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Auditor of Public Accounts

Commonwealth of Virginia

Auditor of Public Accounts

P.O. Box 1295
Richmond, Virginia 23218

April 2, 2019

The Honorable Jeffrey P. Bennett
Chief Judge
County of Bedford Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
P. O. Box 178
Amherst, VA 24521

Audit Period: July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018
Court System: County of Bedford
Judicial District: Twenty-Fourth

We are performing a statewide audit of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts. During our review of this court, we conducted certain audit procedures, as we deemed appropriate.

Management of this court is an important part of the court's accountability, since you are responsible for establishing and maintaining internal controls and complying with applicable laws and regulations. During our review, we noted certain matters that required management's attention and corrective action. These matters included:

Properly Bill and Collect Court Costs

Repeat: Yes (first issued in fiscal year 2017)

The Clerk and her staff did not properly bill and collect court costs. In 27 cases tested, we noted the following errors.

- In three cases, paternity blood test fees totaling \$630 were miscoded as local rather than state.
- In one case, the defendant was not charged \$129 in court appointed attorney fees.
- In one case, the defendant was overcharged \$94 in court costs.

The Clerk and her staff should correct the specific cases noted above and institute a more diligent system of review to minimize the likelihood of billing errors going undetected. In all cases, the Clerk should bill and collect court costs in accordance with the Code of Virginia.

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Properly Complete Waivers

Repeat: No

The Clerk and her staff did not have proper supporting documentation for attorney payments. Court appointed attorneys may request additional payments in excess of the statutory cap by submitting detailed waiver applications and detailed timesheets for approval by the Chief and Presiding Judges. In two of eight invoices tested, the signatures of neither the Presiding nor the Chief Judge were present, which would indicate approval of the additional payments.

The Clerk should ensure all proper signatures are present and waivers are completed in full and retained with the appropriate case files as required by Court Appointed Counsel Procedures and Guidelines Manual.

We acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the Clerk and her staff during this engagement.

AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

MSM:vks

cc: The Honorable Robert Louis Harrison, Jr., Judge
Stacey T. Arrington, Clerk
Paul F. DeLosh, Director of Judicial Services
Supreme Court of Virginia