

SS.7.C.3.11

Diagram the levels, functions, and powers of courts at the state and federal levels.

State and Federal Courts have similar structure, functions and powers:

Lower Courts (trial courts)

- lower courts usually have original jurisdiction
 - they often use juries
 - Florida has 67 **County Courts**
 - We are in Santa Rosa County
 - they hear misdemeanor criminal cases and small civil cases
 - Florida has 20 **Circuit Courts**
 - We are in the First Judicial Circuit
 - includes Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton Counties
 - they hear felony criminal cases and civil cases of more than \$15,000
 - they also handle family law cases (divorces, child custody, adoptions, etc.)
 - they also hear cases appealed from County Court

Appeals Courts

- Florida has five District Courts of Appeal (DCA's)
 - we are in the First District
- appeals courts **do not** conduct trials and **do not** use juries
 - when a case is appealed, the appeals court considers whether to not the judge of the trial court made an error

State Supreme Court

- each state has one Supreme Court for the state
- Cases from state court can end up in Federal Court

Differences between state courts and Federal Court

- Federal Judges - always appointed, never elected
 - State Judges - usually elected, some are appointed
- Federal Judges - serve for life
 - State Judges - serve terms of a certain number of years (often 4 years), usually have a mandatory retirement age
- Federal Courts - handle cases that involve federal laws, disputes between states, the US Constitution
 - State Courts - 90+percent of all cases are in state court systems; the laws that affect most people on a daily basis are usually state or local laws