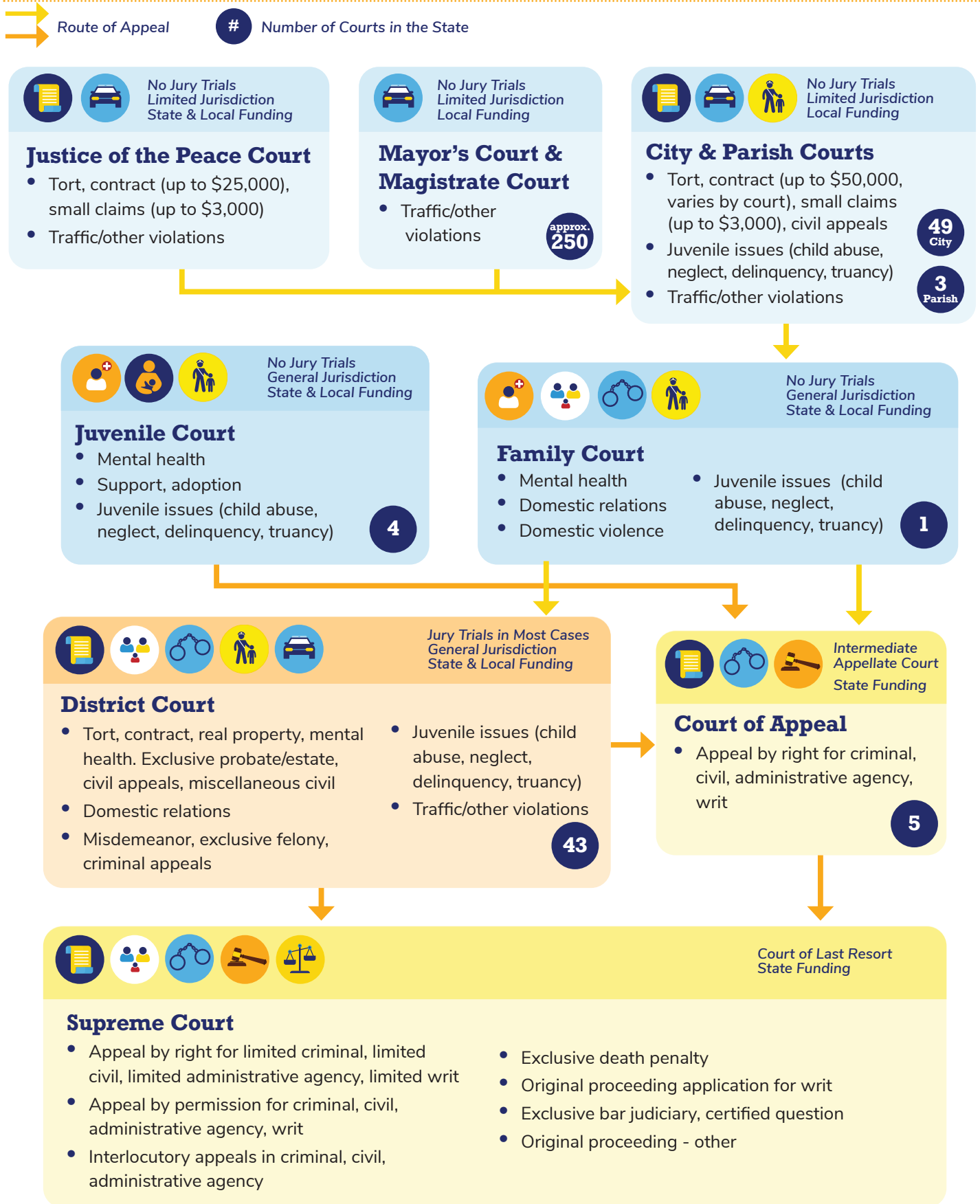


Demystifying Louisiana's Court System



POWER COALITION
For Equity & Justice



Legal System

District Attorney (DA)

As the chief prosecutor for a judicial district (sometimes a single parish, sometimes covering multiple parishes), DAs largely shape how your parish's criminal legal system is operated. Your vote for DA can reshape the criminal legal system in your parish and in Louisiana.

Responsibilities: DAs have the power to choose which charges are filed against an individual accused of a crime, divert the accused to a program, or dismiss the case altogether. The DA also has the power to identify and tackle racial disparities within the criminal legal system.

Courts

Across the entire Louisiana court system, there are 5 courts of appeal, 43 district courts, 5 family or juvenile courts, 49 city courts, 3 parish courts, and 1 supreme court.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is Louisiana's highest court and serves as the final stop for cases that are appealed in the state. Its decisions often serve as the final word on legal disputes in Louisiana. There are seven Supreme Court districts throughout Louisiana, with one justice elected from each of the districts. The justices of the Louisiana Supreme Court serve 10 year terms of office.

Responsibilities: The Louisiana Supreme Court hears all cases involving disciplinary actions against lawyers and judges, all cases in which a law or ordinance has been declared unconstitutional, and all capital cases where the death penalty has been imposed. The senior justice is the Chief Justice, who is the chief administrative officer of the judicial system.

Court of Appeals

There are five Circuit Courts of Appeal, each covering a different group of parishes. The Courts of Appeal have appellate jurisdiction over all civil matters, all matters appealed from family and juvenile courts, and most criminal cases that are triable by a jury.

District Court

District court judges make important decisions in civil and criminal cases (mainly felonies and property-related matters) that impact not only the parties who appear in court for specific cases, but also the community at large. They also handle appeals of criminal cases tried by city, municipal, and traffic courts (with a few exceptions).

Juvenile Court

Juvenile Court hears juvenile delinquency cases, and cases when children are ungovernable, truant or runaways. They also handle what are known as Child in Need of Care cases, which result when a child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned.

City and Parish Court

City and Parish Courts typically have civil jurisdiction over cases involving small claims, evictions, and traffic violations. Different parishes and cities may have individual rules about the maximum claims to be made in their courts.

Magistrate Judges

Magistrate Judges are the first judges you see, and they determine how your case moves forward. They also often conduct mediations, resolve discovery disputes, and decide a variety of motions. They determine whether criminal defendants will be detained or released on a bond, and may appoint counsel for defendants.

Justice of the Peace

Justices of the peace have no criminal jurisdiction, except as committing magistrates and for the issuance of peace bonds. They have original civil jurisdiction in cases up to \$5,000, but are NOT allowed to decide lawsuits involving title to real estate, the right to public office, divorce proceedings, suits against public bodies, and executory proceedings.

Constable

The role of the constable is to preserve the public peace, execute the process in City Courts and Justice of Peace Courts, and discharge other functions assigned by law. They serve warrants and summonses, collect garnishments, and process evictions and other matters pertaining to the court.