

Law on the Frontlines

Legal Reference for Public Libraries



Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference

TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2025 03 26

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...

Vickie
Yiannoulou

Prince George's
County Circuit
Court Law Library

Catherine
McGuire

Thurgood
Marshall State
Law Library

Joy Hollerbach

Thurgood
Marshall State
Law Library

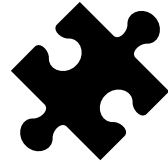
Audrey Dingler

Thurgood
Marshall State
Law Library

Learning Outcomes



Describe the structure of government



Explain the connection between the structure of government and finding law



Utilize primary sources of law



Describe where to find help when needed

Access to Justice

A quick review...



What is Law?

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



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

Recognizing Citation Formats

Code

Md Code, Family Law §5-104

State Code

Article Name

Section Number

Rules

Md. Rule 6-301

Title Chapter

Regulations

COMAR 07.01.02.05

Title . Subtitle . Chapter . Regulation

Cases

Doe vs. Johnson

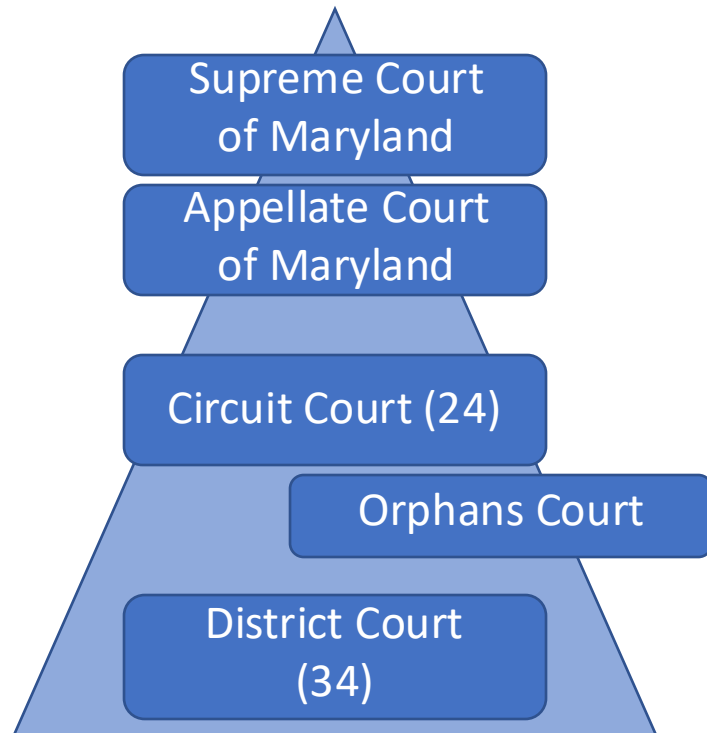
413 Md. 817

Party 1 Name Party 2 Name

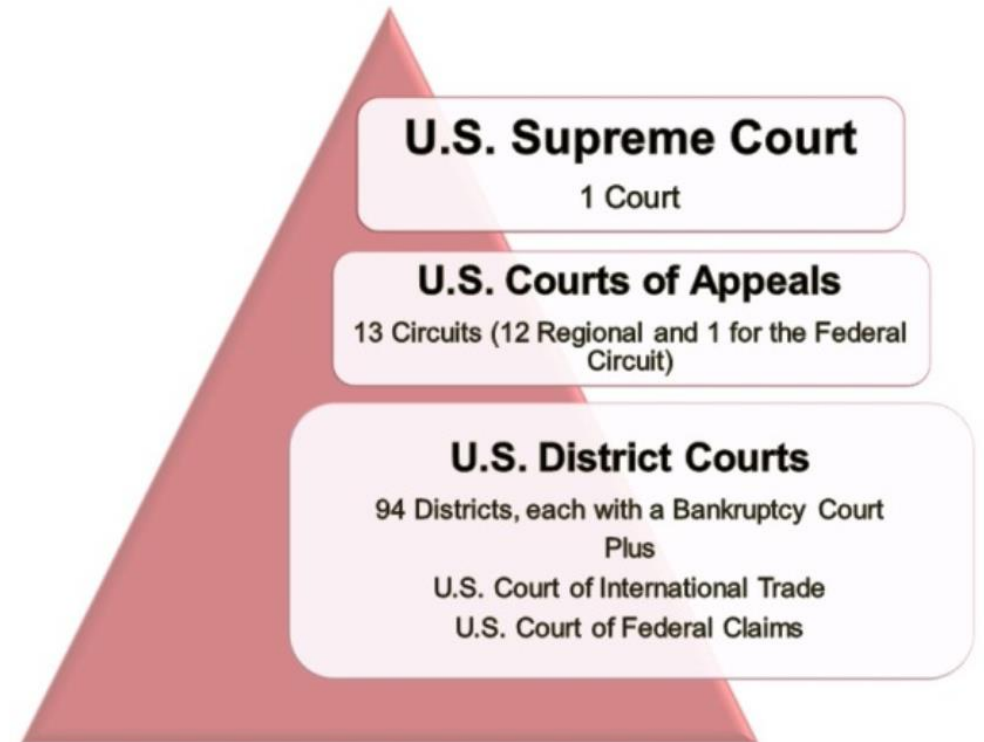
Volume Title Page
Number Number

Court Structure

TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2025 03 26



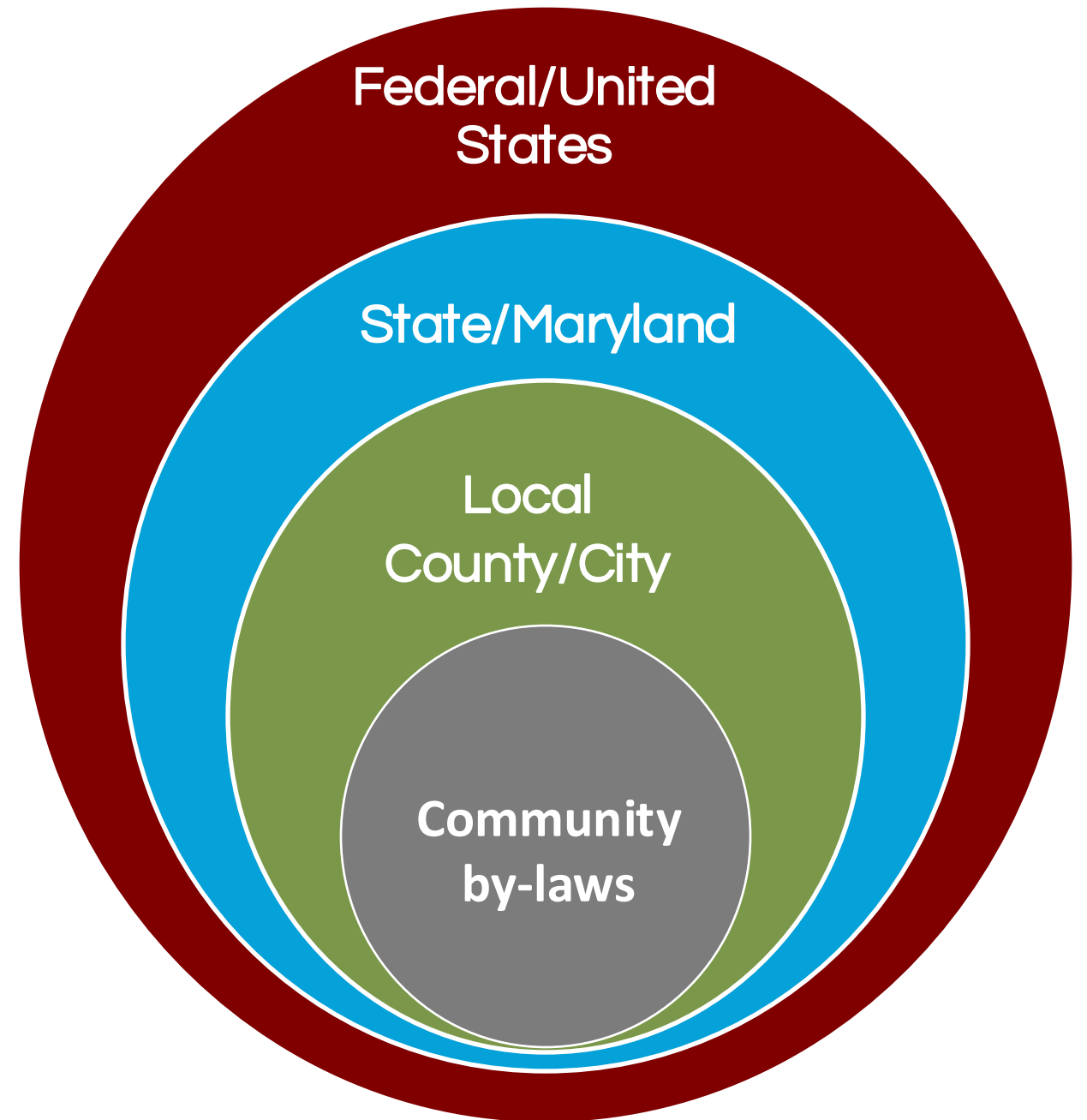
Maryland Courts



Federal Courts

Location, Location!

Where something takes place matters



Importance of Dates and Language



Language of Law
What does it mean?

Dates
Why does it matter?



Finding the Law

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Maryland Courts website. At the top, there is a banner with the text "MARYLAND COURTS" and the tagline "Fair, Efficient, & Effective Justice For All". To the right of the banner are search boxes for "Site Search" and "Opinions Search", along with a "Search" button and "Search Tips". Below the banner 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". On the left is the library's logo, a circular seal with a scale of justice. To the right of the logo is the library's name and hours: "M,W,F 8AM - 4:30PM | TU,TH 8AM - 9PM | SAT 9AM - 4PM". Further right is contact information: "361 ROWE BOULEVARD", "ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401", "410-260-1430 | 888-216-8156", and "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. Find the Prince George's County towing ordinance.

Case Law

Secondary Sources

- Can provide citations to primary law
- People's Library of Maryland: <https://peoples-law.org/>

Case law databases

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

Maryland Judiciary Case Search

<https://casesearch.courts.state.md.us/>

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? What do you see?

When you
hit a wall...

Maryland Law Libraries

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library recognizes county public law libraries as vital to the communities they serve. The State Law Library maintains a directory of all Maryland circuit court law libraries. These libraries support judges, court staff, and attorneys. In addition, some serve the public and have staff available to assist patrons. For details about available resources such as databases, public computers, printing, copy fees, and access procedures, please contact your chosen circuit court. Click on any location below to learn more.

 - indicates the library is staffed.

| | |
|--|---|
| Thurgood Marshall State Law Library  | + |
| Allegany County Circuit Court Law Library | + |
| Anne Arundel County Public Law Library  | + |
| Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library  | + |
| Baltimore Bar Library  | + |
| Calvert County Law Library | + |

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>

Maryland Public Library Toolkit

- Designed for public library reference staff as a reference guide to Maryland primary and secondary legal resources
- Web-based:
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/public-library-toolkit>



Next session-

Wednesday, April 23, 2025,
9:00am – 10:30am

[Frontlines: Navigating the Law –
Landlord/Tenant](#)



Questions?



Law on the Frontlines

A cooperative project advancing access to justice

mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training

Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib

410-260-1430

lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov

Maryland Court & County Law Libraries

www.mdcourts.gov/ccll

Maryland Access to Justice Commission

www.mdaccesstojustice.org

Access to Justice Department,
Administrative Office of the Courts

www.mdcourts.gov/accesstojustice

Thank you for joining us today!