

APPENDIX TO PART VII

GUIDELINES FOR OPERATION OF PLEA AGREEMENTS IN THE MUNICIPAL COURTS OF NEW JERSEY

Guideline 1. Purpose.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to allow for flexibility in the definitions and exclusions relating to the plea agreement process as that process evolves and certain offenses come to demand lesser or greater scrutiny.

Note: Guidelines and Comment adopted June 29, 1990, simultaneously with former Rule 7:4-8 ("Plea Agreements") to be effective immediately; as part of 1997 recodification of Part VII rules, readopted without change as Appendix to Part VII and referenced by Rule 7:6-2 ("Pleas, Plea Agreements"), October 6, 1997 to be effective February 1, 1998; Guideline 4 amended July 5, 2000 to be effective September 5, 2000; Guidelines 3 and 4 amended July 28, 2004 to be effective September 1, 2004; Guideline 4 amended June 7, 2005 to be effective July 1, 2005; Guideline 4 amended June 15, 2007 to be effective September 1, 2007; Guideline 3 amended July 16, 2009 to be effective September 1, 2009; Guideline 3 amended July 30, 2021 to be effective September 1, 2021.

GUIDELINE 2. Definitions.

For the purpose of these Guidelines, a plea agreement occurs in a Municipal Court matter whenever the prosecutor and the defense agree as to the offense or offenses to which a defendant will plead guilty on condition that any or all of the following occur:

- (a) the prosecutor will recommend to the court that another offense or offenses be dismissed,
- (b) the prosecutor will recommend to the court that it accept a plea to a lesser or other offense (whether included or not) than that originally charged,
- (c) the prosecutor will recommend a sentence(s), not to exceed the maximum permitted, to the court or remain silent at sentencing.

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GUIDELINE 3. Prosecutor's Responsibilities.

Nothing in these Guidelines should be construed to affect in any way the prosecutor's discretion in any case to move unilaterally for an amendment to the original charge or a

dismissal of the charges pending against a defendant if the prosecutor determines and personally represents on the record the reasons in support of the motion. The prosecutor shall also appear in person to set forth any proposed plea agreement on the record. However, with the approval of the municipal court judge, in lieu of appearing on the record, the prosecutor may submit to the court a Request to Approve Plea Agreement, on a form approved by the Administrative Director of the Courts, signed by the prosecutor and by the defendant. When a plea agreement has been reached between the defendant and prosecutor in the Judiciary's electronic system, the prosecutor shall submit any proposed amended or dismissed charge and plea agreement electronically in that system. Nothing in this Guideline shall be construed to limit the court's ability to order the prosecutor to appear at any time during the proceedings.

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GUIDELINE 4. Limitation.

No plea agreements whatsoever will be allowed in drunken driving or certain drug offenses.

A. Driving while under the influence of liquor or drugs (N.J.S.A. 39:4-50) and

B. Possession of marijuana or hashish (N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10a(4)), being under the influence of a controlled dangerous substance or its analog (N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10b), and use, possession or intent to use or possess drug paraphernalia, etc. (N.J.S.A. 2C:36-2). No plea agreements will be allowed in which a defendant charged for a violation of N.J.S.A. 39:4-50 with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.10% or higher seeks to plead guilty and be sentenced under section a(1)(i) of that statute (blood alcohol concentration of .08% or higher, but less than 0.10%).

If a defendant is charged with a second or subsequent offense of driving while under the influence of liquor or drugs (N.J.S.A. 39:4-50) and refusal to provide a breath sample (N.J.S.A. 39:4-50.4a) arising out of the same factual transaction, and the defendant pleads guilty to the N.J.S.A. 39:4-50 offense, the judge, on recommendation of the prosecutor, may dismiss the refusal charge. A refusal charge in connection with a first offense N.J.S.A. 39:4-50 charge shall not be dismissed by a plea agreement, although a plea to a concurrent sentence for such charges is permissible.

Except in cases involving an accident or those that occur when school properties are being utilized, if a defendant is charged with driving while under the influence of liquor or drugs (N.J.S.A. 39:4-50(a)) and a school zone or school crossing violation

under N.J.S.A. 39:4-50(g), arising out of the same factual transaction, and the defendant pleads guilty to the N.J.S.A. 39:4-50(a) offense, the judge, on the recommendation of the prosecutor, may dismiss the N.J.S.A. 39:4-50(g) charge.

If a defendant is charged with more than one violation under Chapter 35 or 36 of the Code of Criminal Justice arising from the same factual transaction and pleads guilty to one charge or seeks a conditional discharge under N.J.S.A. 2C:36A-1, all remaining Chapter 35 or 36 charges arising from the same factual transaction may be dismissed by the judge on the recommendation of the prosecutor.

Nothing contained in these limitations shall prohibit the judge from considering a plea agreement as to the collateral charges arising out of the same factual transaction connected with any of the above enumerated offenses in Sections A and B of this Guideline.

The judge may, for certain other offenses subject to minimum mandatory penalties, refuse to accept a plea agreement unless the prosecuting attorney represents that the possibility of conviction is so remote that the interests of justice requires the acceptance of a plea to a lesser offense.

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