

Washington State Sentencing Guidelines Commission

Goals of the Sentencing Reform Act

The SRA was enacted to help make the criminal justice system more accountable to the public by developing a sentencing system which structures or guides, but does not eliminate, the use of judicial discretion in sentencing adult felony offenders. The SRA established the following goals for felony sentencing (see RCW 9.94A.010):

1. Ensure that the punishment for a criminal offense is proportionate to the seriousness of the offense and the offender's criminal history;
2. Promote respect for the law by providing punishment which is just;
3. Ensure that the punishment imposed on any offender is commensurate with the punishment imposed on others committing similar offenses;
4. Protect the public;
5. Offer the offender an opportunity to improve him or herself;
6. Make frugal use of the state's and local governments' resources; and
7. Reduce the risk of re-offending by offenders in the community.

The sentencing guidelines system is designed to ensure that offenders who commit similar crimes and have similar criminal histories receive equivalent sentences. The adult felony sentencing grid is structured so that offenses involving greater harm to a victim and to society result in greater punishment. The guidelines apply equally to offenders in all parts of the state, without discrimination as to any element that does not relate to the crime or to the defendant's previous criminal record.