



REPORT OUTLINE/DRAFT Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences

Legislative report

Wilder Research

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As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$XX,XXX to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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Executive summary

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Background

In 2025, the Minnesota legislature ordered the creation of a task force to examine mandatory minimum sentencing (Minnesota Senate, 2025). Specifically, the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences was “established to collect and analyze data on the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons to mandatory minimum sentences; assess whether current laws and practices promote public safety and equity in sentencing; and make recommendations to the legislature.”

The Task Force will provide recommendations to the Minnesota legislature regarding:

1. Collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences that involve mandatory minimum sentences.
2. Collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person received a mitigated durational departure because the mandatory minimum sentence was seen as inappropriate by a judge or county attorney, or both.
3. Collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person likely would have received a mitigated durational departure but for the enforcement of a mandatory minimum sentence.
4. Collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences for codefendants of persons sentenced to a mandatory minimum sentence.
5. Review relevant state statutes and state and federal court decisions.
6. Receive input from persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence.
7. Receive input from family members of persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence.
8. Receive input from persons who were victims of crimes with a mandatory minimum sentence.
9. Receive input from family members of persons who were victims of crimes with a mandatory minimum sentence.
10. Analyze the benefits and unintended consequences of state statutes and practices related to the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons of crimes with mandatory minimum sentences, including but not limited to an analysis of whether current statutes and practices promote public safety and properly punish a person for that person’s role in an offense.
11. Make recommendations for legislative action, if any, on laws affecting the collection and reporting of data and the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons for crimes with mandatory minimum sentences.

The primary components of the work included:

- X Task Force meetings, in which members shared their experiences and observations, identified challenges, participated in presentations and discussions about specific topics, and developed recommendations.
- The creation of three subcommittees to support the work of the Task Force:

- Data: explore available secondary data regarding mandatory minimum sentences and the extent to which available data can answer various research questions
- Legal analysis: analyze Minnesota statutes and comparative state statutes and legal issues pertaining to mandatory minimum sentences
- Stakeholder input: contract with a vendor to conduct primary data collection with people affected by mandatory minimum sentences or professionals with extensive knowledge of mandatory minimum sentences
- [component]
- [component]

Figure 1 presents the Task Force members, the role they filled as required by the legislature, and the subcommittee each member belongs to:

This report summarizes the findings from these components.

1. Members of the Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences

Required role	Member	Subcommittee
Commissioner of Corrections (or designee)	Kelly Mitchell	Chair of the Stakeholder Input Subcommittee
Executive Director of MN Sentencing Guidelines Commission (or designee)	Nathaniel Reitz	Legal Analysis Subcommittee
State Public Defender (or designee)	John Donovan	Legal Analysis Subcommittee
Statewide Coordinator of the Violent Crime Coordinating Council (or designee)	Ken Sass	Legal Analysis Subcommittee Data Subcommittee
Defense Attorney (appointed by the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers)	Amber Johnson	Data Subcommittee
County Attorney from Hennepin or Ramsey County (appointed by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association)	Morgan Kunz	Stakeholder Input Subcommittee Data Subcommittee
County Attorney from Outside the Seven-County (appointed by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association)	Shane Baker	Legal Analysis Subcommittee
Peace Officer Familiar with Shooting Investigations (appointed by the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association)	Jeremiah Carlson	Data Subcommittee
Peace Officer Familiar with Shooting Investigations (appointed by the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association)	Nick Sassor	
Member Representing a Victims' Rights Organization (appointed by the Senate Majority Leader)	Ashley Sturz-Griffith	Stakeholder Input Subcommittee
Member of a Statewide Civil Rights Organization (appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives)		
Retired District Court Judge (appointed by the Chief Justice)	Dale Harris	Legal Analysis Subcommittee

Required role	Member	Subcommittee
Impacted person who is directly related to a person who has been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence or who has been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence and has completed the sentence (appointed by the Governor)	Robert Stewart	Chair of the Data Subcommittee Stakeholder Input Subcommittee
Person with academic expertise regarding the laws and practices of other states relating to mandatory minimum sentences (appointed by the Governor)	Mark Osler	Chair of the Legal Analysis Subcommittee

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Terminology

Due to the complex nature of this work, the following definitions provide context to the report.

Defendant: An individual who has been accused of committing a crime. Additionally, this may also refer to an individual when civil relief is sought against them.

Survivor: An individual who has experienced domestic abuse or otherwise has been victimized by another person. Some people prefer “survivor” instead of “victim” to convey a sense of empowerment, such that the individual survived despite significant harm or trauma.

Victim: An individual who has experienced domestic abuse or otherwise has been victimized by another person. This term includes individuals who were killed due to domestic violence. In legal proceedings, this term specifically refers to someone who has been subjected to a crime.

Mandatory Minimum Sentences

 Literature review

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Challenges, best practices, recommendations, and areas for future exploration

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References

Minnesota Senate. (2025). *S.F. 1719, 94th Legislature, 2025-2026 Regular Session.*
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/94/2025/0/SF/1719/versions/0/>

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Appendix

Task Force creation legislation

Sec. 26. TASK FORCE ON MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES.

Subdivision 1. Definition.

As used in this section, "mandatory minimum" refers to legislatively defined, predetermined sentencing requirements, including but not limited to sentencing requirements under Minnesota Statutes, sections 152.021, 152.022, and 609.11, that mandate a minimum period of commitment to the commissioner of corrections upon conviction for certain offenses.

Subd. 2. Establishment.

The Task Force on Mandatory Minimum Sentences is established to collect and analyze data on the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons to mandatory minimum sentences; assess whether current laws and practices promote public safety and equity in sentencing; and make recommendations to the legislature.

Subd. 3. Membership.

(a) The task force consists of the following members:

- (1) the commissioner of corrections, or a designee;
- (2) the executive director of the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission, or a
- (3) the state public defender, or a designee;
- (4) the statewide coordinator of the Violent Crime Coordinating Council, or a designee;
- (5) one defense attorney, appointed by the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers;
- (6) two county attorneys, one from Hennepin or Ramsey County and one from outside the seven-county metropolitan area, appointed by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association;
- (7) a peace officer familiar with shooting investigations, appointed jointly by the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association and the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association;
- (8) one member representing a victims' rights organization, appointed by the senate majority leader;
- (9) one member of a statewide civil rights organization, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

- (10) one impacted person who is directly related to a person who has been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence or who has themselves been convicted of a mandatory minimum sentence and has completed the sentence, appointed by the governor; and
- (11) one person with academic expertise regarding the laws and practices of other states relating to mandatory minimum sentences, appointed by the governor.

(b) Appointments must be made no later than July 30, 2025.

(c) Members shall serve without compensation.

(d) Members of the task force serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority or until the task force expires. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing authority consistent with the qualifications of the vacating member required by this subdivision.

Subd. 4. Officers; meetings.

(a) The task force shall elect a chair and vice-chair and may elect other officers as necessary.

(b) The commissioner of corrections shall convene the first meeting of the task force no later than August 1, 2025, and shall provide meeting space and administrative assistance as necessary for the task force to conduct its work.

(c) The task force shall meet at least monthly or upon the call of its chair. The task force shall meet sufficiently enough to accomplish the tasks identified in this section. Meetings of the task force are subject to Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D.

(d) To compile and analyze data, the task force shall request the cooperation and assistance of local law enforcement agencies, the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission, the judicial branch, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, county attorneys, and Tribal governments and may request the cooperation of academics and others with experience and expertise in researching the impact of mandatory minimum sentences.

Subd. 5. Duties

(a) The task force shall, at a minimum:

- (1) collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences that involve mandatory minimum sentences;
- (2) collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person received a mitigated durational departure because the mandatory minimum sentence was seen as inappropriate by a judge or county attorney, or both;

- (3) collect and analyze data on mandatory minimum sentences in which a person likely would have received a mitigated durational departure but for the enforcement of a mandatory minimum sentence;
- (4) collect and analyze data on charges, convictions, and sentences for codefendants of persons sentenced to a mandatory minimum sentence;
- (5) review relevant state statutes and state and federal court decisions;
- (6) receive input from persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence;
- (7) receive input from family members of persons who were convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum sentence;
- (8) analyze the benefits and unintended consequences of state statutes and practices related to the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons of crimes with mandatory minimum sentences, including but not limited to an analysis of whether current statutes and practices:
 - (i) promote public safety; and
 - (ii) properly punish a person for that person's role in an offense; and
- (9) make recommendations for legislative action, if any, on laws affecting:
 - (i) the collection and reporting of data; and
 - (ii) the charging, convicting, and sentencing of persons for crimes with mandatory minimum sentences.

(b) At its discretion, the task force may examine, as necessary, other related issues consistent with this section.

Subd. 6. Report.

On or before January 15, 2026, the task force shall submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over criminal sentencing on the findings and recommendations of the task force.

Subd. 7. Expiration.

The task force expires the day after submitting its report under subdivision 6