



My County Works

A County Government Activity Book



Dear Educators and Parents,

The National Association of Counties, in partnership with iCivics, is proud to present "My County Works," a county government activity book for children. It is designed to introduce students to counties' vast responsibilities and the important role counties play in our lives every day.

Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments (known as shires) were established in Virginia.

The organization and structure of today's 3,069 county governments are chartered under state constitutions or laws and are tailored to fit the needs and characteristics of states and local areas.

No two counties are exactly the same. In Alaska, counties are called boroughs; in Louisiana, they're known as parishes. But in every state, county governments are on the front lines of serving the public and helping our communities thrive.

We hope that this activity book can bring to life the leadership and fundamental duties of county government. We encourage students, parents and educators to invite your county officials to participate first-hand in these lessons—to discuss specifically how your county works.

It's never too early for children to start learning about civics and how they can help make our communities better places to live, work and play.

Please visit www.naco.org for more information about why counties matter and our efforts to advance healthy, vibrant, safe counties across the United States.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Chase", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties

★ Partnering with iCivics ★

The National Association of Counties and iCivics have developed a collection of civic education resources to help young people learn about county government. These materials, aligned with state standards and available free of charge, include:

- ★ *Counties Work*, an educational, online game where students simulate the role of county leaders balancing community needs and the budget, designed for grades 6 through 12 and available on desktops and tablets
- ★ *County Solutions*, a classroom curriculum that provides the basics of county government and encourages local civic engagement, available for middle school and high school instruction
- ★ *My County Works*, a county government activity book for elementary school students

Explore these resources at

www.NACo.org/iCivics or www.iCivics.org/TeachLocal.

Edan Eagle at your service—county explorer extraordinaire! You don't just live in your city or town. You're a county resident, too. A county is a unit of government, and it works to serve you every day. Do you know how? Follow me for an up-close look at what your county does for you.

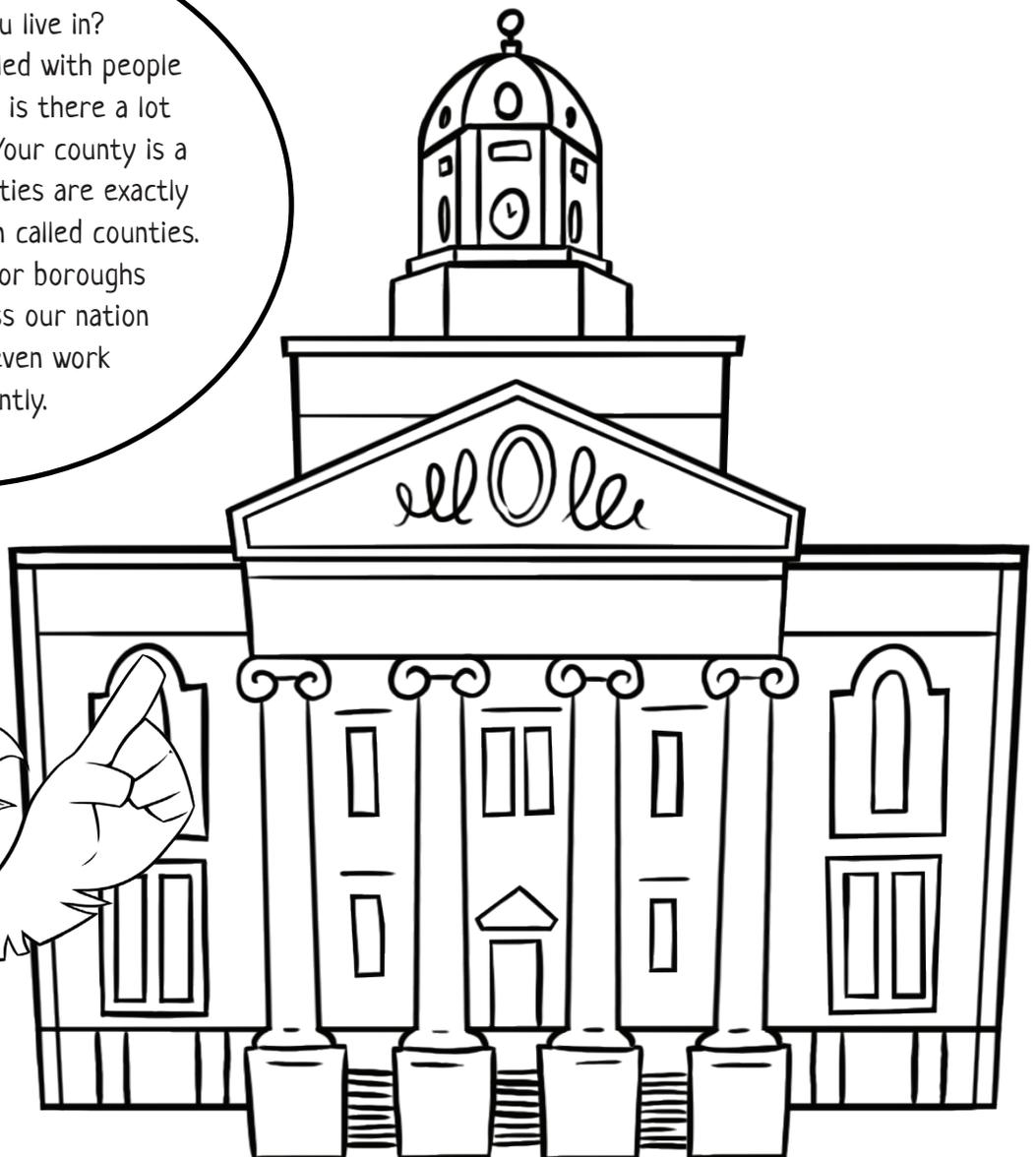


★ The County Seat ★

Just like you have a home, so does your county's government. Your county government's home is the **county seat**. This city or town is where you'll usually find the county courthouse. Many of the people and departments you'll learn about in this book have offices inside your county's courthouse. Let's take a look at who's inside!

My county is _____ . **My county seat is** _____ .

What county do you live in? Is it big or small? Is it filled with people everywhere you turn, or is there a lot of space to move about? Your county is a unique place. No two counties are exactly the same. Some aren't even called counties. We call them parishes or boroughs instead. Counties across our nation look, feel, and can even work a little differently.



★ Who's Working for You? ★

The people running your county's government are called **elected officials**. Elected means that the people in your county voted to say they wanted these leaders to be in charge of your county's government. One day, you'll get to vote for your county's elected officials, too.

Who Runs Your County?

Your county may be run by people called commissioners, supervisors, county board or council members, or executives. These people have a very important job. They make decisions for your county and decide how the county will spend money.



Who are your county's elected officials?

★ Constitutional or Row Officers ★

Other elected officials have special jobs in the county. They are in charge of things like keeping track of the county's money, protecting county residents, and fighting for the county in court.



Sheriff

I make sure county residents follow the law.

District Attorney

I serve as the county lawyer and argue important cases in court.



Treasurer

I manage the county's money.



Recorder

I record, or keep, important information about county property.

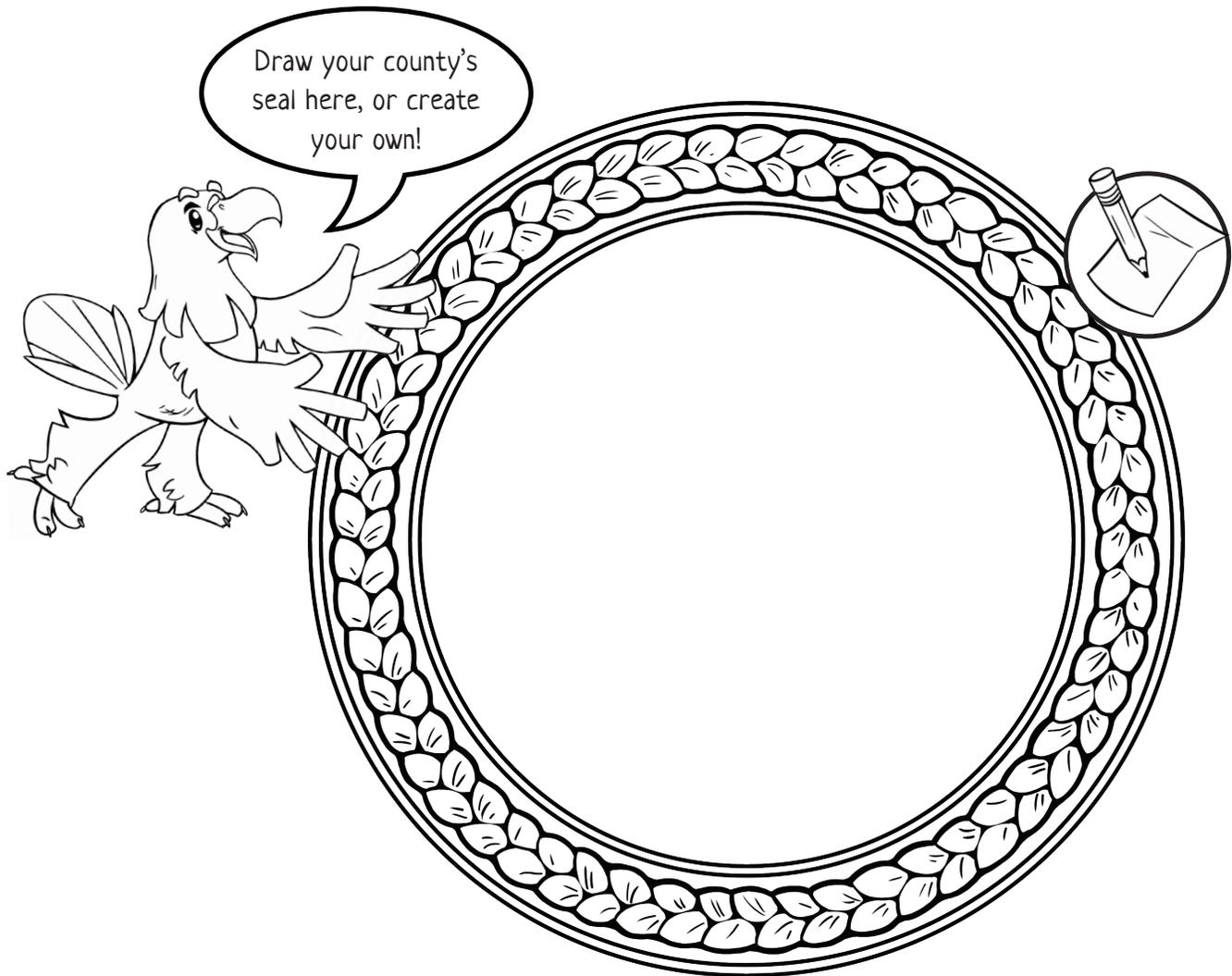


Clerk

I keep important legal records and manage elections.

★ The County Seal ★

There are 3,069 counties across the United States. That's a lot! Each county has a unique **seal**. You might see it in the courthouse, on a webpage, waving on the county flag, or stamped on important documents. The seal is a symbol. When you see it, it means whatever you're looking at is a part of your county's government. Special colors and pictures decorate the seal to show what's unique or important to your county. Some county seals even have a saying written on them. The saying is called a motto.



**What special colors, pictures, or motto are on your county seal?
Why do you think your county chose those?**

★ Public Works and Transportation ★

You probably came to school today on the school bus, or maybe you rode in a car, walked, or biked. The **Department of Public Works and Transportation** manages something we all use every day: The roads! And they do a lot more than that. Follow the trucks to learn what else they maintain.



Roads and Bridges



Public Buildings



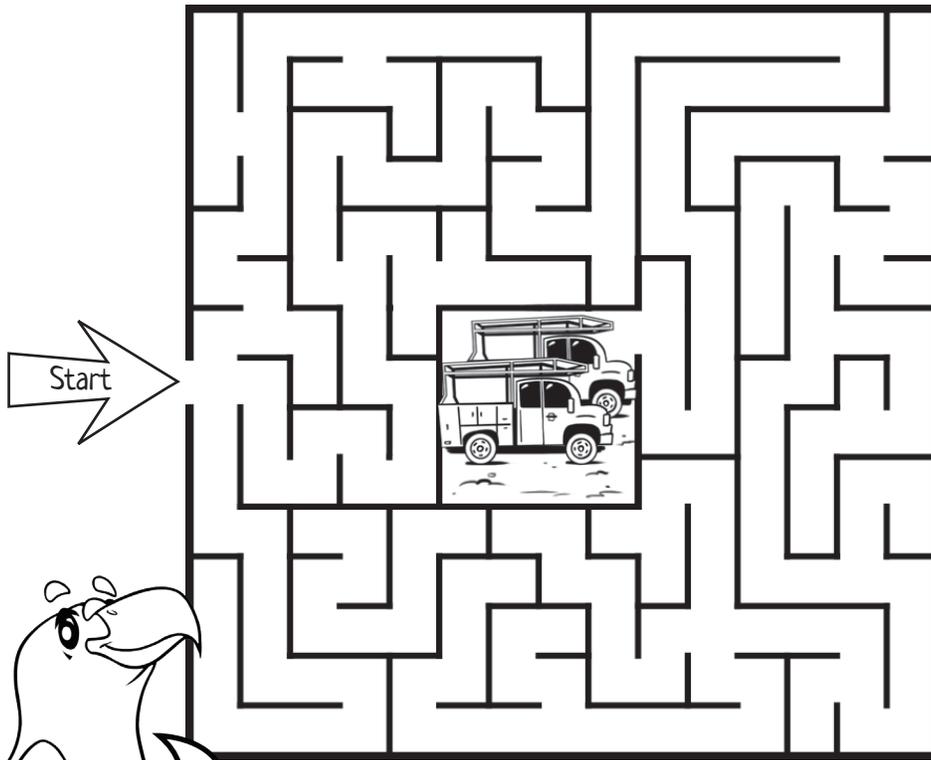
Airports



Water and Sewers



Public Transportation



Can you help the head of the Department of Public Works and Transportation find his trucks? With your pencil, draw a line through the maze.



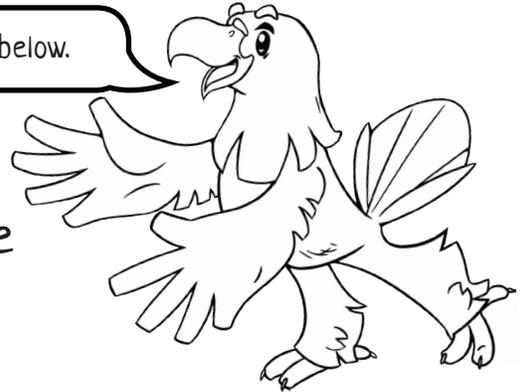
There's a fallen tree blocking traffic on Liberty Run Road. Can you circle the truck I'll need to fix it?

How have you benefited from the Department of Public Works and Transportation's services today?

★ Finance Department ★

If you get an allowance each week, you may already know a little about what the **Finance Department** does. They look after the county's money, pay county bills, and track how much money the county spends and collects each year. The Finance Department also makes sure other county departments have the money they need to serve residents. And, they check very carefully to see if the county's money is used wisely.

Solve each equation to answer the riddle below.



“What is the Head of the Finance Department's favorite class?”



As the head of the Finance Department, I oversee tax collection. If your parents own a house, they pay a property tax. This tax helps provide part of the money the county needs.

- | | | | |
|----|------------|-----|------------|
| 1. | $2 + 4 =$ | 7. | $10 + 1 =$ |
| 2. | $3 + 8 =$ | 8. | $7 - 3 =$ |
| 3. | $10 - 6 =$ | 9. | $1 + 8 =$ |
| 4. | $8 + 2 =$ | 10. | $9 - 6 =$ |
| 5. | $5 - 3 =$ | 11. | $5 + 3 =$ |
| 6. | $8 - 2 =$ | | |

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11)

Key:

2 - E, 3 - C, 4 - T, 6 - M, 8 - S, 9 - I, 10 - H, 11 - A

Your county needs money to run. How do you think your county spends the money it collects?

★ Records Department ★

You'll probably never forget your birthday, right? But if you do, the **Records Department** in the county where you were born can help you find your birth certificate. They keep all sorts of important documents, like marriage and death certificates. They also have records that can tell you who owns property in your county. They run local, state, and national elections.

Your birth certificate is just one of the important documents the Records Department has on file. Can you fill out yours here?



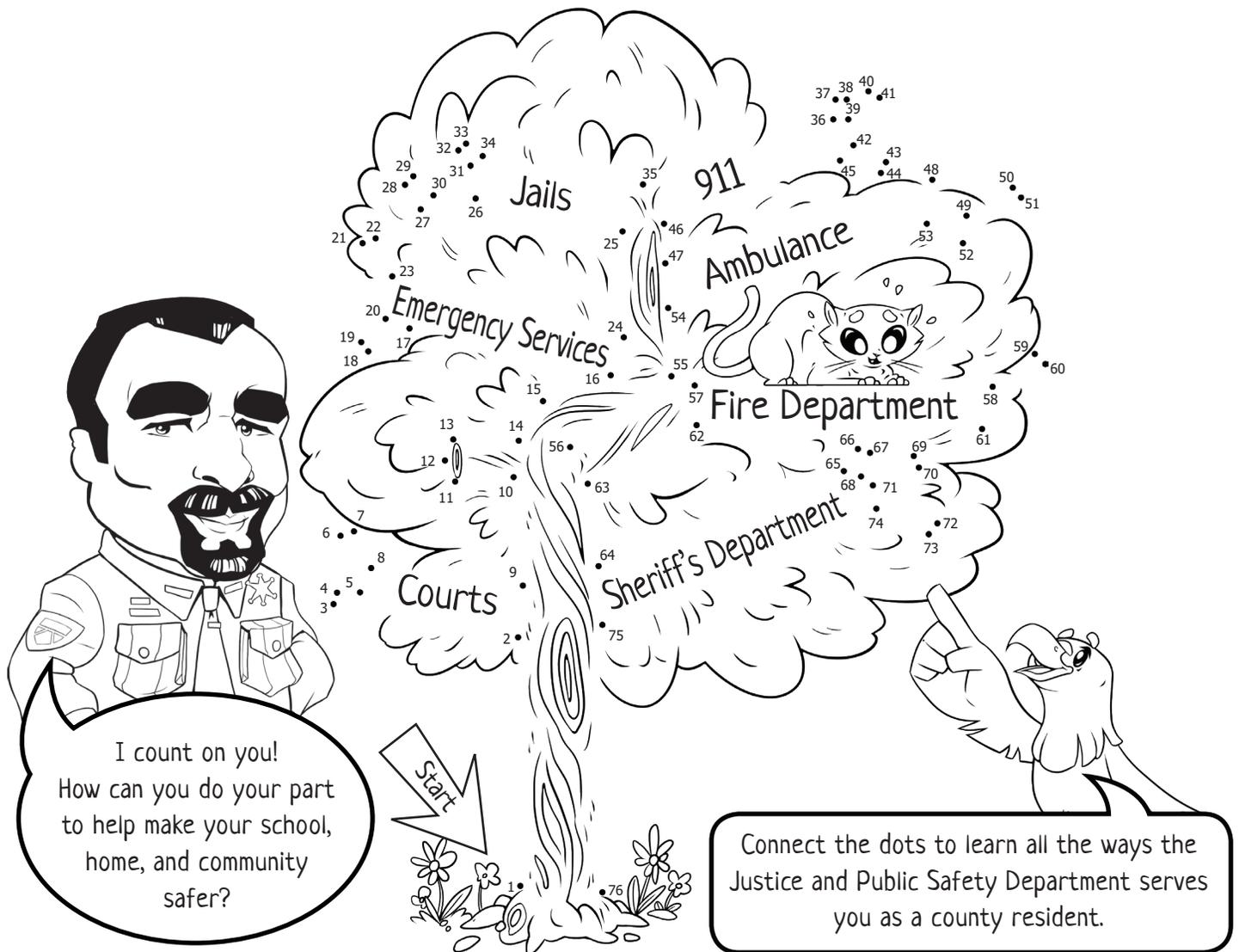
I'm the County Clerk. I work at the Records Building and file all the important documents we receive each day.

Name:	
Certificate of Birth	
Date of Birth:	Place of Birth:
Weight:	Length:
Mother's Name:	Father's Name:

Why is the Records Department important to county residents?
Why might it be important to people who don't live in your county?

★ Public Safety and Justice ★

The **Justice and Public Safety Department** is always working for you. They make sure citizens stay safe and follow the law. Judges, court workers, and public attorneys (or lawyers) work for the Justice and Public Safety Department. Sheriffs, county police officers, and firefighters work for them, too. So do emergency medical technicians who quickly get people in ambulances to a hospital for help.



What is the most important service the Justice and Public Safety Department provides? Why do you think so?

★ Big and Small Counties by Population ★

These are the 10 largest and smallest counties in the country by population.
Find each county's name in the word search below.



B	C	Q	S	U	V	J	Y	I	I	M	Y	N	P	P	S	E	A	S	H
J	P	E	S	M	P	O	H	B	O	R	D	E	N	R	L	B	Z	M	X
L	O	V	H	U	H	O	R	T	S	A	N	P	E	Z	D	K	I	V	W
C	W	O	O	G	B	T	D	A	P	P	N	N	W	T	L	Z	G	H	V
U	O	L	N	S	T	K	L	O	N	O	D	W	Y	J	T	Y	S	J	I
F	Y	O	Q	T	L	L	C	F	S	G	J	S	O	B	L	A	I	N	E
G	P	S	K	J	A	I	N	R	U	E	E	A	R	G	X	F	M	V	N
Y	K	A	E	D	R	Y	E	R	D	Z	A	N	K	O	R	I	I	C	L
A	N	N	Y	A	Q	H	O	A	T	C	Y	D	R	C	K	S	Z	V	N
K	W	G	M	J	P	L	D	X	O	F	K	I	X	B	L	S	V	R	W
U	R	E	D	C	P	I	X	P	W	R	E	E	V	E	T	H	U	X	N
T	Z	L	M	P	M	J	H	G	P	I	N	G	L	G	L	H	D	K	W
A	E	E	H	A	F	T	W	A	X	V	E	O	C	W	T	J	G	G	W
T	H	S	I	C	S	Y	O	K	R	E	D	P	D	R	G	G	N	N	V
V	S	M	L	Q	Y	N	G	J	H	R	Y	O	A	Z	N	I	N	J	Q
P	S	E	X	I	H	M	U	H	Q	S	I	M	M	I	V	K	R	Y	P
L	P	K	P	X	P	O	O	B	C	I	U	S	K	O	W	E	R	O	P
O	F	G	D	F	R	R	H	Z	S	D	E	O	L	X	L	Q	Y	X	H
N	T	G	A	I	C	J	B	E	K	E	X	I	F	R	K	W	V	N	J
X	A	Z	H	P	Y	D	C	C	N	P	E	T	R	O	L	E	U	M	J

Largest Counties

Los Angeles County, CA
New York City, NY
Cook County, IL
Harris County, TX
Maricopa County, AZ
San Diego County, CA
Orange County, CA
Miami-Dade County, FL
Dallas County, TX
Riverside County, CA

Smallest Counties

Loving County, TX
King County, TX
Kenedy County, TX
Arthur County, NE
Blaine County, NE
Petroleum County, MT
McPherson County, NE
Loup County, NE
 City and Borough
 of **Yakutat**, AK
Borden County, TX

Big counties are hard to miss, and small counties may be hard to find. Choose a large and small county. Can you find a few interesting facts about each county?

★ Community Health ★

Ouch! You might not feel so good if you need services from the **Department of Community Health**, but you'll feel much better afterward. This department wants you to stay healthy. They have flu shots and vaccinations. They help hospitals, clinics and nursing homes, too.

When there's a public health emergency, the Department of Community Health responds right away. Draw a picture and finish the news story to explain how the Department of Community Health helped these county residents.



Did you know the Department of Community Health has special workers called health code inspectors? You might see one of them at your favorite restaurant. They make sure all the delicious food you eat is prepared safely and cleanly.

County News

MYSTERY VIRUS CURED

QUICK ACTION HAS HELPED STOP THE STRANGE FLU VIRUS THAT STARTED TO SPREAD THROUGH THE COMMUNITY

How might the Department of Community Health work with other county departments to provide services to residents?

★ Human Services ★

The **Human Services Department** helps county residents of all ages. There's a long list of services they provide for everyone. They help young people, adults, and the elderly. They also help the disabled, people looking for a job, low-income residents, and veterans.



The Human Services Department and Department of Community Health both help people who need it. Help these residents get to the right department. Draw a line between what each resident wants and the department that provides it.



"We should have programs to support veterans after they return home from war."

"A Meals on Wheels program would benefit our county seniors who no longer drive."



"We could help residents looking for jobs by offering free career classes each month."

"Where can I find information about adoption and foster care?"



"Let's offer free eye exams for the county's kids!"

"Free classes on nutrition would be a great way to help county residents be healthier."



I help county residents in the ways they need most.

HUMAN SERVICES



"We should organize a blood drive at the hospital."



COMMUNITY HEALTH

"Starting a food bank for residents in need would be a great idea!"



★ Parks and Recreation ★

The **Department of Parks and Recreation** is responsible for some of your favorite places to play. They build and maintain the public parks and playgrounds where you slide, swing, and run. They also look after nature and bike trails. And they organize classes and activities that help county residents exercise, relax, and enjoy!



Write a letter or draw a picture for the Department of Parks and Recreation. Thank them for the services they provide for you. You could also tell them about other services you'd like to see in your neighborhood or community.

★ Community and Economic Development ★

The **Community and Economic Development Department** helps to plan for the future of the county. They work with businesses to bring jobs to your community. They also create and provide more affordable housing to county residents.



Your Department of Community and Economic Development offers information and services for residents who want to start a new business.

You're never too young to think about starting your own business. Kids do it every day! Write down all your business ideas. It doesn't matter how wild or crazy it may seem now. It just might be the next big thing that creates jobs and opportunities for your community!



Take a look at your community. Look at the businesses, jobs, and housing. Can you see the Department of Community and Economic Development at work?

★ Who You Gonna Call? ★



These county residents need to know which county department they should call. Test your knowledge of county government and help each resident.

WORD BANK

Human Services | Finance | Records
Community Healthy
Board of Education
Environment & Land Management
Public Works & Transportation
Community & Economic Development
Justice & Public Safety
Parks & Recreation

ACROSS

- 2** Who do I call to find out if any crimes have been committed in my neighborhood?
- 4** My apartment doesn't have a recycling bin. I'd like to do my part to help our Earth.
- 5** I need training so I can find a new job. Is there a department that can help me?
- 6** My dad said we're related to some very famous people who lived right here in my county. I'd like to research to be sure.
- 9** My school is planning a community health fair. Who can my principal call for help with the event?
- 10** We don't have a movie theater, and the nearest one is twenty miles away. Maybe there's a company who wants to build a theater here.

DOWN

- 1** I can't safely ride my bike in the street. Potholes are everywhere!
- 3** We have some of the best schools in the nation. Who can I call to say job well done?
- 7** I bought this piece of land so I could grow my own food. This letter says I need to pay a tax for the property first.
- 8** There isn't enough for my kids to do in the summer. I'd like for them to be able to play and exercise.

★ Board of Education ★

You might just be the **Board of Education's** most important priority! Your education is very important to them indeed. They manage public and charter schools in the county and community colleges and adult education programs, too. The Board of Education makes a lot of decisions that affect you. Each decision they make is a part of one very big goal—an excellent education for all county residents.



Draw a picture of your school. Circle or label the things you like best about your school.



See a spot for improvement? Say something! Most Boards of Education have public school board meetings. During the meeting, county residents have time to speak about things they'd like to see change in their schools.

★ Environment and Land Management ★

Surely, someone has asked you to take out the trash. That huge trash truck that comes to pick up the trash each week is part of the **Department of Environment and Land Management**. They safely get rid of waste in ways that do the least harm to our environment. They also manage recycling and monitor our air and water quality.



The Department of Environment and Land Management protects our environment. Think of 5 ways you can do your part to help!



My department helps keep our county neat and tidy. We also care for natural resources. And we promote healthy environments for plants, animals, and for you!

★ My County ★



I may be a county explorer extraordinaire, but you're a county whiz! Now you know everything there is to know about your county's government. Fill out this page with all the information you learned about your county.

Draw your county and some of the people who live and work there.

A large rectangular drawing area with a decorative border of small circles. A small circular icon of a pencil and paper is in the top right corner.

Services My County Provides to Me

A rectangular drawing area with a decorative border of small circles.

My County Name:

My County Seat:

Population:

Elected Official:

A county leader elected by the people; elected officials may be called commissioners, supervisors, board members, or executives

Constitutional or Row Officers:

Elected officials with very specific jobs

Sheriff:

An elected official who makes sure county residents follow the law

District Attorney:

An elected official who serves as the lawyer for the county court and argues important cases

Treasurer:

An elected official who manages the county's money

Clerk:

An elected official who keeps important legal records and manages elections

Recorder:

An elected official who records important information about property in the county

County Seat:

The town or city that houses the county government

Budget:

A balanced list of the amount of money the county collects and spends

★ Meet NACo! ★

STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER AMERICA.



About NACo

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government, and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.

About NACo

Through NACo, county officials:

- ★ Advocate with a collective voice on national policy
- ★ Exchange ideas and build new leadership skills
- ★ Pursue transformational, cost-effective solutions
- ★ Enrich the public's understanding of county government, and
- ★ Exercise exemplary leadership in public service.

Vision

Achieve healthy, vibrant and safe counties across the United States



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