a reasonable cost.
  - (b) Either parent is self-employed, maintains health care coverage for himself or herself, and can obtain health care coverage for the benefit of the child at a reasonable cost.
- (9) The office shall determine the costs to each parent for dependent health care coverage and child care costs and shall disclose those costs in the recommendation under section 17b(3).

Sec. 17b. (1) Child support orders entered after June 30, 2005 shall be modified according to this section. For each support order entered before June 30, 2005, the friend of the court office shall provide notice to the parties of their right to a review under this section as required by federal law. Notices under this subsection may be placed in court orders as allowed by federal law.

(2) The friend of the court office shall initiate proceedings to review support by sending a notice to the parties. The notice shall request information sufficient to allow the friend of the court to review support, state the date the information is due, and advise the parties concerning how the review will be conducted.

(3) After the information in subsection (2) is due, but not sooner than 21 days or later than 120 days after the date the notice is sent, the friend of the court office shall calculate the support amount in accordance with the child support formula and send a notice to each party and his or her attorney, which shall include all of the following:

- (a) The amount calculated for support.
- (b) The proposed effective date of the support amount.
- (c) Substantially the following statement: "Either party may object to the recommended support amount. If no objection is filed within 21 days of the date this notice was mailed, an order will be submitted to the court incorporating the new support amount." The notice also shall inform the parties of how and where to file an objection.
- (4) Twenty-one or more days from the date the notice required by subsection (3) is sent, the friend of the court office shall determine if an objection has been filed. If an objection has been filed, the friend of the court shall set the matter for a hearing before a judge or referee or, if the office receives additional information with the objection, it may recalculate the support amount and send out a revised notice in accordance with subsection (3). If no objection is filed, the friend of the court office shall prepare an order. The court shall enter the order if it approves of the order.

(5) The friend of the court may schedule a joint meeting between the parties to attempt to expedite resolution of support issues in accordance with the guidelines developed under section 19(3)(m). The joint meeting and proceedings following the joint meeting are subject to the requirements of section 42a of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.642a.

(6) The following provisions apply to support review proceedings under this section:

(a) A recommendation under subsection (3) shall state the calculations upon which the support amount is based. If the friend of the court office recommends a support amount based on imputed income, the recommendation shall also state the amount that would have been recommended based on the actual income of the parties if the actual income of the parties is known. If income is imputed, the recommendation shall recite all factual assumptions upon which the imputed income is based.

(b) The friend of the court office may impute income to a party who fails or refuses to provide information requested under subsection (2).

(c) At a hearing based on an objection to a friend of the court office recommendation, the trier of fact may consider the friend of the court office's recommendation as evidence to prove a fact relevant to the support calculation if no other evidence is presented concerning that fact, if the parties agree or no objection is made to its use for that purpose.

(7) The court shall not require proof of a substantial change in circumstances to modify a child support order when support is adjusted under section 17(1).

(8) A party may also file a motion to modify support. Upon motion of a party, the court may only modify a child support order upon finding a substantial change in circumstances, including, but not limited to, health care coverage becoming newly available to a party and a change in the support level under section 17(5)(a).

(9) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, the friend of the court office shall conduct a more frequent review of the support order upon presentation by a party of evidence of a substantial change in circumstances as set forth in the child support formula guidelines.

Sec. 19. (1) The state friend of the court bureau is created within the state court administrative office, under the supervision and direction of the supreme court.

(2) The bureau shall have its main office in Lansing.

(3) The bureau shall do all of the following:

(a) Develop and recommend guidelines for conduct, operations, and procedures of the office and its employees, including, but not limited to, the following:

(i) Case load and staffing standards for employees who perform alternative dispute resolution functions, investigation and recommendation functions, referee functions, enforcement functions, and clerical functions.

(ii) Orientation programs for clients of the office.

(iii) Public educational programs regarding domestic relations law and community resources, including financial and other counseling, and employment opportunities.

(iv) Procedural changes in response to the type of grievances received by an office.

(v) Model pamphlets and procedural forms, which shall be distributed to each office.

(vi) A formula to be used in establishing and modifying a child support amount and health care obligation. The formula shall be based upon the needs of the child and the actual resources of each parent. The formula shall establish a minimum threshold for modification of a child support amount. The formula shall consider the child care and dependent health care coverage costs of each parent. The formula shall include guidelines for setting and administratively adjusting the amount of periodic payments for overdue support, including guidelines for adjustment of arrearage payment schedules when the current support obligation for a child terminates and the payer owes overdue support.

(b) Provide training programs for the friend of the court, providers of alternative dispute resolution, and employees of the office to better enable them to carry out the duties described in this act and supreme court rules. After September 30, 2002, the training programs shall include training in the dynamics of domestic violence and in handling domestic relations matters that have a history of domestic violence.

(c) Gather and monitor relevant statistics.

(d) Annually issue a report containing a detailed summary of the types of grievances received by each office, and whether the grievances are resolved or outstanding. The report shall be transmitted to the legislature and to each office and shall be made available to the public. The annual report required by this subdivision shall include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(i) An evaluative summary, supplemented by applicable quantitative data, of the activities and functioning of each citizen advisory committee during the preceding year.

(ii) An evaluative summary, supplemented by applicable quantitative data, of the activities and functioning of the aggregate of all citizen advisory committees in this state during the preceding year.

(iii) An identification of problems that impede the efficiency of the activities and functioning of the citizen advisory committees and the satisfaction of the users of the committees' services.

(e) Develop and recommend guidelines to be used by an office in determining whether or not parenting time has been wrongfully denied by the custodial parent.

(f) Develop standards and procedures for the transfer of part or all of the responsibilities for a case from one office to another in situations considered appropriate by the bureau.

(g) Certify alternative dispute resolution training programs.

(h) Establish a 9-person state advisory committee, serving without compensation except as provided in subsection (4), composed of the following members, giving preference to a member of a citizen advisory committee:

(i) Three public members who have had contact with an office of the friend of the court.

(ii) Three attorneys who are members of the state bar of Michigan and whose practices are primarily domestic relations law. Not more than 1 attorney may be a circuit court judge.

(iii) Three human service professionals who provide family counseling.

(i) Cooperate with the office of child support in developing and implementing a statewide information system as provided in the office of child support act, 1971 PA 174, MCL 400.231 to 400.240.

(j) Develop and make available guidelines to assist the office of the friend of the court in determining the appropriateness in individual cases of the following:

(i) Imposing a lien or requiring the posting of a bond, security, or other guarantee to secure the payment of support.

(ii) Implementing the offset of a delinquent payer's state income tax refund.

(k) Develop and provide the office of the friend of the court with all of the following:

(i) Form motions, responses, and orders to be used by a party, without the assistance of legal counsel, in making or responding to a motion for a payment plan under section 5e of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.605e, or for the modification of a child support, custody, or parenting time order, including a domicile or residence provision.

(ii) Instructions on preparing and filing the forms, instructions on service of process, and instructions on scheduling a support, custody, or parenting time modification hearing.

(iii) Guidelines for imputing income for the calculation of child support.

(l) Develop guidelines for, and encourage the use of, plain language within the office of the friend of the court including, but not limited to, the use of plain language in forms and instructions within the office and in statements of account provided as required in section 9.

(m) In consultation with the domestic violence prevention and treatment board created in section 2 of 1978 PA 389, MCL 400.1502, develop guidelines for the implementation of section 41 of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.641, that take into consideration at least all of the following regarding the parties and each child involved in a dispute governed by section 41 of the support and parenting time enforcement act, MCL 552.641:

(i) Domestic violence.

(ii) Safety of the parties and child.

(iii) Uneven bargaining positions of the parties.

(n) Coordinate the provision of title IV-D services by the friend of the court and cooperate with the office of child support in providing those services.

(4) The state advisory committee established under subsection (3)(h) shall advise the bureau in the performance of its duties under this section. The bureau shall make a state advisory committee report or recommendation available to the public. State advisory committee members shall be reimbursed for their expenses for mileage, meals, and, if necessary, lodging, under the schedule for reimbursement established annually by the legislature. A state advisory committee meeting is open to the public. A member of the public attending a state advisory committee meeting shall be given a reasonable opportunity to address the committee on any issue under consideration by the committee. If a vote is to be taken by the state advisory committee, the opportunity to address the committee shall be given before the vote is taken.

(5) The bureau may call upon each office of the friend of the court for assistance in performing the duties imposed in this section.

Sec. 27. The compensation and expenses of the friend of the court for each judicial circuit and of the employees of the office and all operating expenses incurred by the office shall be fixed by the chief judge as provided in section 591 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.591. The compensation and expenses shall be paid by the

county treasurer from the general fund and the friend of the court fund created under section 2530 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.2530, of the county or counties served.

Sec. 28. Each office of the friend of the court shall compile data as required by the state court administrative office, under the supervision and direction of the supreme court.

Enacting section 1. This amendatory act does not take effect unless all of the following bills of the 95th Legislature are enacted into law:

(a) Senate Bill No. 101 or House Bill No. 5501.

(b) Senate Bill No. 104 or House Bill No. 5502.

This act is ordered to take immediate effect.

*Carol Morey Viventi*

Secretary of the Senate

*Richard J. Brown*

Clerk of the House of Representatives

Approved .....

.....  
Governor

**Compiler's note:** House Bill No. 5501, referred to in enacting section 1, was filed with the Secretary of State January 8, 2010, and became 2009 PA 237, Imd. Eff. Jan. 8, 2010.

House Bill No. 5502, also referred to in enacting section 1, was filed with the Secretary of State January 8, 2010, and became 2009 PA 238, Imd. Eff. Jan. 8, 2010.