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# The U.S. Criminal Justice System And Its Phases

## Introduction

We are going to discuss the criminal justice system and the phases of the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system is made of three primary components. The first component is law enforcement. An example of law enforcement is the police, who capture and arrest the suspect. The second component is the courts, where the suspect is tried to find guilt or not and then sentenced. Last component is correction, who delivers the punishment in several ways such as parole, jail, prison time or community-based programs. The stages in the criminal justice system are entry to the system, prosecution and pretrial services, adjudications, sentencing and sanctions, and lastly corrections.

## The Components of the criminal justice system

Law enforcement is the component that enforces the law, maintains the order, and captures criminals; these can be accomplished by a city police department, a county sheriff's department, or a state police or federal law enforcement agency. Officers began actively investigating and solving major crimes once they could coordinate their actions by telephone, travel by car, and fingerprint suspects. The beginning of the twentieth century saw dramatic changes to police departments, forensic techniques, and American society's relationship to law enforcement. "Where competition among agencies can enhance performance and group esprit, and can ensure that no one agency controls policymaking in a particular operational sphere". Sometimes competition between agencies can be hindrance than positive, such as when the competition gets to the point they don't want to share information. Changes in the federal criminal system have affected the traditional balance among federal, state, and local responsibilities for law enforcement. Some careers in law enforcement are police officers, state troopers, FBI agents and U. S. Marshals.

The courts are a judicial body established to administer justice. The U. S. Judicial System consists of 52 separate court systems, plus territorial courts, in the United States. Anyone can see a trial unless it's been decided to be a closed courtroom trial. Federal and state courts are independent from each other. Federal and most states are three-tiered models; this means the complainants can argue in trial level court and then maybe be able to move the case through two levels of appeals. Some careers in court are prosecutors, defense lawyers, judges, court reporter and bailiffs.

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Correction system is the community's response to suspected and convicted juvenile and adult offenders. "Corrections agencies, operating at local, municipal, state, and federal levels, include jails, prisons with varying degrees of security, and a wide array of quasi-institutional as well as community-based programs". Some careers in corrections are prison warden, prison security officer, probation officer, and parole officer.

## The stages of the criminal justice system

Entry to the system is the starting point. There is a crime that has been observed and reported. It then moves to an investigation which can have two outcomes. The first outcome is that it does not become solved or there are no arrests. The second outcome is that there is an arrest. Once there is an arrest the suspect is either released or moves to the prosecution and pretrial services.

During the prosecution and pretrial services, charges are filed. Once the charges are filed there's the initial appearance. During the initial period the charges can be dropped or dismissed or it can move onto the bail or detention hearing. Once the bail or detention hearing is over, it splits into two categories: misdemeanors and felonies. In misdemeanors it moves to the preliminary hearing. In felonies the next steps splits into two options. The two options for felonies are the preliminary hearings and the grand jury. Now we move to the next stage which is the adjudication. The first step in the adjudication stage is arraignment; this is for both misdemeanors and felonies. Next step is split into two options: plea bargain or trial. In both cases of felonies and misdemeanors trials, there are convictions, though after trials in felonies cases there can be something called appeals. An appeal is when one party goes in front of a court of judges and makes an argument to overturn the verdict. Once there is a plea bargain or conviction made, the process moves to the next stage.

The next stage is the sentencing and the sanctions. This stage is split into two options also. The two are sentencing and probation, Depending on if the crime is misdemeanor or felony the way it gets to those options is different. When it's a misdemeanor the plea bargain goes to sentencing and then moves to probation, if it is a conviction it can either go straight to probation or a sentence. If it is a felony case then both plea bargain and conviction go to a sentence and then to the option of probation. The last step for probation is intermediate sanctions. For sentencing it goes to the last stage.

The last stage is the corrections. For misdemeanors there are two options in this stage, jail or the restorative justice. For felonies there are two options, restorative justices or prison, though the prison choice is then subdivided. It's subdivided into four things: capital punishment, habeas corpus, pardon and clemency, and paroled.

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## Conclusion

In conclusion each part co-functions with each other. If the police do not do a good job in making a case for the prosecutor and then when the prosecutor goes to court, they will have a harder time winning a case in court if they even do win. If there is no incarcerated felon, then the correction cannot do their job. Basically, each branch of the criminal justice does depend on what the others do. There could be repercussions to the other parts of the system if one tries to change a part in the system. Even if they co-function with each other there are times when they will clash with each other. One part might disagree with how the other parts run things.

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