

Superior Court of California County of Kern BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- **Incremental service restorations were only possible due to WAFM reallocations. Baseline budget allocations remain 3% below 2007-08 funding levels and have not kept pace with increased costs of operations, staffing and services.**
- **Innovations, infrastructure investment and collaborative programs help court achieve operational efficiencies.**

Court Service Highlights in Detail

Restoration of services begins after years of budget reductions.

- Lake Isabella – Regional court facility closed in June 2013 was reopened one day per week for traffic and limited civil filings in the fall 2015.
- Operating Hours – Court telephone and counter hours restored Monday – Thursday to 4:00 PM, an increase of 12%.
- Court Reporters – Reporter services in unlimited civil courts restored as of March 2016 after a 3-year budget balancing hiatus.

Collaboration and innovation combine to improve services and increase efficiencies.

- Integrated Criminal Justice Case Management System – The Court and its Justice Partners—DA, Public Defender, Sheriff, Probation—have agreed to a cooperative upgrade of the County-wide criminal case management system.
- STAR Court – Utilizing recidivism grant funding, the Court, with local Justice and Mental Health Agency partners, established the Sustained Treatment and Recovery Court, a collaborative Mental Health Court.
- Service Kiosks – Payment and informational kiosks installed at all Court facility locations have increased access for court users.
- Jury Automated Check-in – Jurors may now utilize technology to check in for service on the web and in jury assembly rooms at newly installed kiosks.

Amnesty program data (October - December 2015)

- Fine reductions processed: 2,128
- Driver's license holds lifted: 333
- Fines, fees, assessments waived: \$810,065
- Outstanding debt collected (gross): \$162,466

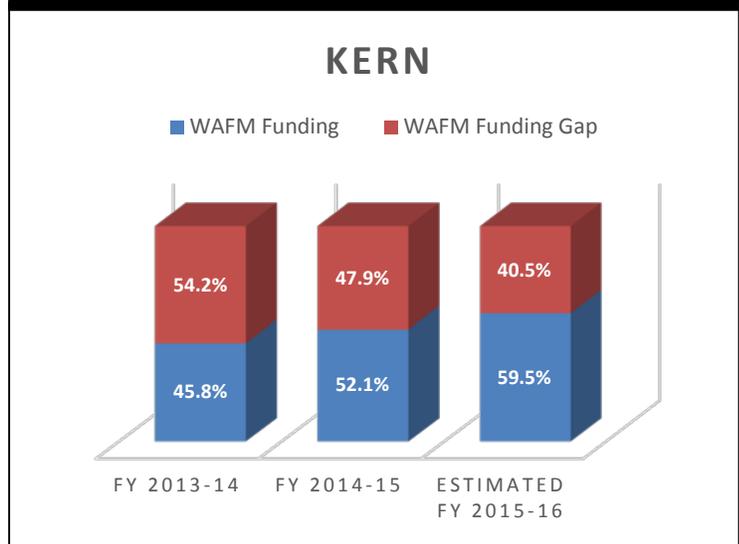
Budget Challenges and Priorities

Employee vacancy rates: Overall vacancy rates remain at 23% below WAFM workload/staffing recommendations. Actual staffing is 121 positions short of WAFM model need of 535.

Recruitment hampered by uncompetitive wages: Kern Superior Court employee wages remain 12% below market averages in key areas of technology, legal services and professional classifications.

Reserve depletion stymies reinvestment: The mandated depletion of the Court's local fund balance will hinder future reinvestment in technology, facilities and other infrastructure improvements and modernization.

Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



Court Demographics

Population Served	873,092
Square Miles Covered	8,162
Total Number of Court Facilities	12

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.