

--These minutes were amended by vote during the Commission's September 16, 2026, meeting--



District of Columbia Sentencing Commission

441 4th St NW Suite 430 South, Washington, DC 20001
Telephone (202) 727-8822 | Fax (202) 727-7929

June 16, 2026

Hybrid Meeting Held at 441 4th St. NW, Suite 430S, Washington, DC and via Zoom

Voting Members in Attendance:

Hon. Danya Dayson
Cedric Hendricks
Frederick Cooke, Jr.

Hon. Rainey Brandt
Raymond Hulser
Katerina Semyonova

Hon. Todd Edelman
Kathleen Houck
Nazgol Ghandnoosh

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Cristina Hillyer
for Elisa Mason

Anaiah Mitchell
for Brooke Pinto

Staff in Attendance:

Linden Fry
Emily Blume
Mia Hebb

Taylor Tarnalicki
Maeghan Buckley

Patrick Sheehan
Brittany Bunch

Monthly Meeting Introduction – Judge Danya Dayson (Chairwoman).

Judge Dayson called the June monthly meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A roll call was completed, and a quorum was established.

1. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the May 19, 2026, Commission Meeting – Action Item, Judge Danya Dayson.

Members reviewed the draft minutes from the May Commission meeting. A roll call vote was taken, resulting in approval of the minutes (eight votes in favor, one abstention, and zero opposed).

2. Director's Report – Information Item, Linden Fry (Executive Director).

a. GRID System Update

Staff are finalizing a contract for short-term stability improvements to help keep the GRID system running while the Commission begins the years-long process of replacing or upgrading the system. The initial phase of the contract is scheduled for completion by September 1, 2026. Staff have also begun developing contracting documents for a needs assessment, which is expected to be put out for bid in FY 2027, contingent upon available funding.

b. Budget Update

The FY 2027 proposed budget is currently pending before the Council. The mayor's proposed budget for the Commission is \$1,740,000, representing a 4.5% reduction from the previous fiscal year.

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The Commission's mid-year reprogramming request has been approved, allowing the Commission to allocate the savings from the vacant Legal Analyst position and reduced server assessment costs from OCTO to support stabilization of the GRID system in preparation for a future overhaul or replacement. Remaining funds will also support sending a delegation of Commission staff to the National Association of Sentencing Commissions (NASC) conference in mid-August, upgrades to internal computers and technology, and increased printing costs.

c. Status of New Commission Member Nominations

On May 6, 2026, the Mayor nominated Reverend Terrence McKinley and James Berry Jr. to fill the vacant citizen seats on the Commission. These nominations were referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

d. Legal Analyst Position Recruitment

The Legal Analyst position is expected to be posted by the end of the month. The position may be filled by either a junior attorney or an experienced non-attorney. Once the position is posted, a copy of the posting will be provided to all Commission members.

Mr. Fry also mentioned that the Guidelines Implementation Committee (GIC) should expect to receive an email regarding new updates to the 2027 Guidelines Manual, which will take effect on January 1, 2027. Any Commission member interested in joining or participating in the GIC's work should reach out to Maeghan Buckley.

3. Comparing Felony Domestic Violence and Non-Domestic Violence Case Lifecycle and Sentencing Trends –Information and Discussion Item, Patrick Sheehan (Statistician).

Patrick Sheehan presented findings from a recent data request examining Domestic Violence (DV) arrest and sentencing trends. The goal of the analysis was to compare outcomes in DV and non-DV arrests and cases and to better understand how Strangulation cases are ultimately resolved. The timeframe for the analysis was January 1, 2022, to May 21, 2026.

This response focused on addressing the following research questions:

- What is the arrest-to-sentencing lifecycle of DV arrests, and how do their papering and conviction rates compare to non-DV arrests?
- How do overall sentencing trends compare between DV and non-DV cases?
- How do the sentences imposed in cases in which felony Strangulation charges were filed (not necessarily convicted) compare between DV and non-DV cases?

The analysis found that DV and non-DV arrests made since 2022 had similar papering rates; however, DV arrests resulted in convictions less frequently than non-DV arrests. Additionally, the number of DV cases sentenced has increased at a more consistent rate than non-DV cases during this period. The analysis also found that DV and non-DV cases received similar sentences. Finally, slightly more than half (53%, n=68) of the 128 cases in which a Strangulation charge was filed resulted in a Strangulation conviction.

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After the presentation, Mr. Sheehan opened the floor for questions and discussion. Judge Dayson asked how the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) determines whether an incident is classified as DV and how those classifications compare to Court data. Specifically, she asked whether MPD designates all interfamily arrests as DV incidents or whether the designation is limited to intimate partner violence. Commission Member Kathleen Houck clarified that MPD data does not distinguish between intimate partner violence and other forms of intrafamily violence, so the MPD data should be generally consistent with the Court data.

Ms. Houck then asked whether there was a substantial number of FD1 cases present in the data. Commission staff agreed to follow up with Ms. Houck and provide the number of FD1 cases.

Commission Member Nazgol Ghandnoosh asked whether the lower conviction rate observed in DV cases compared with non-DV cases should be interpreted positively or negatively. She also asked whether the data could be used to examine recidivism outcomes for individuals whose arrests were papered versus those whose arrests were not papered. Mr. Sheehan explained that the Commission's ability to conduct recidivism analyses is limited. Research Director Taylor Tarnalicki added that, similar to the criminal history simulation previously presented to the Commission, the Commission could look at the most severe count for individuals sentenced in multiple felony cases and then analyze the case types that were used in the analysis to determine if there is a pattern of DV or non-DV cases in someone's criminal history. However, the data available to the Commission would not make it possible to do a full recidivism analysis. Judge Dayson also noted that the Court retains very little information on arrests that are not papered beyond the fact that they were not sent to Court for prosecution. Because those arrests are never assigned a case number, they are particularly difficult to track and analyze.

4. How the Sentencing Commission Has Ranked Offenses: A Historical Refresher – Information and Discussion Item, Maeghan Buckley (General Counsel) and Linden Fry.

Maeghan Buckley and Linden Fry presented a walkthrough of how the Commission has historically ranked offenses. Mr. Fry began with a review of the original offense-ranking process used when the Guidelines were developed. The Commission relied on historical sentencing patterns to promote consistency by recommending sentences that reflected the middle 50% of sentences historically imposed for a particular offense, thereby reducing extreme sentences on either end of the spectrum. He noted that most offense rankings completed since then have involved new or amended offenses for which historical sentencing data are unavailable, requiring a different ranking process.

Mr. Fry explained the Commission's current offense-ranking process for new or amended offenses. Commission staff research offenses created or modified by the Council, after which the Guidelines Implementation Committee (GIC) reviews the offense and recommends one or more offense severity rankings. The recommendations are then presented to the full Commission for discussion and a vote. He noted that, while the Commission previously waited until offenses appeared in sentencing data before evaluating rankings, it now proactively tracks legislation and begins researching potential offense rankings after Council approval but before new laws take effect.

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Ms. Buckley then discussed the factors the Commission has previously considered when ranking offenses. These considerations include:

- The statutory penalty or penalties for each offense;
- The default ranking of each offense;
- The scope and severity of the criminalized conduct;
- The potential harm to the victim(s) and society;
- The ranking of comparable offenses (considering factors such as conduct and penalty)
- If the offense is classified as a Crime of Violence or Dangerous Crime under D.C. Code § 22-1331; and
- Any limitations based on the maximum initial sentence and/or an applicable mandatory minimum sentence.

Following the presentation, Mr. Fry and Ms. Buckley opened the floor for questions. Commission member Kathleen Houck asked whether the Commission ever revisits its rankings of offenses absent legislative changes. Mr. Fry explained that, while uncommon, the Commission has re-ranked offenses without legislative changes. She also asked whether input from individuals outside the GIC is considered during the ranking process. Mr. Fry responded that outside input has generally not been sought beyond GIC members, though the research conducted varies depending on the offense being considered. Ms. Houck also asked whether the Commission seeks to avoid situations where an attempted Crime of Violence is assigned a higher Offense Severity Group (OSG) than the completed offense. Mr. Fry stated that he was not aware of any attempted offenses ranked higher than the completed offense, although a limited number share the same OSG. He noted that statutory penalties and other relevant factors are considered when making those determinations. Judge Dayson added that this type of discussion is representative of the work conducted during GIC meetings.

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 15, 2026

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Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:
September 15, 2026
Via Zoom

To view the video recording of the full discussion, visit <https://scdc.dc.gov/page/commission-meetings>.