

**UNITED STATES PROBATION
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA**

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August 3, 2026

Jill Bushaw, Chief
United States Probation Officer

Matthew Warren, Deputy Chief
United States Probation Officer

To: Federal Public Defender / CJA Panel Attorneys
Re: Presentence Interview Process

The probation office recently shared a summary of the presentence process following a courthouse breakfast with members of the panel who were in attendance. Because the presentence stage of the sentencing process involves a joint effort with defense counsel, we thought it would be beneficial to provide correspondence summarizing the process to better reach all panel members with the same information. Also, we intend to include a copy of this letter on our external website in the event it is a helpful resource regarding the presentence workflow for new attorneys who join the panel.

I'd like to start with sharing our appreciation for the working relationship our office maintains with the panel, as the quality of the information we are able to obtain and include in the presentence report is a reflection of the level of collaboration we have in this district. The presentence interview is an essential first step in compiling the history and characteristics of the defendant and the essential details of their life circumstances that are relevant under 18 USC § 3553(a)(1).

When a case is set for plea, we make every effort to assign it to a presentence officer in advance so the officer may coordinate with defense counsel to schedule the presentence interview prior to the plea hearing. Pursuant to the Administrative Order, the presentence interview should be completed within five days of the change of plea hearing.

Because our office is not involved with the case until the plea stage, the assigned officer will contact the defense attorney to confirm the defendant's location, if detained, and to coordinate the scheduling of the presentence interview. If a defendant is transferred prior to the scheduled interview, we would appreciate counsel notifying our office so the interview may be rescheduled at the facility where the defendant is currently housed.

The next essential step in the process is completion of the presentence packet. The presentence packet contains four separate components: 1) a cover sheet; 2) a worksheet for the preparation of the presentence report; 3) a declaration of net worth and cash flow statements to be signed and dated by the client; and 4) authorization to release information forms to be signed and dated by the client, if authorization is given. The presentence packet is identical for all clients, and should you wish to access a copy of it before it is emailed to you by the assigned probation officer, it can be located here: <https://www.ianp.uscourts.gov/presentence-documents>.

In order to most effectively facilitate this process, we welcome any effort to provide your clients with the presentence interview packet as soon as they have indicated an intent to plead guilty. When feasible, workflow options for your consideration include providing your clients with prelabeled envelopes for returning the packet or asking them to bring the materials to the change of plea hearing.

The period between plea and sentencing is understandably an anxious time for many individuals. Providing the presentence interview packet in advance allows your clients the opportunity to review the materials beforehand and gain a better understanding of the topics that will be discussed during the interview.

Additionally, many individuals have experienced trauma or abuse and may find it difficult to discuss those experiences openly in an interview setting. Allowing clients the option to provide this information in writing can offer a more sensitive approach, while also helping to ensure more complete and thoughtful information is gathered.

Our goal is to receive the completed presentence interview packet one business day prior to the scheduled interview. Please note that it is neither expected nor intended to be implied that defense counsel needs to complete the packet for their client, unless that is the attorney's preference. So long as the individual has had the opportunity to complete the packet to the best of their ability and has an understanding of what will be discussed, the interview can proceed more efficiently and productively. During the interview, the assigned probation officer will review the information provided in the packet and expand on it as necessary.

However, we kindly request that the forms be reviewed to ensure all required signatures and initials, particularly on the releases of information and financial statement, are completed. Assistance in this area is extremely helpful in minimizing delays in obtaining signed releases so there is adequate time to request and receive records, as well as verify the defendant's reported background information, prior to the scheduled disclosure of the draft presentence report.

Our presentence process has largely remained unchanged since 2014, when we transitioned to phone interviews, but some facilities are now using other forms of technology. While new forms of technology provide additional opportunities, we are working through scheduling and connection issues as they have come up. If you have any questions or suggestions for improvement, please reach out to Senior USPO Angie Myhlhousen (angie_myhlhousen@ianp.uscourts.gov) or Senior USPO Jessica Clark (jessica_clark@ianp.uscourts.gov).

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Bushaw". The signature is cursive and fluid.

Jill Bushaw
Chief USPO