

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHEN DOES SENTENCING OCCUR IN A FELONY CASE?

AFTER A FINDING OF GUILT FOLLOWING A GUILTY PLEA OR TRIAL VERDICT.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION'S ROLE IN SENTENCING?

THE COMMISSION WROTE AND CONTINUALLY UPDATES THE D.C. VOLUNTARY SENTENCING GUIDELINES. THE GUIDELINES PROVIDE JUDGES WITH A RECOMMENDED SENTENCE TYPE (E.G. PRISON, PROBATION, SPLIT SENTENCE) AND SENTENCING RANGE. THE RECOMMENDED SENTENCE IS PRIMARILY BASED ON THE SEVERITY OF THE OFFENSE OF CONVICTION AND THE DEFENDANT'S PRIOR CRIMINAL HISTORY SCORE. THE COMMISSION ALSO ASSISTS ATTORNEYS, PRESENTENCE REPORT WRITERS, COURT STAFF AND JUDGES IN APPLYING THE GUIDELINES IN SPECIFIC CASES OR FACTUAL SITUATIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE COMMISSION IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPOSING A SPECIFIC SENTENCE. THAT RESPONSIBILITY IS LEFT SOLELY TO THE SENTENCING JUDGE. ANY ADVICE GIVEN BY THE COMMISSION IS NOT BINDING ON THE COURT.

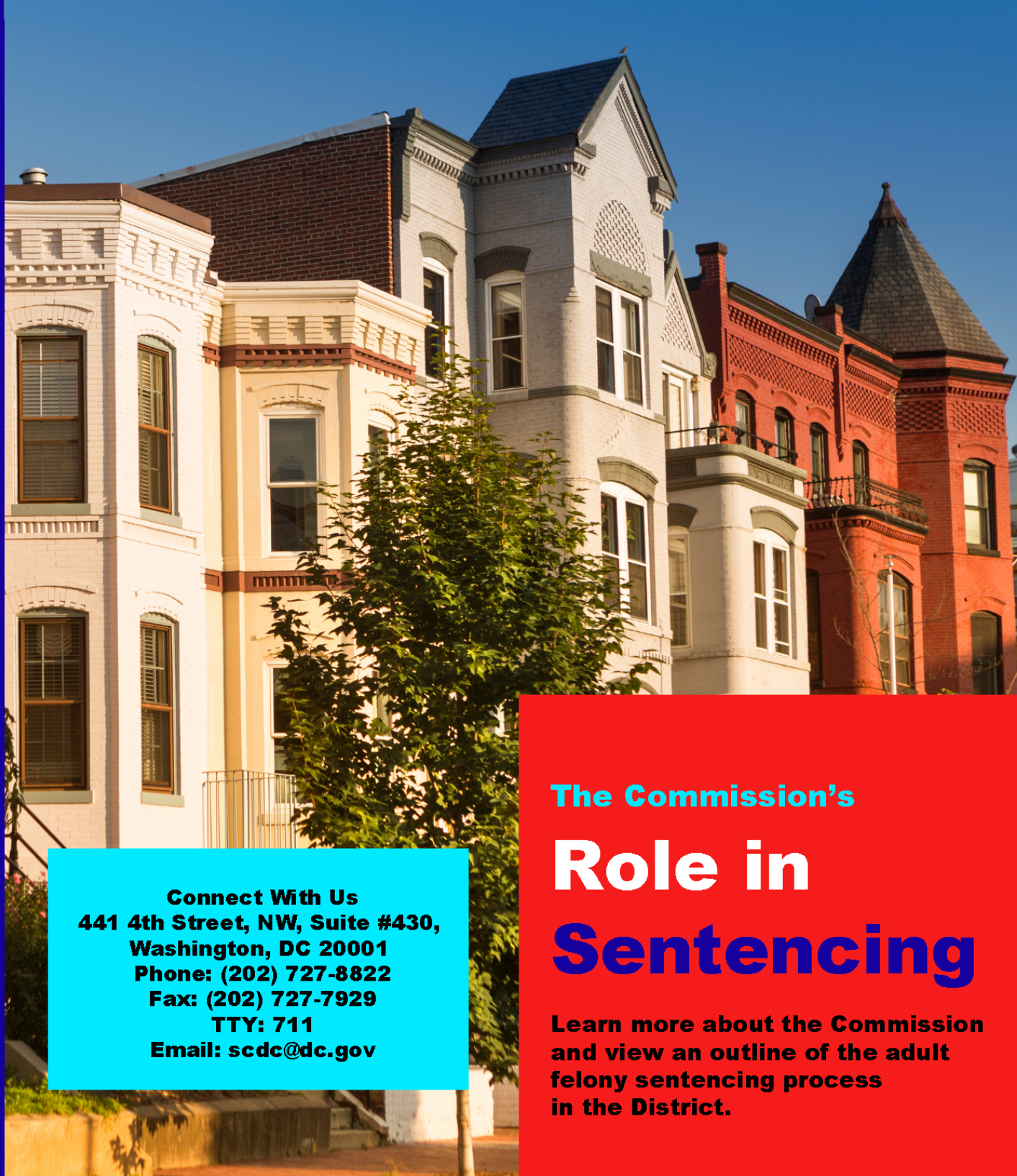
IN ADDITION, THE COMMISSION COLLECTS DATA ON THE SENTENCES TO REVIEW JUDICIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES, MONITOR SENTENCING TRENDS, AND TO DETERMINE IF IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE GUIDELINES.

ARE THE GUIDELINES MANDATORY?

NO, THE D.C. SENTENCING GUIDELINES ARE COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. JUDGES ARE ONLY OBLIGATED TO IMPOSE A LEGAL SENTENCE, THEY ARE NOT REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES. HOWEVER, LAST YEAR 97.3% OF ALL ADULT FELONY SENTENCES IMPOSED BY D.C. SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES COMPLIED WITH GUIDELINES.

HOW DOES THE COMMISSION MONITOR SENTENCES?

THE COMMISSION MONITORS FELONY SENTENCING TRENDS THROUGH ITS DATA SYSTEM GUIDELINES REPORTING INFORMATION DATA (GRID) SYSTEM. GRID HAS THE CAPABILITIES TO TRACK A DEFENDANT, ARREST, OR CASE OUTCOME THROUGH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.



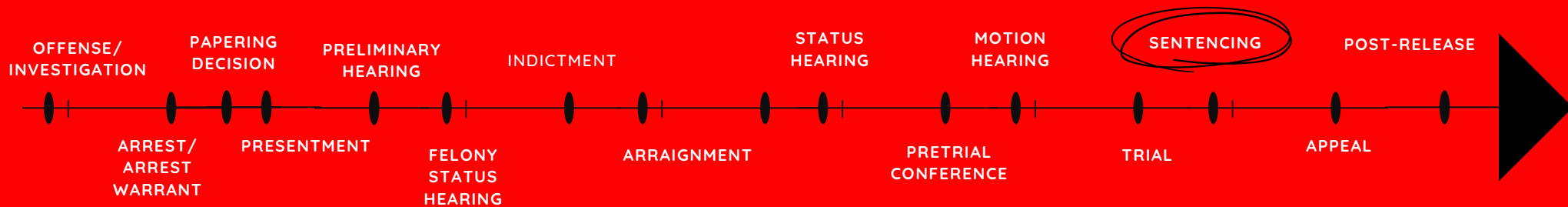
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The Commission's **Role in** **Sentencing**

Learn more about the Commission and view an outline of the adult felony sentencing process in the District.



D.C. CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS



THIS IS A OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS.
EVERY CASE IS DIFFERENT AND MAY FOLLOW A DIFFERENT ROUTE.