



National Association of Sentencing Commissions

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NASC Heads North – Save the Date

The 2015 National Association of Sentencing Commissions Conference will be held August 16 to 18, 2015 at the Alyeska Resort in Girdwood (about 45 miles from Anchorage). Additional information about the conference and registration will be posted on the [NASC web site](#) in the coming months.

Revisit the 2014 NASC Conference

The 2014 NASC Conference was held at Yale Law in New Haven, CT. If you were unable to attend and want to see what you missed or if you attended and want to watch certain sessions, you can! Recordings from the [2014 Conference](#) are available on-line (click on the link).

Massachusetts Sentencing Commission

New Massachusetts Sentencing Commission members were appointed by Governor Deval Patrick in 2014. The newly re-invigorated commission will be chaired by Superior Court Judge John Lu. The commission is comprised of judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and representatives from criminal justice, public safety, and victim agencies. In order to ensure that Massachusetts has a state-of-the-art sentencing system, the commission will use data to bring a critical data-based lens to the Commonwealth's sentencing practices, make Legislative recommendations and become a useful reference for the Judiciary. To accomplish the work set forth in its enabling legislation – M.G.L. Ch. 211E – the Commission will consult with national scholars, gather data on current sentencing practices, and research best practices across a range of sentencing options. The commission plans to reach out to sentencing commissions in other states for information on current practices and trends.

Massachusetts continues to introduce evidence-based practices into the

Alaska Criminal Justice Commission

The Alaska Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) was established on July 1, 2014 as part of an omnibus crime bill that created several “smart justice” programs, including probation monitoring reforms, a pretrial monitoring program, and a grant for community-based recidivism reduction programs. The commission has a three-year term and is staffed by the Alaska Judicial Council, although it is created within the office of the governor.

Role. The ACJS's statutory responsibilities include analyzing sentencing laws and practices, classification of crimes, and a wide variety of criminal justice practices and procedures. The commission may make recommendations to the governor, and periodically must report its conclusions and recommendations to the legislature.

Membership. The thirteen members represent a broad range of

sentencing system, providing more sentencing options for judges in all cases. Massachusetts currently has two randomized-control trials of the Project HOPE/MORR model in process. The first project in Salem is federally funded and the second project in Worcester is state funded. The number and types of specialty courts continues to grow. All criminal justice agencies use state-of-the-art risk assessment instruments to guide placement into various programs.

Massachusetts Sentencing Commission staff collaborated in the implementation of the Massachusetts Results First Initiative (MRFI), a cost-benefit model first developed in Washington State. As part of this project, the Commission's annual *Survey of Sentencing Practices* was used to model system resource use and the Commission conducted a seven-year recidivism study on offenders with probation supervision, parole supervision, and incarceration sentences. The system-wide research team is now working on completing an inventory of programs throughout the criminal justice system and expanding the model to the juvenile system. More information about this project is available at:

perspectives, including judges, law enforcement, corrections, prosecutors, victims, defense counsel, Alaska Native and rural, and behavioral health. Two legislators serve as non-voting members.

Progress to Date. Over the past six months, the commission organized itself and identified key topics for initial attention. Perhaps the most pressing issue is Alaska's growing prison population, which is projected to need a costly new correctional facility within the next one to three years. To that end, the commission is studying sentencing alternatives, bail and probation laws and practices, sentence lengths, and barriers to re-entry that contribute to recidivism. Because Alaska has a significant rural population and a disproportionate number of incarcerated Alaska Natives, the commission also is focusing quite strongly on practices and procedures in rural areas, and ideas for involving Alaska Native tribes in recidivism reduction efforts.

Challenges and Opportunities.

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mrfi/>.

More information about the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission can be found at our web-site: <http://www.mass.gov/courts/court-info/trial-court/sent-commission/>

Although the legislature thoughtfully provided the commission with staffing resources, supporting such a broad mandate has proven challenging in practice. Additionally, limitations on data collection and analysis capacity within key state agencies such as corrections and courts have hampered commissioners' ability to understand drivers of prison population and get information necessary to their deliberations. On the other hand, commissioners are highly energized and motivated in their work. In fact, the commission recently considered its first legislative recommendation (regarding food stamp eligibility for drug felons), and it has several more proposals in the pipeline.

The mission of the National Association of Sentencing Commissions is to facilitate the exchange and sharing of information, ideas, data, expertise, and experiences and to educate individuals on issues related to sentencing policies, sentencing guidelines, and sentencing commissions.