



Part 1

Basics of Ohio Criminal and Civil Law

Introduction

This segment of the *Legal Handbook for Ohio Journalists* provides a general overview of Ohio civil and criminal laws and the operations of the judicial branch of government.

It includes discussions of the various types and sources of law (constitutional, statutory, administrative and common law); a review of the federal, state and local court systems serving Ohioans; and step-by-step walkthroughs of the legal procedures followed in typical Ohio civil and criminal trials.

Sections IV through XII provide basic information on various substantive areas of state law including: torts, criminal law, business organization and contracts, workplace law, property law, education law, probate and family law. Section XIII discusses the role of lawyers and judges in the justice system, and the professional and ethical standards they must meet.

Surveys indicate that most citizens rely on the news and entertainment media as their most important source of information about the legal system and the operation of our courts. The OSBA's goal in providing this information to working journalists is to help reporters, editors, broadcast news executives and commentators who cover the courts and law-related stories do the best possible job of providing their audience with accurately worded, balanced, fact-based and up-to-date information.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO READERS: The following material is intended to provide readers with broad and general legal information in understandable, non-technical terms. It IS NOT intended or warranted to be a full or complete presentation of the legal topics addressed. Part One of this text has been excerpted from the current and 13th edition of *The Law & You*, which was updated in December 2006. It is important to understand that laws change and legal interpretations are constantly evolving as a result of court decisions, legislative action and administrative rulemaking. In any real-world legal situation, readers are strongly advised to independently verify the currency and accuracy of information in this publication, and to seek competent legal counsel.