



Superior Court of California County of Trinity BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Elizabeth W. Johnson, Presiding Judge

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www.trinity.courts.ca.gov

Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- **Our Youth Peer Court has been an effective bridge between the court and area schools**
- **Court Services hours have increased**
- **The Self-Help Center is now available to the public through a cost-sharing provision with Shasta Court**

Court Service Highlights in Detail

Our Youth Peer Court has been an effective bridge between the court and area schools

A Youth Peer Court was established in 2015 with the help of grant funds. Due to the success of this program, we continue to see increased need and interest in collaborative courts. We hope to find a wider range of case types and community services for our advocates to participate in. For example, we are actively considering a veterans court and a mental health court.

Court Services hours have increased

Operating hours in court services have partially been restored. The long term goal would be to fully restore the hours and be open from 8am - 5pm as soon as possible.

Our Self-Help Center is now available to the public through a cost-sharing provision with Shasta Court

Legal aid through our Self-Help Center is now available to the public one (1) day a month through shared services with Shasta Superior Court. We now are able to offer assistance in landlord/tenant disputes and certain probate matters such as guardianships. The assistant to the Family Law Facilitator helps with paperwork in the remote areas of Hayfork and Mad River on the regularly scheduled court days in those outlying facilities.

Other Court Services

We now accept credit/debit card payments over the phone, at the counter, and through our website for non-delinquent fines and filing court documents. This is a popular service for the public.

Budget Challenges and Priorities

Trinity is a very small court which has been chronically understaffed; after years without positive support, morale is suffering.

New courthouse construction projects are on hold due to budget constraints despite critical needs, and court security remains at risk. Serious crime is increasing, making court security deficits alarming. Trinity lacks a secure location to separate in-custody male and female defendants. Inmates are brought into the courthouse from a busy highway with complete visibility by citizens, jurors and government staff.

The 1% cap on fund balances is insufficient to pay for any unplanned expenditures, such as an increase in CalPers rates, or planned expenditures such as employee payouts upon retirement and the costs associated with upgrading to a web based case management system.



Court Demographics

Population Served	13,448
Square Miles Covered	3,208
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.