



## Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing

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This documentation was written to accompany the release of Sentencing Commission data which are not fully documented. It is intended to serve as an overview and to fill in gaps between the data sets being sent and the data entry documentation accompanying them.

### DATA SETS.

Commission data sets are organized by **Year of Sentence**. Each year's data set reflects sentences handed down during that calendar year and reported to the Commission. Within '**data year**' there could be offenses which were committed at any time prior to or including that year. The particular **sentencing guidelines** which apply to that offense are determined according to the '**offense date**'. [Before 1996, however, date of offense was not included in the data sets.]

Data from data years 1984-1994 were entered using a DOS-based data entry program (referred to as **SIDES** in some of the documentation). Data were entered in a card format into fixed columns. The older documentation refers to the columns in which the data were entered. For the data sets released as **SAS Data Sets** (bin extension), this column information is no longer relevant. The variable names are the important items needed to distinguish between fields. For the data sets released as comma delimited files (CSV extension), the printed column information is also not relevant. The variable names should appear as the first row in the data.

### File descriptions:

**1984-1989: Three files exist for each of these data years.** One file contains information on all sentences entered (four offenses per transaction were entered). A second file contains only one offense (most serious) per transaction. And a third file contains DUI offenses only. All DUI offenses were entered into this file. However, if the DUI was sentenced at the same time as a nonDUI offense, then the DUI is also included in the first file. If the DUI was sentenced at the same time as a nonDUI offense, AND it was the most serious offense sentenced in the transaction, then it is included in the Most Serious Offense data set. If only a DUI offense was a part of the transaction, then it appears only in the DUI file.

**FILE 1: (Up to) four offenses.** The variables pertaining to each of the four offenses have identical names, with a number at the end of the variable name to distinguish between them. E.g., OFF1, OFF2, OFF3, OFF4 and SENT1, SENT2, SENT3, SENT4, etc. OFF1 refers to the specific offense for the first offense. SENT1 refers to the type of sentence for the first offense...and so on.

**FILE 2: One offense.** Only the information for the **Most Serious Offense** appears in this file. The specific prior offense information is not included in this file. Only the final **prior record score** is included.

**FILE 3: DUI offenses,** only are included.

**1990-1994: Two files exist for each data year.** The first file contains information on all sentences entered (up to four per transaction). The second file contains only DUI offenses. If the DUI was sentenced at the same time as a nonDUI offense, then those offenses (both the DUI and the nonDUI) are also included in the first file. If only a DUI offense was reported, then it appears only in the DUI file.

**FILE 1: (Up to) four offenses.** The most serious offense is not written out as a separate file for these data years. Instead, the **most serious offense is repeated** as an offense without a number towards the end of the file. The variables pertaining to each of the four offenses have identical names, followed by a number at the end of the name to distinguish between them. (E.g., OFF1, OFF2, OFF3, OFF4 and SENT1, SENT2, SENT3, SENT4, etc.) Then the **most serious offense** is a repeat of all the variables for one offense and the variable names are like: OFF, SENT, etc. All of the prior offense information, plus the final **prior record score** is included in this file.

**1995:** The 1995 data were entered during a transition year between the old DOS-based data entry program and the 1996 SAS-based program. The 1995 data include three files. Two of the files correspond to the two sets of guidelines which were in effect. Sentence information was entered in an abbreviated form. Only one offense per transaction was entered, very little error checking was done, and some other variables included in other years were not entered for 1995.

**FILE 1: One offense, 1991 Guidelines.** Only the most serious offense per transaction was entered.

**FILE 2: One offense, 1994 Guidelines.** Only the most serious offense per transaction was entered.

**FILE 3: DUI offenses.**

**1996+:** These data years should have complete documentation at the time of their release.

### **Important Concepts:**

**Transaction.** "A crime or crimes which were committed by an offender at a single time or in temporally continuous actions that are part of the same episode, event, or incident or which are conspiracy and the object offense." The transaction is an important unit of analysis for all guideline years up to, *but not including*, the 1997 guidelines. All offenses within the same transaction were supposed to be submitted to the Commission on a single form (with continuation pages), or as a single case.

In some instances the courts would submit more than one transaction on a single form (with the same CID number). These forms were entered as separate transactions, but the same CID was used for each transaction. Thus, it is possible to have multiple occurrences of the same CID number.

**Commission ID Number.** The CID number is preprinted on the paper forms traditionally used to submit sentencing reports to the Commission. For data years up until the 1996 data year, this number corresponds to transactions, not offenses and not individuals. Also, for data years 1984-1994, the same CID number can be in the data more than once. Thus, there can be multiple transactions with the same CID (same person). There can also be multiple transactions with different CIDs (same person).

**Judicial Proceeding.** "A proceeding in which all offenses for which the offender is convicted are pending before the court for sentencing at the same time. A judicial proceeding may include multiple transactions." The term judicial proceeding was first used with the 1994 guidelines. Starting with the 1996 data, there should be one CID per judicial proceeding, more closely corresponding to an individual offender.

**Offense Codes.** Offenses are coded in the 1984-1994 data by an offense code and a subcode. For specific offense information, see the separate listing of offense codes. The offense number roughly corresponds to the title & section numbers in Pennsylvania statute (except for the drug offenses—Title 35). The subcode also includes information about whether the offense was completed or inchoate (attempt, solicitation, or conspiracy).

**Prior Record Score** The prior record score is an integral part of the sentencing guideline calculation process in Pennsylvania. Types of offenses were categorized by the Commission as receiving more or less weight in determining the overall prior record score. The individual prior offenses are listed separately, but the **prior record score (or PRS)** is what is used to determine the recommended sentence.

**Offense Gravity Score** The other key component used to determine the guideline recommendation is the offense gravity score (**OGS**). Under the guidelines prior to the 1994 guidelines specific offenses were assigned an OGS ranging from 1 to 10 for nondrug offenses, where 1 is least serious and 10 is most serious. For drug offenses the OGS ranged from A to , where A is most serious. Note that the data record the 10 as 0 in the data years preceding 1990.

**Data Year****Codebook***Effective for offenses coded after:*

<b>1985</b>	<b>1-Oct-82</b>	<b>Missing appendices</b>
<b>1986</b>		
<b>1987</b>	<b>1-Jan-87</b>	
<b>1988</b>	<b>1-Jan-88</b>	
	<b>1-Jul-88</b>	
<b>1989</b>		
<b>1990</b>	<b>1-Jul-90</b>	<b>Changes to FINES from AM7 &amp; AM8</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>Jul-90</b>	
<b>1992</b>	<b>Part 2 1992 updated 6/92</b>	
<b>1993</b>	<b>Effective for 1993</b>	
<b>1994</b>	<b>" "</b>	
<b>1995</b>	<b>1995 (EXCEL)</b>	
<b>1996</b>	<b>ICPSR</b>	
<b>1997</b>	<b>ICPSR</b>	