

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CRIMINAL COSTS & FINES PAYMENT PLAN CONFERENCES

## What Is a Payment Plan Conference?

- Informal hearing held before a Trial Commissioner (not a judge) at the Criminal Justice Center, 1301 Filbert St.
- To ask for a lower monthly payment amount—that you can afford
- To challenge what they say you owe or to fix accounting mistakes
- Possibly to get your supervision fees reduced or waived
- Even if you are *already in collections*, you can still ask for a payment plan conference!

## What Should I Bring to the Conference?

- Money to make a first payment (that you can afford)
- Proof of your income, (including public benefits) and expenses (rent, utilities, etc.)
- **Give a copy of your documents to the court, but be sure to keep your own copy!**

## Only agree to a monthly payment plan that you can realistically afford.

People are being asked to pay different monthly amounts. Most people are being asked to pay \$35/month. Some are being asked to pay more. You may not be able to afford what you are being asked to pay. At the Conference, tell the Trial Commissioner how much you can afford to pay. If you cannot afford to pay \$35/month, suggest a smaller amount. Whether they accept this will depend on your situation (see below).

## What Should I Say at the Conference?

- **Ask for your court files:** your “quarter sessions” files and archived probation files. These will have information on what you owe and what you’ve already paid. If they don’t have your files, ask for a postponement.
- **If you think your supervision fees were waived.** Sometimes even though supervision fees were waived by the judge, they end up being added to your case. Tell the Trial Commissioner if you think your supervision fees were waived by the judge. Ask them to check your paper files—there may be mistakes in the computer information.
- **Ask for a breakdown** of what they say you owe, case by case.
- If you are on **public benefits** – cash assistance, SSI, Food Stamps, unemployment, etc.
- How much your **income** is, or if you don’t have any income. How long since you have been able to find work. If your criminal record, disability, or other things have made it hard for you to work or find a job.
- What your **monthly expenses** are.
- How much you can afford to pay each month in a payment plan.

## You Have the Right to Appeal

If you aren’t able to agree on a payment amount you can afford, ask to appeal to a judge. If you still disagree about the amount they say you owe, ask to appeal to a judge.

# YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HAVE YOUR SUPERVISION FEES WAIVED IN A PAYMENT PLAN CONFERENCE

Supervision fees are \$25.00 per month for each month that you were on probation – no matter how many cases you are on probation for at the same time. You may be able to get the amount down with the Trial Commissioner at a Payment Plan Conference.

If you fall into **one of these categories**, you should ask the Trial Commissioner to waive your supervision fees.

*Tell the court if you are:*

- Unemployed, even though you have tried hard to find a job, or not making enough money in your job to afford to make payments
- 62 years old or older with no income, or too old to work
- On public assistance
- In school, or enrolled in a vocational/training program
- Not able to work because of a disability
- Responsible for supporting dependents, so that paying supervision fees would be an undue hardship
- Participating in an inpatient treatment program
- Other extenuating circumstances, including inability to pay

**Bring proof of the above if you have it.**

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## **YOU MAY BE ABLE TO GET YOUR BAIL JUDGMENTS VACATED OR REDUCED**

**You can't challenge bail judgments in a payment plan conference. But you may be able to get your bail vacated or reduced in a separate bail hearing. How?**

- **File a Petition to Vacate a Bail Judgment.** These are available at the Motions Counter on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Criminal Justice Center, 1301 Filbert St.
- For **help filing it**, call **215-683-3710**, and court staff will help you in about 14 days.
- You need to file a separate petition for every time you missed a court appearance. The filing fee is \$12.50 per petition.
- You can **get your bail *vacated*** if you had a really good reason for missing court. If you missed court because you were in **lockup**, ask the court to help get prison files to prove this. Another good reason is being in the **hospital**. Try to get proof of your reason.
- You can also **get your bail *reduced*** if you showed up at court **within 6 months** of your missed court date.