

# State to bankroll suspect's experts

## Witnesses to be paid in teen's murder trial

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**MILFORD** — The state will pay for expert witnesses to assist in the defense of a West Haven teen-ager accused of fatally stabbing her live-in boyfriend, a Superior Court judge ruled Wednesday.

Judge Bruce Thompson granted a defense motion requesting the state pay the cost of retaining expert witnesses to help defend Charissa Willette, 18. She is charged with murder in the killing of Kevin Finch, 22, formerly of Milford.

Willette is unemployed and her father has "used all of his available assets to retain private counsel and bond his daughter out of jail," according to the motion filed by Willette's private attorney, Tara Knight of New Haven.

The judge's ruling requires Willette and her father to file affidavits supporting their claims of indigency.

"The defendant's father, who intended on paying all the costs in fees in this case, recently became disabled and is not working," the motion states.

According to a fee schedule administered by the state Judicial Department, psychiatrists are entitled to a flat fee of \$125 for court appearances and testimony, with a \$25-an-hour rate charged for each hour in excess of the first two hours they are required to be in court.

Psychiatrists also are entitled to \$50 per hour for travel to prison or state hospitals to conduct examinations.

Knight said she has not yet determined what kind of expert witnesses will be retained and whether they will include psychiatrists, forensic experts or other specialists.

Police said Willette, who is free on \$150,000 bail, plunged an eight-inch kitchen knife into

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Finch's heart during a domestic dispute April 26 in the couple's mobile home on Jones Hill Road in West Haven.

Thompson's order directs the state to pay all costs determined to be "necessary and reasonable" in helping Knight prepare a defense for her client.

The order does not include attorney's fees.

State's Attorney Mary Galvin declined comment because the matter is a pending case.

In August, a Superior Court judge determined there is enough probable cause to justify the prosecution's murder case against Willette.

During a probable cause hearing, Knight suggested Willette was

an abused girlfriend who grabbed a knife in an apparent act of self-defense. She said the stabbing occurred during a domestic dispute in which Finch allegedly choked Willette, spit on her, threw her into a couch and called her vulgarities.

Willette's actions were "no consistent" with a murder, according to Knight, who said Willette called Finch's parents, dialed 911 and placed a towel on his wound after the stabbing.

Galvin, however, said Willette grabbed the knife in the kitchen area of the trailer and then backed Finch into a bedroom at the other end of the trailer, demonstrating she acted with clear aggression and intent to harm Finch.

As Finch was trapped inside the bedroom, Willette stabbed through the bedroom door with the knife several times, Galvin claimed.