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What You Need to Know

A program of Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

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What You Need to Know About Court Costs and Fees - HELP4TN Blog

Generally, people using the civil court system in Tennessee must pay fees and costs for the privilege of using the courts. However, in situations of extreme financial hardship, some people cannot afford these fees and costs. In those circumstances, a judge may allow you to use the courts without paying the fees and costs up front if you meet certain requirements.

How to Ask the Judge for Help:

If you cannot afford to pay the court fees and costs, you may ask the court to let you use the court system without paying up front. To do so, you must file a form, the "Uniform Civil Affidavit of Indigency" form, with the court at the time you file any other court document (such as a complaint, civil warrant, motion or petition). A judge will review the Affidavit form and will either grant or deny your request.

Where to Get the Affidavit Form for Free:

The Uniform Civil Affidavit of Indigency form is available for free at all courthouses in Tennessee. In addition, the form is available for free at several places online:

- * The [Tennessee Courts website](#): Next to "**Request to Postpone Filing Fee and Order (Uniform Civil Affidavit of Indigency)**", select "Fillable PDF" to fill the form in online or to print it.
- * The local county courts' website
- * The [HELP4TN.org website](#): Select "[Help with Legal Forms](#)" and then "[Uniform Affidavit of Indigency](#)" form. You can use the HELP4TN Bot to fill in the form. Fill in the questions asked in the Bot by typing in the text box or speaking to the Bot using the microphone button.

How to Complete the Affidavit Form:

The Affidavit form asks you to fill in basic information about yourself, your dependents (such as your children, if any), your job, income, expenses, and debts. Some items ask for a "fair market

value" (FMV) estimate of its current value (such as what your car is currently worth). Fill in your best estimate.

You must sign the form under oath and subject to penalty of perjury if the information that you put on the form is not accurate or complete.

The judge will fill out the bottom portion of the form after she or he makes a decision and order on your request.

Who Pays the Court Fees and Costs and When?

Generally, when a judge allows you to use the court system without paying the court fees and costs up front, those fees and costs must be paid at some point. The judge will decide who--you or the other party or parties--must pay those fees and costs. Usually, that decision, and the required payment, happens at the end of the matter.

This blog is not legal advice, but it is legal information to help you learn about your rights. Need more help? HELP4TN free legal helpline has attorneys ready to answer your questions. Give us a call at 844-435-7486.

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