

You and Pennsylvania's Judiciary

Jury Service

Jurors must be U.S. citizens, 18 years of age and able to read and understand English. Prospective jurors are selected in each county from various sources. Modest juror compensation is set by state law. Citizens also are called to serve on grand juries by a county prosecutor or the state Attorney General. For more information, contact the district court administrator in your county.

Marriage Licenses, Adoptions, Wills, Deeds, Case Files

In most counties, elected county-paid officials maintain criminal and civil records in each Common Pleas Court. The Register of Wills/Recorder of Deeds maintains deeds, wills, marriage licenses and other information. The Prothonotary's Office maintains most civil case information. Clerks of the Orphans' Court maintain records for adoptions and termination actions in most counties. In Philadelphia, these cases are heard, and records maintained, in Family Court. With the exception of adoption records, civil and criminal court records, deeds, marriage license records and estate records are generally open to the public.

Do You

...have a complaint about a judge's conduct?

The **Judicial Conduct Board** investigates complaints of misconduct concerning Pennsylvania's jurists. For more information, please visit: www.judicialconductboardofpa.org

...have a complaint about a lawyer's conduct?

The **Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court** investigates complaints regarding the conduct of Pennsylvania's practicing attorneys. For more information, please visit: www.padiciplinaryboard.org

...believe a lawyer improperly took money?

The **Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security** helps to recover money improperly retained by an attorney. For more information, please visit: www.palawfund.com

...want to practice law in Pennsylvania?

The **Board of Law Examiners** administers the bar examination for new lawyers and reviews applications from attorneys in other states wishing to be admitted to legal practice in Pennsylvania. For more information, please visit: www.pabarexam.org

...want to become a magisterial district judge?

The **Minor Judiciary Education Board** offers education and certification for non-lawyer Pennsylvanians who seek election as district judges or Philadelphia Traffic Court judges. It also conducts continuing education for all jurists in these courts. For more information, please visit: www.mjeb.org

Child Support, Divorce, Custody, PFAs

Pennsylvania's Common Pleas Courts have jurisdiction over family law matters: divorce, property division, alimony, child custody, child and spousal support, paternity and Protection From Abuse orders. While most of these cases originate in the Prothonotary's Office, child and spousal support matters are handled in the Domestic Relations section of Common Pleas Court. Support is determined by a set of guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Each of the Commonwealth's 67 counties has a Domestic Relations section. Look in the Blue Pages of your phone book for the office nearest you.

Law Library

Each Common Pleas Court maintains a law library that acts as a legal information center for the judiciary, prosecutors and public defenders, attorneys and public. Most libraries are free and open to the public.

...have a need to look up a criminal case in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania?

The Unified Judicial System's Web Portal permits the public to access criminal cases filed in Common Pleas Court in order to obtain information on a case such as charges, scheduled court events and dispositions. Similar court docket information is available online for all appellate court cases and some magisterial district judge cases. For more information, please visit: <http://ujportal.pacourts.us>

...have a question about court administration, either locally or across the state?

Pennsylvania's 67 counties are divided into 60 judicial districts, each of which has a president judge and a district court administrator. The president judge is primarily responsible for local administration of a judicial district and the district court administrator carries out day-to-day management tasks on behalf of the president judge and other jurists.

District court administrators offices are among the best places for citizens to pose questions about the general conduct of court business in each county. However, these offices are unable to give legal advice. Many counties also have administrators for the courts of limited jurisdiction and they can serve as an information source regarding magisterial district judge offices or the Philadelphia Traffic Court. Most counties also have independently elected clerks of (criminal) court, prothonotaries (civil court clerks), registers of wills and recorders of deeds. Telephone numbers for all of these court offices may be found in the Blue Pages of local phone directories.

Delinquency and Dependency

Each Common Pleas Court has a Juvenile Court for deciding cases involving children younger than 18 who are charged with misdemeanors or felonies, or who are alleged to be abused or neglected. Judges assigned to Juvenile Court have a wide range of services available for assisting children found delinquent or dependent, including residential programs and foster care. For more information about delinquency, contact your county Juvenile Probation Department. For information about dependency, contact your county Children and Youth Department.

How To Get Legal Help

People charged with crimes who cannot afford their own legal counsel may find help in the Public Defender's Office. Legal Services provides legal assistance to poor Pennsylvanians in civil matters; check your local phone book for more information. Anyone may call the toll-free Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 692-7375.

AOPC

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

As the administrative arm of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the **Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)** carries out that court's policy and management directives while also providing policy guidance, administrative support, technical assistance, and legal representation for jurists and court administrators within the 60 judicial districts. The AOPC is led by the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania.

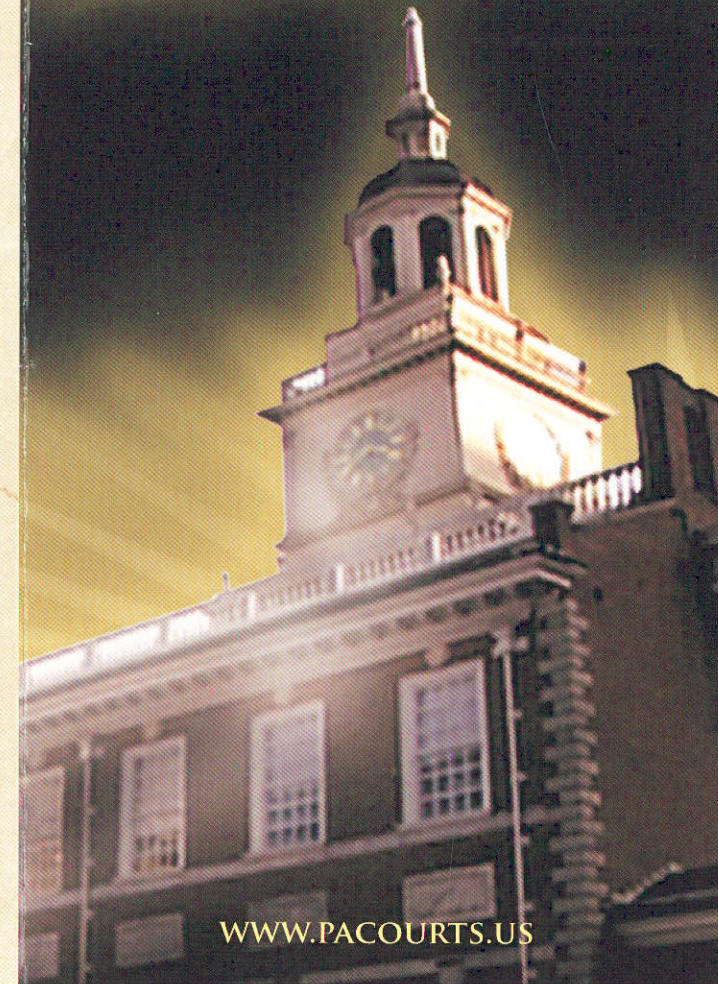
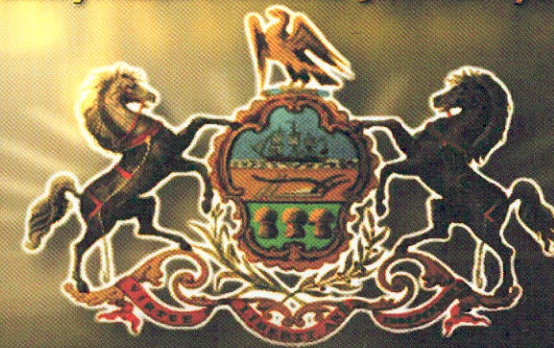
For information about any of the agencies please visit the Pennsylvania Judiciary's web site at: www.pacourts.us. Pennsylvania's state court system was the second in the country to go online and, through its Judicial Computer Project, has been among the nation's leaders in using technology to more efficiently administer its courts and broaden public accessibility.

On the Cover: Independence Hall, Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's first permanent home, dating to 1743.

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System



WWW.PACOURTS.US

