



# Superior Court of California County of Mendocino BUDGET SNAPSHOT



February 2015

## Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

*Our priority is reducing the impacts of closures and service reductions on our court's users. Currently, some litigants travel up to 70 miles each way to the Ukiah Courthouse. We are reducing the Point Arena calendar from five days to three days in 2015, and we are discontinuing the Round Valley/Covelo calendar completely in 2015.*

### Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Combined the Self-Help Center with the Facilitator's Office
- Mediation services for newly filed cases are limited to one session per family per Family Law court filing
- Family Court Custody and Visitation Evaluations no longer made available to the Family Court judge
- Self-Help hours reduced by one hour per day

### Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Litigants must bring family members or friends to interpret at the Self-Help Center
- Laid off two full-time court reporters and left one part-time position vacant

### Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Reduced telephone hours by 2 hours per day and counter hours by 1 hour per day
- Only able to hire occasional Limited Term Staffing

### Closed Courtrooms and Courthouses

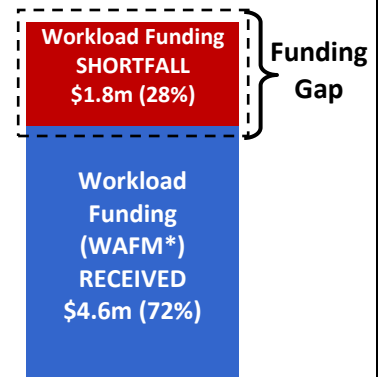
- Closed a single courtroom branch in Willits on December 31, 2009 – a 33% reduction in Mendocino courthouses
- There is insufficient staffing to cover all courtrooms without creating a chronic case processing backlog
- It may be necessary to close another courtroom

### Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

- Instituted layoffs and reduced workforce resulting in a vacancy rate of 20%
- 5 mandatory furlough days for all employees in 2013
- Staff merit increases frozen since 2009
- Cost of retirement and health insurance benefits will increase to 60% of an employee's salary in 2015
- 1 vacant Court Clerk position will remain unfilled

## Funding Shortfall

**\*WAFM is the Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology. It describes how much funding courts need based on their workload. In the current year, the workload-based allocation *needed* in Mendocino was calculated at \$6.4 million but the court received \$4.6 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



## Court Demographics

Population Served	89,029
Square Miles Covered	3,878
Total Number of Court Facilities	2

## Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. David E. Nelson
Court Executive Officer	Chris Ruhl
Executive Office Contact	(707) 467-2511

## Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- *Litigants are waiting much longer for services at the public counter and on the telephone.*
- *Reductions in court reporting services require litigants to provide their own court reporters.*
- *We have insufficient staff to support all areas of court Operations without impacts on access to the public.*
- *The court is facing substantial increases in employee benefits costs.*

## **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' historical share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the historical share was based on the amount each court received from its county.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget by as much as \$800 million. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) 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 to each court's historical share of statewide funding, applying it 100% only to "new" money appropriated in the budget. New money is any undesignated general court operations funding increase above the FY 2012-13 State funding level.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are as follows:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including 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 2012-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All undesignated court operations state funding increases after FY 2012-13 are 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.