

# Superior Court of California County of Riverside BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Restoration of critical public services
- Enhanced technology to improve public service and efficiency
- Expanded strategies to assist self-represented litigants

## Court Service Highlights in Detail

### Restoration of critical public services

Recovering from budget reductions over the past five years, the court was able to begin restoring critical public services and improving access to justice, primarily at the public counters, over the telephones and through electronic means. The court was able to avoid the closure of courtrooms or a reduction in service hours. Despite the addition of critical staff positions, severe staffing shortages remain.

### Enhanced technology to improve public service and efficiency

Numerous enhancements have been made to automate services so that the public can access the court without needing to come to a courthouse or, in many cases, without ever having to wait in a line. This includes online services, interactive voice assistance, fax filing, kiosks, and other electronic media. Not only does this improve overall service, it eliminates paper documents in many cases, thus reducing the need for storage, and drastically minimizing the potential for human error. As an example, the recent implementation of criminal e-filing capabilities has resulted in the e-filing of approximately 1,000 felony complaints in just two months. Plans for a new case management system are on the horizon.

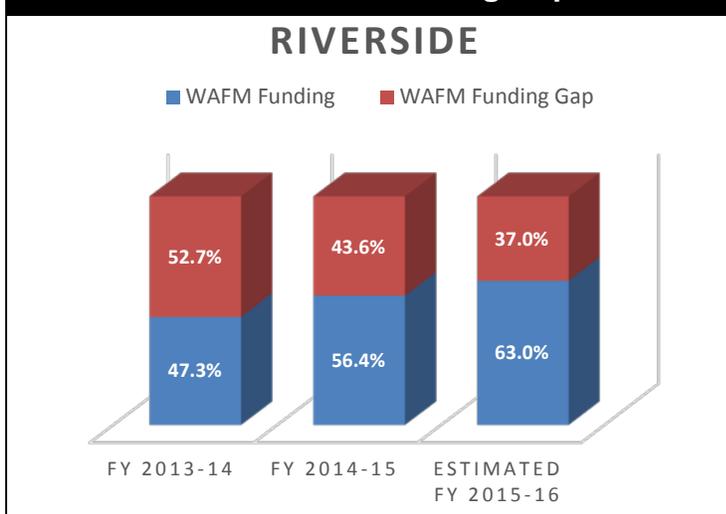
### Expanded strategies to assist self-represented litigants

The court has begun restoring self-help services by hiring additional staff to triage and assist litigants. The court has also expanded services to include assistance with guardianship and small claims matters. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of self-help litigants assisted this year.

## Budget Challenges and Priorities

Despite a slight uptick in funding this fiscal year, it is difficult to maintain a core level of services for the public. Civil assessment revenue is down 30%--\$5 million--because of the Amnesty Program. This lost revenue offset more than half of the gain from WAFM. The effects of the revenue loss are compounded because of the ban on local reserves. As a result, staffing vacancies may need to be increased, jeopardizing the restoration of public services. In addition, the court continues to be severely under-judged with the second highest judge-to-filing ratio in the state. Currently, fifty-one more judges are required to hear just the current caseload. We hope that the Governor's plan to reallocate judicial vacancies to counties most in need will result in some relief.

## Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



## Court Demographics

Population Served	2,308,441
Square Miles Covered	7,303
Total Number of Court Facilities	14

## 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.