

## Infographic for Immediate Release

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### Court 101: Understanding civil cases in Pennsylvania

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.

The infographic below highlights key information about civil cases in Pennsylvania. [Download a high-resolution version](#) of the graphic.

**Understanding Civil Cases in Pennsylvania** info share PACOURTS

**WHAT IS A CIVIL CASE?**  
A civil case involves disputes between or among people, organizations or the government, wherein the rights of each party are decided.

**EXAMPLES OF CIVIL CASES:**

- Personal injury
- Property interests or disputes
- Contract disputes
- Disputes with custody/support
- Landlord/tenant disputes
- Contractual wills
- Civil rights violations
- Employment disputes
- Regulatory matters, (e.g., appeals from driver's license suspensions)

**KEY TERMS:**  
**Plaintiff:** Party who starts lawsuit.  
**Defendant:** Party who is sued.

**TRIAL:** Hearing by a judge, a hearing officer or a jury of others.

**BURDEN OF PROOF:**  
The plaintiff must prove their case before a judge, jury or hearing officer by presenting more persuasive evidence than the defendant's evidence. In 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.

**OUTCOME OF CASE:**  
A judge or jury will either issue a ruling in favor of one party or not grant it, or in some cases, order both parties to do something or take certain actions. Cases settled by the parties are decided without a final ruling.

**TYPES OF RESOLUTION:**

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

**CIVIL CASE FLOW CHART:**

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    graph TD
      A[Dispute develops] --> B[Complaint is filed and defendant notified]
      B --> C[Defendant may agree to consent for complaint]
      B --> D[Case might be dismissed for legal reasons]
      C --> E[Discovery process (both sides gather evidence)]
      D --> E
      E --> F[Settlement (tentative to both)]
      E --> G[Mediation (tentative to both)]
      E --> H[Settlement (tentative to both)]
      F --> I[If no settlement reached and case not dismissed, the trial takes place and verdict is rendered]
      G --> I
      H --> I
      I --> J[ Losing party can appeal to the applicable court ]
  
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This is a simplified overview of civil case litigation for educational purposes and does not represent the full spectrum of civil cases handled by Pennsylvania courts. The outcome should be decided by a court. High stakes cases and a lawyer should be consulted for information on specific outcomes.

AOPC

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