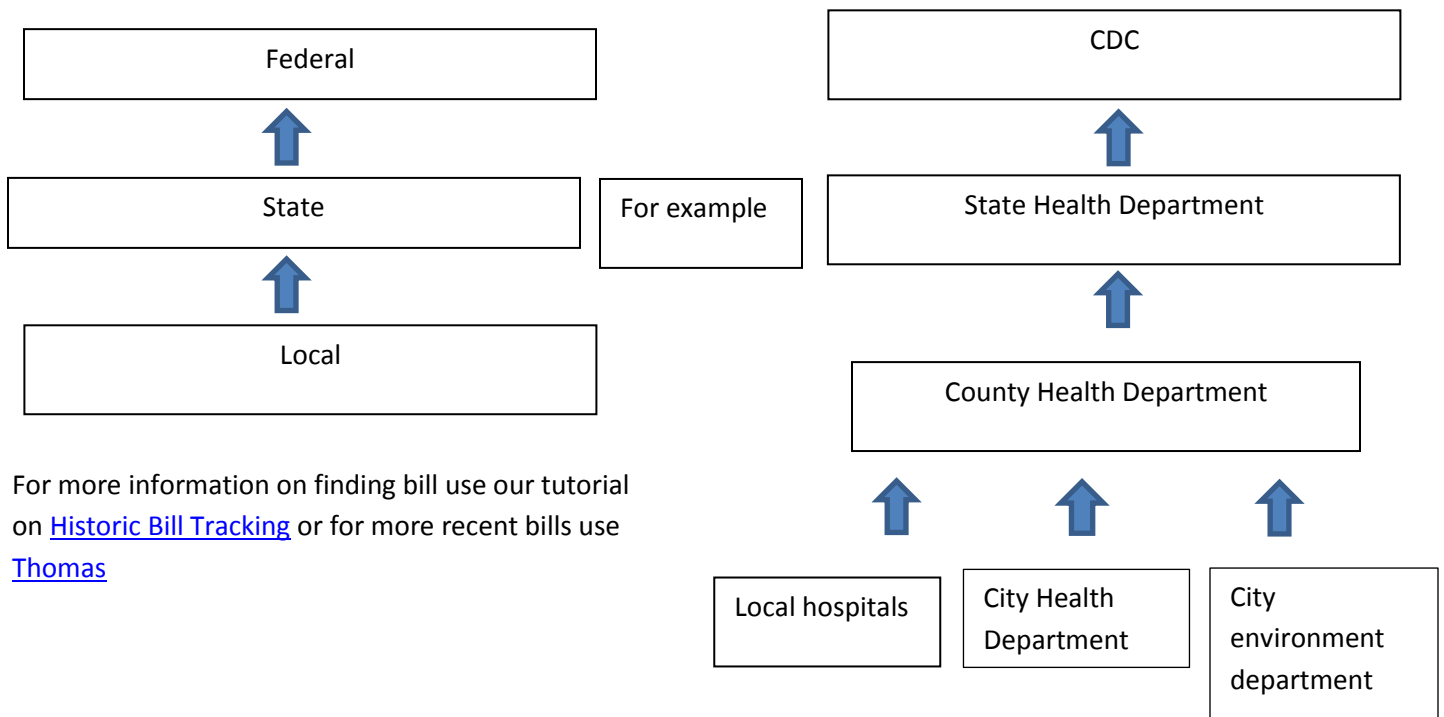


Navigating Government Information

1. Identify the agencies that would collect the information you need. When looking for historic information remember that over time agencies change names, are moved to different departments, are eliminated and created. If you need a historic perspective you may need the history of the agency. You can find many publications through the library's catalog. An advanced search will let you search just government documents. Select Missoula: UM-Missoula-Government Documents for the library type.

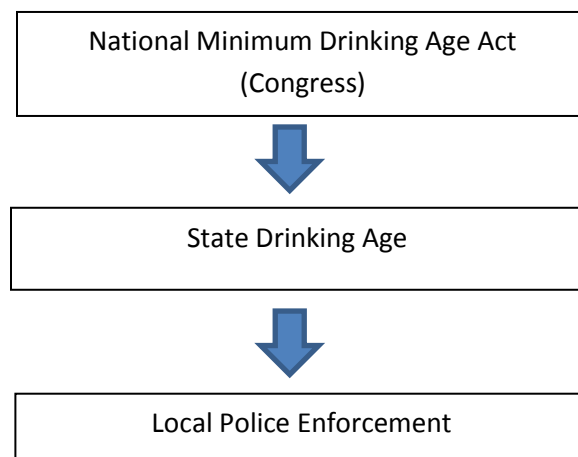
2. Most local or state agencies will report to a larger agency.

Generally local government agencies such as local health or safety departments will report to state agencies who in turn report to national agencies. More than one department or bureau can report to an agency.



For more information on finding bill use our tutorial on [Historic Bill Tracking](#) or for more recent bills use [Thomas](#)

In some cases information moves in the other direction, starting at the federal level and working down to the local level. This type of information is frequently laws, rules and court opinions.



How to find laws

There are two types of state laws, Codes or Statutes and Rules. Codes are laws passed by the state legislature. They tend to be broad such as smoking bans or who can marry. The rules are the administrative part of the laws and give detail on how the code will be followed. Federal laws are the same with Public Laws and the Code of Federal Regulations.

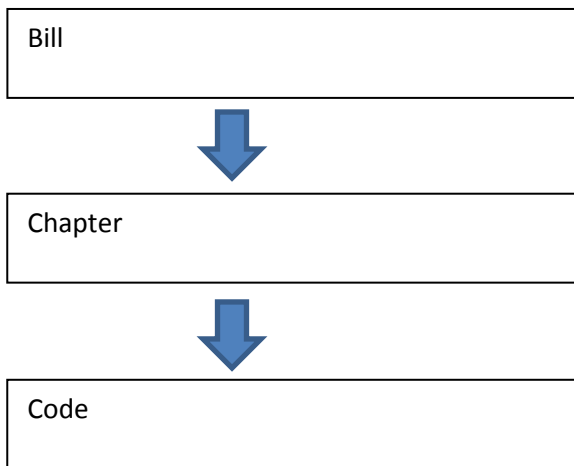
[HeinOnline](#) has access to the United States Code and the Federal Register.

A bill is submitted

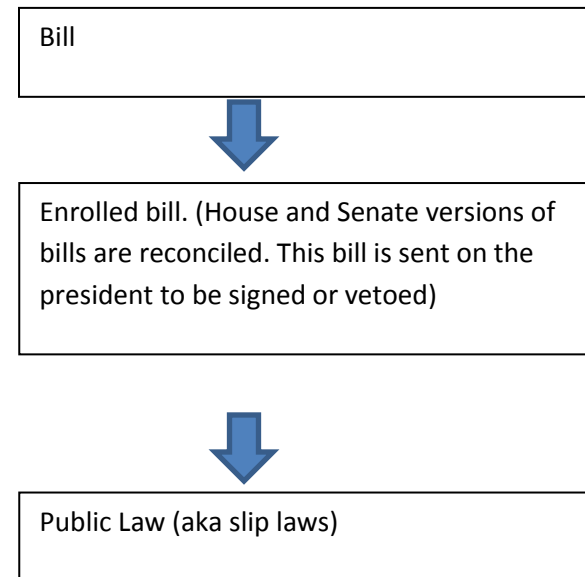
The bill is passed and becomes of a chapter of the session laws for that year and is presented in the format of the bill as it was passed.

The bill is then formatted for inclusion in the state code. When looking for a bill start with the state code, there will be a history included with the law which will include the chapter for the law. The chapter will include information for the bill.

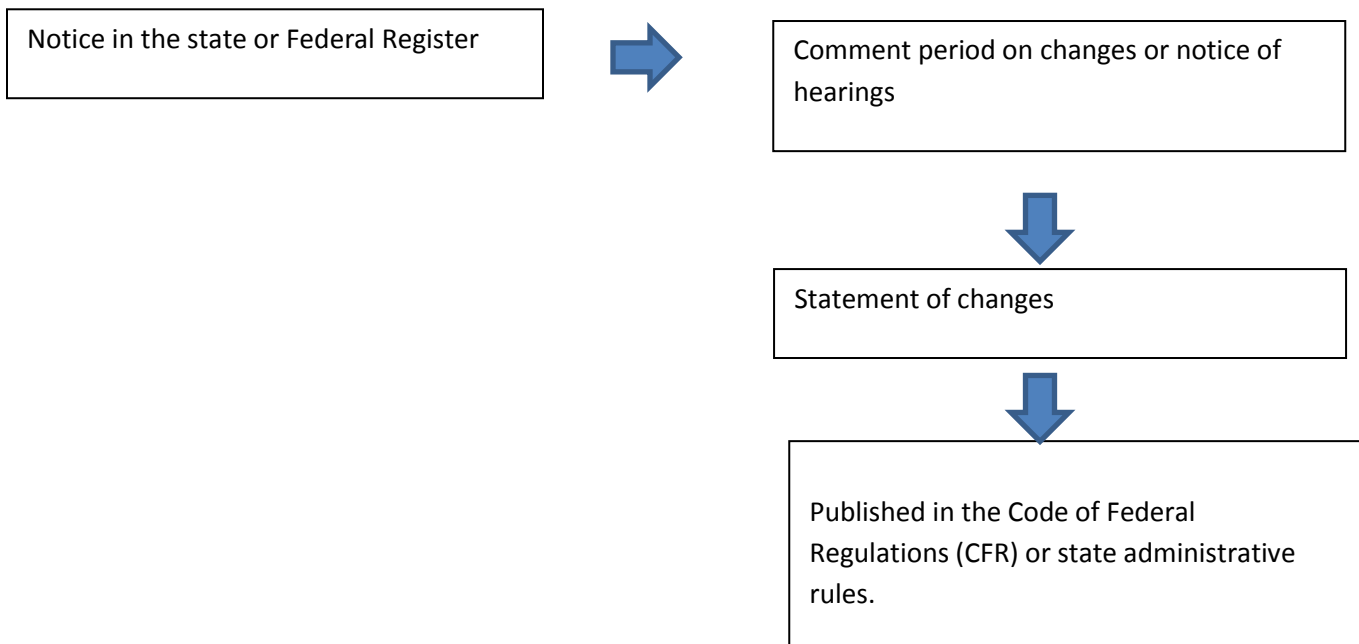
State



Federal



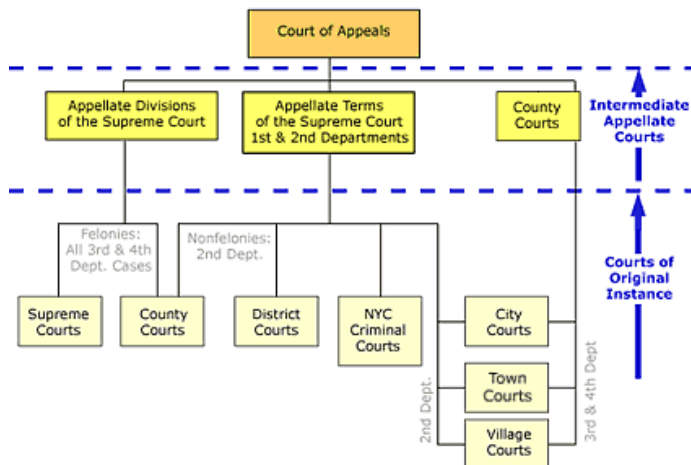
A rule is submitted: When an agency wants to make changes to the rules a notice is published in the state or federal register which is published, time is given for comment and the final rule is again published in the register before being included in the Federal Register or the Code of Federal Regulations.



Courts

Just as there are different levels of agencies there are different levels and types of courts- civil, criminal and federal. All court can eventually lead to the Supreme Court. Documents from the lower courts may be more difficult to find, while opinions from higher courts are much easier to find. If you need an opinion or other information from a lower court you may need to contact that court. [LexisNexis Academic](#) has court cases.

CRIMINAL COURT STRUCTURE



CIVIL COURT STRUCTURE

