



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

ROBERT GORDON
DIRECTOR

IV-D MEMORANDUM 2019-018

TO: All Friend of the Court (FOC) Staff
All Prosecuting Attorney (PA) Staff
All Office of Child Support (OCS) Staff

FROM: Erin P. Frisch, Director
Office of Child Support

DATE: September 23, 2019

SUBJECT: Revisions to Customer Contact Letters to Create User-Friendly Communications

UPDATE(S):

Manual

Form(s)

ACTION DUE: None

POLICY EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon receipt

PURPOSE:

This IV-D Memorandum announces revisions to the following OCS customer contact letters:

- *First Customer Contact Letter* (OCS0015);
- *Final Customer Contact Letter* (OCS0025);
- *Client Contact Letter* (OCSCONT);
- *Client Contact Letter 1* (OCSCONT1);
- *Client Contact Letter 2* (OCSCONT2); and
- *Notice of Continuing Eligibility* (OCS4636).¹

OCS has redesigned the letters to include icons, more white space, and simpler language to make the letters easier for customers to read. The revisions to the OCSCONT, OCSCONT1, and OCSCONT2 also include a new title: *Customer Contact Letter*.

¹ The wording on the OCS4636 will vary depending on whether the customer's case has state-owed arrears. Therefore, there are two versions of the form: the OCS4636 for a case with state-owed arrears, and the OCS4636 for a case without state-owed arrears. Both versions are attached to this IV-D Memorandum.

The letters will be available September 27, 2019 with the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System (MiCSES) 10.2.0.1 Release. The MiCSES functionality for these letters remains unchanged. Updates to the *Noncooperation Notice* (OCS1252) and *Cooperation Notice* (OCS1253) are planned for a future release.

DISCUSSION:

A. Background

OCS sends customer contact letters to provide information to customers or request information from them. These letters include:

- OCS0015 and OCS0025: MiCSES generates these letters and sends them to customers who must provide information to pursue child support as a condition of receiving public assistance;²
- OCSCONT, OCSCONT1, and OCSCONT2: Support specialists (SSs) manually generate these letters to customers;³ and
- OCS4636: MiCSES generates this letter and sends it to customers who currently receive IV-D services but have recently stopped receiving public assistance.⁴

Redesigning the customer contact letters to make them user-friendly advances the Michigan Child Support Program's Strategic Plan goal to improve the customer experience. In addition, it will improve the efficiency of the program if customers are better able to understand the letters and take requested actions as a result.

B. Changes to the Customer Contact Letters

1. Emphasis on Concern for Customer Safety

Providing good cause and family violence information to customers as early as possible in the child support process can help individuals determine what is best for their family based on their situation. Educating families on good cause and family violence is the key to helping ensure customer safety.

a. Form Changes to Support Customer Safety

All the revised customer contact letters except the OCSCONT and OCS4636 emphasize the IV-D program's concern for customer safety with a bold text box and an exclamation point graphic. The text box directs customers to call OCS if pursuing child support may result in harm to themselves or their

² Ref: [Section 2.05, "Referrals and Applications," of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual](#) for more information about the OCS0015 and OCS0025.

³ Ref: Section 2.05 of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual* for more information about the OCSCONT, OCSCONT1, and OCSCONT2.

⁴ Ref: [Section 3.03, "Case Updates and Member Demographics," of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual](#) for more information about the OCS4636.

child(ren). The previous versions of the letters directed customers to contact their Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) caseworker and complete a *Claim of Good Cause – Child Support* (DHS-2168) form when this concern existed. OCS instructing customers to contact their MDHHS caseworker and complete a form lacked the helpfulness MDHHS must extend to survivors of family violence.

Note: Customers must still contact their MDHHS caseworker to request and file a DHS-2168. The OCS update to the customer contact letters offers customers an additional resource and opportunity for assistance if they have a concern for their safety.

b. Support Specialists (SSs) and Customer Safety

Because of the emphasis on customer safety in the contact letters, SSs can expect an increase in calls requesting assistance. If an SS receives calls from customers who indicate they are concerned for their safety or the safety of their child(ren), the SS will work with the customer to determine if good cause and/or family violence protections are appropriate.

When a customer tells an SS (s)he would like to claim good cause and the reason meets the criteria outlined in [Section 2.15, “Cooperation/Noncooperation/Good Cause,”](#) Subsection 3.1, “When to Consider Good Cause,” the SS will:

- Explain the DHS-2168 and direct the customer to contact an MDHHS caseworker to request the form. Currently, the form is only available from an MDHHS caseworker; and
- Set the good cause status on the *Case Member Details* (CASE) screen to “pending.” This will suspend paternity and/or order establishment and enforcement activities until a final good cause determination is made. When the status is set to “pending,” MiCSES will notify Bridges of the pending good cause status.

When customers tell an SS they are concerned that disclosure of their address or other personally identifying information (PII) may result in harm, the SS will discuss the suppression of PII. The SS will explain what PII is and the ways PII can be suppressed.⁵

Note: When good cause is set on a case in MiCSES, it does not automatically set family violence for that case. The SS must set the family violence indicator and reason code separately.

⁵ Ref: [Section 1.15, “Family Violence,” of the Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual](#) for more information on PII and the suppression of PII.

2. Other Changes to the Letters

a. Use of Simpler Language and User-Friendly Features

To make the letters easier to read and more visually appealing for customers, OCS has done the following:

- 1) Removed unnecessary text, such as directions for accessing the MiChildSupport website and references to federal and state laws;
- 2) Used plain language, fewer words, and simpler, more direct instructions;
- 3) Increased white space; and
- 4) Drawn attention to important information by:
 - a) Placing text in boxes;
 - b) Bolding and enlarging text; and
 - c) Using icons such as a laptop computer, telephone receiver, magnifying glass, and checkmarks.

OCS also simplified the heading of the letters by replacing the formal MDHHS letterhead with “Michigan Department of Health and Human Services” and “Office of Child Support” in plain text.

b. Inclusion of Support Specialist (SS) Availability

On all letters except the OCS4636, OCS has included the times that SSs are available to take customer phone calls (weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

c. References to “Client” Replaced With “Customer”

OCS has changed “Client” to “Customer” in the titles of the OCSCONT, OCSCONT1, and OCSCONT2. This is consistent with the use of “Customer” in the titles of the OCS0015 and OCS0025. These titles will be changed in Section 2.05 of the *Michigan IV-D Child Support Manual* in a future revision of the manual section.

d. Addition of an Editable Date Field on the OCSCONT

The OCSCONT letter now contains a field for the SS to add a date by which the customer must provide the missing information.

e. Changes to the OCS4636

Both versions of the previous OCS4636 (for cases with arrears and cases without arrears) have confused recipients, which resulted in numerous customer calls. OCS worked with customers and IV-D workers to identify problem areas of the OCS4636, then devoted a significant amount of time

and research on making improvements. OCS replaced the legal and technical language with simpler wording to better explain continued eligibility and inserted a table to highlight the IV-D services available.

Though some IV-D staff have asked OCS to obsolete the form, that isn't possible. Federal regulations require the form because when a family no longer receives public assistance and there are no arrears owed to the state, the customer has the authority to continue or discontinue IV-D services. The OCS4636 notifies the customer of his/her rights in this situation.

NECESSARY ACTION:

Retain this IV-D Memorandum until further notice.

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

Case Management Work Improvement Team
Program Leadership Group

CONTACT PERSON:

Amy M. Coscarelli
OCS Policy Analyst
(517) 355-1490
CoscarelliA@michigan.gov

ATTACHMENTS:

OCS0015:	<i>First Customer Contact Letter</i>
OCS0025:	<i>Final Customer Contact Letter</i>
OCS4636 (two versions):	<i>Notice of Continuing Eligibility (case with state-owed arrears)</i> <i>Notice of Continuing Eligibility (case without state-owed arrears)</i>
OCSCONT:	<i>Customer Contact Letter</i>
OCSCONT1:	<i>Customer Contact Letter 1</i>
OCSCONT2:	<i>Customer Contact Letter 2</i>

EPF/AMC