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OVERVIEW OF THE USA CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The criminal justice system is the network of government and private agencies intended to manage accused and convicted criminals. The criminal justice system is comprised of multiple interrelated pillars, consisting of academia, law enforcement, forensic services, the judiciary, and corrections. These pillars are fashioned to support the ideals of legal justice. Legal justice is the result of forging the rights of individuals with the government's corresponding duty to ensure and protect those rights – referred to as due process. These constitutional entitlements cannot be given and protected without the abiding commitments of those professionals working in the criminal justice system. Consequently, such professionals must submit themselves to the ethical principles of the criminal justice system and evidence persistent integrity in their character. This is accomplished with the help of a worthy code of professional ethics that signals competence, reliability, accountability, and overall trustworthiness – when properly administered. [1]

Crime prevention and law enforcement are central to the mission of professionals in the field of criminal justice. Criminal justice encompasses the entire system responsible for enforcing and upholding criminal laws. This system includes various components, such as the police, prosecutors, the courts, and corrections. Each of these components plays a vital role in the administration of justice.

Law enforcement agencies are tasked with enforcing criminal laws. They have the authority to issue citations or summonses to individuals who violate the law, directing them to appear in court. In some cases, the police may make arrests, taking individuals into custody, even if they resist. Additionally, the police are responsible for crime prevention, using various

strategies to deter criminal activity, such as patrolling high-crime areas and using surveillance cameras and license plate readers. [2]

Prosecutors are responsible for officially charging individuals with violations of criminal law in court. They determine the charges based on the applicable laws and the severity of the offense. Crimes are generally classified as minor non-criminal petty offenses, misdemeanors, or felonies, depending on the potential punishment. Prosecutors have significant power in influencing the outcome of a case by determining the charges and potential penalties.

The court system oversees the legal processes within a criminal case, ultimately deciding whether an individual violated the criminal law. When individuals are charged with crimes, they are brought before the court, which may decide whether they can be released on bail or their recognizance. The court manages various pretrial stages, including hearings on motions and decisions on trial type (bench trial or jury trial). Plea bargaining and guilty pleas are also part of the court's functions.

After an individual is convicted of a crime, they become part of the correctional system. The correctional system administers punishments and sentences, which may include probation, incarceration, or parole. There are also alternative sentences available, depending on the circumstances. [2]

In summary, the criminal justice system is a complex framework consisting of law enforcement, prosecution, the courts, and corrections. Its primary functions include enforcing criminal laws, determining charges and penalties, conducting legal proceedings, and managing sentences and punishments. Each component plays a crucial role in ensuring justice is served within the bounds of the law. [2]

References:

1. Criminal Justice System. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/criminal-justice-system>.
2. Crime Fighting in The United States URL: https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Crime_Fighting_in_The_United_States.