

the suspect about entering a drug program. She could also ask people who know the suspect to write letters to the court. These letters might say why the suspect is a person who is able to change his behavior. All of this could help the judge decide to give the person a sentence that is a chance for him to change his ways rather than just a punishment.

After the trial, if a lawyer thinks that the prosecution made a lot of mistakes, then the lawyer will want to appeal. Many cases are overturned after they are appealed. This means that the suspect are granted new trials.

Finding a Lawyer

If you need a lawyer, the best way to find one is to ask your friends. If they have used a good lawyer, they will tell you. Another way is to call the **bar association**. This is an organization to which all qualified lawyers belong. It can send you a list of lawyers.

What if you cannot find a lawyer right away? Ask the police at the police station. They must find you a lawyer. There is usually a **public defender** or legal aid lawyer to help you. That lawyer can help you until you get one of your own choice. If you cannot afford a lawyer, then the public defender or legal aid lawyer will still defend you.

What should you tell your lawyer? You should tell your lawyer everything you know about the crime. Your lawyer has to have information to defend you. Anything you say to your lawyer is **privileged** or private, information. The lawyer cannot tell anyone else what you say. Yet, your lawyer has to know the truth to be able to build a good case for you. The lawyer is working for you. You and your lawyer are a team not only before the trial, but also during the trial and sentencing and after the sentencing.



CRITICAL THINKING

Why would a lawyer represent a suspect whom she thought was guilty? Why is this necessary in order for the criminal justice system to work?

DID YOU KNOW? According to the federal Administrative Office of the United States Courts, African Americans have the highest overall percentage among minority groups on the federal bench. The higher percentage of Hispanics serve as district court judges. Individuals reported as having physical challenges serve as judicial officers at all levels.

Understanding Chapter 10

1. Why do you need a lawyer in a criminal case?
2. What can a lawyer do that you cannot do for yourself?
3. How can you finding a qualified lawyer?



Workbook

Self-Check p.22

Reality-Check p.23



TO LEARN MORE

The Peoples Guide to Government: Guides to the Judicial Branch, pp. 34-37