



MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

TOOL KIT FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

Talking Points for Speaking to Elementary Students

What Is a City? A city is a place where you live, work, go to school and play. Some cities are also called towns or villages. Cities are communities that may be made up of several neighborhoods. A city is a municipal government created by the citizens through legislative special act, and established by vote of the citizens, through adoption of a charter. A city government provides services to its citizens and sets up rules that allow us to have a beautiful, safe and healthy place to live. The central building from which these services are offered and rules are made is called city hall. The people working at city hall provide us with many services like clean water, garbage collection, playgrounds, streets, lights, and police and fire protection. More than half of Mississippi's population lives in a city.

Who Runs City Hall? Every city is governed or run by a group of people who make and change laws. These people run the city because the people in the city voted in an election to let them do so. The people elected to run the city are usually called mayor, councilmember or commissioner. Most councils have five or seven members. The people adopt a charter, which is like a constitution, and in it the people decide how they will govern themselves. They meet as a council during the month to take care of city business. Anyone can attend these meetings. The meetings are usually held in city hall. How a city runs depends on what form or type of government is in place. The form of government is stated in each city's charter.

City Departments There are many departments that make up a city government. These departments are necessary to operate the city and to provide services to its citizens. Not all cities provide the same services or have the same departments. The services, and ultimately the structure of the city government, are decided upon primarily by the residents of the city. Some of the most common city departments are:

- ◆ Utilities - provides water and wastewater treatment (a few city departments provide other utilities like electricity and natural gas to homes and businesses).
 - ◆ Public Works - provides for garbage pickup, traffic lights, streets and road maintenance, and city building maintenance.
 - ◆ Planning - implements plans for the future growth and development of the city.
 - ◆ Finance - prepares payments for running the city, invests city revenues and handles the budget.
 - ◆ Parks and Recreation - provides recreational programs and activities for residents, such as sports, arts and crafts, and special events; staff also maintain city facilities, parks and playgrounds.
 - ◆ Police - makes sure that all laws are obeyed; keeps citizens safe and protects their property. Many police departments have programs/staff in schools to help students.
 - ◆ Fire - provides fire protection to the community; also has fire prevention programs to make people aware of fire hazards and teach what to do in a fire emergency.
- Other city departments might include: library, building inspection, engineering, technology services, code enforcement, and animal control.