

Washington State Criminal Sentencing Task Force

Groundrules

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Members

Task Force members have the following responsibilities:

- a) **No Surprises:** Members agree to keep all fellow members apprised of relevant information for the duration of the Task Force. Relevant information may include but is not limited to:
 - i. Discussions and meetings with citizens, agencies, and elected officials.
 - ii. Changes in personnel or other circumstances that may affect the Task Force.
 - iii. Anticipated legislative proposals relevant to the work of the Task Force or that may impact an individual member's constituency.

- b) **Represent Constituency:** Members will bring the concerns and perspectives of their various constituencies to the Task Force, where appropriate, for discussion and possible consensus building. It is understood that many members participate in other initiatives at local, state, regional, and national levels and may advocate in those forums for solutions on issues related to the Task Force's work, but will make it clear they are representing only themselves, not the Task Force, unless the Task Force has taken an official position on the matter, in which case it should be presented verbatim.

Members will keep other key entities within their interest areas and constituencies informed on Task Force developments, solicit input on issues under consideration, and share this input with the Task Force if relevant—even if those opinions differ from the member's own personal views.

- c) **Focus on the Overall Good of All the Interests Represented:** While members are to represent the points of view of their interest area, members are also asked to focus on the overall good of all the interests represented on the Task Force, not just the perspectives of individual interest areas. Additionally, members are to be aware and make the Task Force aware of situations where the Task Force's advice could affect their own interest.

- d) **Respectful of the Diversity of Views:** To enhance the possibility of constructive discussions and dialogue as members educate themselves on the issues and engage in consensus building, members agree to be respectful of the diversity of views on the Task Force. Members agree to listen openly to all points of view on issues and alternatives and seek to identify areas of agreement, as well as reasons for different points of view. Members agree to avoid personal attacks both at the table and away from the table.

- e) **Prioritize Preparing for, Attending, and Actively Participating in Meetings:** Members will arrive on time and avoid leaving early. Members will inform the Co-Chair and the Facilitation Team as far in advance as is possible if they (or their alternates) cannot attend a scheduled meeting. The Facilitation team will review and discuss the agenda with a member who has indicated in advance that they cannot attend a meeting.

- f) **Work Cooperatively and Creatively to Seek Areas of Agreement:** Members will work cooperatively with each other and the Facilitation Team to accomplish the purposes of the Task Force, and acknowledge that all participants bring legitimate purposes, goals, concerns, and interests—irrespective of whether they agree with them.

- g) Focus on the Subject at Hand: Members agree to focus on the topic of discussion, share discussion time, avoid interrupting, respect time constraints, keep reactions and responses from being personal, and avoid side conversations.
- h) Base Decisions and Recommendations on Evidence and Data: Task Force members commit to working in good faith together to identify, commission or collect, and carefully consider any relevant studies, analyses, and/or other data to underpin their decisions and recommendations.
- i) Abide by Discussion Ground Rules:

Be Respectful

- One person speaks at a time; listen when others are speaking, avoid interrupting and side conversations.
- Keep comments brief so everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts. Avoid dominating the discussion.
- Hear and respect all opinions.
- Silence cell phones and refrain for using laptops during the meeting, except to take notes.

Be Constructive

- Acknowledge that all participants bring with them legitimate purposes, goals, concerns and interests, whether or not you are in agreement with them.
- Openly explore issues.
- Act in “good faith,” seeking to resolve conflicts and identify solutions. Come with the sense that this is a gathering of bright minds working toward a common goal.
- State concerns and interests clearly, listen carefully to and assume the best in others. Leave negative assumptions and attitudes at the door.
- Share comments that are solution focused, rather than repeating past discussions.
- It is OK to disagree; it is not OK to make personal attacks or slanderous statements.
- Minimize the use of jargon and acronyms, define and explain when used.
- Work towards consensus. Be willing to compromise.
- Ask for clarification when uncertain of what another person is saying. Ask questions rather than make assumptions.

Be Productive

- Begin and end meetings on time.
- Respect time constraints.
- Adhere to the agenda as much as possible, focusing on the subject at hand.
- Indicate to the facilitator/s when they wish to make a comment and be acknowledged before speaking.
- Volunteer for the tasks at hand, as appropriate.