



The Cost of Freedom

Innocence cases are complex, challenging and costly – often taking five to seven years and hundreds of man-hours to reach exoneration.

For Derrick Williams the process began in the summer of 2006 when his sister-in-law wrote to the Innocence Project of Florida (IPF) asking for assistance. Derrick had been convicted of the 1992 rape of a Palmetto, Florida woman. IPF spent five years working on Derrick's case – expending more than 1,800 hours of the attorneys' time to unlock the truth for him.

Task	Approximate Attorney Hours for Derrick Williams' Case
Gathering and reviewing thousands of pages of case documents	385
Conducting prison visits, meetings and calls with client	52
Preparing the motion to obtain DNA testing, which the State Attorney's Office initially opposed	140
Preparing for the hearing to get DNA testing and the eventual settlement with the State Attorney's Office	140
Facilitating the DNA testing with the laboratory	70
Preparing the motion to vacate the conviction in which the court set a two-day evidentiary hearing	140
Investigations and taking depositions of witnesses prior to the evidentiary hearing	301
Preparing for the evidentiary hearing and court appearance	560
Facilitating exoneration	35
Total	1,823

Note: This list does not include the hundreds of hours spent by IPF volunteers and interns, Intake Coordinator and Director of Social Services in providing services and support to Derrick.

At any given time, IPF attorneys are litigating dozens of cases, have hundreds of cases in the document collection and investigation phase and more than one hundred cases awaiting review.

In addition to staff salaries, IPF also spent more than \$20,000 on DNA testing, investigations, expert witnesses and travel associated with Derrick's case. In addition to the legal services, IPF provided Derrick transitional assistance—helping him re-integrate into a changed society after 18 years in prison. IPF provides all of our services free of charge to our clients.

Derrick Williams' case was hindered by the fact that the Manatee County Sheriff's Office illegally destroyed most of the evidence, including the rape kit and an exculpatory hair recovered at the crime scene. Fortunately, the t-shirt worn by the perpetrator was stored at the Clerk of the Court's Office. Although DNA testing revealed a mixture of individuals who had worn the shirt, Derrick was excluded.

If the attorneys working on Derrick's case were employed by a private firm as mid-level associates, the attorney fees alone would have been more than \$210,000. IPF is the premier organization in Florida providing these types of services and we do it for a fraction of what the costs would be if the case were handled by paid private attorneys.



Derrick Williams on the night of his exoneration with IPF attorneys, Michael Minerva, Melissa Montle and Seth Miller.