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Sentencing Guidelines Commission

Agency Profile 1

<http://mn.gov/sentencing-guidelines/>

AT A GLANCE

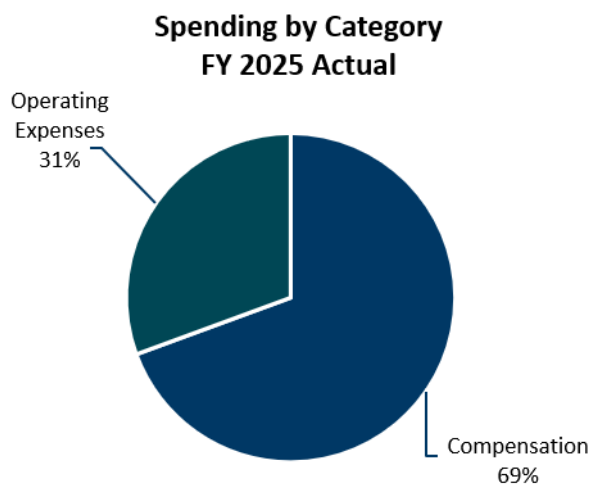
- 13 Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission (MSGC) members represent key criminal justice stakeholders and the public
- MSGC creates and improves sentencing guidelines
- Guidelines give judges uniform standards to apply when sentencing over 16,000 felony cases annually
- MSGC staff help criminal justice professionals in all 87 counties correctly use the guidelines
- MSGC staff publish reports and conduct research on felony sentencing for the commission, legislature, and the public

PURPOSE

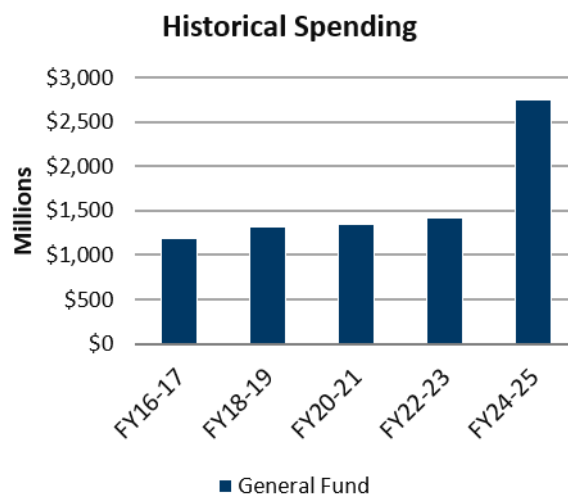
The MSGC exists to establish rational and consistent sentencing standards that:

- Promote public safety
- Reduce sentencing disparity
- Recommend felony sanctions that are proportional to the crime's severity and the offender's criminal history
- Support the appropriate use of finite correctional resources
- Support the statewide outcome that people in Minnesota are safe
- Support the statewide outcome of efficient and accountable government services

BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

The MSGC's activities are financed entirely through the general fund. Its payroll budget consists of one executive director, four research analysts, and one management analyst. Operating expenses include leased space, technology costs, education delivery costs, and office expenses.

STRATEGIES

The Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission utilizes the following strategies to accomplish its mission:

- The MSGC meets monthly to work on improving the sentencing guidelines.
- The MSGC makes recommendations to the legislature regarding changes to criminal law, criminal procedure, and other aspects of sentencing.
- MSGC staff create and maintain a comprehensive and accurate database on felony sentences.
- MSGC staff publish reports on sentencing practices and related criminal justice issues. These reports help policymakers, criminal justice officials, and the public evaluate felony sentencing policy and proposed legislation.
- A sentencing worksheet is required whenever a judge sentences a felony, and MSGC staff review every worksheet to ensure the accurate and consistent application of the sentencing guidelines.
- MSGC staff provide in-person and web-based educational opportunities to help practitioners understand and correctly apply sentencing guidelines policies.
- The MSGC and its staff respond to changes in case law, legislation, and issues raised by interested parties by making changes to the sentencing guidelines and the electronic worksheet system.
- Annually, MSGC staff work with the Department of Corrections to generate prison bed projections.
- MSGC members and staff serve on committees and task forces to further the goals of the criminal justice system.

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

Measure	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Monitoring sentencing data	Quantity	The monitoring system is designed to maintain data on felony sentences under the guidelines. A case is defined when a sentencing worksheet is received from a probation officer and matched with sentencing data from the district courts.	In 2022, MSGC staff collected and analyzed 16,259 felony cases, representing a 12.68 percent increase from 2021.	In 2024, MSGC staff collected and analyzed 14,229 felony cases sentenced in 2024. That is a 12.49 percent decrease from 2023.
Data requests	Quantity	Data reports are prepared by MSGC by researching and compiling statistical data in response to information requests.	In 2024, MSGC responded to 600 data requests.	In 2025, MSGC responded to 600 data requests.
Fiscal impact statement responses	Quality	MSGC staff assists the Legislative Budget Office in preparing fiscal impact statements that include long-term fiscal consideration for projected felony populations.	In 2024, MSGC prepared 45 fiscal impact statements with a 100 percent on-time response.	In 2025, MSGC prepared 105 fiscal impact statements with a 100 percent on-time response. This is a 133.3 percent increase over 2024.

Measure	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Application of sentencing guidelines in felony sentencing	Results	By collecting data from the district courts on the individual imposed sentences and comparing that to the worksheet submitted by probation, MSGC is able to determine the effectiveness of sentencing policies in comparison to departures imposed by the district courts from the presumptive disposition and duration indicated on the appropriate sentencing guidelines grid.	In 2022, 71 percent of cases sentenced were within the disposition and duration indicated on the appropriate sentencing guidelines grid. This is a 1.6 percent increase from 2021.	In 2024, 72 percent of cases sentenced were within the disposition and duration indicated on the appropriate sentencing guidelines grid. This is a 2.9 percent increase from 2023.

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

The MSGC is the state’s clearinghouse and information center for sentencing-practices data. These data are used by state, national, and international researchers to evaluate the impact of sentencing policies, and by the Commission to assess the Sentencing Guidelines’ compliance with their statutory purposes. However, the programs directly implemented by the Commission have not been evaluated using randomized control or quasi-experimental design.

M.S. 244.09 (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/244.09>) provides the legal authority for the MSGC.