



Superior Court of California County of Madera BUDGET SNAPSHOT

February 2016



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Ernest J. LiCalsi, Presiding Judge

Bonnie Thomas, Court Executive Officer

(559) 416-5599

Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Proactive implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program
- Launching of a Behavioral Health Collaborative Court

Court Service Highlights in Detail

Proactive implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program

We have updated our website to include information regarding the traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program (amnesty). Each time staff has an interaction with a member of the public, staff checks to see if the party is eligible for a reduction in the amount of court-ordered debt they owe, or to get their driving privileges restored, or both. Our clerks also actively inform people about the amnesty program. When reviewing the amnesty applications, we “err on the side of generosity.” In fact, we took the proactive step of providing the collection agency implementing the program with extensive reports indicating eligibility for the program based on our available court records.

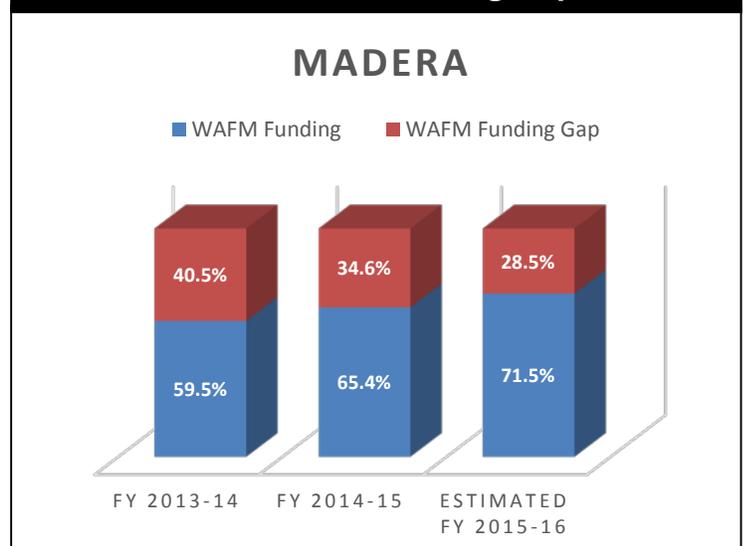
Launching of a Behavioral Health Court

Madera started Behavioral Health Court, a Collaborative court, which is held two days each month. Behavioral Health Court partners include the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Office of the Alternative Public Defender, Probation, Behavioral Health Services, Madera County Department of Corrections, SERI (provider of case management services, including counseling and care for the day-to-day personal needs of the participants), Hope House, and Madera Rescue Mission. Other agencies and organizations are involved as needed to address the specific needs of participants.

Budget Challenges and Priorities

We are still trying to recover from years of budget reductions. We have been able to maintain current levels of service to the public but we foresee many challenges ahead. The biggest challenge is the need for a new case management system, but with the inability to maintain reserves we have no funds to move off the current case management system. This is frustrated by the fact that we do not have any Information Technology staff in our court, which limits the types of services we are able to provide to the public.

Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



Court Demographics

Population Served	153,897
Square Miles Covered	2,153
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.