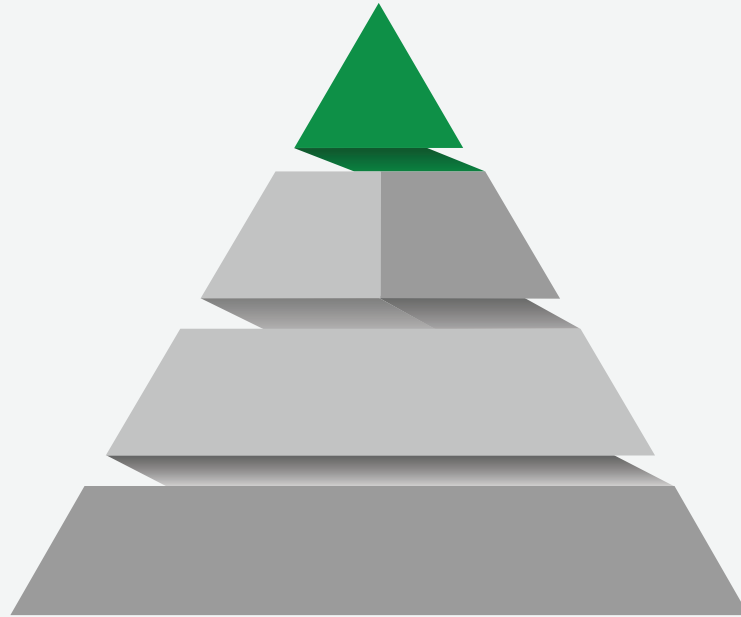


How the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Operates



About the Pa. Supreme Court Justices:

- There are seven justices – including a Chief Justice
- Justices serve 10-year terms, up to age 75
- The justice with the longest continuous service on the court automatically becomes Chief Justice.



How a case gets to the Pa. Supreme Court:

- 1** Primarily hears appeals from Commonwealth and Superior Courts, but also hears direct appeals such as death penalty cases
- 2** Can consider any case pending in a lower court of “immediate public importance”
- 3** At its own discretion, the court will grant an appeal upon approval of three justices.

The Pa. Supreme Court:

- It is the highest court in the Commonwealth
- Dating back to **1684** it's the oldest appellate court in North America
- The court meets in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg
- Receives and considers over **2,000** requests for review annually

What happens once a case is selected for review?

1. Parties make arguments: Justices review briefs and usually hear oral arguments
2. Justices write opinions:

Majority opinion

shared by more than half of Court and becomes the Court's decision

Dissenting opinions

opinions that disagree with the disposition of the case

Concurring opinions

agree with result but not necessarily the rationale

3. Court issues decision: The Court hands down a decision within defined timelines after the oral argument (or submission of a case).

What are a few of the court's administrative duties?

- Supervise the entire Pennsylvania Unified Judicial System
- Make procedural rules for administration of justice in the courts
- Regulate the practice of law, including admission to the bar and attorney discipline.

