

How much does it cost to have a court trial?



Criminal Trial - You against the State or Federal Government

Civil Trial - You against another person

Free Publication by Self Defense Fund

National Association For Legal Gun Defense

The Cost of Defending a Criminal or Civil Case in Court

A criminal case is when a State or the Federal government files charges against you when another person is injured or dies. Generally you will be charged with murder or manslaughter. The government has unlimited attorney money and time to attack you.

Civil litigation is a formal judicial process whereby disputes between two parties are resolved through the court system.

SDF membership gives you unlimited attorney fees plus one million or ten million dollars for trial cost as listed below and further described in this publication.

- a) Criminal litigation. (Includes all court cost)
- b) Civil litigation. (Includes all court cost)
- c) Case appeals up to and including State Appeals Court and US Supreme Court (Includes all court cost)
- d) Expert witness. (If needed)
- e) Certified scientific forensic testing lab. (If needed)
- f) Private investigator. (If needed)
- g) Immediate cash for a Bail Bond up to One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00)
- h) Transportation impounded. (Towing and impound fees paid up to 30 days)
- i) Victim rights. (You have the right to counter sue your attacker to recover your losses)
- j) Reimbursement up to Five Hundred Dollars per day (\$500) for every day you are in trial.
- k) Personal Crisis Manager
- l) Civil Judgement – Supersedeas Bond for the actual amount of the judgment (Optimum Plan Only)

Average Criminal or Civil Trial Cost – Non Member

The typical death penalty trial cost nearly \$1.3 million, while a non-death trial cost about \$600 thousand.

	Defense Attorney	Legal Assistant	PI Defense Investigation	Expert Witness	Court Cost	Bail Bond Expenses	TOTAL Cost
Murder or Manslaughter	\$672,000	\$386,000	\$38,000	\$49,000	\$55,000	\$25,000	\$1,225,000
Non-Death	\$320,000	\$160,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$35,000	\$15,000	\$570,000

Trial Cost for a SDF Member

	Defense Attorney	Legal Assistant	PI Defense Investigation	Expert Witness	Court Cost	Bail Bond Expenses	TOTAL Cost
Murder or Manslaughter	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Non-Death	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

How Much Does a Typical Trial Cost?

There really is no “typical” exact way to know since the facts and complexity of each case are different and therefore what is needed to bring or defend a case vary so much.

However, more importantly, an inexpensive trial - i.e. a simple case, with few or no experts required - usually costs \$25,000+ just in terms of lawyer, court, transcription, copying, etc. costs. Once you add in expert witness fees, it's easy to see that a more complex case anywhere could cost upwards of \$50,000 dollars; and it's not uncommon for a large case, which could involve multiple attorneys or hundreds of attorney hours, to cost \$100,000 or more.

Attorney Legal Fees for Criminal Defense

Depending on what part of the country the case is in, and the attorney's experience and level of expertise, a standard rate for a criminal lawyer will range from \$250 to \$400 per hour. Since a trial can take upwards of 200 hours - sometimes significantly upwards! - attorney fees can get very high very quickly.

Expert Witness Fees

A major expenditure is expert witness fees. Experts don't come cheap, and some injury cases can involve multiple experts such as engineers to testify about a weapon. Self-defense reconstruction professionals to testify about how an incident occurred. For non-death cases medical professionals to testify about injuries and medical treatment. Even accountants to testify as to lost income or wages. Experts can get several thousand dollars for working on a single case.

Administrative Fees

There are transcription, copying, messenger, and delivery costs. Lawsuits are document-intensive, and hiring a court reporter to take depositions, making copies of transcripts or voluminous medical reports, and sending documents around in various high-priority, guaranteed-delivery ways all add up over the course of an injury case.

Court Filing Fees

There are court and filing fees, including the cost of service of process. These expenses might be a few hundred dollars, but over the course of a trial, the total costs in this area can mount up to another several hundred or even several thousand dollars.

Miscellaneous Expenses

There are other out-of-pocket costs, such as travel costs for lawyers and witnesses. If anyone needs to fly, rent cars, stay overnight, etc., these expenses can add up quickly.

Cost in Time and Money for You

Another important consideration is the amount of time it takes to resolve a matter through the court system. You have to show up in court each time and if the State prosecutor in a criminal case or the plaintiff in a civil case chooses to go all the way in court, it may be years before the criminal trial ends or in a civil judgement is award is actually paid.