

# Justice Court

Justices of the Peace serve both as Judges and Magistrates. As Judges, they preside over justice criminal courts, justice civil court, and small claims court. Criminal cases include but are not limited to traffic cases, school attendance cases, minor alcohol violation cases, and minor tobacco violation cases. Law enforcement agencies, including but not limited to the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Department, Department of Public Safety, Parks & Wildlife, Health Department, Animal Control, and Constable's Office file complaints in justice criminal court. Civil cases include but are not limited to evictions and other suits with amounts in controversy up to \$10,000. Every party to a civil suit has the right to request a jury proceeding.

As magistrates, Justices of the Peace issue warrants, conduct criminal examining trials, admonish prisoners, and set bonds. They also conduct juvenile detention hearings and admonish juveniles for statements. Additionally, Justices of the Peace perform marriage ceremonies and perform coroner duties on deaths that occur when not attended by a physician.

While defendants may represent themselves in a case before the justice court, defendants should consider seeking legal counsel before filing a plea. It is the duty of this office to help you in any way possible, but the Rules of Judicial Ethics prohibit this office:

- From giving legal advice
- Telling either party how to present their case.
- Expressing opinions of law.

The Judge and Court Clerks can answer questions:

- Only of a general nature.
- About procedures of the Court.
- Concerning court costs.

The Judge and Clerks must remain impartial, and cannot hear any part of a case, or discuss the merits of any case, unless all parties are present.