

## PROTOCOL FOR REQUESTING PCS DATA SETS

[REV. 12/14/05]

### **Procedures**

1. Under the Commission's Release of Information Policy, the data sets are available under either General Release or Contracted Release. These General Release and Contracted data sets are the same except for three variables: 1) defendant name, 2) defendant social security number, and 3) judge name. Contracted data sets contain defendant social security number and defendant name for 1996 and subsequent data years and judge name for all years but 1985. General Release data sets include defendant name and judge name for 1998 and subsequent sentencing years but defendant social security number is removed for all years.
2. All data sets under General Release will be made available to the public through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, upon completion of data entry, verification and documentation. These data sets will also be available for purchase from the Commission, but for 1998 and subsequent data years the identity of the requesting party will be provided to each judge.
3. All requests for data sets from the Commission, either General Release or Contracted Release, must be submitted in writing, using the Data Set Request Form (DSR7/01). Payment must accompany all requests. The cost of each data set is \$70.00, and includes a copy of the applicable *Sentencing Guideline Implementation Manual(s)* for the data year.
4. Requests under General Release will be completed within one month of receipt of payment.
- ~~5.~~ Requests under Contracted Release require Commission approval. Prior to Commission review, the request must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the institution with which the requestor is affiliated.
6. If the Commission approves the data request under Contracted Release, the requesting party will be required to sign an Information Release Contract to ensure that the data will be used only for the purposes of the approved request and that the defendant name, social security number, and judge name remain confidential. Approved requests will be completed within one month of Commission approval.
7. If the Commission does not approve the data request under Contracted Release, a refund will be made to the requesting party.

### **General Release**

The Commission will provide data for each sentencing year to the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), a national clearinghouse based at the University of Michigan. These data sets will be provided upon completion of data entry, verification and documentation. Data verification is the process of preparing data for analysis, and involves removing or correcting invalid variables, and obtaining missing information regarding the sentence imposed. For 1998 and subsequent data sets, the sentencing judges are provided an opportunity to review the data for completeness and accuracy.

### **Contracted Release**

By contract, the Commission may provide data for any sentencing year to an agency or individual conducting research on behalf of the Commission, when such research is determined by the Commission to be necessary and beneficial to the enumerated duties of the Commission (42 Pa.C.S. §2153). These data sets will be provided upon completion of data entry, verification and documentation. Defendant name and defendant social security number is included in the 1996 data set and subsequent sentencing years. Judge name is included in the data sets for all years but 1995. Due to the confidential nature of the information, the recipient of this data will be prohibited from releasing the data or any identifying information to any third party.