



Superior Court of California County of Placer BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

The Placer Superior Court is in a period of slow recovery. The modest, but appreciated, increases to court funding provided in the Budget Acts of FY 2013-14 and 2014-15 allowed the Placer County Superior Court to avoid any further reductions in staffing, reinstate a ½ position in the self help center, return clerk’s office hours to normal on Fridays, and avoid any further limited service days.

General Public Access and Services

- The Court continues to refrain from offering valuable programs, including our Family Law and Domestic Violence Case Management Programs.
- Case processing and access to justice delays exist in all areas due to a 45% reduction in staffing as outlined further in the sections below.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

Operating hours for the Family Law Facilitator and Self-Help Center, significantly reduced during the fiscal crisis, only remain open until noon most days. Telephone services discontinued in 2009 and remain unavailable.

Public Service Counters

The additional funding provided in FY 2013/14 enabled the court to restore hours on Fridays and avoid limited service days in FY 2013-14. Impacts remain, however, as a result of the significant staffing reductions over the past several years. Criminal records searches take up to 90 days to issue responses, and in-person waits are up to 2 hours to file domestic violence restraining orders, requests for child custody modifications, and other family law matters

Courtrooms and Court Houses

- The Court closed two courtrooms in 2009 and they remain closed.
- A third courtroom’s use has been significantly reduced and is frequently closed due to insufficient staffing, leading to significant trial delays in civil cases.

Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

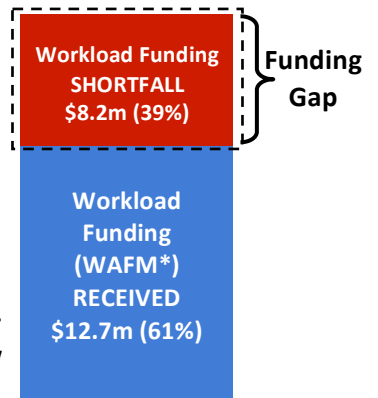
- Court has experienced reductions of non-judicial positions of more than 40% since FY 2008-09, which remain in place.
- All employees pay full share of retirement costs and pay an increasing share of health benefit costs.
- Current labor contract contains no COLAs and step increases have been frozen. Funding increases provided in FY 2013-14 and 14/15 enabled the court to discontinue employee furloughs.

Judicial Officers

The continued reduction of the use of assigned judges has resulted in a decrease in access to justice and an overall delay of processing of cases county-wide. Complicating matters, Placer Court needs 34 percent more judges than we have to process current caseloads.

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 Placer was calculated at \$20.9 million but the court received \$12.7 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	366,115
Square Miles Covered	1,503
Total Number of Court Facilities	6

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Alan V. Pineschi
Court Executive Officer	Jake Chatters
Executive Office Contact	(916) 408-6186

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

Services and access cannot improve without significant reinvestment in the courts. For Placer, funding is needed to allow us to meaningfully and adequately address the increase in court workload from the growth in unlimited civil, felony, and dependency cases • to rehire and maintain adequate staffing to support the needs of the residents and visitors to our County • to fund our severe need for additional judges to hear cases • to meet the increasing demands of court users for more rapid and universal access to court information electronically.

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.