

Attorney Referee & Friend of the Court Director

55th Circuit Court – Clare & Gladwin Counties

Full-Time | Monday–Friday 8:00 AM–4:30 PM | No Nights or Weekends

Starting Salary: \$90,000+ (DOQ) | Full Benefits

ABOUT THE POSITION

The 55th Circuit Court (serving Clare and Gladwin Counties) is seeking an experienced Michigan attorney to serve in a **dual role** as both **Attorney Referee** and **Friend of the Court (FOC) Director**. This is a unique, mission-driven leadership position ideal for an attorney who wants to combine courtroom work with program administration and have a direct impact on families and children.

As Attorney Referee, you will conduct hearings and make recommendations to the Family Court Judges: Presiding Judge of the Family Court, Judge Tara Hovey; Judge Michelle Ambrozaitis; and, Judge Marcy Klaus, in the limited circumstances where ancillary matters are assigned to her court.

As FOC Director, you will lead a dedicated team of **nine staff members** (currently seven filled, two vacancies—1 full-time and 1 part-time), manage office operations, and oversee child support, custody, and parenting-time services across both counties.

This position offers **stable daytime hours, no weekends**, full county benefits, and an opportunity to shape the future of family services in two Michigan counties.

WHY THIS ROLE MATTERS

The 55th Circuit Court serves approximately **56,000 residents** across Clare and Gladwin Counties. Families with children make up a significant part of this population, including many single-parent households. The Friend of the Court office plays a crucial role in:

- Ensuring children receive financial support
- Assisting separated parents with parenting-time and custody agreements
- Resolving family disputes
- Reducing conflict and helping parents maintain stability

Statewide, the Michigan child support system manages **760,000+ cases** and distributes more than **\$1.2 billion in support annually** — placing FOC Directors and Referees at the heart of Michigan’s family safety net.

Locally, the 55th Circuit has historically experienced **high caseload pressure** and growing demand for family services, making this leadership position critical to improving outcomes and strengthening families.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Attorney Referee Duties (Approx. 50%)

- Conduct evidentiary hearings in domestic relations matters, including custody, parenting time, child support, paternity, temporary orders, and enforcement matters.
- Swear in and examine witnesses, take testimony, rule on motions and objections, analyze evidence, and prepare recommended findings of fact and conclusions of law.
- Draft, review, and prepare proposed orders for judicial approval.
- Provide legal guidance to the court, staff, and stakeholders as needed.
- Ensure hearings are conducted in compliance with Michigan statutes, court rules, and case law.
- Use audio/video systems to record hearings and maintain accurate digital records.

Friend of the Court Director Duties (Approx. 50%)

- Lead and supervise the FOC office, including **nine (9) employees** who manage support enforcement, investigations, scheduling, and parent services.
- Oversee case management, support enforcement, parenting-time services, and MiCSES/MiCES data entry and accuracy.
- Manage the FOC budget and fiscal operations.
- Recruit, train, evaluate, and support staff; fill current vacancies; and foster a positive, professional team culture.
- Collaborate with community agencies, law enforcement, attorneys, mental health providers, and service organizations.
- Develop office procedures, internal policies, forms, and operational improvements.
- Implement new laws, rules, and SCAO directives impacting FOC services.
- Represent the FOC to government bodies, community groups, and the public.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Juris Doctor (JD) degree from an ABA-accredited law school.
- **Licensed attorney in the State of Michigan in good standing** (required).
- Strong knowledge of Michigan family law, court procedures, and evidentiary standards.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Valid vehicle operator's license and ability to pass a background check and fingerprinting.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- **Five (5) or more years** in the active practice of law, particularly family law, or
- Prior experience as an Attorney Referee in Circuit, Juvenile, or Probate Court.
- Supervisory or administrative experience (in any field).
- Experience with MiCSES/MiCES systems, child support processes, or domestic relations case management.
- Familiarity with services and agencies serving families in Clare and Gladwin Counties.

WHAT WE OFFER

- **Stable work schedule:** Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM–4:30 PM (no nights/weekends).
- **Full county benefits package**, including health insurance, retirement, and paid time off.
- Opportunity to lead a vital public service office with a meaningful mission.
- Direct impact on improving family stability and child wellbeing across two counties.
- Professional respect and direct reporting relationship to the Presiding Family Court Judge.
- Support for required Michigan Judicial Institute (MJI) training.

ABOUT THE 55TH CIRCUIT – CLARE & GLADWIN COUNTIES

- Serves approximately **56,000 residents** combined.
- A significant share of children live in single-parent households, indicating high need for custody, support, and parenting-time services.
- Historical caseload growth has created a strong need for capable leadership in family services.
- The FOC office is essential to the stability, safety, and financial wellbeing of hundreds of local children each year.

HOW TO APPLY

Submit the following to: **worpells@clareco.net**

- Cover Letter
- Resume
- Writing Sample (legal memo, pleading, findings, or recommendation—may be redacted)
- Three Professional References

Applications accepted until filled.

Start date: ASAP.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Note: Michigan Works Region 7B is assisting with recruiting efforts