

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM  
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Arraignment:** The court hearing in which the defendant is formally charged with a crime and enters a plea of guilty or not guilty.

**Bail:** An amount of money which is sometimes imposed by the court to ensure the defendant's appearance at future court hearings. A defendant held in custody is required to post bail in order to be released. Bail can be posted either at court or at the House of Correction.

**Bail Hearing:** A hearing to determine whether or not an incarcerated defendant or convicted offender will be released from custody and to determine what amount (if any) he/she must pay as a bond to assure his/her presence at future proceedings (e.g., trial). This may also include specific conditions of bail, e.g., no contact with the victim or witness, must attend treatment programs, etc.

**Continuance:** A delay or postponement of a court hearing.

**CORI report:** Criminal Offender Record Information report prepared by the state Criminal History Systems Board. A CORI report includes the history of each criminal charge, from pre-trial through court proceedings through sentencing.

**Default:** A defendant's failure to appear at a required legal proceeding.

**Defendant:** A person formally charged with a crime.

**Disposition:** What happened with your case.

**Felony:** A crime punishable by incarceration in the state prison for a period of years.

**Grand Jury:** A group of 23 people that hear evidence presented by a prosecutor to determine if a formal criminal charge (indictment) shall be issued in a case.

**Misdemeanor:** A crime punishable by a fine or incarceration in the House of Correction for a maximum of 2 1/2 years.

**Pre-Trial Conference:** The hearing in which the prosecutor and the defense report the status of the case to the court.

**Probation:** The defendant is placed under the supervision of a probation officer and is required to fulfill certain conditions set forth by the court for a specified period of time.

**Prosecutor/ Assistant District Attorney:** an attorney employed by a governmental agency whose official duty is to initiate and maintain criminal proceedings on behalf of the government against persons accused of committing criminal offenses.

**Restitution:** In some cases, the Judge may order the defendant to pay the out-of-pocket expenses that you may have incurred as a result of the crime. Advocates are available to assist you in documenting your losses.

**Sentencing Recommendations:** When a defendant has pled guilty or has been found guilty after trial, the Judge will consider (but is not required to accept) the recommendations made by the prosecutor, defense attorney.

**Subpoena/Summons:** A Court Order which requires your appearance at court. Failure to appear under court order is considered as a Contempt of Court. It is imperative that you inform your advocate or prosecutor immediately if you cannot appear as ordered. Please be sure to keep your advocate informed of any changes in your address or telephone number

**Victim Impact Statement:** Under Massachusetts General Laws c. 258B, §3(p), as a victim you have the right to offer a verbal or written statement to the Judge after the Defendant has been found guilty or has admitted to sufficient facts. Such a statement is known as an Impact Statement and gives you the opportunity to explain to the Judge the physical and financial impact of the crime. In addition, you may express to the Judge your views regarding the defendant's sentence. Your written statement will become part of the defendant's file and will be passed on to the Probation or Parole Officer, Correction facility or the Parole Board.