

Contra Costa to Refund Juvenile Hall Fees to Parents of Kids Found Not Guilty



Contra Costa County has unlawfully charged more than 500 parents for the cost of holding their kids in juvenile hall. (*Sukey Lewis/KQED*)

By **Sukey Lewis** DECEMBER 13, 2017

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Contra Costa County will give refunds to hundreds of families who were unlawfully charged fees while their children were held in juvenile hall.

Over the past year, the county's probation department has reviewed 8,157 accounts going back to 2010 and found that 520 families were charged fees for the costs of detaining their kids in juvenile hall, even though the child was never found guilty in juvenile court.

Supervisor John Gioia said refunding these fees, which amount to about \$160,000, is about "removing a burden on families and instead supporting them to be successful."

"The greater community benefit is correcting a wrong that should never have occurred and acknowledging that we want to right that wrong," Gioia said Wednesday.

The refunds were approved Tuesday by the county Board of Supervisors, which promised to look into whether refunds should also be made covering the period from 1991 through 2009.

Last year, Contra Costa was among the [first](#) California counties to stop the practice of collecting juvenile fees, after a [study](#) from the policy advocacy clinic at UC Berkeley law school drew attention to the disproportionate impact of these fees on poor and minority families.

Then, in October, Gov. Jerry Brown signed SB 190 into law, barring counties from charging parents for the costs of locking up and monitoring their children.

Now, Contra Costa County is also forgiving \$8.8 million in unpaid juvenile fee debt.

Timothy Ewell, the county's administrator, urged people who think they have been improperly charged to contact the [county's probation department](#) with questions or to file a claim.

The county will begin sending out refund notifications to families in January 2018.