

Law on the Frontlines

Legal Reference for Public Libraries



Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference

TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2023 03 rev.

This session is being recorded.

Introductions

The Frontlines Workgroup includes representatives from the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Access to Justice Department of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Instructors for each course will vary but the information provided is based on the core curriculum of the ongoing Frontlines Project.

Today's instructors are...

Catherine McGuire

Thurgood Marshall
State Law Library

Julia Viets

Montgomery
County Circuit
Court Law Library

Joan Bellistri

Anne Arundel
County Public Law
Library

Pre-Assessment

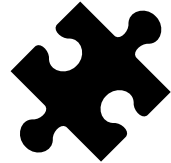
Review each of the following statements and respond with TRUE or FALSE. We will review at the end of class.

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.
2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.
3. Laws are pretty much the same between the states. What is law in Pennsylvania is the same as in Maryland.
4. If a patron wants to appeal their case, I know that information on the Supreme Court is all that they need.
5. When a patron asks for court cases, I can help them identify which cases will be most helpful for them to use.

Learning Outcomes



Describe the structure of government



Explain the connection between the structure of government and finding law



Utilize primary sources of law



Assess options for forms and select appropriate options

Access to Justice

A quick review...



What is Law?

Language passed by government bodies that holds force over all parties in a particular jurisdiction

Test Yourself – Is it Law?

- Maryland Code
- Senate Bill
- COMAR
- Carroll County Code
- Annapolis City Ordinance
- Brief in the opinion of Smith vs. Doe

The "need to know" for
effective reference

Three branches and the law they make




LEGISLATURE

*Congress
General Assembly
County Council*

Statutory Law

Statutes
(aka Acts, Session
Laws, Ordinances)



Source: Maryland Code

EXECUTIVE

*President
Governor
executive agencies*

Regulatory Law
Administrative Law

Regulations
Executive Orders




Source: COMAR

JUDICIARY

*Courts
(appellate, trial)*

Case Law

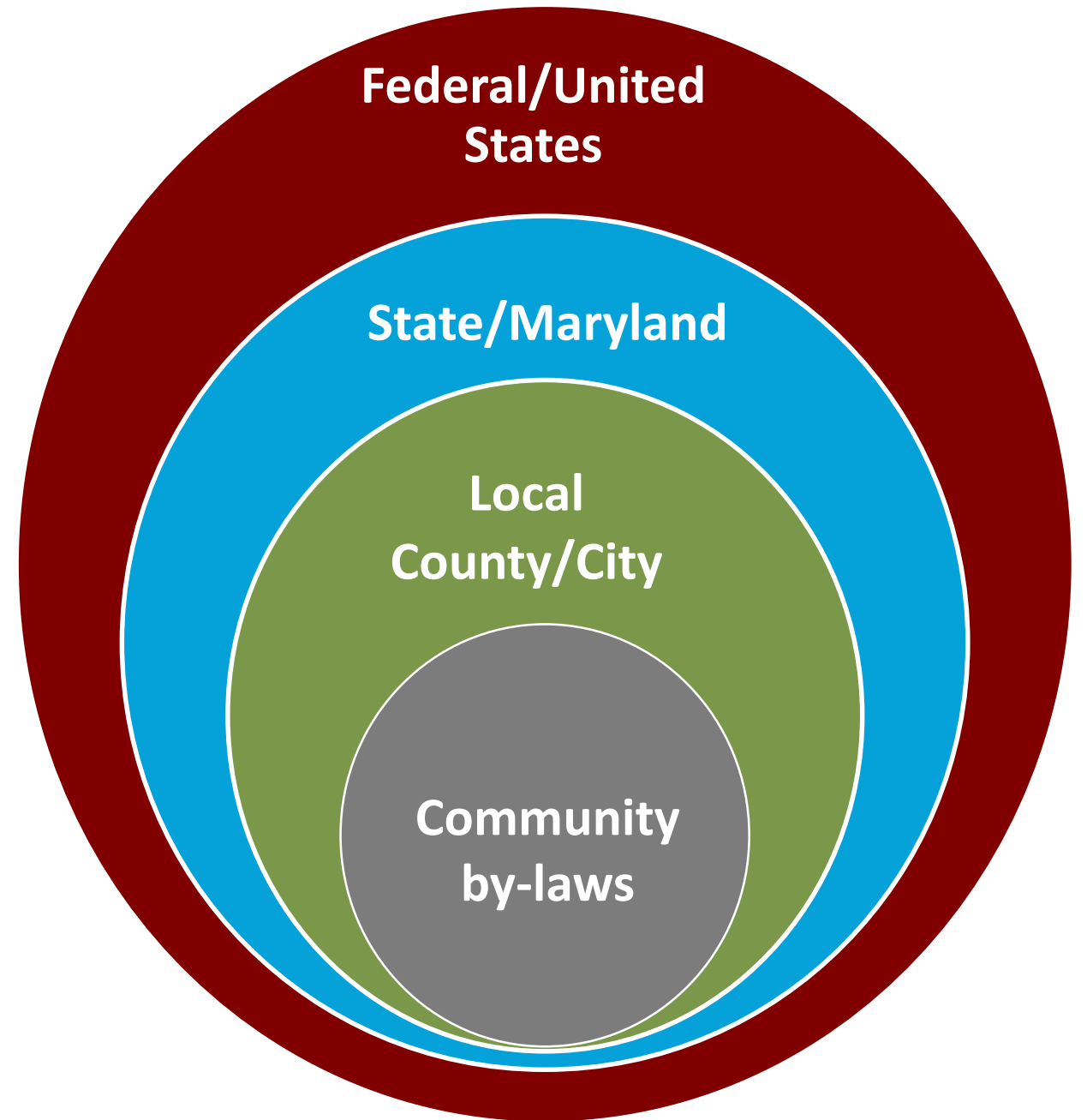
Cases, aka opinions
Rules of Procedure



Source: Case Reporters

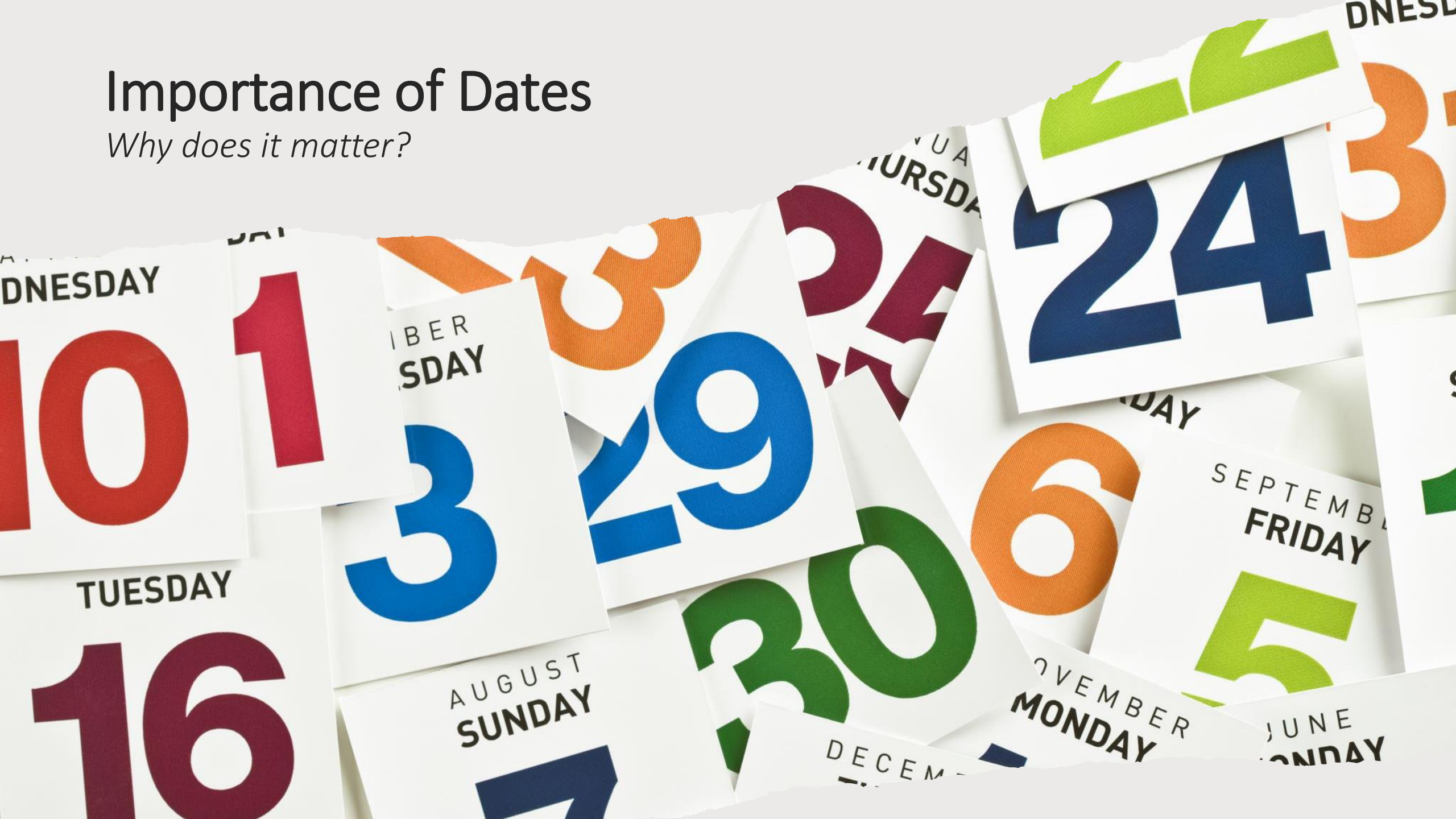
Location, Location!

Where something takes place matters



Importance of Dates

Why does it matter?



Recognizing Citation Formats

Md Code, Family Law §5-104

07.01.02.05

Jane Doe vs. John Johnson, 413 Md. 817

Finding the Law

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Maryland Courts website. At the top left, it says "MARYLAND COURTS" with the tagline "Fair, Efficient, & Effective Justice For All". To the right, there are search boxes for "Site Search" and "Opinions Search", along with "Search" and "Search Tips" buttons. Below this is a dark navigation bar with white text for "HOME", "USING THE LIBRARY", "RESEARCH", "ABOUT US", "PEOPLE'S LAW LIBRARY", and "ASK A LAW LIBRARIAN". Underneath the navigation bar is a light gray section for the "Thurgood Marshall State Law Library". It features the library's logo (a scale of justice inside a circle with the text "MARYLAND THURGOOD MARSHALL STATE LAW LIBRARY"), the library name, and its hours: "M,W,F 8AM - 4:30PM | TU,TH 8AM - 9PM | SAT 9AM - 4PM". To the right of the logo, the address "361 ROWE BOULEVARD, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401" and phone number "410-260-1430 | 888-216-8156" are listed, along with the email "LAWLIBRARY@MDCOURTS.GOV". At the bottom of this section are two search boxes: "Search Catalog" and "Search Library Website", each with a "Search" button.

- YOU ARE IN:
- Research
 - Catalog
 - Gateway to Maryland Law
 - Databases
 - Research Guides
 - Collections
 - Special Collections Room

Gateway to Maryland Law

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library has an extensive collection of primary and secondary sources focusing on Maryland law. Many of these resources are available online, but some require physical presence at the Library to access.

[Maryland Code](#) | [County and Municipal Codes](#) | [Court Rules](#) | [Case Law](#) | [Regulations](#) | [Attorney General Opinions](#) | [State Publications](#) | [Task Force Reports](#) | [Incorporated by Reference](#) | [Law Reviews and Journals](#)

Maryland Code and Laws of Maryland

Maryland statutes are passed by the General Assembly, Maryland's legislative body. The Laws of the State of Maryland is a chronological collection of laws passed by the General Assembly.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Maryland Code and Rules](#)
- [Maryland County Codes](#)
- [Maryland Law Collections](#)
- [Maryland Law Reviews and Journals](#)
- [Maryland Municipal Codes](#)
- [Maryland Publications](#)
- [Scanned Collections](#)
- [Task Force Reports](#)

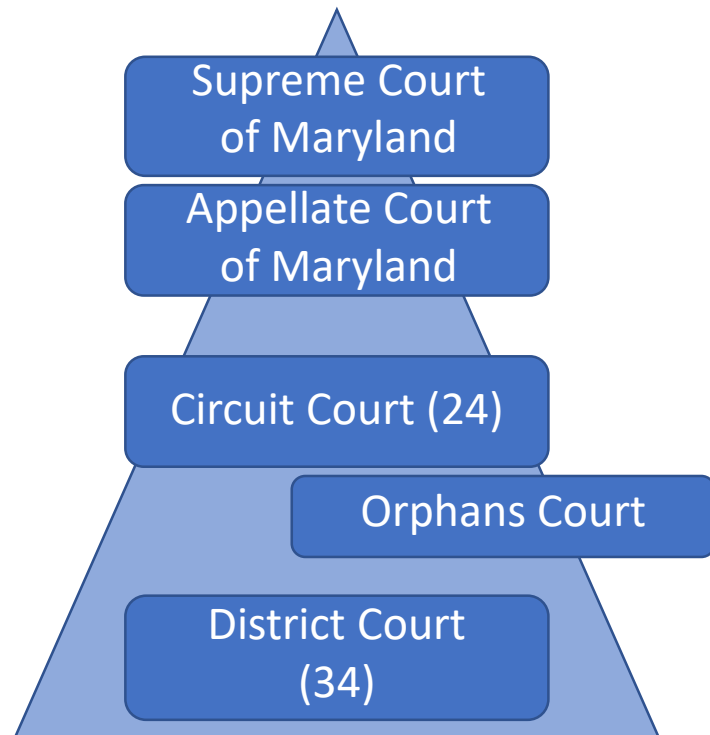
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/research/gateway-to-md-law>

Practice Time

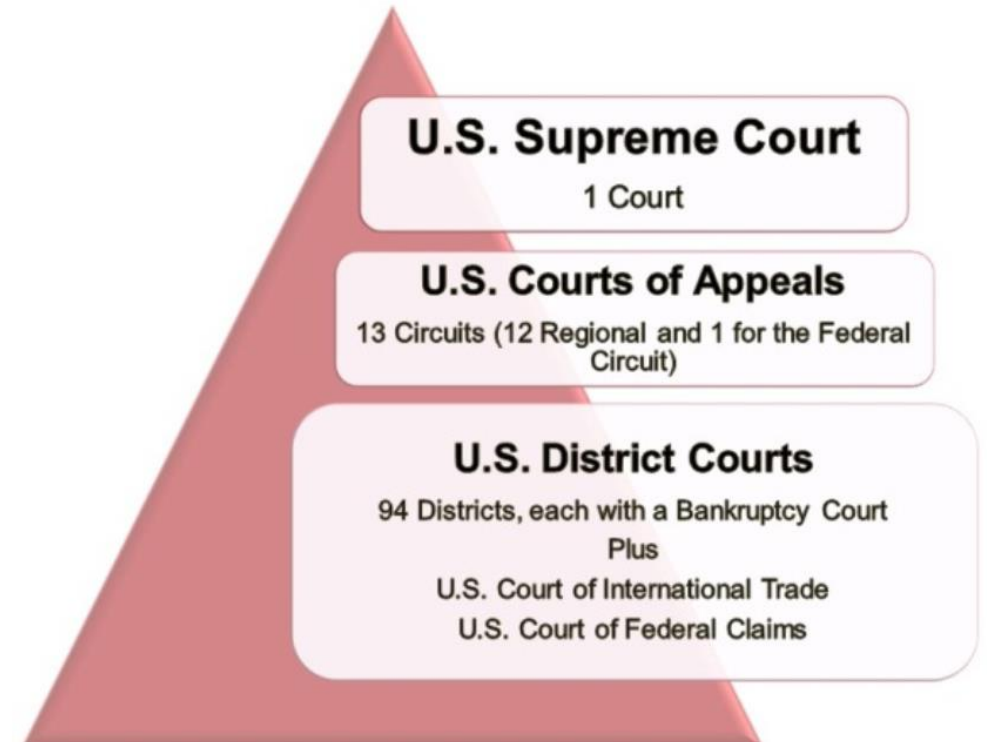
Using the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the following:

1. Md Code, Nat. Res. §4-803 – what is this section about?
2. Find the Md Code section that addresses actions for evictions for nonpayment of rent in a mobile home park.
3. Find the COMAR regulations addressing the topic from question #1
4. Does your local county code include any language about the keeping of chickens?

Court Structure



Maryland Courts



Federal Courts

Case Law

Secondary Sources

- Can provide citations to primary law

Case law databases

- Westlaw / Lexis (fee-based)
- [Google Scholar](#) (free)

Practice Time

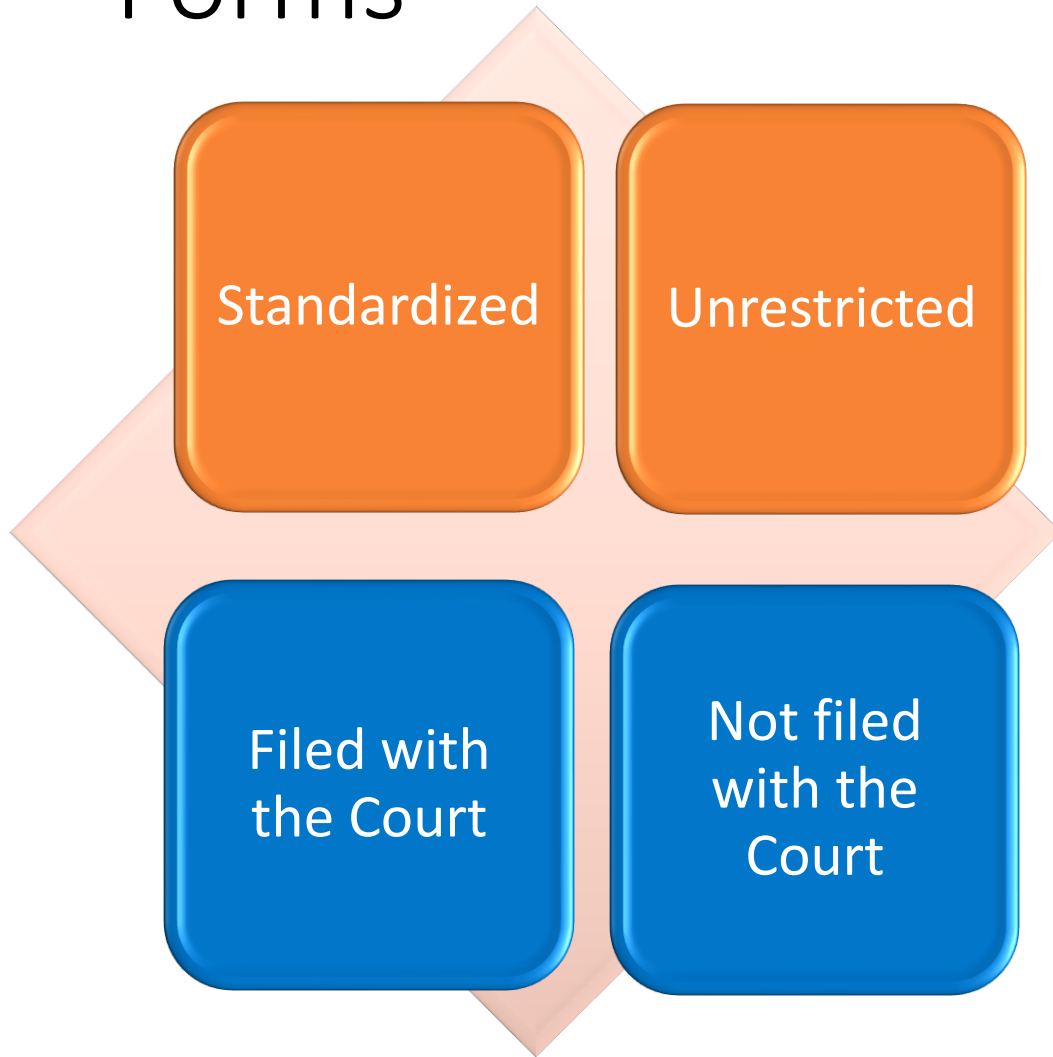
Using the Maryland PLL website, find the article on Defamation Law; locate and write down the citations to the two Maryland cases cited for this topic.

Then, go to Google Scholar. Look up one of the two citations you identified. Check the "how cited" tab. Does the other case appear in the list?

Test Yourself – Is it Law?

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Forms



- Standardized fill-in-the-blank forms are rare in MD
- Standard court forms are on MDcourts.gov
- MD Rules contains formatting
- Sample forms books provide examples and guidance
- Identifying the right form is often *advice*
- When in doubt – contact a law library

Standardized Forms		Unrestricted Forms	
Filed in Court	Not Filed in Court	Filed in Court	Not Filed in Court
Most District Court Forms	Power of Attorney	Motions	Wills
Most Family Law Forms		Complex Civil Complaints	Leases
Bankruptcy			Contracts

Let's find some forms...

Using the free version of Westlaw's Maryland Code & Rules from the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the statutory form for a limited power of attorney.

Using the Maryland Judiciary's website, find the form for Petition for Guardianship of a Minor.


When you
hit a wall...


Maryland Law Libraries


Thurgood Marshall State Law Library 

Circuit Court Law Libraries

Allegany County


Charles County 

Prince George's County 

Anne Arundel County 


Dorchester County

Queen Anne's County

Baltimore City 

Frederick County

St. Mary's County

Baltimore County 

Garrett County

Somerset County


Calvert County

Harford County

Talbot County

Caroline County

Howard County 


Washington County 

Carroll County 


Kent County

Wicomico County

Cecil County

Montgomery County 

Worcester County

 indicates the library is staffed.

<https://mdcourts.gov/ccll>

Post-Assessment

Let's review each of the following statements again. Respond with TRUE or FALSE. Is your response different now than it was at the beginning of this class?

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.
2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.
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Self-Education: Basic Civics

- Schoolhouse Rock, *Three Ring Circus* (YouTube)
- [Center for Civic Education](#)
- National Constitution Center [video collection](#)
- [USA.gov/branches-of-government](https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government)

Self-Education: Legal Reference

- Maryland Judiciary video – What is the Law?
<https://mdcourts.gov/video/selfhelp/what-law>
- Frontlines – recordings and slides from past sessions
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training/PLR-schedule-training>
- Frontlines – Legal Reference
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training>

Want some practice?

[Sign-up](#) for a hands-on Frontlines Lab session!

May 23, 2023.

Next session-

Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 9-10am,
Frontlines Topics: Landlord-Tenant



Questions?