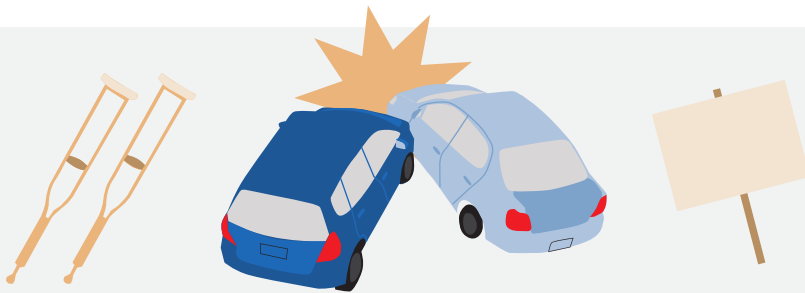


Understanding Civil Common Pleas Cases in Pennsylvania

What is a civil case?

A civil case resolves disputes between or among people, organizations or the government, wherein the rights of each party are decided.

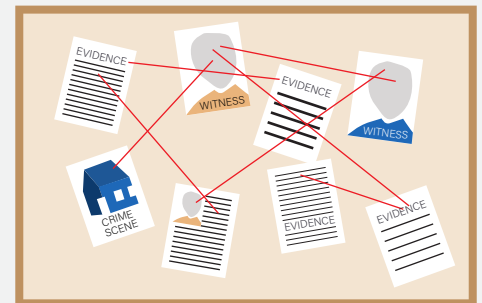


Examples of civil cases:

- Personal injury
- Property damage or disputes
- Contract disputes
- Divorce/child custody/support
- Landlord-tenant disputes
- Contested wills
- Civil rights violations
- Employment disputes
- Regulatory matters, (e.g., appeals from zoning disputes.)
- Medical malpractice

Burden of proof:

The plaintiff must prove his/her case before a judge, jury or hearing master by presenting more persuasive evidence than the defendant's evidence, i.e., by a "preponderance of the evidence" or, in some cases, "clear and convincing" evidence. This is a lower burden of proof than the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard a prosecutor must prove in a criminal case.



Filed by:

Plaintiff(s) - Person or entity who starts case
v.

Defendant(s) - Person or entity who is sued



Outcome of case:

A party is found liable or not liable; or ordered to do something or stop doing something.

Trial:

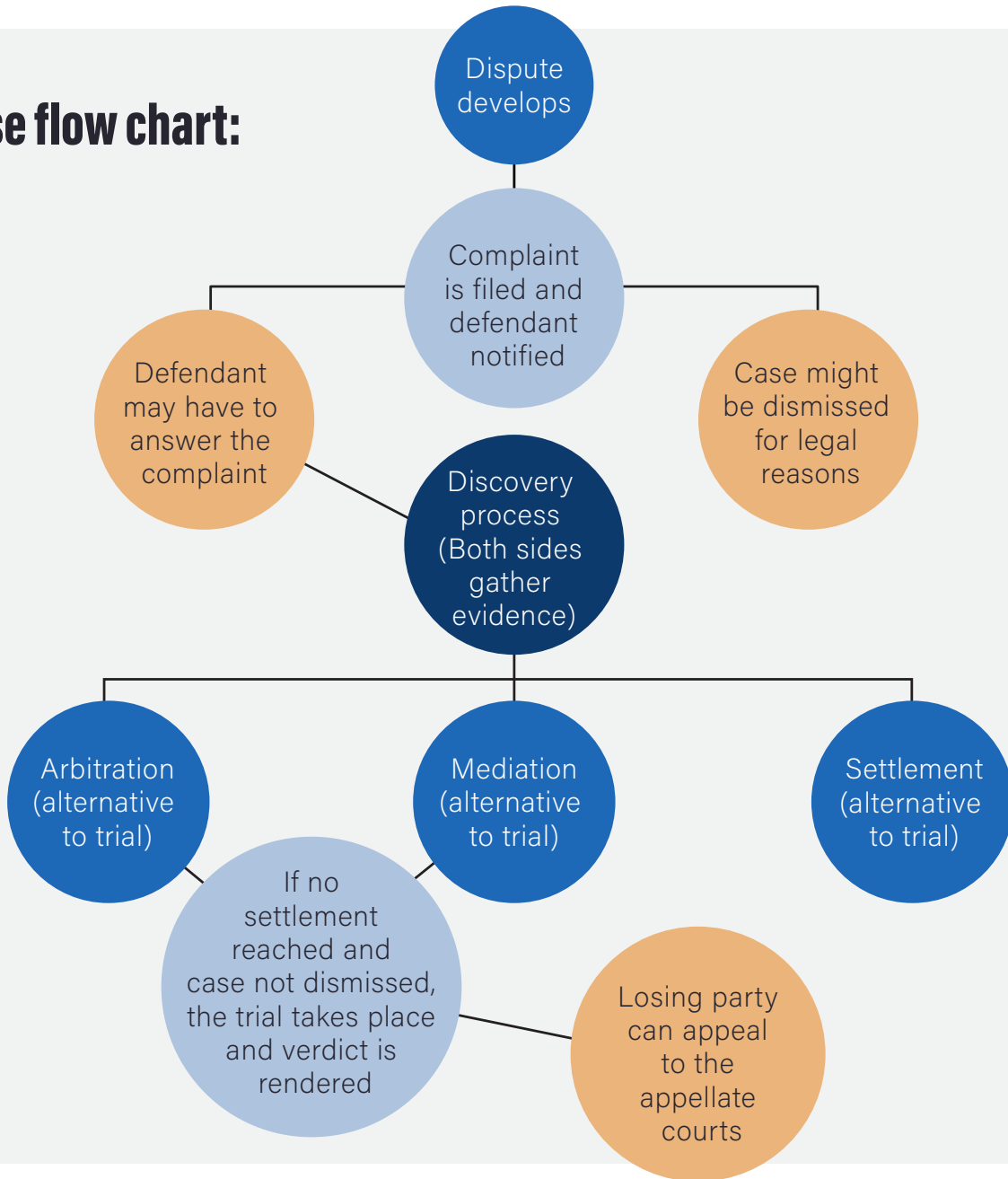
Heard by a judge, a hearing officer or a jury of citizens



Types of resolution:

- Money compensation for injuries or damages
- Party prohibited from doing something, (e.g., not to build over a property line)
- Party required to do something, (e.g., give plaintiff job back)
- Court declares rights of each party, (e.g., who owns the land)

Civil case flow chart:



*This is a simplified overview of civil case information for educational purposes and does not represent the full expanse of civil cases handled by Pennsylvania courts. This overview should not be used in place of legal advice and a lawyer should be consulted for information on specific civil issues.