

District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency

Recommendation Guidelines

June 1980

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Government
of the
District
of Columbia

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Pretrial Services
Agency

Recommendation Guidelines
(Superior Court
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Foreword

In the early 1960's the United States witnessed the beginning of what has been termed the American Bail Revolution. The principal focus of this movement was the pretrial incarceration of thousands of non-dangerous, presumptively innocent accused who were detained in deplorable conditions awaiting trials that were months in the future. As the result of a number of studies and experiments conducted across the country it was discovered that many of these accused could be released in a novel fashion - on their own word to return - rather than the traditional surety bond method.

Twenty years later we are still struggling. We have learned that the bail decision is used for two distinct purposes - to insure appearance and to protect society from persons suspected of being dangerous. Yet, those purposes are so entwined as to be indistinguishable. We justify our bail decisions in appearance terms while often setting our priorities on danger-based considerations. We can identify with relative accuracy those who will appear as required but cannot, with anything even approaching consistency, predict who will commit crimes.

Prestigious organizations have stated that surety bond is an anachronism that has outlived its usefulness. There have even been suggestions that the determination of appropriate financial conditions complicates the bail process beyond the ability of anyone to predict the correct bail amount that will insure either appearance or the protection of society.

For nine years, since the effective date of the Court Reorganization Act of 1970 (February 1, 1971) we have had the opportunity of separating flight and danger considerations and treating them openly during the bail setting process. We have failed. Needless pretrial detention of many accused of misdemeanors and non-dangerous felonies occurs. Accused persons believed to be dangerous are released with regularity.

Thus, we have viewed it as our task to develop a recommendation plan that can be accountable to the issues of appearance and community safety. In designing this plan

we have attempted to consider the differences between society as it is today - highly sophisticated technically, highly urbanized, in the throes of economic uncertainty, individual members subsumed into massive anonymity - and as it was at the time of the Judiciary Act of 1789 - frontier-minded, rural, and highly individual.

Finally, we recognize that we must balance individual rights and the rights of collective individuals - society - using means that, to a large degree, are untested and unscientific. What follows is subject to change - in fact, must change. It is but a new beginning.

April 1980

Bruce Beaudin
Director

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The District of Columbia
Pretrial Services Agency
Recommendation Guidelines *

I. Introduction.

Since the Judiciary Act of 1789 and the enactment of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, it has been the right of all persons charged with non-capital offenses to have bail set that is not excessive. For many years judges have attempted to determine what dollar amount will insure a person's appearance in court and for many years bondsmen have determined finally who will and won't be released.

In 1951, in the landmark case of Stack v. Boyle, the United States Supreme Court confirmed that reasonable bail was an absolute right in non-capital cases and, further, that what was reasonable depended upon individual circumstances in individual cases. What was reasonable was whatever amount was necessary to secure the appearance of the individual before the court at future court dates.

In 1960, in New York City, where the jails were filled with people detained pretrial because of inability to post the bail set, an experiment was conducted by the Vera Foundation to test whether alternatives to traditional surety bail could be substituted and result in good appearance rates. The experiment proved that personal recognizance (or promise) releases were as effective at producing people in court as was the surety system.

In 1963, as the result of a request submitted by the Judicial Council of the District of Columbia, the Ford Foundation granted sufficient funds to Georgetown University Law Center to establish the D.C. Bail Project. For 2½ years the Project, using the same criteria as had been proved successful in New York City, tested the alternatives in D.C. The conclusion: appearance rates were at least as good as, if not, better than, appearance rates for surety release. More important, many more people were released than had been the case before.

* These guidelines have been designed for use in recommending pretrial release and detention conditions in those cases under the jurisdiction of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. (See D.C. Code §23-1321 through 1332.) For a description of the remainder of the Agency's recommendation policies as they apply to Citation release and cases under the jurisdiction of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia refer to the District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency: Handbook on Procedure, Recommendation Criteria, April, 1979.

In 1966, based largely upon the successful experiments in New York and D.C., the Congress passed the Federal Bail Reform Act. Among other provisions the Act prescribed personal recognizance as the preferred type of release creating a presumption that persons charged with non-capital offenses should be released upon their word to return to court when required.

Also in 1966, in a little-heralded bill, Congress created the D.C. Bail Agency to assist the courts in the District with implementation of the Bail Reform Act which was made applicable to the local courts by an explicit provision of the Agency's enabling legislation.

During the next few years, the Department of Justice and several prestigious committees of the D.C. Bar, the Judicial Council, and the local courts, studied the operations of the Act in the District. Problems that surfaced included concern about pretrial crime, failures to appear, and lack of supervision, among others.

In 1971, along with other changes made in the District's court structure, Congress enacted two significant provisions affecting bail and its administration. In one provision, the D.C. Bail Agency was tripled in size and given many specific statutory functions of a supervisory nature - they exist to this day. In the other, the courts were given authority to consider any threat posed to community safety by the pretrial release of a suspect and to set conditions that would reduce the risk of danger. They were also given authority to detain without bail persons charged with non-capital offenses whose releases might pose a threat to community safety.

For the ensuing nine years, the courts and those agencies charged with administering the pretrial release system in the District of Columbia experimented with various approaches to the new law. The proper balancing of two directly competing concerns - community safety and the right to release - proved difficult to achieve. Although the law attempted to provide some guidelines to separate the two concerns and address each on its face, the separate considerations were, more often than not, merged in the decision-making process.

In 1977, a number of circumstances combined to cause the Agency to re-evaluate its recommendation criteria. In addition to compiling and analyzing a number of studies conducted

internally, the Director of Research began to compile and analyze studies carried out in other jurisdictions that made wide use of non-financial conditions of release. We also commenced implementation of a fully automated system that permitted current analysis of our own data. While there was a good deal of information concerning appearance, there was precious little concerning predictions of danger and pretrial crime.

At the same time, since the law provided for consideration of community protection, the Agency began to gather data on pretrial crime both in its own jurisdiction and as reported in others. The availability of studies conducted by the Institute for Law and Social Research using PROMIS data in various Prosecutors' Offices and others provided us with much information.

While the plan will no doubt change as more is learned, it represents a first real attempt to separate community safety and appearance factors in the pretrial process.

II. Goals.

The ultimate objective of this plan is to provide sufficient information to the person charged with the responsibility of fixing pretrial release conditions to permit the setting of the least restrictive conditions that will assure appearance in court and community safety. Implicit in reaching this objective is the identification of those factors that influence appearance as distinct from those that impact community safety. We believe that if we have developed our plan correctly and if it is implemented with care we should achieve the following milestones:

A. Release (or detention) conditions will be fixed according to the risk perceived and the justification for each condition will be grounded in appearance or safety terms;

B. The use of surety conditions will be substantially reduced - if not eliminated altogether;

C. The use of financial conditions will be reduced by at least a half;

D. The pretrial detention population will be composed only of those persons who have been judicially determined to pose a substantial threat to community safety;

E. Needless pretrial detention (of those who presently make bond within a week of arrest) will be eliminated thereby reducing the average daily pretrial detention population;

F. The system failures that result in the issuance of needless warrants for failure to appear will be reduced by at least 50%;

G. Appearance rates will increase to a level of over 95%; and

H. Recidivism as measured by rearrest will be reduced by 20%.

We frankly acknowledge the possibility that some defendants should be detained pretrial. One of the most significant factors in assessing the need for pretrial detention as a community protection device, is the strength of the government's case. Precisely because the Pretrial Services Agency, at the time it formulates its recommendation, is not in a position to evaluate that evidence, the invocation of the law as it pertains to pretrial detention is an absolutely vital component of our recommendation plan. History has demonstrated reluctance to utilize these provisions, yet, such utilization provides the only test of that key factor - the strength of the government's case - that protects the rights of the defendant and the community alike.

Since monetary conditions may be used only to minimize the risks of non-appearance we believe our recommendation plan provides alternatives that are more than adequate substitutes for financial conditions. When the risks concerned are threats to personal safety or pretrial crime, only the hearing contemplated by statute complete with its adversary and due process provisions can provide justification for pretrial detention. Restrictive conditions designed to protect the community are, at best, the product of guesswork, - albeit educated.

Our plan addresses the specific risks posed and suggests conditions that will reduce those risks should release be the objective. Should detention be the objective only the process contemplated by statute should result in that detention. Where indicators of potential rearrest or threat to personal safety suggest restrictive conditions, we will recommend them. Where facts and other indicators suggest that a hearing should first occur then our recommendation will call for such a hearing. In those cases in which a hearing is recommended, yet, for various reasons, not conducted, the PSA can only proceed as though there has been an implicit concession that no serious threat of pretrial crime or threat to personal safety exists sufficient to justify detention and will recommend restrictive conditions according to its plan.

III. Underpinnings.

The plan outlined infra is based upon a number of presumptions. Some are statutory; others are based upon experience and common sense; and still others are conjecture.

A. Statutory.

1. A presumptive right to pretrial release on the least restrictive conditions possible to insure appearance in court and community safety exists for all persons charged with crime in the District of Columbia.
2. Circumstances may exist that rebut the presumption and require conditions that will minimize suspected risks of non appearance, threats to personal safety, or rearrest.
3. Any restrictive condition imposed must relate to the risk posed, i.e., failure to appear, personal safety or rearrest, and be designed to minimize that risk not eliminate it. Total elimination of all risk is an inappropriate and unconstitutional standard.
4. The enhanced penalty section of the law prescribing punishment for the conviction of crimes committed during the period of pretrial release must be imposed for violations of conditions reported.

B. Experience.

1. The use of surety conditions does not necessarily accomplish what is intended:
 - a.) bondsmen state that "almost 80% of their failures to appear are returned through police (law enforcement) efforts rather than their own.";

- b.) according to court officials, bond forfeitures are seldom, if ever, collected;
 - c.) bondsmen many times require not only a fee (10% in most places) but also full collateral to protect the face amount of the bond;
 - d.) bondsmen prefer to do business with repeat offenders;
 - e.) the decision to release or not is removed from the court to a private businessman whose only concern is profit.
2. The use of any financial condition without reference to knowledge concerning the defendant's ability to satisfy those conditions may frustrate the intent of the court, e.g., a \$500,000 surety condition may not result in detention while a \$300 - 10% deposit condition may result in detention of an indigent.
 3. Good contact and notification procedures result in an excellent appearance rate for all released defendants.
 4. Trial within sixty (60) days of arrest reduces the incidence of rearrest by more than 1/2 and the incidence of failure to appear by more than 1/3.
 5. At a cost of nearly \$35.00 per day for each day of detention, and with limited capacity for pretrial detainees in the jail, the elimination of needless pretrial detention can result in the savings of nearly \$1,000,000 a year.

C. Conjecture.

1. Intensive supervision and contact may reduce the incidence of rearrest and threats to personal safety.
2. It should be the task of the PSA to present to the court alternatives that will permit safe implementation of the law - providing some insurance for appearance and community safety in even the most difficult cases.

3. In assessing the particular risk posed and in formulating its recommendation the PSA should consider the following:
 - a.) Appearance.
 1. 90% of the defendants charged appear as required.
 2. 10% of the defendants charged present some risk of non-appearance for reasons that may be system - or defendant - related. (Our own studies show that over half of the warrants issued for failures to appear are traceable to "system" problems. For example, the system is often unaware of the hospitalization or incarceration of a defendant who has been released or the system itself has failed to provide proper and adequate notification.)
 3. While the identification of the particular 10% who fail to appear is difficult to achieve, the PSA post-release efforts will be intensified for those suspected of being higher risk cases than others.
 4. The persons who present some risk of non-appearance are not necessarily those who pose some risk of rearrest or threat to personal safety, e.g., the best appearance rates are for those charged with murder and rape while the worst are for those charged with petit larceny and soliciting for prostitution.
 - b.) Community Safety.
 1. Threats to community safety fall into two broad categories, i.e., threats to personal safety and threats of recidivism (rearrest).
 2. The most serious concern centers on those releasees who may pose a threat to personal safety.

3. 78% of the persons charged remain free from additional charges pending disposition of the initial charge.
4. 22% of those charged will be charged with a subsequent offense during the initial release period (although this does not mean that convictions in either of the cases will be the final disposition).
5. Though much more difficult to identify than the 10% who present a risk of non-appearance, based upon present charge and prior criminal history - the two most significant factors identified in many studies - those defendants whose releases seem to pose a threat to personal safety or a threat of rearrest will receive intensified supervisory services from the PSA according to the condition recommended.
6. The persons who present some risk of rearrest or to personal safety are not necessarily those who pose some risk of non-appearance.

IV. Factors To Be Considered.

Our approach utilizes individual factors of both positive and negative values that can be applied to each individual being considered for a recommendation. When the problem indicators and solutions have been matched it will be the task of the Pretrial Services Officer to formulate an appropriate recommendation.

A. Factors that have a positive effect on appearance:

1. Halfway house - work release.
2. Residential third party custody.
3. Commitment to a mental institution for evaluation.
4. Third party custodial intensive contact supervision.
5. Once a week "in person" reporting to the PSA.
6. Establishing phone contact with a person or employer willing to assist with notification.
7. Temporary custody to PSA of such documents as visa, passport, driver's license, etc.
8. Establishing a mail contact with a person or employer willing to assist with notification.
9. Priority on the trial calendar.
10. PSA-initiated phone call and written notice one week and again one day prior to due date.
11. Follow-up post release interview sometime after release.
12. Agency-initiated phone contact once a week.
13. Enrollment in drug, alcohol, or mental health program.
14. Phone notification initiated by PSA where defendant is required to acknowledge court date.

15. Individual custodian or reference agreement to notify defendant - PSA provides notice to them.
 16. Specific place to live today with an obligation to report "permanent" residence to PSA.
 17. Phone reporting once a week.
 18. Travel restriction unless the PSA is notified in advance.
 19. Maintain present alcohol/drug/mental treatment.
 20. Referral to outpatient mental facility.
- B. Factors that may have a positive effect on re-arrest rates:
1. Trial within 60 days.
 2. Curfew - 11:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.
 3. Diversion.
- C. Factors that may have a positive effect on reducing suspected threats to personal safety:
1. Detention hearings as directed in the statute.
 2. Confinement to an address coupled with daily check by PSA with both defendant and a "house" custodian.
 3. 24 hour, residential, third party custody.
 4. Commitment to a mental institution.
 5. Curfew - 11:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. coupled with twice a week check by PSA.
 6. Weekly sign-in at local police precinct.
 7. Alcohol/drug/mental treatment in a recognized program.
 8. Stay away from the prosecution witnesses.
 9. Intensive follow-up to initial Post-Release interview.
 10. Third Party Custody intensive contact, supervision, and/or support services.

11. Maintain present drug/alcohol/mental program.
 12. Referral to outpatient mental program.
- D. Factors that indicate appearance problems:
1. No fixed residence.
 2. Illegal alien.
 3. Fugitive charge - if the underlying charge is BRA, FTA, Escape, Probation or Parole violation related to contact requirements.
 4. Stated Intent to flee.
 5. Negative military status (AWOL).
 6. Non-area resident with no verifiable ties in the area of residence.
 7. Serious mental problem.
 8. Poor Parole or Probation adjustment where a revocation hearing has been scheduled.
 9. Conflicting information concerning identification, i.e., gives an alias as a deliberate attempt to mislead.
 10. Soliciting charge coupled with a prior history of arrests or convictions.
 11. Present charge or prior conviction of failure to appear within 5 years. Note - this characteristic may be totally disregarded if we have positive knowledge it is in error such as hospitalization or incarceration as the reason.
 12. Present charge or prior conviction of BRA within 5 years. Note - subject to same provision as in #11.
 13. Condition violator if the condition is related to "contact."
 14. Poor Probation or Parole adjustment if no hearing scheduled and if poor adjustment relates to "contact."

15. Unverified residence or notification address.
 16. Alcohol or drug use where the defendant is not presently enrolled in a program or is enrolled but not in compliance.
 17. Conflicting information concerning residence.
 18. 2 open charges (today's is the second) where Prosecutor mentions an outstanding warrant from a foreign jurisdiction he does not intend to execute.
 19. 3 open charges (today's is the third).
 20. Defendant ignorance, i.e., can't read or write.
 21. No address to return to today due to nature of charge.
 22. Alcohol/drug use - if enrolled in a program and in compliance.
 23. Non-area resident with verified ties in the area of residence.
 24. Some indication of mental instability.
- E. Factors that indicate rearrest potential:
1. On Probation, Parole, or Pretrial Release for any offense not classified as "violent" or "dangerous".
 2. Charged with Soliciting.
 3. Charged with Petit Larceny.
 4. Charged with Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle.
 5. Charged with Forgery.
 6. Charged with Fraud.
 7. Charged with "property" crimes, e.g., Unlawful Entry, Burg. II, D.P.P., etc.
 8. Any prior charge not defined as "violent" or "dangerous" or included in 2, 3, 4, & 5.
- F. Factors that indicate possible threats to personal safety:
1. Serious prior juvenile record. (Cases are of "violent" or "dangerous" nature.)

2. Prior convictions of "dangerous" or "violent" crimes as defined by statute.
3. A condition violator if the condition was designed to protect personal safety.
4. A prior conviction of "violence" or "danger" and not free from system ties for a minimum of a year.
5. On Probation or Parole for a "violent" or "dangerous" offense.
6. Weapon involved.
7. Present drug or alcohol use if not in a program or not in compliance.
8. Presently on conditional pretrial release for an offense defined as "violent" or "dangerous."
9. Present charge is a "dangerous" or "violent" offense and there is a prior history of arrests or convictions.
10. Presently on Probation, Parole, or Pre-trial Release for any offense not defined as "dangerous" or "violent".
11. Controlled drug or alcohol use - in a program and in good compliance.

V. The Process.

Successful implementation of our new recommendation plan requires a number of things. We must have adequate information concerning the accused; we must have the ability and capacity to relate that information to what we have experienced; we must have the cooperation of the people in the environment in which we work; and we must have a staff that is concerned about what it does.

A. Information.

As in the past, we will develop information about the community ties of each accused through a combination of defendant interview and reference verification. We will seek to determine background information on residence, employment, mental health, family ties, education, and drug and alcohol use, and other relevant details. We will check carefully any evidence of prior erratic behavior including mental and criminal histories.

B. Evaluation.

As a result of total automation of our records we will be able to discern daily the release population and our supervision workload. As a result, we will be able to match those conditions that seem appropriate to the problems presented in a way that will permit us to maintain an adequate level of supervision. In addition, we will be able to evaluate continually the effectiveness of the conditions recommended and fixed as they relate to appearance and community safety.

C. Environment.

In 1971, as has been mentioned, the District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act of 1970 went into effect. Changes in the bail laws, the size and jurisdiction of the local and federal courts, and the size and functions of the Pretrial Services Agency resulted in a flurry of activity. During the ensuing four years, the environment was in a state of flux as such procedural changes as were required by statute were implemented and as the system began to prepare for a move to new quarters. For the past few years, however, things have stabilized.

In the area of release and detention the prosecutor has pretty much identified the types of cases in which pretrial detention will be requested. For the most part, the judges have given life to the statutory presumption that most accused should be released on personal recognizance. The Pretrial Services Agency is credited as an accurate source for background information to be used at the bail setting hearing. The relationships that exist among these agencies augurs well for the Agency's new plan.

D. Staff.

At present, the Agency's staff is exceptional. Composed of law, graduate, and college students, its Pretrial Services Officers have a genuine concern for the work assigned. Since most believe in the philosophical goals of bail reform they work hard to develop the best information possible. Our on-going training, directed by a most competent and concerned training officer is beyond cavil. In the research area we have the luxury of a totally automated system that yields data which is constantly under analysis by a competent, full time, staff analyst. Our automated system itself is supported by a division of three highly motivated people who see to the constant enhancements necessary for good operations. At the management level each supervisor has a minimum of at least five years in the Agency. In short, the staff is ready to implement the new approach - an approach which has been under development and analysis for over three years.

VI. Conclusion.

Our new recommendation policies presuppose that we can match solutions to problem indicators. The problem indicators are divided into three broad categories: Indicators of Failures to Appear; Indicators of Personal Violence; and Indicators of Rearrest. The solutions are also divided into three broad categories: Factors That Minimize The Perceived Risk of Failure to Appear; Factors That Minimize The Perceived Risk of Personal Violence; and Factors That Minimize The Perceived Risk of Rearrest.

The task of the Agency will be to formulate recommendations that match the solution(s) to the problem(s) posed. In an effort to provide some structure together with enough leeway to create we have established some boundaries and some specific considerations within those boundaries. As we implement our strategy and analyze the data we hope to refine the plan even further. In the meantime, it is with a great deal of trepidation coupled with a certain amount of confidence that we begin our new approach.

Appendix A

A List Of Violent And Dangerous Crimes

1. Violent (D.C. Code 23-1331(4))

Murder
Forcible Rape
Carnal Knowledge of a female under the age of
sixteen
Taking or Attempting to take immoral, improper,
or indecent liberties with a child under the
age of sixteen years
Mayhem
Kidnaping
Robbery
Burglary
Voluntary Manslaughter
Extortion or Blackmail accompanied by threats of
violence
Arson
Assault with intent to commit any offense
Assault With A Dangerous Weapon
Attempt or Conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing
offenses

2. Dangerous (D.C. Code 23-1331 (3))

Taking or Attempting to take property from another
by force or threat of force
Unlawfully entering or attempting to enter any
premises adapted for overnight accommodation
of persons or for carrying on business with the
intent to commit an offense therein
Arson or attempted arson of any premises adaptable
for overnight accommodation of persons or for
carrying on business
Forcible Rape, or assault with intent to commit
forcible rape
Unlawful sale or distribution of a narcotic or
depressant or stimulant drug (as defined by any
Act of Congress) if the offense is punishable by
imprisonment for more than one year

Appendix B

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