

Preparing for a Sentencing Hearing. Few, if any, hearings cause a defendant more anxiety than sentencing. Facing sentencing for a criminal conviction, whether a [felony](#) or [misdemeanor](#), can be daunting. Depending on the specific circumstances of your case, a judge can impose jail or prison, fines, probation, and other long-lasting penalties. Careful preparation is critical to getting the best possible outcome:

1. Review Your Case and Sentencing Guidelines

- Meet with your [criminal defense attorney](#) to understand the possible sentencing outcomes based on [Missouri law](#) and [sentencing guidelines](#).
- Review any plea agreements or trial outcomes that may impact the sentencing range.

2. Gather Supporting Documentation

Compile any documents that may positively influence the judge's decision, such as:

- Character Reference Letters
- Treatment or Rehabilitation Program Certificates
- Community Service Records
- Proof of Employment

3. Consider Character Witnesses

- Identify individuals in your life willing to speak on your behalf or provide written statements, like family members, counselors, teachers, employers, or community members.
- Provide these individuals with information on what to expect and what's relevant to share.

4. Complete Necessary Assessments or Evaluations

- Attend any court-mandated evaluations, such as drug or alcohol assessments or mental health evaluations, and bring results to the hearing if applicable.
- Document preparation in voluntary programs (for example, [Substance Awareness Traffic Offender Program](#) (SATOP) or [Required Educational Assessment and Community Treatment Program](#) (REACT)) as proof of proactive rehabilitation efforts.

5. Prepare a Positive Personal Statement

- [Work with your defense attorney](#) to prepare a respectful and honest statement expressing remorse, taking accountability, or sharing in-depth insights on lessons learned.
- Avoid excuses. Instead, focus on your goals and aspirations, and how you intend to contribute positively to society.

6. Address Restitution

If your case involves financial restitution, confirm that any agreed-upon payments have been made or discuss options for a payment plan with your lawyer.

7. Dress Appropriately and Show Respect

- Plan to wear conservative, professional attire for the hearing to show respect for the court. If you're unsure what to wear, seek guidance from your lawyer.
- Be sure to arrive on time and maintain respectful body language throughout the proceedings.

8. Discuss Sentencing Alternatives with Your Attorney

Explore potential sentencing alternatives that could be available based on the specifics of your case. These might include:

- Diversion Programs
- House Arrest
- Probation
- Community Service

9. Prepare for Possible Immediate Custody

Bring only essential personal items and arrange for childcare, pet care, or other responsibilities in case the court orders immediate custody.

10. Plan Post-Sentencing

Review with your attorney any steps you may need to take after sentencing, like appeal rights, probation conditions, or requirements for any rehabilitation programs.

Be sure to remember that sentencing hearings are a crucial opportunity to show the judge your commitment to positive change. Proper preparation can significantly impact the court's perception and potentially the outcome of your sentence. An experienced [criminal defense lawyer from Combs Waterkotte](#) can provide expert legal guidance tailored to your sentencing hearing during a free, confidential consultation. Call now at 314-900-HELP or [reach out online](#) to discuss the specifics of your hearing with one of our [expert defense attorneys](#).