

RCW 10.01.180 Fine or costs—Default in payment—Contempt of court—Enforcement, collection procedures.

(1) A defendant sentenced to pay any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs who willfully defaults in the payment thereof or of any installment is in contempt of court as provided in chapter 7.21 RCW. The court may issue a warrant of arrest for his or her appearance.

(2) When any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or assessment of costs is imposed on a corporation or unincorporated association, it is the duty of the person authorized to make disbursement from the assets of the corporation or association to pay the obligation from those assets, and his or her failure to do so may be held to be contempt.

(3) (a) The court shall not sanction a defendant for contempt based on failure to pay fines, penalties, assessments, fees, or costs unless the court finds, after a hearing and on the record, that the failure to pay is willful. A failure to pay is willful if the defendant has the current ability to pay but refuses to do so.

(b) In determining whether the defendant has the current ability to pay, the court shall inquire into and consider: (i) The defendant's income and assets; (ii) the defendant's basic living costs as defined by RCW 10.101.010 and other liabilities including child support and other legal financial obligations; and (iii) the defendant's bona fide efforts to acquire additional resources. A defendant who is indigent as defined in RCW 10.01.160(3) is presumed to lack the current ability to pay.

(c) If the court determines that the defendant is homeless or a person who is mentally ill, as defined in RCW 71.24.025, failure to pay a legal financial obligation is not willful contempt and shall not subject the defendant to penalties.

(4) If a term of imprisonment for contempt for nonpayment of any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs is ordered, the term of imprisonment shall be set forth in the commitment order, and shall not exceed one day for each \$25 of the amount ordered, 30 days if the amount ordered of costs was imposed upon conviction of a violation or misdemeanor, or one year in any other case, whichever is the shorter period. A person committed for nonpayment of any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs shall be given credit toward payment for each day of imprisonment at the rate specified in the commitment order.

(5) If it appears to the satisfaction of the court that the default in the payment of any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs is not willful contempt, the court may, and if the defendant is indigent as defined in RCW 10.01.160(3), the court shall enter an order: (a) Allowing the defendant additional time for payment; (b) reducing the amount thereof or of each installment; (c) revoking the fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs or the unpaid portion thereof in whole or in part; or (d) converting the unpaid fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs to community restitution hours, if the jurisdiction operates a community restitution program, at the rate of no less than the state minimum wage established in RCW 49.46.020 for each hour of community restitution.

(6) A default in the payment of any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs or any installment thereof may be collected by any means authorized by law for the enforcement of a judgment. The levy of execution for the collection of any fine, penalty, assessment, fee, or costs shall not discharge a defendant committed to imprisonment for contempt until the amount has actually been collected. [2023 c 449 s

12; 2022 c 260 s 15; 2018 c 269 s 8; 2010 c 8 s 1006; 1989 c 373 s 13; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 96 s 3.]

Effective date—2023 c 449: See note following RCW 13.40.058.

Construction—Effective date—2022 c 260: See notes following RCW 3.66.120.

Construction—2018 c 269: See note following RCW 10.82.090.

Fine and costs—Collection procedure, commitment for failure to pay, execution against defendant's property: Chapter 10.82 RCW.