

KERN

Population: 873,092 • Authorized Judges: 39 • Staff: 498 FTE

Civil Filings: 16,443 • Criminal Filings: 156,174 • Family/Juvenile Filings: 16,652 • Other Filings: 536

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Provide the needed court employees resources to deliver to court users the expected services needed for their cases.

- **Court closes all clerical counters and service telephones at 4:00 PM Monday through Thursday and at Noon on Fridays due to insufficient staffing resources—court is currently 16% below RAS model staffing recommendations based on workload studies.**
- **Civil case processing of writs and judgments are backlogged because limited clerical staff are assigned to process cases with statutory deadlines—Unlawful Detainers, harassment, civil restraining orders.**
- **Family law domestic violence restraining orders are delayed up to five days to process due to staffing shortages. Default judgments are backlogged up to 6-weeks delaying case dispositions.**
- **Document processing requests for criminal cases are backlogged delaying completion of expungements, job applications, background checks, and identify theft investigations.**
- **Given the long distances required to travel the expansive Kern County area, the court has seven regional court locations to meet the demand for services in remote locations. Two of these regional courts, Lake Isabella and Taft, are open only one day per week due to budget reductions in 2013.**

Family Law Facilitator and Civil Self-Help Services appointment times are filled by noon each day due to staffing shortages caused by AB 1058 grant Self-Help funding that has not kept up with demand for services.

- **Family Support and Family Law orders-after-hearings are not completed timely because self-represented litigants are unable to speak with FLF staff.**
- **Small claims and harassment court hearings are continued because litigants are unable to prepare for court due to limited Self-help resources.**

Collaborative Courts, which have been established with federal and state grants, require additional funds to sustain them for continued services after grant resources have been exhausted.

- **Mental Health Court established with RRF Grant funds cannot reimburse Mental Health service providers and Probation monitoring staff necessary to ensure client compliance and completion of program requirements designed to reduce recidivism.**
- **DUI, Veteran's and other similar Collaborative Courts are limited in the number of client's they can help due to lack of sustainable funding for the litigant services needed to prevent recidivism.**

PRIORITIES FOR REINVESTMENT

Assuming an additional investment in operations funds, we intend to...

- Hire additional court staff to increase counter and telephone service hours reduced during the budget reductions of past years. Reduce current court employee vacancy rates sufficiently to address delays in processing restraining orders, judgments, writs and document processing requests for court users;
- Expand FLF collaborative training and Self-Help services with the Kern County Library. Additional funding will enable an increase in the type and frequency of the Self-Help Public seminars that are provided to litigants free of charge to help with preparation for their cases.
- Coordinate the expansion of electron Self-Help services with other courts that have received Innovation Grants to augment new technologies and services to self-represented litigants.
- Maintain or expand Collaborative Court calendars where feasible and funded to reduce recidivism.

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