



# Superior Court of California County of Del Norte

## BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

### Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

*The Del Norte Court has faced multi-year reductions in baseline funding that required us to request funding support from the Judicial Council. Unfortunately, this request was summarily denied, leaving us and the people we serve severely under-resourced. This Court's budget priority is basic: recoup the money that has been cut in the past several years to remain open to serve the community.*

#### Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

The Court continues to employ one full time and one part-time mediator. Should funding not be appropriated, cuts may need to be made in this department. Delays on complex family law cases create significant hardships for all involved.

#### Counters / Clerks / Telephones

The next cost saving measure will be to reduce public access to the Court through reduced counter hours and phone access. The Court has avoided this in the past year, but absent any significant funding augmentation, this is the most logical step.

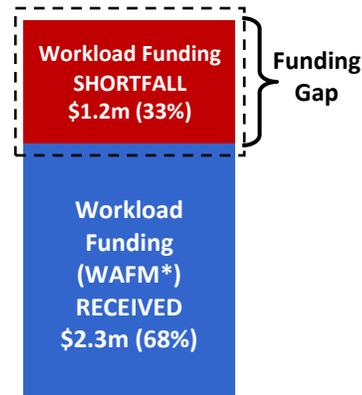
#### Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

Del Norte has continued to hold several positions vacant due to budget reductions, with salary savings redirected toward operating expenses. Even with these reductions, without the funding gap closed, layoffs may be considered.

NOTE: We intend on holding the hiring freeze in place until the funding gap is resolved. This continues to create untold delays in case processing and requires the Court to operate without sufficient staffing levels, negatively affecting court users.

### 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 Del Norte was calculated at \$3.5 million but the court received \$2.3 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.



### Court Demographics

Population Served	28,131
Square Miles Covered	1,230
Total Number of Court Facilities	2

### Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. William H. Follett
Court Executive Officer	Sandra Linderman
Executive Office Contact	(707) 465-3299

### Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- *Del Norte is a small, two-judge court that operates with minimal staffing levels.*
- *Our Court does not operate any superfluous programs that can be cut to alleviate budget shortages.*
- *The Court's budget is minimal in nature and does not allow for further cuts outside of layoff and closures.*

## 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.