

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 in the right frame of the tabbed Criminal Practice page (Figure 1). In the left frame of the Criminal Practice page you can do any of the following:

- Type a database identifier, e.g., **mcj-cs** for the Multistate Criminal Justice Cases database, in the *Search for a database* text box to display its Search page.
- Click **View Criminal Justice Directory** to display the *Criminal Justice* section of the Westlaw Directory.
- If you know the citation of a document, type your citation in the *Find by citation* text box. If you are unsure of the correct citation format, click **Find using a template** 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 Individual State Criminal Justice–Statutes (XXCJ-ST) and the Criminal Justice–Individual State Court Rules (XXCJ-RULES) databases, where XX is a state’s two-letter postal abbreviation. (To view a list of individual state criminal justice statutes databases, click **State Criminal Justice Statutes** in the *Statutes and Regulations* section.)

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 death penalty statutes are contained in the Death Penalty–Federal Statutes database (FDP-USCA) and the state death penalty statutes are contained in the Death Penalty–Multistate Statutes database (MDP-ST).

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. State cases 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. (To view a list of individual state criminal justice cases databases, click **Individual State Criminal Justice Cases** in the *Cases* section of the Criminal Practice page.

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.