

Career Profile: Criminal Justice

Description:

Criminal justice integrates social sciences, behavioral sciences, and humanities. Criminal justice consists of three main specialization areas, police and security positions, criminology, and the legal system. Within each of these specific career areas, requirements and training vary. The interests of those involved in criminal justice are as follows; first, they enjoy working with people; second, they like to take charge and are not afraid to make quick decisions; third, they have a preference for a hands-on immediate approach to resolving difficulties or problematic issues (College Major Handbook).

Training and Qualification:

Each area of criminal justice has different entrance requirements for each field. Within each career area are a number of possible occupations. The possible occupations within criminal justice are not limited to the occupations listed below. Requirements for these occupations may vary by state or school. Bachelor degrees in criminal justice are offered at a number of universities. (For a list of possible schools see www.collegesource.com) Additional training may be needed after graduation, depending upon the occupational area desired.

Law Enforcement Requirements: Formal Police Academy Program, extensive interviewing, physical and psychological testing, and fitness evaluation. Employment in law enforcement is possible with local, county, state, or federal agencies.

Courts: Probation/Parole Officer-bachelors degree in criminal justice or social sciences required. Other areas of the court system require a civil service test. Victim Advocates require a bachelor degree in criminal justice. Clerks of the Court are required to have no less than a bachelor degree in criminal justice and may require a higher level of education; often a law degree is required.

Corrections Officer: Generally requires postsecondary education. Psychology, sociology, police science, and criminology are postsecondary degrees to take into consideration. Criminal justice majors enter the field with a more competitive edge than other fields of study. The application process varies from state to state, but all require a drug test, written examination and extensive background check.

Correction Counselor/Caseworker: Most jobs require a four-year degree in criminal justice, psychology, social work, or sociology, additionally, one-year's experience in correction casework, probation/parole, or substance abuse counseling. Bilingual abilities are highly favored.

Employment/Salary:

The following information is found in *Great Jobs for Criminal Justice Majors*.

Law Enforcement: The median salary for local law enforcement in 1998 was \$37,710. County and State law enforcement median salary was \$33,700. Federal law enforcement employees are paid according to the government pay scale and therefore vary according to GS-level.

Courts: The court positions are not limited to and may include other occupations that may involve additional forms of training. The average salary for entry-level probation and

parole officers is \$26,000. Victim Advocates salaries range from \$18,000-\$20,000 for entry-level.

Correctional Officer: The median salary for a corrections officer in 1998 was \$28,540, however, the differences from state to state varied greatly. Federal corrections officers are paid based on the government pay scale according to the GS-level.

Correction Counselor/Caseworker: Salaries vary greatly depending on the area of correctional counseling. However, new graduates with a bachelor's degree in all fields can be expected to make around \$25,000 in an entry-level position.

Brigham Young University:

Brigham Young University does not offer a criminal justice major. If you are seriously considering criminal justice as a major, transferring to a university which does offer a criminal justice major will be best solution. When considering schools, contact the criminal justice department and talk with an advisor about a possible graduation plan, class schedule, and transferable credits. Unfortunately, BYU does not offer any necessary prerequisite classes for criminal justice majors. If you are currently enrolled at BYU, the best option would be to complete your General Education requirements.

Additional Resources:

For additional questions regarding criminal justice degrees and requirements contact:

- Bobbi Gren: Criminal Justice Advisor at Utah Valley State College: (801) 863-8489
- The National Criminal Justice Associations- <http://www.ncja.org>
- National Association of Police Organizations- <http://www.napo.org>
- American Correctional Association- <http://www.aca.org>
- American Probation and Parole Association- <http://www.appa-net.org>

All of the information on this sheet has been compiled from the following resources: *Great Jobs for Criminal Justice Majors* (2001). VGM Career Books; *College Major Handbook*. (2004). JIST Publishing Works; an interview with Bobbi Gren the Criminal Justice Advisor from Utah Valley State College; collegesource.com; and U.S. Bureau of Labors Statistics website under Criminal Justice.

