

# Superior Court of California County of Siskiyou BUDGET SNAPSHOT



Hon. William J. Davis, Presiding Judge

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## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Implementation of traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program
- Sponsorship of collaborative court through realignment legislation
- Circuit riding in Siskiyou County with the Family Law Facilitator and new case management system

### Court Service Highlights in Detail

#### Implementation of the mandated traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program:

Implementing the traffic ticket/infraction amnesty program has been a challenge. Our case management system does not allow us to use the financial codes created at the time the original liability was incurred – it requires new financial codes be created once the amnesty reduction has occurred because the distributions are affected. Unless the distributions are done properly, local agencies, the state and the county may not receive their appropriate share of the amounts collected. ALL this work must be done manually. In the first 3 months of the program, our criminal/traffic/fiscal staff of just 11 people has expended over \$26,000 of time to recover \$7,400.

#### Collaborative court as a function of realignment:

Through the Community Corrections Partnership Committee we are sponsoring a collaborative court program that will serve vulnerable populations, such as people struggling with mental health issues, veterans, and people who are homeless, who have cases with the Superior Court. Our goal is to reduce recidivism in these populations, many of which have histories of repeat offending due to substance abuse. Our approach will allow the judge to modify sanctions at appropriate times to support the individuals' recovery and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Historically, judges at sentencing too often have only the basic background probation reports. This program will enhance the tools available to judges, allowing them to address these issues.

#### Other court services

The Family Law Facilitator (FLF) travels circuit with representatives from Social Security, Child Support, Domestic Violence, and sometimes Legal Aid, regularly stopping at sites around the County, allowing people to access many services in one visit. This collaboration is funded from the agencies' own resources. 2015 marked the highest customer count ever in the FLF office, attributed to providing services to people where they live, particularly in rural Tulelake, CA.

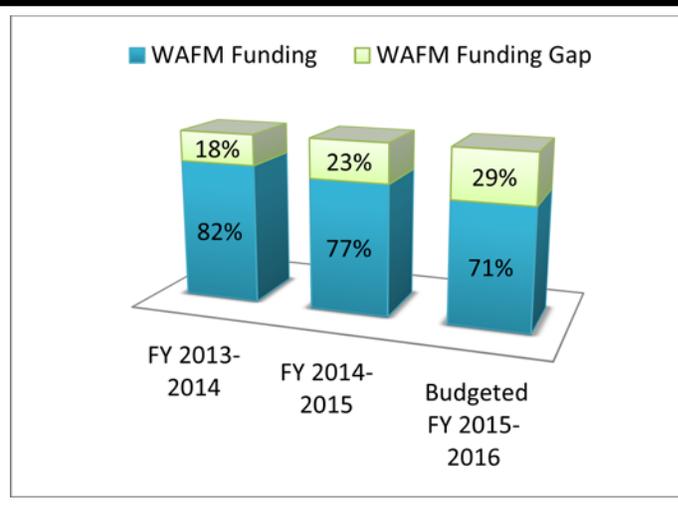
The Court case management system (CMS) upgrade is newly online. We encumbered reserves to acquire a \$230,000 upgrade of a web-based platform to allow for greater efficiencies in court operations like calendars and collections.

### Budget Challenges and Priorities

Living with the Workload Allocation and Funding Methodology (WAFM).

There are some faulty factors in WAFM that have nothing to do with filings, but are tied to the relative poverty of each county. A review of the 2015-16 FY Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [cite: *2015-16 WAFM for TCBCAC \$20m 20160114*] shows that all courts with a BLS factor <1 are non-urban, smaller, more economically challenged courts. To support access to justice in all trial courts, the impacts of these faulty factors need to be examined.

### WAFM as compared to FY 2012-13 Trial Court Funding



### Court Demographics

Population Served	45,231
Square Miles Covered	6,347
Total Number of Court Facilities	1.05*

\*Dorris Courtroom operates once per month.

## The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology 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.