



Feature

Job Opportunities in Criminal Law

Criminal attorneys are one of several different types of attorneys. These lawyers work in criminal and penal law either as a district attorney (DA) or as a defense attorney. The types of cases taken on by these criminal attorneys may include everything from misdemeanors to felony crimes like homicide and drug dealing. The criminal law industry is one of the most popular law fields to go into, because it offers such a wide variety of different case types that each attorney can specialize in as they choose. Law is a very competitive industry. About 27% of all criminal attorneys are self-employed.



Educational Requirements

The formal requirements associated with becoming a criminal attorney include at least a four-year college degree, followed by three years of law school. Following the third year

of law school, a written bar exam will need to be taken and passed before graduates can be licensed to practice law. The requirements associated with criminal attorney positions and their education do tend to vary at least slightly from one state to the next, so it is important to look into these requirements for your state before pursuing a degree. The competition for entrance into most prestigious law firms is quite intense, and competition for many criminal attorney jobs is just as keen because of how many students graduate from law school every year with the aim of becoming a criminal defense attorney.

Duties

The most detailed aspects of a criminal defense attorney's duties depend on his or her specialization, as well as the individual position held. All lawyers are licensed in a way that allows them to represent parties in court, but some criminal attorney jobs require more time in court than others. Criminal law and penal law are specialties of the criminal attorney, and involve a number of different fields of specialization and work, including counterfeiting, fraud, white-collar crime, drug dealing, criminal appeals, sexual harassment, money laundering, false claims, fraud, homicide and more. As a criminal attorney, you are either a defense attorney or involved with the district attorney's office. Some criminal attorney jobs are public defender jobs, which means you are paid by the state instead of by the individual client.

While a number of the duties attached to criminal attorney jobs are explored within the courtroom, there are a number of skills that must be possessed for those aspects of the job

which take place outside of the courtroom, including but not limited to: interviewing witnesses and clients, conducting research, handling preparation details for the trial, and conducting depositions. Still, it is vital that all people who consider criminal attorney jobs at least be familiar with courtroom rules and courtroom strategy, because a large part of being a criminal attorney is operating inside of a courtroom.

Salary

The median annual earning for a wage or salary lawyer in 2006 was \$102,470, with most within this occupation earning somewhere between \$69,000 and \$145,000. The median annual earning within the legal industry differs depending on what specialty you follow. Criminal attorneys made \$108,100, on average, in May of 2006. The median salary for an average lawyer 9 months after graduation in 2005 was \$60,000, but private practice criminal attorney jobs in the same position earned an average of \$85,000. Experienced lawyers' salaries varied significantly based on the location of the position, the type of firm, and the firm's size. Self employed criminal attorneys tend to earn less than those operating within law firms.

Job Opportunities and Outlook



In 2006 alone there were more than 761,000 practicing lawyers. There are a large number of criminal attorney jobs that need to be filled on a consistent basis. Criminal law is a popular specialty for attorneys who are fresh out of college and looking for a place to build some significant practice.

Average job growth is projected when it comes to criminal attorney openings, but job competition is still expected to be quite keen. The number of jobs in the sector is certainly growing, but so is the number of qualified



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graduates coming out of law school and passing their Bar exams. As long as there are criminals, there will be criminal attorney jobs, especially for those who are industrious enough to open their own private-practice businesses.

It may be necessary for some graduates to accept positions outside of their field of interest or specialty, or sometimes accept positions for which they feel overqualified. Permanent positions in some aspects of criminal law may be difficult to find, but all in all, criminal attorney jobs should not be impossible to find, just on the competitive side to land. When it comes to working independently, criminal attorney jobs opening up in small towns and suburban areas that are expanding will be easiest to secure. There will be less competition here from large and established law firms like there would be in the larger cities.

Conclusion

Criminal attorney jobs range from private practice jobs to partners within a large firm, and each of these positions earns a different salary based on size of the practice and its location. Criminal attorney jobs come with a myriad of different specialties, including penal law, criminal law, defense law, working with the district attorney's office, and a great deal more. While this is an extremely competitive field to get into, it is worthwhile for those with a knack for courtroom politics and the understanding of clients needs outside of the courtroom.

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