

**OFFSITE CASH PAYMENT (OCP) PROJECT:
AN ARIZONA COURTS FAIR JUSTICE INITIATIVE**

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Offsite Cash Payment (OCP) Project: An Arizona Courts Fair Justice Initiative

Background

In March of 2020, the Supreme Court of Arizona's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) launched a new service for court customers to make cash payments through the PayNearMe® network at retail locations throughout the state and nation. The introduction of this cash payment option is the latest in a series of innovative programs designed to fulfill major tenets of the Arizona Supreme Court's strategic agenda¹ and Fair Justice initiative², which include technological solutions to encourage court re-engagement.

In addition to offering reasonable payment plans and savings on collection fees, establishment of the offsite payment option is another way the judicial system can increase compliance. Many courts offer a variety of payment methods (cash, checks, and credit cards at the courthouse, credit/debit cards on online payment portals, and checks via the mail). But, what about those court customers who are "unbanked" or prefer to pay cash and live far away from the court? In 2017, the FDIC reported that about 6.5% of the public (8.4 million households) is "un-banked" and only uses cash for their financial transactions³. The Arizona courts believe in the importance of inclusion and the need to meet a wide variety of customer financial situations.

OCP Model: Customer Service and System Design

In this context, the Arizona Judicial Branch took the next step and implemented the statewide Offsite Cash Payment (OCP) program through the PayNearMe® network. This program provides court customers a secure and convenient method to pay court financial obligations with cash, without visiting the courthouse. Customers make payments at well-known retailers like 7-11, Family Dollar, and other participating stores at any time, including at night, on weekends and on holidays. There are over 27,000 participating retailers nationwide. The Supreme Court's Administrative Order authorizing the Offsite Cash Payment program and other methods of payments may be found in Appendix A.

¹ *Justice for the Future: Planning for Excellence*, Supreme Court of Arizona, 2019.

² *Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Fair Justice for All: Court-Ordered Fines, Fees, Penalties, and Pretrial Release Policies*, Supreme Court of Arizona, 2016.

³ <https://www.fdic.gov/householdsurvey/>.

The payment amount displays in the court's case management system within 30 minutes and the monies are receipted into the court's bank account within three business days, akin to the way the court processes credit card payments.

The process is tied together as customers get an OCP bar code, either from their collection notice or from the AOC's payment website, www.azcourtpay.com. Every bar code is unique to a court case and links back to the court's case management system and bank account. An example of the bar codes can be found in Appendix B.

Once the customer has their OCP bar code, they can visit a participating retailer. The cashier scans the bar code and receives the customer's cash payment. The customer is given a receipt and the process is complete.

The Arizona's courts' program supports customer payments in criminal and civil cases, including traffic matters, and in juvenile cases. The collected money goes towards outstanding court-ordered financial obligations such as victim restitution, court fines and fees and deferred filing fees.

Currently, Arizona's offsite cash payment program does not accept payments for warrants, probation supervision payments, child support, or other family court costs and the court must have entered a final disposition in the case. Although PayNearMe® allows multiple forms of payment in its other partnerships, such as utility billing, Arizona's courts' program is presently a cash-only payment service. Arizona customers using PayNearMe® pay a \$2.99 fee to the vendor to process up to \$1,000 for each payment made through the service.

Program Implementation

While the process for the customer is simple, implementing this court payment program statewide was complex in many respects. Arizona has 178 courts participating, each with their own bank accounts. One important objective of this project was that payments made at the retailers would be transmitted directly to the court's case management system within 30 minutes and into the court's bank account within 3 days. It is imperative that this process be accurate. PayNearMe® has a robust payment compliance methodology which ensures that payments made at retailers go directly into the correct accounts. Thus, every court's contact and banking information was double-checked to ensure integrity and various tests were performed on test cases to ensure that the process worked accurately end-to-end (retailer to court's case management system to the court's bank account).

While the banking process was being completed for 178 courts, the AOC launched a four-court pilot project to ensure the project met expectations. Courts participating in the pilot project included Scottsdale Municipal, Glendale Municipal, Flagstaff Municipal and the Superior Court in Yuma County.

The AOC developed training materials and trained staff at the pilot courts. The AOC also worked with PayNearMe® to develop printed marketing materials (posters, business cards, website graphics, etc.) to be posted at courts, informing customers about this new service. Examples of these materials can be found in Appendix C. In the weeks before the project went live statewide, the project manager held two project overviews via WebEx (reaching 150 court staff) and five training sessions via WebEx, reaching over 400 court staff throughout the state.

Supreme Court's COVID-19 Pandemic Response

When the AOC started planning for this project back in 2019, the focus was on making cash payments easier for all, especially those who are unbanked or underbanked. However, when implementation happened in March, limitations to on-site court services occurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Although the offsite cash payment program had been in development for months, having options to conduct business outside of courthouses become a high priority. For those paying customers looking for an alternative that does not require entering a courthouse, the PayNearMe® network has emerged as a safe, timely, and user-friendly option during the pandemic.

Emerging Trends: Preliminary Program Data

Since the launch of the Arizona courts' program on March 13, 2020, some interesting trends have begun to emerge. Preliminary data provides insights into how customers use the program (March 13 – May 31, 2020):

- Offsite cash payments have been received by 81 courts
- Half of the courts in the "payment top-10" are in rural counties
- 98% of the cash payments are for limited jurisdiction court cases (municipal/justice courts)
- The average cash payment receipted is \$169.22
- 27% of the payments are being used to pay off the case balance in full and the average payment amount is \$320
- 25% of the payments have been made at out-of-state retail locations

Conclusion and Future Directions

The Arizona Supreme Court is committed to developing and implementing technology solutions to increase a defendant's remote accessibility to court information and convenient payment methods. The PayNearMe® offsite cash payment program is an important next step in providing user-friendly, Fair Justice based payment options. The promising start realized in the offsite cash payment program gives the AOC confidence that this new payment method will be embraced by our customers, as a viable alternative to driving to courthouses to make cash payments and on-line payment systems requiring a bank account.

As the Supreme Court and local court staff continue to inform customers about the new payment option and customers benefit from the convenience of making cash payments closer to home, transaction volumes will likely continue to increase. The initial success of the program and rapid adoption by court customers has already led to requests for program expansion to other court services, including the collection of monthly probation supervision fees.

In the Winter 2019 (Vol 34, #4) issue of *Court Manager*, we discussed enhancements made to Arizona's Fines, Fees and Restitution Enforcement (FARE) program, and our latest statewide implementation, the FARE Compliance Assistance Program, also known as FARE CAP. All these Arizona Supreme Court's initiatives strive to meet these overarching goals: litigant re-engagement with the courts and compliance with monetary court orders.

APPENDIX A

Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Order 2019-78 authorizing Offsite Cash Payments as an accepted form of payment for court cases

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA

In the Matter of:)	
)	
FACILITATING THE IMPOSITION AND))	Administrative Order
COLLECTION OF COURT-ORDERED))	No. 2019 - <u>78</u>
FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS))	(Affecting Administrative
)	Order No. 2017-80)
)	

Administrative Order No. 2017-80 requires all courts to implement procedures to assist people in complying with court-imposed financial obligations in criminal and civil traffic cases.

In furtherance of this directive, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is establishing a program supporting offsite cash payments at retail establishments around the State of Arizona and an online payment website.

Therefore, pursuant to Article VI, Section 3, of the Arizona Constitution,

IT IS ORDERED that Section 2 of Administrative Order No. 2017-80 is amended as follows:

“Section 2. Accepting the following forms or means of payment for a court-ordered financial obligation:

- a. Cash;
- b. Credit and debit card;
- c. Cashier’s check, certified check, or other financial institution generated fund transfer instrument;
- d. Money order;
- e. Off-site cash payment through a vendor contracted with the AOC; and
- f. The web payment website – www.azcourtpay.com

In individual cases, forms of payment may be subject to reasonable restrictions and hold periods for clearance of funds.

If a court determines that an exception to the Minimum Accounting Standards of the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA) is needed to comply with this section, a request for exception may be submitted pursuant to the requirements of ACJA, Section 1-401(E)(1)(c).”

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that all courts display a link to www.azcourtpay.com on their website.

Dated this 10th day of July, 2019.

ROBERT M. BRUTINEL
Chief Justice

APPENDIX B

Bar codes can be found on collection notices or obtained through the Arizona courts' payment website, www.azcourtpay.com.

CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT PINA COUNTY
110 W Congress
Tucson, AZ 85701

Para leer las instrucciones en español, favor de ver el reverso de este aviso

09/04/2014

Case Number: CR2010100
Notice Number: 05 14247 0036
Balance Due: \$4,115.76

Notice of Delinquent Account

Contact the court for payment alternatives.

Our records indicate you have failed to comply with a court judgment. Please give this matter your prompt attention. If you fail to pay the amount due, the Court is prepared to take further collection actions. Your payment will avoid further sanctions, which may include additional collection fees, rejection of your vehicle registration renewal by MVD and interception of your Arizona tax refund or lottery winnings.

Payment Options:

- Pay by Internet / Pagar por Internet @ www.azcourtpay.com
- Pay by Phone / Pagar por Telefono 1-800-876-7627
- Pay in Person / Pagar en persona at Clerk of the Superior Court Pina County, 110 W Congress, Tucson, AZ 85701
- Pay by Mail / Pagar por correo by cashier's check or money order. Make payable to Clerk of the Superior Court Pina County, 110 W CONGRESS ROOM 125, Tucson, AZ 85701. Include your case # with the payment.
- Pay by Cash / Pagar por Efectivo at a location listed on the coupon below / en los locales indicados en las instrucciones a continuación.

Additional case information can be obtained at <http://www.courtsuperiorcourtaz.com/casos/> or by calling the Court at (520)734-4008.

CASH PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Take barcode and scan at participating stores
\$2.50 service fee per payment. Payments are cash only and good next business day. Find CVS Pharmacy, 7-Eleven, and Casey's General Store at paynowme.com/admap.

80083127772 PayNowMe

STORE INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 - Scan barcode
- 2 - Enter payment amount
- 3 - Take cash payment from customer
- 4 - Give customer transaction receipt

CVS Pharmacy 7-Eleven Casey's

Subject to PayNowMe, Inc. Terms of Use at paynowme.com/terms. Get help at paynowme.com/help.

Clerk of the Superior Court Pina County is open Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

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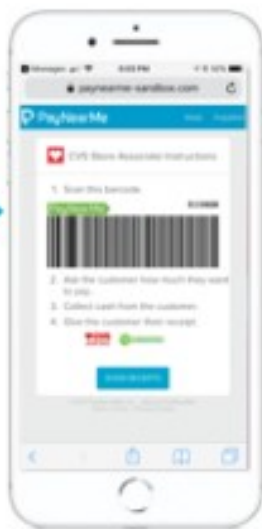
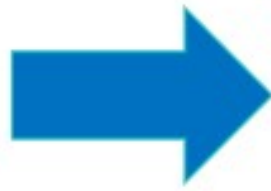
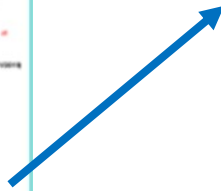
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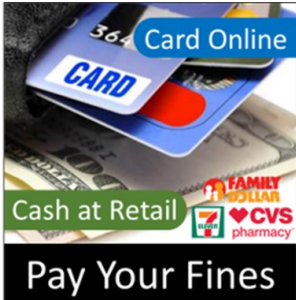


www.azcourtpay.com



APPENDIX C

Marketing materials provided to the courts



Website logo



Reverse side printed in Spanish

Business card with program details



Also available in Spanish

11"x17" Posters for lobby