



## Criminal Court Process

- **Arraignment-** This is the initial hearing during which the charges are read aloud to the defendant. The defendant will then enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. The judge will address bond and any other conditions of bond (such as protection orders for victims, and any requirements of the defendant during the duration of the criminal case) at this hearing. **In juvenile court, this hearing is called a detention hearing.**
- **Preliminary Hearing-** A preliminary hearing applies to felony cases that are first charged in a municipal court. This is a probable cause hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence to present a case for review by the grand jury.
- **Pretrial Hearing-** A pretrial hearing refers to a meeting between the prosecution and defense. This hearing is used to exchange information, review facts of the case, and request evidence. The court typically sets trial and plea dates after pretrial hearings.
- **Trial-** At a trial, the prosecution will call witnesses to testify and will present evidence to prove its case. The defense also gets to cross-examine the state's witnesses and present its own witnesses and evidence. A judge or jury will make a finding of guilty or not guilty.
- **Plea-** A guilty plea means the defendant admits to committing an offense. A no - contest plea means the defendant agrees to the facts of the case and requires the judge to determine whether the agreed facts constitute a violation of the law.
- **Sentencing -** This hearing is where the court sentences the defendant. It can take place after a defendant has been found guilty at trial, or has been found guilty on a plea. **In juvenile court, this hearing is called a disposition hearing.**

**Victims of crime have the right to be informed, provide input, and be heard at every stage of the process.**