

OKALOOSA COUNTY CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT



DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW: INDIGENCY APPLICATION PROCESS

**REPORT NO. AR-22-02
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Executive Summary

On December 14th, 2022, a potential Fraud, Waste & Abuse policy violation was forwarded to our office for investigation (Case INV 22-02). During our investigation it was determined that a customer service representative filed a questionable application for indigency status in her dissolution of marriage case. The application was subsequently approved by her direct supervisor. During the investigation we reviewed indigency applications, policies and procedures, payroll information, public records, and conducted interviews.

As a result of the investigation, we decided to conduct an administrative review of the current Okaloosa Court Indigency application process, policies, forms, and standard practices. Specifically, we reviewed the application form in use and the effectiveness of the Department's procedures related to processing the applications over the past twelve months.

Our work resulted in three findings / recommendations for process improvements, some of which have already been addressed by management.

Background

Our office received a request from Clerk Administration to review the Indigency applications and procedure related to the processing of the forms. Investigative Report INV 22-02 yielded procedural and processing errors on an indigency application filed by a Clerk employee in her personal Dissolution of Marriage case. As a result, we wanted to determine the extent of errors in these filings.

Scope & Methodology

The scope of our administrative review included all indigency applications filed in Okaloosa County for the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022. We examined the procedure and policies found in Power DMS, a document management system used by the Okaloosa County Clerk. The review included discussions with leadership and staff, process walkthroughs, procedural examination and review of Form(s) 5105-1 that had been approved or denied during the calendar year 2022.

Procedure, Forms and General Practices

These included Form 5105-1 – Application for Determination of Civil Indigence (New-8-4-202), Form 5106 – Federal Poverty Guidelines (New 2-21-2019) which is used in conjunction with procedure 5105, Procedure 5105 – Civil Indigence Determinations (Revision 12-12-2022). Form 5105-1 received by the court are reviewed by customer service clerks in the performance of their daily tasks using information reflected in procedure 5105 and may include Form 5106 guidelines if applicable.

Review Findings

Total Approved Cases Reviewed	196
Incorrect Approvals	7
% incorrect	4%
Total Denied Case Reviewed	50
Incorrect Denials	7
% incorrect	14%

Findings of Fact and Recommendations

A. Finding: Currently the Form 5105-1 Application for Determination of Civil Indigency in some cases is processed with missing, incomplete, or unclear information provided by the applicant on the form.

Recommendation A: Our office recommends that Forms 5105-1 with missing or unclear information be denied in all cases to allow for correct information be provided on a subsequent submission. Alternately, if the applicant is present, let them provide corrected information. Review of processed forms indicates applicants may not have a clear understanding of the requested information, and are therefore documenting incomplete information, incorrect information or leaving off needed information. A redesigned form or instructions on proper completion of the form may provide for more complete information being provided by the applicant.

B. Finding: Currently customer service clerks are conducting manual calculations based on the data provided on the form 5105-1 which results in calculation errors and possibly an erroneous denial or approval of indigency

Recommendation B: The recommendation related to this finding has already been addressed by management. Our office recommends that a fillable spreadsheet with built in formulas be provided to customer service clerks to minimize calculation errors. These spreadsheets can be attached to the court file and would provide verifications for the approved/denied status of the application.

The Customer Service Manager provided our office a newly developed excel worksheet. The 14 cases with error outcomes were recomputed using the excel worksheet and provided the correct outcome validating the recommended use of the form.

C. Finding: In the review of processed form(s) 5105-1, errors in the outcomes of approved or denied determinations were made by customer service clerks. The calculation or outcome error could not be pinpointed as the customer service clerks, at the time of our review, were not required to provide the mathematical calculations when reviewing the forms. and there is no vetting of the calculations or review by Supervisory staff.

Recommendation C: Our office recommends additional training for customer service staff on the Form 5105-1 calculations and the department institute an employee/supervisor review of the form. In addition, the excel worksheet used to verify the calculations should be retained with the Form 5101-1 as an audit trail of the approval or denial.