



Superior Court of California County of Trinity BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

The court house's "historical" designation title did not transfer to the State under the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002 (SB 1732) so legislation prohibits the State from spending courthouse construction and modernization funds on the building to improve the facility which features extremely poor conditions for jurors. Furthermore, new legislation prohibits courts from having more than a 1% fund balance so these types of improvements may never occur in Trinity. We had to reschedule trials due to lack of security and inadequate space for jurors. Safety concerns are paramount. Our budget is impacted by unprecedented county billing.

Court Security/Safety/Facilities

- We are unable to fill vacancy for deputy marshal due to lack of funding in WAFM for security, and we are unable to use sheriff's department at our court.
- We face several ongoing security problems including a vehicle intentionally crashing into the court parking lot, and two attempted break-ins in the past nine months.
- We had to use a makeshift courtroom for visiting Judge, and use retired extra help as bailiff, due to short staffed marshal's office.
- Capital projects began for two security doors/windows; but we were unable to secure judges' chamber' exterior windows due to "historical" designation of building.

Public Access & Staff Impacts

- Due to increased vacancy rates, years of "ongoing" reductions and the inability to carry a reserve has compromised our service levels. The court must maintain reduced hours to the public effective FY 2013-14 per the Government Code.
- Unfilled vacancies grew from 20 % to 29% diminishing staffing levels.
- Skeleton crews are burdened with increased workload.
- All staff furloughed one day per month for 16 months (Sept 2009 through Dec 2010).

Self-Help / Family Law Facilitator Services/Mediation

- Family Law Facilitator, shared with Shasta Court, recently resigned. There will be no coverage until position filled, reducing hours, and there are no court reserves to supplant program funding.
- Self-help services for landlord/tenant disputes have been discontinued and office hours have been reduced, diminishing services to court user. We have no Self-Help Attorney.
- Mediator Services (CFCC) was furloughed from .50 to .35 until July 1, 2015.

Courthouse/Facility

- Court eliminated its Juvenile Drug Court Program (funded under the Collaborative Justice Focus Abuse Grant) in FY 2012-13 after funding was diminished and justice partners determined they had insufficient resources to support the program when serious felonies are on the rise in our county. Per capita, Trinity has the same homicide ratio as Oakland.
- Court shares a historic county-owned courthouse facility located in Weaverville, and we struggle with limited space, poor security, and antiquated infrastructure.

Court Security / Safety / Facilities

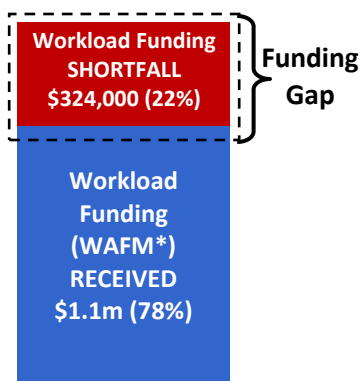
- Redirected 1 perimeter screening deputy
- Redirected 5 courtroom bailiffs

Availability of Judicial Officers

- Caseload maintained with 5 fewer judicial officers than needed as specified in Judicial Needs Assessment
- 5 commissioners resigned at the end of 2012

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 Trinity was calculated at \$1.4 million but the court received \$1.1 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	13,389
Square Miles Covered	3,208
Total Number of Court Facilities	3

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Elizabeth W. Johnson
Court Executive Officer	Cindy Van Schooten
Executive Office Contact	(530) 623-8330

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Court has only one court reporter employee; no pro tem court reporters reside in the county. Additional needs are met by out-of-county providers at an increased expense due to travel-related costs.
- Court has no interpreter employees and must contract all mandated services with out-of-county providers, often at a premium.

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

Trinity is a two judge court which has been chronically understaffed; one-third shortage of security personnel, compromising safety to employees and the public; backlogs continue to increase while quality/quantity of service has deteriorated. Court is unable to pay for unprecedented county bill for collections, even with JCC Legal Service's assistance.

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.