

Criminal Dictionary of Offenses and Charges

A

- Abduction** - Taking away by violence or fraud and persuasion.
- Abstraction** - Taking away with intent to harm or deceive.
- Accessory** - Not the perpetrator of the crime but in some way involved without being present in the commission of the crime.
- Acquittal** - A legal judgment that an accused is not guilty of the crime for which he or she has been charged and tried.
- Adjudication** - The judicial decision that ends a criminal proceeding by a judgment or acquittal, conviction, or dismissal of the case.
- Aiding and Abetting** - To assist another in committing a crime.
- Alias** - False name used in substitution of a legal name on official documents and for official purposes. May be noted as AKA (Also Known As) .
- Appropriate** - To take something from another for one's own use or benefit.
- Arraignment** - A call to the accused to come before the court to hear charges or enter a plea.
- Arrest** - The taking of an individual into custody by law enforcement personnel for the purpose of charging them with an illegal act.
- Arson** - Any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a dwelling house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc.
- Assault** - Intentional or threatened infliction of injury to another.

B

- Bail** - An amount of money, set by a judge at an initial appearance to ensure the return of the accused at subsequent proceedings.
- Battery** - Non-consensual, unlawful contact, such as touching, beating or wounding of another.
- Blackmail** - An illegal demand for money or property under threat of harm or exposure of undesirable acts.
- Bond** - A certificate of obligation, either unsecured or secured with collateral, to pay a specified amount of money within a specified period of time.
- Bookmaking** - An operation with the purpose of placing, registering, paying off or collecting debts for bets.
- Burglary** - The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or a theft. Attempted forcible entry is included.

C

- Cause of Action** - One or more related charges, combined and made against a defendant for wrongs committed.
- Charge** - In criminal law, a charge is an allegation that an individual has committed a specific offense.
- Citation** - An order issued by a law enforcement officer requiring appearance in court to answer a charge - Bail is not accepted in lieu of appearance.
- Coercion** - The use of physical force or threats to compel someone to commit an act against his or her will.
- Contempt of Court** - An act committed which serves to obstruct the court in its administration or authority.
- Controlled Substance** - A drug whose availability is restricted by law.
- Conversion** - The unauthorized taking of another's property.
- Conviction** - Guilty verdict in a criminal trial.
- Count/Charge** - An offense named in a cause of action - A cause of action may contain multiple counts or charges, each relating to the others but identifying a separate offense.
- Court of Record** The court where the permanent record of all proceedings is held.
- Credit Card Fraud** - Use, or attempted use of a credit card to purchase goods or services with the intent to avoid payment of such.
- Crime Against Nature** - Deviate sexual intercourse.
- Criminal Nonsupport** - Failure to pay child support in violation of court order.

D

- Dangerous Weapon** - Something that is capable, though not designed to cause serious injury or death.
- Deadly Weapon** - A weapon designed to cause serious injury or death.
- Defraud** - Knowingly misrepresenting facts to cheat or trick.

Degree - First, Second, or Third - Classification assigned to a crime, depending on circumstances, for purposes of determining punishment, with first degree being the most serious

Dismissal - Finally disposing of the cause without further consideration - voluntary or involuntary.

Dismissal Without Leave After Deferred - Prosecution Charges dismissed after specified time (90 days to 1 year) provided certain conditions have been met such as participating in specified program of anger control or drug counseling or providing community service, etc.

Disorderly conduct - Any behavior that tends to disturb the public peace or decorum, scandalize the community, or shock the public sense of morality.

Disposition - The final settlement in the matter.

Driving While Intoxicated - Operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs - Complete intoxication is not required - Individual state statutes specify the blood alcohol content at which a person is presumed to be under the influence of intoxicating liquor.

Driving Under the Influence - Driving or operating a motor vehicle or common carrier while mentally or physically impaired as the result of consuming an alcoholic beverage or using a drug or narcotic.

Drunkenness - To drink alcoholic beverages to the extent that one's mental faculties and physical coordination are substantially impaired. Driving under the influence is excluded.

Due Diligence - A reasonable and expected measure of attention taken for a particular action - Not measurable by an absolute standard, but dependent on the situation.

E

Embezzlement - The unlawful misappropriation or misapplication by an offender to his/her own use or purpose of money, property, or some other thing of value entrusted to his/her care, custody, or control.

Expunge - When a record of an offense is expunged it will not appear on a released criminal history - The record may be destroyed or sealed after a certain period of time - Records may be expunged in juvenile cases, or upon satisfactory completion of a court-ordered probation and/or class(s).

Extortion - Obtaining another's property by actual or threatened force, fear or violence.

Extradition - The surrender of an individual accused or convicted of a crime by one state to another.

F

Felony - A serious offense carrying a penalty of incarceration from one year to life in a state prison, to the death penalty.

Forcible Entry - Entering or taking possession of property with force, threats or menacing conduct.

Forcible rape - The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Rapes by force and attempts or assaults to rape, regardless of the age of the victim, are included. Statutory offenses (no force used—victim under age of consent) are excluded.

Forgery - Also counterfeiting - The altering, copying, or imitating of something, without authority or right, with the intent to deceive or defraud by passing the copy or thing altered or imitated as that which is original or genuine; or the selling, buying, or possession of an altered, copied, or imitated thing with the intent to deceive or defraud.

Fraud - The intentional perversion of the truth for the purpose of inducing another person or other entity in reliance upon it to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right. Fraudulent conversion and obtaining of money or property by false pretenses. Confidence games and bad checks, except forgeries and counterfeiting, are included.

G

Gambling - To unlawfully bet or wager money or something else of value; assist, promote, or operate a game of chance for money or some other stake; possess or transmit wagering information; manufacture, sell, purchase, possess, or transport gambling equipment, devices, or goods; or tamper with the outcome of a sporting event or contest to gain a gambling advantage.

Grand Larceny - The theft of property over a specified value - Dollar amounts vary by state.

Guilt/Guilty - Final disposition - Having committed a crime.

H

Habitual Violator - To have committed the same offense three times - Can also be charged as a habitual offender.

Hijacking - To take control of a vehicle by intimidation, force or threatened force - Also, the theft of goods while in transit,

as when transported in trucks.

Homicide - The killing of another human being. This type has two degrees – manslaughter and murder, depending on circumstances or intent.

I

Illicit - Prohibited or unlawful.

Infraction - Violation of local ordinance or state statute usually resulting in a fine or **limited period of incarceration** - Term usually used in traffic offenses.

Injunction - A court order which prohibits a person from doing a specified act for a specified period of time.

Intent - The frame of mind or attitude of the person at the time an act was committed - See Culpability.

Intoxicates, Intoxication - Reduction of physical or mental capabilities caused by the ingestion of an intoxicating substance such as alcohol or drugs.

Involuntary Dismissal - Dismissed due to lack of prosecution or lack of evidence.

J

Judgment - The final decision of the court regarding a claim or case.

Jurisdiction - The power of a court to question facts, apply law, make decisions and judgments.

Jury Trial - The determination of a case by a jury

K

Kidnapping - Taking and carrying away a person by force, fraud, threats or intimidation - Unlawfully confining a person for a substantial period of time in an isolated place.

L

Larceny - The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. Examples are thefts of bicycles, motor vehicle parts and accessories, shoplifting, pocket-picking, or the stealing of any property or article that is not taken by force and violence or by fraud. Attempted larcenies are included.

Embezzlement, confidence games, forgery, check fraud, etc., are excluded.

Legal Malice - An act, committed without just cause or excuse, intended to inflict harm or cause death.

Lewd and Lascivious - Obscene, indecent.

Libel - Defamation of another person through print, pictures, or signs.

M

Mail Fraud - The use of the mail system to commit a fraud.

Malice Aforethought - Planning to commit an unlawful act without just cause or excuse.

Manslaughter - The unpremeditated killing of a person - Can be voluntary or involuntary, determined by circumstances - The feature distinguishing involuntary manslaughter from voluntary is the absence of intent to cause death or commit an act that might be expected to produce death or harm - Voluntary manslaughter is homicide that is committed during an act in the heat of passion.

Misdemeanor - A crime that is less serious than a felony for which the punishment is usually imprisonment for one year or less

Motor vehicle theft - The theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. A motor vehicle is self-propelled and runs on land surface and not on rails. Motorboats, construction equipment, airplanes, and farming equipment are specifically excluded from this category.

Murder - Unlawful killing with malice aforethought - Murder is willful, deliberate and premeditated, or done during the commission of a crime - first, second and third degree.

N

Negligence - Flagrant and reckless disregard of the safety of others.

No Contest - A plea in which the defendant does not contest the charge.

No Probable Cause - There was not sufficient reason to bring case to trial.

O

Obtain Property under False Pretense - The misrepresentation of the value of something.

P

Pander - To provide products or services that cater to the sexual gratification of others - To entice another into prostitution.

Parole - To release from confinement after serving part of a sentence, usually with terms and conditions provided in the parole order.

Parole Violation - An act that does not conform to the terms of parole.

Perjury - Intentionally making a false statement under oath.

Plea - The defendant's formal answer to a charge.

Plea Bargain - A plea of guilt to a lesser offense in return for a lighter sentence.

Probation - Relief of all or part of a sentence on the promise of proper conduct.

Probation Before judgment - Violation of probation terms may result in an entry of a conviction.

Probable Cause - Degree of proof needed to arrest

R

Racketeering - An organized conspiracy for the purpose of committing crimes of extortion or coercion.

Rape - Sex without consent - May be forcible or by intoxication, with a person who is underage and unable to give consent, or with a person with diminished mental and/or physical capabilities.

Reckless Endangerment - An act that does or could cause injury to another, not necessarily with intent.

Restitution - Payment made by a defendant to victim as reimbursement for monetary losses incurred as a result of the crime

Restraining Order - An order prohibiting a specified action until such time that a hearing on an application for an injunction can be held.

Robbery - The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear.

S

Sentence - A judgment of punishment for a criminal act.

Slander - Defamation verbal communication - Making false and malicious statements about another.

Status Closed - No further action will occur on this case; cannot be reopened at later date.

Statutory Rape - Sexual activity by an adult with a person under the age of consent.

Stricken - To eliminate or expunge.

Suspended Sentence - Deferment of punishment usually over a period of probation.

Suspicion - Arrested for no specific offense and released without formal charges being placed.

T

Theft of Services - Obtaining services without consent through deception, threat, tampering, etc.

Theft/unauthorized - Theft by using someone else's information, credit card, check, or something similar.

Truncated Files - Destroyed or partially destroyed - Unable to obtain any more information.

U

Under the Influence of Intoxicating Liquor or Drugs - Any condition where the nervous system, brain or muscles are impaired to an appreciable degree by an intoxicating substance.

Usury - Charging more interest than is permitted by law for a loan of money.

Unlawful Entry - Entry without force and without permission by means of fraud or other wrongful act.

Uttering - To forge another's name.

V

Vagrancy - The violation of a court order, regulation, ordinance, or law requiring the withdrawal of persons from the streets or other specified areas; prohibiting persons from remaining in an area or place in an idle or aimless manner; or prohibiting persons from going from place to place without visible means of support.

Vandalism - To willfully or maliciously destroy, injure, disfigure, or deface any public or private property, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control by cutting, tearing, breaking, marking, painting, drawing, covering with filth, or any other such means as may be specified by local law.

Vehicular Homicide - Death of another caused by the intentional, unlawful or negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

Verdict - The formal, final decision or finding made by a jury or judge.

Voluntary Dismissal - The court or district attorney dismisses the charges against an individual.

W

Warrant - Court order authorizing a law enforcement official to arrest or perform search and seizure.

Weapons Offenses - The unlawful sale, distribution, manufacture, alteration, transport, possession or use of a deadly or dangerous weapon.

Withheld - Adjudication withheld.

Wrongful Entrustment - Allowing an unlicensed driver to operate a motor vehicle.

Y

Youthful Offender - Classification of youths and young adults, generally older than juveniles - In the 18 to 25 year age group, these individuals are sometimes given special sentencing consideration for the purpose of rehabilitation, sometimes through education and counseling.

Sources

Blacks Law Dictionary

Department of Justice