



**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**  
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TO: Al Robinson, Chair  
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel  
County Administrator

FROM: David K. Hanson  
Friend of the Court

DATE: February 24, 1999

SUBJECT: Friend of the Court Advisory Committee

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Appoint the 9 member Citizen Advisory Committee, with staggered terms, according to the statute.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, the Legislature enacted the FOC Citizen Advisory Committee structure. The function is for the Committee to review each grievance submitted by a FOC client who alleges a gender bias decision, to review a selection of all grievances and to make certain reports to the Board and Chief Judge.

The Committees heretofore had no authority to review FOC files because the Court Rules required they be kept confidential. The legislature resolved this conflict with a new law effective March 1.

DISCUSSION

A Committee shall be appointed in each county and composed of the following individuals:

- An advocate for children
- A representative of noncustodial parents
- A representative of custodial parents
- An attorney who engages primarily in family law practice
- The county sheriff or the sheriff's designee
- The prosecuting attorney or the prosecuting attorney's designee
- The director of the family independence agency or the director's designee
- A mental health professional who provides family counseling
- A member of the general public **who is not an individual who could serve on the committee in a category listed above.**

Except for the initial members, a citizen advisory committee member shall serve a renewable 3 year term. Of the initial members, 3 shall serve 3 year terms, 2 shall serve 2 year terms, and 2 shall serve 1 year terms. The county board may remove a citizen advisory member for cause. The Board should attempt to compose the committee so that its membership reflects the ethnic racial, and gender distribution of the community that it serves.

The Board may appoint non-voting members who represent other community interests, including those of the Friend of the Court.

A citizen advisory committee is advisory only and shall do the following:

1. Met not less than 6 times annually, keep minutes and submit a copy to the county board.
2. Review and investigate grievances concerning the FOC as specifically provided in the statute.
3. Advise the court and the county board of the FOC's duties and performance and on the community's needs relating to the office's services.
4. Make an annual report of activities to the county board, court, state court administrative office, governor's office and the standing senate and house committees.

The Advisory Committee does not have any power or authority over local Friend of the Court operations. The Committee listens to members of the public for purposes of making recommendations regarding policy.

#### IMPACT ON BUDGET, HUMAN RESOURCES AND INDIRECT COSTS

The County seems to have the following responsibilities:

- Establish a plan to seek membership on the committee
- Committee should be comprised of individuals who are interested in providing constructive input to the county and court on the performance of the FOC. Individuals with specific issues related to their domestic relations action should be considered in the context of their ability to contribute to the progress of the group.
- Establish a mechanism to review candidate qualifications for membership.
- Establish a mechanism to appoint new and ongoing membership to the Committee.
- Provide space for committee meetings
- Provide clerical services: notice of meetings and mailings
- Provide resources: meeting rooms, postage, materials, personnel and security
- Provide ongoing training as membership changes
- Determine the level of funding to be provided to ensure the Committee has the ability to appropriately function.
- Establish additional policies and procedures based upon local resources and community needs.

#### IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS:

None.

#### CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:

This request is in conformity with the County's Policies and Procedures.

#### **A RESOLUTION CREATING AND APPOINTING NINE MEMBERS TO THE FRIEND OF THE COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THREE-YEAR TERMS EXPIRING AS INDICATED**

#### **WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**FEBRUARY 20, 1999**

WHEREAS, January 1, 1997 the legislature amended MCL 552.501 (PA 366 of 1996) to create a nine member Citizens Advisory Committee for the Friend of the Court; and

WHEREAS, effective March 1, 1999 changed legislature to allow citizens to perform the necessary functions as a Friend of the Court Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, the Friend of the Court's Citizens Advisory Committee is an advisory committee only and its charge shall be

- Meet not less than 6 times annually, keep minutes of each meeting, and submit a copy of the minutes to the county board
- to review and investigate grievances filed with the committee concerning the Friend of the Court operations
- advise the Court and County Board on the Friend of the Court; Friend of the Court's duties and

performances, and community needs relating to office services

- submit an annual report of its activities to the county board, court, state court administrative office, governor's office and the senate and house committees and appropriations subcommittees that are responsible for legislation concerning the judicial branch; and

WHEREAS, the Friend of the Court Advisory Committee has no authority to make changes in Friend of the Court procedures, recommendations or court orders; and

WHEREAS, appointments shall be for three-year terms, staggered for implementation; and

WHEREAS, the nine member committee shall be comprised of an advocate for children, a representative of custodial parents, a representative of non-custodial parents, an attorney who engages primarily in family law practice, a mental health professional who provides family counseling, a member of the general public who is not an individual who could serve on the committee in any of the previous categories, the County Sheriff or designee, the Prosecuting Attorney or designee, and the Family Independence Agency Director or designee

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby appoints the following members to the Friend of the Court Citizens Advisory Committee for three year terms expiring as indicated:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Term</u>
1)	Children Advocate	12/31/00
2)	Custodial Parents Representative	12/31/00
3)	Non-Custodial Parents Representative	12/31/00
4)	Family Law Attorney	12/31/01
5)	Mental Health Professional-Family Counseling	12/31/01
6)	General Public <b>who can't serve in any of the above categories</b>	12/31/01
7)Sgt. Ron Owens	Sheriff/Designee	Indefinite
8)Ramona Fernandez	Prosecuting Attorney/Designee	Indefinite
9)Barbara Ludwig	Family Independence Agency/Designee	Indefinite

#### RESUMES FOR THE FRIEND OF THE COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Children Advocate	Richard McVay	27-33
	Naomi Woloshin*	34-35
	Marjorie Nemerovski	36-38
	Addie Hunter	39-40
Custodial Parents Representative	Vicki Bennett	41-43
	Marjorie Nemerovski	36-38
	Mary Ceccanese*	44-47
	Charles Hall Jr.	48-49
	Audrey Jackson	50-53

Non-Custodial Parents Representative	Vicki Bennett William Elling Marjorie Nemerovski	41-43 55-56 36-38
Family Law Attorney	Eileen J. Slank*	57
Mental Health Professional Family Counseling	Pamela Ludolph* Marjorie Nemerovski	58-68 36-38
General Public who can't serve in any of the above categories	Jeffery Bozsik Carol Ann Cotter* Paul Jensen Ena Weathers	69-71 72-74 75-78 79-80
Sheriff/Designee	Sgt. Ron Owens*	81
Prosecuting Attorney/Designee	Ramona Fernandez*	82
Family Independence Agency/Designee	Barbara Ludwig*	83

**\*Friend of the Court Recommended**

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