



These materials have been adapted, with permission from The Florida Bar Benchmarks Adult Civic Education Program, for use in Louisiana. Principal authors of the Florida Benchmarks Program are Annette Boyd Pitts and Richard Levenstein. For assistance with adaptation in other states, contact staff@flrea.org

SORTING OUT THE COURTS

Topics addressed:

- Different levels, functions and powers of state and federal courts
- Constitutional grant of powers and jurisdiction for state and federal courts
- Trial and appellate processes
- Role of juries in U.S. legal system

Overview: This activity examines the different levels, functions and powers of state and federal courts. Three handouts are included and a PowerPoint.

Time needed: 30 – 45 minutes* (see asterisks throughout write-up for shortening presentation)

Group size: Suitable for small and large audiences.

Materials Needed:

- Sorting Out the Courts PowerPoint* (can be modified for time)
- Handout 1 – Puzzled: Federal and State Courts. Distribute for warm-up exercise pre-cut in an envelope, one per small group.
- Handout 2 – Steps of a Trial. Distribute also for warm-up exercise pre-cut in an envelope, one per small group.
- Handout 3 – Case Files (one set per small group) *(optional depending on time)
- Presenter Information (not for distribution)

Equipment: For your PowerPoint presentation you will need a computer, projector screen and power cord. Contact your event coordinator. Bring web-based materials on a flash drive and handouts for distribution.

Preparation:

- Review all handouts and PowerPoint
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view.” The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the presentation.
- Make copies of all materials
- Print and cut Handout 1 – Puzzled. Give each group/table a set of the puzzle pieces, pre-cut and in envelopes during warm-up.

30 – 45 minutes



Warm-up

Distribute Handouts 1 and 2 for warm-up exercise as audience arrives.

Introduce yourself and the ACE program.

- Print and cut Handout 2 – Steps of a Trial footprint cards. Give each group/table a pre-cut stack of cards in an envelope during warm-up.
- To Review Florida v. J.L.:

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1999/98-1993> AND
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/529/266/>

- To Review Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier:

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1987/86-836> AND
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/484/260/case.html>

Warm-Up: Distribute Handouts 1 and 2 in two separate envelopes. Give each table one set of each. As audience is being seated, ask members to assemble the pieces provided in handout #1 into two pyramids; and to use the pieces provided in Handout #2 to make a “pathway” in the correct order of sequence. Refer to “Presenter Information” and review briefly.

Role of the judicial branch using the PowerPoint:

- Describe the three branches of government, the role of the judicial branch and the role of judges/justices.
- Distinguishes between federal and state courts.
- Identifies the Louisiana Constitution and the U.S. Constitution as the sources of power and jurisdiction for the courts.
- Provides an overview of the trial court system and the role of the jury.

Distribute Case File Handout with a state case and a federal case, with the Sorting Out the Courts diagram sheet included. Using the Sorting Out the Courts diagram, have participants diagram the courts named in the Case File handout for each case. Participants should name the trial court, intermediate appellate court and the high court for both the state and federal courts.

Note: Florida v. J.L. is a Florida case, and the diagram should show the state courts. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier was a federal case and should show the federal court. See presenter information. Audience diagrams will vary but should reflect the same levels of courts provided in the diagram.

Review and emphasize structure and function of state and federal courts.

Review briefly the Steps of a Trial and the “Puzzled” assembled diagrams of the state and federal courts.

Start Power Point:



Review

3 branches of government.
 Review 2 parallel court systems.
 Discuss trial court system and role of jury.

Distribute

Case Files Handout

Audience should name trial court, appellate court and high court for both cases

Review

and emphasize structure and function of state and federal courts.

Open for Q & A.