

GEMS Script for Michigan Works! Staff

Use this script as a guide when talking to potential participants about the GEMS program. Instructions are in brackets, possible participant responses are in bold, and your responses are in italics.

[Identify/Introduce yourself.]

I was given your name by the xx County Friend of the Court because you might be eligible for a program called GEMS. This program helps people find a better job so they can pay their child support. I'd like to offer you the opportunity to participate in the program.

Are you working?

“No. What happens if I sign up for the program?”

If you sign up:

- *You'll get a career coach who will work with you to help you find a full-time permanent job. Sometimes they can offer help with things like bus passes or gas vouchers so you can get to a job interview. They can sometimes help with work clothes or help you build a resume.*
- *There may be other things that your career coach can help with, like help with answering interview questions even if you have a criminal background.*
- *You will need to check in with your career coach weekly until you get a job, then check in once a month for six months after that.*
- *If you take part in the program, you and your career coach will develop a plan to help you find a job that will help you pay your child support. Michigan Works! will report your progress with the Friend of the Court. The Friend of the Court will consider your participation in the program when checking on your payment of child support and reviewing possible enforcement actions.*
- *If you take part in the program, a career coach can help find and potentially pay for training. The career coach can also help you find a career where you can be self-sufficient – not just a “job.”*
- *If you take part in the program, the Friend of the Court may review and change your child support order and suspend certain enforcement activities.*

- *Your full participation in this program will show the Friend of the Court, the judge, and the court that you are trying to earn income that will help you pay support. Do you agree that is a good thing?*

“I am paying child support, but the Friend of the Court keeps taking enforcement actions and sending my name to you. Why?”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“I have a job.”

- [Ask:] *Where? What do you do? How much do you make? How many hours? How long have you been there? Does it pay enough to cover your child support?*
- [Ask for documentation. They will provide it to either Michigan Works! or the Friend of the Court.]
- [Encourage the participant to contact the Friend of the Court as soon as possible to inform them of employment.]
- [Tell the Friend of the Court the information the participant provided about the job.]
- [Explain that if they take part in GEMS, a career coach can help with sending documentation to the Friend of the Court.]
- [If they say they have a part-time job, encourage them to take part in GEMS to find full-time employment.]

[If they cannot tell you any specifics, encourage them to enroll.]

- *With GEMS, you get individualized help with job openings, and someone who can vouch with the Friend of the Court whether you are trying to look for a job. [List other program benefits.]*

“The Friend of the Court didn’t tell me they were going to do this. Why did they pick me?”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“My job starts on Monday.”

- [Ask:] *Where? What will you do? How much will you make? How many hours? When did you last work?*

[If they cannot tell you any specifics, encourage them to enroll.]

- *To be on the safe side, you can participate in GEMS in case things don't work out. Then you'll already be set to start getting help to keep that job or find a new one.*
- *With GEMS, you get...* [List other program benefits.]

“No, but I’m already looking for a job. I can find a job on my own.”

- *With this program, you will get individualized help with job openings.*
- *And you will get someone who can vouch with the Friend of the Court whether you're trying to look for a job.*

“I can just go to Michigan Works! or online to look for a job on my own.”

- *Yes, but with this program, you will get a personal career coach that other people just walking into Michigan Works! do not get. They can help you with...* [List other program benefits.]
- *And you will get someone who can vouch for whether you are looking for a job or not.*

“I told the Friend of the Court I didn't want to do this.”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“But I’m in school.”

- *You still must pay child support, and you might want some help looking for a job if you're dealing with school, too.*
- [Encourage them to join by explaining that Michigan Works! can help them find employment in their field or help them gain experience in their desired field; “foot in the door.”]
- *Michigan Works! can help you find employment once you finish school.*

“Before I agree, I want to talk with the Friend of the Court.”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“What exactly won’t the Friend of the Court do? What enforcement will they stop?”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“I’ve tried to work out a payment plan, but the Friend of the Court won’t help me.”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“I’ve tried to contact the Friend of the Court, but they aren’t responding.”

- *Have you left a voicemail message, with a number for them to return your call?*
- *Have you sent them a letter?*
- *I can reach out and ask them to contact you. What is the best method for them to contact you?*
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?”*
- [Tell them to use MiChildSupport.]
www.michigan.gov/michildsupport

“I want custody of my child.”

- [Explain that you are not able to provide legal advice, and provide Legal Aid contact information.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*

“I’m not getting parenting time.”

- [Refer them back to the Friend of the Court.]
- *...but can you and I keep talking about why this program might work for you? Do you agree that the Friend of the Court records show that you are behind in support payments?*