



Superior Court of California County of Sonoma BUDGET SNAPSHOT

January 2014

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2014-15

Increase court services, which were cut due to reduced funding. Restore five hours of window/counter service operations each week. Improve time to mediation in conservatorships and child custody disputes, from the current 5 months to 3 months. Restore self-help services to provide needed one-on-one support and additional workshops to assist more self-represented litigants. Convert to a new case management system to ease filing, retrieval and storage of records for the public.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator/ Court Investigators

Decrease wait times for all of these services, which currently range from 16 to 20 weeks.

Legal Process Clerks

The court is struggling to meet mandated requirements in criminal cases, leaving those with civil and family matters with completely unacceptable delays. These delays impact families, children, and businesses. Public frustration is visibly mounting, and staff members are burned out and suffering from low morale, due to increased workloads and high staff vacancy rate.

- The lobby/public access has been reduced by one hour daily for all departments, resulting in longer lines at counters and delays in service during peak hours.
- Wait times are up to 45 minutes on the telephone.
- Jury staff reduced by 50%.
- Processing of new complaints takes up to 6 weeks; judgments take up to 4 months
- Backlogs and increased errors are occurring in court paperwork as fewer staff members have workload requirements that require more, implicating due process issues for the public.

Technology

Court has a critical and immediate need to replace its obsolete case management system and upgrade its technological infrastructure to reduce inefficiencies and operating costs, as well as, to improve access to the public by leveraging on a cost-effective and modern case management system that provides electronic filing, remote access to electronic retrieval of files and real-time exchange of information with justice system partners and other counties using similar case management system data exchange protocols.

Budget Considerations

Budgeted Revenues* FY 2013-2014	\$27,011,958
<u>Total Revenues* FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>\$30,530,434</u>
Five-Year Revenue Reduction	-\$3,518,476
Current Year Unfunded Employee Health Benefits and Retirement Costs	-\$1,259,360
Share of \$60 million augmentation	\$844,404
<small>*Excludes Sheriff-Provided Security</small>	

Court Demographics

Population Served	487,011
Square Miles Covered	1,768
Total Number of Court Facilities	5
Filled Staff Positions FY 2013-2014	174
<u>Filled Staff Positions FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>220</u>
Lost Positions in 5 years	-46 (21% reduction)

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Kenneth J. Gross
Court Executive Officer	José Octavio Guillén
Executive Office Contact	(707) 521-6855

Budget Challenges for FY 2014-15

Contract costs continue to rise, including IT, court operations (forensics and transcripts), screening, janitorial, and employee health and retirement. To balance the court budget and avoid a structural deficit, staff reductions may be required. The elimination of reserves means there is no safety net to offset these increased costs. Technology investments are needed for imaging and court wide electronic filing for better case processing and public access to court documents. Electronic calendar technology must also be funded. Funding to increase staffing is critical in order to maintain operations at the current minimum levels. The need for additional staffing is particularly acute in the areas of court investigators, child custody recommending counselors, legal processors, and self-help services.