

# *Your Criminal Justice Career*

A Guidebook



*The Justice Research Association*

# YOUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAREER

*A Guidebook*

The Justice Research Association

*(with information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics)*

Compiled by Frank Schmalleger

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Cover Designer: *Joe Sengotta*

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# Foreword

According to a recent *New York Times* article,<sup>1</sup> the criminal justice field is undergoing explosive growth. The *Times* estimated that in 1998 there were more than 350,000 undergraduate students majoring in criminal justice at the graduate and undergraduate levels in the United States. Add to that the thousands of other students who take criminal justice courses out of curiosity or to fulfill an elective requirement, and the number of students enrolled in such courses in a given year is nothing short of phenomenal.

One reason for the large and rapidly growing cadre of criminal justice majors is a fascination with criminals, and with understanding criminal behavior. Popular movies and television shows have piqued the interest of many, leading to a flood of students into criminal justice curricula. But at another level, says the *Times*, “the flood of new courses and students is a reflection of the intellectual success of criminal justice.” Many now entering the justice field are led by personal idealism—and hope to make a difference in the fight against crime, and in addressing the conditions which give rise to unlawful behavior.

Fortunately for students in the field, the criminal justice system in this country is growing rapidly—and the job market for criminal justice personnel appears able to accommodate most graduating students for years to come.

This guide hopes to meet the needs of criminal justice students who will soon be entering the job market. It brings

<sup>1</sup>Fox Butterfield, “A Newcomer Breaks Into the Liberal Arts: Criminal Justice,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1998, p. B1.

together, in one convenient place, information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on criminal justice and public safety occupations. Most of the information contained in this volume comes from the BLS's 1998–1999 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. It has been adapted here (as well as occasionally reworded) to assist college and university criminal justice students preparing for careers in the justice and public safety fields.

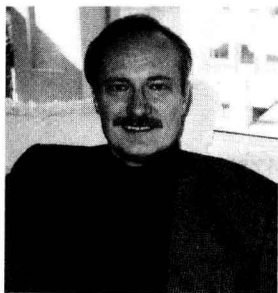
The BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is a massive publication, covering employment projections for the nation in great detail, and describing a large number of career areas. Sorting through the *Handbook*—which contains more than a thousand employment categories—and finding material of interest can be a daunting task. Hence, it is our hope that this guide will make important BLS information on criminal justice careers easily and readily available to those interested in working in the American justice system and in public safety occupations.

Much of the information contained in this guide is also available at the federal government's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* site on the World Wide Web at <http://stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm> and at "Dr. Frank Schmallegger's Cybrary of Criminal Justice Links," <http://talkjustice.com/files/cybrary.htm>.

Portions of Chapter 12 come from the Criminal Justice Distance Learning Consortium's (CJDLC's) *Definitive Guide to Criminal Justice and Criminology on the World Wide Web* (Prentice Hall, 1999). CJDLC is a project of the Justice Research Association, and we are grateful to them for making this information available for use here.

Thank you for using this guide. If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail me at [justice@hargray.com](mailto:justice@hargray.com).

Frank Schmallegger, Ph.D., Director  
The Justice Research Association



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# Finding a Job



## Significant Points

- Choice of employment is one of the most crucial decisions anyone can make.
- Some of the best jobs information is readily available through personal contacts, classified advertisements, public libraries, the World Wide Web, and other easily accessible sources.

## /ntroduction

Finding employment (and accepting a job offer) is one of the most crucial decisions you can make. Your choice of careers

The material in this chapter is adapted from Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998–1999 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.





is an important determinant of life satisfaction. A job can be rewarding in a number of ways—from the daily personal satisfaction that comes from helping others, or from knowing that you are contributing positively to society, to the financial rewards that arrive every month in the form of a paycheck. The reward of knowing that you are helping others is commonly cited by those entering criminal justice and public safety occupations as one reason for their choice of careers.

Salary, of course, is also an important job consideration. But when choosing a job, it is good to keep in mind that the financial benefits of employment extend beyond salary to encompass fringe benefits—including health and retirement plans paid for or sponsored by employers. Such benefits can have a significant impact on the quality of life, especially if you or a family member become sick, or as retirement time approaches.

For college students, job seeking usually begins in the months immediately prior to graduation. Career experts tell us, however, that the more time you spend considering what kind of job you want, the more likely you are to find satisfying employment.

What are some of the best sources of information that you can use in finding and choosing a job? According to the 1998–1999 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, they include the following:

## PERSONAL CONTACTS

Your network of family, friends, and acquaintances may offer one of the most effective ways to find a job. They may help you directly or put you in touch with someone else who can. Such networking can lead to meeting with someone who is hiring for an agency or firm or who knows of specific job openings.

The people close to you—your family and friends—can be extremely helpful in providing career information. They may be able to answer your questions or put you in touch with someone who can. This type of networking can lead to meeting someone who can answer your questions about a specific

career, agency, or company, and who can provide inside information and other helpful hints. This is an effective way to learn what type of training is necessary for a certain position and how someone in that position entered the field, the prospects for advancement, and what they like and dislike about the work.



## CLASSIFIED ADS

The "Help Wanted" ads in newspapers list hundreds of jobs. You should realize, however, that many other job openings are not listed, and that the classified ads sometimes do not give all the important information. Many offer little or no description of the job, working conditions, or pay. Some ads do not identify the employer. They may simply give a post office box for sending your resume. This makes follow-up inquiries very difficult. Furthermore, some ads offer out-of-town jobs; others advertise employment agencies rather than actual employment openings.

Keep the following in mind when using classified ads:

1. Do not rely solely on the classifieds to find a job; follow other leads as well.
2. Answer ads promptly, since openings may be filled quickly, even before the ad stops appearing in the paper.
3. Read the ads every day, particularly the Sunday edition, which usually includes the most listings.
4. Beware of "no experience necessary" ads. These ads often signal low wages, poor working conditions, or commission work.
5. Keep a record of all ads to which you have responded, including the specific skills, educational background, and personal qualifications required for each position.

## INTERNET NETWORKS AND RESOURCES

A variety of information is available on the Internet, including jobs and job search resources and techniques. The growth of



online listings has made available a wide variety of resources at your fingertips—24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many companies, professional societies, academic institutions, and government agencies maintain online resources or homepages with the latest information on their organizations and their activities.

Listings may include information such as government documents, schedules of events, job openings, and even networking contacts. Listings for academic institutions often provide links to career counseling and placement services through career resource centers, as well as information on financing your education. Colleges and universities also offer online guides to campus facilities and admission requirements and procedures.

The variety of career information available through the Internet provides much of the same information available through libraries, career centers, and guidance offices. However, no single network or resource will contain all desired information, so be prepared to search a variety of different places. As in a library search, look through various lists by field or discipline, or by using particular keywords.

When searching employment databases on the Internet, it is sometimes possible to post your resume online or send it to an employer via e-mail. Some sources provide this service free of charge; however, be careful that you are not going to incur any additional charges for postings or updates. A good place to start your job search is *America's Job Bank*. It can be found at [www.ajb.dni.us/index.html](http://www.ajb.dni.us/index.html).

## PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The state employment service, sometimes called the Job Service, operates in coordination with the U.S. Employment Service of the U.S. Department of Labor. About 1,700 local offices help jobseekers find jobs and help employers find qualified workers at no cost to themselves. To find the office nearest you, look in the state government telephone listings under "Job Service" or "Employment."

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES, CAREER CENTERS, AND GUIDANCE OFFICES

These institutions maintain a great deal of up-to-date career material. To begin your library search, look at the computer listings under “Vocations” or “Careers” and then under specific fields. Check the periodicals section, where you will find trade and professional magazines and journals about specific occupations and industries. Familiarize yourself with the concerns and activities of potential employers by skimming their annual reports and other information they distribute to the public. You can also find occupational information on video cassettes, in kits, and through computerized information systems. Don’t forget the librarians; they can be a great source of information and can save you time by directing you to the information you need.

Check your school’s career centers for programs such as individual counseling and testing, guest speakers, field trips, and career days. Also, read through any pamphlets that describe employment.

Always assess career guidance materials carefully. Information should be current. Beware of materials that seem to glamorize the occupation, overstate the earnings, or exaggerate the demand for workers.

## COUNSELORS

You may wish to seek help from a counselor. These professionals are trained to help you discover your strengths and weaknesses, guide you through an evaluation of your goals and values, and help you determine what you want in a career. The counselor will not tell you what to do, but will administer interest inventories and aptitude tests, interpret the results, and help you explore your options. Counselors also may discuss local job markets and the entry requirements and costs of the schools, colleges, or training programs offering preparation for the kind of work that interests you. You can find counselors in the following places:





1. High school guidance offices
2. College career planning and placement offices
3. Placement offices in private vocational/technical schools and institutions
4. Vocational rehabilitation agencies
5. Counseling services offered by community organizations
6. Private counseling agencies and private practices
7. State employment service offices affiliated with the U.S. Employment Service

Before employing the services of a private counselor or agency, you may want to seek recommendations and check their credentials. The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) accredits counseling services throughout the country. To receive a listing of accredited services for your region, send a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope to: IACS, 101 South Whiting St., Suite 211, Alexandria, VA 22304.

The *Directory of Counseling Services*, an IACS publication providing employment counseling and other assistance, may be available in your library or school career counseling center. A list of certified career counselors by state can be obtained from:

The National Board of Certified Counselors  
3 Terrace Way, Suite D  
Greensboro, NC 27403-3660  
Phone: (910) 547-0607

### PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES, TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, BUSINESS FIRMS, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

These organizations provide a variety of free or inexpensive career materials. For information on such organizations, consult directories in your library's reference section. You may want to start with *The Guide to American Directories* or *The Directory of Directories*. Another useful resource is *The Ency-*

*clopedia of Associations*, an annual publication listing trade associations, professional societies, labor unions, and fraternal and patriotic organizations.

The National Technical Information Service Audiovisual Center, a central source for audiovisual material produced by the U.S. Government, sells material on jobs and careers. For a catalog, contact:

NTIS Audiovisual Center  
Springfield, VA 22161  
Phone: (800) 553-6847



For first-hand experience in an occupation, you may wish to work as an intern. Some internships offer academic credit or pay a stipend, and can lead to a full-time job after graduation. Check with guidance offices, college career resource centers, or directly with employers for opportunities.

## JOB MATCHING AND REFERRAL SERVICES

At the state employment service office, an interviewer can determine if you are “job ready” or if counseling and testing services would be helpful first. After you are job ready, you may examine available job listings and select openings that interest you. A staff member can then describe the job openings in detail and arrange for interviews with prospective employers. Employment counselors can arrange for tests to assess your occupational aptitudes and interests. They will also help you choose and prepare for a career.

*America's Job Bank*, run by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, provides information on preparing your resume and using the Internet for your job search, trends in the U.S. job market and state occupational projections, and approximately 500,000 job openings on any given day. A wide range of jobs are listed all over the country, and most are full-time jobs in the private sector. Job seekers can access these listings through the Internet; computers with access to the Internet are available to the public in any local public employment service office,



as well as in schools, libraries, and several hundred military installations.

*Tips for Finding the Right Job*, a U.S. Department of Labor pamphlet, offers advice on determining your job skills, organizing your job search, writing a resume, and making the most of an interview. *Job Search Guide: Strategies for Professionals*, another U.S. Department of Labor publication, discusses specific steps that job seekers can follow to identify employment opportunities. This publication includes sections on such things as handling job loss, managing personal resources, assessing personal skills and interests, researching the job market, conducting the job search, and networking. Check with your state employment service office, or order a copy of these publications from the U.S. Government Printing Office's Superintendent of Documents. Phone (202) 512-1800 for price and ordering information.

## PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

These agencies can be helpful, but they are in business to make money. Most agencies operate on a commission basis, with the fee dependent upon a percentage of the salary paid to a successful applicant. You or the employer will have to pay a sizable fee. Find out the exact cost and who is responsible for paying it before using the service.

While employment agencies can help you save time and contact employers who otherwise might be difficult to locate, in cases where you are responsible for the fee, your costs may outweigh the benefits. Consider any guarantee they offer when determining the cost.

## COLLEGE CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICES

College placement offices facilitate matching job openings for their students and alumni. They set up appointments and use the facilities for interviews with recruiters. Placement offices usually list part-time, temporary, and summer jobs offered on campus. They also list jobs in regional business, nonprofit, and government organizations. Students can receive career



counseling and testing, job search advice, and use of the career resource library. Here you may attend workshops on such topics as job search strategy, resume writing, letter writing, and effective interviewing; critique drafts of resumes and watch videotapes of mock interviews; explore files of resumes and references; and attend job fairs conducted by the office.



## COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Many nonprofit organizations, including churches, synagogues, and vocational rehabilitation agencies, offer counseling, career development, and job placement services, generally targeted to a particular group, such as women, youth, minorities, ex-offenders, or older workers.

## EMPLOYERS

It is possible to apply directly to employers without a referral. You may locate a potential employer in the Yellow Pages, in directories of local chambers of commerce, and in other directories that provide information about employers. When you find an employer you are interested in, you can send a cover letter and resume even if you are not certain that an opening exists.

## FEDERAL JOB INFORMATION

Information on getting a job with the federal government is available from the Office of Personnel Management through a telephone-based system. Consult your telephone directory under U.S. Government for a local number or call (912) 757-3000 [TDD (912) 744-2299]. Information also is available on the Internet at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov).

