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Joel A. Sickler, Criminologist

Joel Sickler has worked in the field of sentencing and corrections for more than 30 years and currently heads the Justice Advocacy Group LLC. Mr. Sickler was a *magna cum laude* graduate of St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. He was a graduate fellow at American University's School of Justice in Washington, DC where he earned a Master of Science in the Administration of Justice. Upon the completion of his graduate work, he was elected to the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration.

While a graduate fellow, Mr. Sickler worked as a correctional officer at a large maximum-security penitentiary that served the District of Columbia. Active in the officer's union, he created and led a corrections officer task force that promoted alternatives to incarceration. His idea was to promote community-based sentencing and treatment programs for offenders who posed no public safety risk. The idea was for the guards' union to push for creative sentencing measures that would help depopulate the prison to lessen overcrowding and create better, safer working conditions for the union's rank and file members. Mr. Sickler also hoped the measures would allow some offenders, mostly youths, to avoid the calamitous exposure to the violent prison experience. When the idea gained traction, the union bosses quickly shut it down. They feared – if too successful and the prison population shrank – officers would lose their jobs. That outcome and having witnessed atrocities at the prison including having an inmate die in his presence, Mr. Sickler sought to achieve prison reforms through the private sector. That led to his employment with the respected National Center on Institutions and Alternatives' (NCIA) Client Specific Planning (CSP) program in Washington, DC.

Since 1981, Mr. Sickler has been one of the country's premier post-conviction specialists. For almost 20 years he worked with and directed NCIA's CSP program which was instrumental in the development and expansion of the concept of alternatives to imprisonment in the United States. He helped open several of NCIA's regional offices and ran their western regional office in Los Angeles. There he also directed their juvenile delinquency diversion program sponsored by The Seaver Institute. He left NCIA temporarily in 1988 to co-direct with criminologist Matthew Yeager, The Sentencing Group, a consortium of criminal justice professionals in Los Angeles. Mr. Sickler directed The Sentencing Group's capital mitigation unit. Returning to NCIA in 1992 he

headed their CSP program nationally (focusing on federal sentencing and prisoner advocacy) until leaving the organization in 2003 to start his own firm, the Justice Advocacy Group.

The Justice Advocacy Group offers assistance to criminal lawyers and their clients preparing comprehensive sentencing memoranda and offering strategic defense sentencing planning, sentencing guidelines research and presentation of mitigation evidence. The group also works in the areas of federal prisoner classification and designation, program application methods and advising on reentry pre-release services.

In his career, Mr. Sickler has prepared over 2,000 evaluations for felony-level defendants facing sentencing in federal and state courts nationwide. He has submitted sentencing reports in 41 of the 94 federal judicial districts and in three foreign countries. He has received 40 federal court-appointments as a capital mitigation specialist and has testified as an expert regarding mitigation findings and recommendations in six federal jurisdictions. He has visited 51 federal prisons and have advised clients with inmate matters in 86 of the Bureau of Prisons' 119 institutions. He has advised clients from Japan to Luxembourg. Based on more than 30 years of experience assisting clients committed to the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), he has extensive knowledge of the BOP and its stated mission, services, policies, program statements, regulations, and institutions.

Mr. Sickler frequently lectures at national sentencing seminars and has trained sentencing advocates and attorneys under the auspices of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL) and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA) (of which he is a member of both). He is a member of the National Association of Sentencing Advocates & Mitigation Specialists (NASAMS), serving as the organization Vice President from 1998-2000. In 2011, he appeared in the Showtime network documentary, *Unraveled*.

Learn more at <http://www.justiceadvocacygroupllc.com>.