



# KNOW YOUR DISTRICT ATTORNEY (DA)

## DUTIES

Under North Carolina law, district attorneys are required perform certain duties that include:

**Deciding how long a case will wait before going in front of a judge.** Sometimes called “controlling the calendar,” the DA can make a defendant sit in jail until they have a strong enough case to proceed or until the person will accept a guilty plea to get out.

**Presenting a case in court against all persons accused of a crime.** The DA does not represent the victim of crimes, instead it represents the state when trying to prove that a defendant broke the law.

**Advising law enforcement officers.** The DA tells law enforcement exactly what information it needs to prove a crime was committed.

**Handling appeals of criminal cases** with the assistance of the Attorney General.

**Every four years, district attorneys are elected. When you vote, make sure the candidate you choose wants to create the best judicial system for YOUR community.**

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Among the responsibilities a district attorney has to the community are:

**To help create safe communities.**

**To ensure only the GUILTY are punished.**

**To be fair and honest.**

**To promote policies and procedures that promote racial equity in the justice system.** This includes conducting racial bias training, ensuring race is not a factor in charging decisions, and eliminating the use of the death penalty.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

It has been said that district attorneys, sometimes called prosecutors, are **the most powerful players in the judicial system.** There are very few checks and balances on the district attorney’s power.

District attorneys have complete authority and control over its offices policies and procedures. They have the power to **not pursue low level misdemeanors, offer alternatives to criminal records,** create policies to **eliminate racial bias** in prosecutions and jury selections, and much more.

*More information on reverse →*

# MORE ABOUT YOUR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

District attorneys serve many important functions, giving them a lot of power in the judicial system. Your local district attorney has the power to:

**Determine if a person will be charged with a criminal offense.** After the police investigate a crime, it is the DA who decides if a suspect will be charged with a crime.

**Deciding what charge the accused will face.** The DA has the responsibility of deciding what charge the a person accused of a crime will face. District attorneys have discretion over the seriousness of the charges brought, directly impacting what sentences a person could face.

**Providing access to certain tools that the DA controls.** Some of those tools are the grand jury, requests to the court for warrants for searches, or electronic surveillance.

**Deciding to offer a plea agreement and/or reduce the charges against the defendant.**

The DA has the sole power to offer a plea or reduce charges. Some DAs use this power to unfairly manipulate defendants.

**Determine if the defendant will face the death penalty.**

**Investigate the killing of a citizen by a law enforcement officer in the line of duty.** How this type of investigation is conducted has come under scrutiny lately.



## LEARN MORE

Find out what YOU need to know about local, elected offices such as district attorneys, sheriffs and judges at:

[justicepolicycenter.org/vote4justice](https://justicepolicycenter.org/vote4justice)

