



Maryland Sentencing Guidelines Data Access and Dissemination

RIGHT OF ACCESS Maryland's Public Information Act (PIA), found in the General Provisions Article (GP), §§ 4-101 through 4-601, Annotated Code of Maryland, grants a broad right of access to public records while protecting legitimate governmental interests and the privacy rights of individual citizens. This includes access to sentencing guidelines data collected and maintained by the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy (MSCCSP). Under the PIA, the MSCCSP is required to fulfill all public requests for records unless an exception to the PIA applies to the information. The MSCCSP does not have an obligation to create records to satisfy a request, only to provide records that already exist. For example, the MSCCSP is not required to analyze data or create a custom report to satisfy a PIA request.

The MSCCSP routinely publishes reports summarizing the sentencing guidelines data on its website and offers a data download tool that allows the public to download the raw data directly from its website (see below).

MSCCSP REPORTS Individuals interested in summaries of the sentencing guidelines data are encouraged to view the MSCCSP's online [reports](#). These publications cover a wide range of sentencing topics, from judicial compliance with the guidelines to average sentence lengths for various offenses. Key reports include the *annual report* summarizing the MSCCSP's activities in the prior calendar year and guidelines compliance in the prior fiscal year, the *common offense report* summarizing sentencing guidelines compliance and average sentence for the five most common single count offenses in each crime category (person, drug, and property) in the prior fiscal year, and the *Sentencing Snapshot* which provides a quick overview of sentencing trends and other topics of interest.

Any request for information not available in an MSCCSP report is considered a custom report. Due to limited staff resources, the MSCCSP is unable to generate custom reports. However, as described below, the raw sentencing guidelines data are accessible from the MSCCSP website and may be utilized by individuals to conduct their own analyses for information requests that are not covered by the MSCCSP generated reports.

MSCCSP DATA DOWNLOAD Individuals interested in conducting analyses of the sentencing guidelines data are encouraged to download the raw data directly from the MSCCSP website using the data download tool. When downloading the sentencing guidelines data, please keep in mind the data considerations identified below.

FORMAT/STRUCTURE The data are provided via an Excel file (.xlsx). The data include both single and multiple offense sentencing events, with one row for each convicted offense. The field *GLSID* is a unique identifier which links offenses within the same sentencing event.

FIELDS The fields include *case-level* information (e.g., the sentence across all offenses in the sentencing event), as well as *offense-level* information (e.g., the sentence for the offense). All fields are described in the data [codebook](#). Variables marked with a double asterisk (**) are collected on the sentencing guidelines worksheet but are not included in the downloadable data for confidentiality reasons. Excluded are offender name and components of the offender score that would identify aspects of a juvenile record. Note also that while the worksheet includes a designated space for the sentencing judge's name and signature, that information is not recorded in the sentencing guidelines data.



QUESTIONS/REQUESTS Individuals with questions about the publicly available reports and data, as well as those with requests for information beyond what is provided on the MSCCSP website, should contact the MSCCSP's Research Director, Dr. Stacy Skroban Najaka at snajaka@umd.edu or 301-403-2709.

The MSCCSP will determine the feasibility of requests based on the amount of information requested, the time and resources needed to successfully complete the report, and the available staff resources. As noted above, the MSCCSP does not have an obligation to create records to satisfy a request, only to provide information available within its current system. If a request is denied, the MSCCSP will provide a written statement of the reasons for the denial, legal authority for the denial, and notice of its remedies for review of denial. If a request requires substantial staff time and resources, the person(s) or institution(s) requesting the information may be required to pay for the materials, processing, and, if more than two hours, staff time. The MSCCSP will fulfill requests no later than 30 days upon receipt unless an extension is granted. The MSCCSP will notify the requester in 10 days if the MSCCSP is the wrong agency for the request. In responding to requests for information, the MSCCSP reserves the right to establish priorities based on staff resources.