



EAST BAY
CHILDREN'S
LAW OFFICES



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**ALAMEDA COUNTY IS
FIRST IN STATE TO REPEAL JUVENILE JUSTICE FEES**

Thousands of low-income Alameda County families will no longer pay juvenile probation and public defender fees. On July 12, 2016 the Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to [end the assessment and collection](#) on all fees charged to parents and guardians with children in the juvenile justice system. The repeal, which is the first of its kind in the state, ends all fee assessment and collection, offering immediate relief to more than 2,900 families with outstanding debt and shielding thousands of families who pass through Alameda's juvenile courts every year from future financial hardship.

The repeal is the result of efforts lead by the U.C. Berkeley School of Law Policy Advocacy Clinic and the East Bay Community Law Center, in collaboration with key county departments (including the Probation Department, the Central Collections Agency and the Public Defender's Office) and on behalf of several community partners, including the East Bay Children's Law Office, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and the Prison Law Office.

Prior to the repeal, Alameda County charged a range of fees to families with children in the juvenile system, including \$25.29 for each night in Juvenile Hall, \$15.00 per day for electronic ankle monitoring, \$90 a month for probation supervision, a \$250 probation investigation fee, and a \$300 public defender fee, among others. In some cases, the fees added up to thousands of dollars per family.

These fees put financial stress on low-income families and strained fragile relationships. Because youth of color are disproportionately impacted by the juvenile system and serve longer average probation terms than their white counterparts, these fees hurt families of color the most. In their [letter](#) to the Board of Supervisors proposing the moratorium that led to today's repeal, Supervisors Richard Valle and Keith Carson highlighted how families struggle to pay these fees: "Imposing this kind of debt on families induces economic and familial instability, which undermines the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system."

According to a [report](#) by the Policy Advocacy Clinic, the County saw little financial gain from these fees. Last year, the County netted approximately \$168,000, which amounts to a tiny portion of its \$2.74 billion budget.

“This repeal is a victory for families and young people throughout Alameda County,” says Attorney Kate Weisburd who directs the Youth Defender Clinic at the East Bay Community Law Center and represents young people in juvenile court. “This punitive debt has no place in the juvenile system—it undermines family stability at a time when stability is needed most,” Weisburd explains. “The families we work with are some of the poorest in the County and yet they were asked to foot the bill for the juvenile justice system.”

According to the Policy Advocacy Clinic’s Clinical Teaching Fellow Stephanie Campos-Bui, “With this full repeal of juvenile fees, Alameda County has become a leader in the effort to end criminal justice debt in California. As our students’ [research shows](#), these practices run counter to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile system by resulting in high pain to families. On top of the harm to families, these fees often result in little or no financial gain to local jurisdictions.”

According to Brendon Woods, the Public Defender for Alameda County, “The Board of Supervisors deserves tremendous credit for recognizing that an existing county policy was harming families, and taking swift action to correct the problem.”

The new ordinance is the first full repeal of juvenile justice fees in California, and goes into effect immediately. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors recently imposed a moratorium on juvenile fees and is expected to enact a full repeal by October 1, 2016. Senator Holly Mitchell introduced a bill in the California Legislature (SB 941) that would repeal the fees statewide.

#End#