

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1999

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HOUSE BILL 331*
Committee Substitute Favorable 3/23/99

Short Title: Sentencing Services Program/AB.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 4, 1999

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REDESIGNATE THE COMMUNITY PENALTIES PROGRAM AS THE SENTENCING SERVICES PROGRAM, TO CLARIFY THAT THE WORK PRODUCT OF THESE PROGRAMS IS ALWAYS PRESENTED TO THE COURTS, AND TO MAKE OTHER CLARIFYING CHANGES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Subchapter XIII of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

"SUBCHAPTER XIII. COMMUNITY PENALTIES PROGRAM.

"ARTICLE 61.

~~"COMMUNITY PENALTIES PROGRAM ACT OF 1983.~~

SENTENCING SERVICES PROGRAMS.

"§ 7A-770. Purpose.

This Article shall be known and may be cited as the ~~"Community Penalties Act of 1983."~~"Sentencing Services Act." The purpose of this Article is to ~~reduce prison overcrowding by providing~~ establish a statewide sentencing services program that will provide the judicial system with community sentences to be used in lieu of and at less cost than imprisonment. ~~information that will assist that system in imposing sentences that~~

1 make the most effective use of available resources. In furtherance of this purpose, this
2 Article provides for the following:

- 3 (1) ~~Establishment of local sentencing alternatives for felons who require less~~
4 ~~than institutional custody but more than regular probation supervision.~~
5 programs that can provide judges and other court officials with
6 information about local correctional programs that are appropriate for
7 offenders who require a comprehensive sentencing plan that combines
8 punishment, control, and rehabilitation services.
9 (2) Increased opportunities for certain felons to make restitution to victims
10 of crime through financial reimbursement or community service.
11 (3) Local involvement in the development of ~~community penalties~~ sentencing
12 services to assure that they are specifically designed to meet local needs.
13 (4) ~~Reduced expenditures of State funds through an emphasis on alternative~~
14 ~~penalties for offenders so that new prisons need not be built or new~~
15 ~~space added.~~ Effective use of available community corrections programs
16 by advising judges and other court officials of the offenders most suited
17 for a particular program.

18 **"§ 7A-771. Definitions.**

19 As used in this Article:

- 20 (1) ~~"Community penalties"~~ "Sentencing services program" means an agency or
21 State-run office within the ~~judicial~~ superior court district which shall (i)
22 ~~prepare community penalty sentencing plans;~~ (ii) arrange or contract with
23 public and private agencies for necessary services for offenders; and
24 (iii) ~~monitor the progress of offenders placed on community penalty plans.~~
25 assist offenders in initially obtaining services ordered as part of a
26 sentence entered pursuant to a sentencing plan, if the assistance is not
27 available otherwise.
28 (2) ~~"Community penalty"~~ "Sentencing plan" means a plan presented in writing
29 to the sentencing judge which provides a detailed assessment and
30 description of the targeted offender's proposed community penalty.
31 offender's background, including available information about past
32 criminal activity, a matching of the specific offender's needs with
33 available resources, and, if appropriate, the program's recommendations
34 regarding an intermediate sentence.
35 (2a) "Director" means the Director of the Administrative Office of the
36 Courts.
37 (2b) "Superior court district" means a superior court district established by
38 G.S. 7A-41 for those districts consisting of one or more entire counties,
39 and otherwise means the applicable set of districts as that term is
40 defined in G.S. 7A-41.1.
41 (3) ~~"Judicial district" means a district court district as defined in G.S. 7A-~~
42 ~~133.~~
43 (4) Repealed by Session Laws 1991, c. 566, s. 4.

- 1 (5) ~~"Targeted offenders" means persons charged with or convicted of~~
2 ~~misdemeanors or felonies who are eligible to receive an intermediate~~
3 ~~punishment based on their class of offense and prior record level and~~
4 ~~who are facing an imminent and substantial threat of imprisonment.~~

5 **"§ 7A-772. Allocation of funds.**

6 (a) The Director may award grants in accordance with the policies established by
7 this Article and in accordance with any laws made for that purpose, including
8 appropriations acts and provisions in appropriations acts, and adopt regulations for the
9 implementation, operation, and monitoring of ~~community penalties sentencing services~~
10 programs. ~~Community penalties sentencing services~~ programs that are grantees shall use
11 ~~such the funds to develop, implement, and monitor community penalty plans. exclusively to~~
12 ~~develop a sentencing services program that provides sentencing information to judges~~
13 ~~and other court officials. Grants shall be awarded by the Director to agencies whose~~
14 ~~comprehensive program plans promise best to meet the goals set forth herein. The~~
15 ~~Director shall consider the plan required by G.S. 7A-774 in making funding decisions. If~~
16 ~~a senior resident superior court judge has not formally endorsed the plan, the Director~~
17 ~~shall consider that fact in making grant decisions, but the Director may, if appropriate,~~
18 ~~award grants to a program in which the judge has not endorsed the plan as submitted.~~

19 (b) The Director may establish local ~~community penalties sentencing services~~
20 programs and appoint those staff as the Director deems necessary. These personnel may
21 serve as full-time or part-time State employees or may be hired on a contractual basis
22 when determined appropriate by the director. Contracts entered under the authority of this
23 subsection shall be exempt from the competitive bidding procedures under Chapter 143
24 of the General Statutes. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall adopt rules
25 necessary and appropriate for the administration of the program. Funds appropriated by
26 the General Assembly for the establishment and maintenance of ~~community penalties~~
27 ~~sentencing services~~ programs under this Article shall be administered by the
28 Administrative Office of the Courts.

29 **"§ 7A-773. Responsibilities of a ~~community penalties sentencing services~~ program.**

30 A ~~community penalties sentencing services~~ program shall be responsible for:

- 31 (1) ~~Targeting offenders who are eligible to receive an intermediate~~
32 ~~punishment based on their class of offense and prior record level and~~
33 ~~who face an imminent and substantial threat of imprisonment.~~

34 Identifying offenders who:

- 35 a. Are charged with or have been offered a plea by the State for a
36 felony offense for which the class of offense and prior record
37 level authorize the court to impose an active punishment, but do
38 not require that it do so;
39 b. Have a high risk of committing future crimes without appropriate
40 sanctions and interventions; and
41 c. Would benefit from the preparation of an intensive and
42 comprehensive sentencing plan of the type prepared by
43 sentencing services programs.

1 (2) ~~Preparing detailed community penalty sentencing services plans~~
2 ~~requested pursuant to G.S. 7A-773.1 for presentation to the sentencing~~
3 ~~judge by the offender's attorney or at the request of the sentencing judge.~~
4 ~~judge.~~

5 (3) Contracting or arranging with public or private agencies for services
6 described in the ~~community penalty sentencing plan~~.

7 (4) ~~Monitoring the progress of offenders under community penalty plans.~~

8 **"§ 7A-773.1. Who may request plans; disposition of plans; contents of plans.**

9 (a) A judge presiding over a case in which the offender meets the criteria set forth
10 in G.S. 7A-773(1) may request, at any time prior to the imposition of sentence, that the
11 sentencing services program provide a sentencing plan. The court may also request, at
12 any time prior to the imposition of sentence, that the program provide a sentencing plan
13 in misdemeanor cases in which the class of offense is Class A1 or Class 1 and the prior
14 conviction level is Level III, if the court determines that the preparation of such a plan is
15 in the interest of justice. In addition, in cases in which the offender meets the criteria set
16 forth in G.S. 7A-773, the defendant or a prosecutor, at any time before the court has
17 accepted a guilty plea or received a guilty verdict, may request that the program provide a
18 plan. However, prior to an adjudication of guilt, a defendant may decline to participate in
19 the preparation of a plan within a reasonable time after the request is made. In that case,
20 no plan shall be prepared or presented to the court by the sentencing services program
21 prior to an adjudication of guilt. A defendant's decision not to participate shall be made
22 in writing and filed with the court. The comprehensive sentencing services program plan
23 prepared pursuant to G.S. 7A-774 shall define what constitutes a reasonable time within
24 the meaning of this subsection.

25 (b) Any sentencing plan prepared by a sentencing services program shall be
26 presented to the court, the defendant, and the State in an appropriate manner.

27 (c) Sentencing plans prepared by sentencing services programs may include
28 recommendations for use of any treatment or correctional resources available, unless the
29 sentencing court instructs otherwise. Sentencing plans that identify an offender's needs
30 for education, treatment, control, or other services shall, to the extent feasible, also
31 identify resources to meet those needs. Plans may report that no intermediate punishment
32 is appropriate under the circumstances of the case.

33 (d) To the extent allowed by law, the sentencing services program shall develop
34 procedures to ensure that the program staff may work with offenders before a plea is
35 entered. To that end, no information obtained in the course of preparing a sentencing
36 plan may be used by the State for the purpose of establishing guilt.

37 **"§ 7A-774. Requirements for a comprehensive ~~community penalties~~ sentencing**
38 **services program plan.**

39 Agencies applying for grants shall prepare a comprehensive ~~community penalties~~
40 ~~sentencing services program plan~~ for the development, implementation, operation, and
41 improvement of a ~~community penalties sentencing services program~~ for the judicial
42 superior court district, as prescribed by the Director. The plan shall be updated annually
43 and shall be submitted to the senior resident superior court judge for the superior court

1 district for the judge's advice and written endorsement. The plan shall then be forwarded
2 to the Director for approval. The ~~Such~~ plan shall include:

- 3 (1) ~~Objectives~~ Goals and objectives of the community penalties sentencing
4 services program.
- 5 (2) ~~Goals for reduction of offenders committed to prison for each county~~
6 ~~within the district, and a system of monitoring the number of~~
7 ~~commitments to prison.~~ Specification of the kinds or categories of
8 offenders for whom the programs will provide sentencing information to
9 the courts.
- 10 (3) ~~Procedures for identifying targeted offenders, and a plan for referral of~~
11 ~~targeted offenders to the community penalties program.~~ Proposed
12 procedures for the identification of appropriate offenders to comply with
13 the plan and the criteria in G.S. 7A-773(1).
- 14 (4) ~~Procedures for preparing and presenting community penalty plans to the~~
15 ~~court.~~
- 16 (4a) Strategies for ensuring that judges and court officials who are possible
17 referral sources use the program's services in appropriate cases.
- 18 (5) ~~Procedures for obtaining services from existing public or private~~
19 ~~agencies, and a detailed budget for staff, contracted services, and all~~
20 ~~other costs.~~
- 21 (6) ~~Procedures for monitoring the progress of offenders on community~~
22 ~~penalty plans and for cooperating with the probation personnel who~~
23 ~~have supervisory responsibility for the offender.~~
- 24 (7) ~~Procedures for returning offenders who do not comply with their~~
25 ~~community penalty plan to court for action by the court.~~
- 26 (8) ~~Procedures for evaluating the program's effect on numbers of prison~~
27 ~~commitments.~~

28 **"§ 7A-775. ~~Community penalties~~ Sentencing services board.**

29 (a) ~~Each community penalties sentencing services program shall establish a~~
30 ~~community penalties sentencing services board to provide direction and assistance to the~~
31 ~~community penalties sentencing services program in the implementation and evaluation of~~
32 ~~the plan. Community penalties Sentencing services boards may be organized as nonprofit~~
33 ~~corporations under Chapter 55A of the General Statutes. The community penalties~~
34 ~~sentencing services board shall consist of not less than 12 members, and shall include,~~
35 ~~insofar as possible, judges, district attorneys, attorneys, social workers, law-enforcement~~
36 ~~officers, probation officers, and other interested persons. The community penalties~~
37 ~~sentencing services board shall meet on a regular basis, and its duties include, but are not~~
38 ~~limited to, the following:~~

- 39 (1) Preparation and submission of the sentencing services program plan to
40 the senior resident superior court judge and the Director annually, as
41 provided in G.S. 7A-772(a);
- 42 (4) (1a) Development of an annual budget for the program;
43 (2) Hiring, firing, and evaluation of program personnel;

1 (3) Selection of board members;

2 (4) Arranging for a ~~private and independent~~ an annual audit; audit, in
3 accordance with G.S. 143-6.1;

4 (5) Development of procedures for contracting for services.

5 (b) If the board serves as an advisory board to a sentencing services program
6 located in a local or State agency, the board's duties do not include budgeting and
7 personnel decisions.

8 **"§ 7A-776. Limitation on use of funds.**

9 Funds provided for use under the provisions of this Article shall not be used for the
10 operating costs, construction, or any other costs associated with local jail ~~confinement.~~
11 confinement, or for any purpose other than the operation of a sentencing services
12 program that complies with this Article.

13 **"§ 7A-777. Evaluation.**

14 The Director shall evaluate each ~~community penalties~~ sentencing services program on
15 an annual basis to determine the degree to which the ~~prison commitments have been~~
16 ~~reduced or have kept from increasing as a result of the community penalties program.~~
17 The Director shall not renew or continue a program that has failed to affect commitments
18 and that shows no promise of doing so in the future, after allowing for changes in the
19 number of convictions. program effectively meets the needs of the courts in its judicial
20 district by providing them with sentencing information. In conducting the evaluation, the
21 Director shall consider the goals and objectives established in the program's plan, as well
22 as the extent to which the program is able to ensure that the offenders served by the plan
23 meet the criteria established in G.S. 7A-773(1)."

24 Section 2. G.S. 15A-1340.11(6) reads as rewritten:

25 "(6) Intermediate punishment. – A sentence in a criminal case that places an
26 offender on supervised probation and includes at least one of the
27 following conditions:

- 28 a. Special probation as defined in G.S. 15A-1351(a).
- 29 b. Assignment to a residential program.
- 30 c. House arrest with electronic monitoring.
- 31 d. Intensive probation.
- 32 e. Assignment to a day-reporting center.

33 ~~In addition, a sentence to regular supervised probation imposed pursuant~~
34 ~~to a community penalties plan as defined in G.S. 7A-771(2) is an~~
35 ~~intermediate punishment, regardless of whether any of the above~~
36 ~~conditions is imposed, if the plan is accepted by the court and the plan~~
37 ~~does not include active punishment."~~

38 Section 3. G.S. 15A-1340.14(f) reads as rewritten:

39 "(f) Proof of Prior Convictions. – A prior conviction shall be proved by any of the
40 following methods:

- 41 (1) Stipulation of the parties.
- 42 (2) An original or copy of the court record of the prior conviction.

1 (3) A copy of records maintained by the Division of Criminal Information,
2 the Division of Motor Vehicles, or of the Administrative Office of the
3 Courts.

4 (4) Any other method found by the court to be reliable.

5 The State bears the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that a
6 prior conviction exists and that the offender before the court is the same person as the
7 offender named in the prior conviction. The original or a copy of the court records or a
8 copy of the records maintained by the Division of Criminal Information, the Division of
9 Motor Vehicles, or of the Administrative Office of the Courts, bearing the same name as
10 that by which the offender is charged, is prima facie evidence that the offender named is
11 the same person as the offender before the court, and that the facts set out in the record
12 are true. For purposes of this subsection, "a copy" includes a paper writing containing a
13 reproduction of a record maintained electronically on a computer or other data processing
14 equipment, and a document produced by a facsimile machine. The prosecutor shall make
15 all feasible efforts to obtain and present to the court the offender's full record. Evidence
16 presented by either party at trial may be utilized to prove prior convictions. Suppression
17 of prior convictions is pursuant to G.S. 15A-980. If a motion is made pursuant to that
18 section during the sentencing stage of the criminal action, the court may grant a
19 continuance of the sentencing hearing. If asked by the defendant in compliance with G.S.
20 15A-903, the prosecutor shall furnish the defendant's prior criminal record to the
21 defendant within a reasonable time sufficient to allow the defendant to determine if the
22 record available to the prosecutor is accurate. Upon request of a sentencing services
23 program established pursuant to Article 61 of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes, the
24 district attorney shall provide any information the district attorney has about the criminal
25 record of a person for whom the program has been requested to provide a sentencing plan
26 pursuant to G.S. 7A-773.1."

27 Section 4. Section 2 of this act becomes effective October 1, 1999, and applies
28 to offenses committed on or after that date. The remainder of this act becomes effective
29 October 1, 1999, except that community penalties plans requested for offenders prior to
30 that date shall be governed by the law in effect at the time the plan was requested.