

Agency Purpose

The Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission's mission is to promote the rational, proportionate, and consistent application of sentencing law to people convicted of felony offenses. With public safety as its first priority, the Commission develops, monitors, evaluates, and implements a variety of felony sentencing policies and practices.

The ongoing process of developing a consistent system for felony sentencing is very complex, and involves input from a variety of sources:

- ⇒ The governor and Minnesota legislature, who, through legislative changes, set both very broad and very specific sentencing policies.
- ⇒ Citizens, including crime victims, who serve on the commission and provide input from those who do not work within the criminal justice system.
- ⇒ The judiciary, who must implement the guidelines, and who are most directly involved in day-to-day sentencing decisions.
- ⇒ Law enforcement, who are aware of recent and future trends in both enforcement strategies and criminal conduct.
- ⇒ Corrections, which works with offenders and can provide assistance with measuring outcomes of the sentencing process.
- ⇒ Prosecutors and defense attorneys, who must navigate the system to provide just outcomes for their respective clients.

Core Functions

The Sentencing Guidelines Commission is responsible for setting sentencing guidelines for the district court. Those guidelines must be followed unless substantial and compelling circumstances exist.

The key strategies for carrying out these core functions:

- ◆ annual revision of published Sentencing Guidelines;
- ◆ collection of data on all felony sentences;
- ◆ support development of integrated statewide criminal justice information;
- ◆ advise practitioners on sentencing law;
- ◆ educate and inform public regarding sentencing policy;
- ◆ provide impact analysis to sentencing policy decision makers; and
- ◆ evaluate sentencing policy outcomes.

Operations

The Commission employs seven full-time employees who assemble the felony sentencing data and provide support for the Commission's decision-making process, along with providing assistance to people involved or interested in specific sentencing practices. The primary ways in which these services are delivered:

- ◆ collect, integrate, and maintain sentencing data for over 12,000 felony sentences per year;
- ◆ review and validate 17,491 electronic worksheets (EWS) in 2003;
- ◆ respond to 103 individual requests for sentencing data, prepare nine annual statistical reports on various sentencing issues and a specific report to the legislature on the Commission's activities and sentencing practices;

At A Glance

The Sentencing Guidelines Commission, a legislatively created body, is composed of a collection of criminal justice professionals, judges, and citizens interested in sentencing policy. The Commission developed the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, a set of rules that the courts must use in deciding sentences for felony offenders.

Since 1981, when the Guidelines went into effect, the number of felons sentenced each year in Minnesota has increased from 5,500 to 12,978, representing a 2,182 increase between 2001 and 2002 alone. Sentence lengths have increased dramatically during that time period, and the Sentencing Guidelines have become far more complex. The Commission strives to maintain a sentencing system that balances public safety concerns with consistent and proportional sentences.

- ◆ provide analysis to the Commission and to the 2004 legislature for 49 fiscal impacts covering a wide variety of proposed sentencing alternatives. This figure represents a significant increase from the 24 fiscal impacts completed in 2003;
- ◆ answer 3,747 telephone calls in 2003 dealing with questions regarding specific application of the Sentencing Guidelines, review and analyze specific sentencing practices and outcomes of those practices, including the Drug Offender Sentencing Issues Report to the legislature; and
- ◆ conduct nine trainings in 2003 for criminal justice practitioners on application of the Guidelines.

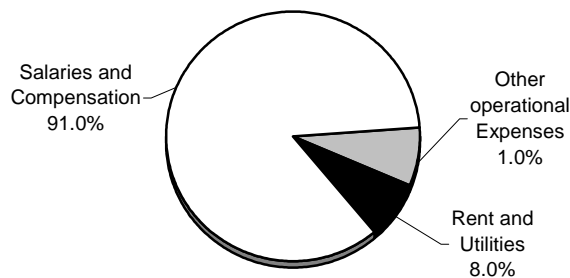
Key Measures

- ⇒ The Commission prepares and presents an Annual Report on Sentenced Offenders for the legislature at the beginning of each session.
- ⇒ All fiscal notes are delivered to legislative decision makers within time periods specified.
- ⇒ Specific legal and data questions from practitioners are answered prior to date requested.

Budget

The Commission is funded through a \$872,000 General Fund appropriation for the biennium. There are 7 FTEs.

Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission
(Total: \$872,000)



Contact

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Further information, including meeting dates and times, information on public hearings, e-mail address, and previously issued reports, may be found on the World-Wide Web at: <http://www.msgc.state.mn.us/>

Dollars in Thousands

	Current		Forecast Base		Biennium 2006-07
	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	
<u>Direct Appropriations by Fund</u>					
General					
Current Appropriation	436	436	436	436	872
Forecast Base	436	436	436	436	872
Change		0	0	0	0
% Biennial Change from 2004-05					0%
 <u>Expenditures by Fund</u>					
Direct Appropriations					
General	466	527	436	436	872
Statutory Appropriations					
Gift	4	3	0	0	0
Total	470	530	436	436	872
 <u>Expenditures by Category</u>					
Total Compensation	382	398	388	388	776
Other Operating Expenses	88	132	48	48	96
Total	470	530	436	436	872
 <u>Expenditures by Program</u>					
Mn Sentencing Guideline Com	470	530	436	436	872
Total	470	530	436	436	872
 <u>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</u>					
	6.6	5.8	5.8	5.8	