

This & That

by Lisa Symula
Family Division Administrator -
Probate/Juvenile Register



I have compiled below several noteworthy items with respect to court policies and procedures.

1) Motion Call: Hopefully you have noticed that we have revised our Motion Call Schedule. Our new docket will permit practitioners to obtain a much earlier hearing date for most petitions. Prior to this change, it was taking from four to eight weeks to obtain a hearing date. It will now take you an average of two to three weeks! However, this will not apply to most minor guardianship filings, as we still need 28 days to complete a child protective services screening.

2) Phone System: We have finally updated our phone system. Our phone number (248-858-0260) has not changed, but when you call the Probate Court, you will note that our phone menu has been revised. The changes reflect the implementation of the new Probate Code and some of our procedural and policy revisions. You will still be able to talk to a "live" person if none of the menued items meet your needs.

3) Receipts: Effective June 1, 2001, we are no longer issuing handwritten receipts when you pay filing fees. You will receive a receipt from the cash register, which will be the only proof of payment you will receive. We will no longer be filing any receipts in our files.

4) New Attorney General Address: There is a new Attorney General address: One Michigan Avenue, Suite 400, Lansing, MI 48909. When necessary, please use this address on your petitions and filings for the address of the Attorney General as an interested person.

5) SCAO Forms: There has been much discussion regarding the use of modified forms or computer-generated forms for filing. Many attorneys' offices have purchased software

programs containing these forms, which do not look exactly like the SCAO-approved forms. Our previous policy in Oakland County was not to accept these forms mainly because we do not have the additional time to compare the forms when presented to us at the counter. Oftentimes, these forms are not filed by the attorney of record and the filer cannot answer questions with respect to modifications. MCR 5.113 (A)(1)(c) requires that any forms submitted to the court be "substantially in the format approved by the SCAO." Many counties will reject altered documents to ensure that nothing has been eliminated from the SCAO-approved form. It is now our policy in Oakland County that we will accept these computer-generated forms provided that the following language is somehow contained on the form: "This document is a replication of the SCAO-approved form. No alterations or deletions have been made." Hopefully, this will permit you the continued convenience of using the computer-generated forms.

6) Casual Day: Finally, on a lighter note, once a month you will see our Probate Court staff in casual business attire. For your information, the last working Friday of every month, the Probate and Circuit Court staffs will be participating in casual day. Each staff member who participates makes a monetary contribution to a fund, and a portion of the monies raised are donated to a charity. Our casual days last year allowed us to make a contribution to the Carol Ripley Scholarship Fund, which provides total or partial scholarships for financially or emotionally needy youth to participate in classes and activities. We appreciate your support and patience in our casual day efforts.

Stay tuned.