

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is Fugitive Safe Surrender being implemented in Washington, DC?

Thousands of DC residents have open court matters that have resulted in warrants being issued for their arrest. The most common reasons for these warrants are missed court dates or probation/parole violations. Fugitive Safe Surrender (FSS) offers these persons a chance to handle their warrants voluntarily in a safe and neutral location, the Bible Way Baptist Church on New Jersey Avenue. In addition, the Agencies that will deal with the warrant have agreed that everyone coming in to FSS will be treated fairly, with respect, and will be given favorable consideration for doing so. Too often, when the police try to serve these warrants by arresting persons at home, at work, or in their neighborhood, both the individual and the police are at put at risk.

2. Which Agencies are participating?

FSS is a cooperative effort among the following Agencies: the Superior Court for the District of Columbia (DCSC), the United States Marshals Service (USMS), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia (USAO), the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia (OAG), the United States Parole Commission (USPC), the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), the DC Pretrial Service Agency (PSA), the DC Public Defender Service (PDS) and other members of the DC Bar, the DC Department of Corrections, and the DC Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). All of these Agencies will be working together and in cooperation with and the full support of Bishop James Silver, Pastor of the Bible Way Baptist Church, and his congregation.

3. Has this been tried somewhere else?

Yes, the United States Marshals Service has sponsored similar Fugitive Safe Surrender Programs in five other cities so far. Over 4,000 wanted persons have voluntarily surrendered as a result.

4. Who is eligible to participate in this program?

FSS is designed for ADULTS (the program will not be handling any juvenile cases) who have outstanding warrants from the D.C. Superior Court for non-violent felonies or misdemeanor crimes and also don't have a history of violence in their recent past. Warrants in domestic violence cases are not eligible for participation. Child custody and child support cases are also excluded.

If you have an outstanding that is not from the D.C. Superior Court, we urge you to contact the court or authority that issued the warrant to resolve the matter. *Only D.C. Superior Court warrants will be addressed at Fugitive Safe Surrender. No other warrants are eligible for the program.*

- Warrants from other local jurisdictions in Maryland (Prince Georges County, Montgomery County, etc.) or Virginia (Arlington County, Fairfax County, etc.) are not eligible.
- Warrants issued by U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. or other federal courts are not eligible.
- Domestic violence warrants are not eligible for resolution under Fugitive Safe Surrender.
- Immigration matters are not eligible for resolution under Fugitive Safe Surrender.

5. How do I know if I have a warrant?

You will need to come to the Bible Way Church where the FSS staff will do the necessary record checks to see if you have any outstanding warrants. This information can't be provided over the phone or ahead of time, given the security and privacy concerns that would be raised.

6. Do I need to bring ID with me?

It would help speed up the intake process if you could bring current, government-issued identification (such as a driver's license or other ID card). However, having identification is not a requirement; there will be a variety of methods in place to verify your identity at the Church.

7. Can someone come with me?

Absolutely. In fact, we encourage you to bring a family member or friend to help see you through this process. There will be a child care center staffed by Church volunteers, and a waiting area for family and friends while your case is being processed.

8. What do you mean by "violent crime"?

DC Code (Title 23 Section 1331) states:

The term "crime of violence" means:

- aggravated assault
- act of terrorism
- arson
- assault on a police officer
- assault with a dangerous weapon
- assault with intent to kill, commit first degree sexual abuse, commit second degree sexual abuse, or commit child sexual abuse
- assault with intent to commit any other offense
- burglary
- carjacking
- armed carjacking
- child sexual abuse

- cruelty to children in the first degree
- extortion or blackmail accompanied by threats of violence
- gang recruitment, participation, or retention by the use or threatened use of force, coercion, or intimidation
- kidnapping
- malicious disfigurement
- manslaughter
- manufacture or possession of a weapon of mass destruction
- mayhem
- murder
- robbery
- sexual abuse in the first, second, or third degrees
- use, dissemination, or detonation of a weapon of mass destruction
- an attempt or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing offenses

9. What is a “history of violence” that could prevent me from participating?

Many factors will be considered in determining whether a person’s criminal history would prevent him or her from participating in Fugitive Safe Surrender, including the nature of prior charges or convictions, how long ago those incidents occurred, how long it has been since he or she was involved with the criminal justice system, etc. All cases and records will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and everyone who shows up at the Bible Way Church will be treated fairly, with respect, and will be given favorable consideration for having come in voluntarily.

10. What is an “extensive criminal record”?

As with “history of violence,” “extensive criminal record” is a complicated term. Many variables need to be considered, and it is impossible to say how many prior cases would prevent someone from participating in Fugitive Safe Surrender. All cases and records will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and everyone who shows up at the Bible Way Church will be treated fairly, with respect, and will be given favorable consideration for having come in voluntarily.

11. You keep saying “favorable consideration.” Exactly what do you mean by “favorable consideration”?

Since each case will be reviewed and decided on an individual basis, the exact definition of “favorable consideration” will differ from case to case. It does not mean that your case will be dismissed or that you will not have to return to court. In many instances, FSS participants leave the Church with the warrant quashed (removed and de-activated) and a new court date. In fewer instances, the matter is resolved right then and there through a hearing. Finally, in a very small number of cases, the prosecutor may decide to dismiss the case. While each of these outcomes is possible, none is guaranteed. The best thing about participating in FSS is that the warrant is no longer hanging over your head.

In most cases, you can go home that night free from worry about being arrested on that warrant, although you are still responsible for resolving the original issue.

12. Can I talk with a lawyer about what is happening with my case?

Absolutely. Staff attorneys from the DC Public Defender Service as well as members of the Court's defense bar will be at the Church and will be available to talk with you about your case. They will talk to you about what the prosecutor, the Court, or the US Parole Commission have told them will likely be done with your case, and provide other assistance as necessary. If your case goes before the court or Parole Commission that day in one of the courtrooms set up at the Bible Way Church, they will represent you during that hearing. This service will not cost you anything but is being provided as part of FSS. If your case is continued, the lawyer you originally had assigned to the case will resume representing you in it.

13. Suppose I change my mind about participating once I'm there. Can I leave?

Once you sign in and indicate your agreement to participate in the program, you must remain at the church until your case has been resolved. This is mainly to ensure the safety of all FSS participants. Your family or friends who accompanied you may leave at any time.

14. Can you guarantee that I will not be "stepped back" (taken into custody) if I come down to Bible Way Baptist Church during this Program?

We can't make such a guarantee to anyone (for instance, suppose a person who thinks he only has a "No Permit" warrant also has a murder warrant he didn't know about – obviously he will have to be processed on that murder warrant). We CAN guarantee that everyone who is eligible and voluntarily participating in FSS will be treated fairly, with respect, and will be given favorable consideration for having done so. And we do know from what we have seen in the other FSS cities that most persons who voluntarily participate in this program will go home that day.

15. Suppose I want to take care of my warrant before November 1st. What can I do?

Persons with open warrants can always go to the Release Services Unit (RSU) of the DC Pretrial Services Agency in order to get help with voluntarily surrendering on their warrant. That office is located in Room C-301 of the DC Superior Court, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW. RSU staff will verify the existence of the warrant, notify the appropriate judge and/or courtroom clerk and, in some instances, accompany the person to the courtroom.