

# Your Guide to the New Hampshire Courts



**New Hampshire**  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
*Equal Justice Under Law*



## TO THE CITIZENS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

We hope that you will find “Your Guide to the New Hampshire Courts” an informative, user-friendly handbook for learning about the court system and the administration of justice. Knowledge of how the judicial branch of government works, in upholding the rule of law, is an important part of good citizenship. In our democracy, the courts play a crucial role in the day-to-day life of our communities. Family matters, criminal prosecutions, civil disputes, landlord-tenant cases, small claims matters and all the other issues that are resolved in our courtrooms impact the lives of thousands of New Hampshire citizens. Everyone, even those who may never set foot inside a courtroom, has an interest in understanding how the system works.

Public trust and confidence in the court system is essential to its operation: if the public doesn't trust its courts, then respect for the laws and for our system of government is undermined. We believe that enhanced knowledge about the court system will strengthen public confidence in judges and lawyers and in the administration of justice. We have created this guide with that goal in mind.

We are grateful to the New Hampshire Bar Foundation for underwriting this very important project. The Foundation's longstanding financial support for justice-related projects has made an immeasurable contribution to the vitality and strength of New Hampshire's legal system.

John T. Broderick Jr., Chief Justice  
New Hampshire Supreme Court

Eleanor W. Dahar , President  
New Hampshire Bar Association 2007-2008



New Hampshire Supreme Court

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*Some content in this guide is drawn from materials published by the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women.*

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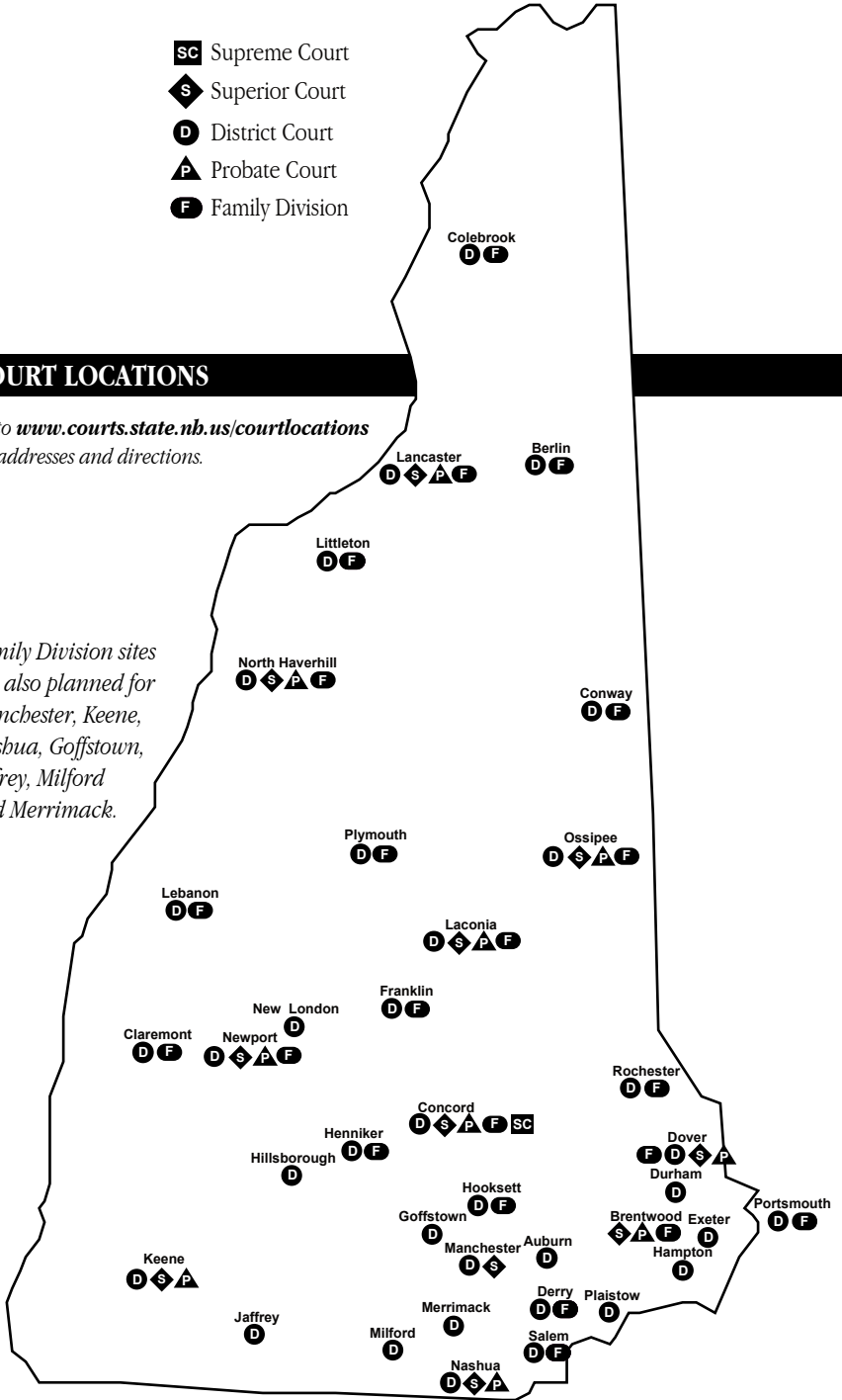


## COURT LOCATIONS

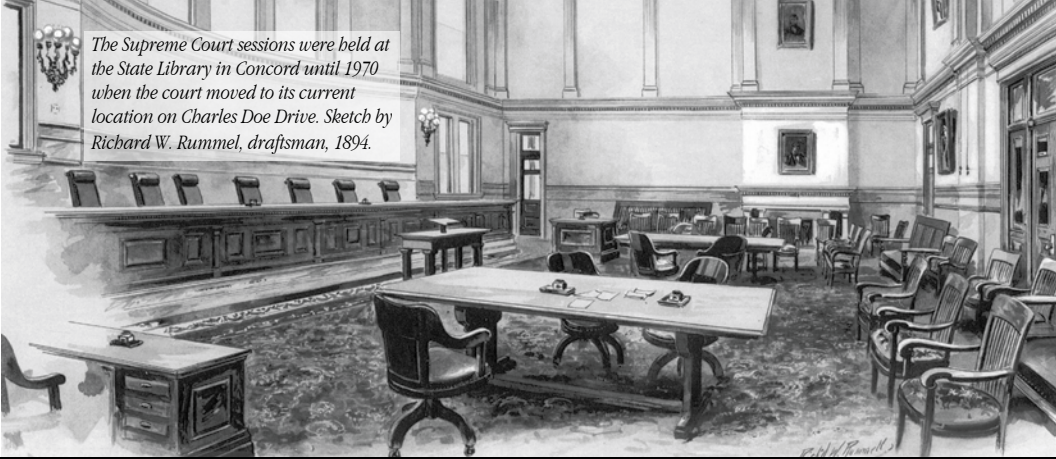
- SC** Supreme Court
- S** Superior Court
- D** District Court
- A** Probate Court
- F** Family Division

Go to [www.courts.state.nh.us/courtlocations](http://www.courts.state.nh.us/courtlocations) for addresses and directions.

*Family Division sites are also planned for Manchester, Keene, Nashua, Goffstown, Jaffrey, Milford and Merrimack.*



*The Supreme Court sessions were held at the State Library in Concord until 1970 when the court moved to its current location on Charles Doe Drive. Sketch by Richard W. Rummel, draftsman, 1894.*



## HISTORY

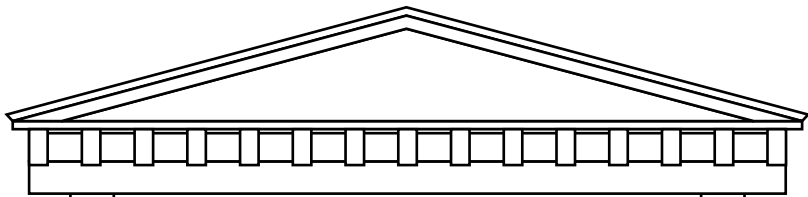
The modern trial and appellate court system in New Hampshire took shape in 1901, when the legislature divided the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court—which had presided over all trials and appeals—and created two separate courts. The Supreme Court retained jurisdiction over appeals; the new Superior Court became the forum for trials. The Probate Court, established in the State Constitution in 1784, had jurisdiction over matters involving wills, trusts and estates.

In 1963, the state legislature established the community centered-District Court system, which handles non-jury matters including misdemeanor offenses, juvenile and domestic cases that do not require jury trials. In 2004, legislation was signed into law to consolidate jurisdiction for all family-related matters, which had been handled in the Superior, District and Probate Courts, into a single statewide Judicial Branch Family Division.

In 1978, the voters of New Hampshire overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the state constitution which made the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court the administrative head of the court system. The amendment gives the Chief Justice, with the approval of a majority of the Supreme Court Associates Justices, authority to make rules governing court administration, practice and procedure.

Court rules are adopted as a way to make sure that similar cases are handled in the same way in all courts around the state. That in turn helps protect rights set out in our state constitution. The rules form a standardized system of justice that guarantees every New Hampshire citizen will be treated equally when they come to court.

The Administrative Office of the Courts in Concord provides centralized services to all court locations around the state, including computer technology, revenue collection and system-wide budgeting. Funds for the court system, for daily operations and construction of court facilities, are appropriated by the legislature as part of the state's biennial budget process.



### **Supreme Court**

- Appeals from Superior, District and Probate Courts; Family Division; administrative agencies.
- Issues advisory opinions for the state executive and legislative branches.
- Certified questions from the federal courts.



## **STRUCTURE OF THE COURTS**

### **Superior Court**

- Civil lawsuits with a minimum damage claim of \$1,500; felonies; divorce, custody, parental rights and other related issues in locations without a Family Division.
- Holds jury trials.
- Equity cases for non-monetary relief (i.e. zoning or real estate title).

### **District Court**

- Small claims (up to \$5,000); landlord/tenant cases; juvenile delinquency and domestic violence (in non-Family Division locations); misdemeanors; violation-level criminal matters; civil cases (under \$25,000).
- Preliminary hearings in felony cases; issues search and arrest warrants.
- Traffic violations.

### **Probate Court**

- Wills, estates and trusts; adoptions and guardianships; involuntary commitments; partition of real estate; name changes.

### **Family Division**

- Divorce and child support; juvenile delinquencies; domestic violence; guardianship of minors; termination of parental rights; abuse and neglect cases; certain adoptions and cases involving children in need of services (CHINS).

Most appeals are taken directly to the Supreme Court. State law provides that in some cases in which parties have a right to a trial by jury, cases from the district or probate court can be "appealed" to the Superior Court for a trial by jury, with the verdict subject to appeal in the Supreme Court.



## THE WORK OF THE COURTS

### SUPREME COURT

- Located in Concord. Decisions are made either by the full, five-member court or, depending on the issue presented, by a three-judge panel.
- Issues opinions that interpret the New Hampshire Constitution and laws and corrects legal errors in lower court proceedings.

### SUPERIOR COURT

- Only court where jury trials are held. Located in all 10 counties; 2 locations in Hillsborough County.
- In criminal jury trials, a unanimous verdict must be reached by a panel of 12 jurors.
- In civil cases, the party that brings the lawsuit can decide to have a judge, not a jury, decide the case.

### DISTRICT COURT

- Community courts where judges hear evidence and decide cases; 35 locations.
- Holds non-jury trials on misdemeanor and violation charges; in felony cases sets bail and holds preliminary hearings.
- In felony cases, judges set terms of bail and pretrial custody within 48 hours of arrest. The case is then sent to the Superior Court where the prosecutor presents evidence to a grand jury,

which decides whether to “indict” the defendant on formal charges.

### PROBATE COURT

- Oversees settlement of estates of deceased persons; decides cases in which the validity of a will is challenged.
- Decides if a guardian should be appointed to make decisions about an individual’s health and financial well-being.
- Determines whether an adult should be involuntarily committed to a state hospital because the court has determined, after hearing testimony, that the person is a danger to themselves or others.
- Probate Court locations in each county.

### FAMILY DIVISION

- Legislation signed in 2004 expanded the Family Division statewide, creating a single, community-based system for resolution of family matters which had been heard in the Superior, District and Probate Courts.
- Mediation is emphasized and sometimes required, especially when minor children are involved; decisions in cases are made by judges.
- Decisions made by marital masters and child support referees must be approved by a judge.



## CRIMINAL LAW

Criminal law maintains public safety and order by defining criminal conduct and stating the penalty for such conduct. The defendant in a criminal case is presumed innocent, and the government (“the state”) must prove the defendant’s guilt “beyond a reasonable doubt.” A person found guilty in a criminal case is subject to punishment that could include probation, a fine or order to make restitution, or incarceration. Crimes are categorized as misdemeanors (punishable by no more than one year in jail) or felonies (punishable by more than one year in prison). In a criminal trial, only the defendant may appeal the verdict to a higher court; the “double jeopardy” provisions of the United States and New Hampshire Constitutions prevent a defendant from being tried twice on the same charges.

### How a criminal case moves through the court system\*

- **Arrest:** A man is arrested by police at the scene of a housebreaking and is charged with burglary, which is a felony and can result in up to seven years in jail if he is convicted. The man, who is the “defendant,” is held in jail overnight until a court can hold a hearing on whether or not he should be released on bail until the charges against him are resolved.
- **Arraignment:** The defendant appears before a District Court judge in the city or town nearest where he was arrested. Bail is set and a probable cause hearing is held and the judge determines there is sufficient evidence to send the case to Superior Court where a grand jury decides to bring a formal charge called an indictment. Because the defendant faces time in jail and cannot afford a lawyer, the judge appoints one to represent him.
- **Jury Trial:** The defendant has a trial in Superior Court before a jury of 12 fellow citizens who, after hearing testimony from various witnesses on both sides of the case, find the defendant guilty of one count of burglary. The judge sets a sentencing date and instructs the defendant to meet with the Probation Department which interviews him and provides background information to the judge before sentence is imposed.
- **Sentencing:** The judge sentences the defendant to serve six months in jail followed by one year probation.
- **Appeal:** The defendant claims legal mistakes were made during his trial. The prosecutor and the defense lawyer file written arguments called “briefs” with the Supreme Court.
- **The Supreme Court:** After reading the briefs, the justices listen to oral arguments from each side. The appeals court does not hear any testimony but the justices ask the lawyers questions about the case during oral argument. The justices issue a written opinion (usually in less than 180 days from oral argument) in which they uphold the jury verdict which means the defendant will have to serve his prison sentence.

\* *Not an actual case.*

In a civil case, one private party (the “plaintiff”) files a lawsuit seeking compensation for losses caused by another private party (the “defendant”). While a defendant in a criminal trial is found “guilty” or “not guilty,” a defendant in a civil case is found “liable” or “not liable” for damages. A defendant found liable may be required to reimburse the plaintiff for losses resulting from the defendant’s behavior. In a civil case, both the plaintiff and the defendant may appeal the verdict to a higher court.

### How a civil case moves through the court system\*

#### ***Superior Court***

- ***Lawsuit Filed:*** A truck driver injured during a collision with a drunk driver hires a lawyer and brings a lawsuit in Superior Court asking for \$150,000 in “damages” to cover lost wages, medical bills, and pain and suffering. The truck driver requests a jury trial and claims the accident was the fault of the drunk driver.
- ***Trial Scheduled:*** Twelve citizens are chosen as jurors to listen to lawyers from both sides present evidence. After all the evidence is presented, the lawyers on each side of the case make their “closing arguments.” The jury is given instructions by the judge about the rules for evaluating the evidence they have heard; the jury then deliberates in private until they reach a unanimous decision. They agree to award the truck driver \$75,000.
- ***Appeal:*** The drunk driver appeals the case to the Supreme Court and says the judge made legal errors during the trial and the verdict was too high. The Supreme Court justices decide that the judge did make a legal mistake in one of the jury instructions. They “remand” the case back to the Superior Court for another trial.

#### ***District Court***

- ***Complaint Filed:*** A homeowner who paid a local contractor \$3,000 to fix a leaky roof files a small claims complaint in District Court after water damaged his bedroom carpet and furniture. The roofer is notified by mail that the complaint has been filed. Since he contests the claim, a court hearing date is set.
- ***Mediation:*** When they arrive at court, both sides have an opportunity to meet with a mediator, assigned by the court clerk at no charge, to try to resolve their dispute before they go into the courtroom. They meet, but cannot agree on a resolution, so a hearing is held immediately before a judge. Neither party is required to have a lawyer.
- ***Court hearing:*** The judge hears the evidence and the roofer claims that his guarantee did not cover hurricane damage, which he says resulted in the leak. The judge decides the roofer owes the homeowner \$1,000.
- ***Appeal:*** The roofer appeals to the Supreme Court. The justices uphold the District Court judge’s ruling.

\* *Not an actual case.*



## **FAMILY MATTERS**

### **The Family Division**

The statewide expansion of the Family Division was signed into law in June 2004. It was the most significant change in the New Hampshire court system since the early 1980s, when the state courts were unified by the legislature into a cohesive state-funded system. Family Division cases include divorce, parenting disputes, child support, all juvenile matters and domestic violence. By consolidating all family-related matters into a single “Judicial Branch Family Division,” judges and court administrators believe these difficult cases will move through the system more efficiently and in a less adversarial way. Read more about the legislature’s role in establishing the Family Division on page 10.

Case managers are seen as one of the most effective components of the Family Division. With a large percentage of litigants representing themselves, case managers are able to guide them through the court process. Mediation and other conflict resolution services are used to help families reach mutual agreements on their own in a less adversarial setting than a courtroom.

*For more information about the Family Division, go to the Judicial Branch website at **[www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us)**.*



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

Cases involving minors are handled in New Hampshire's Family Division and District Courts. Three types of cases involve minors:

**Delinquency:** A juvenile delinquent is a person under age 17 who has done something that would be a crime if committed by an adult.

**Children in Need of Services (CHINS):** Children under age 18 who repeatedly refuse to attend school, run away from home, or are found uncontrollable.

**Neglected and abused children:** Children under age 18 who have not been provided with proper care, supervision, or financial support, or who have been sexually, physically or psychologically abused.

### What Happens When a Juvenile Faces Delinquency Charges

A juvenile taken into custody by police has the right to remain silent and to be represented by a lawyer; the court must appoint an attorney if the juvenile cannot afford one. Detained juveniles are never housed with adult offenders. A juvenile is entitled to a hearing before a judge within 24 hours of arrest; there is no right to trial by jury in juvenile court.

The Attorney General's office can ask the court to certify a juvenile as an adult if a serious crime is involved in which case the charges would be heard in the Superior Court. The vast majority of cases involving juvenile offenders, however, are heard in the Family Division or the District Court.

With few exceptions, court proceedings involving a juvenile are closed to the public and the records are confidential.

### CASA

CASA is a private, non-profit organization that defends the best interests of abused and neglected children in New Hampshire's

child welfare and juvenile court systems. CASA volunteers talk with children, family members, social workers, and others to make informed recommendations to the courts about the child's situation.



## THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

The Judicial Branch is one of three co-equal branches of government, along with the Executive Branch, which includes the Governor's office, the Executive Council and state agencies, and the Legislative Branch, which includes the Senate and the House.

The legislature makes the laws, the courts interpret the laws enacted by the legislature, and the Executive Branch, through agencies such as the Attorney General's office, enforces the laws.

Lawmakers can pass laws that will affect the administration of the court system. For example, the Family Division of the court system began as a pilot project initiated by the legislature in two counties. Eventually, the legislature, working with the court system, voted to expand the Family Division statewide to all 10 counties. The legislature also approves the Judicial Branch budget as part of the biennial budget process for all of state government.

### How Laws are Made

- A member of the House or Senate files a request for a new law with the Office of Legislative Services which then puts the request into the form of a "bill." The bill is then submitted to the chamber of the legislature in which the sponsor is a member. The House Speaker or Senate President assigns the bill to an appropriate standing committee.
- A public hearing is scheduled on all bills. The committee members then vote on whether to recommend that their legislative chamber pass the bill either in its original form or as amended, refer it back to committee for further study or defeat it.
- The committee recommendation is then sent to the full legislative chamber. If one chamber of the legislature passes a bill as originally drafted, or with amendments, the bill is then referred to the second chamber where the same process is followed: public hearing, committee recommendation, vote by the full chamber.
- If either chamber refers a bill to a study committee or defeats it, the bill goes no further.
- If either chamber disagrees with the language or provisions of a bill, a conference committee composed of members from both chambers is established to resolve the disagreement. If a new version of the bill is agreed upon, another vote is required, in both chambers, before going to the Governor's desk.
- The Governor has five days from the time of the bill's arrival to veto it, sign it into law or let it go into effect without a signature. If the bill is vetoed by the Governor, a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate is required for an override. If an override vote is successful, the bill becomes law.

Each year, new laws are added by number and title to the "New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated," the official digest of New Hampshire law, compiled by the state Office of Legislative Services. The RSAs, as they are commonly known, are also revised every year to reflect new or repealed sections of laws or language changes and other amendments made by the legislature. You can look up a law, by subject, title or number on the state website, [www.state.nh.us](http://www.state.nh.us).

*Adapted from A Primer on the Legislative Process. For more information visit [www.gencourt.state.nh.us](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us).*



*Courtesy of the Office of the Governor.*

## **HOW JUDGES AND MARITAL MASTERS ARE SELECTED**

Members of the Supreme Court and trial court judges are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by a majority of the Executive Council. Some Governors, by executive order, have appointed a Judicial Selection Commission which screens and interviews applicants for judgeships and then makes recommendations to the Governor for nomination.

New Hampshire is one of only three states, including Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in which judges serve lifetime terms. In most states, judges are elected and must stand for re-election or they are appointed for a set term and must then seek reappointment. In addition to providing for lifetime terms, the New Hampshire Constitution also says that judges cannot serve beyond age 70. To learn more about judicial selection around the country, go to **[www.judicialselection.us](http://www.judicialselection.us)**.

Marital Masters are designated in the Judicial Branch to preside over cases involving family law matters. An order issued by a Marital Master must also be signed by a judge. The Administrative Judge of the Family Division recommends a nominee for Marital Master to the Governor who can send the nomination on to the Executive Council for approval. In addition to professional experience with family law matters, Marital Masters, as explained in state law, must demonstrate “personal qualities of patience and understanding of the difficult personal matters which are the subject of divorce and a willingness to deal with complex family matters in a non-adversarial manner.” Marital Masters serve for an initial three-year term and are eligible for reappointment.



## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

In addition to its judicial duties, the Supreme Court is responsible for the discipline of judges and lawyers. Two independent groups, the Judicial Conduct Committee and the Attorney Discipline System evaluate complaints against judges and lawyers and make recommendations to the court.

### **Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC)**

In 1973, New Hampshire was among the first states to adopt a Code of Judicial Conduct that had been approved as a model code by the American Bar Association. With that action, New Hampshire formally recognized that supervision over the conduct of judges is essential to sustain public confidence in the justice system. The code, updated in 2001, sets out detailed ethical standards and provides specific guidance to judges for maintaining those standards in personal and professional life.

Since 1977, the New Hampshire Supreme Court has overseen the disciplinary process for judges through the “Judicial Conduct Committee.” The committee operates independently of the court system and has a separate budget and administrator.

In New Hampshire, a judge can be removed from the court only by the legislature either through a bill of address, voted by the legislature and approved by the Governor and Executive Council, or by impeachment, in which case formal charges are brought by the House and a trial held in the Senate.

### **Attorney Discipline System**

On January 1, 2004, a new Attorney Discipline System went into effect in New Hampshire. It has been designed to improve the effort to protect client rights and guarantee lawyers a full and fair evaluation of complaints against them. The system is composed of the Attorney Discipline Office, a Complaint Screening Committee, Hearings Committee and Professional Conduct Committee. The Attorney Discipline Office has its own budget and staff, independent of the court system.

For more details about the work of the JCC or the Attorney Discipline Office, go to the Judicial Branch website at [www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us).



## JURY SERVICE

Thousands of New Hampshire citizens are called for jury service each year, serving as partners with the court in the administration of justice. Names of potential jurors are randomly selected from a list of driver's license holders and registered voters, ensuring that juries represent a cross-section of the community. Being summoned for jury duty does not mean that an individual actually will serve on a jury. Judges and attorneys question potential jurors to determine if they have any biases that would prevent them from hearing a case impartially.

*Two types of juries serve in New Hampshire's courts:*

A grand jury hears evidence presented by the county attorney in criminal cases and decides whether or not there is enough evidence to formally charge a person with a crime. They do not decide guilt or innocence.

A petit or trial jury hears a case brought to trial and renders a verdict based upon presented evidence. In a civil case, a trial jury determines which party is at fault and how much compensation for damages is appropriate. In a criminal case, a trial jury determines whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. The jury's deliberations are conducted in private and the verdict reached must be unanimous.

### **Juror Qualifications and Terms of Service**

A juror must be:

- At least 18 years old
- A United States citizen
- Able to read, speak, and understand English

Persons over the age of 70 may be excused from jury duty upon request. The court will make reasonable accommodations to try and facilitate jury service for persons with disabilities. If you have been convicted of a felony that has not been annulled, you are not eligible to serve. You do not need to have any special skills, education, job experience or legal knowledge to be a juror.

Jurors are paid \$20.00 for each day of service. By law, employers must allow employees time off (paid or unpaid) for jury service.



## RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED

Every citizen accused of a crime has certain constitutional rights. The Federal Constitution sets out the minimum level of protections guaranteed to every citizen. The New Hampshire Constitution provides similar rights and, in some circumstances, provides even greater protection than the Federal Constitution.

What are these rights?

- The right to remain silent and to refuse to answer questions asked by police officers or other government officials, if those answers might connect you in some way to criminal activity.
- To have a lawyer represent you if you face time in prison upon conviction. If you cannot afford to pay for a lawyer, you can ask the judge to appoint one for you, paid for by the state.
- To a public and speedy trial, either before a jury or a judge.
- To change the location of a trial if a judge decides that you cannot get a fair trial in the community where the crime took place.
- To be presumed innocent until proven guilty. You are considered innocent of any crime unless the prosecutor presents sufficient and legally-obtained evidence to prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.
- To be present at all critical stages in the criminal prosecution.
- To testify in your own defense, if you so choose. You cannot be forced to testify.
- To cross-examine any person who testifies against you.
- To bring in witnesses. The judge can also order a witness to appear in court.
- To present additional information to the judge at the time of sentencing.
- To be protected from being tried a second time for the same offense after an acquittal.

The New Hampshire Public Defender Program, which is funded by the state legislature, provides court-appointed legal representation to individuals charged with homicides, felonies, misdemeanors, and juvenile delinquency.



## NEW HAMPSHIRE CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Victims of felony crime in New Hampshire are entitled to certain rights under the New Hampshire Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. According to state law, you have the right to:

- Be treated with fairness and respect for your dignity and privacy;
- Be free from intimidation and be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process;
- Be notified of all court proceedings;
- Be advised of the progress of the case and of its final disposition;
- Appear and make a written or oral victim impact statement at the sentencing of the defendant;
- Be notified of the date and time of an appeal, sentence review hearings and sentence reduction hearings;
- Be notified of any change of status such as prison release or probation board hearings.

A victim of domestic violence, which means an act committed by a family or household member or current or former partner, has a right to go to court to file a petition asking for protective orders against the abusive person and to seek a private criminal complaint.

For more detailed information about victims' rights, go to [www.doj.nh.gov](http://www.doj.nh.gov).

The Attorney General represents the state in all civil and criminal cases in the Supreme Court and prosecutes all homicides. Generally, the County Attorney and local police prosecutors handle most other criminal cases. The Attorney General also has authority in other regulatory areas, such as environmental and consumer protection.



## REPRESENTING YOURSELF IN COURT

You have the right to go to court without a lawyer. Some people can't afford to hire a lawyer; others decide they would rather handle their legal problem on their own. Persons who pursue a legal matter on their own in court, without a lawyer representing them, are described as proceeding *pro se*. *Pro se* litigants are subject to the same rules of law and evidence as litigants represented by attorneys.

Court staff can provide you with information about the court process and forms, but they are prohibited from giving substantive legal advice.

Contact the clerk's office in the court nearest you to find out if information or forms are available for people who decide to pursue a legal matter *pro se*.

Court rules in New Hampshire also provide that litigants can hire an attorney to represent them on a limited basis for part of a legal case. This process known as “unbundled services” or “limited scope representation” can save money and speed up the effort to resolve a case. For example, a lawyer can be hired to do some or all of the following:

- Review court papers and give you advice
- Draft a motion or other papers
- Represent you at a court hearing



- Visit the Self-Help Center on the Judicial Branch website at **[www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us)** for more information on how the court system works.
- For general information about obtaining low-cost legal assistance, visit the websites of the New Hampshire Bar Association (**[www.nhbar.org](http://www.nhbar.org)**) and New Hampshire Legal Advice and Referral Center (**[www.larcnh.org](http://www.larcnh.org)**).



## SETTLING DIFFERENCES...OUT OF COURT

### Office of Mediation and Arbitration

Many disputes can be resolved without a judge or a jury making a decision in a formal court proceeding, which can be expensive and time consuming for both the people involved and for the courts. “Alternative Dispute Resolution” (ADR) programs use mediation, arbitration and other non-judicial processes to resolve disputes outside of a courtroom.

The Judicial Branch Office of Mediation and Arbitration was established in July 2007 by the legislature to assume overall responsibility for managing, developing, and overseeing the court system’s dispute resolution programs. Mediation is used in a wide range of cases in the New Hampshire courts, including small claims, Family Division, Probate and non-criminal Superior Court cases.

The legislature authorized the Judicial Branch to develop programs designed to:

- increase citizen satisfaction with the legal system
- provide affordable justice
- reduce protracted and repetitive litigation
- empower participants to make decisions affecting their future
- enhance court efficiency
- institute dispute resolution processes

The office provides mediation services to all divisions of the court system and oversees the quality of the ADR programs the court provides.





## LEGAL RESOURCES FOR THE PUBLIC

### **John W. King New Hampshire Law Library**

The John W. King New Hampshire Law Library (NHLL) is the only public law library in the State of New Hampshire. Its mission is to advance the administration of justice by providing legal information and related services to the Judicial, Legislative, and Executive Branches of government, the legal communities of New Hampshire and the people of the state.

Housed in the Supreme Court building at One Charles Doe Drive in Concord, NHLL collects New Hampshire legal materials, statutes and court decisions from all 50 states and the federal government, federal administrative agency materials, legal practice and “how-to” materials and legal encyclopedias and treatises. LexisNexis online is available free on public computers. The library offers free wireless access. Anyone is welcome to use the library and librarians are on staff to explain legal research techniques. The law library blog, which is focused on legal research, is located at [nhlawlibrary.blogspot.com](http://nhlawlibrary.blogspot.com).

NHLL materials do not circulate, but many may be requested through Interlibrary Loan. Document delivery services are available via email or fax (35¢ per page) or regular mail (20¢ per page).

*Hours:* 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday (excluding holidays).

*Telephone:* (603) 271-3777 *Fax:* (603) 513-5450

### **The Judicial Council**

The 24-member Judicial Council, established in 1945, is an independent state agency whose members include the Administrative Judges of the state court system, the Attorney General, clerks, lawyers, legislators and citizens. Eight members are appointed by the Governor and Executive Council. Five members are appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Judicial Council is an ongoing forum for consideration and discussion of issues involving the administration of justice. The council has an executive director and staff whose duties include processing payments for court-appointed lawyers and guardians for indigent clients. The council also contracts with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to provide guardians ad litem for children in cases involving abuse and neglect, divorce and termination of parental rights.

*Each year, as part of Law Week, attorneys visit schools around the state.*



## **NEW HAMPSHIRE BAR ASSOCIATION**

The New Hampshire Bar Association (NHBA) is a non-profit association of all lawyers licensed in New Hampshire, including all judges in the state. The Bar Association speaks as the unified voice of the legal profession to facilitate support and improvement of the legal system. It also serves the public directly through public information programs, materials and a lawyer referral service.

The Bar's Pro Bono Referral Program makes referrals each year for low-income individuals who need legal assistance in non-criminal matters. The Bar also runs a nationally recognized Domestic Violence Emergency Project (DOVE) which provides victims of domestic violence with emergency legal services.

Volunteer lawyers participate in law related education projects sponsored by the NHBA that include the annual "Lawyer and Judge in Every School" program, and "We the People," a national program for high school students that focuses on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

### **New Hampshire Legal Services**

The Legal Advice and Referral Service (LARC) at 1-800-639-5290, or [www.larcnh.org](http://www.larcnh.org), makes free legal information and legal services easily accessible for eligible, low-income people across the state. Other services available include New Hampshire Legal Assistance, the Disabilities Rights Center and the Civil Practice Clinic at Pierce Law School in Concord. Contact LARC for details.



**New Hampshire**  
**BAR ASSOCIATION**  
*Equal Justice Under Law*

Volunteer lawyers answer legal questions from the public on NHBA's Lawline (800-868-1212, the second Wednesday of each month, from 6:00-8:00 p.m.).



*Supreme Court "On the Road"  
at Berlin Junior High School,  
October 2006.*

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR COURT SYSTEM

The Judicial Branch Communications Office directs public outreach and education programs for the state court system. Responsibilities include maintenance of the Judicial Branch website, media contacts, court publications, including the biennial report of the Judicial Branch, the Speakers Bureau and student tours and programs.

### Supreme Court "On the Road"

Each year the Supreme Court holds a special session at a local high school during which lawyers argue their cases before a student audience. It is the only occasion when the justices hear oral arguments outside the Supreme Court building in Concord. Volunteer lawyers meet with participating schools prior to the event to brief students and teachers on the cases and the legal issues involved. After the arguments, the justices answer questions from the student audience about their work.

### Judicial Branch Speakers Bureau

New Hampshire's judges and court administrators welcome an opportunity to meet with your civic organization, club, professional organization or school. Find details on the Judicial Branch website at [www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us).

### Tours

The Court Communications Office also arranges visits to court sites around the state

for lawmakers, local officials, international visitors and students of all ages. Contact the Court Communications Office for more details.

### What's on the Court website?

The Judicial Branch website, [www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us), provides easy to read information about each of the divisions of the New Hampshire court system. There's a "What's New" page that includes announcements of upcoming Supreme Court opinions, orders and press releases. There is a link on the home page for jurors, as well as a student page and a "Self-Help Center." The website also provides links to the Judicial Branch biennial reports, speeches, and other documents related to the administration of justice.



Supreme Court oral arguments are broadcast live on the web. Go to the Judicial Branch homepage and click on the Webcast icon.





**Find contact information about the courthouse nearest you at  
[www.courts.state.nh.us/courtlocations](http://www.courts.state.nh.us/courtlocations)**

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