

[0070] | OVERVIEW OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS

ADULT CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS

The stages of the criminal justice system are as follows:

PRETRIAL

After committing a crime:

- An offender may be arrested by a law enforcement officer.
- A court can issue an arrest warrant.
- A State Attorney's Office may file an information; or
- A grand jury may recommend charges by returning an Indictment or Presentment.

FIRST APPEARANCE - (Following the Arrest) If the defendant cannot post bond within hours of the arrest or has been arrested on a no bond offense, or committed a crime which requires a first appearance, the court holds a "first appearance" hearing. The Judge decides whether the defendant can be released and if so, what conditions are necessary to protect you and the witnesses and the public.

First Appearance Court occurs within 24 hours of a suspect's arrest. Each suspect arrested must appear before a Judge, except for misdemeanor charges when an administrative bond is set. The Judge will determine if there is probable cause for the suspect's arrest; determine conditions of pretrial release; and decide whether a monetary bond should be set. If appropriate the Judge will appoint a defense attorney if the suspect cannot afford one.

First Appearance takes place at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. each day in courtroom J-1 located at the Pretrial Detention Facility (jail), 500 E. Adams Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202. To find out more about court proceedings, please call (904) 630-5882.



INTAKE - If probable cause is found, the State Attorney's Office may choose to file charges and summons the suspect into court. You may be required to meet with your State Attorney's office. Law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys or any other government official cannot ask or require a victim of a sexual offense to submit to a polygraph examination.

FILING OF FORMAL CHARGES - The State Attorney's Office may file formal charges after reviewing law enforcement arrest reports, and within 21 days in certain circumstances. The State Attorney's office has discretion whether to prosecute a person for a crime. The State Attorney's Office must inform any victims of its decision.

ARRAIGNMENT - The accused is formally charged and enters a plea of guilty, not guilty, or no contest. The State Attorney's Office will notify you of the arraignment date. You have the right to be present at the arraignment. In some cases, there will not be a formal arraignment hearing in court.

RELEASE HEARING (SETTING BOND) - If the defendant was unable to post a bond after the initial arrest, or if bond was not set, the defendant is entitled to a bond hearing. The State Attorney's Office will notify you of the scheduled hearing and you will have an opportunity to speak regarding the defendant's release and conditions or have the State Attorney make known your wishes.

PRETRIAL CONFERENCE - There may be numerous pretrial conferences (including case status conferences) that allow the court to ensure the case is progressing in a timely manner. You, as a victim, will receive notice of the hearing dates. You are not required to attend these hearings, unless subpoenaed, but you have a right to be present and a victim advocate or your attorney can accompany you or attend these proceedings on your behalf, if you choose.



DISCOVERY (PREPARATION FOR TRIAL) -

Subpoenas. You may receive a subpoena for trial, a deposition and/or other hearings. A subpoena summons a person to appear at the time date and location specified.

Depositions. The defendant's attorney can issue a subpoena for you to appear for a deposition. You have right to request a victim advocate from the government or non-profit sector to attend the deposition with you. You have the right, as a victim who is not incarcerated, to not be required to attend discovery depositions in any correctional facility.

PLEA NEGOTIATIONS - Many cases are settled through a plea negotiation where the defendant pleads guilty or no contest without a trial. The State Attorney's Office must consult with the victim of a before finalizing the plea agreement with the defendant.

PRETRIAL INTERVENTION / DIVERSION PROGRAM - According to their discretion and office policy, the State Attorney's Office may agree to utilize pretrial intervention and diversion programs.

Pretrial Intervention Program. Defendants with no more than one nonviolent misdemeanor, who is charged with any misdemeanor or any third degree felony is eligible for release to the pretrial intervention program on approval of the administrator of the program and the consent of the victim, the State Attorney, and the judge. Successful completion of the program results in a dismissal of the charges.

Diversion Program. Diversion is similar to probation where the defendant accepts responsibility for the offense and is released under supervision for six months to a year. During the program, the probation office supervises the defendant. You have a right to provide the State Attorney with your opinion on the defendant's participation in the pretrial division program.



TRIAL

Generally, the prosecutor presents evidence to either the judge or a jury about the case. The defendant may be found guilty or not guilty. The process ends if the defendant is found not guilty. You, as a victim, may be called to testify.

The State Attorney's Office will assist you during this process. You cannot be excluded from any hearing, trial or proceeding relating to the offense. Your rights involving the trial stage are listed in this brochure.

SENTENCING

PRESENTENCE INVESTIGATION (PSI) - You have the right to provide information regarding the impact of the offender's conduct on you and your family to the individual responsible for conducting and/or compiling the presentence investigation. You have a right to review the non-confidential portions of the presentence investigation prior to the sentencing hearing.

SENTENCING HEARING - If the defendant is found or pleads guilty, the judge reviews sentencing guidelines, plea agreements, and other factors and determines what type of sentence the defendant should receive. You have a right to provide an oral and/ or written victim impact statement (VIS) to the State Attorney' s Office at any time before the court imposes the sentence.

NOTE: If the victim and the offender attend the same school, the victim's parents have the right to attend the sentencing or disposition of the offender and request that the offender be required to attend a different school, (sec. 960.001(1)(s), Florida Statutes)

