



## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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# REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

For business meeting on September 24, 2019

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Title

Allocations and Reimbursements to Trial Courts: Extension on Receipt of Children's Waiting Room Funds During Temporary Closure

Agenda Item Type

Action Required

Effective Date

September 24, 2019

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected  
None

Date of Report

August 30, 2019

Recommended by

Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee  
Hon. Jonathan B. Conklin, Chair

Contact

Melissa Ng, 916-263-1754  
[melissa.ng@jud.ca.gov](mailto:melissa.ng@jud.ca.gov)

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### Executive Summary

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council approve an extension for the Superior Court of Contra Costa County to continue receiving Children's Waiting Room (CWR) funds to accumulate sufficient resources in anticipation of the CWR reopening by October 2019. The Contra Costa court closed its CWR in Pittsburg on October 1, 2018, in order to relocate to Martinez. Due to project delays, the court was unable to reopen in July 2019 and submitted a request for a three-month extension in anticipation of reopening by October 2019.

### Recommendation

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee (TCBAC) recommends that the Judicial Council, effective September 24, 2019, approve the continuation of the distribution of Children's Waiting Room funds to the Superior Court of Contra Costa County to allow the court to accumulate sufficient funding to operate the CWR full time at its new location in Martinez, scheduled to reopen in October 2019.

## **Relevant Previous Council Action**

The Judicial Council's Children's Waiting Room Distribution and Fund Balance Policy was last revised by the council at its business meeting on March 24, 2017 (see Attachment A).

The Superior Court of Contra Costa County received approval from the Judicial Council at its business meeting on May 17, 2019, to continue receiving CWR funds during the temporary closure in anticipation of reopening the CWR by July 2019.<sup>1</sup>

## **Analysis/Rationale**

Per Government Code 70640, the statute states that "it is the policy of the state that each court shall endeavor to provide a children's waiting room in each courthouse for children whose parents or guardians are attending a court hearing as a litigant, witness, or for other court purposes as determined by the court."

Further, the statute also states that after January 1, 2006, a court may apply to the Judicial Council for a CWR distribution between \$2 and \$5, inclusive, from applicable filing fees (see Attachment B). CWR distributions to trial courts from first paper filing fee revenues deposited into the Trial court Trust Fund (TCTF) can be spent only on costs associated with operating a CWR.

Standard 10.24 of the California Rules of Court also states that "[e]ach court should endeavor to provide a children's waiting room located in the courthouse for the use of minors under the age of 16 who are present on court premises as participants or who accompany persons who are participants in court proceedings"; that "[t]he waiting room should be supervised and open during normal court hours"; and "if a court does not have sufficient space in the courthouse for a children's waiting room, the court should create the necessary space when court facilities are reorganized or remodeled or when new facilities are constructed."

The approval of this request is consistent with Government Code section 70640 and standard 10.64 and would allow the Superior Court of Contra Costa County to accumulate sufficient funding to reopen and operate its CWR full time at its Martinez location, which also houses its family law operations.

The Judicial Council's policy requires the TCBAC to make a recommendation to the council on a court's request. At its August 7, 2019, meeting, the TCBAC unanimously recommended that the Judicial Council approve the continued distribution request of the Contra Costa court. The Contra Costa court's request for a continued CWR distribution is provided in Attachment C.

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<sup>1</sup> Judicial Council of Cal., *Allocations and Reimbursements to Trial Courts: Continued Children's Waiting Room Funds Distribution* (May 17, 2019), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=7187354&GUID=2EAFDE3B-3019-4334-B783-D717623CC794>.

Attachment D provides the current distribution amount and total distributions for fiscal years 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 (for the period of July 2018–April 2019) for the 18 courts that currently have a CWR distribution.

Attachment E provides the distribution from the First Paper General Civil Unlimited Uniform Filing Fee (Gov. Code, § 70611) for the Contra Costa court. There is no change in the distribution for this request because the court is already receiving a CWR distribution.

### **Policy implications**

None.

### **Comments**

This item was not circulated for public comment.

### **Alternatives considered**

No alternatives were considered.

### **Fiscal and Operational Impacts**

Approving the court’s request for a continued CWR distribution would reduce by approximately \$126,000 the total amount of uniform, first paper civil filing fee revenues that would otherwise support all courts’ TCTF base allocations for court operations.

### **Attachments and Links**

1. Attachment A: Government Code Section 70640
2. Attachment B: Children’s Waiting Room (CWR) Distribution and Fund Balance Policy
3. Attachment C: Superior Court of Contra Costa County’s Request to Extend CWR Distribution
4. Attachment D: Children’s Waiting Room—Distribution Amount and Total Distribution
5. Attachment E: Distribution from First Paper General Civil Unlimited Uniform Filing Fee (Gov. Code, § 70611) in Contra Costa County

**Government Code Section 70640**

(a) It is the policy of the state that each court shall endeavor to provide a children's waiting room in each courthouse for children whose parents or guardians are attending a court hearing as a litigant, witness, or for other court purposes as determined by the court. To defray that expense, monthly allocations for children's waiting rooms shall be added to the monthly apportionment under subdivision (a) of Section 68085 for each court where a children's waiting room has been established or where the court has elected to establish that service.

(b) The amount allocated to each court under this section shall be equal to the following: for each first paper filing fee as provided under Section 70611, 70612, 70613, 70614, or 70670, and each first paper or petition filing fee in a probate matter as provided under Section 70650, 70651, 70652, 70653, 70654, 70655, 70656, or 70658, the same amount as was required to be collected as of December 31, 2005, to the Children's Waiting Room Fund under former Section 26826.3 in the county in which the court is located when a fee was collected for the filing of a first paper in a civil action under former Section 26820.4.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the court may make expenditures from these allocations in payment of any cost, excluding capital outlay, related to the establishment and maintenance of the children's waiting room, including personnel, heat, light, telephone, security, rental of space, furnishings, toys, books, or any other item in connection with the operation of a children's waiting room.

(d) If, as of January 1, 2006, there is a Children's Waiting Room Fund in the county treasury established under former Section 26826.3, the county immediately shall transfer the moneys in that fund to the court's operations fund as a restricted fund. By February 15, 2006, the county shall provide an accounting of the fund to the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(e) After January 1, 2006, the court may apply to the Judicial Council for an adjustment of the amount distributed to the fund for each uniform filing fee. A court that wishes to establish a children's waiting room, and does not yet have a distribution under this section, may apply to the Judicial Council for a distribution. Applications under this subdivision shall be made according to trial court financial policies and procedures authorized by the Judicial Council under subdivision (a) of Section 77206. Adjustments and new distributions shall be effective January 1 or July 1 of any year beginning January 1, 2006.

(f) The distribution to a court under this section per each filing fee shall be not less than two dollars (\$2) and not more than five dollars (\$5).

(Amended by Stats. 2007, Ch. 130, Sec. 135. Effective January 1, 2008.)

**Children's Waiting Room (CWR) Distribution and Fund Balance Policy**

**A. Applying for a New CWR Distribution**

- A court's presiding judge or executive officer must submit a request to the director of the Judicial Council Finance Office 45 days prior to the date of the council meeting at which the court is requesting consideration.
- The request must include the following information:
  - Date of the council meeting at which the court is requesting consideration.
  - Requested effective date of the distribution (July 1 or January 1). If a court wants to begin receiving distributions more than one year in advance of the planned opening date of a CWR, the request should include an explanation of the extenuating circumstance(s).
  - The scheduled opening date of the CWR(s).
  - Description of the CWR(s).
  - The date when the court intends to make expenditures related to operating its CWR(s).
  - The requested distribution amount between \$2 and \$5. Courts can request the Judicial Council Finance Office to provide an estimate of annual distributions.
- The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee (TCBAC) will make a recommendation to the council on each court's request.
- If the council approves that distributions begin prior to the operating of a CWR but the court does not operate a CWR six months after their planned opening date, the court must apply for a continued distribution.

**B. Requesting a Decreased CWR Distribution Amount**

- Any court's request to decrease its existing CWR distribution is approved by the Judicial Council and the request can be implemented by Judicial Council staff, effective either January 1 or July 1.

**C. Temporarily or Permanently Ceasing CWR Operations**

- Courts that cease operating all CWRs must notify the director of the JC Finance Office within 60 days of the cessation date. Unless a court provides notification and submits an application to continue receiving distributions while not operating a CWR within 60 days of the cessation date, the court's CWR distributions will be stopped either January 1 or July 1, whichever is earlier, and the court will be required to return any CWR fund balance to the TCTF.
- For courts that are required to return all of their remaining CWR fund balance to the TCTF, the return of the CWR fund balance will occur on the February trial court distribution for those courts that the CWR distribution stopped on January 1, and on the August distribution for those courts that the CWR distributions stopped on July 1.
- If there is a dispute between a court and JC staff over the amount of CWR fund balance that should be returned to the TCTF, the dispute will be brought before the TCBAC and the Judicial Council if the two parties cannot come to a resolution within 90 days of the cessation date.

## **Children's Waiting Room (CWR) Distribution and Fund Balance Policy**

- An application for a continued distribution must include all the information required of courts applying for a new distribution (see section A above) as well as the amount of any CWR fund balance.
- The TCBAC will make a recommendation to the Judicial Council on each court's application.
- For courts that apply and whose application is denied by the Judicial Council, any CWR fund balance shall be returned to the TCTF.

### **D. Cap on CWR Fund Balance**

- Courts shall monitor the CWR distribution amount per filing to ensure it is adequate to meet the CWR needs of the court without accumulating an amount in excess of the cap described below.
- Effective July 1, 2015, there shall be a cap on the amount of CWR fund balance that courts can carry forward from one fiscal year to the next. The cap shall be the amount of the highest annual distribution within the three most recent fiscal years.
- Courts that have a CWR fund balance greater than the cap (as described above) at the end of the every other fiscal year (beginning with fiscal year 2016–2017) will be required to return to the TCTF the amount above the cap in the subsequent fiscal year.
- For courts that are required to return the portion of their CWR fund balance above the cap to the TCTF, the return of the CWR fund balance will occur on the August trial court distribution.
- If there is a dispute between a court and JC staff over the amount of CWR fund balance that should be returned to the TCTF, the dispute will be brought before the TCBAC and the Judicial Council if the two parties cannot come to a resolution within 90 days of the cessation date.
- The cap applies only to courts that have received at least 12 months of distributions in a fiscal year while operating a CWR.
- If a court wants a cap adjustment, it must submit a request explaining the extenuating circumstance and including its CWR expenditure plan to the director of the JC Finance Office for consideration by the TCBAC and the Judicial Council. The request must be received by the Finance Director within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year for which the adjustment is being requested.
- JC staff will report any return of CWR fund balance through the trial court distribution process to the TCBAC and the Judicial Council.
- For courts that have Judicial Council–approved adjustments to their CWR caps, annual reporting will be required 60 days after the end of each fiscal year for courts that have an adjustment to their CWR cap approved by the Judicial Council, using a template provided by Judicial Council staff.

### **E. Courts that have Received a Distribution but Never Operated a CWR**

- Courts that received distributions between January 1, 2006 and June 30, 2014 but did not operate a CWR during that time period must either apply for a continued distribution by

**Children's Waiting Room (CWR) Distribution and Fund Balance Policy**

September 26, 2015 or have their distributions stopped on January 1, 2016 and return to the TCTF any CWR fund balance.

- For courts that are required to return all of their remaining CWR fund balance to the TCTF, the return will occur on the October 2015 trial court distribution.
- If there is a dispute between a court and JC staff over the amount of CWR fund balance that should be returned to the TCTF, the dispute will be brought before the TCBAC and the Judicial Council if the two parties cannot come to a resolution within 90 days of the cessation date.

Kate Bieker  
Court Executive Officer

*Superior Court of California*

COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA  
725 COURT STREET  
P.O. BOX 911  
MARTINEZ, CA 94553-0091



June 27, 2019

Sent via electronic mail

Zlatko Theodorovic  
Director of Budget Services  
Judicial Council of California  
2850 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95833-4353

Re: Request to Extend Receiving CWR Distribution During Temporary CWR Closure

Dear Mr. Theodorovic:

The Contra Costa Superior Court (Court) received approval to continue receiving its Children's Waiting Room (CWR) distribution during a temporary closure of its CWR. The Court closed the CWR in its Pittsburg Courthouse on October 1, 2018 and has been working on relocating its CWR to the Martinez Family Law Center where there is significant public demand and need for a CWR. The Court originally anticipated opening the new Martinez CWR in July 2019, but the process has been delayed.

The Court received approval to use self-help funding to build the Martinez CWR, submitted a court-funded request to build the CWR, and entered into an inter-branch agreement with the Judicial Council in February 2019 for the Judicial Council to oversee the construction of the CWR. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by July 19, 2019. The Court also conducted an open competitive solicitation for a vendor to operate the Martinez CWR and received one bid. The Court is in contract negotiations with the vendor and expects to execute the agreement within the next few weeks. Once the contract is executed, the vendor anticipates taking 45 to 60 days to start operations. Therefore, the Court anticipates opening the new Martinez CWR by October 1, 2019.

The Court requests the Judicial Council to approve an extension of the continued CWR distribution to the Court at the next council meeting. The Court currently receives a CWR distribution at the \$5 level and projects having a fund balance of \$255,595 by the end of Fiscal Year 2018-2019. The prospective vendor's cost proposal to operate a CWR for 9 hours per day, 5 days per week is approximately \$220,000 per year, which is 57 percent higher than the annual operating cost of the Court's previous CWR vendor. Although the Court is attempting to negotiate a lower cost level with the vendor, it is anticipated that the annual cost to operate the CWR will exceed the Court's CWR distribution of approximately \$125,000 annually. The ability for the Court to continue receiving its CWR distribution will allow it to continue building its reserve to fund these anticipated annual shortfalls. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Kate Bieker", written over a circular stamp.

Kate Bieker  
Court Executive Officer

KB/FL

cc: Hon. Barry Baskin, Presiding Judge  
Fae Li, Director of Finance

Children's Waiting Room  
Distribution Amount and Total Distribution

**Attachment D**

	Court	Distribution Amount	2015-16 Total Distribution	2016-17 Total Distribution	2017-18 Total Distribution	2018-19 July 2018-April 2019
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Alameda	\$5	\$ 162,487	\$ 188,819	\$ 169,579	\$ 145,442
2	Butte	\$5	\$ 19,372	\$ 27,096	\$ 11,227	\$ -
3	Contra Costa	\$5	\$ 104,333	\$ 129,349	\$ 116,444	\$ 105,683
4	Fresno	\$5	\$ 98,469	\$ 121,401	\$ 110,504	\$ 97,516
5	Los Angeles	\$5	\$ 830,421	\$ 1,295,100	\$ 1,480,168	\$ 1,328,993
6	Monterey	\$5	\$ 32,856	\$ 40,826	\$ 20,230	\$ -
7	Orange	\$5	\$ 369,617	\$ 466,843	\$ 421,645	\$ 368,905
8	Riverside	\$5	\$ 253,815	\$ 317,869	\$ 287,070	\$ 274,541
9	Sacramento	\$5	\$ 504,807	\$ 373,901	\$ 348,234	\$ 274,685
10	San Bernardino	\$5	\$ -	\$ 297,239	\$ 288,108	\$ 248,556
11	San Diego	\$5	\$ 336,581	\$ 430,649	\$ 380,780	\$ 337,696
12	San Francisco	\$5	\$ 115,160	\$ 140,230	\$ 124,923	\$ 109,487
13	San Joaquin	\$5	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 91,233	\$ 78,199
14	San Luis Obispo	\$5	\$ 23,484	\$ 29,250	\$ 25,681	\$ 23,263
15	San Mateo	\$5	\$ 64,791	\$ 81,204	\$ 71,715	\$ 62,556
16	Santa Barbara	\$5	\$ 39,686	\$ 48,354	\$ 43,675	\$ 37,337
17	Santa Clara	\$5	\$ 147,497	\$ 174,867	\$ 162,279	\$ 144,060
18	Solano	\$5	\$ 46,724	\$ 56,083	\$ 54,379	\$ 49,574
19	Sonoma	\$5	\$ 45,987	\$ 55,979	\$ 49,926	\$ 44,864
20	Stanislaus	\$2	\$ 19,924	\$ 24,371	\$ -	\$ -
21	Ventura	\$5	\$ 84,342	\$ 103,657	\$ 92,008	\$ 82,189
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 3,302,071</b>	<b>\$ 4,403,087</b>	<b>\$ 4,349,806</b>	<b>\$ 3,813,546</b>

**Distribution from First Paper General Civil Unlimited Uniform  
Filing Fee (GC 70611) in Contra Costa County**

<b>Distribution</b>	<b>State vs. Local</b>	<b>Current</b>
Trial Court Trust Fund Base Allocation	State	\$311.70
Children's Waiting Room	State	\$5.00
Automated Recored-Keeping and Micrographics	State	\$3.00
Judges' Retirement Fund	State	\$2.50
State Court Facilities Construction Fund	State	\$35.00
Immediate & Critical Needs Account	State	\$30.00
Local Courthouse Construction Surcharges		\$0.00
Equal Access Fund	Local	\$4.80
Dispute Resolution	Local	\$8.00
Law Library	Local	\$35.00
<b>Fee Amount</b>		<b>\$435.00</b>