



Superior Court of California County of Kings BUDGET SNAPSHOT



February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

Our #1 priority is to close the budget deficit of \$3.6m, which would enable our court to attain full staffing levels, return the public access at the counters and telephone to full service hours, keep courtrooms open, reduce backlogs and return to overall 100% efficiency.

Access to Justice and Impact to the Public

- Without additional funding, we continue to monitor court operations and consider possible closures of two remaining satellite courts in FY 2015-16
- Staffing shortages and reduced hours force our Self Help Center to turn away as many as 20 clients a day
- The Self Help Center closes at 4:00 except on Fridays, when it closes at 11:30 due to staff shortages and mandatory furloughs
- Avenal courtroom is only open every other Friday
- All public counters close at 4:00 except on Fridays when they close at 11:30 due to furloughs and staff shortages at all locations
- Corcoran and Avenal courthouses are closed daily during the lunch hour due to limited staffing coverage.

Staff Impacts Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

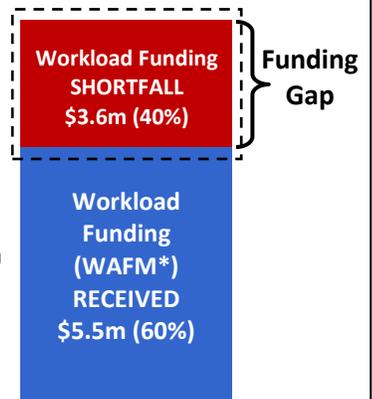
- 6 employees have been laid off with the possibility of additional layoffs in FY 2015-16; current staffing is at 80.6, which includes 1.6 Commissioners
- The Court Executive and Chief Deputy positions have been consolidated, reducing expenses, capturing 100% of the Court Executive Officer's salary and benefits
- Case processing is backlogged 10-12 weeks
- Satellite Court locations are reduced to 2 staff members each
- All employees and Commissioner have taken 10-27 furlough days over the past 6 years (avg. 14 days/year), with the possibility of additional furlough days in FY 2015-16
- Employee benefits have been reduced and/or eliminated; there have been no promotions or new hires
- There have been no salary increases for management in 7 years
- Vacancies have remained unfilled for the past 5 years
- Increased workload per employee has generated an increase in workers compensation claims which results in increased costs
- The Court relies heavily on volunteers and unpaid interns to fill the vacancy gap
- Reduced benefits, furloughs and stagnate salaries make it difficult to compete in the local job market.

Judicial Officers

Workload is handled with 5 fewer officers than needed as specified in Judicial Needs Assessment.

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 Kings was calculated at \$9.0 million but the court received \$5.5 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	154,000
Square Miles Covered	1,392
Total Number of Court Facilities	6
Filled Staff Positions FY 2014 -15	80.6
Filled Staff Positions FY 2008 - 09	100
Lost Positions	19.4

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Thomas DeSantos
Court Executive Officer	Jeffrey E. Lewis
Executive Office Contact	(559) 582-1010

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

The Court is grappling with a shortfall of \$3.6 million in the current year due to budget cuts and prior year revenue sweeps, as well as a 30% increase in juvenile dependency cases (with no increase in funding). Court costs have increased by 150% in the last four years. We continue to lose qualified experienced employees due to stagnant salaries and benefits, and ongoing furloughs. If Kings County eliminates the funding for Collaborative Justice Courts (consisting of Behavioral Health Court, Drug Court, and Veterans Court), these programs are at risk of closure.

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.