

EVIDENCE-BASED SENTENCING TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY & REDUCE RECIDIVISM

A Model Curriculum for Judges

v. 2018

Introduction to the Curriculum

The National Center for State Courts' (NCSC) Evidence-Based Sentencing (EBS) curriculum was first developed as a model judicial education curriculum on EBS in partnership with the National Judicial College (NJC) and the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) with financial support from the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States (PEW) and the State Justice Institute (SJI). With financial support from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), it was later revised and updated as a "Smarter Sentencing" curriculum. In 2017-2018, with financial support from PEW and NCSC, and with the assistance of the NCSC's EBS Judicial Peer Group, an informal group of judges and other criminal justice practitioners active in local sentencing reform activities, it has again been revised and updated. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of PEW, BJA, or SJI.

In its complete form, the curriculum is based on a 100-slide PowerPoint presentation designed to support education programs for judges and other criminal justice system stakeholders of up to 2 ½ days. The slide presentation is accompanied by extensive notes pages that provide background and more detailed information about the contents of each slide along with references to supporting research and publications.

The curriculum is designed for a judicial audience or teams of criminal justice stakeholders (e.g., including a judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, probation supervisor, and treatment provider from local jurisdictions), and includes time for robust discussion and implementation planning activities. Frequently, local judges or probation leaders also serve as presenters or facilitators. Time is also included for plenary discussion of related evidence-based community corrections practices (EBP) and implementation

Center for Sentencing Initiatives



The Center for Sentencing Initiatives (CSI) promotes sentencing practices that protect the public and reduce recidivism.

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activities in the sponsoring state. As much as a full day can be devoted to these team and statewide EBS and related EBP implementation discussions and activities.

The curriculum also provides up to 2 hours of time for scenario-based learning exercises. These exercises are designed to provide individual participants or teams with an opportunity to apply the material presented to relevant hypothetical sentencing and probation violation scenarios. Typically, 3-4 sentencing and violation response scenarios are developed in advance of the educational session in consultation with sponsor representatives. To evaluate program effectiveness, pre- and post-program self-assessments of participants' understanding of EBS are also included.

Program duration and the slide deck itself can be significantly shortened to accommodate required time constraints. Elimination of the interactive activities described above and the slides associated with those activities, along with slides and discussion associated with summarizing course objectives and previous slides, and reviewing the broader social and economic benefits of EBS, can reduce the program to 5 hours or less, including two breaks.

Depending on time constraints, the education session can be further reduced to 25-40 slides and to as little as one hour in duration by eliminating detailed discussion of use of RNA information at sentencing in jurisdictions that do not currently provide for such use, targeting the presentation to the specific priorities of the audience, using 3-6 key slides from the Introduction Section, and from Sections 2 (Risk), 3 (Needs), 4 (Risk Needs Assessment), 6 (General Responsivity), 7 (Specific Responsivity), and 9 (Responses to Violations), and limiting opportunities for audience participation and discussion.

For more information about Evidence-Based Sentencing,
visit the NCSC's Center for Sentencing Initiatives website at www.ncsc.org/csi.

*This document was prepared by Honorable Roger K. Warren (ret.).
Have a question or comment? Contact Jennifer Elek at jelek@ncsc.org.*