

# National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Resolves to Eliminate Fines, Fees, and Costs in Juvenile Courts

*The NCJFCJ recently passed a resolution addressing to reduce or eliminate the hardships associated with fines, fees, and costs in juvenile courts.*

RENO, NEVADA, UNITED STATES, April 5, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- (Reno, Nev.) – The [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges \(NCJFCJ\)](#) recently passed a resolution at its 2018 National Conference on Juvenile Justice in San Diego addressing to reduce or eliminate the hardships associated with fines, fees, and costs in juvenile courts.



In 2014, juvenile and family courts handled an estimated 975,000 delinquency cases. With the delinquency caseloads more than doubling since 1960, the NCJFCJ recognizes judges are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children under court jurisdiction while holding them accountable in developmentally appropriate ways.

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*Judge Anthony (Tony) Capizzi*

Juvenile courts across the country routinely impose financial obligations on young people and their families’ bail, fines, fees, costs, and restitution without regard to children’s inability to pay. The failure to pay can result in serious and long-term consequences on children and their families including the pressure to waive their right to counsel, if representation is a financial burden; being pulled deeper in the juvenile justice system for longer periods of time; and the magnification of the disparities of class, race, and ethnicity. All of which are reasons unrelated to public safety and counterproductive to the rehabilitative goals of the juvenile court.

“Our resolution demonstrates NCJFCJ’s call to action for juvenile and family court to work with their courts towards reducing and eliminating fines, fees, and costs by considering a youth and their family’s ability to pay prior to imposing such financial obligations,” said Judge Anthony (Tony) Capizzi, NCJFCJ president. “The NCJFCJ implores judges to provide strong leadership to exercise their discretion to alleviate harm, and support youth and their families on pathways to successful and thriving futures.”

“The Juvenile Law Center applauds the NCJFCJ for encouraging courts to work toward reducing and eliminating fees,” said Susan Vivian Mangold, Esq., executive director, Juvenile Law Center. “We appreciate their critical view of these fines, fees, and costs as disproportionately impacting poor communities, racial and ethnic minorities and their recommendation that no court should detain or order youth to out-of-home placement or extend community supervision solely because of lack of payment.”

The resolution states that the core functions necessary for the nation’s juvenile courts to meet their rehabilitative goals should be fully funded by government revenue and not by revenue generated by fines, fees, and costs. These fines, fees, and costs should never be used for salaries or benefits of official judicial branch employees or operations nor should the revenue be used to evaluate the performance of such employees.

“The resolution also recommends that courts collect detailed data on the imposition of these fines, fees, and costs which will be important to our ongoing work to provide information and eliminate these abusive debts imposed on youth and their families,” said Mangold. “The Juvenile Law Center looks forward to continuing to work with judges in jurisdictions throughout the country to end the imposition of these debts on youth and their families.”

Also, the NCJFCJ supports the use of payment plans for specific cases, and the imposition of reasonable restitution after considering a youth’s ability to pay and encourages courts to provide opportunities for youth to repay restitution through meaningful community services.

“The fines and fees levied in juvenile courts cause lasting harm to children and their families, disproportionately impact youth and families of color, erode trust between courts and the communities they serve, and harm public safety by keeping children entangled in the justice system,” said Mary Ann Scali, executive director, National Juvenile Defender Center.

In addition to the resolution, the NCJFCJ Board of Directors endorsed an accompanying judicial bench card, a partnership with the National Juvenile Defender Center and the State Justice Institute, titled Ensuring Young People Are Not Criminalized for Poverty: Bail, Fees, Fines, Costs, and Restitution in Juvenile Court. The bench card outlines types of financial assessments and obligations youth and families may encounter in juvenile and family court, their impacts, and how judges can address these financial assessments in their courtroom.

“We thank the NCJFCJ for their partnership in developing these new materials. Together, the bench card and accompanying resolution offer judges and courts information and ideas to address the unintended negative consequences of financial sanctions on youth and families, said Scali. “Our hope is that these resources yield strategies to eliminate financial barriers to youth success. Doing so will benefit everyone – children, families, courts, and communities.”

For more NCJFCJ resolutions and policy statements, visit: <http://www.ncjfcj.org/about/resolutions-and-policy-statements>

About the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ):

Founded in 1937, the Reno, Nev.-based National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, is the nation’s oldest judicial membership organization and focused on improving the effectiveness of our nation’s juvenile and family courts. A leader in continuing education opportunities, research, and policy development in the field of juvenile and family justice, the 2,000-member organization is unique in providing practice-based resources to jurisdictions and communities nationwide.

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