



# Superior Court of California County of Contra Costa BUDGET SNAPSHOT

February 2016



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Steven K. Austin, Presiding Judge

Stephen H. Nash, Court Executive Officer

(925) 957-5600

## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Restored public counter hours in clerk's offices
- Eliminated partial court closure days and backlogs
- Reestablished Traffic Night Court; added Truancy, Laura's Law, and Intensive Support Calendars

## Court Service Highlights in Detail

### Public hours in court clerk's offices extended

Effective November 1, 2015, the court increased the number of hours that the court clerk's offices are open by two hours per day.

### Partial court closure days and backlogs eliminated

As a result of the budget crisis, the court negotiated staff furloughs, and had closed all non-essential operations during the end of the year holiday week. Beginning in 2015, the partial closures were eliminated, resulting in timelier processing of court business without interruption. With a focus on providing efficient service, the court has eliminated most backlogs in the processing of civil and traffic cases, and significantly reduced wait times for family law mediation appointments.

### Traffic Night Court reestablished, and other collaborative courts added

Traffic Court has been reestablished, two times per month. Given a high demand for Traffic Court in the evenings, the possibility of further expansion is under review. The court has launched the following special court calendars:

- Truancy Court
- Laura's Law (Mental Health)
- Intensive Support – Domestic Violence

### Other court services

The court is launching an application to allow for the online filing of requests for restraining orders related to domestic violence.

## Budget Challenges and Priorities

### Restoration/replacement of declining local revenues

Following the enactment of the traffic amnesty program, we are experiencing a 30% reduction in civil assessment revenues. Annualized, this equates to an ongoing reduction of \$1.6 to \$1.9 million per year, representing 2.8% to 3.3% of court funds.

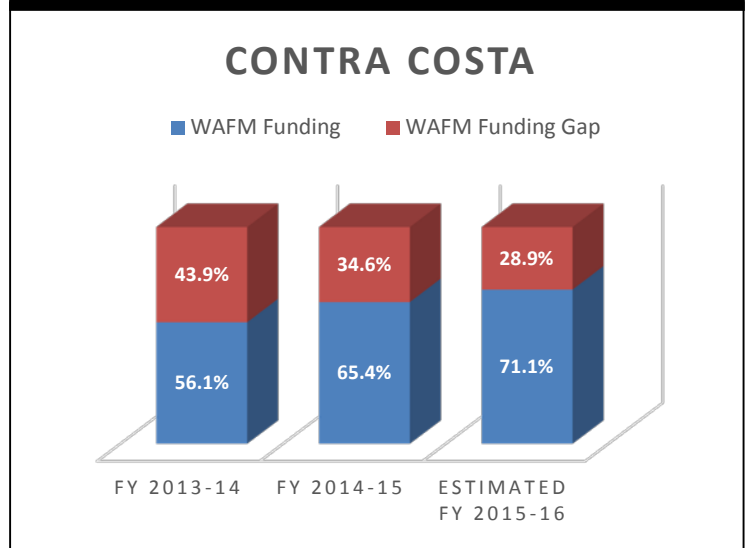
### Funding Courts for Employee Compensation

Unlike other state-funded entities, trial courts are currently not funded to address employee salary adjustments.

### Inadequate Relief Staffing

With a 23% drop in staffing over several years, the court struggles with insufficient relief staff to keep courtrooms open.

## Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



## Court Demographics

Population Served	1,111,339
Square Miles Covered	802
Total Number of Court Facilities	6

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

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology 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.