

31.211 Determination of ability to pay partial fee for representation and services at arraignment -- Collection of unpaid partial fee by civil judgment -- Funds placed in special trust and agency account.

- (1) At arraignment, the court shall conduct a nonadversarial hearing to determine whether a person who has requested a public defender is able to pay a partial fee for legal representation, the other necessary services and facilities of representation, and court costs. The court shall order payment in an amount determined by the court and may order that the payment be made in a lump sum or by installment payments to recover money for representation provided under this chapter. This partial fee determination shall be made at each stage of the proceedings.
- (2) If the partial fee, or any portion thereof, is not paid by the due date, the court's order shall be considered a civil judgment subject to collection under Civil Rule 69.03 and KRS Chapter 426.
- (3) All moneys collected by the public advocate from indigent defendants pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall be credited to the Department of Public Advocacy special trust and agency account to be used to support the state public advocacy system.
- (4) If a person receives legal assistance or other benefit under this chapter to which he or she is not entitled or if a person receives legal assistance under this chapter and is financially able to pay for representation on the date the suit is brought, the public advocate, on behalf of the Commonwealth, shall recover, where practical, payment or reimbursement, as the case may be, from the person who received the legal assistance or from his or her estate. Any suit seeking recovery under this subsection shall be brought within five (5) years after the date on which the aid was received.
- (5) Attorneys providing representation under this chapter shall forward all information that indicates that payment or reimbursement may be obtained pursuant to subsection (4) of this section to the public advocate.
- (6) The duty of recovery contemplated by subsection (4) of this section shall extend against persons who were the custodial parents or guardians of unemancipated minors at the time these minors were deemed needy as defined in KRS 31.100(5)(c) or (d).
- (7) All moneys collected under this section shall be placed in a special trust and agency account for the Department of Public Advocacy, and, notwithstanding KRS 45.229, the funds shall not lapse.

Effective: July 15, 2026

History: Amended 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 136, sec. 6, effective July 15, 2026. -- Amended 2023 Ky. Acts ch. 144, sec. 2, effective July 1, 2024. -- Amended 2014 Ky. Acts ch. 87, sec. 8, effective July 15, 2014. -- Created 2002 Ky. Acts ch. 283, sec. 14, effective July 15, 2002.