# Rhode Island Judiciary

#### **SUPREME COURT**

- 1 Chief Justice
- 4 Associate Justices

Supreme Court has the final authority to reverse or modify lower courts' decisions.

It can advise the legislative and executive branches of state government regarding the constitutionality of State laws.

Rhode Island has a unified court system.

State courts hear civil and criminal cases for state-level violations, family law disputes, and appeals from municipal courts. This infographic illustrates the court structure.

Court rulings that are appealed go on to Supreme Court.

#### **GLOSSARY**

**APPEAL:** apply to have a decision from a lower court reversed by a higher-level court.

**JUDGE:** public official who is appointed or elected to preside over cases in a court of law.

**JUSTICE:** judge of an appellate court or court of last resort (like the Supreme Court).

**MAGISTRATE:** similar to a judge, but can only hear and rule on cases within a very limited scope.

**PROBATE COURT:** hears cases involving the execution of wills, estates, conservatorships, and guardianships.

#### TRAFFIC TRIBUNAL COURT

1 Chief Magistrate

Traffic Tribunal Court hears cases regarding driving under the influence tickets and other state-level traffic violations.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION COURT

Court rulings that

are appealed go on

to Superior Court.

1 Chief Judge

9 Associate Judges

Workers' Compensation Court hears cases regarding employers and employees with work-related injuries, related expenses, return-to-work issues, and disputes between employees and insurance carriers.

#### **DISTRICT COURT**

1 Chief Judge

14 Associate Judges

District Court hears criminal and civil cases where the amount in controversy does not exceed \$5,000, such as municipal ordinance violations and misdemeanors where the right to a jury trial has been waived.

### SUPERIOR COURT

1 Presiding Justice

21 Associate Justices

Superior Court hears cases regarding criminal offenses, including all statelevel felonies and misdemeanors, except otherwise stated by law. In civil cases. Superior Court shares concurrent jurisdiction with District Court when the amount exceeds \$5.000 to \$10,000, and hears any controversy over \$10,000.

#### **FAMILY COURT**

1 Chief Judge

11 Associate Judges

Family Court hears cases regarding divorces, adoptions, paternity proceedings, juveniles, and all matters relating to the enforcement of laws regulating childcare providers and childplacing agencies.

Probate Court rulings that are appealed go on to Superior Court.

#### **FEDERAL COURTS**

Federal courts located in Rhode Island hear criminal, civil, and bankruptcy cases. These include issues regarding residents who live in different states, federal questions, cases where the US Government is a party, and other topics.

#### **MUNICIPAL COURTS**

Each of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns has a municipal court that handles probate, local traffic violations, and municipal issues.

