



Superior Court of California County of Contra Costa

BUDGET SNAPSHOT



February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

- Increase funding and operating efficiency to increase public counter hours, and reduce lines, wait times, and backlogs
- Reduce, if not eliminate, planned furlough/court closure days
- Implement appropriate technology to enhance public access through increased online court resources and services

Impacts of recent court funding reductions

Closed 8 Courtrooms and 1 Court House

- Closed Concord court house
- Closed five courtrooms staffed by Commissioners
- Closed child support courtroom one day per week
- Eliminated Traffic Night Court
- Reduced Small Claims Night Court to once per month

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs

- Reduced court staff by 24% since 2008
- 4 court closure days due to staff furloughs in FY 2014-15
- 10 court closure days budgeted for FY 2015-16

Increased Delays / Backlogs

- Growing delays for child support and dissolution orders;
- Increased delays in child custody cases; wait times for recommending counseling appointments have increased from 3 weeks to 12-14 weeks.

Counters/Clerks/Telephones

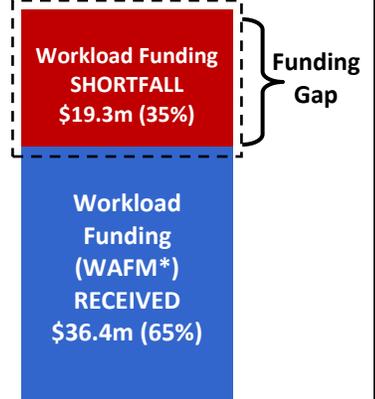
- Most Clerks offices close at 1 PM, resulting in reduced access to the court

Court Reporters

- No court reporting in Family, Civil and Probate
- Pro per and low-income litigants have unequal access to justice in these case

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 Contra Costa was calculated at \$55.7 million but the court received \$36.4 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.



Court Demographics

Population Served	1,087,008
Square Miles Covered	802
Total Number of Court Facilities	6

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Steven K. Austin
Court Executive Officer	Stephen H. Nash
Executive Office Contact	(925) 957-5600

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- Service windows, telephone support, and self-help assistance remain understaffed
- Extremely thin courtroom staffing relief results in daily struggles to keep courtrooms open
- Reduced custodial staffing impacting the cleanliness of court facilities

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.