

COMMON REASONS FOR ATTORNEY VOUCHER RETURNS

This tip sheet will help CJA lawyers reduce voucher returns for corrections or clarifications. Below are the most common reasons vouchers are returned.

LATE VOUCHER

Submit a voucher within forty-five days of disposition of the case. If a voucher is submitted outside the 45-day window, provide an explanation for the late submission.

VAGUE ENTRIES

Avoid vague or general descriptions such as “review” or “research.” The auditor has no way of determining whether vague entries are compensable or whether similar entries are duplicates.

STATE COURT REFERENCES

When referencing a “prosecutor” or “ASA,” explain how the interaction with the state was related to the federal case. The Government cannot reimburse for work performed on a state case.

TRAVEL QUESTIONS

Explain travel time that does not correspond with mileage (i.e. billing an hour of travel time for a four-mile trip). Be careful not to double-bill travel to another CJA case. Bill all mileage and time related to a trip to a single CJA case. Do not pro-rate with another CJA case.

WRONG SERVICE TYPE

List time spent preparing for in-court representation under the appropriate service type. The “in-court” service type is reserved for time actually spent in court.

FAILS TO GROUP SIMILAR TASKS

Instead of charging 0.1 for each similar short task performed on the same day (i.e. phone calls, texts, emails, or other correspondence), reasonably bundle tasks to accurately reflect time worked.

INCOMPLETE DISCOVERY DESCRIPTION

Provide a brief description of the discovery reviewed. Merely writing “discovery review” may result in: a voucher return; a request for a description of the discovery; or an entry tagged as a possible duplicate.

INTERIM PAYMENT

Do not request an interim payment without attaching an authorization.

INCLUDES SERVICES OF A PERSONAL NATURE

Do not seek compensation for performing services of a personal nature such as disposition of personal property, depositing money into a prisoner account, representation in a custody hearing, or executing conditions of probation.

NO MEMO TO EXCEED THE CAP

If a voucher exceeds the statutory cap, attach a memorandum for the judge explaining why the representation was extended and complex and why additional payment is necessary to provide fair compensation.

DUPLICATE ENTRIES

Avoid voucher entries that are, or appear to be, duplicates. Many returns can be avoided by reasonably bundling similar tasks, providing sufficient descriptions in voucher entries, viewing the voucher entries in chronological order before submitting, or by explaining that similar voucher entries are not duplicates.