

Infographic for Immediate Release

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Court 101: Common court terms you may not know

HARRISBURG — Have you ever wondered why some courts begin with “oyez oyez?” Or tried to determine the difference between a prothonotary and clerk of courts? Legal concepts and court terms can be complex. The infographic below highlights a few of these important court terms or visit www.pacourts.us/learn to see our full legal glossary.

We encourage reporters to use the full graphic, or parts of the graphic, by [downloading a high-resolution version](#).

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CLERK OF COURTS
The official in each county (irrespective of formal title) who has responsibility to keep and maintain criminal case records of the Court of Common Pleas. The person may be elected or appointed depending on the jurisdiction.

PROTHONOTARY
The official in each county (irrespective of formal title) who has responsibility to keep and maintain most civil case records of the Court of Common Pleas. In some counties one official may serve the functions of both the clerk of courts and the prothonotary. The person may be elected by voters or appointed by the court or another elected official.

OYEZ, OYEZ, OYEZ
OYEZ (OH yay)
Oyez means “hear ye!” and is traditionally said two or three times in succession to introduce the opening of court and command attention and silence.

DOCKET
A docket is the way the court keeps track of a case. It’s essentially a list of cases to be heard by the court. Docket sheets log brief entries of court proceedings.

WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS
A formal, written document (writ) ordering a person to appear before a judge – usually to determine if he or she is being legally detained or imprisoned.

More court terms available in legal glossary on www.pacourts.us

Disclaimer: This glossary contains simplified definitions for general informational purposes and does not encompass the full range of implications or contexts for the terms defined. The information set forth here should not be used in place of legal advice; a lawyer should be consulted for advice on specific legal issues.

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PA Courts InfoShare is a bi-weekly product of the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) that visually highlights the work of the courts with interesting data and statistics obtained through the judiciary's case management systems, interactive dashboards and other research. Reproduction is permissible with source cited.



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