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## SENTENCING GUIDELINES RESOURCE CENTER

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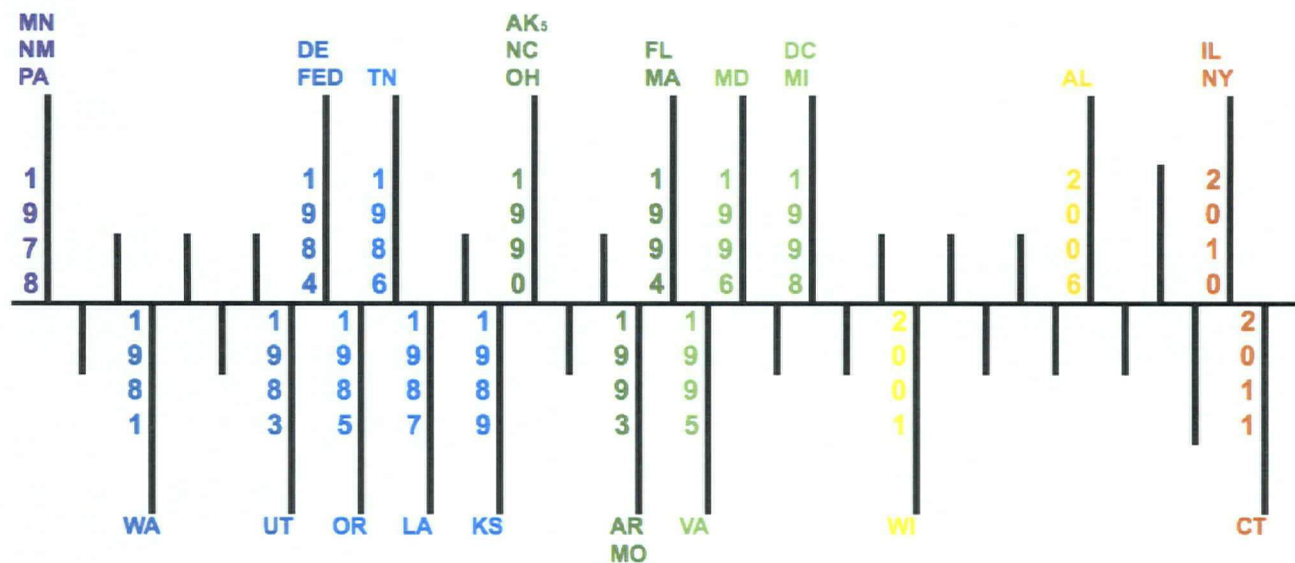
### MENU

# Timelines of Sentencing Commissions and Sentencing Guidelines Enactments: 1978 to the Present

## FORMATION OF SENTENCING COMMISSIONS, 1978-PRESENT

Starting in the late 1970's, state sentencing commissions have been founded to help regulate criminal punishment in their jurisdictions. Commissions are formed for a number of reasons, and have varying structures, responsibilities, and locations in their state government. Their duties may include formation and revision of sentencing guidelines, analyzing current and future sentencing practices, policies, or laws, proposing new sentencing policies, and/or serving as an informational resource for the jurisdiction. See [The Role of the Sentencing Commission](#) (<http://sentencing.umn.edu/content/role-sentencing-commissions>) for more information. Some commissions listed on the timeline below are now defunct, others are still very active in defining sentencing practices.

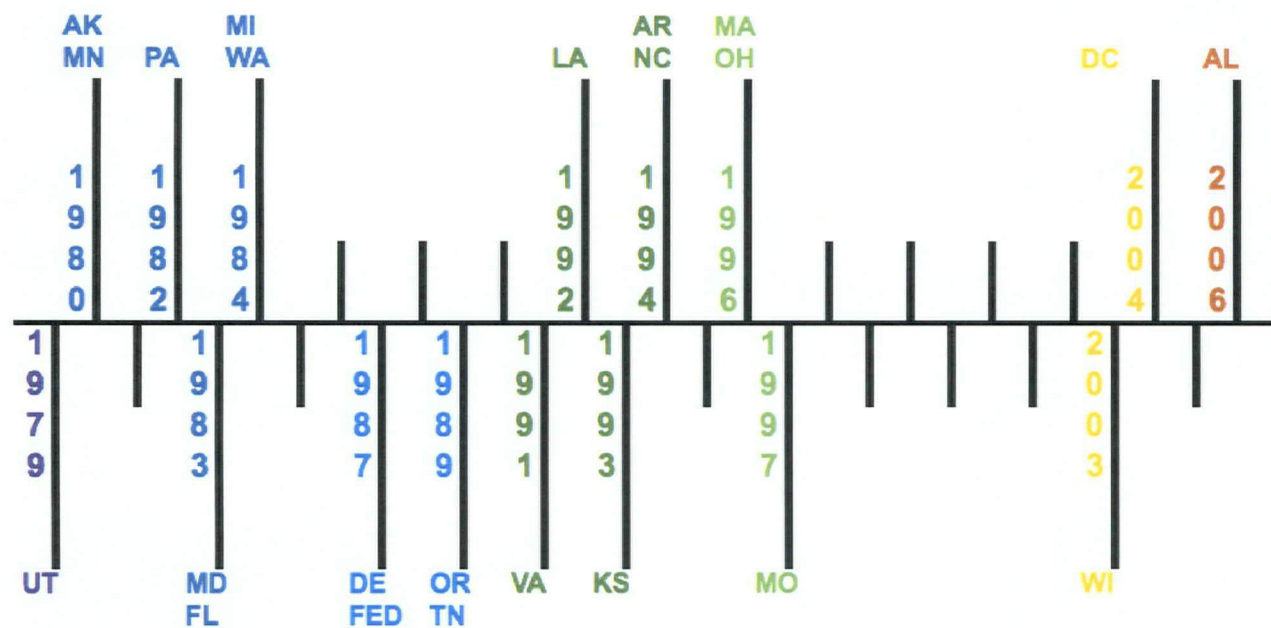
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## SENTENCING GUIDELINES ENACTED, 1979-PRESENT

Some (but not all) commissions were given the role of writing sentencing guidelines. Guidelines are utilized to help judges make well-reasoned and consistent decisions, to increase proportionality, to institute uniformity, to set priorities in prison use and avoid overcrowding, and/or to better ensure public safety. Many guidelines reforms have been paired with a shift from indeterminate sentencing (in which parole boards are given full discretion over when an offender is released from prison) to a system in which prisoners must serve the pronounced more defined term, with reductions only for good conduct. Sentencing guidelines generally use combinations of offense and offender characteristics to derive recommended sentences for typical cases, while allowing for “departures” from the guidelines in special circumstances that warrant either harsher or more lenient sentencing. See [What are Sentencing Guidelines \(http://sentencing.umn.edu/content/what-are-sentencing-guidelines\)](http://sentencing.umn.edu/content/what-are-sentencing-guidelines) to learn more.

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## NOTES

- Alabama implemented advisory guidelines for felonies in 2006 and presumptive (legally-binding) guidelines for non-violent drug and certain property felonies in 2013. Alabama is the first jurisdiction to implement even partially presumptive Guidelines since the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Blakely v. Washington*, 542 U.S. 296 (2004).
- Alaska's original Sentencing Commission was active between 1990 and 1993. In 2014, the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission was established with a three-year mandate that includes analyzing sentencing laws and practices.
- Florida's Sentencing Commission is defunct, but was active between 1994 and 1998.
- Louisiana sentencing guidelines were in place from 1992-1995 and are now defunct.
- Massachusetts guidelines have not been formally adopted.
- Michigan's Sentencing Guidelines Commission was active between 1998 and 2002. In 2015 Michigan Justice Policy Commission was created to fill a similar role.
- Missouri amended the statute that defines the functions of the Sentencing Advisory Commission in 2012 to remove the requirement to establish and publish a system of recommended sentences. The commission annually publishes the dispositions and averages sentence data as a guide for the courts.
- New Mexico's Sentencing Commission has existed in its current format since 2003.
- Oregon's Criminal Justice Council was active between 1985 and 1987. In 1995, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission was formed.
- Tennessee's Sentencing Commission is defunct, but was active between 1986 and 1995.



- Utah's Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) acted as Utah's sentencing authority from 1983-1993, the current Utah Sentencing Commission (which is a subpart of the CCJJ) was formed in 1993. Utah's 1979 guidelines were drafted by the Department of Corrections, Utah Courts, and the Board of Pardons and Paroles; commission-drafted guidelines were adopted in 1985.
- Wisconsin's Sentencing Commission was first active between 1984 and 1995. It was reestablished in 2001 and was active until 2007, but is now defunct. Wisconsin adopted previous guidelines from 1985-1995. Wisconsin's 2003 guidelines were utilized until 2007 and are now defunct.

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