

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MICHIGAN SENTENCING COMMISSION
POSITION DESCRIPTION**

THIS POSITION DESCRIPTION DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CONTRACT.

POSITION: Research Director, Michigan Sentencing Commission

SALARY SCHEDULE RANGE: K

STATUS: Full-time

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MICHIGAN SENTENCING COMMISSION:

The Michigan Sentencing Commission (MSC) was created in the Legislative Council by Public Act 273 of 2024. The duties of the MSC, which are described in MCL 769.34b, include making recommendations for modifications to the sentencing guidelines and conducting research on the sentencing guidelines and state and local sentencing and release policies. Additionally, the MSC has the authority to “recommend modifications to any law that affects sentencing or the use and length of incarceration.”

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION OF RESEARCH DIRECTOR:

The Research Director will conduct and oversee the Michigan Sentencing Commission’s research program, including research that is required by its enabling legislation or is otherwise relevant to its work. As part of this, the Research Director will draft or oversee the drafting of reports on subjects such as sentencing practices and trends, sentencing disparities, prison population and cost trends, and other areas that are relevant to the Commission’s work.

The Research Director will also oversee the Commission’s data and its data collection program, including its data sharing agreements with the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) and other public institutions that maintain data that is important to the Commission’s work.

This position reports to the Chief of Staff of the Michigan Sentencing Commission.

EXAMPLES OF WORK:

- Consults regularly with the Chief of Staff of the Sentencing Commission on Commission priorities, operations, and emerging policy issues.
- Collects and analyzes data relevant to the Commission’s work and produces reports, memoranda, policy briefings, and other knowledge products to inform Commission members, staff, and other Commission stakeholders on research findings.
- Works with data custodians to establish and maintain data sharing agreements, and to ensure the Commission has access to up-to-date versions of all datasets relevant to its work.

- Provides information, briefings, and analysis to sentencing commissioners, legislators, legislative staff, and Executive Branch officials.
- Engages stakeholders, including state agencies, courts, prosecutors, defense organizations, and advocacy groups, in the development of sentencing policy recommendations, and helps respond to stakeholder inquiries and questions.
- Represents the Commission in meetings, presentations, and public forums as assigned.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

MISSION STATEMENT PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

- Displays a team-oriented attitude toward co-workers and other Legislative Council staff.
- Provides high-quality services and products to members of the Commission, the Legislature, and other customers.
- Acts in a professional manner.
- Takes initiative in improving one's knowledge, skills, and judgments to better serve the Commission and the Legislature.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES THE EMPLOYEE SHALL EXHIBIT IN THE POSITION:

The Research Director must have specialized skills, experience, and knowledge related to the Commission's work, including:

- **Research and Data Analysis:**
 - Must have experience with data management and data analysis using statistical software (e.g. Strata, R, SAS, and/or SPSS).
 - Must also have the ability to analyze data from multiple sources with strong attention to detail, the ability to work with technical staff at data custodians such as MDOC, the ability to maintain appropriate data security, and the ability to negotiate, comply with, and manage data sharing agreements.
- **Strong Writing Skills:**
 - The Research Director will oversee the drafting and publication of the Commission's research reports and other knowledge products. Accordingly, candidates for this position must have strong writing and editing skills, strong attention to detail, and the ability to communicate effectively to a broad range of audiences.

- The Research Director should also have prior experience producing research reports in a government or academic setting.
- Preference will be given to candidates with criminal justice and social policy research and writing experience. Prior research experience specific to Michigan’s criminal justice system is strongly preferred.
- **Knowledge of Michigan’s Criminal Justice System:**
 - The Research Director must have a deep understanding of the criminal justice system in Michigan, especially of Michigan’s felony sentencing system and Sentencing Guidelines.
 - Knowledge of Michigan’s corrections system and parole policies and practices is a plus.
- **Project Management Skills and Experience:**
 - The Research Director may need to oversee a team of researchers for certain projects. Because of this, experience managing a team of researchers on a complex research project in a government or academic setting is preferred. Other project management experience in research is a plus.
- **Other Necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:**
 - Communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, with legislators, government leaders, commission stakeholders, and the public.
 - Organize projects and workflow, manage competing deadlines, and supervise staff, contractors, and interns effectively.
 - Build collaborative working relationships with commission stakeholders, both in government and the private sector.
 - Confidently use standard hardware, operating system, and print functions of a PC, as well as email and electronic timekeeping systems.
 - Confidently use Microsoft Office Suite software applications to compose documents and construct tables and graphics using the agencies standard formats.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POSITION:

- A bachelor’s degree in mathematics, statistics, or a similar discipline is a requirement for applicants. Graduate training in statistics and/or data science is preferred.

- Availability to work from the Michigan Sentencing Commission’s offices in Lansing during business hours is required. A hybrid schedule can be negotiated, but the expectation is that most workdays will be in-person at the office.
- Must be willing and able to work overtime as required.

February 2026