



Louisiana Center
for Children's Rights

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**ORLEANS PARISH JUVENILE COURT ENDS FEES IN DELINQUENCY CASES,
BECOMING THE FIRST JURISDICTION IN THE SOUTH TO TAKE SUCH ACTION.
GROUPS CALL ON OTHER LOUISIANA JUVENILE COURTS TO FOLLOW SUIT.**

NEW ORLEANS—In a resolution signed by Chief Judge Candice Bates-Anderson on July 19, 2018, the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court adopted a new [policy](#) to stop charging administrative fees to families with youth in the delinquency system. The Court cited research that juvenile fees undermine the system's rehabilitative and public safety goals and yield little net revenue. According to the resolution, the new policy "will allow the Court to better serve the youth of Orleans Parish, their families, and the community."

Louisiana law authorizes courts to charge certain administrative fees to youth and their families in the juvenile justice system, including fees for probation supervision, public defenders, medical examinations, and care and treatment. As the Court's resolution notes, juvenile fees cause economic and social harm to youth and families. They can also be difficult and costly to collect, because many families cannot afford to pay them.

[Research](#) by the Policy Advocacy Clinic at the UC Berkeley School of Law documented how administrative fees are regressive and racially discriminatory, disproportionately harming low-income families and families of color. Even after controlling for underlying offense, the [researchers](#) found that families of color are liable for higher fees than families of White youth. In addition, criminologists have [found](#) that charging juvenile fees correlates with higher rates of recidivism.

According to Gina Womack, Executive Director of the Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children: "The Court's new policy will help reduce the harm to our youth and families, especially low-income families of color who are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. We look forward to working with Orleans and other courts to build on this reform and create a system in Louisiana that strengthens our community."

Aaron Clark-Rizzio, Executive Director of the Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights, praised the new policy while noting it applies only in Orleans Parish: “We are grateful to the Court for taking this important step in New Orleans, but we see court fees hurting vulnerable kids up and down the state. We hope other juvenile courts will follow the example of Orleans Parish to support youth and their families.”

Ahmed Lavalais, Clinical Teaching Fellow at Berkeley Law’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, which presented its [research findings](#) about juvenile fees in Louisiana and other states to the Court, said: “With this bold and commonsense action, Orleans Parish has become the first jurisdiction in the South to end the harmful and costly practice of charging juvenile fees. The Court should be commended for its leadership and serve as a model for the entire region.”

The Court’s new policy is effective June 20, 2018, and “encourages other Louisiana juvenile courts to end juvenile administrative fees in FINS [Families In Need of Services] and delinquency adjudications.”

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