



# Superior Court of California County of Colusa BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- **Implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program**
- **Broadened services toward Collaborative Courts**

## Court Service Highlights in Detail

### Implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program

Implementation of the traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program has greatly impacted our court. Processing time has increased because of all of the manual adjustments required per case to ensure the reductions and distributions are done properly. Without extra care, local agencies, the State and the County may not receive their appropriate share of the amounts collected. Since the implementation of the amnesty program, fine and civil assessment revenues have decreased more than 40%.

### Broadened services for Collaborative Court

Colusa Superior Court works closely with our local outreach programs (including Probation, Behavioral Health, and a local Drug and Alcohol program) to support recovery and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Due to funding restrictions and limited community needs beyond those addressed in collaboration with local outreach programs, a Collaborative Court is not planned at this time.

### Other court services

Budgetary reductions have been a challenge to overcome in Colusa Superior Court, although Court services have been minimally impacted. This is due to the skill of court administration, the bench, and the dedicated and hardworking staff. In spite of budget difficulties, we are pursuing a business process reengineering study as well as investigating technological advances to increase overall efficiency, service availability, and access to justice. These steps will help to maximize the long term benefit of short term salary vacancy savings.

## Budget Challenges and Priorities

- Our staff vacancy rate has gradually increased since WAFM implementation; it is now at 28%.
- The 1% cap on fund balances effectively eliminates our ability to conduct multi-year planning for staffing, large infrastructure and technology projects, and long term efforts. There are concerns that the 1% limit may inhibit the progress we make with our reengineering study.
- Space limitations for courtrooms and staff needs continue to restrict Court flexibility and efficiency. Colusa is in serious need of a facility expansion. Additional space would provide a hearing room and more office space. This is the court's top priority for funding.



## Court Demographics

Population Served	21,660
Square Miles Covered	1,156
Total Number of Court Facilities	2

## The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM) calculates the total funding needed for California's 58 trial courts based on case filings, workload and other factors.

To do this, WAFM relies on results from what we call the Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model to estimate total staffing needed using a weighted caseload model. Developed in partnership with national experts, the RAS model is based on a time study of over 5,000 case processing staff in 24 California trial courts. The study established a set of caseweights (amount of time in minutes to process a case from initial filing through any post-disposition activity) understanding that certain types of filings take more time and resources to handle than others. The weighted filings are used to estimate total staff needed in each court.

The WAFM model converts the staff need data into dollars, taking into account average salaries, benefits, operating expenses and equipment, and the local cost of labor using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a benchmark. A "funding floor" is applied to the smallest trial courts because there is a basic operating threshold that must be met in order to provide service to the public. In other words, California's small courts do not have economies of scale, and yet there are basic expenditures that even the smallest courts must make. The result is, for each court, an estimate of the core operations funding required to adequately process its workload. This is known as the court's WAFM share.

Starting in FY 2013-14, a portion of each court's allocation is being recalculated according to its WAFM share. (A court's WAFM share is different from the courts' traditional share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the traditional share was based on the amount each court received from its county not taking into consideration the courts' filings or staff needs.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) California's trial courts are underfunded by at least a collective \$444 million. The underfunding is made worse for those courts that experience a reduction of funding based on their WAFM share. To manage the budget reductions resulting from the implementation of WAFM in the absence of full trial court funding, the Judicial Council approved applying WAFM incrementally, applying it fully only to new money appropriated in the budget.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including to FY 2017-18, incrementally more of the historical (base) funding (using FY 2012-13 as the base) will be subject to WAFM, until 50% of the FY 12-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All new state funding is distributed according to the WAFM shares; and
- For each dollar of new state funding, one dollar of the historical base will be reallocated using WAFM.