

**Massachusetts Probation or Parole  
Georgia State University Information Sheet for Research Study**

**Study Title:** Community Corrections Fines and Fees: Qualitative Component

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**Sponsor:** Arnold Ventures

**INTRODUCTION**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand. This research is funded by Arnold Ventures.

**WHO IS DOING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

This study is being carried out by the Community Corrections Fines and Fees (CCFF) Research Study Team. The person in charge of this research study is Dr. Shytierra Gaston of Georgia State University's Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology. There may also be other people on the research team helping at different times during the study.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

The purpose of this research study is to explore how fines and fees impact or impacted you while you were on community supervision. Questions will ask you about the fines and fees you were ordered to pay, how you paid your fines and fees, and how these fines and fees impacted your community supervision and overall daily life.

**WHO WILL BE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

This study includes 25-50 individuals on or released within the past year from community supervision in Massachusetts. You are eligible to participate in this study because you:

- Are 18 years old or older
- Are currently on community supervision, or were released from community supervision within the last year
- Have been (or were) on community supervision for at least 6 months, and
- The agency which oversaw your community supervision is participating in the CCFF study

**WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY, AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**

You will be asked to complete a one-time interview that will take approximately 1 to 2 hours to complete. Interviews will be conducted via telephone or video conferencing software. If you agree, this interview will be audiotaped. The interview will focus on your experiences on probation or parole, including any warnings and/or violations you received, fines and/or fees you had to pay, payments you made to the court, and your supervision conditions. You will also be asked questions about your background, employment, transportation availability, income, and monthly expenses. After the interview, you will be asked to provide the names of three to five

people who were significant in supporting you while you have been or were under community supervision. Providing these names is voluntary.

### **ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by being in this research study. However, some questions could make you feel uncomfortable. You can skip any questions that you don't want to answer or stop the interview at any time.

Additionally, although we make every effort to ensure that your responses remain confidential, there is a chance your data could be seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it if something goes wrong. The researcher cannot promise that information sent by the internet or email will be private because of the vulnerable nature of the internet. We are minimizing this risk by:

- Storing all electronic data in a secure password-protected, encrypted folder
- Not transmitting or sharing files among study staff via email
- Requiring study staff to undergo confidentiality training
- Keeping consent forms and interview data in separate places
- Storing paper consent forms and other paper study files in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office
- Password-protecting individual files that contain personal information

### **ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. But, being in this study may help the Community Corrections Fines & Fees Study understand how fines and fees impact individuals on community supervision and their loved ones. Likewise, you will not be penalized in any way if you choose not to complete the survey. There are no costs associated with participation. Your current or prior supervision agency will NOT be aware of your participation.

### **WHAT WILL YOU GET BECAUSE OF BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

By completing a research interview, you will receive a \$50 VISA gift card as a thank you for your time.

### **DO YOU HAVE CHOICES ABOUT TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

If you do not want to take part in this research study, you may simply not participate. This interview is completely voluntary. Participating in this study or not, will not affect your relationships with your probation/parole officer or with Georgia State University. You are free to skip questions or discontinue the interview at any time, even after you begin. When reporting study results, your answers will be combined with other participants to further protect your anonymity. If you choose not to participate, please inform the interviewer now.

You can choose whether this interview is recorded. If you allow the interview to be recorded, only the audio will be captured, whenever possible. Only study staff will have access to recordings. Recordings will be transcribed and during the transcription process any potentially identifying information will be removed. At the end of this study, the recording containing your voice will be deleted. If you do NOT want your interview to be recorded, please inform the interviewer now.

## **HOW WILL YOUR RESEARCH INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Information about you will be kept private. We will ensure confidentiality is maintained through the following methods:

- Your interview answers will be associated with a unique number rather than your personal data. Files containing both the unique number and your personal data will be stored separately from your interview information.
- The data from this research study may be published; but you will not be identified by name. If we refer to your responses, we will not use your real name and will remove any identifying information first.
- Only members of the research team will be able to access your survey responses via a secure username and password. This is so we can analyze the data and conduct the study. Information will be stored in a password protected OneDrive folder at Georgia State University. People at your community supervision agency will NOT have access to your responses.
- Agents of Georgia State University and Arnold Ventures may request to inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes. This is to ensure we are following laws and ethical guidelines governing research.
- Our funding agency requires us to make our transcripts be public indefinitely so other researchers can use it once the study is finished. This public dataset will NOT include any identifying information. We will examine all files and clean them by hand to ensure that no Identifying information is present prior to sending them for archiving.
- Identifiable study data will not be used or shared for future research studies.
- Audio files will be transcribed without the inclusion of identifiable information. All audio will then be deleted once data collection and analyses for the project ends.
- Paper files will be shredded when the study is complete. The only exception to this is that signed consent forms must be kept for 3 years following the end of the study. Then they will be destroyed in 2025.
- No confidential data will be transmitted through email.

The identity of participants and information about them will be kept confidential, unless the authorities have to be notified about abuse or immediate harm that may come to the participant or others. For example, if the investigator learns about abuse of a child or elderly person or that you intend to harm yourself or someone else, or about certain communicable diseases, they will report that to the proper authorities. If keeping information private would immediately put you or someone else in danger, the researchers would release information to protect you or another person.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator(s), Arnold Ventures, Georgia State University, or its agents from liability for negligence.

## **WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Dr. Shytierra Gaston at [sgaston9@gsu.edu](mailto:sgaston9@gsu.edu) or (828) 482-5603 or (978) 315-0550.

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

No one has to be in this research study. This survey is completely voluntary. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have. You are free to skip questions or exit the survey at any time, even after you begin. You may start and then change your mind. To stop being in the study or have your answers removed after they are submitted, you should tell Dr. Shytierra Gaston at [sgaston9@gsu.edu](mailto:sgaston9@gsu.edu). When reporting survey results, your answers will be combined with other participants to further protect your anonymity.

**HOW WILL THIS RESEARCH STUDY AFFECT YOUR LEGAL STATUS?**

Being in this study or refusing to be in this study will have NO EFFECT on any court case, probation or parole you may be involved with. You will also NOT get in trouble for refusing to participate and you will NOT get special privileges if you agree.

BY TAKING PART IN THIS INTERVIEW YOU INDICATE YOUR CONSENT FOR YOUR ANSWERS TO BE USED IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUR REFERENCE.

**CONSENT TO AUDIOTAPE**

YES, you may audiotape my interview

NO, I do NOT want you to audiotape my interview

**CONSENT TO PARTICPATE**

Check here to indicate that the interviewee gave verbal consent to participate

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Signature of Person Obtaining Verbal Consent

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Date