

Tour Guide

an educational tour of the orange county courthouse
www.ninj9.org

The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court Judiciary and Court Administration staff welcome you to the Orange County Courthouse. We hope that your visit is enjoyable and informative. This Tour Guide has been prepared to help guide you through the courthouse floor-by-floor. The Orange County Courthouse is comprised of 23 floors which house courtrooms, judicial chambers, administrative offices and public access space. The courthouse is flanked by two buildings occupied by the Public Defender, Building A, and the State Attorney, Building B.

the basics:

The Trial: One of the most important aspects of the judicial system is the “trial.” At trial the judge or jurors decide the facts of the case and determine which side shall prevail. The trial may last a few hours or several weeks. Generally, there are two types of trials conducted in the Orange County Courthouse - criminal and civil.

Civil Trials: A civil trial consists of a plaintiff and a defendant. The plaintiff is suing the defendant for some breach of contract or personal wrong. Civil trials are divided into two categories by the dollar amount or type of case being tried. If the amount in controversy is less than \$15,000 the case will generally be tried in County Court and if the amount in controversy is over \$15,000 or where the litigation involves matters that cannot be brought before the County Court, the case will be heard in Circuit Court.

Criminal Trials: In a criminal trial, the defendant is a person charged with violation of the law and the plaintiff is the State of Florida. The type of crime or the amount of time the convicted defendant may be imprisoned, will determine the jurisdiction. For example, the Circuit Criminal Court has jurisdiction over felonies. A felony is a crime punish-

able by more than one year in jail. The County Criminal Court has jurisdiction over misdemeanors and all county and municipal ordinance violations. A misdemeanor is a crime punishable by a fine and/or less than one year in jail.

Other Proceedings: While trials are the most visible proceedings conducted in the courthouse, there are many other proceedings that are handled daily.

For example, at an arraignment proceeding criminal defendants are apprised of their rights and enter their pleas. The plea can be Not Guilty, Guilty or Nolo Contendere. A nolo contendere or no contest plea is not an admission of guilt but rather it informs the judge that the defendant wishes not to contest the charge. If the defendant enters a guilty or a no contest plea, the judge may sentence the defendant at that time. The sentence is the time in jail, probation, and/or the fine that the judge imposes on the defendant. If the defendant enters a not guilty plea, a trial date will be set.

Another proceeding you may observe is a Violation of Probation Hearing. This hearing is conducted when previously convicted criminal defendants violate the restrictions that were imposed on them by the judge.

tour guide

floor-by-floor guide:

Basement: The basement of the courthouse is used for judges' parking and as a secure holding area for prisoners awaiting criminal trials and all other proceedings. The underground holding cell area has separate elevators to floors with courtrooms. There is no public access to the basement.

floor 1

Court Security: Anyone entering the courthouse is required to pass through the metal detectors located just inside the main entrance. This measure is meant to prevent a person from entering with a dangerous weapon. Briefcases, purses, bags and packages are x-rayed and may also be hand searched by security personnel.

407-836-6060

Rotunda/Public Lobby: This majestic four-story area is flanked by two escalators which take visitors to the first through fourth floors. Elevators for the first through fourth floors are located behind the Information Booth. To reach the fifth through twenty-third floors, you must take the elevators located down either hall located to the left and right of the elevators that service the first four floors.

Information Booth: Located in the rotunda, the Information Booth is staffed by volunteers recruited by Court Administration. These volunteers will answer any questions you may have and help you get around the complex.

Clerk of the Courts: Records Management, Suite 150: Operates a central storage and retrieval facility for court records; oversees the storage and disposal of inactive files; evidence personnel control and inventory all items introduced as evidence in any court. **407-836-6321**

Jury Assembly: Manages the pool of prospective jurors for the court on a

daily basis. The Jury Assembly Room, located to the south just past the rotunda, is where all those called for jury duty must report before being assigned to a specific case. **407-836-2206**

Dispute Resolution Services, (Mediation), Suite 120, Court cases involving juvenile restitution, county civil, juvenile dependency, and domestic relations are referred by judges to certified mediators to attempt to settle prior to trial. All parties reporting for any mediation must check-in at the Dispute Resolution Services Office in order to proceed with their case. The parties will then be directed to a mediation conference room once the case is processed. **407-836-2004**

floor 2

A Place for Children, Suite 270: Licensed child care facility for families with official court business. **407-836-2108**

Clerk of the Court: Circuit Criminal, Suite 210: Maintains and processes all records relevant to felonies, grand jury actions, and criminal appeals. **407-836-2056**

Clerk of the Court: County Criminal, Suite 250: Maintains and processes all records relevant to misdemeanors, municipal and county ordinance violations and parking violations. **407-836-2066**

floor 3

Court Interpreting Services: Provides neutral translation services for the court for defendants and witnesses in criminal cases who do not speak or understand English. **407-836-2399**

Court Resource Center, Suite 365: A place to conduct legal research and obtain Supreme Court forms for domestic matters. Self-help court information is available for pro se litigants. **407-836-0517**

Family Court Services, Suite 330: Assists the public in pursuing a variety of domestic actions including divorce, name change and child custody. Also provides information on mandatory parenting courses and acts as a liaison between social services and the court. **407-836-6054**

Family Ties (Supervised Visitation Center), Suite 330: Operates a visitation/monitored exchange center developed to allow parental-child contact in a friendly atmosphere with assurance for the child's safety. Appointments must be made through the Family Ties coordinator at **407-836-0426**.

Court Reporting Services (Official), Suite 360: Stenographically record circuit criminal court proceedings and provide written transcripts. **407-836-2280**

Clerk of the Court: Circuit Civil, Suite 310: Maintains the records of civil suits where the amount in dispute is over \$15,000 or where the litigation involves equitable matters that cannot be brought before the County Court. **407-836-2055**

Clerk of the Court: Domestic Relations, Suite 320: Maintains records in civil litigation involving domestic matters. This includes divorces, adoptions and injunctions. **407-836-2054**

Clerk of the Court: Mental Health, Suite 335: Responsible for the court's records when a person is involuntarily committed for treatment of a mental illness or substance abuse. This office also maintains records pertaining to the protective services for disabled adults or elderly persons; persons with developmental disabilities; persons with tuberculosis; judicial determinations of incapacity or the restoration of capacity and guardian advocates. **407-836-2057**

Clerk of the Court: Probate, Suite 340: Manages cases involving the distribution of estates of deceased

interesting facts

The Orange County Courthouse:

- Stands 416 feet high.
- Has 23 main floors in the tower.
- The basement has separate areas for judges' parking and inmate processing.
- The public, judges, and inmates have separate elevators and stairs.
- 22 elevators in the complex carry passengers to their floors.
- The public garage accommodates 750 cars with an expansion plan for an additional 750.
- Including the garage, the complex consists of four buildings.
- Excluding the garage, the complex has 965,000 square feet of interior space.
- 680 miles of wiring are strung through 193 miles of conduit.
- 11,300 electrical receptacles and 17,000 light fixtures power and light it.
- More than 36,000 light bulbs light the complex.
- 4,500 concrete panels make up the building's outer layer.
- 948 concrete piles form the foundation.
- 265 surveillance cameras help provide security.
- 3,000 doors open to offices and courtrooms.
- 9,500 windows look out on Orlando.

A little history:

The Orange County Courthouse is the result of more than 12 years of planning, designing and construction. Here are a few facts about Orange County's previous courthouses:

- in 1875 a three-story frame building was erected on the corner of Wall and Court Streets and served for 17 years;
- in 1892 the population had grown to 12,582 and so a larger courthouse was built and was able to serve the community for 35 years until the need for an even larger courthouse arose;
- in 1927 a new courthouse was built on the corner of Magnolia and East Washington at the cost of \$1 million;
- as the population continued to grow, so did the courthouse...in 1958 an eight story annex was built and in 1970 a tower connecting the two buildings was erected—this building, as well as the other sites throughout the downtown area were used until the new courthouse was completed in late 1997.

look here
for
interesting
facts

A free program designed to educate the public on the workings of the judicial branch of government and to encourage the public's trust and confidence in the court system. For more information call (407) 836-2380.



an educational tour of the orange county courthouse

the election process:

Circuit Judges: There are 20 judicial circuits, each with a varying number of judges dependent upon population and caseload of the particular area. Circuit court judges are elected by the voters of the various circuits in nonpartisan, contested elections against other persons who choose to qualify as candidates for the position. Circuit court judges serve for six-year terms.

Chief Judge: A chief judge is chosen from among the circuit judges in each judicial circuit to carry out administrative responsibilities for all trial courts (both circuit and county courts) within the circuit. The term for the chief judge is two years and begins on July 1st of each odd numbered year. A chief judge may be re-elected to serve successive terms.

County Judges: The Florida Constitution establishes a county court in each of Florida's 67 counties. The number of judges in each county court varies with the population and caseload of the county. County judges serve six-year terms.

Court Administration: Each of the 20 circuits has a trial court administrator assisting the chief judge in carrying out administrative duties. The trial court administrator is selected by a majority vote of the circuit and county judges in their respective circuit and reports directly to the chief judge. The trial court administrator may provide assistance to the chief judge and the judges in the following areas: budget administration, fiscal administration, facilities management, personnel administration, public information, jury management, witness management, court reporting management, court technology, dispute resolution, court interpreters, pretrial release, and probation.

Clerk of the Circuit and County Court: The clerk of the circuit and county court is a local constitutional officer elected by the voters in his/her respective county for a term of four years. The clerk keeps a progress docket on all proceedings going before the court. The clerk is the recorder of all documents authorized or required by law to be recorded in the county where the clerk presides. These documents are recorded in the "Official Records" which is the general series of books where the clerk registers the time of filing, the filing number of each document filed for the record, the kind of document, and the names of the parties on the document. The clerk is responsible for recording documents upon payment for the services rendered.

State Attorney: In each of the 20 judicial circuits, a state attorney represents the state in the prosecution of state law violations in either county or circuit court. State attorneys are elected in each circuit for a four-year term.

Public Defender: There is a public defender in each of Florida's judicial circuits. A public defender is appointed to represent the defendant by the presiding judge once it has been determined that the individual cannot afford legal counsel. Public defenders are elected in each circuit for a four-year term.

an educational tour of the orange county courthouse

persons and the administration of guardianships. **407-836-2058**
Clerk of the Court: Marriage Licenses, Suite 355: Issues marriage licenses. Couples may apply for a license between 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Marriage ceremonies are conducted on a first-come-first-serve basis between 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

407-836-2067

Clerk of the Court: County Civil, Suite 350: Handles small claims involving lawsuits if the amount involved is \$5,000 or less and general civil where the amount in dispute may be up to \$15,000. This division also processes tenant eviction cases. **407-836-2065**

County Civil Hearing Rooms: County Civil, including small claims, are heard.

floor 4

Traffic Court: Courtrooms. Traffic court is a county court with jurisdiction in misdemeanor traffic offenses and civil traffic infractions. **Clerk of the Court: Traffic Court, Suite 410:** Processes civil and criminal traffic offenses, including the collection of traffic fines. **407-836-2059**

floor 5

Court Administration Human Resources: Responsible for personnel administration. **407-836-2261**

Child Support Hearing Officers: Handle disputes involving Department of Revenue child support enforcement cases in Orange County. Also serve as "general masters" for Baker Act petitions (a request for involuntary commitment of someone mentally ill). **407-836-2287**

Witness Management: Assists witnesses and victims, in

both traffic and criminal matters, through the system by advising on case status and providing instructions when a trial is set. If you receive a subpoena in a criminal or traffic matter, you should call the number indicated on the paperwork the day before the trial date.

407-836-2045

floors
13, 14,
15

Reserved for expansion, not accessible to the public.

floor
21

Court Administration: The primary objective of Court Administration is to serve the judges of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court by providing various support programs necessary for the daily operation and management of non-judicial court functions. For information on court-sponsored programs, contact Court Administration. **407-836-2050**

Court Appointed Attorney Program: Addresses procedures for the appointment of attorneys and payment of attorney's fees and costs for indigent defendants.

407-836-2366

Clerk of the Court: Administrative Offices. The Clerk is responsible for maintaining the records of the Circuit and County Courts.

407- 836-2060

floor
22

Mechanical: Houses air conditioning and elevator machinery. There is no public access to this floor.

floor
23

Gene Medina Judicial Conference Room

Roger A. Barker Ceremonial Courtroom: This high-tech courtroom is reserved for grand jury proceedings and special, high profile trials or trials with multiple defendants.

Note: Judicial Chambers are located on the 3rd, 4th, 8th, 11th, 17th and 20th floors.

Courtrooms are located on the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 16th, 18th, 19th and 23rd floors.

NINTH
JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT
COURT
OF
FLORIDA

For more information about your judicial system, reach us on the world wide web at www.ninja9.org or call Court Administration at **407-836-2050.**

To schedule a tour call **407-836-2380.**

The Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida is comprised of Orange and Osceola Counties.