

# THE COMMISSION CHRONICLE



## INSIDE THE FALL ISSUE:

*MPD  
ENHANCEMENT  
PROJECT*

*HOT TOPIC: TITLE 16*

*RECENT  
PUBLICATIONS*

*MEET THE MEMBER:*

*DID YOU KNOW...*

## MPD ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

**The moment we've all been waiting for...the MPD Enhancement Project is complete!**

In November 2019 the Commission celebrated the launch of the MPD Data Enhancement Project. Since kickoff, Commission staff have collaborated with Mindcubed, a local IT Software and Services Company, and Gerry Roth, an experienced Project Manager, to bring the Commission's vision to life; that vision being a comprehensive data system which allows the user to track the complete criminal justice lifecycle of a case, from arrest through final disposition and sentencing.

Previously the Commission's data system, better known as GRID, only consumed sentencing and criminal history data. While this data holds extreme value to the Commission and its research [<https://scdc.dc.gov/node/1479516>], there are several research and policy questions that cannot be answered using sentencing data alone. For example, how often a person is arrested and sentenced for different offenses, and what factors may be contributing to this discrepancy? Or, what is the frequency of arrests for violent offenses among individuals who have a prior violent felony conviction? The inclusion of arrest data, sourced from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), has expanded the Commission's current research capabilities and will aid in answering some of these more complex questions.

Additionally, this system enhancement has also increased the Commission's ability to report accurately on sentencing trends, and assess the effectiveness of the Voluntary Sentencing Guidelines. The Commission is looking forward to utilizing this data in future discussions and to make more informed sentencing policy decisions. The Commission would like to extend a special thank you to both the D.C. Council and MPD with their assistance and support of this project.

If you are a criminal justice practitioner, researcher, academic, or citizen interested in submitting a data request please submit a completed data request form to [scdc@dc.gov](mailto:scdc@dc.gov). Data request forms can be found on the Commission's website: <https://scdc.dc.gov/node/1109316>



## HOT TOPIC: TITLE 16

### *COMMISSION FOCUS: JUVENILES IN ADULT COURT*

Title 16 is a special sentencing provision that permits juveniles (those aged 15, 16, or 17 at the time of the offense) to be tried and sentenced as an adult in D.C. Superior Court if they are charged with one of five serious felony offenses, such as rape or murder. The Commission has spent the last year analyzing the impact of the Guidelines on Title 16 sentences to determine if there is a need to modify the Guidelines recommended sentence for this unique group of individuals. Research has shown that Title 16 sentences, on average, represent approximately 3.5% of offenders sentenced each year.

**Research has shown that Title 16 sentences, on average, represent approximately 3.5% of offenders sentenced each year.**

However, this small population is often sentenced similarly to Youthful (ages 18-24) and Adult (ages 25+) offenders with similar criminal histories who are convicted of the same offenses; for some offenses, such as carjacking and voluntary manslaughter, the average sentence to serve is actually longest amongst Title 16. Over the last year Commission members examined trends among Title 16 sentences that were imposed between January 2013 and July 31, 2020, and identified a few factors that may be contributing to this discrepancy in sentencing, which includes:

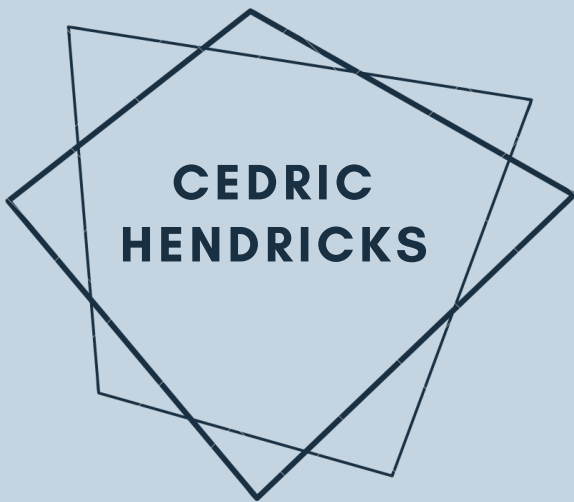
- Higher rate of 11(c)(1)(C) pleas among Title 16 convictions, which have resulted in more severe sentences than traditional pleas; and
- Juveniles are initially charged with a more serious offense than the offense of conviction

The Commission acknowledges that any findings are based on a limited number of Title 16 convictions which not only makes it difficult to generalize the findings, but also to reach any meaningful conclusions.

However, this research combined with widely accepted existing research regarding developmental differences between juveniles and adults has opened the door for a conversation about creating special rules/caveats to use when sentencing Juveniles.

At the close of the year-long Title 16 discussion, the Public Defender Service (PDS) will be delivering a proposal that outlines three potential Guidelines policy changes to consider when sentencing under Title 16. Updates and information related to this discussion can be found on the Commission's website in the Commission Meeting section. [<https://scdc.dc.gov/page/commission-meetings>].

# Meet the Member



## **How many years have you served on the Commission?**

I believe that it is close to 20 years. I started work at CSOSA in January 2001. My service began sometime thereafter during the term of our first agency Director, Paul Quander, who I believe came onboard in 2002. The oldest Commission related email I could easily locate was sent to me in May 2006, addressing an Annual Report issue.

## **What led to your decision to pursue a career with CSOSA?**

I was recruited from a position with the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on the Hill to join CSOSA to serve as the Special Assistant to our then Interim Director Jasper Ormond. A few months later, I moved into the position of Associate Director in charge of the Office of Legislative, Intergovernmental and Public Affairs. I continue to hold this position today.

## **What is your favorite memory from your time with the Commission?**

Working with Judge Weisburg, who I had previously gotten to know when he and Eric Holder co-chaired a commission looking into the changes needed in DC sentencing laws and procedures as the result of the passage of the DC Revitalization Act.

## **If you could wave a magic wand, what change (if any) would you like to see in the criminal justice community?**

More local control

## **What do you like to do in your free time?**

Listen to jazz music

# RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Up to date on the latest Commission Publications? If not, check them out here!

## FAST FACTS

The Sentencing Commission recently completed a four-part Fast Facts series on Robbery offenses. This collection of Fast Facts provides an overview of sentencing trends for each classification of robbery: attempted robbery, robbery, and armed robbery. The series concludes with a high level overview of sentencing and offenders trends for all three types of robbery offenses combined. Read all four Fast Facts here:

<https://scdc.dc.gov/node/1487916>

## ISSUE PAPER

Learn about the impact of misdemeanor convictions on the calculation of a criminal history score in the Commission's most recent issue paper. This issue paper focuses on explaining when prior misdemeanor convictions count in criminal history and the impact that they can have on sentencing under the Guidelines. Check it out here:

<https://scdc.dc.gov/release/impact-misdemeanor-convictions-criminal-history-scores>

# Did you know...



*An overwhelming majority (98%) of all robberies sentenced between 2015 and 2019 received the Guidelines recommended sentence. This is consistent with the overall Guidelines compliance rate.*



*In 2019, Females were most frequently sentenced for Violent offenses, followed by Drug offenses. Violent offenses represented 41% of all female cases, while Drug offenses represented 23% of all female cases.*



*Historical data indicates that the proportion of younger offenders sentenced has been gradually increasing since 2010, specifically those aged between 22 and 30 at the time of the offense. This age category peaked in 2019, representing approximately 40% of all offenders sentenced.*