

Court Reporters Board - Transcript Reimbursement Fund Temporary Shutdown

FAQs

What is the TRF and how does it work?

The Transcript Reimbursement Fund is unique to California, and provides reimbursement for transcripts to qualified indigent litigants in civil cases. Court reporters provide verbatim transcripts of judicial proceedings and take responsibility for their accuracy. The Legislature created the fund in 1981, and the Court Reporters Board of California has operated the program since then. The fund is financed through court reporters' annual license renewal fees. For more than 30 years, the fund has played an integral part in helping provide access to justice for some of the most vulnerable Californians. To date, the fund has reimbursed transcription costs totaling more than \$9 million.

Who is eligible and who will be affected by the shutdown?

Qualified indigent litigants in pro bono (no attorney fees) and pro per (litigant represents his or herself) civil cases are eligible. In addition to pro per litigants, applicants include pro bono attorneys, qualified legal services projects, qualified support centers and other qualified projects. Any new or unapproved applicant to the pro bono or pro per programs will be affected.

How did the board allow this to happen?

The board is required to stop transfers to the fund when its overall budget reserve falls below six months. Although previous reports indicated that the board's fund condition would not fall below six months in reserve until fiscal year 2017-18, a new analysis showed the drop in fiscal year 2016-17. The funding that previously existed in the TRF account from prior transfers has now been exhausted due to the popularity of the program. This means the board will no longer be accepting applications to the fund for the pro bono and the pro per programs until restorative measures put in motion by the board have been put in place.

What is the state doing about it?

As part of the restorative measures, the board voted to increase license fees. This requires a change to the regulations which the board is working proactively with DCA and the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency to finalize.

When will the TRF accept and pay claims again?

Applicants may reapply when funding is again solvent. The board will notify all affected parties either by email or letter of the temporary shutdown and will add the appropriate

information and updates to the “Consumers” tab on the board’s website. The board will not be able to process applications until restorative measures are put in place. As part of these measures, the board voted to increase license fees. This requires a change to the regulations which the board is working proactively to finalize, but generally can take over a year to complete.

Litigants need transcripts for appeals. How will this affect the appeals process?

The board understands the financial burden that could potentially be placed on qualified litigants who are unable to secure other means to pay for transcripts. The board is sensitive to the challenges this poses and has made reestablishing the fund a priority. The TRF is a very important part of what the board does, and the board has taken the necessary steps to resolve the funding issue as soon as possible, but this does require a change in regulations which generally can take over a year to complete.

What is the status of my application?

All TRF applications that have not yet been approved by the board will be returned. Provisionally approved applications are expected to be funded. The board will not be able to process applications until restorative measures are put in place. The board is working proactively to finalize the regulatory process, which is necessary to increase license fees. Updates will be available on the board’s website.

Will I have to reapply with new paperwork when there’s money available?

Yes, you will have to submit a new application form and required documentation.

How will I know there is money available again?

Updates will be added to the board’s website. You can also be added to the board’s email notification list by visiting the website’s consumer section at www.dca.ca.gov/webapps/crb/subscribe.php.