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# UNDERSTANDING JUVENILE LAW

*Read and follow the instructions on each page.  
Incomplete work will count as unsuccessful completion of your Teen Court Case  
which will result in your case being brought back to court.  
**MUST BE COMPLETED IN INK-- NOT PENCIL***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Guide To Florida's Court System

## WHAT COURTS MAKE UP THE FLORIDA SYSTEM?

The Florida court system consists of the Supreme Court in Tallahassee; five district courts of appeal which have appellate jurisdiction for most cases, located in Tallahassee, Daytona Beach, Lakeland (with a branch in Tampa), Miami and West Palm Beach; county courts in each of Florida's 67 counties; and 20 circuit courts having jurisdiction over one or more counties.

## WHO PAYS FOR THE COURT SYSTEM?

The state pays all of the costs of running Florida's appellate courts. It pays the salaries of all trial (circuit and county) judges and their secretaries, who are called judicial assistants, and most other costs of running the trial courts. Counties pay some other costs of the trial courts, such as providing the court facilities.

## WHAT LEVEL OF COURT WOULD HANDLE YOUR CASE

**County Courts**, which are courts of limited jurisdiction, handle among other things:

- County and city ordinance violations, including traffic infractions.
- Minor criminal offenses.
- Civil cases involving amounts of \$15,000 or less, such as landlord-tenant and small claims disputes.

**Circuit Courts**, which are courts of general jurisdiction, handle, among other matters:

- Domestic relations cases such as dissolution of marriage (divorce), guardianship, juvenile delinquency and juvenile dependency (cases of child abuse, neglect, and abandonment.)
- Major criminal offenses.
- Probate matters, such as the processing of wills and settling of estates of deceased persons.
- Civil cases involving amounts greater than \$15,000.
- Appeals from county court judgments, except when a state statute or provision of the state constitution is held invalid.

**District Courts of Appeal**, which sit in panels of three judges, or en banc (special cases), decide appeals from circuit courts in most criminal and civil cases. They also have jurisdiction to decide appeals from county courts when (1) a state statute or provision of the state constitution is held invalid, or (2) for orders or judgments of a county court which are certified to be of great public importance and are accepted for review. In Florida, district courts of appeal are courts of finality in many instances.

The **Florida Supreme Court**, has seven justices, decides the most important legal issues in Florida. Among other issues, the court decides:

- Constitutional questions.
- District court decisions holding invalid laws or provisions of the state constitution.