

PROFESSIONAL LEGAL RESEARCH

Criminal law is the body of law that defines criminal offenses and their punishment, as well as the procedures that regulate the investigation, charging, and trial of suspects. This quick reference guide highlights the criminal law resources on Westlaw and shows you how to retrieve relevant cases.

Criminal Law

Criminal law practice typically involves issues such as those relating to the investigation of criminal charges, negotiation of plea agreements, preparation for trial, and pursuit of appeals.

Criminal Law Resources on Westlaw

Westlaw includes an extensive collection of criminal law materials, including primary law, secondary sources, dockets, jury instructions, transcripts of notable trials, sentencing guidelines, and appellate briefs. In each category listed below, a few key databases are highlighted. These databases and other criminal law–related resources can be accessed at the tabbed Criminal Practice page (Figure 1), or you can type a database identifier, e.g., **mcj-cs** for the Multistate Criminal Justice Cases database, in the *Search for a database* text box in the left frame. You can also click **View Criminal Justice Directory** in the left frame to display the *Criminal Justice* section of the Westlaw Directory.

Remember that the easiest way to retrieve a specific document when you know the citation is to use the Find service. Type your citation in the *Find by citation* text box in the left frame of the Criminal Practice page and click **Go**. If you are unsure of the correct citation format, click **Find using a template** in the left frame to display fill-in-the-blank Find templates.

STATUTES AND RULES

Statutes and court rules from individual states that relate to criminal acts and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes are contained in the Criminal Justice–Individual State Statutes (XXCJ-ST) and the Criminal Justice–Individual State Court Rules (XXCJ-RULES) databases, where XX is a state’s two-letter postal abbreviation. The Federal Criminal Justice–U.S. Code Annotated database (FCJ-USCA) contains documents from the *United States Code Annotated*® that relate to criminal acts and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes, including the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure for the United States District Courts. Federal and state death penalty statutes are contained in the Death Penalty–Federal Statutes (FDP-USCA) and the Death Penalty–Multistate Statutes (MDP-ST) databases.

Category:

Practice Area Fundamentals

For research assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call the West Reference Attorneys at 1-800-850-WEST (1-800-850-9378) or click **Help** on Westlaw® for a live help session.

CASE LAW

Court decisions that construe and review criminal justice laws and regulations are another important source of information when you research criminal justice issues. The Federal Criminal Justice–Cases database (FCJ-CS) includes federal cases that relate to criminal acts and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes. Cases from individual state courts that relate to criminal acts and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes are contained in the Individual State Criminal Justice Cases databases (XXCJ-CS), where XX is a state’s two-letter postal abbreviation.

SECONDARY SOURCES

The Criminal Justice–Law Reviews, Texts, and Bar Journals database (CJ-TP) includes analytical texts, law reviews, and other legal periodicals that relate to criminal acts and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes.

JURY INSTRUCTIONS AND SENTENCING GUIDELINES

Jury instructions and sentencing guidelines are contained in a variety of databases, including Federal Jury Practice and Instructions–Criminal (FED-JICRIM) and Federal Criminal Justice–Federal Sentencing Guidelines (FCJ-FSG). The FCJ-FSG database contains the United States Sentencing Guidelines that became effective November 1, 1987.



Figure 1. Criminal Practice page

For assistance using Westlaw, call 1-800-850-WEST (1-800-850-9378).
For free reference materials, visit west.thomson.com/westlaw/guides.