

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/playbook-for-change-states-reconsider-mandatory-sentences>**

## Policy Issue Resources

### Publication

Since 2000, at least 29 states have taken steps to roll back mandatory sentences, with 32 bills passed in just the last five years. Most legislative activity has focused on adjusting penalties for nonviolent drug offenses through the use of one or a combination of the following reform approaches: 1) expanding judicial discretion through the creation of so-called safety valve provisions, 2) limiting automatic sentence enhancements, and 3) repealing or revising mandatory minimum sentences. In this policy report, Vera's Center on Sentencing and Corrections summarizes state-level mandatory sentencing reforms since 2000, raises questions about their impact, and offers recommendations to jurisdictions considering similar efforts.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

Vera Institute of Justice. All rights reserved.