

Local Government in The Bahamas

All of the islands of the Bahamas except for **New Providence** are referred to as the Family Islands. The **administration** or management of affairs on each island used to be carried out by resident justices during the earlier period of settlement.

In 1908, the justices on the island were replaced with **District Commissioners**.

These people were later called **Family Island Administrator**.

Governor-General
Prime Minister
Minister of Lands and Local Government
Permanent Secretary
Under Secretary
Family Island Administrator
District Councils

Each Administrator is at the center of the island's system of administration. He or she is the **chief representative** of the government on that island and acts as a link between government and the people. Some islands have more than one Administrator. The Administrator could be assisted by a Senior Deputy, a Deputy, or an Assistant Family Island Administrator. All Family Islands have Local/District Councils.

There are 32 Local/District Councils in The Bahamas, and they are divided into types – second and their schedules. The **second** schedule comprises 13 districts, and the **third** schedule comprises 19 districts. The second schedule

districts are subdivided into town areas with seven to nine elected members. The third schedule districts are all unitary authorities with five to eleven elected members. Second and third schedules together make up the first schedule. A Local Government election is held every **three years**.

Each Administrator is provided with a residence. He or she has many responsibilities. The Administrator keeps in touch with the people of the island at all times and is also familiar with the policies of central government.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ISLAND ADMINISTRATOR

1. To act as a legal representative of the government on the island.
2. To work as Magistrate and Justice of the Peace. [JP]
3. To preside over some criminal cases and can impose sentence up to six months.
4. To decide if there is sufficient evidence to commit an accused to stand trial in Supreme Court.
5. He or she can levy fines in minor civil matters.
6. To act as a **coroner** when there is a sudden or suspicious death. {a coroner is an official who determines the cause of death of an individual}.
7. To order immediate search and investigation when someone goes missing.
8. To collect taxes and revenue for the government treasury. {revenue is the government income}.
9. To distribute funds on behalf of some government ministries and departments.
10. To act as chairman of a local board.
11. To supervise the operation of the post office.
12. To sign requests for licenses.
13. To issue birth and death certificates and perform marriages.
14. To sign and endorse papers like passports, deeds, and wills.

15. To keep the government of the Bahamas which is centered in Nassau informed on everything that is going on in the island.

DISTRICT COUNCIL

On each Family Islands, repair work on all government facilities is the responsibility of the **Local District Council**. These facilities include roads, streets, lighting, garbage collection, parks, burial grounds, harbors, and dock and government buildings.

Members of the District Council are elected by the people of the island. At least two people nominate each member, and then an election is held to decide which nominees will become members of the board. The members of the board serve as a link between the people of the island and the Administrator. They are given a budget that they use to carry out their duties. (a budget is an allowance of money)

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