



## **Supreme Court**

The New Jersey Supreme Court is the State's highest appellate court. It is composed of a Chief Justice and six Associate Justices. The Justices have their individual chambers in Fairfield, Morristown, Somerville, Camden, Cherry Hill, and Newark, and travel to Trenton for conferences and oral argument.

The Supreme Court is a court of discretionary jurisdiction. Most litigants must request that the Court hear their matter by filing either a petition for certification or a motion for leave to appeal. In very limited circumstances, such as where a judge in the Appellate Division files a dissenting opinion, a party may appeal to the Supreme Court as of right. In deciding the cases that come before it, the Court interprets the New Jersey and the United States Constitution, New Jersey statutes, administrative regulations of the State's governmental agencies, as well as the body of common law and other relevant legal authority. In addition to written briefs, the parties present their legal arguments to the Court at oral argument, during which the parties articulate their positions and respond to questions from the members of the Court.

Each Supreme Court Justice has three law clerks. Law clerks are primarily responsible for performing legal research, preparing written memoranda on novel issues of law, and assisting the Justices in the preparation of opinions.

## **Appellate Division**

The Appellate Division of the Superior Court is New Jersey's intermediate appellate court. It is comprised of 32 judges who are assigned to one of eight four-judge parts. The judges sit in two- and three-judge panels of each part. The chambers of the judges are located throughout the State, including Cape May Court House, Jersey City, Linwood, Morristown, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, Westmont and West Long Branch.

Appellate Division judges are primarily responsible for deciding perfected appeals from final judgments of the trial courts and Tax Court as well as from final decisions and actions of state administrative agencies. The judges also consider emergent applications, motions for leave to appeal in interlocutory matters, and other motions filed in the ordinary course. The Appellate Division disposes of approximately 6,000 appeals and 10,000 motions each year. About 1,200 perfected appeals are argued each term. Arguments are heard in various locations throughout the State, including Morristown, New Brunswick, Newark and Trenton, as well as other locations from time to time. With limited exception, perfected appeals are disposed of by written opinion. Judges also hear and decide appeals in which sentencing is the only issue as part of the Excessive Sentence Oral Argument program, as well as expedited appeals from orders granting motions to detain a defendant pending a criminal trial. Each Appellate Division judge has two law clerks. Law clerks are primarily responsible for performing legal research and preparing extensive bench memoranda, assisting in processing emergent applications, and proofreading opinions.

## **Tax Court**

The Tax Court is a court of limited jurisdiction. Tax Court Judges hear local property tax appeals and appeals on such matters as state income, sales and business taxes, and homestead rebates. Ten judges are currently assigned to hear Tax Court cases and there are chambers located in Trenton, Newark, Atlantic City, Morristown and Hackensack. A Tax Court law clerk researches substantial issues of law for the judge's opinions and motions, prepares memos, manages the motion calendar, performs case management and communicates with attorneys.

### **Assignment**

Assignment Judges are in a unique position within our courts. They are the judicial head of the vicinage to which they are assigned. Their duties vary as the respective assignment judge determines the types of matters they wish to handle, which may cover multiple divisions. Some of the matters that come before the judge are mandated by statute or court rule. In addition, assignment judges deal with a considerable variety of administrative duties that may require a law clerk's assistance.

Therefore, potential law clerks, during an interview, may wish to inquire as to a particular assignment judge's docket types and other tasks that they may be required to perform. Clerks will be conducting research, preparing legal memos, managing the judge's docket and regularly communicating with counsel as well as courthouse staff.

### **Family**

Family Part trial judges preside over cases that arise out of family actions and family-type actions involving parentage, child custody and support, parenting time, juvenile delinquency, marital dissolution, child welfare and domestic violence. Family Part Judges are primarily responsible for all fact finding unlike other divisions of the court wherein the jury is factfinder. Family Part Judges are responsible for handling matters related to cases assigned to them, including but not limited to deciding motions, emergent applications, and conducting trials and hearings.

Law clerks who serve in the Family Part are expected to perform legal research and prepare memoranda; assist judges in processing emergent applications; make recommendations to judges regarding dispositions of motions, both verbally and via written bench memoranda; draft, edit and proofread legal correspondence; and attend and assist with case conferences, consent conferences, motion hearings and trials. Law clerks are also expected to handle communications between attorneys and self-represented litigants; enter case disposition information into the Family Automated Computer Tracking System (FACTS) and NJKids; and to perform other related functions.

### **Civil**

Law Division civil trial judges are assigned to the Civil Part or the Special Civil Part. The Civil Part and the Special Civil Part handle cases primarily involving monetary damages, such as, automobile accident injuries, medical malpractice, or contract disputes. Currently, 113 Civil Part and Special Civil Part judges are assigned throughout the State's twenty-one county courthouses.

Civil Part and Special Civil Part judges control pretrial case management, hear and decide procedural and substantive pretrial applications and conduct bench and jury trials. Civil Part and Special Civil Part law clerks are expected to conduct legal research of substantive and procedural legal matters; review case files, depositions, pleadings, motions, legal briefs, and memoranda of law to prepare bench memoranda that summarize factual allegations and legal issues prior to oral argument; draft orders; proofread judge's orders and opinions; interact with counsel and self-represented litigants regarding case management and procedural issues; and, as allowed by their judge, attend hearings, trials; or settlement conferences.

## **Criminal**

The Criminal Division trial judges are, responsible for managing criminal cases from the time of arrest through the time of disposition. The Criminal Division is comprised of approximately 116 judges, each assigned to one of the 15 vicinages throughout the State. The Criminal Division also oversees the Drug Court program. Drug Courts are specialized courts within the Superior Court that target drug-involved 'offenders who are most likely to benefit from treatment and do not pose a risk to public safety. There are 18 judges across the State assigned to Drug Court. A number of Criminal Division judges are assigned additional tasks such as, expungements, applications for post-conviction relief, Megan's Law cases, gun permit applications, municipal appeals and wiretap applications. Additionally, as part of the recently enacted Criminal Justice Reform laws, judges may be required to conduct additional hearings, including but not limited to, pretrial detention hearings and/or setting conditions of pretrial release.

A Criminal Division law clerk is primarily responsible for assisting his or her judge by conducting legal research for the judge's opinions and motions, assisting in drafting jury charges, drafting legal orders, assisting the judge in drafting legal opinions, drafting sentencing and other memoranda, managing the motion calendar, performing case management and communicating with attorneys.

## **Equity**

Chancery Division civil trial judges are assigned to General Equity or the Probate Part. General Equity and Probate Part handle cases primarily involving non-monetary relief, such as, protection of trade secrets, enforcing non-compete agreements, foreclosure, or appointing guardians for incapacitated individuals. Currently, twenty-one General Equity judges are assigned to fifteen vicinage county courthouses. Probate Part judges, who handle the probate assignment, in addition to their regular responsibilities, are assigned throughout the State's twenty-one county courthouses.

General Equity and Probate Part judges individually case manage their dockets, hear and decide procedural and substantive pretrial applications and conduct bench trials. General Equity and Probate Part law clerks are expected to conduct legal research of substantive and procedural legal matters; review case files, depositions, pleadings, motions, legal briefs, and memoranda of law to prepare bench memoranda that summarize factual allegations and legal issues prior to oral argument or trial; draft orders; proofread judge's orders and opinions; interact with counsel and self-represented litigants regarding case management and procedural issues; and, as allowed by their judge, attend hearings, trials; or settlement conferences. General Equity law clerks also assist in the processing emergent temporary restraining order applications.