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Monday, June 25, 2018: OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: *The Superior Court of Alameda County has revised its criteria for low-income applicants seeking a fine reduction for traffic infractions, making the Court’s fine reduction program more accessible to low-income residents.*

Effective immediately, the Superior Court of Alameda County will use the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s “Extremely Low Income” standard as the criteria for applicants seeking a reduction in their traffic infraction fines under the Court’s Ability-to-Pay program. Previously, the Court used a standard that provided a traffic infraction fine reduction for those earning a gross monthly household income at or under 125% of the Federal Poverty Line. Under the new standard, the income limits are as follows:

Persons in household	Income must not exceed
1	\$2033.33
2	\$2325.00
3	\$2616.67
4	\$2904.17
5	\$3137.50
6	\$3370.80
7	\$3604.17
8	\$3837.50

The Court implemented its Ability-to-Pay petition in early 2017, in advance of the May 1, 2017, deadline for doing so. Since then, the Court has worked with advocates from the East Bay Community Law Center to refine and improve the Ability-to-Pay process. “After research and review, the Court is convinced that revisions to the income eligibility standards of the Ability-To-Pay program make sense given the economic realities of living in Alameda County,” said the Court’s Executive Officer, Chad Finke.



As a direct result of the engagement and advocacy of the East Bay Community Law Center's Clean Slate Practice, the Court has also agreed to the following revisions to increase access to fine reduction for low-income people:

- The Court will increase the time span in which individuals may submit income documentation from *60 days* after the application is filed to *6 months*.
- The Court will no longer require *3 months* of pay stubs to assess eligibility, and will now require only *1 month*.
- The Court will no longer make fine reduction available to only to individuals whose disposable income is determined to be at or under *\$250*, but will instead raise this amount to *\$400*.

These revisions are the product of an ongoing partnership between the Superior Court of Alameda County and the East Bay Community Law Center, a legal services provider serving low-income residents in Alameda County. "We are happy that the Court has taken our recommendations under advisement and has decided to adopt the HUD "Extremely Low Income" standard, which more accurately accounts for the regional costs of living and their impact on the County's most vulnerable communities," remarked Brandon Greene, a staff attorney at the East Bay Community Law Center. "We hope to continue to work with the Court to further refine the standard in furtherance of equity and justice in Alameda County."

Individuals who previously applied for an Ability-to-Pay determination and were denied because they exceeded the Court's prior income threshold are encouraged to re-apply under the new standards. Applicants should fill out the Request for Ability to Pay Determination and Ability to Pay Checklist on the Superior Court's website (<http://www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/Pages.aspx>)

- Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse, 661 Washington Street, Oakland, 94607
- Fremont Hall of Justice, 39439 Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont, 94538
- East County Hall of Justice, 5151 Gleason Drive, Dublin, 94568

The forms can also be obtained directly from a clerk at those same courthouses.

The East Bay Community Law Center's Clean Slate practice holds a weekly Traffic and Court Debt clinic, where applicants seeking a traffic court fine reduction can seek consultation with a lawyer or a law student. The clinic is held on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at 1950 University Ave., Ste 200, Berkeley, 94704. The East Bay Community Law Center also provides consultation on other traffic and court debt related issues.