JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
Business Management Services
Report to the Data Analytics Advisory Committee

(Action Item)

Title: Resource Assessment Study (RAS): Caseweight Update

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Issue

The Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model uses a weighted caseload methodology to measure staff resource need in the trial courts. The weighted caseload framework is arrived at by calculating certain key components: court filings; caseweights and other model parameters that estimate how much time or resources case processing activities take; and a staff-year value, which quantifies the amount of time staff have for their work activities. The resulting calculation provides an estimate of the staff needed for each court's case processing work, expressed as full-time equivalents (FTE).

This memo addresses the 2024 update to the RAS model caseweights based on a time study conducted in August and September of 2024.

Background

The RAS model is used to estimate the number of staff needed to handle the volume of workload coming before the courts. The RAS estimated need is updated annually to include the most recent three-year average filings data. Updates to caseweights and other model paraments are made to the model periodically (approximately every five years) by conducting a time study in a representative sample of trial courts. It is necessary to perform this periodic re-measuring of workload to account for ongoing changes—such as new laws, technology advances, and evolving court practices—that may affect court resource needs and to ensure the RAS model caseweights reflect these changes. The time study is the tool that provides the underlying data used to update the RAS model caseweights.

The Judicial Council of California (JCC) contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) for the current 2024 RAS model update. The NCSC are recognized leaders in the analysis of court workload and have conducted similar workload studies in almost 30 other states. Additionally, they have served as consultants to the previous California court workload studies (2005, 2010).

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The time study has been conducted three previous times, starting in 2005:
- The Judicial Council first approved the RAS model at its July 20, 2005, meeting.[1,2]
- In February 2013, the Council approved an updated version of RAS with caseweights, and other model parameters derived from a 2010 time study.[3]
- In July 2017, the Council approved an updated version of RAS with caseweights, and other model parameters derived from a 2016 time study.[4]

Analysis

The RAS time study was conducted in August and September 2024 to establish a new set of caseweights. Caseweights for the RAS model are defined as the estimated number of minutes required to process a filing of each casetype, from initial filing through post-disposition activity. The number of minutes per filing (the caseweight) is multiplied by three-year average filings to arrive at the total time needed to process cases of all types. In turn, that total is divided by the staff-year value—the total staff time available for work activities, taking into account holidays, vacation, sick leave, etc.—to come up with the number of full-time-equivalent staff necessary to handle the court caseload (see Table 1).

Table 1. FTE Need Calculation

$$\text{FTE Need} = \frac{\text{3-Year Average Filings} \quad x \quad \text{Caseweights}}{\text{Workyear Value (WYV)}}$$

Court Participation

Nineteen trial courts across the state (nearly 5,500 court case processing staff) participated in the four-week time study to provide workload data necessary to update the caseweights used in the RAS model (see Table 2). In the 2016 update, 15 courts (approximately 4,000 court case processing staff) participated in the time study. In both studies, the sample of participants was robust and included small, medium, and large courts; courts from the northern, central, and southern regions of the state; and encompassed urban, suburban, and rural communities. Nine of the courts in the 2024 study also participated in the 2016 time study. The roster of staff participating included all categories of staff responsible for case processing activities, including—but not limited to—court operations clerks, courtroom clerks, records management staff, self-help

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[1] http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/0705item1.pdf

[2] At the time, the RAS model was an acronym for Resource Allocation Study model, but that was later revised to Resource Assessment Study model to better reflect the model's use in assessing, not allocating, workload.

[3] http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jc-20130226-itemM.pdf

[4] https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/20170728-17-077.pdf

staff, probate examiners, legal research attorneys, and others. Overall, the average weekly participation rate was approximately 90% throughout the 2024 study.

High numbers and rates of participation are important in developing the caseweights because they help ensure that the study captures the full scope of case processing activities in all casetypes studied. The importance of this is best understood by describing a hypothetical situation: imagine that the study were conducted in one small court. If that were the methodology, this technique would only capture the activities that took place in that court during the four-week study period. If that court only held an arraignment calendar but did not have a criminal trial during the study period, that would be reflected in the caseweights. If the court didn't process a CARE Act petition during the study, there wouldn't be data to create a weight for that workload. Neither of those scenarios would produce a study outcome that accurately represents the full range of case processing activities that occur in California courts.

The 2024 study update presents a marked contrast to the hypothetical example. The nearly 5,500 study participants represent about 40% of all case processing staff statewide, which far exceeds the threshold needed to create a representative sample of case processing activities. During the four-week study period, the study captured a full range of case processing activities at all phases of the case, in courts of varying size ranging from two-judge courts, mid-sized courts, and large courts.

Table 2. 2024 RAS Update Courts

Court	Court
Butte	Orange
Calaveras	San Benito
Contra Costa	San Bernardino
El Dorado	**San Diego**
Fresno	**San Francisco**
Humboldt	Santa Barbara
Kings	Santa Clara
Lake	**Solano**
Lassen	Yolo
Los Angeles	

Note: The courts in bold particiapted in the 2016 time study

Methodology/Framework

The RAS model seeks to estimate the resources needed (full time equivalents (FTEs)) for each court's case processing work. Over the years, there have been changes to the

technical aspects of the model such as the manner of data collection for the time study or the number of casetypes for which we develop caseweights. But the overall methodology, and the components included as part of its framework, have remained largely consistent throughout the history of the RAS model.

Time Diary and Random Moment
As noted, the Judicial Council contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to implement the 2024 RAS model update. The NCSC utilizes a Time Diary method to collect time data. The Time Diary method requires study participants to report their work activities via an online daily time log. The Time Diary is the NCSC's preferred method for capturing study participants' time, and the NCSC has used this method to conduct court workload studies in more than 30 states.

The JCC used a different method for collecting time data when they implemented the 2016 RAS study update. The update was conducted by the JCC's Office of Court Research using the Random Moment Method, through which e-mail surveys were sent to court staff at random moments in the day. These emails included a series of questions about the activities staff performed at a specific time. Although the method to collect time data was different, the study's output was the same: an updated set of caseweights to apply to filings to measure workload.

In 2010, both methods were used for the RAS study update. The random moment was conducted in sixteen courts in parallel with the NCSC time diary method. Before the results from the two studies were merged into a final set of study caseweights, they were reviewed and analyzed by NCSC and Judicial Council staff and found to yield comparable results.

The Time Diary method used for the 2024 RAS model update has been used in previous RAS workload studies (see Table 3).

Table 3.   Workload Study Updates

Year	Update Methodology
2005	Time Diary
2010	Time Diary/Random Moment
2016	Random Moment
2024	Time Diary

While there is a difference in how time data was collected for the various study updates, the basic framework remains the same. Therefore, any changes in the caseweights reflect

changes in court workload and not changes in the way the courts were studied.

Number of Casetype Caseweights
The 2024 caseweights are estimated for the same set of casetypes used in the 2017 study, with an additional two casetypes (mental health certifications and Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act petitions) for a total of 23 casetype caseweights. The casetypes that are selected for weighting must meet two criteria: there must be an associated count of filings for that casetype; and workload for that casetype must be different in profile than other casetypes in the same category. For example, there are separate weights for traffic and non-traffic infractions because the workload and profile of the cases differ enough to differentiate the casetypes instead of creating a single misdemeanor weight. With limited exceptions, the filings data must be collected via the automated Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS).[5]

Table 4. RAS Model Casetypes, 2011, 206 and 2024

2011 Casetypes	2016 Casetypes	2024 Casetypes
Infractions (courts with <100k filings)	Infractions (courts with <100k filings)	Infractions (courts with <100k filings)
Infractions (courts with >100k filings)	Infractions (courts with >100k filings)	Infractions (courts with >100k filings)
Misdemeanor-non traffic	Misdemeanor-non traffic	Misdemeanor-non traffic
Misdemeanor- traffic	Misdemeanor- traffic	Misdemeanor- traffic
Felony	Felony	Felony
Asbestos	Asbestos	Asbestos
Unlimited Civil	Unlimited Civil	Unlimited Civil
Limited Civil	Limited Civil	Limited Civil
Unlawful Detainer	Unlawful Detainer	Unlawful Detainer
Small Claims	Small Claims	Small Claims
Mental Health	Mental Health	Mental Health
Estates/Trusts	Estates/Trusts	Estates/Trusts
Conservatorship/ Guardianship	Conservatorship/ Guardianship	Conservatorship/ Guardianship
Juvenile Delinquency	Juvenile Delinquency	Juvenile Delinquency
Juvenile Dependency	Juvenile Dependency	Juvenile Dependency
Dissolution/Separation/Nullity	Dissolution/Separation/Nullity	Dissolution/Separation/Nullity
Family Law- Child Support	Family Law- Child Support	Family Law- Child Support
Family Law- Domestic Violence	Family Law- Domestic Violence	Family Law- Domestic Violence
Family Law- Parentage	Family Law- Parentage	Family Law- Parentage
Family Law- All other petitions	Family Law- All other petitions	Family Law- All other petitions
EDD	EDD	EDD
Complex	Complex	Complex
		Mental Health Certification (new)
		CARE ACT (new)

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[5] Exceptions to automated data collection were made previously for complex civil, asbestos, and EDD filings because courts felt the benefit of having specific caseweights for those casetypes outweighed the cost of manual data collection. The next update to JBSIS will allow for automated data collection.

To develop the caseweights, the time data collected from the participating study courts is used to infer the total amount of staff time spent processing activities in each casetype over a whole year. In a time study of the size and scope of California's, this means that hundreds of thousands of minutes of staff time are collected for each casetype across all of the participating courts. The time spent on case processing activities includes work at all phases of a case: work that is performed when a matter is first filed with the court; work performed to prepare cases for a hearing or event; work conducted while the matter is being heard in a courtroom; work that disposes a case; and, workload and activities that are performed after the disposition of the case.

In addition to case processing activities, the study collects information on non-case specific workload such as answering general questions at the counter and warrants (i.e. search and probable cause; bench warrant workload is captured as case-related workload.) Other staff workload, such as training and administrative work, are also captured and factored into the weights.

The caseweight for each casetype, by court, is then estimated by dividing the total case processing time by the average annual number of filings. Dividing by average annual filings helps to "scale" the weight to the appropriate size based on volume. To illustrate, if the time measured during the time study for infractions case is 100,000 minutes and similarly, if the time measured for probate cases is measured at 102,000 minutes over a year, it might appear to suggest that the two casetypes require approximately the same amount of resources. However, there are far more infractions cases that occur in a year than probate cases. Dividing by the average annual filings apportions the time measured during the time study to the volume of filings that are typically processed in a year.

It is important to note that the use of filings data to help construct the caseweight, as described above, does not imply that only the workload associated with filing a new case is measured. During the four-week time study period, court staff are asked to record how they spent their time. One court employee could spend all their time supporting a division's post-disposition review work. Another could document their time doing data entry on a variety of cases at various phases. Another could be conducting mediations in family law. Individually, these data points would not give a complete picture of case processing workload, but taken in aggregate, across all of the courts in the time study and across all of the thousands of study participants, a detailed picture emerges.

Following the data collection, each court's caseweights are used to develop the statewide caseweights. Similar to the previous RAS study, the median value was calculated for the statewide caseweights. The methodological consideration for using the median is that it is more

suited for measuring central tendency when the data aren't clustered uniformly around a central point, as is found in time study data collection in courts of different sizes.

As mentioned above, casetypes have been added over the years as filings data has become more readily available and consistently reported statewide. Additionally, if a certain filing is thought to create a workload impact that is not well-represented by the set of current caseweights, a casetype may be added to capture that workload (and in some instances, data is collected manually to support the caseweight). Two new casetypes meet the above criteria and new caseweights are proposed to measure their workload.

CARE Act Petitions – New Caseweight
For the 2024 RAS model update, CARE petitions were added as a new caseweight category. The workload associated with CARE petitions is substantively different from that of other RAS casetypes, so there is no existing caseweight that represents the workload associated with the CARE Act. At the time of the RAS time study, CARE was implemented in nine courts (Glenn, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, Stanislaus, Tuolumne (October 2, 2023); Los Angeles (December 1, 2023); and San Mateo (July 1, 2024)). Four of these courts were part of the nineteen RAS study courts: Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Time data related to CARE workload was collected in those four courts during the time study for use in developing the caseweight.

At this time, petitions are not reported through the Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS) and petition data from these courts is collected manually. For three of the courts, there is currently 11 months of reported filings data (October 2, 2023, through August 31, 2024) and for one of the courts, there is 9 months of reported data (December 1, 2023, through August 31, 2024). Because we need a full year of filings data to develop the caseweight, the data was extrapolated to a full year (12 months) using the average of the months of reported data in each court. Other weighting methodologies, such as more heavily weighting the later months of filings data, were considered but not adopted because the number of CARE petitions filed each month has been relatively consistent.

In summary, for purposes of developing the caseweight for CARE, a single, extrapolated year of filings data will be used to develop the caseweight instead of a 3-year average.

Mental Health Certifications – New Caseweight
On July 24, 2020, the Judicial Council approved the adoption of a new, interim caseweight to measure the workload of mental health certification hearings under Welfare and Institutions Code section 5250 that are performed by court staff.[6] Starting on July 1, 2018, these petitions

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[6] https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8643451&GUID=CDF1174A-E96B-4478-9BF5-AE2ACEA883FC

started being collected in the Judicial Branch Statistical Information System. Since they have a very different workload profile than that of other mental health filings, it was more accurate to establish a separate weight for certification workload rather than use the existing mental health caseweight. Establishing an interim, separate weight helped ensure that the workload for this case type was captured as part of the annual Resource Assessment Study updates until the workload could be more fully studied during the Resource Assessment Study model update and a more permanent weight was developed.

Mental Health Certification was included as a caseweight category and workload was captured during the time study as part of the 2024 RAS model update.

<u>Study Validation</u>

The preliminary study data were compiled and shared with the study courts during a series of validation sessions conducted by the NCSC in November. Courts were asked to review the preliminary results and contribute their comments or feedback. The meetings were well attended and included CEOs and court staff from the pilot courts who had served as project leads during the study. One focus of the meetings was to identify factors that may be driving changes to the statewide caseweights as compared to the current caseweights. Feedback from meeting attendees provided insights into this, and also helped identify possible factors for differences in caseweights between individual courts. Variation between study updates and from court to court is expected and the feedback helps us better understand that variation. The comments generally affirmed expected changes in some areas of workload (e.g., increased time in criminal, driven largely by post disposition activity) while also prompting discussion about casetypes where the change was not expected (e.g., decreased time in complex civil). When discussing differences in caseweights between courts, attendees highlighted possible factors for that as well (technology, backlog, etc.,). As noted, we expect to see variation from court to court as well as changes in overall caseweights from study to study. These changes generally reflect workload shifts due to new laws, changes in court processes and practices, and technology upgrades that study updates are intended to capture.

<u>Recommendation</u>

The preceding information is intended to provide an overview of the framework used to update the caseweights as part of the workload study update. A more comprehensive report will be prepared for the Judicial Council to review and approve once DAAC approves all of the model parameters of the Resource Assessment Study model to move forward to the Council.

Judicial Council staff recommend:

The Data Analytics Advisory Committee should approve the caseweights that are based on the 2024 time study and the established framework that is used to update the caseweights.

<u>Attachments</u>

Attachment 1. 2024 Draft RAS Model Caseweights

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	Case Type	Preliminary 2024 Weights
Criminal	Felony	1,248
	Misdemeanor - Traffic	233
	Misdemeanor - Non-Traffic	486
Infraction	Infractions (For courts with <100k filings)	35
	Infractions (For courts with >100k filings)	39
Civil	Asbestos	3,764
	Complex Civil	551
	Unlimited Civil	726
	Limited Civil	204
	Unlawful Detainer	361
	Small Claims	365
Juvenile	Juvenile Delinquency	1,258
	Juvenile Dependency	1,377
Family	Dissolution/Separation/Nullity	993
	Child Support	396
	Domestic Violence	517
	Parentage	1,158
	All Other Family Petitions	791
Probate/ Mental Health	Conservatorship/Guardianship	3,071
	Estates/Trusts/Other Probate	604
	Mental Health	262
	Mental Health Certification	26
	CARE Court	872