

Administrative Office of the Courts

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) provides support services to the Tennessee Supreme Court and the entire state court system. The director, appointed by the Supreme Court, is administrative officer for the courts and oversees the AOC. Duties of the office include preparing the court system's annual budget; providing judicial education, law libraries, computers, other equipment, training and technical support for judges and other court personnel; assisting judges with case assignments; administering payroll accounts for the court system; conducting orientation for new judges; administering the official state criminal court reporters system; providing assistance to judicial committees; compiling data; and disbursing funds to court-appointed attorneys representing indigents.

Courts of Limited Jurisdiction

GENERAL SESSIONS COURT jurisdiction varies from county to county based on statutes and private acts enacted by the legislature. Every county is served by a court of limited jurisdiction, which hears civil and criminal cases, including matters formerly handled by justices of the peace. Civil jurisdiction of General Sessions Courts is restricted to specific monetary limits and types of actions. Criminal jurisdiction is limited to preliminary hearings in felony cases and trials of misdemeanor cases in which a defendant waives the right to a grand jury investigation and trial by jury in Circuit or Criminal Court. General Sessions judges also serve as juvenile judges in all counties except those in which the legislature has established a separate Juvenile Court. General Sessions judges must be attorneys, although non-attorney incumbent judges may continue in office until they retire or are defeated. The judges are elected to eight-year terms.

JUVENILE COURT jurisdiction is vested in General Sessions Courts in all counties except those in which the law establishes special Juvenile Courts. Juvenile Courts have exclusive jurisdiction in proceedings involving minors alleged to be delinquent, unruly, dependent and neglected. Juvenile Courts also have concurrent jurisdiction with Circuit, Chancery and Probate Courts in some areas.

MUNICIPAL COURT, also known as City Court, has jurisdiction in cases involving violations of city ordinances. Generally, a city judge has authority to assess fines up to \$50 and jail sentences up to 30 days. However, the jurisdiction varies widely from city to city. About 253 Tennessee cities have Municipal Courts.