**Research Guide: Federal and California Court Structure**

Law Library for San Bernardino County

***Research Guide,*** [***www.sblawlibrary.org***](http://www.sblawlibrary.org)***, (909)885-3020***

Updated: June 1, 2021

**Disclaimer**

The information in this research guide is intended to assist patrons with their legal research and is in no way intended to replace the counsel of an Attorney. Any decisions about how to proceed must be determined by the patron. The library staff can recommend and refer you to print and web-based resources that will help you find answers to your law-related questions. The staff at the Law Library for San Bernardino County cannot explain or interpret the law itself and we are not permitted to give legal advice.

**Flow Chart**

***“The Supreme Court is the highest court in the federal Judiciary... The United States Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice of the United States and eight associate justices.”***

*Source: uscourts.gov*

***“A court of appeals hears appeals from the district courts located within its circuit, as well as appeals from decisions of federal administrative agencies… Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has nationwide jurisdiction to hear appeals in specialized cases…”***

*Source: uscourts.gov*

**Federal Court Structure**

**UNITED STATES**

**SUPREME COURT**

**U.S. COURTS OF APPEAL**

12 Regional Circuit Courts of Appeals

1 U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

***“Within limits set by Congress and the Constitution, the district courts have jurisdiction to hear nearly all categories of federal cases, including both civil and criminal.”***

*Source: uscourts.gov*

**U.S. Court of Federal Claims**

**U.S. District Courts**

94 Judicial Districts

U.S. Bankruptcy Courts

**U.S. Court of International Trade**

**Federal Courts and Other Entities Outside the Judicial Branch**

Military Courts (Trial and Appellate)

Court of Veteran’s Appeals

U.S. Tax Court

Federal administrative agencies and boards

**TRIAL COURTS**

**Flow Chart**

***“The Supreme Court of California is the state’s highest court. Its decisions are binding on all other California state courts.”***

**California Court Structure**

***“The primary role of the Courts of Appeal is to hear appeals from cases in the superior court. Its role is not to retry a case heard in the superior court but rather determine if legal errors were made.”***

**SUPREME COURT**

1 Chief Justice and 6 AssociateJustices

**COURTS OF APPEAL**

6 Districts

*Source: Law Office Procedures Manual, Revision 2014. (p. A-9)*

Works Cited

*Law Office Procedures Manual*. Encino, Calif. (15760 Ventura Blvd., Suite 630 Encino 91436-3022: Rutter Group, 1992. Continually updated resource.

*United States Courts.* Educational Resources. Retrieved 06/01/2021.

http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-informed/federal-court-basics/structure-federal-courts.aspx

*United States Courts.* Educational Resources. Retrieved 06/01/2021. http://www.uscourts.gov/FederalCourts/UnderstandingtheFederalCourts/FederalCourtsStructure.aspx

*Source: Law Office Procedures Manual, Revision 2014. (p. A-10)*

*Source: Law Office Procedures Manual, Revision 2014. (p. A-11)*

***“The superior courts are the trial courts in each county in California. They have jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters except those specifically reserved to the Supreme Court or the Courts of Appeal.”***

[\*California Courts - Small Claims Basics](http://www.courts.ca.gov/1256.htm)

Superior Court

Civil: Over $25,000

Criminal: Original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts.

Appeals: Court of Appeals or Supreme Court

Superior Court

Limited Civil

Civil: $25,000 or less

Small Claims: $10,000 or less\*

Criminal: Misdemeanors

Appeals: Appellate Department of Superior Court

Second District

Los Angeles, Ventura

8 Divisions

Fifth District

Fresno

**TRIAL COURTS**

Sixth District

San Jose

Fourth District

San Diego, Riverside, Santa Ana

3 Divisions

Third District

Sacramento

First District

San Francisco

5 Divisions