

# THE COURTS AND THEIR JUDGES

## TEXT SUMMARY

The California judicial system consists of three levels of courts: the superior courts, the courts of appeal, and the California Supreme Court. California's superior courts handle trials of all civil and criminal cases. There is one superior court in each of the 58 counties. Special departments of these courts are set up to handle family law, juvenile cases, traffic cases, and small claims.

When a party is not satisfied with the result of a Superior Court trial, he can take the case to the courts of appeal. There are six courts of appeal in California, one for

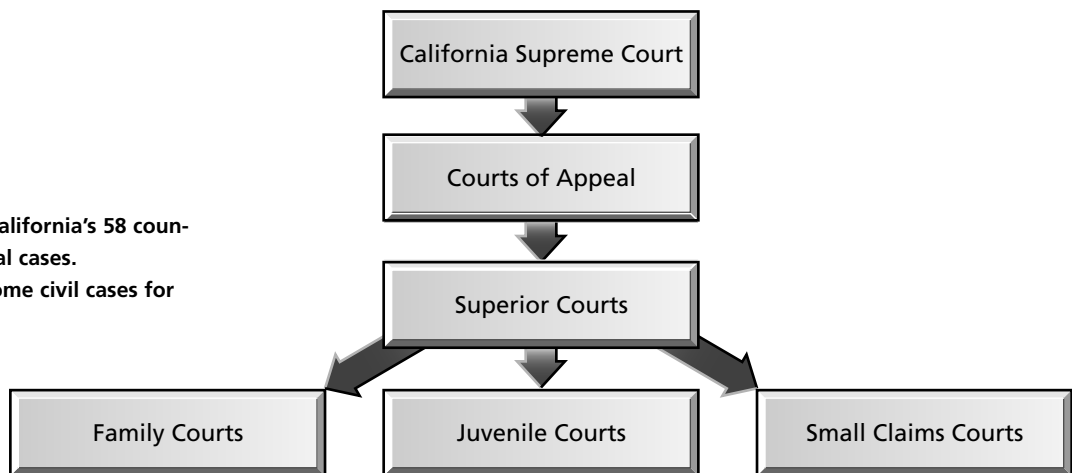
each of six districts. These tribunals review cases that were tried in the superior courts to make sure that the law was correctly interpreted at the trial. Decisions of the courts of appeal can in turn be appealed to the California Supreme Court, the highest court in California. Their interpretation of California law is final.

Superior court judges in California are elected by voters to six-year terms. Appellate judges are appointed by the governor to a single twelve-year term; after that term, the judges face a retention election, in which the voters decide whether or not the judge should stay in office.

**THE BIG IDEA**

**Judges for California courts, hear cases ranging from the minor to the most serious.**

## GRAPHIC SUMMARY: California State and Local Courts



Superior courts in each of California's 58 counties hear all civil and criminal cases. Specialized courts handle some civil cases for the superior courts.

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What is the role of the superior court?

2. **Diagram Skills** What is California's highest court?