

Justice in Kansas

Talking Points—

Types of Courts in Kansas

- There are several different levels of courts in Kansas to handle various kinds of cases. These courts are:
- **Municipal Courts:** These with violations of city ordinances committed within the city limits. The cases usually involve traffic and other minor offenses.
- A person charged with an offense in municipal court may be represented by a lawyer. The judge hears the cases without a jury.
- Anyone convicted in municipal court may appeal to the district court of the county in which the municipal court is located.
- **District Courts:** District courts are created by the Constitution. They are the trial courts of Kansas, with general original jurisdiction over all civil and criminal cases, including divorces and other domestic relations, damage suits, probate and administration of estates, guardianships, conservatorships, care of the mentally ill, juvenile matters, and small claims.
- It is here that the civil and criminal civil jury trials are held. Kansas is divided into 31 judicial districts, with varying numbers of judges in each district. There is a district court in each county, and an office of the clerk of the court where cases may be filed.
- Judges of the district court must be lawyers. Some counties have district magistrate judges, who may or may not be lawyers, and whose jurisdiction is limited. There is at least one resident judge in each county.
- Appeals may be taken from the district courts to the Court of Appeals, or to the Supreme Court.
- **Court of Appeals:** The Kansas Court of Appeals is located in Topeka at the Kansas Judicial Center and is an intermediate appellate court. The Court of Appeals hears all appeals from orders of the state Corporation Commission, and all appeals from the district courts in both civil and criminal cases except those which may be appealed directly to the Supreme Court.
- The Court of Appeals may hear appeals en banc, but the court usually sits in panels of three. The Court of Appeals may sit anywhere in the state as caseloads dictate.

- Hearings are scheduled regularly in Kansas City, Wichita, and Topeka. They also may be conducted in other cities as caseloads warrant to save time and money of litigants and their attorneys traveling to a regular hearing venue.
- **Supreme Court:** The Kansas Supreme Court sits in Topeka in the Judicial Center and is the state court of last resort.
- It hears direct appeals from the district courts in the most serious criminal cases and appeals in any case in which a Kansas statute has been held unconstitutional.
- It may review cases decided by the Court of Appeals and may transfer cases from that court to the Supreme Court. It also has original jurisdiction in several types of cases.
- The Supreme Court, by constitutional mandate, has general administrative authority over all Kansas courts. Its rules govern appellate practice in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals and procedures in the district court.
- Supreme Court rules also provide for the examination and admission of attorneys, set forth the code of professional responsibility, which governs the conduct of attorneys, and include the canons of judicial ethics which govern the conduct of judges. Rules also provide for the examination and certification of court reporters.
- All of the nonjudicial employees of the Kansas courts are under a personnel plan adopted and administered by the Supreme Court. Personnel and payroll records of all court employees throughout the state are maintained in the Office of Judicial Administration, the Court's administrative arm. The Supreme Court adopts and submits to the Kansas Legislature an annual budget for the entire judicial branch of state government.