

CJA VOUCHERS — GETTING PAID MORE FASTER

The key to an appointed attorney getting paid quicker and with fewer reductions is in preparing the voucher and the supporting documentation. The time to start preparing the voucher is not when the case is completed but at the time of the initial appointment. Here are ten helpful pointers to assist the CJA attorney in this process.

1. **USE THE FILLABLE INTERACTIVE FORMS AND WORKSHEETS.** These will perform the mathematical computations, which eliminates mathematical errors and expedites review by the CJA Administrator by eliminating the need to do a mathematical check. Also, since they are computer generated and printed, they are legible. [While it is not necessary to type the forms, if they are handwritten *they must be legible. Do not make the reviewer work at deciphering.*]
2. **KEEP ACCURATE CONTEMPORANEOUS TIME RECORDS.** Here the interactive worksheets can help. At the beginning of the case the appropriate worksheets may be created and the necessary entries made as work is performed. Not only does this meet the requirement to maintain contemporaneous records but also makes completion of the voucher at the conclusion of the case easier and quicker.
3. **SEPARATE TASKS INTO DISCRETE ENTRIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.** Do not aggregate tasks, even if related, into a single block of time. For example, when preparing a motion, *to the extent possible and feasible*, separate the time spent researching legal issues, reviewing documents, interviewing the client or witness, and preparing affidavits from the preparation of the motion itself, not lump them all together under a generic “preparing motion” entry. You want the judge to see the component parts that were essential to the finished product to justify the time expended. However, where the related work is *de minimis, e.g.*, a couple of minutes taken to check a citation, segregation may not be feasible.
4. **ENTRIES SUFFICIENTLY DETAILED.** Where a description of the services is required, be sure that it is sufficiently detailed to indicate the services were necessary to an effective defense and the amount of time expended reasonable. The Instructions/Guidelines for Completing CJA Worksheets, Appendix 9 to the *CJA Compensation Policy Manual* contains examples of various entries. The detail furnished must also be consistent with the requirements of the canons of ethics, work product rule, and any applicable confidentiality restrictions.
5. **PROPERLY CLASSIFY TIME AND EXPENSE ITEMS.** Misclassifying a time or expense can result in delays and/or disallowance. For example, a necessary justification may be omitted requiring return of the voucher by the CJA Administrator or the CJA Administrator may be looking for a justification that is unnecessary (either the description of the service provided or the classification may indicate a justification is required and if either does, the CJA Administrator will be looking for the necessary justification or backup statement).
6. **KEEP AND PROVIDE RECEIPTS FOR EXPENSES.** Using the interactive worksheets right from the beginning and keeping copies of all receipts in a single “case” folder can be of material assistance in ensuring that necessary receipts are available at the end of the case. Although receipts are necessary only for certain expenses, *e.g.*, subsistence expenses regardless of amount, other travel expenses in excess of \$25.00,

couriers and special deliveries, outside copy expenses, and non-travel expenses in excess of \$50.00, providing receipts for other expenses is encouraged.

7. PROVIDE ADEQUATE JUSTIFICATION. Where a time or expense exceeds a presumptive maximum a statement justifying the excess and adequately supporting the requested amount is a must. After reading the statement, ask yourself if you would allow the claimed time or expense assuming it is all you have to go on; after all it is the only thing the reviewer is going to have to go on. If the reviewing judge has to contact you to get additional supporting information, at best processing will be delayed and, at worst, compensation denied. [The best time for preparing this justification is at the same time that the time or expense is recorded on the worksheet. The circumstances or reasons will still be fresh in your memory and will expedite preparation of the voucher.]

8. ATTACH ALL FUNDING ORDERS AND TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS. Where prior approval was obtained, attach the order. If court authorization is required but not previously obtained, attach the necessary statement that not only justifies the additional expense but also why the services could not await prior authorization. [Because it is always safer to ask permission than beg forgiveness, obtaining prior approval should be the norm and seeking after the fact authorization the exception.]

9. DOCUMENTS IN THE PROPER SEQUENCE. In reviewing vouchers, the reviewer will be looking for materials in a particular sequence. If a required document is out of sequence it may not be found, which can result in return of the voucher, a request for further information, or denial of compensation or reimbursement.

10. USE THE CHECKLIST. Before submitting, review the voucher package against the checklist to make sure all is there and in order, *i.e.*, all the items are checked either “Yes” or “N/A”