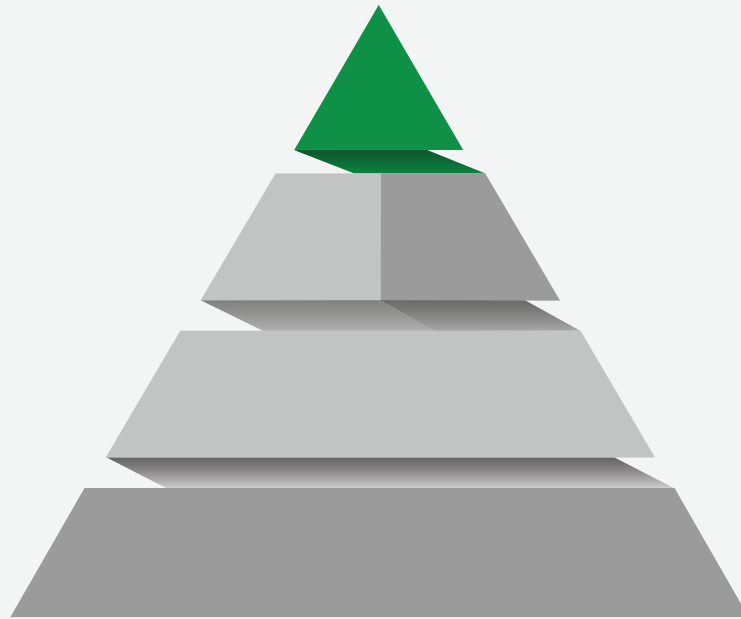


# How the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Operates



## About the Pa. Supreme Court Justices:

- There are seven justices – including a Chief Justice
- Justices serve 10-year terms, up to age 75
- The justice with the longest continuous service on the court automatically becomes Chief Justice.



## How a case gets to the Pa. Supreme Court:

- 1** Primarily hears appeals from Commonwealth and Superior Courts, but also hears direct appeals such as death penalty cases
- 2** Can consider any case pending in a lower court of “immediate public importance”
- 3** At its own discretion, the court will grant an appeal upon approval of three justices.

## The Pa. Supreme Court:

- It is the highest court in the Commonwealth
- Dating back to **1684** it's the oldest appellate court in North America
- The court meets in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg
- Receives and considers over **2,000** requests for review annually

## What happens once a case is selected for review?

1. Parties make arguments: Justices review briefs and usually hear oral arguments
2. Justices write opinions:

### Majority opinion

shared by more than half of Court and becomes the Court's decision

### Dissenting opinions

opinions that disagree with the disposition of the case

### Concurring opinions

agree with result but not necessarily the rationale

3. Court issues decision: The Court hands down a decision within defined timelines after the oral argument (or submission of a case).

## What are a few of the court's administrative duties?

- Supervise the entire Pennsylvania Unified Judicial System
- Make procedural rules for administration of justice in the courts
- Regulate the practice of law, including admission to the bar and attorney discipline.

