

**Infographic for Immediate Release**  
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**Understanding Civil Cases in Pennsylvania’s Court of Common Pleas**

HARRISBURG — Civil cases resolve disputes between or among people, organizations or the government, wherein the rights of each party are decided. Civil cases are different from criminal cases in a variety of ways – from the types of dispute, who files the dispute, types of resolution and the course or flow of the cases through Pennsylvania courts.

A high-resolution file of the graphic below is available for download at [www.pacourts.us](http://www.pacourts.us) under [Media Resources](#).

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

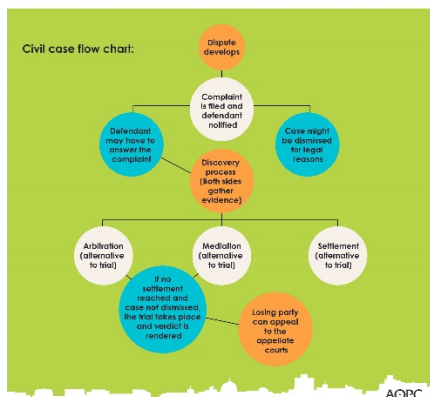
**Outcome of case:**

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)



\*This infographic overview of civil cases is neither an advertisement nor a recommendation of the PA system of civil case practice by attorneys or courts. This overview should not be used in place of legal advice and a lawyer should be consulted for more on specific cases.

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