



# Superior Court of California County of Sierra BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Charles H. Ervin, Presiding Judge

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## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Proactive implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program
- Broadened services for Laura’s Law Collaborative Court

### Court Service Highlights in Detail

#### Proactive implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program

In September 2015, our Court contracted with the Shasta Superior Court Collections Department to provide all legislated services for the traffic amnesty program including local newspaper ads and notices to eligible violators. To date, we have expended \$3,600 for set up and collection expenses and have recovered a mere \$193 in fines plus \$250 in amnesty fee revenue. So far, \$1,369 in fine and \$2,400 in civil assessment revenue has been forgiven under the amnesty program rules.

#### Broadened services for Laura’s Law Collaborative Court

In early 2015, we began exploring options available for treatment of individuals who present mental health issues in our Court system. Sierra Court personnel and judicial officers attended training in Nevada County, hosted by Hon. Thomas Anderson and their Forensic Task Force on Mental Health and the Court. We are in the process now of working with Sierra County’s Human Services and Mental Health director toward establishing a protocol for referral, treatment and supervision should the need arise. Sierra’s population and incidence of non-custodial mental health cases does not support a fully functional Laura’s Law protocol, however we wish to be prepared and able to review cases on a case by case basis.

#### Other court services

We have expanded our Drug Court model to serve the rehabilitation of Post-Release Community Supervisions parolees which in turn has provided Drug Court participants with an excellent incentive toward their goals to successfully complete their program and not re-offend or violate probation.

### Budget Challenges and Priorities

Sierra Court receives the minimum court funding allocation that, provides sufficient revenue to operate without court closures and service interruptions.

However, the 1% cap on fund balances is problematic because it limits our ability to undertake and plan a large purchase such as a case and document management system. Ours is showing signs of failure and we do not have the necessary funds to purchase and implement a new one. We are exploring a collaborative budget change request with 9 other courts to acquire a new system to provide greater efficiencies, public access and preservation of court records.

With Judicial Council support, we successfully negotiated modification of our Joint Operating Agreement with the County to pay for a new building roof, replacement windows, and repairs to the exterior. An ADA restroom for the Court portion of the building has been approved and will be installed this year. Given that we voluntarily removed our court from the courthouse replacement list, we appreciate Judicial Council’s efforts to rehabilitate our historic courthouse.



### Court Demographics

Population Served	3,089
Square Miles Covered	962
Total Number of Court Facilities	1

## 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.